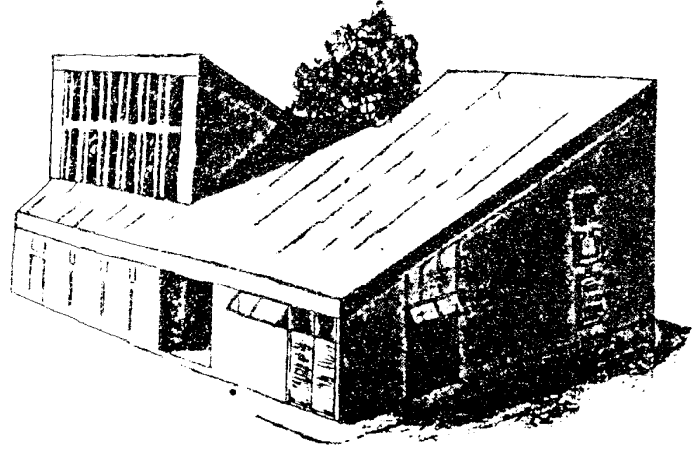


Parish of Rochester St Peter with St Margaret



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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PARISH OF ROCHESTER

ST PETER WITH ST MARGARET

SUNDAY 27TH APRIL 2025 AT ST MARGARET'S CHURCH AND ON ZOOM
(check website for meeting updates and for Zoom log in)

To follow directly at the end of the 10.30am Parish Eucharist
Approx start time 12.00pm

Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Election of Officers

Churchwardens (charity trustees for one year only)

1.

2.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

AGENDA

Chaired by Reverend Mark Ball

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Minutes of the APCM held on 21st April 2024 to be held as a true record**
- 3. Matters arising**
- 4. Election of PCC members**
- 5. Appointment of an Independent Examiner**
- 6. Reports** Written reports are taken as read and questions may be asked.
- 7. A.O.B.**
- 8. Date of next APCM – tba**

Concluding Act of Worship

Parish of Rochester Annual Report for 2024 – Introduction

Administrative information

This report is for Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Rochester (the PCC), registered with the Charity Commission as charity number 1132260. The PCC is a body corporate, and the governing documents of the PCC are the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure (1956) as amended and the Church Representation Rules 2017. This report covers the period from 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

The Parish of Rochester is in the Church of England diocese of Rochester. The correspondence address is St. Peters Church Parish Centre, Delce Road, Rochester, ME1 2EH.

Aims, Objectives and Activities of the PCC

The PCC is responsible for working with the incumbent, the Reverend Dr Joel Love, in promoting, in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of churches and other properties in the parish, which are currently:

- The St. Peter's Church Parish Centre, Delce Road, Rochester, ME1 2EH
- St. Margaret's Church, St Margaret's Road, Rochester, ME1 1UJ
- The Matthews Memorial Hall, Castle Avenue, Rochester, ME1 2DU
- A residential property at Hathaway Court, The Esplanade, Rochester, ME1 1QY

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches and to enjoy full participation in the parish community. The PCC, through its committees and groups, maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions as to how our services can involve the many social groups that live within our parish.

When planning our activities for the year, the incumbent and the PCC have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion, specifically that such charities should have an identifiable, positive, beneficial moral or ethical framework that has a progressive effect on society. We try to deliver the responsibilities of the PCC in our parish community through, amongst other things:

- Worship and prayer
- Teaching and learning about God
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish and those involved with the church
- Mission and outreach work to our community and beyond
- Working with other churches on projects of mutual interest
- Working with other community organisations for the benefit of the local area

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of the buildings listed above. Please see all the detailed reports in this annual report for information on how our activities are planned, managed and carried out.

Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At the Parish of Rochester, the PCC consists of the incumbent (the vicar), an assistant priest, the curate, a churchwarden selected at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners, two Deanery Synod representatives and nine ordinary members elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

Three deputy churchwardens, an honorary treasurer and an honorary secretary are appointed by the PCC and may be co-opted to the PCC if they are not already elected members.

The PCC met seven times in 2024.

There is an electoral roll for the parish which records the names of everyone entitled to vote at the APCM. All those who attend our services or are otherwise involved in the life of the church are encouraged to register on the electoral roll.

PCC Members During 2024

Ex Officio Members (throughout 2024 unless otherwise noted)

The Reverend Dr Joel Love (Vicar)
The Reverend Mark Ball (Associate Priest)
The Reverend Ruth Pyrke (Curate)
Mr Douglas Seth-Smith (Churchwarden)
Mrs Julia Hawkins (Deanery Synod Representative)
Mr Michael O'Connor (Deanery Synod Representative)

Elected Members serving until April 2024

Mr Aidan Dooley

Elected Members serving throughout 2024

Mrs Pam Moss (Deputy Churchwarden)
Mr Peter Cornell (Deputy Churchwarden)
Mr David Porter
Mrs Monica Aldridge
Mrs Nicola Timlick
Mr Gary Ward
Mrs Joy Wilson
Mrs Angela Cornell

Elected Members serving from April 2024

Mrs Bonnie Chandler

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
21st April 2024 at St. Peter's Church

Election of Churchwardens

- 1. Douglas Seth Smith** Proposed by Jayne Pearson, seconded by Pam Moss. Carried
- 2. Vacant**

Douglas said that he will be having a course of chemotherapy for his prostate cancer from mid May to mid June and will be very tired for a while afterwards. He thanked the deputy wardens and everyone else who has helped him during this time and that we need help with the live streaming.

2024 ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING MINUTES

- 1. Apologies:** Jayne Pearson, Stuart Pearson, Gary Ward, Lindsay Ward, Rev. Mark Ball, Rev Ruth Pyrke, Peter Cornell.
- 2. Minutes of APCM 2023**
Proposed as a true record by Joel Love. Seconded by Douglas Seth Smith.
- 3. Matters Arising.** None
- 4. Election of PCC Members**
 - 1. David Porter** Proposed by Monica Aldridge, seconded by Pam Moss
 - 2. Bonnie Chandler** Proposed by Joel, seconded by Julia Hawkins
 - 3. Joy Wilson** Proposed by Monica Aldridge, seconded by Jayne Pearson
- 5. Appointment of an independent examiner**
We do not have one at the moment and the APCM delegated the appointment to the PCC. Carried.
- 6. Reports**
All were handed in on time again except two but they were there for the meeting.
Nicky thanked Kevin Holloway for his work for Safeguarding Adults and Nicky was thanked for her work by Joel.
Joel proposed that pictures of all clergy including the lay readers from Borstal who sometimes take our services, plus PCC members be put up on the notice boards at both churches.
Joel proposed that Nicky stay as safeguarding officer. Seconded by Christine Seth Smith. Carried.
Rachel thanked everyone who has helped out in Ruth's absence.
It was noted that Jayne Pearson as parish administrator keeps a record of all money raised for charity.
Joel thanked Christine Seth Smith for Eco church and also starting up having proper coffee after church.
Julia enjoys being part of the music group and appreciates the organisation. She also thanked David Porter for explaining to the congregation what the PCC does.
- 7. A.O.B.** None
- 8. Date of next APCM** - tba

Concluded with The Grace.

Vicar's Report

You may have noticed something different when you opened this year's Annual Report. Our activities are now arranged under five headings, which are inspired by the **Five Marks of Mission** of the Church of England:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth

This new arrangement is intended to show that everything we do in Church is missional, and that we are already doing a lot. This year, our worshipping congregation has become a little younger (with two newborn babies at the end of the year) and more diverse in terms of our ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Church Development survey also showed that we have regular worshippers with partial sight or hearing loss, or with reduced mobility. We have among our number some people who identify as neurodiverse and some people who are living with a mental health diagnosis. We celebrate this diversity and want to learn from each other about how we can better support and accommodate each other in all that we do.

We do many things to **proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom**, one of which is Pints of View, which has continued to grow in 2024 and regularly attracts 40 people, most of whom do not belong to any faith tradition. We also plan to bring back Table Talk events in 2025, if we can recruit the volunteers to help run them. Table Talk is an opportunity to get to know people from our community by providing hospitality, and to talk together about our faith practices and values. Proclaiming the Good News also takes place in our preaching. This year we built on the success of our 'Tough Topics' sermon series (from 2023) with a series of sermons on the topic 'How I pray'. Thinking about our online presence and how to reach people in their homes, Joel presented a communications strategy to the PCC. We will be doing more work on this in 2025.

Nurturing New Believers has happened through preparing 6 candidates for confirmation and baptising 15 people: nine babies (aged less than 1 year), four other children, and two adults. Joel has been learning more about Intergenerational worship and the PCC has begun to think about how we could grow in this area.

This year, we had study groups looking at the Bible Course, the Prayer Pack, the Parables of Jesus, and the Sanctuary Mental Health course. Our Good Friday quiet day was attended by 40+ people. We also had whole-Church engagement in bible study through reading the whole of Mark's gospel together (January-March 2024) and we began to use *A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church* in our Parish Eucharists from Advent Sunday 2024.

We have been growing new leaders by encouraging people to attend *It's Your Calling* days and the preaching course: *Hearing God's Word/Speaking God's Word*. Two members of our congregation signed up to do the Bishop's Certificate and one is continuing with this. She is supported by a formational group made up of clergy and lay members of our congregation. We also have an ordinand (Scott) on placement with us and a curate (Ruth) entering her final year with us.

A big part of our **response to human need** are the 16 funerals (of which 6 in church) and 3 memorial services we held in church in 2024. We also celebrated 1 Wedding and 1 Blessing after civil marriage. We are talking about trialling a Grief Café in the new year, hopefully with support from our team of Listening volunteers. Joel has been taking communion to patients at the Wisdom Hospice and anointing some when they were close to death. Christine and Joel also reestablished a regular communion service at Sherwood House.

Inspired by Revd Mark Ball (and the Kent Workplace Mission), we are looking to start up a High Street Chaplaincy in 2025. Training for this will take place early in the new year. See Mark's report for more information.

This year, we had sermons on Safeguarding and heard from a Mental Health chaplain. The PCC is considering a proposal to start a Mental Health peer support group in the parish. We will be running the Sanctuary Mental Health course again in 2025, since the first trial went so well.

Joel and Angie continue to be advocates for Acts 435, a website that enables us to match local people's needs with anonymous donors elsewhere. Generous donations here have also enabled us to support people with their fuel costs and food bank referrals.

The trustees of the John Baynard's Charity (several of whom are from our congregation) decided to close the charity and make one final grant to the new Oasis Restore school at Cookham Wood. We were able to give them £19,000 thanks to the generosity of a man who lived here 250 years ago.

At the end of 2023, Joel did Anti-Racism training with Pastor Austen in Germany with the goal of **Transforming Unjust Structures** as we seek to become a more Inclusive Church. The resignation of Archbishop Justin Welby in November over his handling of a Safeguarding situation reminds us of our commitment to transforming the unjust structures of abuse and silence.

In June, we joined a celebration at the Cathedral to commemorate 30 years since the ordination of the first women as priests in the Church of England. Our PCC's decision to experiment with *A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church* was motivated by a desire to challenge unjust structures of sexism and misogyny in the Church and in the Bible.

We continue to support the LGBTQIA+ community through 'A Seat at the Table' (which we hosted at St Margaret's in November) and a new social gathering, called 'Flourish'. This has met three times in 2024, with plans to continue into 2025. Also in the past year, our PCC voted to use the *Prayers of Love and Faith* with couples in same-sex marriages and civil partnerships. We haven't used them at St Peter's or St Margaret's yet, but Joel did pray them with a lesbian couple from our congregation at St Matthew's in March and also supported a gay couple from our parish at their Eucharist with *Prayers of Love and Faith* at the Cathedral in September.

We try to support a range of charities working in the UK and around the world, tackling the unjust structures of poverty and global inequality. The PCC is considering a proposal to call this 'Charitable giving' rather than 'Mission and Outreach' (because everything we do is Mission and Outreach; charitable giving is just one expression of this).

We are interpreting **Sustaining and Renewing Creation** to include our whole approach to resources: people, time, money, and buildings as well as the environment. Joel is working on a new Volunteer policy to help us focus on valuing and celebrating our volunteers, while committing to an ongoing process of learning and also incorporating succession planning and reviews into our regular practice. The PCC reviewed a number of our policies and risk assessments during 2024 and devoted two sessions to thinking about the risks facing Lone Workers (volunteers or employees working alone in Church or in other people's homes).

When it comes to money and buildings, Jayne worked very hard this year to redecorate the kitchen and toilets at the Parish Centre. We also got a new cooker and a dishwasher. The PCC took the decision to sell the Matthews Memorial Hall, and this was completed in September. We now have the opportunity to think about how this money can support our mission in the present and our vision for the future. There will be a PCC Vision Day to think about this on Saturday 1 March 2025 from 9.30am to 12.30pm at St Peter's.

Thinking about sustaining the natural environment, it is sad to see that the Eco Church committee has lost its chair and has stopped meeting. However, if we feel that this is a core part of our mission, we will find a way to continue the work of the Eco Church committee. In the meantime, we have celebrated the natural world at Harvest and the Animal Service, as well as a 'Churches Count on Nature' picnic in the summer and several 'Wild Church' events:

- Rogation walk around the Cluster
- Summer prayer picnic in Jackson's Fields
- Autumn requiem for lost biodiversity

With some new people being elected to the PCC for the first time, we decided to hold a face-to-face social event in the summer. Reminiscing about times when we felt that our parish was living up to its full potential, people spoke about the Beer Festival, Table Talk, and Pimm's & Hymns. We decided to hold a Table Talk early in the New Year, and a Pimm's & Hymns in the summer of 2025 – as long as we could find volunteers to help with these. Joel & Alejandro have hosted parties at the vicarage this year to thank our team of clergy and LLMs, as well as PCC members from both Rochester and Borstal.

Joel has continued to serve as Mayor's chaplain alongside representatives from other faiths from Medway Inter Faith Action (MIFA). This involves occasionally going to lead prayers at full council meetings. Joel also represents the diocese of Rochester on General Synod and reports back to Diocesan and Deanery synods.

As part of Joel's ongoing ministerial development, he has taken a course on Working with Conflict and has attended research conferences with the Littlemore group of priest theologians. Joel has continued as a tutor on the diocesan Spiritual Accompaniment course and sees 8 people for Spiritual Direction. Spiritual Direction is something that we would recommend for anyone who is interested in exploring their own spiritual life and what God may be calling them to. Please speak to one of the clergy or LLMs to find out more.

There were a few things that Joel stopped doing in 2024, including the support he was giving to St Justus by celebrating a Eucharist there every month, and doing baptisms and funerals for them. We were happy to welcome Revd Folake Makanjuola to St Justus in July. Joel also stood down from the Board of Reference of the Bishop's Certificate and LLM-formation programme to free up more time for the parish.

Douglas Seth-Smith has given 7 years to this parish as a Churchwarden and is stepping down at the APCM. As we contemplate life without a churchwarden, we are immensely grateful to him for all that he has done, and we pray for others to step into his shoes.

Rev. Dr. Joel Love

Curate's Report

This past year has held many changes challenges as well as blessings. Following my cancer diagnosis October 2023, I spent the first quarter of 2024, completing chemotherapy treatment and the second quarter in recovery. As I have shared in communications during my treatment, I thank God for the healing I have experienced and for the sustaining prayers that covered me during this time. I am ever grateful to Father Joel who regularly visited me and continued investing in my formation. This was also modelled by my colleagues on the Ministry Team and was a great encouragement for me, motivating me to look towards my future ministry. I am evidence of God's grace and mercy and of answered prayers of the saints of our joint benefice.

After a period of recovery, I started a phased return to work beginning with leading morning prayer and making my way back on to the teaching, leading and preaching rota. Return to work in schools commenced at the beginning of the academic year. Supper Club bible study group were encouraged to join in with the Sanctuary Course covered the later part of 2024 and I began a placement with the Kings School in Rochester which will be completed in the first quarter of 2025. As I move into the final stages of training, I continue to work through IME2 jointly provided by Rochester and Canterbury diocese and have started a placement with the Bishops Mission order of St John's Chatham.

Reverend Ruth Teruel-Pyrke

Assistant Priest Report

I have enjoyed another full and enriching year as Assistant Priest across Rochester and Borstal Parishes, alongside my other role as Lead Retail Chaplain with Canary Wharf Multifaith Chaplaincy.

I have continued generally spending Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the parishes, with Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays in London.

Alongside the regular ongoing mix of working with other team members in leading worship, congregational and community pastoral work, and school engagement, it has been good to get the BAE Systems Chaplaincy up and running this year. I go in most Wednesday lunchtimes to be available for pastoral conversation with workers there on their lunchbreak. It is mostly low-key relationship building, but has included several sessions of specific bereavement support for people who have lost family members and colleagues.

That Cluster chaplaincy work is carried out in partnership with Kent Workplace Mission. I have been in touch with them too about setting up some training for those of us interested in setting up a High Street Chaplaincy ministry. Hopefully this will come to fruition in 2025.

At the beginning of November I had a Ministry Development Review meeting with Bishop Simon, which was a really helpful and fruitful time of reflection as the year drew to a close.

I am very grateful for the blessings of ministering amongst you all and am looking forward to the year ahead and all it brings.

Reverend Mark Ball

Churchwarden's Report

First of all, I would like to thank our clergy team for all they have done this year. Joel Love as our incumbent has led us so ably with creativity and inspiration and we are so grateful, as we are to Mark Ball, our associate priest for all that he has done. It has also been a joy to welcome back Ruth Teruel-Pyrke, our curate, following her illness and treatment. Praise the Lord! We are also extremely appreciative of all the clergy who have helped us out – Pam Alexander, Sue Brewer, Mike Hayes, Alan Le Grys, Susie Simpson and Neil Thompson.

It has been an encouraging year for church attendance with new people coming through our doors for services and events. The Carol Service at St Margaret's, and Christingle at St Peter's had the highest number of people attending since before lockdown.

Quinquennial inspections of both churches by the architect John Bailey (appointed by the diocese) took place during the early autumn of 2024. His reports highlighted the actions we need to take over the next five years which apply to maintenance and improvement of the buildings.

The hard plastic children's play equipment in the garden at St Peter's has reached the end of its useful life and there have been several trips to the council recycling centre to move these on. In addition, some surplus items in the roof spaces have also been cleared out and taken there.

The wobbly metal gratings in the south aisle at St Margaret's have been stabilised by two kind parishioners which has improved the noise level as people walk over them. The brass at both churches needs polishing from time to time, and I am so grateful to the kind volunteers who perform this task so admirably to keep our churches looking bright and shiny.

Both our churches have been used as polling stations and the recent elections have added to our income. Many events in our church buildings including Coffee Shop, concerts, and Quiz Nights etc really help to make our churches an integral part of the local community.

In January 2025 our beloved caretaker, Derrick Solley, died suddenly. He had been a great asset to the church over the years, quietly doing so many tasks that were essential to the smooth running of our churches. He will be greatly missed.

After seven years I am stepping down as churchwarden. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve this parish. Although hard work at times, it has also been very rewarding. I am so grateful for the support I have received.

Thank you all.

Douglas Seth-Smith

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

The PCC met seven times in 2024, bi-monthly until September, then monthly from October onwards except December. We will continue to meet monthly.

January

Of the two boilers at St Margaret's, one had packed up and the other one was temperamental, so the PCC agreed to apply for a faculty to replace them with other gas boilers which were nearer the C of E Net Zero Carbon policy.

Tech Savvy is getting better organised with more regular bookings.

The Christingle and Toy Service raised money for various charities. We discussed putting cards through people's doors to tell them about us now that we no longer produce Neighbours.

March

Our Safeguarding policy was discussed and it was agreed that we should use case studies and redraft it.

It was agreed that we should charge for storage for existing hirers with restrictions, to be reviewed annually.

The new dishwasher will soon be fitted at St Peter's, and we have a new camera showing the bells at St Margaret's.

It was agreed to sell Matthews Memorial Hall at auction.

It was decided to do a trial of giving regular congregation members tokens to put in the collection plate so that newcomers could see that it was being used.

The Lenten appeal this year is for the Christian Aid Middle East fundraising appeal.

We agreed to use the Prayers of Love and Faith at certain services.

We have put Honest Church on line.

It was agreed that we put pictures of PCC members up on the notice boards so that people know who to approach.

May

The PCC discussed replacing the broken slabs in the car park at St Peter's with tarmac or Bitmac.

We are awaiting the approval for the faculty for replacing the boilers at St Margaret's and the quinquennial inspections of both churches are due soon.

July

The PCC agreed with our safeguarding officer to update all our risk assessments as some of them were out of date, then they can all be ratified.

Updating our website was also considered as a way of letting people know all about us.

The finance committee will get a quote for the car park repairs.

It was suggested that we set up a group for mental health and run a Sanctuary course in the autumn.

The PCC decided to start meeting monthly from September.

September

Many risk assessments were ratified by the PCC, and it was decided that more needed to be done to cover every activity.

As we do not have all the hymns that we need on the CDs we have, we agreed to purchase one that includes all the hymns in our hymn book, because there are times when we have no organist, and one of our organists is leaving soon. We also need more volunteers to operate the system.

The new cooker and dishwasher are in place in St Peter's.

There will be a meeting with the DAB regarding the faculty for new boilers at St Margaret's.

The PCC discussed using the Women's Lectionary which are readings about women, as it covers more of the bible. We would apply for permission from the Bishop to do this and would trial it for a year starting in Advent.

October

The CD set of backing music has been purchased.

The new cooker at St Peter's is wired in and working, but remedial wiring work on the freezer needs to be done.

Matthew Memorial Hall has been sold, with completion date on 21st October.

DAC has approved the new boilers at St Margaret's and we have a quote for them to be fitted.

The Bishop has agreed that we should trial the Women's Lectionary and Joel will give us a sample on Safeguarding Sunday.

It was agreed that putting tokens in the collection plate was not working, and very little cash is put into the plate (mostly because the majority of the congregation do Standing Orders) so from Advent we will announce that the collection plate will be at the back of the church with the SumUp machine, with a welcomer always with it to offer help.

Future social activities were discussed – beer festival, Pimms and Hymns and Table Talk.

The grilles on the side aisles at St Margaret's have been fixed so that they no longer wobble.

The quinquennial inspections have been done for both churches and we are awaiting the reports.

David said that due to other commitments he would not always be able to attend PCC meetings and would stand down as chairman.

November

The Makin report was discussed and it was agreed that those members would who wanted to read it should do so.

We may finally get some interest on the Goodwin Legacy.

The new boilers are in and working at St Margaret's.

All Risk Assessments have now been completed and ratified.

We will be renaming Mission and Outreach as Charitable Giving.

Lay assistants will be licenced on the first Sunday of Advent, and readings from the Women's Lectionary will start then.

Bonnie and Scott will also start preaching then.

The quinquennial reports are back.

Monica Aldridge
PCC Secretary

PROCLAIMING GOOD NEWS

St Margaret's Bell Ringers Report

St Margaret's bellringers have continued to ring regularly on practice nights and for Sunday service throughout the year. Practice nights are well attended and we regularly have between 12 and 16 ringers comprised of St Margaret's home band plus ringers from Higham, Cuxton, Frindsbury and Rochester Cathedral. We also welcome the occasional ringer from further afield and offer taster sessions for people who wish to try out ringing before deciding whether to continue learning with us. This year we have gained three young ringers who attend practice with their parents. We have not recruited any new adult ringers.

On practice nights we focus on bell handling for our young ringers and call changes, plain hunt, Bob and Grandsire Doubles for more advanced ringers. We also often have enough competent ringers to attempt triples methods. Derna and Phil continue to support practices, teaching new learners and wedding ringing at various local towers. Derna has also recently taken on the role of Tower Captain at All Saints Frindsbury, who now ring for service on alternate Sundays to St Margaret's..

We have been able to conduct service ringing on most St Margaret's Sundays thanks to regular Sunday ringers Phil Brown, Jayne Vousden, Alan Moss, Phil Jordan, Jeremy Jarvis and Rob Mitchell. We have rung for a wedding, a blessing and a ringer's funeral this year, as well as Remembrance Sunday in November, and for St Margaret's Christmas services in December. We have also welcomed a few visiting peal bands.

Our secretary (Jayne) organised our usual tower tour in October. This was well attended by our ringers and we were joined by ringers from Cuxton and Meopham who don't normally attend our practices. As always, this meant that we were able to ring a greater variety of methods.

The band have all recently renewed their Safeguarding training to the required level and all teachers and officers have DBS checks in place. Derna has again renewed her Leadership training and has followed up on action points coming out of that training.

Derna Brown

Churches Together in Medway (CTIM)

Local Church leaders continue to meet for prayer every few months. There have been larger prayer meetings for the whole of Medway, and the annual Saints Alive service (31 October) and evangelistic Christmas service. More information can be found at <https://medwaychurch.co.uk/> This year we also participated in Inter Faith Week, alongside people of other faiths from Medway Inter Faith Action (MIFA).

Reverend Joel Love

Cluster Report

The Cluster and Without Walls committees still meet every two months as an opportunity to discuss items of interest that have been happening in the three parishes, to advertise future events, to share ideas and to mutually support each other. Unfortunately, this year we have had to say goodbye to Alison and Helen from St Matthews who have been long standing supporters and contributors to the Cluster committee and we thank them and wish them well. We would also like to welcome Kate Everett from St Matthews and Revd Folake from St Justus to the meetings.

Without Walls is still available as a fund raising body and we are always keen to hear from anyone looking for finance for a project and we will do our best to source this.

Emma Gates has once again been funded to arrange trips to Margate and Brighton for underprivileged families at a relatively small expense for the return in providing these experiences for so many people and is still running her now regular "Swap Shops" at the Cleave Warne Hall in Borstal.

Gary Ward

IT Report

The roles of social media, the website, email, Whatsapp and YouTube etc continue to play an important role in advertising services and events as well as providing more informal means of communication.

There are now 55 subscribers to the Parish's YouTube channel and there is a small but regular online band of viewers for Sunday services which on most occasions are broadcast live from both churches barring technical glitches which do, on occasion, affect the quality of these transmissions.

Facebook is still used successfully to advertise events within our own group page but also through wider outreach via the Cluster page and also other local community focused groups. The Parish page now has 259 followers with most unsurprisingly living in the Medway towns. One interesting statistic is that approx. 68% of followers are shown as female with most viewers between the age 35 and 54....and actually only 1 showing as younger than 25! Then again my daughter tells me that Facebook is "only for oldies"! This comment may well encourage further discussion regarding how we advertise events of interest to younger members of our community going forward.

The Whatsapp group continues to be well used as a means for both formal and informal communication with messages of one form or another posted daily. If you are not yet a member and would like to be then please just ask me! Beware though as someone WILL know your birthday and these are celebrated wildly in gif and emoji form!

Parishofrochester.org.uk continues to be updated for free by John Noakes and is the first place to check for Parish related information. As the web site has had its current look for some time there is now some discussion about a possible refresh to give it a more modern and approachable format and some experimentation with AI in creating a potential new "logo" representing our churches.

Unfortunately this year the usage stats are not available so I am unable to regale you with any details on the number of site visits and from where and how and I apologise for any disappointment this may cause.

Website: www.parishofrochester.org.uk
E Mail: office@parishofrochester.org.uk
Parish Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ParishOfRochester>
Cluster Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RochesterClusterOfChurches>
Family Time: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/268342923346343/>
Without Walls Trips: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/479217192446841/?ref=share>

Cluster Partners:

St Justus: <https://www.stjustus.org/>
St Matthews: <https://stmatthewsborstal.com/>

Gary Ward

Deanery Synod Representatives' Report

There were two ordinary meetings of the Rochester Deanery Synod in the 2023/2024 period.

- Tuesday 25th June 2024 at Christ Church Luton.
- A proposed October meeting of Deanery Synod was cancelled due to the Licensing of Rev Nicky Rawlins as Priest-in-Charge of Burham and Wouldham
- Wednesday 15th January 2025 at Rochester Cathedral

Key points noted are as follows

June Deanery Synod

- Chris Bostock opened the meeting with a general welcome and thanked Andrea and Christ Church for their hospitality. We then heard from Proverbs 6: 12-19 and had a time of prayer.
- The deanery can have 3 elected laity members, and 5 clergy members, Chris Bostock and Rev Joel Love had already been elected, and Rev David Kichenside and Michael O'Connor were elected by the meeting to fill two casual vacancies. Therefore, we still have one laity and three clergy vacancies on Diocesan Synod, and these can be filled in at subsequent meetings. If anyone wishes to be part of Diocesan Synod, please contact either Andrea Leonard or Helen Masters know.
- A Talk by Andy Wooding Jones:

As his time as Archdeacon ends, Andy reflected on his 6 years in the role. This time has seen some major shifts in life including COVID, a change in monarch and a very unsettled world. But this time has also seen changes within the Diocese with a new Bishop, two new Archdeacons and the installation of the Bishop of Tonbridge. Changes, yes, but the role is all about changes and seeing God at work. The Archdeaconry has changed with the COVID pandemic and there are regrets that decisions were made for us and not by us. However, that time did see the start of live streaming of services, some of which are continuing now. We also find ourselves looking at who community is in a different way. The Archdeaconry is looking more diverse. This is a real challenge. How do we recognise those around us and how do we mission to them? We recognise that our call is to the whole parish, and not just the congregation.

Within the Diocese, what is God calling us to do together? Deanery clusters in the Rochester

Deanery are working really well, but how can we build each other up?

Looking ahead: if Dioceses are to do more, they need external funding and National Church funding, but there is a need to fulfil the criteria of grants!

February Deanery synod

- Deanery Synod was held in a perishingly cold cathedral.
- There were updates from General Synod:

General Synod met in York from 5th to 9th of July this year. Much was said about trust and accountability, as well as the theology of sabbath and the value and dignity of human beings. This began with a presentation on some qualitative research, A Wisdom of Trust: Building and Sustaining Trust in the Church of England (GS 2354).

Synod tried to be a prophetic voice for our society on subjects including Human Dignity of Disabled Children, Food banks and inadequacies in social security

Safeguarding was very present with discussions on a Safeguarding Code of Practice, a Learning and Development Framework, and a call for an inquiry into the allegations of abuse within the Soul Survivor network

- There was a report on the Living in Love and Faith working groups as well as a debate on the next stages of LLF.
- Simon Lace gave a talk about Rochester Cathedral

Michael O'Connor
Deanery Synod Representative

Social Report

As usual, we held our annual Christmas Bazaar in November. It's always popular with the local community but there seemed to be more people than ever this year. There was a lovely atmosphere inside the hall and many people commented that it was the kickstart to their Christmas activities. We raised a fabulous £2216.50 for church funds. Thank you to all those who helped set up, ran stalls, served refreshments, baked cakes and helped clear away afterwards. Your support is very much appreciated.

In July we held our annual combined Cream Tea and Summer fete. Unfortunately, the weather was terrible, so tables had to be set up inside the hall. Thankfully people still came along, and we gave away 64 cream teas!

Once again, we opened St Margaret's Church and tower to the public during the Sweeps Festival, Heritage Weekend and Christmas Dickens (Sadly the actual Dickens Festival was cancelled due to gale force winds)

We held three Quiz Nights which were all well attended. Those who participated had a great evening. We are planning to hold three more in 2025. Please do think about coming along they are great fun. Teams of eight. £7.00 a head which includes a Ploughman's Supper.

Reverends Joel and Mark started a new initiative 'Flourish'. Flourish aims to provide a safe, family friendly environment where LGBTQIA+ people and allies can meet, make friends, enjoy relaxed conversations and can take part in fun activities.

As always, please keep an eye on the pew sheets for details of upcoming events.

Jayne Pearson
Parish Administrator

Welcomers

We have a very professional band of welcomers in our parish who greet our congregation and visitors and make sure that they have everything they need, and answer their questions with a smile. It is a very rewarding job and I am very grateful for all that the welcomers, Joy Wilson, Mark Pearce, Derrick Solly, Carol Wilson and John Portman, have done over the last year.

My thanks to Derrick for his long service, and who has had to give up welcoming due to ill health, though has agreed to step in again when needed.

More volunteers are always welcome and training is provided – why not give it a try?

Monica Aldridge
Welcomer Co-ordinator

NURTURING NEW BELIEVERS

Electoral Roll Report

As at the 31st December 2024 there were 77 people on the Electoral Roll.

41 were resident in the Parish and 36 were non-resident.

Changes occur when people move into the Parish, get married, die, choose to worship elsewhere or move away.

It should be noted that every six years each parish is required to prepare a new electoral roll when those who habitually attend public worship in the Parish have to reapply to have their names entered onto the roll. This will be take place in 2025.

Jayne Pearson
Parish Administrator

Family Ministry

Family Time continued as a monthly provision under the leadership of Jo Coyle for the first half of 2024 and all age services included various opportunities for intergenerational engagement. There was a Christmas Family Time Fellowship event in December which was well attended by families across our joint benefice. Families were also invited to take part in Christmas activities and services. There will be similar events offered during Lent and Holy Week.

Reverend Ruth Teruel-Pyrke

Flowers

We have continued to do the flower arrangements a St Peter's and St Margaret's, which have certainly added to the beauty of the services, especially at times like Harvest and Christmas.

We are very grateful for all the donations from members of the congregation towards the carnations at Christmas for both churches.

If anyone would like to join us in arranging our floral decorations then do not hesitate to contact us – the more the merrier.

Julia Hawkins and Lindsay Ward

Music and Worship

Our wonderful Music Group plays on the 1st Sunday of each month, led by Christine Seth-Smith or Martin Bament. Christine also plays the keyboard for services whenever she can. A group of volunteers continues to choose hymns for the other Sundays of each month. We now have a complete set of CDs from 'No Organist, No Problem' which we can play when there is no organist. This comes in handy now that we have lost one of our regular organists. We are very thankful to James Cross, who continues to play for us at St Margaret's.

We are grateful to the clergy and LLMs who preach and lead services for us, as well as the excellent team of readers, intercessors, and lay assistants who make our worship possible. Thanks to the welcomers and servers, Jayne and Alan who create the pew sheet, and the technicians who livestream our services whenever possible. Thanks to Joy and Monica who wash and iron the linen, and to the team who serve teas and coffees after the service.

We had some creative themed services over the past year: especially Back to School, the Animal Service, and Safeguarding Sunday.

Reverend Joel Love

Refreshments after Services

The refreshments after services continue to be very popular, especially after Christine Seth Smith introduced Fair Trade coffee in cafetieres.

I am very grateful to Joy, Angie and Carol who help me in dispensing the tea and coffee, and for Cath who often helps with the washing up. More volunteers are always needed so that some people can have a week off from doing one duty or another, so please don't be shy.

Monica Aldridge

Servers' Report

Serving has continued to keep on going and though we managed to cover all of the Sunday services throughout the year we are still a very small serving team. I had a foot operation at the beginning of March, so I was out of action for two months and my thanks go to David and Michael for covering my serving duties over at St Peters until I came back to Serving in May.

We gained Robert Mitchell to our serving team in September. He is in training and is doing well and once Robert is fully trained than he will then support me with the serving at St Peters by doing the first Sundays and I will continue with the third Sunday and when there is a fifth Sunday, we will share it between us.

At St Margaret's Michael and David still do the second and fourth Sundays between them and it works well as on those Sundays Rob and I are ringing for the service.

We had incense at the Midnight Mass as we were able to have David, Michael and myself and it just made the service extra special, and the congregation told me how nice it was.

We hope to have incense when there are special services such as Easter Day when it is at St Margaret's, as we are in agreement that it works better there as it is a bigger building, and on St Margaret's day if we can have a full serving team.

I would like to thank Joel and the clergy team for all their ongoing support throughout the year.

**Jayne Vousden
Head Server**

RESPONDING TO HUMAN NEED

Catering

We have not done much this year with regard to catering. We have of course continued to cater at the open days at St Margaret's – Heritage Weekend and the summer and Christmas Dickens festivals, though we were very quiet indeed for the Christmas Dickens due to the atrocious weather.

We also had a very enjoyable Cream Tea in the summer, but all other catering has been done by the organisers of any functions.

Pat Price

The Coffee Shop Report

The coffee shop again had a good year in 2024.

The Ward Councillors come on the first Tuesday of every month. Following the General Election two of our Councillors became MP's so there will be a by-election on the 6th February when we hope those elected will commit to coming to the coffee shop as before.

The Citizens Advice Bureau have come on the first and third Tuesday of every month but the wonderful news is that they have requested to come every week in 2025, we are delighted to welcome them. No appointment is required.

John Portman runs a carers group on the second Tuesday of every month. This is intended for carers who are looking after people with dementia and John is a mine if information about the help that is available.

On the third Tuesday of every other month we welcome the knit, stitch and natter group from the Wisdom Hospice who meet during the coffee shop. We all pay £3 for which we get cake, tea/coffee and a raffle ticket. All the money that we raise at the coffee shop that day goes to the Wisdom Hospice. The next day this will be on is the April 16th and every other month after that.

Every week now we hope to have a trained bereavement visitor and all are welcome to bring any problem to a listening ear.

On the 4th Tuesday of every month we welcome a group called Tech Savvy. You can bring your laptop, tablet or mobile phone along for help and advice. Laptops are available if you wish to learn how to use them.

It is our privilege to welcome all these different groups, and I would particularly like to thank Kevin, Pat, Derrick, Steve and Richard for all their help and particularly Jayne our Parish Administrator for all her help.

Pam Moss

Supporting older people and people living with Dementia

The Parish of Rochester provides important services which support older people and those living with dementia within our local community and further afield. The pandemic caused the cancellation of many of these services and since then there has been some reluctance amongst older people and carers to return to attending support activities. Numbers are now increasing and new people are being signposted to them,

The Rochester Dementia Memory Café

The Rochester Dementia Memory Café has been run by the parish since 2015. It is held in the Parish Centre on the 4th Friday of each month and welcomes people living with dementia and their Carers as well as those who have other disabilities or are isolated. The Café is recognised in Medway as a valuable community service and is supported by medical and care professionals. It is designated as a Dementia Drop In clinic in Medway. At each Café there are new people coming along and users confirm that they gain much by attending. It provides a friendly social occasion where both the person with dementia and the carer or friend can relax, exchange experiences, and enjoy activities such as the monthly quiz. Advice and information are available. We are very fortunate in having experienced and committed volunteers who greet and help each person attending all the dementia support events. We welcome new volunteers.

The Rochester Carers Group. This service is open to all Carers. It is run with the support of CarersFIRST who are often represented at the meeting which is held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month within the Tuesday Coffee Shop. It provides information and support to the Carer and the person being cared for can come along and be looked after by a volunteer.

Medway Singing for the Memory. The Rochester Cluster has its own Silver Song Music Box. A Rochester Masonic Lodge funded the purchase of a new Box in tablet form and a 75" monitor on a trolley stand early in 2024. This equipment is now used for all the sessions which are held on the second Friday of each month. Attendance is increasing. It is clearly evident that people with dementia, including those where the disease is advanced, gain much from attending.

The equipment is available to be taken out to local Care Homes and community groups to lead Sing for your Life sessions. We have two expert volunteer DJs, Monica and Catherine, who set up the equipment and lead the sessions. Recently sessions have been run within Dementia Cafes in Gillingham and Rainham.

Anna Chaplaincy. The Parish has an Anna Chaplain, Christine Seth-Smith, and an Anna Friend, John Portman, who are licensed by the Diocese. The role is to work alongside local organisations which support older people and in particular those living with dementia, and to develop parish activities which involve them and their Carers. The parish is represented on the Medway Anna Chaplaincy Hub, and is a member of the Medway Dementia Action Alliance and Medway Voluntary Action.

Funding. The parish makes available the parish centre and a small contribution towards costs is made by the Dementia Support groups. The costs of refreshments are covered by donations made at the events and local charitable organisations have also provided funding.

Other Dementia Groups

Rochester Parish Dementia Support also lists the Rochester Dementia Friendly Gardening Group and the Medway Dementia Peer Support Group which are facilitated by John Portman and John Deadman. There is a separate report on the Dementia Friendly Worship services held each month at St Justus church.

John Portman

Dementia Friendly Worship

The people who come to Dementia Friendly Worship always seem to enjoy this special service and time out in the community, and it is a very worthwhile venture. There is much chatter especially during the simple craft activity towards the end of each service (followed by tea and cake), which helps older people who may be lonely.

The service itself is fairly simple and lasts about half an hour, and it is organised by each church in the Cluster (the Parish of Rochester, St Matthew's and St Justus) on a rota basis. Now that Folake has been appointed as incumbent at St Justus we can share the duties which really makes a difference and does not become too much for any one parish. We still welcome several care homes in the area.

The staff at Sherwood House in the Maidstone Road are very grateful to our Church for a number of things. Joel, Mark and I have taken Home Communion to the residents there in the main sitting room on a monthly basis, and they were delighted to have a group of carol singers again in December. They are also interested in attending Dementia Friendly Worship. Sometimes an elderly person is brought by the family as a 'trip down memory lane' to re-visit St Justus. The last person to do this was 100 so it is very rewarding!

Many thanks as always to the kind helpers who serve the tea and wash up, push wheelchairs and generally give people a warm welcome.

Christine Seth-Smith

Pastoral Care Report

The Pastoral Care team continue to meet bi-monthly on Zoom. We work to ensure our awareness of any pastoral concerns within our church community and give appropriate help where possible. This could involve supporting people with getting to church or arranging for home communion, support relating to health needs or support relating to social care needs.

Much of the pastoral care is done within our church community - friendship groups that have naturally formed who help each other, Coffee Shop and the Dementia café. If however, you are aware of some pastoral needs that at present appear to be going unmet please let either the clergy know or one of that Pastoral team (myself, Nicky Timlick, Pam Moss and Christine Seth-Smith)

Angie Cornell

Listening Volunteers

Listening volunteers attend Coffee Shop most Tuesdays. A big thank you to all of them, and especially to Janice and Diane who are not part of our congregation but who make a special point of being here as often as they can.

Reverend Joel Love

Prayer Ministry report

Prayer Ministry continues after some of the 10.30 services. This year we have been invited to join the St Justus Prayer Ministry team in March for a quiet day and I am hoping to arrange a morning for our Prayer Ministry team after Easter.

The Prayer Ministry team are present to pray with you for yourself or other concerns that you may have after the main service, or at other times if this would be helpful.

Angie Cornell

Tech Savvy

Tech-Savvy which was started by seed funding from a grant obtained by Without Walls has gone from strength to strength over the last few months. There are now at least nine experienced regular volunteers that travel to a variety of venues across Medway to assist the over 55s with any technical issues and questions that they may have. A new website is now available: techsavvymedway.co.uk and new branded polo shirts have been printed. Funding for further expansion is currently being negotiated with third parties and we hope for a successful outcome shortly. If you have any IT experience and some occasional free time during the week we would love to hear from you and discuss what the role entails with absolutely no pressure or fixed commitment.

Gary Ward

TRANSFORMING UNJUST STRUCTURES

Charitable Giving

Date	Event/Beneficiary	Donations
January	Knit, Stitch and Natter Water Aid	£124.00 donated to the Wisdom Hospice £100.50 donated
February	Flower Service	Flowers donated by the congregation and given to the sick, housebound, or anyone who needs cheering up
March	Knit, Stitch and Natter	£137.17 donated to the Wisdom Hospice
Lent	Middle East Crisis Young Carers	£121.65 donated plus online donations 34 Easter Eggs donated
May	Christian Aid Week Knit, Stitch and Natter	£108.71 donated £153.96 donated to the Wisdom Hospice
July	Knit, Stitch and Natter Cream Tea & Summer Fete	£101.00 donated to the Wisdom Hospice 64 Cream Teas given away
September	Knit, Stitch and Natter	£153.00 donated to the Wisdom Hospice
October	Harvest Festival	£130 donated in cash plus online donations To Medway Foodbank
November	Knit, Stitch and Natter	£147.00 donated to the Wisdom Hospice
December	Toy Service	£200.00 donated in cash to The Children and Family Hub in Chatham, plus toys donated by St Andrews School. Online donations to the All Saints Project
	Christingle Service	£ 313.91 donated to the Childrens Society

Jayne Pearson
Parish Administrator

Safeguarding Report

This year has been very difficult for the church in relation to safeguarding. The reports that have come out are shocking in the extreme. Those who have been abused and spoken out are very courageous and their voices need to be heard and for action to be taken. Those accountable should be brought to justice. Unfortunately, some who have power have neglected their duties to the abused. We all know how this has developed and its subsequent repercussions. It is up to us all not to let anything be passed over or ignored because it is difficult or distressing.

Safeguarding Meetings

The safeguarding committee is continuing to work on the Safeguarding Dashboard that has recently changed its format, to come into line with the new Church of England Safeguarding Standards. This feeds into a safeguarding action plan which we are completing gradually.

Policies

We are still working on Responding to a Safeguarding Concerns Policy, and a Lone Worker Policy. We have managed to source some templates that require adapting for our parish needs.

The PCC has discussed two case studies to do with lone working.

Safeguarding Risk Assessments are now up to date. Thank you to all those who have worked on this during the past year.

Website

Safeguarding arrangements need to be added to the front page of our website. This hasn't been done yet, because the website is going to have some changes to it.

Safeguarding Concerns

There have been and still are, ongoing areas of concern that are being monitored, recorded and actioned. We work closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer for our area, Anthony Glocking, whose advice has been invaluable over the last year on a number of issues. We also liaise with other parishes when required.

If you have any doubts or worries about any safeguarding issues of yourself or others, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Training

Most people's training is up-to-date which is really good. One or two people have decided not to volunteer any more due to ill health. Happily, others have decided that they wish to volunteer which is very positive.

It is the responsibility of us all, to be as well informed as possible for our roles and responsibilities in the parish.

Joel and Nicky have provided one-to-one training for those who are unable to access computers at home. Others have used friends to enable them to complete the courses.

DBS Checks

Martin Bament works hard behind the scenes to ensure that those who need checks have them. It is sometimes made more difficult when people are lax about bringing in their ID.

Safer Recruitment

Sometimes it is hard for Jayne to get back the references that are needed. This delays the recruitment process. If you are asked for a reference for anyone in the parish, please try to reply promptly.

Nicky Timlick

Schools Report

We now have two Church of England Primary Schools in our parish: St Margaret at Troy Town Primary School (SMaTT) and the new Riverside School. Both are part of the Pilgrim Multi-Academy Trust, which also includes the Pilgrim School (in Borstal parish, where Joel and Ruth also lead worship).

Revd Mark has been leading worship at the Riverside School and spending time in the classrooms, helping children with their reading. During Ruth's illness, Mark has also been sitting on the joint Governing Body for the Riverside School and Pilgrim School.

Joel is now vice chair of governors at SMaTT and leads worship there each week.

Now that Revd Ruth is back, she has also been leading worship at our local Church of England Schools. Ruth is doing a placement with Revd Stephen Padfield, the chaplain at the King's School. Joel and Ruth regularly preach to the King's School children at their services in the Cathedral.

Children from the schools have also been to St Margaret's for worship and for guided RE visits this year. At least one other member of our congregation goes into SMaTT to help children there with their reading.

In December, SMaTT had its SIAMS inspection. (SIAMS is the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools.) The inspector's report identified 4 Strengths and 2 areas for development:

Strengths

- The school's Christian vision for all to 'let their light shine' permeates across the school.
- The vision impacts positively upon the inspiring curriculum and wider provision.
- Collective worship is varied, accessible and invitational.
- Exceptional care and compassion shown by leaders and staff in the school community significantly contributes to the wellbeing of pupils and their families.

Development Points

- Build on the school's newly implemented religious education (RE) curriculum through continued professional development of staff.
- Embed the agreed shared language and school-wide approach to spirituality.

Reverend Joel Love

Walsum Report

Nine people from our congregation and from St Matthew's Borstal travelled to Germany over the August bank holiday weekend to spend time with our partner parish in Walsum-Aldenrade. We travelled by train and aeroplane although this came with its own dramas. The theme for our visit was 'Encounters' and including 'Encountering the Bible', 'Encountering the Past', 'Encountering each other', and 'Encountering myself.' Members of both churches led these sessions and then spoke about them during the Sunday morning service. As always, we were very well fed and looked after. The weekend ended with a sing-song around the campfire in Tanja's beautiful back garden.

Reverend Joel Love

SUSTAINING AND RENEWING CREATION

Buildings Report

As mentioned in my Churchwarden's Report, the Quinquennial inspections took place during the autumn of 2024 at both St Peter's and St Margaret's churches. The respective reports highlighted the actions that need to be taken over the next five years which will given attention in due course.

At St Margaret's there was a successful faculty application to purchase two new gas boilers. This means that services and events have been taking place in a warmer and drier atmosphere. The old boilers had done more than 20 years' service and were proving unreliable, with spare parts unavailable.

The named storms and gales during the year have put a greater strain on the roof at St Margaret's which we need to keep an eye on, in case of damage. The roof at the top of the tower had a large accumulation of dust and debris in which plants were thriving! This was spotted in detail by my ex-neighbour with his drone from ground level as we looked up at the tower. Then together we removed this debris by filling several sacks of roof silt and taking them down the steps of the tower to ground level.

Recently squirrels seem to have made an entrance into the roof space in the NW corner of St Margaret's eaves. I went with our builder into the enormous roof space, and we blocked the hole with a large plastic bag and covered it with stones to prevent further entry, as a temporary measure. He was so impressed with the Victorian architecture and building skills that he would not charge for his time!

Sadly, the lightning conductor metal near the ground has been stolen and needs replacing.

At St Peter's Church we have had new flooring installed in the kitchen and toilets, and fitted a new electric cooker (to replace the gas) and a dishwasher! The car park continues to have a poor surface due to the movement of the paving slabs when vehicles drive over this. We need to find an acceptable replacement which is eco-friendly and will not cause flooding into the church as this is a potential risk, with heavier rainfalls in recent times.

In 2024 the Matthew's Memorial Hall was sold by auction as the church could no longer justify keeping this on. The money raised has gone into parish funds.

We still have the same tenants at Hathaway Court which again adds to our parish income. The maintenance issues are taken care of by a letting agent.

Douglas Seth-Smith

Caretaking Report

In 2024 there was an increase in hire of our hall at the weekends, for events like children's birthday parties. Leading up to Christmas, we had very few weekends without a child's birthday party or a concert or a yoga workshop.

St Peter's hall is in use every evening and most daytimes. However we do have capacity to take on more hirers during the day.

As the year went on, Derrick, our Caretaker, became less mobile and not so able to move tables and chairs or clean the building after the hirers had been in. * When he was not well, a rota system was organised between Peter, Douglas, Pam, Joel and myself to lock up St Peter's in the evening and for opening and closing for weekend hirers.

We are very fortunate to have Dee, our cleaner. She works 7 hours a week split between St Margaret's (Wednesdays) and St Peter's (Thursdays). She starts work at 6am by putting the rubbish out at St Peter's.

Dee often going above and beyond her duties, for instance sewing the rings back onto the kneelers at St Margaret's, cleaning the seat cushions on the chairs, taking home dusters and tea towels to wash, clearing the wax from the carpet using an iron and brown paper, cleaning the fridge and oven. The list goes on. We are very lucky to have her!

Church buildings are a magnet for clutter and things that people think might come in handy and often end up in a drawer never to be seen again. So in 2022 we started to declutter cupboards, the garden, the lofts etc. This is ongoing, however special thanks to Douglas and his trusty 'Berlingo' for the numerous trips to the Tip!

Jayne Pearson
Parish Administrator

*As you will all know now, Derrick died in January 2025. He is greatly missed by everyone and especially by our regular hirers. They miss his welcoming smile, his kindness and his willingness to help anyone.

Eco Church report

Although we have made some progress with our carbon footprint, and raised environmental awareness (hence our Bronze Award certificate) we still have much to do especially with the management of the Wildflower Meadow at St Margaret's.

Last June a group of people met in St Margaret's churchyard for our annual 'Churches Count on Nature' during which more than 65 plants were identified. A special thank you to Lindsey who has also supplied the Latin names! This is so encouraging.

There is a very well kept little 'garden' within the meadow tended by a keen local gardener. Although not totally wild, it is nonetheless bee friendly which is important.

I am stepping down as Eco Church co-ordinator and would be extremely grateful if someone else could take this on.

My thanks to the many people who have contributed to this venture along the way and let's hope that moving forward we can achieve the Silver!

Christine Seth-Smith

Gardening

Once again a lot happened in the gardens in 2024; the front and back grass have been mown regularly thanks to Gordon and Stuart.

Jayne and I met every Tuesday (weather permitting) at St Peter's to cut back the overgrown shrubs, clear the ivy from the fences and prune the roses. We have continued to tidy up Nigel's Memorial garden and have planted more bulbs and shrubs. The result being a much tidier garden.

We removed one of the benches in the Memorial corner as it had started to rot and was unsafe.

Jayne and I have very much enjoyed working together on the gardens, however I am now going to have to step back a bit due to mobility issues. Jayne would very much like some support, so if you are available on a Tuesday from noon to 1pm, please come along

We rested over the winter months and are looking forward to Spring when we renew our efforts for 2025.

Pat Price

Parish Buildings Development Group

The Development Group did not meet at all during 2024, so there is no report.

Steeple Keeper's APCM Report 2025

This year I am pleased to report that the bells and ropes at St Margaret's have continued to be in reasonably good order.

As we now have a camera fitted in the belfry, the bells are sometimes displayed on a monitor for practice nights or ringing before services.

We could consider St Margaret's becoming a training tower in Kent if we were to fit a simulator and clapper fixing arrangement. This depends on whether there is the demand to train more ringers. Funding would be available to help with this.

Douglas Seth-Smith

Stewardship Report

Thank you to **ALL** who give to the Parish in any way; financial or with their time and talents and often, all three!

- As at 31st December 2024 we had 35 individuals/couples who had signed up to regular planned giving via a monthly or quarterly standing order.
- 29 of these had signed a Gift Aid declaration.

In 2024 we successfully reclaimed tax paid by members of this congregation totaling £6601.07.

This is effectively free money for the Parish and I would ask that if you are a tax payer, are making your donations via standing order and if you haven't already done so, that you sign a Gift Aid declaration.

As always, I would respectfully ask that you continue to review your giving to the Parish throughout the year and if you are currently making your donation on a Sunday mornings via the collection plate or Sum Up machine that you consider setting up a regular standing order. Standing orders enable us to budget more effectively and your contribution continues to be received whether you are in church or not.

Once again, thank you for your continuing support. It is very much appreciated.

The Responsibility Is Ours!

**Jayne Pearson
Parish Administrator**

For more information about making a regular contribution via standing order and/or signing up to gift aid, please contact me in the Parish office: office@parishofrochester.org.uk

Parish of Rochester Treasurer's Report

Report for the Financial Year 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

Financial Review

The cash balance on the general account at the beginning of the period was £12,608. Total receipts on unrestricted funds amounted to £253,918, but excluding the one-off transfer of property assets into cash assets this is around £85,000. This is down around £11,000 from 2023 which is behind the pre-pandemic figure for 2019. Gift aid recovered accounted for £6,601 (up £1,057 from 2023, meaning that donations were more tax efficient in 2024). The freehold property at Hathaway Court, which the PCC lets to private tenants, provided a gross income of £14,442 over the year which is at the upper end of the range of expectation.

A total of £104,410 was spent from unrestricted funds to provide the Christian ministry in the parish, in all its forms. This included a parish offering to the diocese of £39,060, which provides for (amongst other things) stipends, housing and training for the clergy, and funding of diocesan activities (including a contribution to the national Anglican Church).

The cash balance on the general account at the end of the period was £168,430.

Reserves Policy

It is the PCC's policy to maintain a balance of unrestricted reserve funds which equates to at least nine months payments from all funds during a typical year, which is approximately £67,000. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow and to meet emergencies. The total value of the reserve fund on 31st December 2022 was a little over £62,530. With the income from the sale of the Mathews Memorial Hall we will be above target on reserves. We did not use reserves in 2024, but we would have had to make a transfer of about £10,000, as budgeted, if we had not received this income.

Reserves are held in the CCLA Church of England Deposit Fund, and the CCLA Church of England Investment Fund, both of which are low risk.

Conclusions

Excluding the one-off sale of the Matthews Memorial Hall, the parish finances in 2024 were in a poorer state than 2023, due to both increased expenditure and moderately reduced income. The cash position is excellent but there is some sign of an underlying systemic weakness emerging which was last seen prior to 2017.

The PCC chose to set a deficit budget for 2024, to retain the employments of the parish's three part time staff and to increase the parish offer by 5% to the to help the Diocese of Rochester with its budgetary challenges.

We continue to be most grateful for all donations received, but particularly for regular giving by standing order and other regular giving schemes because this provides a firm basis for financial planning and offers the added benefit of gift-aid tax recovery for donors who pay UK tax. We also continue to be very grateful to the Friends of the Churches of St Margaret of Antioch & St Peter, and the Dorothy Knight Trust, who provide continuing support.

I urge everyone to consider making a regular donation, whether monthly or annually, and reviewing the amount of the donation they are able to make. We have quite a small number of regular donors and it would be great to see as many people who are able making a regular donation to support the work of the parish.

No one expects parish finances to be easy, and the situation is still much better than during the pandemic, so we must hope that the downturn in 2024 is a short-lived, and we look forward to continuing improvement in 2025 when we have many activities planned which not only raise vital funds but are also of themselves a part of the mission of the Church. If you are able, please support these events however you can, not just financially but with your time, effort, and ideas, especially around how we might reduce costs and generate additional income.

Michael O'Connor, Honorary Treasurer, 27 April 2025

The Parish of Rochester



Annual Report and Financial Statements of The Parochial Church Council for the Ecclesiastical Parish of Rochester

For the year ended 31 December 2024

Incumbent:
Revd Dr Joel Love
The Vicarage
138 Delce Road
ROCHESTER
Kent

Bank:
The Co-operative Bank plc
1 Balloon Street
MANCHESTER
M4 4BE

Independent Examiner:
Mr Jinal Gohil
49 Stoneham Close
Tilehurst
READING
RG30 4HD

Parish of Rochester

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending 31st December 2024

		2024					2023				
		Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2022
	Note	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Incoming Resources											
Voluntary Income	2	38,980	-	-	-	38,980	39,208	(46)	-	-	39,162
Activities for generating funds	2	4,829	-	-	-	4,829	5,129	-	-	-	5,129
Income from investments	2	18,394	-	-	-	18,394	17,122	-	-	-	17,122
Income from church activities	2	187,770	-	-	-	187,770	20,164	-	-	-	20,164
Other incoming resources	2	7,111	-	-	-	7,111	16,984	-	-	-	16,984
Total incoming resources		257,084	-	-	-	257,084	98,607	(46)	-	-	98,561
Resources Expended											
Fund-raising trading costs	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Activities relating to the work of the Church	3	100,710	-	-	-	100,710	86,382	-	-	-	86,382
Governance costs	3	-	-	-	-	-	550	-	-	-	550
Total Resources Expended		100,710	-	-	-	100,710	86,932	-	-	-	86,932
Net Incoming/(Outgoing) Resources		156,374	-	-	-	156,374	11,675	(46)	-	-	11,629
Transfers		-	-	-	-	-	(3,700)	3,700	-	-	-
Gains & Losses on Investments		-	-	-	(9,091)	(9,091)	-	-	-	(9,091)	(9,091)
Net Movement in Funds		156,374	-	-	(9,091)	147,283	7,975	3,654	-	(9,091)	2,538
Balances brought forward at 1st Jan 2024		60,816	16,347	122,604	243,489	443,256	57,895	12,810	122,235	252,580	445,520
Balances carried forward at 31st Dec 2024		217,190	16,347	122,604	234,398	590,539	60,816	16,347	122,604	243,489	443,256

Parish of Rochester

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2024

		2024					2023				
		Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2022
	Note	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets											
Fixed assets property	4	-	-	105,575	175,715	281,290	-	-	105,575	175,715	281,290
Investment assets	5	-	-	-	78,729	78,729	-	-	-	74,508	74,508
Total Fixes Assets		-	-	105,575	254,444	360,019	-	-	105,575	250,223	355,798
Current Assets											
Debtors	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Short Term Deposits		63,642	27,721	-	-	91,362	59,204	22,845	-	-	82,049
Cash at bank & in hand		168,430	-	-	-	168,430	18,904	-	36	-	18,940
Total Current Assets		232,072	27,721	-	-	259,792	78,108	22,845	36	-	100,990
Liabilities falling due with one year	7	(200)				(200)	(200)				(200)
Net Current Assets		231,872	27,721	-	-	259,592	77,908	22,845	36	-	100,790
Net Assets		231,872	27,721	105,575	254,444	619,612	77,908	22,845	105,611	250,223	456,587
Funds											
Endowment		-	-	-	254,444	254,444	-	-	-	250,223	250,223
Restricted		-	-	105,575	-	105,575	-	-	105,611	-	105,611
Designated		-	27,721	-	-	27,721	-	22,845	-	-	22,845
General		231,872	-	-	-	231,872	77,908	-	-	-	77,908
Total		231,872	27,721	105,575	254,444	619,612	77,908	22,845	105,611	250,223	456,587

Parish of Rochester

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

Accounting Policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations together with applicable accounting standards and the Charities SORP. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention except for investment assets, which are shown at market value.

Funds

Unrestricted funds represent funds of the PCC that are not subject to any restrictions regarding their use and are available for application on the general purposes of the PCC and comprise the following funds:

- The General Fund

In addition, there are funds designated for a particular purpose by the PCC:

- St Peter's Church Repair Fund
- St Margaret's Church Repair Fund
- Hathaway Court Repair Fund
- Bells Fund
- Dementia
- Development Fund

The Church Repair Funds are held for the future repairs required for the PCC property. Other funds are held for specific purposes stated. These funds include:

- Memorial (Trust) Funds
- Fixed Asset for Church use

Endowment funds represent funds of the PCC which have been received as an endowment whereby the PCC may only use the interest generated by the capital of the fund:

- CBF Funds
- Hathaway Court

The accounts include transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible. They do not include accounts of groups that use church facilities but owe affiliation to another body (e.g. Scouts), nor those that are an informal gathering of church members.

Incoming Resources

Income from donors and other voluntary sources

Collections are recognised when made.

Income tax recoverable is accounted for when the tax is recovered.

Grants and legacies are accounted for when the PCC receives them.

Funds generated by fundraising and activities is accounted for gross.

Income from charitable and ancillary trading

Rental income is accounted for when received.

Activity, event and fees income is accounted for when received.

Income from investments

Dividends and interest are accounted for on receipt.

Investment gains and losses

Realised gains and losses are recognised when the assets are sold. Unrealised gains or losses are accounted for on revaluation of investments at 31 December.

Resources used

Grants

Grants and other donations are accrued in the accounts.

Activities directly related to the work of the church

All amounts are accounted for when payable. Any amounts committed but unpaid as at 31 December are shown in creditors in the balance sheet.

Fixed Assets

Consecrated land and buildings

Consecrated and beneficed property is excluded from the accounts. No value is placed on moveable church furnishings held by the churchwardens on special trust for the PCC or which require a faculty for disposal as the PCC considers this to be inalienable property.

All expenditure incurred in the year on consecrated or beneficed buildings and moveable church furnishings, whether maintenance or improvement is written off.

Other land and buildings

Other land and buildings held for use by the PCC are:

- St Peter's Church Centre
- Hathaway Court
- Matthews Hall

Other fixtures, fittings and office equipment

Expenditure on office equipment, IT and AV equipment etc. is written off as it incurred.

Investments

Investments are shown in note 5 and are valued at their bid value as at 31 December 2023.

Current assets and liabilities

Amounts owing to the PCC as at 31 December in respect of income tax & fees are included as income and shown as debtors.

Bank and cash deposits are held with the Cooperative Bank Ltd and the Diocese of Rochester.

Related Trusts

The Friends of the Parish of Rochester and the Knight Trust are separately registered and not included in these accounts.

Parish of Rochester

Notes to the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2024

2. Incoming Resources	2024					Total 2023
	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds		
	£	£	£	£		£
<u>Voluntary Income</u>						
Planned Giving	21,312	-	-	-		21,312
Income tax recovered	6,601	-	-	-		6,601
Non Gift Aid planned giving	2,694	-	-	-		2,694
Collections and other giving	5,167	-	-	-		5,167
Sundry donations	3,469	-	-	-		3,469
Grants	-	-	-	-		-
Friends of Rochester	-	-	-	-		-
CYP Family Time Grant	-	-	-	-		-
Harvest donations	-	-	-	-		-
Dementia Activities	(263)	-	-	-		(263)
Sub-total	38,980	-	-	-		38,980
<u>Activities for generating funds</u>						
Fetes bazaars etc	4,829	-	-	-		4,829
Sub-total	4,829	-	-	-		4,829
<u>Income from Investments</u>						
Dividends and interest	3,952	-	-	-		3,952
Hathaway Court Rent	14,442	-	-	-		14,442
Sub-total	18,394	-	-	-		18,394
<u>Income from church activities</u>						
Hire of Hall and rentals	182,463	-	-	-		182,463
Memorial book	80	-	-	-		80
Fees	5,227	-	-	-		5,227
Sub-total	187,770	-	-	-		187,770
<u>Other incoming resources</u>						
Insurance claims	-	-	-	-		-
Legacies	4,152	-	-	-		4,152
Other income	2,959	-	-	-		2,959
Sub-total	7,111	-	-	-		7,111
Total incoming resources	257,084	-	-	-		257,084

	2023					
2. Incoming Resources	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds		Total 2023
	£	£	£	£		£
<u>Voluntary Income</u>						
Planned Giving	21,478	-	-	-		21,478
Income tax recovered	5,543	-	-	-		5,543
Non Gift Aid planned giving	2,949	-	-	-		2,949
Collections and other giving	4,820	-	-	-		4,820
Sundry donations	4,182	-	-	-		4,182
Grants	-	-	-	-		-
Friends of Rochester	-	-	-	-		-
CYP Family Time Grant	-	-	-	-		-
Harvest donations	-	-	-	-		-
Dementia Activities	236	(46)	-	-		190
Sub-total	39,208	(46)	-	-		39,162
 <u>Activities for generating funds</u>						
Fetes bazaars etc	5,129	-	-	-		5,129
Sub-total	5,129	-	-	-		5,129
 <u>Income from Investments</u>						
Dividends and interest	3,300	-	-	-		3,300
Hathaway Court Rent	13,822	-	-	-		13,822
Sub-total	17,122	-	-	-		17,122
 <u>Income from church activities</u>						
Hire of Hall and rentals	17,518	-	-	-		17,518
Memorial book	25	-	-	-		25
Fees	2,621	-	-	-		2,621
Sub-total	20,164	-	-	-		20,164
 <u>Other incoming resources</u>						
Insurance claims	7,200	-	-	-		7,200
Legacies	5,000	-	-	-		5,000
Other income	4,784	-	-	-		4,784
Sub-total	16,984	-	-	-		16,984
 Total incoming resources	98,607	(46)	-	-		98,561

Parish of Rochester

Notes to the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2024

	2024					
3. Resources Used	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds		Total
	£	£	£	£		£
<u>Fund-raising trading costs</u>						
Cost of fundraising	-	-	-	-		-
Sub-total	-	-	-	-		-
 <u>Church activities</u>						
Missionary & charitable giving	100	-	-	-		100
Clergy expenses	3,985	-	-	-		3,985
Parish offer	39,060	-	-	-		39,060
Church running expenses	25,978	-	-	-		25,978
Church repairs & maintenance	4,315	-	-	-		4,315
Children & youthwork	-	-	-	-		-
Other property costs	484	-	-	-		484
Hall running costs	1,554	-	-	-		1,554
Printing and stationary	1,301	-	-	-		1,301
Sundry expenses	2,269	-	-	-		2,269
Organ repairs	-	-	-	-		-
Salaries	20,145	-	-	-		20,145
Diocesan Fees	1,521	-	-	-		1,521
Event catering	-	-	-	-		-
Sub-total	100,710	-	-	-		100,710
 <u>Governance costs</u>						
Independent Examiner's fee	-	-	-	-		-
Sub-total	-	-	-	-		-
Total resources used	100,710	-	-	-		100,710

	2023					
3. Resources Used	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total	
	£	£	£	£	£	
<u>Fund-raising trading costs</u>						
Cost of fundraising	-	-	-	-	-	
Sub-total	-	-	-	-	-	
 <u>Church activities</u>						
Missionary & charitable giving	787	-	-	-	787	
Clergy expenses	4,293	-	-	-	4,293	
Parish share	37,200	-	-	-	37,200	
Church running expenses	13,900	-	-	-	13,900	
Church repairs & maintenance	9,415	-	-	-	9,415	
Children & youthwork	-	-	-	-	-	
Parish magazine and bookstall	-	-	-	-	-	
Other property costs	1,493	-	-	-	1,493	
Hall running costs	589	-	-	-	589	
Designated funds payment	280	-	-	-	280	
Printing and stationary	-	-	-	-	-	
Sundry expenses	16,375	-	-	-	16,375	
Development fund	1,600	-	-	-	1,600	
Organ repairs	450	-	-	-	450	
Sub-total	86,382	-	-	-	86,382	
 <u>Governance costs</u>						
Independent Examiner's fee	550	-	-	-	550	
Sub-total	550	-	-	-	550	
 Total resources used	86,932	-	-	-	86,932	

Parish of Rochester

Notes to the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2024

4. Tangible Fixed Assets	Freehold land & Buildings £	Hathaway Court £	Church Equipment £	Total £
Actual/Deemed Cost				
At 1 January 2024	105,575	175,715		281,290
Additions	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2024	105,575	175,715	-	281,290
Depreciation				
At 1 January 2023	-	-	-	-
Charge for the year	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2024	-	-	-	-
Net Book Value				
At 31 December 2024	105,575	175,715	-	281,290
At 31 December 2023	105,575	175,715	-	281,290

5. Investments	Market Value 2024 £	Market Value 2023 £
Investments are included at their bid value on 31/12/2024		
Endowment		
<u>Fabric Reserve Fund</u>		
1164.96 CBF Investment Fund	27,865	26,334
1487 CBF Fix Interest Securities Fund	2,168	2,152
<u>CBF Investment Fund</u>		
2035.86 CBF Investment Fund shares	48,696	46,021
Total	78,729	74,508

6. Debtors	2024 £	2023 £
Gift aid tax reclaim	4,620	4,079
Total	4,620	4,079

7. Creditors	2024 £	2023 £
Independent Examiner's Fee	200	200
Total	200	200

Independent Examiner's Report to The Trustees of
the Parochial Church Council for the Ecclesiastical Parish of Rochester
(Charity number 1132260)

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2024.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Independent Examiner

The trustees of the charity are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (The 2011 Act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the 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 accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with of my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the trustees have not met the requirements:

- to keep accounting in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounts records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act.

or to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn, to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.