

THE PARISH OF WINCHELSEA

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

"We are an open welcoming church, which exists for the community as a whole and where everyone is valued and respected. We are called to serve Christ in the world, sharing the joy of God's unconditional love in faith and action. We commit ourselves to praying and working for a world where love, reconciliation, equality and peace can prevail."

INTRODUCTION

1. Within the Diocese of Chichester, the Parish of Winchelsea is now served by the church of St Thomas of Canterbury in the Town of Winchelsea. Together with the Parish of Icklesham (the Church of St Nicholas with All Saints) the churches comprise a Joint Benefice. Icklesham has its own Parochial Church Council. In 2023, the Revd Jonathan Meyer became Priest-in-Charge at the Church of St Mary and St Peter, Pett.

P.C.C. WINCHELSEA – MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

2. Members of the PCC are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. Churchwardens are elected at the Annual Parish Meeting, which precedes the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, for a one year term. Deanery Synod representatives are elected for a three-year term.

3. The following served on the Parochial Church Council during 2024:

<i>Incumbent and Chairman</i>	The Reverend Jonathan Meyer
<i>Churchwardens</i>	Mrs Celia King Mr Nigel Ashton (from April 2024) Mrs Charlotte Beecroft (until April 2024)
<i>Deanery Synod</i>	Mrs Angela Hill
<i>Representatives</i>	Mrs Marion Lovell Mrs Deborah Rodley
<i>Elected Office Holders</i>	Mrs Mary Parker (Hon. Secretary) Mr David Harris MBA FCIS (Hon. Treasurer)
<i>Elected Members</i>	Mrs Alice Bolton Mr David Jefferies

Mrs Pamela Jefferies

Mr Jeremy Naylor

Ms Susan Wood

Mr Gavin MacFadyen (Co-opted October 2024)

CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES and the PUBLIC BENEFIT

Registered charity number: 1132555 The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Thomas Winchelsea

Principal address: St Thomas' Church
Winchelsea
East Sussex
TN36 4EB

Website: www.winchelsea-icklesham-churches.org.uk

4. The PCC Members are all Trustees of the above charity and have complied with their duty in Part 9 of the 2011 Charities Act to have due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission. They have also been guided by the following charitable aims this year:

- To maintain a building appropriate for collective or private worship, prayer and reflection.
- To support selected local and national charities throughout the year, including making regular monthly cash and food collections.
- To ensure that church buildings are open daily and are available for use by the community as a whole.

5. In seeking to meet these objects, the PCC has had due regard to carrying out its purpose for the public benefit. There has been a regular Parish Eucharist at 11:00am each Sunday and a Book of Common Prayer service of Holy Communion at 8:00am on the first Sunday of each month.

6. We celebrated the major festivals as usual. During Lent we joined with all the parishes in the Deanery and ran a Lent course at Saint Mary's Room in Rye. This was based on the Rev. Jonathan Meyer's Lent book published by Darton Longman and Todd, drawing from the film version of *Les Misérables*. It was attended by members from both Rye and Winchelsea parishes as well as several people from Pett.

7. There was a new initiative for Palm Sunday. Instead of reading the Passion in the morning service, there was an afternoon service at Icklesham of Passiontide readings and suitable hymns. The Winchelsea choir attended and the service which was for the whole Benefice was appreciated. It was a good way of reflecting quietly on the Easter message. We held a service of prayer and reflection at Icklesham on Good Friday as usual and gathered in the church of Saint Thomas for a service of light on the evening of Holy Saturday. In spite of the early date of Easter and the fact that Saint Richard's church is no longer operational there was a good gathering at the dawn service for Easter morning on Winchelsea Beach. Around 45 people attended.

8. Once again the Corporation attended on Easter Monday for the mayoring of Peter Cosstick. This has become an established part of church life and it reminds us of the link between the Corporation and the

Church. As part of that link, we organised a special service on 30th June to raise funds for the mayor's and mayoress's favourite charity, Demelza. It was well attended and children enacted part of the gospel story.

9. On Sunday 5th May there was a Rogation walk including all the parishes. It began with a Parish Eucharist at the church of St Mary and Saint Peter in Pett at 10 am followed by coffee. We then walked to Icklesham for Rogation prayers outside the church, which was attended by walkers and others from all the churches. After a pub lunch, we walked on to Winchelsea to celebrate a sung Evensong at 3:30 pm. About 15 people joined the walk and others travelled between the churches to attend the various services. It was a good way of bringing all the parishes together.

10. On 7th July we celebrated our Patronal Festival. Our Harvest Festival was celebrated on 6th October and on the previous evening a barn dance was held in the New Hall.

11. On Saturday 14th September a series of church visits, a coffee morning, and an attic sale and other events were organised to support Ride & Stride. Ride & Stride takes place each year and provides funds for the Sussex Historic Churches Trust. We had benefited from a grant for the work on the transepts and the proceeds of the event were shared equally by the Church and the Trust. It raised over £2,500, half of which St Thomas received as a donation.

12. On Friday 15th November, there was a presentation and launch of the Lighting & Sound Appeal in church. Over forty people attended. Graham Large gave us an excellent explanation of the proposed lighting and Nigel Ashton impressed on those present the importance of this project. £7,000 was pledged as a result of this launch. Over £20,000 had already been generously donated. It was an opportunity for the wider community to find out more about the plans and ask questions. Bearing in mind the need for new lighting and sound and the fact that the present wiring is not fit for purpose, there was strong support for the plans.

13. After organising a Lights of Love service for St Michael's Hospice in St Leonards for the last few years, a decision was taken not to have a special service in December this year. However, the collection from our Service of Thanksgiving for the Departed to coincide with All Souls Day on 3rd November was donated towards the hospice. By not having that service in early December, we were able to have an Advent Carol service for the first time. It was supported by the Pegasus Choir and our own choir. The service was extremely well attended and in excess of 150 people were present including many local people who had not attended a service before.

14. Christmas services followed the usual pattern including a Carol service and a Crib service with donkeys in attendance.

15. During the year there were two Baptisms, six Weddings, three Burials, and seven Internment of Ashes.

16. We have held a Church Market on each first Saturday of the month apart from August and January. Fellowship Lunches, organised by Mary Parker, have taken place regularly again at Winchelsea Beach Community Hall with donations being collected and disbursed to a local charity.

17. The PCC has sought to maintain the churchyard, with community support. The PCC runs a Churchyard Sub-Committee to reflect and advise on matters relating to the churchyard and following a generous donation we have continued to establish three wildflower areas, which produced a good variety of native flowering plants and colour during the summer. The range of flowers has increased and support has been enthusiastic from visitors as well as residents. There were two working parties in March and September, members of the congregation and local residents helped weeding and maintenance of the churchyard. They were both well attended and refreshments were enjoyed afterwards.

18. The Bible Study group met monthly in the New Inn to spend an hour reading and reflecting on two or three chapters of one of the Old Testament Books. Discussions were lively and all contributions were welcomed. The group's meetings, open to all, have been well attended.

19. The Mothers' Prayers group met monthly. It was hosted in one of the homes of congregation members living in Winchelsea Beach.

20. The PCC met four times during the year, with a short meeting to approve the budget for 2024 in late January. The Annual Parish Meeting to elect the Churchwardens and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting were held on Saturday 27th April. In the early part of the year, the Church of England documents Living in Love and Faith and Prayers of Love and Faith were circulated. The PCC agreed with and supported the idea of blessing same-sex relations in church but felt that the proposals did not extend far enough.

21. We have continued to support charities as usual through a special monthly collection. The charities supported by the Parish were Demelza House Children's Hospice, Family Support Work, Rye, Winchelsea and District Memorial Hospital, Seaview Project for the homeless in Hastings (Snowflake ceased to operate during the year), Pett Level Rescue Boat, Rye Food Bank, You Raise Me Up, Hastings and the Royal British Legion. A special collection was also made for Farm Africa following our Crib Service. We also provided a box for the Rye Food Bank and donated Harvest offerings to the Food Bank.

RISK MANAGEMENT and SAFEGUARDING

22. During the year, the PCC has continued to monitor the various risks applicable to the Church and has reviewed its published Health and Safety policy. A new health and safety officer has been appointed. No accidents were reported this year.

23. The PCC has also reviewed and reissued its Safeguarding policy. The PCC is a member of the Church's Child Protection Advisory Service. Appropriate clearances are held and updated and cleared people are present in a supervisory capacity whenever children attend Church. Alice Bolton is our Safeguarding Officer.

DELIVERING THE PUBLIC BENEFIT

24. The Church of St Thomas is open during normal daylight hours with some very minor exceptions relating to meetings or at the request of contractors. Under the circumstances this has been appreciated and it is clear that people need the Church for many different reasons and the fact that it is available for their use, for public and private worship and for meditation is regularly reflected in the visitors' book.

25. The Rector visited St Thomas the Martyr Primary School each week for a school service and the whole school attended services in Church for Easter, Harvest Festival and Christingle as well as having a leavers service in the summer.

26. Winchelsea Arts have held six concerts in church and there was a concert in September as part of the Rye Festival.

FINANCE

27. Income for 2024 has remained under £250,000, the threshold for accrual accounting. Accordingly, the financial statements have been prepared in a "cashbook" basis; as last year, transactions have

been processed using accounting software specifically for Church of England record-keeping. Income comprises receipts during the year and expenditure is similarly payments made during the year. An independent examination of our accounting transactions, records and reports has taken place and the Examiner, Ian Menzies has provided an unqualified certificate which is included with these papers. Ian has very kindly not charged the PCC for the examination. Charlotte Beecroft processed payments and David and Pamela Jefferies have maintained Gift Aid records. We very much appreciate their work.

28. At the end of 2024, unrestricted funds on deposit totalled £325,628, see the Statement of Assets and Liabilities below. These funds comprise: the reserve of £73,333 as set out in (14) below; a provision of £20,000 for a grant to Winchelsea Beach Community Association towards the cost of an extension; the final payment of £10,000 to the Diocese for a voluntary additional Parish Share, a reserve of £20,000 intended for a grant to Icklesham Parochial Church Council towards the cost of adding a WC and £12,658 for restricted funds with no separate bank account (Choir, Churchyard Maintenance, Special Giving and the Wildflower Garden). The balance of £189,637 is held to contribute to future expenditure on the fabric of St Thomas and specifically towards the cost of improving the inadequate lighting and sound systems. It is the policy to use these funds to match grants from the Friends of Winchelsea Church and other sources. It is also from these funds that major charitable donations will be made in line with our mission.

29. Grants received in 2024 comprised: £4,505 from the Friends towards the cost of repairs to the organ and for the insurance excess on a claim for stolen rainwater goods; £6,000 from Sussex Historic Churches Trust towards the cost of repairing the transepts in 2023; £1,800 from Icklesham Parish Council towards the cost of mowing the grass in the churchyard and £16,127 from the Department of Culture, Media & Sport for VAT on maintenance expenditure under the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme, some of which occurred in 2023. We are extremely grateful for all these grants.

30. We are aware that for the year ending 31 March 2026, the DCMS will be limiting grants for VAT to £25,000 for each Parish. This will have a major impact on the cost of the forthcoming light and sound project.

31. We are also grateful for the donations that we have received from members of the congregation and from the local community towards the light and sound project and towards maintenance of the churchyard.

32. Collections at special services, the service on the fourth Sunday each month and at the Fellowship Lunches at Winchelsea Beach have enabled us to make donations of nearly £4,000 to local charities.

33. There have been two major items of expenditure in 2024. After investigation, it was found that 44 leather bourdons on the organ needed to be replaced and there were also several tuning and maintenance visits. The total cost of organ repairs and tuning in 2024 was £7,773. The relative humidity and temperature of the church have an impact on the mechanical performance of the organ, The cost of maintaining the ambient temperature of the church to ensure the organ is less likely to require regular attention is a matter of concern to the PCC. In the autumn, moss and plant growth was removed from roof tiles and broken tiles were replaced. The number of tiles that needed replacing far exceed the estimate and the cost of the work ex VAT was £10,989. The Friends have provided us with a grant to cover this expenditure at the beginning of 2025.

34. A campaign to increase regular giving by members of the congregation is badly needed. The analysis below, for the last three years, shows how our regular income falls short of our regular expenditure. We are dependent on grants, additional donations, fundraising events and legacies to ensure that we do not fall back on our funds on deposit which are held for special projects such as the lighting and sound and conservation work to the fabric of the church.

35. The PCC is keen to avoid a situation where there are regular cashflow crises.

Receipts	2022	2023	2024
Planned Giving	£20,235	£20,285	£21,007
Service Collections, Digital & Gen Cash Donations	£18,655	£20,291	£24,462
Gift Aid	£8,372	£8,833	£6,744
Church Market	£3,441	£2,110	£3,337
Church Lettings	£934	£1,430	£2,193
Weddings, Funerals, Burials Ex Costs	£4,473	£7,579	£6,489
Bank Interest - Unrestricted Funds	£95	£125	£180
Total	£56,204	£60,653	£64,612
Payments			
Parish Share ex Additional Payment from St R Funds	£54,000	£55,000	£56,000
Insurance	£4,523	£5,231	£5,093
Salaries and Clergy Expenses	£5,536	£7,305	£6,786
Rectory Running Costs	£4,683	£4,240	£4,857
Church Running Costs	£4,472	£5,142	£3,736
Organ and Piano ex. Friends' Grant	£488	£652	£3,919
Service Costs – Candles, Wine etc.	£912	£812	£1,183
Printing, Postage & Stationery	£2,508	£1,973	£1,824
Energy – Gas & Electricity	£5,079	£3,125	£4,449
Minor Church Maintenance	£447	£544	£882
Town Guides, Postcards etc.	£701	£300	£909
Accounting Software and Bank Charges	£498	£665	£729
Total	£83,847	£84,989	£90,367

36. The PCC's Reserves Policy is to hold all unrestricted funds in a deposit account managed by the CCLA Bank (Church, Charities and Local Authorities). In accordance with Charity Commission guidance, reserves are maintained at a sum equal to 50% of budgeted annual expenditure. At the PCC Meeting in January this year, the budget for 2025 was approved which included expenditure of £146,665, our reserve sum is therefore £73,333.

Summary of Receipts and Payments 2024
For the period: 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

	General Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Prior Year
Receipts					
Voluntary Income	£85,408	-	£27,528	£112,936	£131,392
Activities for Generating Funds	£6,645	-	-	£6,645	£3,732
Charitable Activities	£7,680	-	-	£7,680	£8,881
Interest and Dividends	£821	£17,573	£726	£19,120	£5,521
Other Income	-	-	-	-	£831
Sale of Fixed Asset	-	-	-	-	£350,700
Total Receipts	£100,555	£17,573	£28,254	£146,381	£501,598
Payments					
Cost of Charitable Activities	£111,520	-	-	£111,520	£98,391
Church Repairs & Maintenance	£17,896	-	£7,491	£25,387	£92,319
Governance Costs	£204	-	-	£204	£1,828
Other Costs	£525	-	-	£525	£17,427
Total Payments	£130,145	-	£7,491	£137,636	£209,966
Excess of Receipts over Payments Before Transfers	-£29,590	£17,573	£20,763	£8,745	£291,632
Transfers Between Funds	£30,000	-£30,000	-	£0	
Excess of Receipts over Payments After Transfers	£410	-£12,427	£20,763	£8,745	

Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 December 2024

	General Fund	Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	2024 Totals	2023 Totals
Current Assets					
Investments			£23,648	£23,648	£23,119
Cash at Bank					
Lloyds Current Account	£6,080			£6,080	£5,761
CCLA Guide Book			£3,562	£3,562	£3,382
CCLA Deposit Account		£325,628		£325,628	£338,055
CCLA Lighting & Sound			£20,649	£20,649	-
CCLA Joseph McCrindle			£11,499	£11,499	£10,919
Total Current Assets	£6,080	£325,628	£59,358	£391,066	£381,236
Current Liabilities					
Creditors: Due to Diocese			£1,090	£1,090	£536
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	£6,080	£325,628	£58,268	£389,976	£380,701
Represented by					
Unrestricted - General Fund	£5,784			£5,784	£5,331
Designated - St Richards		£315,373		£315,373	£327,800
The Blanesburgh Bequest			£23,648	£23,648	£23,119
Choir			£700	£700	£700
Churchyard Maintenance			£1,401	£1,401	£1,151
Joseph McCrindle			£11,499	£11,499	£10,919
Lighting & Sound Appeal			£21,014	£21,014	£503
Special Giving			£7,169	£7,169	£7,169
Churchyard Wild Flower Garden			£3,388	£3,388	£3,966
Fund Totals	£5,784	£315,373	£68,819	£389,976	£380,701

Notes to the Financial Reports

Cashbook Accounting

The financial reports have been prepared on a cashbook accounting basis, i.e. the receipts and payments for the year have not been adjusted to reflect creditors, accruals, stock, debtors and prepayments at 31 December 2024. All the reports have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and current Church Accounting Regulations.

Further Analysis of Income Received

1 January to 31 December 2024					
	General Fund	Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Total This Year	Total Last Year
Tax Efficient Planned Giving	£20,957	-	£50	£21,007	£20,119
Collections at Services	£4,153	-	-	£4,153	£10,180
Appeals	-	-	£25,614	£25,614	£1,980
Other Donations	£26,922	-	£64	£26,986	£21,727
Gift Aid Reclaimed	£6,744	-	-	£6,744	£8,833
Legacies	-	-	-	-	£41,693
Grants	£26,632	-	£1,800	£28,432	£27,400
Total Voluntary Income	£85,408	£0	£27,528	£112,936	£131,932
Church Market	£3,337	-	-	£3,337	£2,111
Harvest Supper	£1,115	-	-	£1,115	£435
Church Lettings	£2,193	-	-	£2,193	£1,186
Total Activities for Generating Funds	£6,645	-	-	£6,645	£3,732
Fees - Wedding, Funerals & Burials	£7,680	-	-	£7,680	£8,881
Total Charitable Activities	£7,680	-	-	£7,680	£8,881
Interest from Banks	£180	£17,573	£726	£18,478	£4,191
Investment Fund Dividend	£642	-	-	£642	£1,330
Total Interest and Dividends	£821	£17,573	£726	£19,120	£5,521
All Other Receipts	-	-	-	-	£831
Sales Of Fixed Assets	-	-	-	-	£350,700
Total Other Receipts	-	-	-	-	£351,531
Total Income	£100,554	£17,573	£28,254	£146,381	£501,597

Further Analysis of Payments Made

1 January to 31 December 2024					
	General Fund	Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Total This Year	Total Last Year
Charitable Giving	£3,977	-	-	£3,977	£2,750
Parish Share	£66,000	-	-	£66,000	£65,000
Cost of Weddings, Funerals etc.	£1,191	-	-	£1,191	£1,302
Insurance	£5,093	-	-	£5,093	£5,231
Salaries, Wages and Honoraria	£4,254	-	-	£4,254	£4,677
Clergy, Staff & Choir Expenses	£2,883	-	-	£2,883	£2,824
Rectory Running Costs	£4,857	-	-	£4,125	£3,926
Mission & Evangelism Costs	£1,691	-	-	£1,691	£330
Church Running Costs	£3,828	-	-	£3,828	£4,579
Cost of Organ Tuning & Repair	£7,773	-	-	£7,773	£652
Service Costs, Candles, Wine, etc	£1,183	-	-	£1,183	£812
Printing, Stationary & Sundries	£1,824	-	-	£1,824	£1,973
Church Utilities	£5,080	-	-	£5,080	£3,722
Cost Of Church Activities/Trading eg, Magazine, Bookstall	£1,889	-	-	£1,889	£300
Total Cost of Charitable Activities	£111,520	-	-	£111,520	£98,391
Churchyard Maintenance Cost	-	-	£4,018	£4,018	£4,252
Church Repairs & Maintenance	£14,661	-	-	£14,661	£626
Transepts	£3,235	-	-	£3,235	£80,046
New Building Projects	-	-	£3,473	£3,473	£7,395
Total Building Maint & Repairs	£17,896	-	£7,491	£25,387	£92,319
Accounting Software Subscription	£204	-	-	£204	£331
Other Governance Cost	-	-	-	-	£1,498
Total Governance Costs	£204	-	-	£204	£1,828
Bank Charges	£525	-	-	£525	£324
Professional Fees	-	-	-	-	£17,103
Total Other Costs	£525	-	-	£525	£17,427
Total Payments Made	£130,145	-	£7,491	£137,636	£209,965

Approved at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 12 April 2025

Signed

Celia King

Celia King Churchwarden

Date

8/6/25