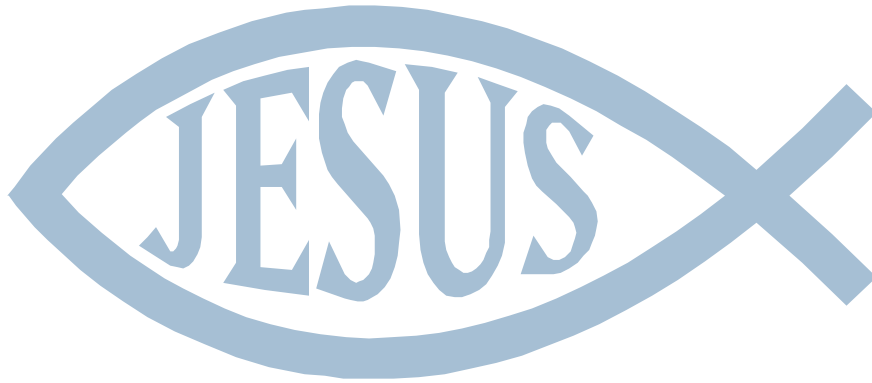


PARISH OF THE UPPER SKERNE
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

2024

At
St Edmund's Church, Sedgefield
Sunday 12th May
Commencing at
11.30 am

Annual Parochial church meeting Agenda

The Annual Parish Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens

1. Welcome and opening prayer
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the last meeting
4. Election of Churchwardens

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Welcome by the Chair of the Meeting
2. Opening Prayer
3. Apologies for absence
4. Minutes of last meeting
5. Matters arising
6. Election of representatives of the laity to the PCC.
7. PCC membership of Licensed Lay Ministers.
8. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the PCC accounts.
10. Questions about parochial church matters.
11. Consideration of PCC reports:
 - a. Electoral Roll
 - b. Report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the parish.
 - c. Safeguarding report
 - d. Acting Treasurer's report and accounts for 2023
 - e. Annual fabric report
 - f. Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
 - g. Bereavement Groups
13. Any other business
14. Date of next meeting
15. Closing Prayer

A meeting of the new PCC will follow immediately.

Parish of the Upper Skerne
Minutes of APCM 30th April 2023 at 11am at St Alban's Church,
Trimdon Grange

The Annual Parish Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer
2. No apologies were received
3. Minutes of the last meeting
Proposed as a true record by Anne Gray, seconded by Brian Mutch. All in favour.
4. Election of Churchwardens
There were two written nominations for churchwarden:
Michele Maccallam *Proposed:* Sharon Stephenson *seconded:* Judith Edgoose
John Burrows. *Proposed :* Sharon Stephenson *seconded* Alison Hodgson

All in favour. Rev Elizabeth Bland declared both duly elected.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. *Welcome and opening prayer by the Chair of the Meeting Rev Elizabeth Bland*
2. Apologies for absence
Apologies received from: Margaret Mason, Vivienne Anderson, Martin and Alison King, John Burrows, Judith King, Alistair Irvine, Sharon Stephenson, Lise Agnew, Janet Deane, Chris and Julia Rowsby.
3. Minutes of last meeting
Proposed as a true record by Alison Hodgson, seconded by Michele Maccallam.
4. Matters arising
No matters arising.
5. Election (if due) of parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery Synod.
John Burton, Brian Mutch, Michele Maccallam , agreed to continue as deanery synod reps. Anne Gray and Victoria Dobson proposed as additional representatives to Deanery Synod.
proposed by Michael King, seconded by Phillipa Cooper. All in favour.
6. Election of representatives of the laity to the PCC.
Rev EB read out the names of those nominated and asked if it was the will of the APCM to accept these people to be elected onto the PCC.

St Alban's – Sylvia Rutter and Victoria Dobson
St Catherine's – Phillipa Cooper and Vivienne Anderson
St Edmund's – Brian Mutch and Robert Elders
St Mary Magdalene's – John Burton and Suzanne Hopper
St Michael's – Michele MacCallam and John Burrows.

All in favour.

7. PCC membership of Licensed Lay Ministers

Bill Armstrong informed the APCM that lay ministers are not automatically ex-officio members of the PCC, as was thought in the past.

Proposal: that the APCM agree to lay ministers being ex-officio members of the PCC (should they wish).

Proposed by John Burton seconded by Anne Gray.

All in favour

8. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the PCC accounts

Proposal to accept Gordon Fletcher as Independent Examiner for Parish Accounts.

Proposed by Phillipa Cooper seconded by Michael King.

All in favour

9. Questions about parochial church matters

No questions

10. Instrument of Governance

a. Term of office of Deanery Synod representatives

The Church Representation rules state that anyone who serves two consecutive terms as a deanery synod rep. may not be nominated for a third consecutive term. An APCM may, however, pass a resolution that this provision does not apply to the parish. Bill Armstrong asked the meeting to pass such a resolution as we have often found it difficult to fill these roles. The meeting should be aware that such a resolution can be rescinded by a future APCM.

Proposed: Robert Elders. Seconded: Michael King.

All in favour.

b. Term of office of PCC members

Bill Armstrong asked the meeting to resolve that PCC members should be elected for a term of office of one year. This decision will be reviewed in 2025 and every 5 years after that.

Proposed: Michele MacCallam. Seconded: John Burton.

All in favour.

c. Recommendation to Bishop's Council

Rev Elizabeth asked if it was the will of the APCM to put forward the Instrument of Governance for the parish to the Bishop's Council, subject to the above amendments.

Proposed: Anne Gray, seconded: Nigel Gibson.

All in favour

11. Consideration of PCC Reports:

- a. Electoral Roll
- b. Report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the parish
- c. Safeguarding report

All above reports were accepted by the APCM.

Proposed by Phillipa Cooper, seconded by John Burton. All in favour

d. Acting Treasurer's Report and accounts for 2022

Bill Armstrong has agreed to work as Acting Treasurer for the time being.

He reported that although planned giving is stable, rising costs are going to be problematic and therefore working with Rev Paul Childs on parish giving will be essential to the parish.

Proposal to accept the parish accounts: Proposed by Alison Hodgson, seconded by Brian Mutch. All in favour.

e. Annual fabric report

In addition to the report in the APCM booklet, Michele wished to add that now St Michael's has achieved Bronze Eco Award, the parish are working towards the same for its other churches.

f. Report on the proceedings of Deanery Synod

No additions were suggested.

Rev Elizabeth asked the APCM if they accepted the APCM 2023 report as a whole.

All voted in favour.

12. Any other business

Rev Elizabeth Bland announced her intended retirement in August. She feels it is time for her to step aside and assured the APCM that the parish is in good shape and will continue to thrive. She thanked everyone for the support and love she and Steve have been shown since first arriving in the parish.

Michael King expressed thanks on behalf of the parish to both Rev Elizabeth and Rev Peter for their hard work, love and care.

13. Date of next meeting

The next APCM will be 5th May 2024 at St. Edmund's Church, Sedgefield

14. Closing Prayer

Rev Elizabeth closed the meeting with the Grace and thanked everyone for attending.

A meeting of the new PCC will follow immediately

Agenda

1. *Election of vice-chair*

Nomination : Brian Mutch

Proposed by Phillipa Cooper, seconded by Sylvia Rutter

2. *Election of PCC secretary*

Nomination: Julie Robson

Proposed by Victoria Dobson, seconded by Phillipa Cooper

3. *Election of PCC treasurer (Acting)*

Nomination: Bill Armstrong

Proposed by Robert Elders, seconded by Suzanne Hopper

4. *Election of electoral roll officer*

Nomination: Julie Robson

Proposed by Michele Maccallam, seconded by Victoria Dobson

5. *Election of safeguarding officer*

Nomination: Julie Robson

Proposed by Victoria Dobson, seconded by Michele Maccallam

6. *Date of next meeting*

The next PCC meeting will be on May 17th at 7pm in St Michael's church.

Written Reports for APCM 2024

Electoral Roll Report

The Electoral roll has increased by 4 (as shown in the table below).
Many thanks to those who have helped in collating this information.

Church Attendance – Electoral Roll			
Electoral Roll 2022/2023		186	
Deductions		9	
Additions		13	
Electoral Roll 2023/2024		190	
Distribution			
St Alban		22	
St Catherine		16	
St Edmund		92	
St Mary Magdalene		25	
St Michael		35	

Julie Robson Electoral Roll Officer

Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the parish

Aims and Purposes

The PCC of the Parish of the Upper Skerne has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, once appointed, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the Churches in the Parish.

Objectives and Activities

In August 2023, Rev Elizabeth Bland retired and associate priest, Rev Peter Robson, was officially licensed to the parish in October 2023.

A new Team Rector, Rev David Lucas was appointed in February 2024 and will join the parish in June, his installation taking place in St Edmund's Church on 9th June.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches and to become part of our parish community in the Parish of the Upper Skerne. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

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

- Worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of our Churches.

The parish churches continue their fortnightly pattern of worship, with the exception of St Alban's which has a monthly Holy Communion service on the first Sunday of the month. Services are no longer available via Zoom as it was felt there was no longer a need for this. The parish notice sheets are still fortnightly and continue to be delivered both in person and also by email. Many thanks to all those who hand deliver the notice sheets. This has been very much appreciated for all those who are unable to attend church.

.Achievements and Performance

This is the eighteenth full year of meetings of the PCC of the Parish of the Upper Skerne. Since the last APCM, the PCC met in the following months– February, May, July and October (2023) and February and April (2024).

All meetings were held in person.

The May meeting was a special PCC meeting to discuss the Parish Profile and Mission Courses as suggested by Rev Ruth Young. As a result of this, a Baptism Matters course was arranged and representatives from all of our churches attended.

A Baptism Group was then established and new ideas have been trialled with great success, including the sponsoring of a children's bible for all children baptised at St Alban's and activity booklets for children attending baptisms.

The Communications Group has introduced a new format for the monthly parish magazine, producing a shorter, colour version. Questionnaires have been distributed to seek parishioners' feedback on the new format.

Although we have a Facebook page, it is not updated regularly and as the administrator has been hard to track down it is felt that a new Facebook page should be set up. The parish website, and A Church Near You website are regularly updated.

Julie Robson PCC Secretary

Safeguarding Report

Safeguarding in the Parish of the Upper Skerne:

Legally, the Parish has a number of requirements and responsibilities. The PCC was provided with all documents necessary to comply with its duty to have regard to the House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. This is reviewed annually.

Safeguarding Issues:

Over the past year there have been no safeguarding issues.

Safeguarding Training

Safeguarding refresher training at all 3 levels has mostly been completed by those requiring it, with just one or two outstanding courses to be completed.

The new online parish dashboard is now well established and updated regularly. It is a simple to use, online tool, accessed via computer or smart phone, that helps keep track of safeguarding in our churches. It keeps you up-to-date with local and national changes in safeguarding requirements. Green lights give assurance that we are

complying with safeguarding requirements and amber and red lights highlight actions which need to be completed.

DBS checks were needed again as they now need renewing every 3 years.

John Burrows (Validator) and Julie Robson (Administrator) to date, have completed the renewals for those needing them.

Julie Robson Parish Safeguarding Officer

Acting Treasurers Report and Accounts for 2023

Income returned closer to normal, following the exceptional situation in 2022. The total income was £178,397 which represents an increase of 34% over the parish income in 2021, a year which was still affected by the pandemic.

Planned giving across the parish remained stable. At a time when costs are increasing it needs to be noted that planned giving is falling well behind where it needs to be.

Collections at services increased by 15% - a sign that the recovery from the pandemic has run its course. This figure includes collections at baptisms, weddings and funerals, as well as cash put in the plate on Sundays. There was an increase of 74.5% in fees from weddings and funerals as the number of weddings, in particular, returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Expenditure increased from £153,433 in 2022 to £210,716 – an increase of 37%. This was largely due to the spending of £43,500 on fabric improvements at St Edmund's. This money was drawn from the Gordon Morris Bequest, a restricted fund.

Other increases in expenditure were in parish share (33%), another indication of a return to normality after the pandemic. Future increases are likely to be much smaller. The Administrator's salary increased by 9%, reflecting a cost-of-living increase. Utility bills increased by 49% as a result of the nation energy crisis. These were offset by a further fall in general running expenses (-8.5%). Clergy expenses remained stable but are likely to increase with the arrival of our new Team Rector.

All of the **church accounts** this year were in deficit – ranging from St Edmund's (£-8,185) to St Mary Magdalene's (-£345).

Looking forward, there are factors which need to be considered. Our parish share pledge is to continue to increase in line with inflation. The static level of giving in the parish will inevitably necessitate some serious thought. After the visit of the Revd Paul Child to the PCC to talk about parish giving, the PCC made a decision, in principle, to recommend that our churches should seriously consider joining the Parish Giving Scheme. This is a decision which each DCC needs to consider at their next meetings. At another meeting, the Archdeacon of Durham asked us to review our current formula for allocating parish share among our churches. That review led to a relative reduction in the amount paid by St Catherine's, and a relative increase in that paid by St Edmund's. The adjustments were staged with the second phase due at the end of this year.

Rising energy costs and general inflation are also likely to continue to have an impact on our churches. One other factor is the decision to produce the magazine in colour. Last year the average monthly cost of photocopying was £82.50; this year it has been £208.20. This is a factor which needs to be considered in the coming review of the magazine format.

Bill Armstrong

April 2024

Parish of the Upper Skerne

Parish Accounts 2023

1. Summary of Accounts

RECEIPTS/INCOME		Parish	St A	St C	St E	St MM	St M
	Voluntary giving						
1	Planned giving	£2,760.00	£825.00	£2,312.00	£21,485.27	£14,025.41	£13,602.00
3	Collections at services	£317.45	£3,425.38	£4,307.60	£4,085.37	£6,642.98	£2,344.32
4	All other giving and voluntary receipts, including special appeals (recurring and one-off)	£2,198.00	£269.00	£2,062.00	£17,830.11	£1,178.77	£2,135.52
6	Gift Aid recovered (planned giving and one-off donations)	£18,637.17	£909.74	£1,576.88	£7,951.18	£2,798.26	£3,738.47
7	Legacies received (capital value)				£3,000.00		
8	Grants (include recurring and one-off)	£1,000.00			£1,000.00		
	Total voluntary giving						
	Activities for generating funds						
9	Fundraising activities (gross proceeds)				£1,424.09	£1,959.80	£3,155.45
	Income from investments						
10	Dividends, interest, income from property etc.			£111.49	£6,187.63	£314.16	£277.08
	Church activities						
11	Fees retained by PCC (weddings, funerals etc.)	£30,331.00	£749.00	£1,925.00	£9,344.00	£3,994.00	£1,244.00
12	Trading activities (gross proceeds), NOT fundraising	£3,432.00	£120.00	£320.00	£1,126.48	£725.00	£670.00
	Other incoming resources						
13	Other receipts/income not already listed PLEASE NOTE BRIEF DETAILS IN BOX E	£97,315.15		£786.45	£72,060.31	£1,668.00	£6,000.00
	Totals (from Financial Statements)						
A	RECEIPTS/INCOME						
B	COMBINED TOTAL	£155,990.77	£6,298.12	£13,401.42	£145,494.44	£33,306.38	£33,166.84
	PAYMENTS/EXPENDITURE						
	Costs of generating funds						
	Costs of fundraising activities				£125.50		£379.76
	Church activities						
	Mission giving and donations	£6,544.00	£324.50	£982.29	£9,102.12	£2,153.57	£432.20
	Diocesan parish share contribution	£72,500.00	£2,750.00	£6,700.00	£27,000.00	£16,608.00	£16,650.00
	Salaries, wages and honoraria	£6,937.50		£484.00	£6,944.00	£771.00	
	Clergy and staff expenses	£1,991.64					
	Church expenses						
	Mission and evangelism costs						
	Church running expenses (including governance)	£22,577.77	£1,480.30	£3,509.32	£10,094.70	£6,134.71	£4,061.47
	Church utility bills		£1,597.27	£625.85	£7,140.19	£2,818.83	£1,429.84
	Costs of trading	£49.99		£320.00	£1,160.00	£807.00	£660.00
	Major capital expenditure						
	Major repairs to the church building				£43,500.43		
	Major repairs to church hall/other PCC property including redecoration						£4,410.00
	New building work to the church, church hall, clergy housing or other PCC property.						
	Other expenditure						
	Other payments/expenditure not already listed PLEASE NOTE BRIEF DETAILS IN BOX E	£47,771.18	£1,560.00	£1,560.00	£48,612.44	£4,358.00	£12,889.50
	Totals (from Financial Statements)						
	PAYMENTS/EXPENDITURE						
	COMBINED TOTAL	£158,372.08	£7,712.07	£14,181.46	£153,679.38	£33,651.11	£40,912.77
		-£2,381.31	-£1,413.95	-£780.04	-£8,184.94	-£344.73	-£7,745.93

2. Consolidated Account

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Unrestricted designated Funds	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	TOTAL 2023 £	TOTAL 2022 £
	RECEIPTS/INCOME						
	Voluntary giving						
1	Planned giving	£55,009.68				£55,009.68	£54,833.20
3	Collections at services	£21,123.10				£21,123.10	£18,328.78
4	All other giving and voluntary receipts, including special appeals (recurring and one-off)	£6,140.21	£995.14	£19,521.05		£26,656.40	£20,253.04
6	Gift Aid recovered (planned giving and one-off donations)	£18,637.17				£18,637.17	£15,273.23
7	Legacies received (capital value)	£3,000.00				£3,000.00	£103,366.36
8	Grants (include recurring and one-off)			£1,000.00		£1,000.00	£17,261.72
	Total voluntary giving	£103,910.16	£995.14	£20,521.05		£125,426.35	£229,316.33
	Activities for generating funds						
9	Fundraising activities (gross proceeds)	£6,539.34				£6,539.34	£7,314.71
	Income from investments						
10	Dividends, interest, income from property etc.	£1,498.93		£5,391.43	£695.59	£6,890.36	£3,419.65
	Church activities						
11	Fees retained by PCC (weddings, funerals etc.)	£30,331.00				£30,331.00	£17,383.40
12	Trading activities (gross proceeds), NOT fundraising	£3,446.48				£3,446.48	£4,327.61
	Other incoming resources						
13	Other receipts/income not already listed PLEASE NOTE BRIEF DETAILS IN BOX E	£5,763.87				£5,763.87	£271.66
	Totals (from Financial Statements)						
A	RECEIPTS/INCOME	£47,579.62	£0.00	£5,391.43	£695.59		£32,717.03
B	COMBINED TOTAL	£151,489.78	£995.14	£25,912.48	£695.59	£178,397.40	£262,033.36
	PAYMENTS/EXPENDITURE						
	Costs of generating funds						
	Costs of fundraising activities	£505.26				£505.26	£1,117.08
	Church activities						
	Mission giving and donations	£2,231.89		£17,040.79		£19,272.68	£14,466.01
	Diocesan parish share contribution	£72,500.00				£72,500.00	£54,500.00
	Salaries, wages and honoraria	£15,136.50				£15,136.50	£13,851.60
	Clergy and staff expenses	£3,380.44				£3,380.44	£3,401.83
	Church expenses						
	Mission and evangelism costs						
	Church running expenses (including governance)	£33,256.61				£33,256.61	£36,335.55
	Church utility bills	£13,611.98				£13,611.98	£9,131.55
	Costs of trading	£2,996.99				£2,996.99	£2,244.99
	Major capital expenditure						
	Major repairs to the church building	£0.00		£43,500.43		£43,500.43	£17,830.31
	Major repairs to church hall/other PCC property including redecoration	£4,410.00				£4,410.00	
	New building work to the church, church hall, clergy housing or other PCC property.					£0.00	
	Other expenditure						
	Other payments/expenditure not already listed PLEASE NOTE BRIEF DETAILS IN BOX E	£1,052.45		£1,093.00		£2,145.45	£554.33
	Totals (from Financial Statements)						
	PAYMENTS/EXPENDITURE						
	COMBINED TOTAL	£149,082.12	£0.00	£61,634.22	£0.00	£210,716.34	£153,433.25

3. Statement of Parish and Church Balances at 31st December 2023

	Parish	St A	St C	St E	St MM	St M	
CCLA		£13,920.40		£79,449.73	£9,836.88	£15,808.34	£119,015.35
DBF			£62,383.68	£10.24		£5,790.10	£68,184.02
Business			£1,503.13		£3,618.32	£2,035.03	£23,265.79
			£16,109.31				
Current	£11,900.89	£2,021.67	£5,257.15	£14,117.02	£25,072.70	£1,500.00	£59,869.43
TOTALS	£11,900.89	£15,942.07	£85,253.27	£93,576.99	£38,527.90	£25,133.47	£270,334.59
Restricted Funds	£913.02		£62,383.68	£99,514.06		£579.41	£163,390.17
Designated Funds				£2,681.73	£2,866.83		£5,548.56
Endowments			£3,094.35	£105.00	£1,209.29	£10,769.91	£15,178.55

4. Restricted and Designated Funds

St Catherine's Building Fund (restricted)

Expenditure	£9,084.97
Interest	£3,014.54
End of year balance	£62,383.68

St Edmund's – Canon Eden Account (restricted)

Interest	£5.05
End of year balance	£10.24

St Edmund's – Gordon Morris bequest (restricted)

Expenditure	£39,115.03
Interest	£3,068.36
End of year balance	£63,462.39

St Michael's – various Trust Funds (restricted)

Interest	£21.67
End of year balance	£230.29

St Michael's – Boiler Fund (restricted)

End of year balance	£370.41
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PCC Account – AV equipment (restricted)

End of year balance	£221.02
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PCC Account – Refugee Support (restricted)

Income	£1,240.00
Expenditure	£3,800.00
End of year balance	£692.00

St Edmund's – various designated funds

Income	£1,260.97
Expenditure	£108.25
End of year balance	£3,942.70

PCC Account – youth work (designated)

Opening Balance	£954.73
No activity	

Annual Fabric Report

The two Churchwardens attended the Swearing in Service and have attended various training events during the year.

One or both of the wardens have attended all DCC and PCC meetings along with Ministerial team meetings, Steering Group, Worship Leaders' meetings along with a presence on Environment, Governance, Communications and Baptism Matters Groups.

The five churches are generally in good condition with maintenance being carried out as necessary with all relevant approvals. Several of the churches are awaiting overdue Quinquennial Inspections which have not caught up following Covid-19, these are being actively pursued.

We thank Julie for all her hard work as Parish Administrator.

The Wardens have worked closely with Peter and Elizabeth, before her retirement, and look forward to working with our new Rector, Rev. David Lucas

Michele McCallum & John Burrows

Report on the proceedings of Deanery Synod

March 23: Held at St Aidan's Billingham

Billingham parish update, with the return of Rev David Brooks after three years away.

Genesis Project at Grove Hill Middlesbrough

Supporting children, to bring communities together to reach out to people and organisations, to work together to raise aspirations, tackle poverty, isolation, and loneliness.

St Chads

Food waste and affordable food

May:23 Held at St Marys Long Newton

Helping those in their 20s to 40s come to grow in faith.

Growing Faith, Talk given by Catherine Simpson, who works two days a week as a school Chaplain and delivers the Growing Faith initiative.

September 23: Held at St Pauls Bishopton Road

First meeting of new Triennium

January 30: Held at St Marys Norton

Focus on Discipleship

No meeting since.

I wrote the following in 2020, and it is still the same today.

Reflection: All very interesting, but still feel we are a long way off integrating into the Deanery, I feel that we are still a long way off from being a full part of what is actually going on, perhaps this will come about when the new Rector arrives

Brian Mutch Deanery Synod Representative

Parish of the Upper Skerne Bereavement Support Service

BALM (Bereavement And Loss Meetings)

Over the last year I have continued working with bereaved people by scheduled telephone appointments and group sessions from all over Co. Durham.

1. Referrals.

BALM accepts self-referrals, but most service users are referred (via email or telephone) by NHS social prescribing co-ordinators, community psychiatric nurses, psychologists and other health-care professionals based at Sedgefield, Ferryhill, Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe.

2. Reasons for referral.

Most service users are referred because they feel isolated after losing a close relative or partner and need to build up their confidence and self image before they are able to leave their homes. They usually need a number of telephone appointments before they feel able to join groups of any kind. There is no limit to the number of sessions, and discharge from the service is by mutual agreement.

3. Telephone sessions.

These are by appointment and take place on Mondays and Tuesdays, usually 4 per day. They last up to an hour each.

4. Group sessions.

These are at Ferryhill Ladder Centre on the first Tuesday of each month and Bishop Middleham Village Hall on the third Tuesday of each month. Revd Peter Robson co-leads the Bishop Middleham group sessions. Each session lasts 2 hours and attendance can vary between 3 and 10 service users.

5. Average monthly number of service users.

As an average monthly number, during the month of March 2024, numbers of different service users totalled 27 over 2 groups and 27 scheduled phone calls.

6. Finance.

BALM is financed by donations, mostly from occasional fund-raising events. Expenses consist mostly of booking a room in the village hall for 2 hours once a month. We do not have to pay for using the Ladder Centre, as they requested the sessions to be set up as one of their regular services. We occasionally buy appropriate books on the subject of bereavement, to help listeners and service users. Our balance currently is £395.81.

Janet Deane, 18th April 2024.

OSF (One Step Forward) - formerly Sedgefield Bereavement Support Group

Over the last year we have continued supporting bereaved people in our area, predominantly at our weekly Group Sessions held at St Edmund's church. In addition, we have continued providing daily support to regular members via our OSF WhatsApp Group. Although we're unable to commit to regular telephone support, we do provide telephone consultations on an ad hoc basis, as well as support via email or by service users messaging our OSF Facebook page.

1. Referrals:

The majority of OSF service users come to us via self-referral, but some are also referred (via email or telephone) by Skerne Medical, NHS Care Co-ordinators, Social Prescribing Link Workers, Community Resilience Workers and other health-care professionals, based at Sedgefield, Fishburn, the Trimdons, Wynyard & occasionally Spennymoor. Sedgefield Co-op Funeralcare occasionally put newly bereaved people in touch with us too.

2. Reasons for referral:

Most service users come to us because they feel lost/isolated/bereft after losing a partner or close relative & need to talk through their grief in a confidential, non-judgmental environment - by people who understand some of what they are going through. Third-party referrals tend to be for very similar reasons. Service users might be suffering from depression, or struggling with their mental health - or they may not have much human interaction, which only heightens their difficulties in attempting to come to terms with their grief. Some may have been bereaved very recently - others may be many years down the line when something happens which acts as a trigger, reawakening their feelings of loss & despair. New service users may first need a couple of telephone appointments before they feel ready to come along to a Group session, or they might wish to meet with the Facilitator in advance. There is no limit to the number of sessions people may attend. For some service users one session is enough to give them the confidence or lift they're seeking; others will attend weekly over a period of a few months; and others continue to drop in & out as they are able, over the course of several years. A handful of 'regulars' have been coming pretty much since the group was first set up by Panny Pighills 8.5 years ago.

3. Group sessions:

OSF meet weekly & our sessions are held every Thursday afternoon in The Welcome Room at St Ed's. Each session lasts 2 hours (2pm - 4pm) and attendance can vary between ca 8 and 16.

I facilitate the group sessions, along with the help of our other 4 Listeners. Last year we very tragically lost one of our original Listeners, Helen Masterman, which was an extremely difficult time for everyone, with the group seeking solace in one another. It also meant that sadly we were down to only 3 Listeners (Eileen, Jackie & myself). Fortunately, in May '23 we were able to welcome 2 new Listeners to the Group (Jo & Siiri). This meant that after the relevant Safeguarding training etc our numbers were looking healthy again, making it easier to accommodate one-to-one sessions (as part of the wider group environment) when these are requested from time to time. Sadly, one of our new Listeners, Siiri, is restarting full-time employment next month, so we will again be 4 (although happily she's requested to remain part of the wider group at large). Jo, our other new Listener is a nurse and can't always attend every Thursday, but we always ensure there are at least 2 Listeners present at Group sessions. During these sessions we have an Open Door Policy, thus ensuring that Walk-ins have access to bereavement support services too.

4. Support via WhatsApp:

One of our original Listeners suggested starting a Group on WhatsApp during Lockdown, to run alongside weekly telephone support calls (when we were unable to hold face-to-face sessions). The 'Group Chat' was originally a means for the group to keep in touch with one another, at a time when many were feeling anxious and were becoming increasingly isolated too. However, the Group proved such a popular & effective way of providing more frequent (daily) support, that it has remained in place ever since. This means that the group can have contact with each other outside of our weekly sessions if they wish & consequently several friendships have grown. It's encouraging to see how most of the group look out for one another, which has led to some getting together for lunch at weekends, joining other groups together, giving lifts to hospital appointments/the station & offers of shopping when ill etc. The Group Chat operates between the hours of 8am - 11pm & we currently have 20 members supporting one another in this way.

5. Finance:

OSF is a not-for-profit group & receives no funding -it is financed purely by voluntary contributions & occasional donations/fund-raising events. The group is grateful that there is no charge to use the Welcome Room - service users make a voluntary contribution (ca £1), which is then split equally between OSF funds (to provide refreshments, occasional flowers, print costs etc.) and Church funds (contributing to heating, lighting & upkeep of the church). Our balance currently is £384.85.

6. Average number of Service Users/month:

As an average monthly number, during the month of March 2024, the group totalled 26 (including 2 new Self-Referrals) & we held 4 Group Sessions.

7. A.O.B:

Other activities have included:

- Our annual Group Christmas Meal at the Dun Cow (a drink for each member was paid for from OSF funds).
- Attending the Opening of the new Co-op Funeralcare premises in Sedgefield & liaising with staff & other related third parties.
- Planning & Training (Risk Assessments/Safeguarding Training/DBS Checks/Insurance discussions/Familiarisation for new Listeners).
- Various Meetings (Listeners/Parish/Skerne Medical).
- Training in Listening Skills (for both new & existing Listeners) is currently being arranged, in conjunction with the Parish, the Diocese of Durham & BALM.

Sue Archer, 26th April 2024.

Parish of the Upper Skerne

Parish Accounts 2023

1. Consolidated Account

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Unrestricted designated Funds	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	TOTAL 2023 £	TOTAL 2022 £
RECEIPTS/INCOME							
	Voluntary giving						
1	Planned giving	£55,009.68				£55,009.68	£54,833.20
3	Collections at services	£21,123.10				£21,123.10	£18,328.78
4	All other giving and voluntary receipts, including special appeals (recurring and one-off)	£6,140.21	£995.14	£19,521.05		£26,656.40	£20,253.04
6	Gift Aid recovered (planned giving and one-off donations)	£18,637.17				£18,637.17	£15,273.23
7	Legacies received (capital value)	£3,000.00				£3,000.00	£103,366.36
8	Grants (include recurring and one-off)			£1,000.00		£1,000.00	£17,261.72
	Total voluntary giving	£103,910.16	£995.14	£20,521.05		£125,426.35	£229,316.33
	Activities for generating funds						
9	Fundraising activities (gross proceeds)	£6,539.34				£6,539.34	£7,314.71
	Income from investments						
10	Dividends, interest, income from property etc.	£1,498.93		£5,391.43	£695.59	£6,890.36	£3,419.65
	Church activities						
11	Fees retained by PCC (weddings, funerals etc.)	£30,331.00				£30,331.00	£17,383.40
12	Trading activities (gross proceeds), NOT fundraising	£3,446.48				£3,446.48	£4,327.61
	Other incoming resources						
13	Other receipts/income not already listed PLEASE NOTE BRIEF DETAILS IN BOX E	£5,763.87				£5,763.87	£271.66
	Totals (from Financial Statements)						
A	RECEIPTS/INCOME	£47,579.62	£0.00	£5,391.43	£695.59		£32,717.03
B	COMBINED TOTAL	£151,489.78	£995.14	£25,912.48	£695.59	£178,397.40	£262,033.36
PAYMENTS/EXPENDITURE							
	Costs of generating funds						
	Costs of fundraising activities	£505.26				£505.26	£1,117.08
	Church activities						
	Mission giving and donations	£2,231.89		£17,040.79		£19,272.68	£14,466.01
	Diocesan parish share contribution	£72,500.00				£72,500.00	£54,500.00
	Salaries, wages and honoraria	£15,136.50				£15,136.50	£13,851.60
	Clergy and staff expenses	£3,380.44				£3,380.44	£3,401.83
	Church expenses						
	Mission and evangelism costs						
	Church running expenses (including governance)	£33,256.61				£33,256.61	£36,335.55
	Church utility bills	£13,611.98				£13,611.98	£9,131.55
	Costs of trading	£2,996.99				£2,996.99	£2,244.99
	Major capital expenditure						
	Major repairs to the church building	£0.00		£43,500.43		£43,500.43	£17,830.31
	Major repairs to church hall/other PCC property including redecoration	£4,410.00				£4,410.00	
	New building work to the church, church hall, clergy housing or other PCC property.					£0.00	
	Other expenditure						
	Other payments/expenditure not already listed PLEASE NOTE BRIEF DETAILS IN BOX E	£1,052.45		£1,093.00		£2,145.45	£554.33
	Totals (from Financial Statements)						
	PAYMENTS/EXPENDITURE						
	COMBINED TOTAL	£149,082.12	£0.00	£61,634.22	£0.00	£210,716.34	£153,433.25

2. Statement of Parish and Church Balances at 31st December 2023

	Parish	St A	St C	St E	St MM	St M	
CCLA		£13,920.40		£79,449.73	£9,836.88	£15,808.34	£119,015.35
DBF			£62,383.68	£10.24		£5,790.10	£68,184.02
Business			£1,503.13		£3,618.32	£2,035.03	£23,265.79
			£16,109.31				
Current	£11,900.89	£2,021.67	£5,257.15	£14,117.02	£25,072.70	£1,500.00	£59,869.43
TOTALS	£11,900.89	£15,942.07	£85,253.27	£93,576.99	£38,527.90	£25,133.47	£270,334.59
Restricted Funds	£913.02		£62,383.68	£63,472.63		£230.29	£126,999.62
Designated Funds				£3,942.70			£3,942.70
Endowments			£3,094.35	£105.00	£1,209.29	£10,769.91	£15,178.55

3. Restricted and Designated Funds

St Catherine's Building Fund (restricted)

Expenditure	£9,084.97
Interest	£3,014.54
End of year balance	£62,383.68

St Edmund's – Canon Eden Account (restricted)

Interest	£5.05
End of year balance	£10.24

St Edmund's – Gordon Morris bequest (restricted)

Expenditure	£39,115.03
Interest	£3,068.36
End of year balance	£63,462.39

St Michael's – various Trust Funds (restricted)

Interest	£21.67
End of year balance	£230.29

St Michael's – Boiler Fund (restricted)

End of year balance	£370.41
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PCC Account – AV equipment (restricted)

End of year balance	£221.02
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PCC Account – Refugee Support (restricted)

Income	£1,240.00
Expenditure	£3,800.00
End of year balance	£692.00

St Edmund's – various designated funds

Income	£1,260.97
Expenditure	£108.25
End of year balance	£3,942.70

PCC Account – youth work (designated)

Opening Balance £954.73

No activity

4. PCC Treasurer's Report

Income returned closer to normal, following the exceptional situation in 2022. The total income was £178,397 which represents an increase of 34% over the parish income in 2021, a year which was still affected by the pandemic.

Planned giving across the parish remained stable. At a time when costs are increasing it needs to be noted that planned giving is falling well behind where it needs to be. Collections at services increased by 15% - a sign that the recovery from the pandemic has run its course. This figure includes collections at baptisms, weddings and funerals, as well as cash put in the plate on Sundays. There was an increase of 74.5% in fees from weddings and funerals as the number of weddings, in particular, returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Expenditure increased from £153,433 in 2022 to £210,716 – an increase of 37%. This was largely due to the spending of £43,500 on fabric improvements at St Edmund's. This money was drawn from the Gordon Morris Bequest, a restricted fund.

Other increases in expenditure were in parish share (33%), another indication of a return to normality after the pandemic. Future increases are likely to be much smaller. The Administrator's salary increased by 9%, reflecting a cost-of-living increase. Utility bills increased by 49% as a result of the nation energy crisis. These were offset by a further fall in general running expenses (-8.5%). Clergy expenses remained stable but are likely to increase with the arrival of our new Team Rector.

All of the **church accounts** this year were in deficit – ranging from St Edmund's (£-8,185) to St Mary Magdalene's (-£345).

Looking forward, there are factors which need to be considered. Our parish share pledge is to continue to increase in line with inflation. The static level of giving in the parish will inevitably necessitate some serious thought. After the visit of the Revd Paul Child to the PCC to talk about parish giving, the PCC made a decision, in principle, to recommend that our churches should seriously consider joining the Parish Giving Scheme. This is a decision which each DCC needs to consider at their next meetings. At another meeting, the Archdeacon of Durham asked us to review our current formula for allocating parish share among our churches. That review led to a relative reduction in the amount paid by St Catherine's, and a relative increase in that paid by St Edmund's. The adjustments were staged with the second phase due at the end of this year.

Rising energy costs and general inflation are also likely to continue to have an impact on our churches. One other factor is the decision to produce the magazine in colour. Last year the average monthly cost of photocopying was £82.50; this year it has been £208.20. This is a factor which needs to be considered in the coming review of the magazine format.

Bill Armstrong

April 2024



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's
report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Charity Name The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of the Upper Skerne		
On accounts for the year ended	31 st December 2023	Charity no (if any)	1132664
Set out on pages	<div></div> <small>(Remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets.)</small>		
	I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2023		
Responsibilities and basis of report	As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act"). I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.		
Independent examiner's statement	I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or• the accounts do not accord with the accounting records I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached. * Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.		
Signed:		Date:	20 th March 2024
Name:	GORDON FLETCHER		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	C.M.I.I.A. MEMBER OF INSTITUTE OF INTERNAL AUDITORS		
Address:	104 BROWNING HILL COXHOLE CO. DURHAM DH6 4SA		

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of the Upper Skerne

On accounts for the year
ended

31st December 2023

Charity no
(if any)

1132664

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2023

Responsibilities and
basis of report

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

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

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

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

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

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

G Fletcher

Date:

20th March 2024

Name:

GORDON FLETCHER

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

C.M.I.I.A.

MEMBER OF INSTITUTE OF INTERNAL AUDITORS

Address:

104 BROWNING HILL

COXHOLE

CO. DURHAM DH6 4SA

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.