

The Parochial Church Council of Ellesmere Port
2023 Annual Report

Ellesmere Port Parochial Church Council
Annual Report and Financial Statements
For the year ended 31st December 2023



Ellesmere
Port
Parish



Reference and Administrative Details of Ellesmere Port Parochial Church Council, its Members and Advisors

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity registered with the Charity Commission in November 2009, registration number 1132859. Prior to this date, the PCC was a charity excepted from registration, by statutory instrument 2007 No. 2655.

Principal Office: Parish Office
 Whitby Road
 Ellesmere Port
 Cheshire
 CH65 6UW

Staff Team

Revd Canon Gordon McGuinness	(Rector) - retired 26 April 2023
Revd Gill Foster	(Associate Rector) Chair
Revd Ricky Montgomery	(curate in training) – joined 19 March 2023
Mrs Gemma Alexander-Bloomfield	Community Development Worker – joined 1 June 2023
Mrs Charmaine Maw	Parish administrator

Church wardens

Keith Nelson	St Thomas & All Saints
Susan Mayers	St Thomas & All Saints
Jan Tomlinson	St Lawrence
Jane Chance	St Lawrence

Deanery Synod Representatives

	Term of office expires
Sue Johnson	2026
Helen Burgess	2026
Michael Edwardson	2026
Karen Milne	2026

Elected Members

Elected Members

Gemma Alexander-Bloomfield	<i>Parish Safeguarding Officer</i>	2024
Win Moorcroft		2024
Amanda Price		2024
Pam Maxwell		2025
Anne Williams		2025
Dayna Harrison	St Lawrence	2026
Jean Welch	St Lawrence	2026

David Blair	2026
Sabine Chadwick	2026 – left 6.2023
Ruby Milne	2026

The following were co-opted:

Diana Burton	Assistant treasurer
Judith Derby	Parish representative for interview panel & Gift Aid Secretary
Gaynor Lyth	Treasurer
Kath Lyth	Licensed Pastoral Worker

Gemma Alexander-Bloomfield stepped down as Parish Safeguarding Officer on 31 May 2023 due to her appointment as Community Development Worker. Mrs Karen Milne was then appointed as the Parish Safeguarding Officer with effect from 1 June 2023.

Advisors and Agents

The PCC's Bankers:	Barclays Bank 100 Whitby Road Ellesmere Port CH65 0AD
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Independent Examiner:	Mr WJ Ford. A.C.M.A 7 Plymyard Close Bromborough Wirral
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The PCC's Investment Managers:	CCLA Investment Management Ltd 80 Cheapside London EC2V 6DZ
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The PCC's Insurers are:	Ecclesiastical Beaufort House Brunswick Road Gloucester GL1 1JZ
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The PCC's Treasurer is:	Mrs Gaynor Lyth 27 Fern Road Whitby Ellesmere Port CH65 6PA
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Introduction

The Parish consists of two worship centres: St Thomas & All Saints Ellesmere Port and St Lawrence, Stoak. The mission statement of the Parish is 'Christ in the centre of the Church; the Church at the centre of the Community'.

The staff team consisted of Revd Canon Gordon McGuinness (Rector), who retired on 26 April 2023 and Revd Gill Foster (Associate Rector). Revd Ricky Montgomery joined the staff team on 19 March 2023 as a curate-in-training. The PCC also appointed a Community Development Worker on 1 June 2023 to enhance their work in the community and to strengthen link with local schools. The PCC has the responsibility for implementing the mission statement through the programmes of the parish. The parish is blessed with one reader emeritus : Frank Mawdsley who serves mainly at St Lawrence Church. Mrs Julia McGuinness also served in the parish as a licensed lay reader until 26 April 2023.

We have two licensed pastoral workers - Mrs Kath Lyth and Mrs Sue Johnson. Mrs Linda Tudor continued her reader training to become a licensed lay reader and we have two other people exploring ordained ministry.

Public Benefit

The Charity Commission requires that Charities explain how their work has a positive benefit on their beneficiaries. This report seeks to do this in its description of the parish's activities in 2023.

In summary, the parish provides for church members:

- Regular opportunities to gather for worship and prayer
- Teaching on the Christian faith and how to apply it to everyday life
- Pastoral support and guidance.
- A network of cell groups in which members can develop closer relationships with other members.
- Opportunities to engage in the work of the Church in the wider community and beyond

In addition, the parish provides for the wider community:

- The occasional offices of baptism, marriage and the funeral service
- Opportunities to explore the Christian faith and to have their questions asked about why Jesus Christ is important for their lives.
- A high level of volunteering in the community offered by church members.

The Ellesmere Port Church of England College together with Ellesmere Port Christ Church – Church of England School (voluntary-aided) Primary School provides opportunities for partnerships between the church and the schools. During 2021 Ellesmere Port Christ Church School became federated with Bishop Wilson Church of England (Aided) Primary School).

The Rector served as the Chair of Governors at the college and continues to serve as the chair in his retirement and a church member serves as Chair of Governors at Bishop Wilson & Christ Church Federation. There are also a number of church members serving as Foundation Governors on the newly formed federated board. We are also welcomed into many of the primary schools in the parish leading acts of worship/assemblies together with our assembly team which takes Bible stories into 3 primary schools in the parish.

In these ways the Parish carries out the aims expressed in its Mission Statement.

Membership and Committees

Members of the PCC are either *ex officio*, or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (ACPM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules 2022.

The PCC operates as the leadership of the parish, in conjunction with the Staff Team. There is a Finance Committee which oversees the Parish Budget and which makes recommendations to the PCC concerning the giving strategy of the Parish.

In 2023, the PCC met on seven occasions; together with one social gathering. All PCC members completed the required Diocesan Safeguarding Training and were DBS cleared.

In between meetings, the Finance Team met to discuss finance and fabric matters, and to make recommendations to the full PCC. The Standing Committee, consisting of the Associate Rector, Wardens, PCC Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, met once in 2023. Much of the day to day running of the Parish is devolved to the Staff Team.

The parish outgoings are made up of daily housekeeping and ministry costs together with the stipends of two full time ministers.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults)

Review of the Year

Introduction

2023 continued with a focus on the vision set for 2021 which stated that we are looking 'To be welcoming and caring church families made up of disciples of all ages that are growing, prayerful and underpinned by God's Word; to be those who are discerning God's will together, to further His Kingdom in Ellesmere Port Parish and beyond'. We gave extra focus to this with the addition of a prayer for growth used at many PCC meetings and church services. The staff team have certain roles and responsibilities in order for the above goals to be achieved and so this report is split into three sections giving an overview of the life in the parish during 2023 - St Thomas' Church Life and Activities & St Lawrence (Gill Foster) and Outreach and Community (Gemma Alexander).

St Thomas: Church Life and Activities

We began 2023 in the knowledge that the incumbent would be retiring on Easter Day and so the future life of the parish continued to be underpinned with prayer as we looked towards the inevitable interregnum. A celebration was held giving thanks for the ministry of the incumbent and his wife as licensed reader as they retired after serving the parish for 21 years.

Our daily online morning prayer continued into it's third year, something that was started through necessity during the pandemic and has continued to flourish and which also strengthens the prayer life of the parish. In addition to this a committed group also continued to meet online with a focus on healing – praying for the church family and beyond, facilitated by a pastoral worker and a further small group meet and pray regularly online for clergy welfare. We also ran a Christmas prayer campaign encouraging schools, businesses and the community to pray during Advent. In this same vein our prayer chain was very active during the year with many folks requesting prayer and this together with the reintroduction of prayer ministry at the 10.45am service has meant prayer has been central in the life of the parish.

The two Sunday services continued to thrive with many visitors joining our café style service on the first Sunday of the month apart from the month of August. We chose to host café church throughout August and invited five people to dip their toe in the water and share God's Word with us during those services. The talks were extremely powerful and very well received by those in the congregation and such an encouragement and a blessing. Café church has proved to be a stepping stone for newcomers and enquirers and is this is the service to which we invite parents looking to have their children baptised. We have also welcomed a number of asylum seekers into our Sunday services providing them with Common Worship service books and Bible readings in their native language.

We also welcomed Revd Ricky Montgomery as a curate-in-training who has settled into the life of parish. Following an invitation from a new build care home, he regularly visits this home and has begun to form a visiting team to assist him in this work.

Ignite which is our Sunday group for children continued with a small group of committed volunteers teaching our children week by week, with the privilege of planting seeds of faith into young and exploring minds.

The parochial church council split into sub-groups to give focus in certain aspects of church life – finance, fabric, Eco Church and Community Outreach and each group led and spoke at a appointed Sunday service order for the church family to be fully informed as to the responsibilities of the PCC.

We welcomed the mayor, members of the Council and our Member of Parliament to their annual civic service in church and joined with them in the annual Remembrance Service in the Civic Square where a large congregation joined us and members of the armed forces, uniformed organisations and schools in giving thanks and remembering those who died serving their country. Our Community Development Worker was also asked to lay a wreath representing our Community Outreach Group.

We joined with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ from churches in Ellesmere Port and brought some joy to the shoppers in the local shopping centre singing our Easter Praises and then again bringing Christmas cheer with our carol singing. We also supported Tearfund, a mission agency with a joint BIG QUIZ, raising much needed funds and also enjoying fellowship with our friends from other churches in the town.

We hosted a very successful tea in celebration of King Charles' coronation and enjoyed lots of homemade cakes and scones and toasted his majesty. The scouts also hosted a very successful summer fair in the grounds of the church where everyone was welcome to join in with the games and tuck into the delights from the barbecue.

The PALS group continued to grow from strength to strength now meeting in the church hall on the fourth Friday of the month to enjoy a home cooked meal together, whilst enjoying fun and fellowship. PALS has been a lynch-pin in bringing the congregations from St Thomas and St Lawrence together for support and friendship. This group has also opened it's doors to welcome many lonely and isolated folk in from the community.

Our faithful knitting crew created Easter Chicks and then Christmas Angels which were spread around the community sharing God's love and hopefully bringing a smile to brighten people's day.

The news of the parish continued to be shared via a monthly newsletter emailed out to the church family with hard copies available for those without access to the internet. This was in keeping with our efforts to be more Eco conscious and saving paper.

Cell groups continued to meet again in person in homes. This is an area of church life that is so valued by it's members and is an area of ministry and support to be developed.

We ran a Lent course together with a course entitled 'Growing Good' in the Autumn, a course produced by the Church Urban Fund which encourages the church to connect the dots between social action, discipleship and growth, which complimented the development and growth in our Community Outreach work.

Our work with local schools continued and was strengthened during 2023 following our Experience Easter week. Seven local primary schools were invited to join us to come and hear more about what the story of Easter means for them. This initiative was a great success and enjoyed by pupils and teachers alike. We have also been more involved with The Ellesmere Port Church of England College hosting their year 7 welcome service, offering a reflection for Remembrance Day and also leading and speaking at their online Christmas Service which has resulted in us being invited to speak to various classes during the year.

We were also very honoured to host a memorial service for a much-loved teacher from one of our primary schools who sadly passed away very suddenly, which meant we welcomed pupils, teachers and parents and offered them a place for them to grieve and to give thanks for her life.

It has been a pleasure to welcome into church, class visits looking at baptism, special places, buildings and music amongst other topics. It has also been a great privilege to be invited into schools to talk about subjects such as The Kingdom of God and partake in Christ Church School Values Day. We have also hosted Messy Church sessions each half term at Christ Church which has had the added bonus of parents and friends during us and hearing more about Jesus! This ministry is complimented by our assembly team who take bible stories into 3 of our local primary schools. We also welcomed schools into church for their Christmas Services which was a great blessing at the end of the year for all involved.

The number of occasional offices remained very low apart from our funeral ministry. We continue to offer support to our bereaved families inviting them to the annual memorial service, inviting them to our Tea at Two, afternoon tea and to a Blue Christmas service which was particularly appropriate for those who were spending their first Christmas without their loved one. Each bereaved family also received a 'goody bag' at Christmas just to remind them we were still thinking of them. We hosted our marriage preparation day, which was a thoroughly enjoyable day as we learned more about Christian marriage together and the logistics of the wedding service – hoping to allay any nerves on the big day.

Our Christmas programme took as its theme the Church of England's 'Follow the Star – join the song' and planned a very full and varied programmed reaching out to the community, serving the community and ministering to those in our church family. We supported 'give a gift to a stranger' with our local hostel for young homeless adults. Church together with local schools supported the Christmas Shoebox appeal sending gifts overseas to children who would otherwise be without on Christmas Day. We hosted our Christmas fair which is always very well supported by the community and it was so good to welcome old and new faces into the building to enjoy fun and fellowship whilst raising much needed funds for church.

We have so much to be thankful for with regards to the many blessings we take for granted each and every day, particularly giving thanks that we have managed to just keep our heads above water with regards to church finances which is something we do not take for granted.

All of the above would not be possible without the energy and commitment of many from the church family doing as Jesus did in caring, loving and serving others using their gifts, skills and talents and perhaps more importantly giving their time. Time is precious and so we must use our time wisely and do what He commanded us to do and that is to make disciples and it is our hope that all that is done in His name will one day come to bear fruit, fruit that will last. We are blessed that we are growing disciples who have a passion to share the Gospel message in so many creative and thoughtful ways.

Saint Lawrence, Stoak: church life & activities

Our witness to the love of Christ continued and developed as we entered 2023 with a number of people taking on new roles in the life of St Lawrence and with visiting preachers immersing themselves in the life of our church due to the parish being in vacancy. We were fortunate to secure the ministry of Revd Ray Dent on a regular basis and so with him and Revd Gordon Welch together with the regular staff team all services were covered at St Lawrence during the year. Our reader emeritus Frank Mawsdley always being on hand to welcome everyone as they approach the church door, standing outside in all weathers with a smile and a welcome is much appreciated by all. We also joined with St Thomas on a number of occasions for celebration joint services which really encouraged the church to be seen as the Body of Christ in Ellesmere Port.

Sadly, the steady numbers attending worship has declined due to the ill health of some of the congregation and also the sad loss of some very faithful members of the congregation. However, this has highlighted the wonderful pastoral care the congregation have one to the other. They have illustrated in so many ways what it means to be the Body of Christ, being there for each other in good times and also in those challenging times.

We have continued to encourage our ABC families to join with the morning services at major festivals and have had the enjoyment of seeing our children leading worship. Our monthly ABC service brings together many families who have joined us to have their children baptised and a great team of volunteers join together to oversee our 'party style' tea which is always welcomed by the children and their families.

We have also encouraged the congregations to get involved with the outreach initiatives of the parish and so many gifted knitters joined in with the Easter chick and angel projects and felt a real sense of doing their bit in sharing the Good News of Jesus.

A great encouragement has been welcoming a number of St Lawrence folk to the parish PALS lunch and Tea at Two. This has helped in bringing the two ends of the parish together and really strengthened the notion of the Body of Christ in the parish.

It was quite apparent that the churchyard needed some 'TLC' and so a major project was begun at the beginning of 2023 to try and bring some form of order back into the churchyard complying with Chester Diocesan Churchyard Rules 2007. This was done sensitively and empathetically working with the many families who visit the churchyard some on a regular basis and others not

so. To date we have managed to correspond with or speak with most families who visit their loved one's grave and have managed to restore some order. This is an ongoing issue but one that needs addressing with empathy and understanding.

We welcomed the local Women's Institute into church for their annual carol concert in December which was a very joyful occasion.

An ancient building brings with it many challenges of maintenance but with two very enthusiastic wardens they have overseen much needed work with the help of others from the church family.

We continue to look to the future with the growth of our ABC service and seeking God's will as we witness to his love in the village of Stoak and beyond.

Revd Gill Foster

Outreach and Community

The mission and outreach subcommittee within the PCC was rebranded to the Community Outreach Group or COG. The reasoning behind this was to work on a vision for the group, to enable us to ensure that we are best supporting our community. We also wanted to look at a 'brand' for the group, a way of reaching out to the community so that we are instantly recognised. A logo was created and this is used alongside the parish motto.

We continued working with a number of schools supporting families with our food hamper project which now operates smoother than ever, despite the numbers being larger than ever. We have had new community partners supporting us with donations, van hire and support on packing days etc. In addition, our family fun day project also grew which supports the families receiving the food hampers. We offered activity days with meals during every school holiday with the support of our local supermarkets. During the year fantastic feedback has been received from these events, and some of our families are now attending church services too. A further way of reaching into the community has been our Cinema nights with families enjoying a film whilst tucking into hotdogs and pizza!

Toms Tots, our toddler group was re-launched in September. The group runs in a very structured manner with a theme each week, song time, planned activities (craft and play), snack time, story and prayer time. Numbers have grown and we have a wonderful attendance each week.

What was once the bereavement tea is now known as our Tea at Two initiative. Open to anyone who would like company, a good cup of tea and some unbelievably delicious cake courtesy of the fantastic bakers we are so blessed to have within our parish. This has attracted fresh faces to attend from the community along with the many regulars attending from both churches.

A warm hub was trialled during the winter months of 2023, with additional funding gained from an outside source. Following research into other warm hubs within the area, there appeared to be a missed opportunity in terms of opening a warm hub that was for families, and so a decision was made to open ours after school hours, so that families could attend and have a light tea, and spend time in a warm environment, and also access some fun activities for children. Whilst we did have a small number of regular attendees, the number was indeed small, and the initiative was not well attended. If repeating a warm hub project, a different approach during daytime hours for a different clientele would be considered.

We worked successfully with a number of other community partners to host an event on World Refugee Day. Working with others we invited local refugees and asylum seekers into church, gave them a hot meal, and advertised the services available to them in Ellesmere Port. The event was advertised by the local press and supported by our local MP and councillors. It was a huge success.

The above work has been funded by a number of grants and donations.

The Beacon Project – the re-ordering of St Thomas Church was re-ignited. There had been much work already undertaken with the architects and planning permission paperwork has been drawn up and will be entered in the near future.

Gemma Alexander-Bloomfield
Community Development Worker

Statement of Financial Activities 2023

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
Receipts					
Planned giving	66,263	-	-	66,263	66,533
Collections and other giving	22,511	3,409	-	25,920	9,655
Other voluntary receipts	2,404	30,429	-	32,833	26,487
Gift Aid recovered	21,783	-	-	21,783	17,611
Other receipts	-	-	-	-	191,860
Activities for generating funds	4,454	599	-	5,053	2,662
Investment Income	27,894	-	-	27,894	26,691
Receipts from church activities	27,624	-	-	27,624	30,530
Total income	172,932	34,437	-	207,369	372,028
Payments					
Cost of generating funds	84	1,259	-	1,344	5
Missionary and Charitable Giving	1,445	-	-	1,445	3,582
Parish Share	102,509	-	-	102,509	99,524
Clergy and Staffing costs	41,298	-	-	41,298	29,452
Church Running Expenses	29,205	-	-	39,678	28,841
Hall Running Costs	9,784	-	-	9,784	5,286
Church Repairs & Maintenance	-	-	-	-	-
Hall Repairs & Maintenance	1,057	-	-	1,057	813
New Building work	-	-	-	-	-
Governance Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Seymour Drive	-	-	-	-	(140)
FIG	-	21,967	-	21,967	16,674
Total expenditure	185,383	23,226	-	208,609	184,035
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer	(12,451)	738	-	(11,713)	187,993
Transfers					
Gross transfers between funds - in	20,411	-	-	20,411	113,081
Gross transfers between funds - out	(5,516)	(14,894)	-	(20,411)	(113,081)
Other recognised gains / losses					
Gains/losses on investment assets	-	-	2,366	2,366	(1,867)
Gains on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use	-	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	2,444	(14,156)	2,366	(9,347)	186,127
Total funds brought forward	676,519	32,943	18,883	728,345	542,218
Total funds carried forward	678,963	18,786	21,249	718,998	728,345

Balance Sheet (Summary)

	As at 31/12/2023	As at 31/12/2022
Fixed assets		
Intangible Assets	365,000	365,000
Tangible Assets	115	115
	365,115	365,115
Current assets		
Investments	315,064	322,871
Cash At Bank And In Hand	49,883	40,639
	364,947	363,510
Liabilities		
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due In One Year	11,064	280
	11,064	280
Net current assets less current liabilities	353,883	363,230
Total assets less current liabilities	718,998	728,345
Liabilities		
	-	-
Total net assets less liabilities	718,998	728,345
Represented by		
Unrestricted		
Unrestricted - General Funds	1,822	7,795
Designated		
Designated - Building Fund For Churches	20,501	20,501
Designated - Contingency Fund	27,002	12,148
Designated - Donation fund not for general use	5,091	3,384
Designated - Property and Furniture + Dep	365,115	365,115
Designated - St Thomas Reordering Fund	259,432	264,394
Designated - Trust Held By Diocese	-	3,183
Restricted		
Restricted - Agency collection	200	200
Restricted - Child Contact Centre	-	8,383
Restricted - Community Outreach Group	13,808	6,269
Restricted - St Lawrence Fund	4,779	1,978
Restricted - Trust Held By Diocese	-	16,113
Endowment		
Endowment - CCLA - Acc 500850001R	21,249	18,883
Fund Totals	718,998	728,345

Notes

Liabilities / Creditors is the money held in Agency Funds.

Ellesmere Port Parochial Church Council

Financial Statements for the year ended
31st December 2023

Accountants Report

I report on the accounts of the P.C.C. for the year ended 31st December 2023, which are set out on the attached pages.

The P.C.C. Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts, and consider that the audit requirement of section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) does not apply. It is my responsibility to state, on the basis of procedures specified in the General directions given by the Charity Commissioners under section 43(7)(b) of the Act, whether particular matters have come to my attention.

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the P.C.C. 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 Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

In connection with my examination, **no matter has come to my attention:**

- which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act,
 - and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the Act.
- have not been met, or
- to which in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

William John Ford A.C.M.A./ C.G.M.A.



Member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
7 Plymyard Close
Bromborough
Wirral
CH62 6DS
16th April 2024