

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF STRETTON

England & Wales · Charity number 1132920

Details

Other names STRETTON: ST MATTHEW

Status Registered

Legal form Previously excepted

Registered 2009-11-23

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

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Activities

Objects: Promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church.

Activities: the provision of regular public Christian worship, outreach, discipleship, fellowship, teaching, evangelism and pastoral work open to all ages and abilities

Classification

- **How:** Makes Grants To Organisations, Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services
- **What:** Religious Activities
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** UNDEFINED. IN PRACTICE, LOCAL.
- Warrington

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-12-31	£93,512	£87,039	-	-
2024-12-31	£80,238	£82,575	-	-
2023-12-31	£93,778	£89,476	-	-
2022-12-31	£74,275	£93,678	-	-
2021-12-31	£70,525	£136,085	-	-
2020-12-31	£84,560	£129,109	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Rev ALAN D J JEWELL	Chair	2014-09-10
Carol Anne Rylett		2019-04-14
Dr Laura Matheson		2024-06-05
Jean Doherty		2022-05-22
Linda Margaret Buckley		2022-05-22
Matthew John Heywood		2025-02-03
STEPHEN EDWARDS		

Accounts



**The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish
of Stretton
St Matthew's**



**Trustee Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year
ending 31st December 2025**

Registered Charity Number: 1132920

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Acknowledgement

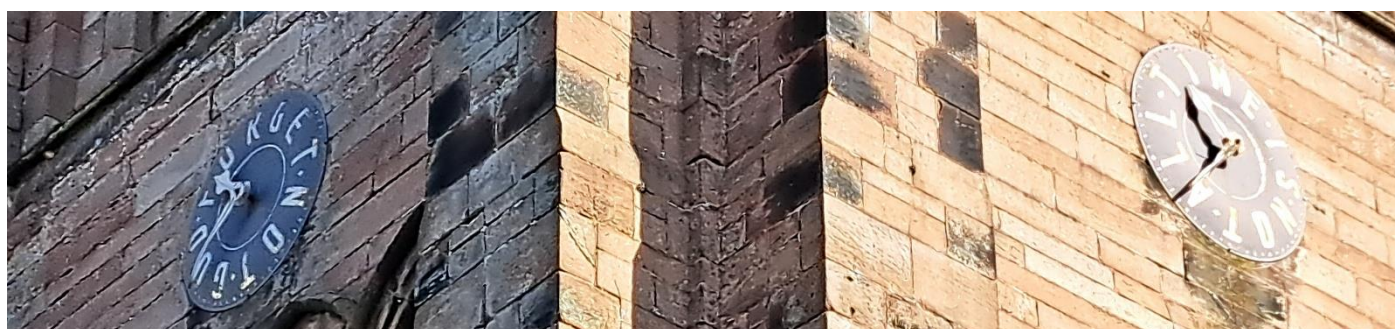
This report pays tribute to all those in the congregation; the PCC and the Clergy team for all their work and ministry in supporting our church, often not seen, but for the benefit of the whole parish.

St. Matthew's Church

St. Matthew's Church is situated in the village of Stretton in Warrington with the parish boundaries encompassing Appleton and Stretton, and bordering Appleton Thorn and St Cross Church which is within the Benefice. The Parish of St Matthew's Stretton is in the Deanery of Great Budworth and is part of the Diocese of Chester.

The Church is a Grade II listed building with a rich heritage dating back to 1827.

The Church is built of red sandstone with Westmorland slate roofs and has a bell tower accommodating a ring of eight bells. It also has a tower clock with two unique clock faces (there are only about half a dozen church clocks in the country which have letters instead of numbers). During the year restoration work was undertaken so the clock is now working again and striking the hours.



The Parish was originally in a rural village location, but now, north of the M56, is becoming part of the south Warrington conurbation, whilst remaining more rural south of the motorway. The recent housing developments have increased the population. New housing is proposed south of the church, which will place the Church at the heart of a housing community, rather than its previously rural position. This will be part of the South East Warrington Urban Extension which will create 4,200 new homes across 6 neighbourhoods.

The Church considers itself very fortunate to have such a beautiful building, although maintenance of the fabric continues to be a challenge.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School is an integral part of the Church family. It is located next to the Church which facilitates the use of the Church by the School. This allows children of all ages to familiarise themselves with the building, not just for faith-related activities, but for its history, architecture, and heritage.

The Church Hall is opposite the school, and is used on weekdays by a Pre-School as well as several local groups such as Brownies and Stretton Parish Council as well as Church groups and is available for private hire, e.g. for celebrations. There is an ongoing effort by the Church Hall Management Committee to market the benefits of hire within the local community.



The Vicar's Report 2025 – the Reverend Alan Jewell

As I produced last year's report, it occurred to me that it might be the last time I ever had to do such a thing. It turns out, I was wrong, and here we are again!

I wrote last year's report, covering the year 2024, shortly after the national Day of Reflection which marked the fifth anniversary of the first lockdown of the COVID19 pandemic. I spoke then about the shadow of those events still hanging over us. One more year on, we still live with the memory of those days.

The work of recovery has continued during 2025, but we are now also beginning to look ahead — both to the future of our churches and, for me personally, to retirement and the end of my time as your vicar.

Looking back over the past year, we give thanks for the life and witness of our two church communities. St Matthew's and St Cross are different in character, yet together they form a single benefice, sharing in the calling to worship God, to serve our communities — Stretton, Appleton, and Appleton Thorn — and to make known the love of Christ. As in every year, there have been both challenges and encouragements, and signs of quiet faithfulness alongside moments of growth and change.

Worship

Our regular pattern of services has remained broadly unchanged. At St Cross, we continue to gather for Holy Communion each Sunday at 9.30am. At St Matthew's, the main Sunday service is at 10.45am, with Holy Communion on the first and third Sundays, and Morning Worship on the second and fourth Sundays. Morning Worship is intended to be more all-age friendly. On those Sundays, a small and faithful group gathers at 8am for Holy Communion. In addition, an informal contemporary evening service is held on the first Sunday of the month, drawing people from across the benefice, and which is much appreciated by those who attend.

We also have, from time to time, a united morning service — usually on the fifth Sunday of the month, or the Sunday after Christmas or Easter (when clergy tend to disappear), or when we have an episcopal visit — as we did for Holy Cross Day (14 September) when Bishop Mark, the Bishop of Chester came to a service at St Cross.

At St Matthew's, it is encouraging to see the continued presence of families with young children, particularly at Praise & Play and Sunday morning worship. We are grateful to those who lead activities for children during communion services. At St Cross, the absence of children remains a challenge. Nevertheless, both churches offer a warm welcome to all who come.

Morning services from St Matthew's continue to be livestreamed and recorded. We have improved things considerably since the days of our improvised and makeshift technical set-up, and this provision enables those who are unable to attend in person to remain connected with the worshipping life of the church.

We are grateful, as always, to all who contribute to our worship: those who lead, read, preach, and pray; those who prepare our buildings, arrange flowers, ring bells, operate sound and projection, welcome visitors, and provide hospitality. Special thanks go to Linda Buckley, our Reader who leads and preaches across both churches.

Life Events

In 2025, our two churches together were responsible for 31 baptisms (up from 19 in 2024), 6 weddings (down slightly from 7 in 2024), and 23 funerals (very similar to the 22 in 2024).

Of the 31 baptisms, 27 were at St Matthew's and 4 at St Cross; of the 6 weddings, 4 were at St Matthew's and 2 at St Cross; and of the 23 funerals, 17 were conducted on behalf of St Matthew's and 6 on behalf of St Cross.

Baptisms

The number of baptisms was particularly high in 2022, as we had a post-pandemic catch-up, before falling again in 2023 and 2024. It is encouraging to see a significant recovery in 2025, especially at St Matthew's. This suggests that, while patterns of connection with the church may fluctuate, many families continue to seek baptism for their children.

Weddings

Weddings show a more gradual decline since 2022, when, again, there was some catching up to be done. The fall in numbers of church weddings reflects wider social change. Nevertheless, each wedding remains a significant pastoral opportunity, bringing us into contact with couples and families at an important moment in their lives.

Funerals

Funerals continue to form a substantial and consistent part of our ministry. The majority are, as one would expect, for those in later old age, often giving thanks for long lives well lived. However, there are also occasions when we are called to minister in situations where death comes much earlier than expected. Such services can be particularly demanding pastorally, as families struggle to come to terms with loss that is untimely and difficult. Both church congregations also found themselves saying goodbye to much-loved members and offering support to their families.

All in all...

Taken together, these patterns highlight a familiar feature of parish ministry: our strongest points of contact with the community are often at the very beginning and the end of life. This offers both an opportunity and a challenge — an opportunity to offer care, welcome and the hope of the gospel at significant moments, and a challenge to build deeper and more sustained relationships with people and families in the years between.

As always, I am grateful to all who support our 'Life Events' ministry: the vergers, churchwardens, administrators, musicians, flower arrangers, bellringers, and other clergy who assist with services. And, again, Linda Buckley, who offers a significant funeral ministry often based on personal and scouting connections.

Parochial Church Councils

Both of our Parochial Church Councils have continued to exercise their responsibilities for the governance of the church, sharing in oversight of our worship, mission, safeguarding, finances, and the care of our buildings. I am grateful to all who serve on the PCCs and Standing Committees of St Matthew's and St Cross for their commitment, wisdom, and willingness to take responsibility in the life of the church.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains a standing priority in both churches, and PCC members have engaged with this not simply as a matter of compliance, but as part of our shared commitment to creating a safe and healthy church culture.

Finance

Both PCCs have also continued to monitor finances carefully, recognising the pressures that we face, while also giving thanks for the generosity and faithfulness of those who support our life together, and for the hard work of our Treasurers - Matthew Heywood at St Matthew's and Tracy-Anne Clancy at St Cross.

Further information about church finances for the year 2025 is available elsewhere in this report.

Fabric

The care of our buildings has again been a significant area of attention. At St Matthew's, attention has been given to ongoing fabric issues, including drainage in the basement and improvements to lighting, as well as general maintenance of the building. We are very grateful to the Community Payback Team who work in the churchyard each week, keeping it in a very good state.

The PCC has also begun planning for the celebration of the church's 200th anniversary in 2026, which offers an opportunity both to give thanks for the past and to look ahead with hope.

At St Cross, the PCC has continued to give careful attention to the upkeep of the church and churchyard, managing the ongoing responsibilities that come with maintaining an historic building with limited resources. The life of St Cross continues to be sustained by a small but faithful congregation, and I am grateful for their quiet commitment and service. Thank you to 'Team Thorn' for work inside and out.

Further information about church buildings is available elsewhere in this report.

Vacancy

During the year, both PCCs have also begun to look ahead to the period of vacancy that will follow my retirement. While this will bring challenges, it also represents an opportunity for others to take on new roles and responsibilities, and for both churches to continue to grow in confidence and shared leadership. If you think you might be able to help, please speak with a Churchwarden or with Reader, Linda Buckley.

Volunteers and Community Life

Both churches continue to depend on the generosity of volunteers, and I am deeply grateful to all who give their time and energy in so many different ways. From Linda, our Reader, churchwardens and PCC members for both churches, to those who clean and prepare our buildings, organise events, and offer hospitality, much of the life of the church is sustained by work that is often unseen.

Community

Both St Matthew's and St Cross continue to host regular opportunities for community connection, including weekly coffee mornings and a variety of social and fundraising events. At St Matthew's, activities such as the Singing Kettle and the monthly quiz continue to bring people together in an enjoyable and accessible way, while also

supporting the work of the church. The Christmas Tree Festival is always a highlight and 'the start of Christmas' for many. At St Cross, regular gatherings play an equally important role in maintaining community connections. Both churches host musical evenings and other social events during the year.

We often think of these occasions as 'fundraising', but they are, just as importantly, helpful in building relationships and offering a sense of welcome and belonging within our communities.

Both churches also have good relationships with local schools: St Matthew's has an obvious connection with Stretton St Matthew's CE Primary School, but St Cross also has very good links with Appleton Thorn Primary School – not a church school, but they often mark festivals with services in church. I have taken collective worship and assemblies in both schools, and at Grappenhall Heys.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead, we do so in a time of change. The coming year will bring the celebration of the 200th anniversary of St Matthew's, as well as the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the benefice following my retirement.

Times of transition can be unsettling, but they also offer opportunities for renewal.

In April this year, at St Matthew's we are marking the repair and refurbishing of the tower clock. As you know, the two clock faces are unique in having letters instead of numbers. They spell out two phrases:

'Time is not all' and 'Forget not God'.

Writing an annual report reminds me that so much of what we do is shaped by time – the daily, weekly, seasonal and annual cycles that govern our lives. In the annual report, we are invited to look back over a calendar year. We are also looking forward to all that lies ahead. What the church clock says is that time is not the whole story. The psalmist reflects on God's eternal faithfulness and our transitory experience, and prays:

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90.12)

The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that:

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3.1)

We give thanks for all that has been, and entrust the future to God.

Alan Jewell

Vicar, St Matthew's, Stretton, and St Cross, Appleton Thorn

Aim and Purpose.

Aim

The primary objective of all Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC has the responsibility to co-operate with the incumbent – the Reverend Alan Jewell – “in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.” (The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956).

At St. Matthew’s the mission statement is “[Sharing the love of Jesus with all through friendship, prayer and service.](#)” The Church exists to serve its Parish – the whole local Community – not just its congregation.

Structure, governance, and management.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England and is a Registered Charity (Charity No. 1132920). The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, the Church Representation Rules 2023, and the Charities Act 2011.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting by those on the electoral roll, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules and the Charity Commission Guidance. They are the charity trustees who are “persons having the general control and management of the administration of the charity” (Charities Act 2011).

The PCC is chaired by the Vicar and meets monthly, with the exceptions of August and December. Meetings alternate between a full business meeting and a discussion meeting of one or two items only. This allows for the business meeting to deal primarily with the operational and financial management of the Church, with reports from sub-committees, and any urgent business. The discussion meeting allows for in-depth debate on key items and is important both for the education of members and to allocate more time for topics which may have greater medium to long term significance than could be given in a bigger agenda.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Sunday 18th May 2025, two people were newly elected, having previously been co-opted, and one member was re-elected.

Stephen Edwards was elected as churchwarden for a further year. There were no other nominations for churchwarden.

Maddy Murdoch, as Parish Safeguarding Officer, maintains the diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard to ensure that appropriate checks, actions and training are in place.

The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, fully recognising its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops’ guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

During the year, the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex Officio	Revd. Alan Jewell
Church Warden	Stephen Edwards
Lay Representatives on The Deanery Synod	Linda Buckley Stephen Edwards Carol Rylett
Treasurer	Matt Heywood *
Secretary	Stephen Edwards
Elected Members	
Elected until 2028	Jean Doherty
Elected until 2026	Carol Rylett
Elected until 2028	Laura Matheson
Elected until 2028	Matt Heywood

The Standing Committee of the PCC meets monthly to consider any matters between PCC meetings, and to set the agenda and to ensure that relevant papers and information are ready to inform decision-making. It also has the responsibility to transact the business of the PCC between meetings.

The PCC is assisted The Church Hall Management Committee which is a sub-committee of the PCC, concerned with the running of the church hall.

St Matthew's is represented on the Deanery Synod by the Vicar and three lay members. Our Reader is the Lay Chairman. The Deanery Synod is an intermediary between the PCC and Diocesan Synod and usually meets three times per year. The Deanery Synod is made up of Clergy and Laity members from across the Great Budworth deanery. It met three times during the year to hear reports from the Diocesan Synod, to discuss the Diocesan Strategy, the church's work at Creamfields and other matters.

Public benefit

A key responsibility of the PCC is to identify how our activities are focused on achieving public benefit and positively impacting on the lives of people in our congregation and community. The Strategy work has focused significantly on how the Church can outreach

and build increasingly stronger links with the local community. The incumbent, Alan Jewell, and the PCC are very aware of the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on “Charities for the advancement of religion” (2011) and are keen to demonstrate how this is being achieved in practice.

Objectives and Activities

Strategic development to enable recovery and growth.

The church has returned to a more normal situation post COVID, and we continue to explore new areas of development.

Continuing to develop links and promote positive action beyond the Church building into the Community.

This involves communication and events.

Develop and progress our work on eco-church.

Eco Church is a scheme run by A Rocha, UK equipping churches to care for God's creation through their worship, buildings, land, community engagement, and individual lifestyles. There is a survey tool which assesses a church's current position and has advice on how to become more Eco-friendly.

Promote the Diocesan strategy.

The diocese's previous four streams of the strategy have coalesced into three strategic priorities, which are:

- **Building Local Strategic Partnerships-** focusing on collaboration and shared mission, between neighbouring parishes, which may include ecumenical ventures or joint projects with schools, chaplaincies, or charities working in the same area.

The forth-coming vacancy will create opportunities for closer links with the other parishes in the deanery as ministers visit to take services.

- **Developing New Leaders-** “for most of us, leadership simply begins with loving God and neighbour in practical ways.” “We long for a diocese that is younger, bolder, more diverse, greener, safer, and more just. That requires leaders from every background and walk of life. Some will help us grow younger or braver; others will help us become more just, welcoming, or sustainable. The more diverse we are, the safer and more inclusive we become.”¹

There are opportunities within St. Matthew's for people to take on leadership either of individual events or projects, or as part of the PCC. We have a couple of Occasional Worship Leaders.

- **Establishing New Christian Communities-** This was previously phrased as “new worshipping communities”. “This strategic priority is intentionally local. Every parish, chaplaincy, and mission context is invited to explore new or renewed ways

¹ Chester Diocese website [Strategy - Leadership | Chester Diocese](#)

of gathering around Jesus — creating spaces where people can meet Him and one another in authentic community.”²

For St. Matthew’s this will involve welcoming the occupants of the new housing planned as part of the South East Warrington Urban Extension into our existing community, as we have done with the recent housing developments.

Meeting our Objectives – Performance and Review

Strategic development to enable recovery and growth

Building on the work of the previous year four areas were identified for further work:

- Service provision
- Children & young people
- Nurturing Discipleship
- Events

Service provision

We maintained the adopted service pattern:

- First and third Sunday 10:45am Holy Communion
- Second and Fourth Sunday 8am Holy Communion, 10.45 Morning Worship
- Fifth Sunday: A United Service with St. Cross.
- A monthly Contemporary Evening Service.

The main Sunday morning service is streamed on YouTube and the church’s website, and is watched by people who are not able to get to the service. This is one of the positive things that came out of the COVID pandemic.

Children & young people

We continue with Children’s Activities during the 10.45am Holy Communion services, supported by several volunteers. It mainly consists of activity sheets which are done around one of the tables at the back of the church.

If there is sufficient demand for Children’s Activities on a Sunday morning, and there are sufficient numbers, then the church hall is available.

Nurturing Discipleship

During Lent and Advent, we hold a weekly service of Compline (or 'Night Prayer') which includes a reflection led by Alan or Linda. These usually follow a theme that encourages church members to consider how their own faith and discipleship might develop.

Coffee after services on Sundays and Thursdays often provides opportunities for church members to discuss matters that have arisen from worship and preaching.

Church Fellowship

² Chester Diocese website [Strategy - Communities](#) | [Chester Diocese](#)

The Church Fellowship has 25 members across the benefice. This year's speakers have included Medical Detection Dogs, St. John's Ambulance who explained automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) and taught CPR, travel talks, the Parish Council and the Vicar whose talk on ecclesiastical matters also included a tutorial on ukeleles.. Other activities have included Afternoon Tea at Fryer's Garden Centre, and a Christmas meal at The Cat and Lion. At Christmas the Fellowship supported Warrington Open Door at Christmas.

The Singing Kettle.

The Singing Kettle has regular gatherings on the fourth Thursday of every month in the Church Hall with refreshments and an informal sing-along.

Events

A number of events were put on during the year for the local community, with the intention of reaching beyond the regular congregation:

Stretton's Past Unveiled

In June, Clare Olver gave a talk on Stretton's history covering Landowners, Lives and the Shadow of Slavery.

Quizzes

Linda Buckley has run a monthly quiz, which is hosted by the Stretton Fox.

Musical evenings

Two musical evenings were held in July and December featuring local musicians, St. Matthew's Primary School, the Appleton Thorn choir and the Singing Kettle band leading everyone in song.

Heritage Open Days

On 20th September the Church was open as part of the national Heritage Open Days. The tower was also open up to the Ringing Chamber, and several people ascended to learn about bell ringing.

Christmas Tree Festival

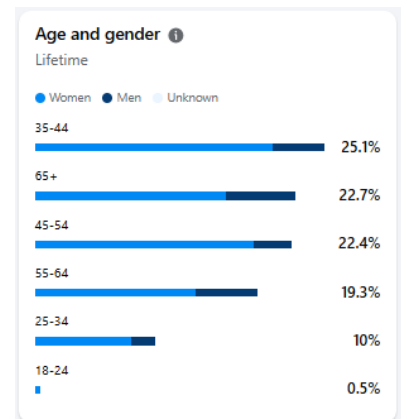
The annual Christmas Tree Festival was held over the last weekend in November and the first in December with local businesses sponsoring and decorating the trees.

Continuing to develop links and promote positive action beyond the Church building into the community.

Communication is mainly electronic, using the church's website and Facebook page.

Facebook

Our Facebook page has 570 followers (555 last year) of whom 83.4% live in Warrington, but with sharing to other local pages our posts can reach more than double that number, with approximately a third engaging with the post (commenting, liking or sharing). The graphic shows our audience profile:



You Tube

We continue to stream our main Sunday service live on You Tube, which benefits members who are not able to get to the church. Our YouTube channel had 78 subscribers, and a monthly audience of 53, with 1,000 views in 2025.

Website

Our website (www.stmatthewschurchstretton.org.uk) attracts over 1,000 visitors per month.

This objective is ongoing - the website and our Facebook page require a continual flow of postings to keep them relevant.

Develop and progress our work on eco-church.

We have started the new format Eco-Church survey to benchmark ourselves against the criteria covering five key areas of church life:

- Worship and teaching
- Buildings and energy
- Land and nature
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle

The survey raises simple ideas which could be done as part of our Eco Strategy. It requires a small committee of people familiar with how the church operates to complete the survey, and to develop our eco-strategy.

Promote the Diocesan strategy.

The PCC shares the aims of the Diocesan strategy as set out above.

Fabric

The PCC receives regular reports on the status of the fabric of the buildings, which requires a continued programme of repairs and maintenance.

A scheme for replacing the lights in the church with LEDs was designed but the lighting units were not considered to be aesthetically appropriate for a church setting, and an alternative consultant has been approached. Replacing the lights with LEDs will result in

all the lights working, and at a lower running cost.

Investigation of the basement drains continued. Old plans suggest that the vestry gutters drain through the basement, the gulleys are to be cleared to check if this is the case.

The clock mechanism was removed to the clock maker's workshop, and he got it working again on his bench. Re-fitting the clock in the tower began in November, and was operational in February 2026.

We continue to benefit from the work done by the Community Payback Scheme in maintaining the churchyard.

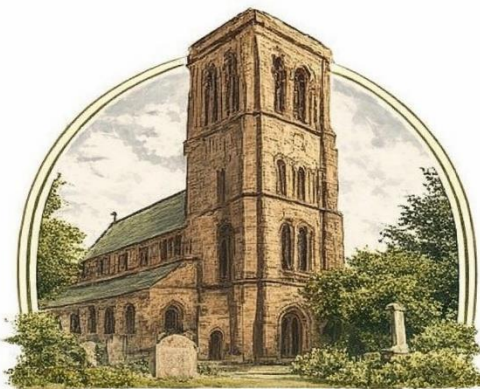
The current church building is over 150 years old. The PCC makes the minor repairs required as funds allow, and is aware that in time more expensive work will be required to the walls and roof.

Looking Forward to 2026

Whilst the challenges the Church faces are not underestimated, the church is growing in numbers across all ages. The PCC keeps the changes which have been made under review, and will make adaptations as necessary.

In December 2025, the Vicar, Revd Alan Jewell, announced his plan to retire at the end of May. Whilst this will lead to a period of uncertainty, the PCC remain optimistic about the year ahead which sees on 23 November the 200th anniversary of the laying of the first stone of the original church building. A year of events being planned, culminating on 9th November 2027 which marks the 200th anniversary of the consecration of the church.

St. Matthew's Church Stretton



200 YEARS
AT THE HEART OF
THE COMMUNITY

Financial Review

Income

Voluntary Giving

Total voluntary receipts from general unrestricted funds received were £55,447, received through planned giving, service collections, voluntary donations, and gift aid tax recovery. Compared with 2024, giving through Standing Orders decreased by 7%, while collections at services increased by £500.

The church is grateful for the many donations through 2025, including regular giving, one-off gifts in memory of loved ones, and specific donations towards the church hall repairs and clock restoration.

Other Income

Income from the Church Hall increased by £2,000 in 2025, due to greater use by the pre-school group. Although the number of regular users fell slightly, the hall continues to be a valuable source of income and a benefit to the community.

Fundraising events, including quizzes, coffee mornings and ad-hoc music events, raised £2,000. The annual Christmas tree festival raised £1,200, with 50% donated to a local community charity.

Expenditure

Parish Share

The largest expenditure item was the Parish Share, totalling £42,867 in 2025. This contribution supports diocesan mission and ministry, including clergy housing, stipend, pensions, new ordinand training, and shared diocesan costs. The contribution also assists churches with financial difficulties.

The amount due from the Church for 2025 was £85,734. The PCC, recognising ongoing financial constraints, contributed 50%. As of 31st December 2025, the unpaid balance stands at £84,486. This is not a legal liability and does not show in the Financial Statements. However, the PCC is regularly reviewing its parish share payment with the intention to increase payments when feasible.

Staff costs

The PCC employed a church hall cleaner during 2025 and paid a vergers for wedding and funerals. The vergers resigned at the end of December 2025, and the PCC intends to appoint a replacement as soon as feasible.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC supported the clergy by paying Council Tax, Water, telephone, broadband and reimbursement for travel expenses amounting to £6,021. No further expense payments were made to persons related to, or connected to, the trustees.

Other charitable giving

The Christmas Tree Festival, this raised £1,214, of which and £607 (50%) was donated to WODAC (Warrington open door at Christmas). This is a local charity and the PCC are grateful to be able to support the local community.

Repairs

Routine maintenance and repairs continued throughout 2025 to ensure compliance with health and safety responsibilities. This included the removal of timber and other debris from the church basement, to allow investigative works into the church basement to continue. The car park wall was also repaired, with an insurance claim submitted for this incident.

Major Works

Major repairs were undertaken in the church hall to refurbish the toilets, during the summer holidays period. The PCC is grateful for a donation from the Stretton Old School Trust, which covered the cost of repairs. Work was also undertaken on the restoration of the church clock, through generous donations.

Reserves

The PCC continues to have a good reserves position, due to generous legacies given in the past. It is the policy of the PCC to keep two months general running costs as a general reserve, plus an additional amount to cover committed contract costs and minor repairs. Major building works, including those identified under the Quinquennial Inspection, will only be undertaken once additional funding is secured. The PCC is aware of the increasing priority of this major work. The reserve requirement under this policy is £25,000. Our current free reserves more than meet this policy and will enable the PCC to use the remaining reserves to support its cash flow during 2026, if required to continue its mission.

As of 31 December 2025:

- Unrestricted reserves were £65,506 – with these available to support the general running of the church
- Restricted reserves - £27,440

The investments are accumulation shares held with CCLA in The Church of England Investment Fund. These create capital growth rather than income.

Financial Recovery Plan.

Throughout 2025, the PCC continued implementing its Financial Recovery Plan. Repairs were kept to the minimum necessary for health and safety. High running costs remained a challenge, slowing progress towards financial recovery.

Looking Forward

Given the inability to pay full parish share, the continued deficit is a concern, with an increased requirement to undertake additional maintenance and repairs during 2026.

The PCC has looked to reduce costs wherever possible and will continue to do so in 2026. The PCC has also decided to continue to pay its Parish Share at 50% to ensure sufficient reserves if required.

Increased giving remains essential to support running costs and future repairs. The PCC is aware of its current dependence on regular donors and regular hall hirers. In late 2025, the church explored the Parish Giving Scheme to make regular giving more accessible, and the PCC has agreed to adopt the scheme. Alongside the upcoming 200-year anniversary celebrations, the aim is to encourage increase regular giving.

The church remains grateful to all those who contribute to the Church financially and in other ways.

Process for recruitment and appointment of trustees

The church runs an annual general meeting, where members of the electoral roll can stand to become a trustee of the church. To be nominated as a trustee an individual should be proposed and seconded by members of the electoral role.

Measures are in place to manage the recruitment and appointment of trustees; this includes all members signing the trustee eligibility and fit and proper persons declaration.

Going concern

The trustees are continually reviewing the operations of the church and its ability to deliver on its objectives. It is the opinion of the trustees that the charity remains a going concern.

Administration

Principal Address: St Matthew's Church
Stretton Road
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 4NT

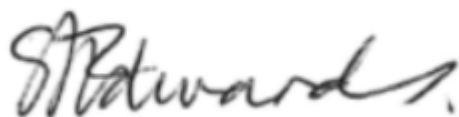
Independent Examiner: Janine Boyo BFP FCA MAAT,
Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Bankers: HSBC
11 Bridge Street
Warrington
WA1 2EY

CCLA Investment Management Ltd
1 Angel Lane
London
EC4R 3AB

Architect: Richard Williams BA(Hons) BArch RIBA
Williams Architecture
88 Cherry Lane
Lymm
Cheshire
WA13 0PD

Approved by the board of trustees on 17th May 2026 and signed on their behalf by:



Stephen Edwards
Churchwarden and Vice-Chair of Parochial Church Council
17th May 2026

Financial Statements Of the Parochial Church Council Of
The Ecclesiastical Parish Of Stretton – St Matthew's For
The Year Ended 31st December 2025

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT
THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF STRETTON
(Registered Number: 1132920)

Independent examiners report to the trustees of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthew's.

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthew's for the year ended 31st December 2025.

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 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

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 PCC 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 you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the Statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

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

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



Janine Boyo BFP FCA MAAT
Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Date: 17th May 2026

Statement of Financial Activities – Accounts to 31.12.2025

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
Donations and legacies	£55,447	£14,250	£69,697	£57,698
Income from charitable activities	£5,913	-	£5,913	£6,858
Other trading activities	£14,418	-	£14,418	£12,503
Investments	£596	£217	£814	£764
Other income	£2,668	-	£2,668	£2,413
Total income	£79,045	£14,467	£93,512	£80,237
Raising funds	£48	£320	£368	£436
Expenditure on charitable activities	£70,128	£9,712	£79,841	£77,754
Other expenditure	£6,564	£265	£6,829	£4,383
Total expenditure	£76,741	£10,297	£87,039	£82,574
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer	£2,303	£4,170	£6,473	(£2,337)
Gross transfers between funds - in	£4,900	£4,940	£9,840	-
Gross transfers between funds - out	(£4,941)	(£4,901)	(£9,841)	-
Gains/losses on investment assets	(£456)	(£37)	(£492)	£6,523
Gains on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use	-	-	-	£38,000
Net movement in funds	£1,808	£4,173	£5,981	£42,186
Total funds brought forward	£101,698	£23,266	£124,964	£82,777
Total funds carried forward	£103,506	£27,440	£130,946	£124,964

Balance Sheet (Summary) - Accounts to 31.12.2025

	As at 31/12/2025	As at 31/12/2024
Fixed assets		
Tangible Assets	£38,000	£38,000
	£38,000	£38,000
Current assets		
Investments	£41,654	£42,146
Cash At Bank And In Hand	£51,669	£44,993
	£93,324	£87,139
Liabilities		
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due In One Year	£378	£175
	£378	£175
Net current assets less current liabilities	£92,946	£86,964
Total assets less current liabilities	£130,946	£124,964
Liabilities		
	-	-
Total net assets less liabilities	£130,946	£124,964
Represented by		
Unrestricted		
Unrestricted - General Funds	£103,506	£101,698
Restricted		
Restricted Funds	£27,440	£23,266
Fund Totals	£130,946	£124,964

Approved by the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthews on 17th May 2026 and signed on its behalf by:



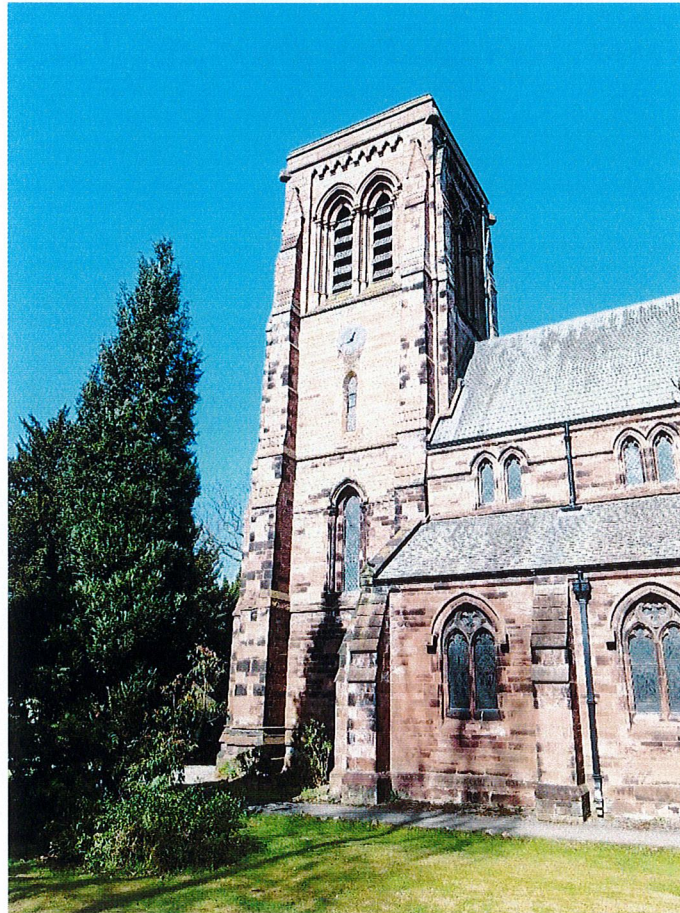
Stephen Edwards
Churchwarden and Vice-Chair of Parochial Church Council

Supporting notes to accounts:

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, using the Receipts and Payments basis.
2. The fixed asset retained for the church use is the church hall at historical cost.
3. The PCC has considered its reserves in accordance with the policy set out in their report. The reserve requirement based on these accounts is £25,000 which is more than met by the PCC's free reserves.
4. Staff Costs: The PCC pays for the services of a Verger and paid for a Church Hall Cleaner for part of the year. There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.
5. Transactions with Trustees: The incumbent was supported through payment of council tax, water rates, broadband, telephone and reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of the Church, totalling £6,021

Accounts

**The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Stretton
St Matthew's**



**Trustee Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year ending 31st
December 2024**

Registered Charity Number: 1132920

Acknowledgement

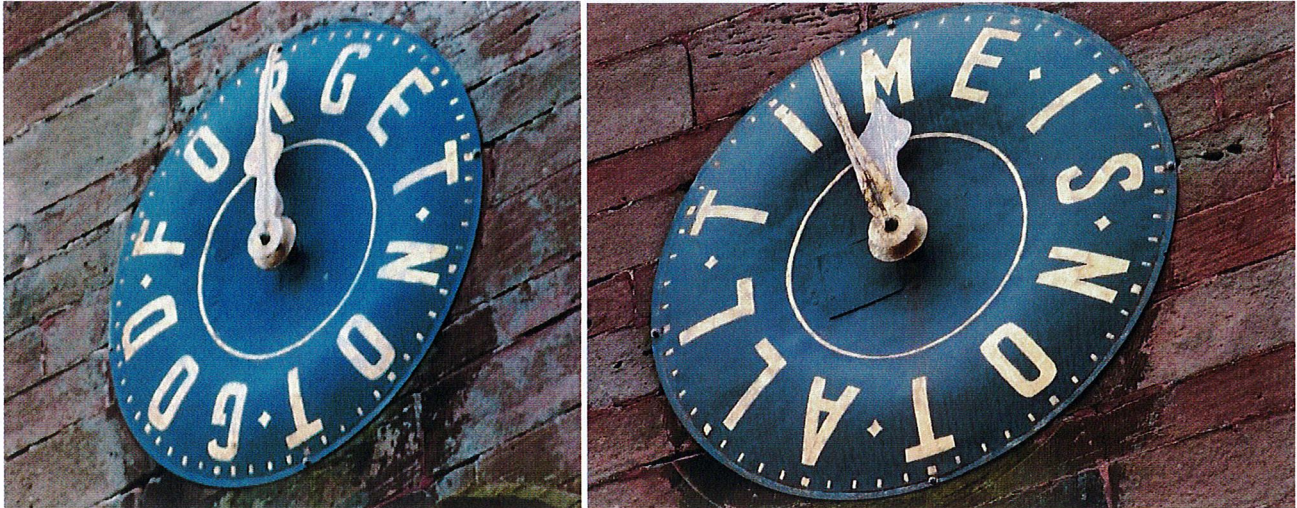
This report pays tribute to all those in the congregation; the PCC and the Clergy team for all their work and ministry in supporting our church, often not seen, but for the benefit of the whole parish.

St. Matthew's Church

St. Matthew's Church is situated in the village of Stretton in Warrington with the parish boundaries encompassing Appleton and Stretton, and bordering Appleton Thorn and St Cross Church which is within the Benefice. The Parish of St Matthew's Stretton is in the Deanery of Great Budworth and is part of the Diocese of Chester.

The Church is a Grade II listed building with a rich heritage dating back to 1827.

The Church is built of red sandstone with Westmorland slate roofs and has a bell tower accommodating a ring of eight bells. It also has a tower clock with two unique clock faces (there are only about half a dozen church clocks in the country which have letters instead of numbers).



The Parish was originally in a rural village location, but now, north of the M56, is becoming part of the south Warrington conurbation, whilst remaining more rural south of the motorway. The recent housing developments have increased the population. New housing is proposed south of the church, which will place the Church at the heart of a housing community, rather than its previously rural position.

The Church considers itself very fortunate to have such a beautiful building, although maintenance of the fabric continues to be a challenge.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School is an integral part of the Church family. It is located next to the Church which facilitates the use of the Church by the School. This allows children of all ages to familiarise themselves with the building, not just for faith-related activities, but for its history, architecture, and heritage.

The Church Hall is located next to the School. It is used on a regular basis by several local groups such as Brownies and Stretton Parish Council as well as Church groups and hired out for celebrations. During the weekdays, it is used by Pre-School, which is very popular. There is an ongoing effort by the Church Hall Management Committee to market the benefits of hire within the local community.



The Vicar's Report 2024 – the Reverend Alan Jewell

That was the year that was...

At the time of writing (March 2025), we have just observed a Day of Reflection marking the fifth anniversary of the first lockdown of the COVID19 pandemic. It is clear that the shadow of those events still hangs over us, and 2024 was a year in which we worked hard to consolidate our recovery. What do we see when we look back at 2024? We give thanks for the life and witness of our church communities in a year that had its share of challenges and blessings as we continued to rebuild.

Worship

The COVID pandemic had a massive impact on our worshipping communities. As I said last year:

“We lost regular worshippers as people aged, continued to isolate, or simply got out of the habit of attending church.”

Having said that, both churches also show encouraging signs with new people attending services, and, at St Matthew's, a core group of young families who come to Praise & Play and to Sunday morning worship. On Sundays at St Matthew's, when it is a communion service, we have a small team of volunteers who lead activities for children. Our thanks to them. Sadly, St Cross doesn't have any children who come to church regularly. Families with children are assured of a warm welcome in both churches!

Our regular pattern of services is unaltered. As we began to recover from the lockdowns, we established a weekly communion service at St Cross at 9.30AM. At St Matthew's, the main service is at 10.45AM – it is Holy Communion on the first and third Sundays, and all-age friendly Morning Worship on the second and fourth. On those Sundays when it is Morning Worship at St Matthew's, we have a Communion service at 8AM, with a small band of dedicated worshippers. On the first Sunday of the month, we have a 6.30PM evening service which is informal and uses more contemporary worship songs. Although it is at St Matthew's, worshippers come from both churches. Where there is a fifth Sunday, we usually have a United Service which more-or-less alternates between the two churches. When it is at St Cross, the United Service is at 9.30AM, and when it is at St Matthew's, it is at 10.45AM (i.e. the usual start time for morning services in the host church).

Morning services from St Matthew's are routinely livestreamed and recorded. Sometimes the results are a bit patchy, with glitches caused by our very basic setup, but we are doing our best. If you or someone you know would like to help with tech, please let us know!

Each year, both churches enjoy a visit from one of the bishops. In 2024, Bishop Sam, the bishop of Stockport, came to St Cross, and Bishop Julie, the bishop of Birkenhead, came to St Matthew's.

Our thanks go to those who regularly lead and support our weekly worship: among them, Reader, Linda Buckley; retired priest Geoff Buchan; and those who clean and decorate the

churches, arrange flowers, ring bells, navigate through PowerPoint presentations, welcome visitors, and serve coffee after services.

Life Events

In 2024, our two churches were responsible for **19 baptisms** (down from 31 in 2023, and 37 in 2022), **7 weddings** (up from 6 in 2023, but down from 11 in 2022), and **22 funerals** (up from 18 in 2023, and down from 23 in 2022).

Of the 19 baptisms, 10 were at St Matthew's, and 9 at St Cross; of the 7 weddings, 6 were at St Matthew's, with just 1 at St Cross; and of the 22 funerals, 19 were held on behalf of St Matthew's, and 3 on behalf of St Cross. (Funerals that go directly to the crematorium or cemetery are regarded as being the responsibility of one of the two churches, even if there is no service held in church.)

The statistics, of course, don't tell the full story. Among those for whom funerals were conducted there were, as always, some familiar names, including some who were regular worshippers, and some who were well-known in the local community and beyond. Some funerals are memorable because they are a joyful celebration of a life lived to the full. But this year, I also officiated at the burial of a baby who arrived in this world prematurely and did not survive. Our prayers are with all who have lost loved ones.

As always, I am grateful to those who support our 'Life Events' services

- the Vergers, (Alan Bruce at St Matthew's and David Rose at St Cross)
- the Churchwardens at both churches
- Carol Rylett who is Baptism Administrator at St Matthew's
- Rose Jewell, who is first call musician for weddings and funerals (and those who deputise when she is not available)
- those who arrange flowers
- the bellringers at St Matthew's.
- other clergy who occasionally take services, including the Revd Geoff Buchan.

Volunteers

In last year's report, I commented on the drop in numbers of people who do any voluntary work, and the impact that has had on our churches and other charities. I regularly have conversations where people say to me, "What we need is some younger folk to step up and take responsibility..." Thankfully, both churches have committed volunteers who take on roles. Among them are

1. Churchwardens: David Shaw and Sandra Bates at St Cross, Stephen Edwards at St Matthew's.
2. Members of both Parochial Church Councils, including our Treasurers, Catherine Edwards at St Matthew's and Tracy-Anne Clancey at St Cross. As noted in last year's report, Catherine had announced her intention to stand down as Treasurer. We are very grateful to her for her continued support for St Matthew's, and to Matthew Heywood who came forward to take on the Treasurer role.
3. Safeguarding Officers: Paul Clancey at St Cross and Maddy Murdoch at St Matthew's.

Social Events

Both churches are open for coffee on a weekly basis – Tuesday mornings at St Cross and Wednesday mornings at St Matthew's – and refreshments are offered after most services. Thanks to the hospitality teams in both churches.

Both churches have regular social events, which also raise funds. Examples include music nights,

sausage butties served after church, a hotpot lunch, flower-arranging classes, a history talk, and so on. Appleton Thorn Village Choir are regular contributors on these occasions, and, at St Matthew's, we also enjoyed welcoming singers and musicians from St Matthew's Primary School.

The Singing Kettle is a monthly get-together at the Church Hall for a chat over a cuppa and a bit of a singalong.

Once a month, St Matthew's hosts a pub quiz, thanks to the kind hospitality of the Stretton Fox, who also generously provide a prize for the winning team. Thanks also to our excellent quiz-setter and presenter, Linda Buckley, and her ever-helpful assistant, Dennis.

All of these occasions do raise money for the churches, but they are also intended to be enjoyable: we want to put the fun into fundraising.

Looking ahead

As I mentioned at the start of this report, I am writing at a time when we are reflecting on the fifth anniversary of the first Covid lockdown. In my sermon at the start of Lent, I talked about Jesus going into the desert where he is tested, and about the people of God in the Hebrew bible, who spent 40 challenging years wandering in the wilderness. God's people often fail, but Jesus succeeds, and offers us the fruit of his victory to share. The Covid years were a wilderness experience, but as winter turns to spring, so Lent leads us to Easter.

In Romans 7, the Apostle Paul reflects on his own struggles. He knows his brokenness and weakness. He wants to be good and to good, but his humanity is frail and fractured. He might fall into despair as he recognises his helplessness:

Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

But he follows that question immediately with the answer:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7.25)

Alan Jewell, Vicar, St Matthew's, Stretton, and St Cross, Appleton Thorn

Aim and Purpose.

Aim

The primary objective of all Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC has the responsibility to co-operate with the incumbent – the Reverend Alan Jewell – “in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.” (The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956).

At St. Matthew's the mission statement is “[Sharing the love of Jesus with all through friendship, prayer and service.](#)” The Church exists to serve its Parish – the whole local Community – not just its congregation.

Structure, governance, and management.

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England and is a Registered Charity (Charity No. 1132920). The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, the Church Representation Rules 2023, and the Charities Act 2011.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting by those on the electoral roll, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules and the Charity Commission Guidance. They are the charity trustees who are “persons having the general control and management of the administration of the charity” (Charities Act 2011).

The PCC is chaired by the Vicar and meets monthly, with the exceptions of August and December. Meetings alternate between a full business meeting and a discussion meeting of one or two items only. This allows for the business meeting to deal primarily with the operational and financial management of the Church, with reports from sub-committees, and any urgent business. The discussion meeting allows for in-depth debate on key items and is important both for the education of members and to allocate more time for topics which may have greater medium to long term significance than could be given in a bigger agenda.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Sunday 19th May 2024 there were no new nominations to PCC: Laura Matheson expressed an interest in joining the PCC, having not been nominated before the meeting, was co-opted by the PCC. During the year Matt Heywood was also co-opted as a member of the PCC.

Stephen Edwards was elected as churchwarden for a further year. There were no other nominations for churchwarden.

An active database was maintained ensuring that DBS checks are undertaken and maintained, and that all PCC members complete the appropriate level of safeguarding training. During the year Maddy Murdoch was appointed as Parish Safeguarding Officer, and has now implemented the diocesan Safeguarding Dashboard to ensure that appropriate checks, actions and training are in place.

The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, fully recognising its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

During the year, the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex Officio	Revd. Alan Jewell
Church Warden	Stephen Edwards
Lay Representatives on The Deanery Synod	Linda Buckley Stephen Edwards Carol Rylett
Treasurer	Bob Turner from March 2024 (resigned May 2025) Stephen Edwards from June 2024 *
Secretary	Stephen Edwards from June 2024
Elected Members	
Elected until 2025	Jean Doherty
Elected until 2026	Carol Rylett
Co-opted until 2025	Laura Matheson
Co-opted until 2025	Matt Heywood

* Under the Church Representation Rules Part 9 M20 if no one is appointed as Treasurer, the role has to be discharged by a Churchwarden. We are grateful to Catherine Edwards who has continued to do the church's book-keeping.

The Standing Committee of the PCC meets monthly to consider any matters between PCC meetings, and to set the agenda and to ensure that relevant papers and information are ready to inform decision-making. It also has the responsibility to transact the business of the PCC between meetings.

The PCC is assisted by a Finance Sub-Group and the Church Hall Management Committee.

The Sub-Committee membership is voluntary with PCC members agreeing to assist with the work required in their specific area in order that the PCC is given detailed information on which to base decisions. Non-PCC members are also invited to participate, where their individual area of expertise greatly assists the work being undertaken. The Sub-Groups do not have executive responsibility. The Church Hall Management Committee is responsible for the operational management of the Church Hall, and the management of bookings.

At the beginning of the year the PCC appointed Richard Williams as its architect.

St Matthew's is represented on the Deanery Synod by the Vicar and three lay members. Our Reader is the Lay Chairman. The Deanery Synod is an intermediary between the PCC and Diocesan Synod and usually meets three times per year. The Deanery Synod is made up of Clergy and Laity members from across the Great Budworth deanery. It met three times during the year to hear reports from the Diocesan Synod, to discuss the Diocesan Strategy, the church's work at Creamfields and other matters.

A key responsibility of the PCC is to identify how our activities are focused on achieving public benefit and positively impacting on the lives of people in our congregation and community. The Strategy work has focused significantly on how the Church can outreach and build increasingly stronger links with the local community. The incumbent, Alan Jewell, and the PCC are very aware of the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on "Charities for the advancement of religion" (2011) and are keen to demonstrate how this is being achieved in practice.

Objectives and Activities

Strategic development to enable recovery and growth.

The church has returned to a more normal situation post COVID, and we continue to explore new areas of development..

Continuing to develop links and promote positive action beyond the Church building into the Community.

This involves communication and events.

Develop and progress our work on eco-church.

Eco Church is a scheme run by A Rocha, UK equipping churches to care for God's creation through their worship, buildings, land, community engagement, and individual lifestyles. There is a survey tool which assesses a church's current position and has advice on how to become more Eco-friendly.

Promote the Diocesan strategy.

The diocese has four working parties looking at the four streams of the strategy which are:

- **Growing our Missional Health** - helping each worshipping community (of which parishes are a main constituent) grow in their personal discipleship to Jesus Christ, and their mission together in their local community
- **Increasing our Missional Reach** - helping each worshipping community to reach those key demographics in their local context who are not currently part of their worshipping community - in particular this is about helping us becoming younger and more diverse
- **Planting new Missional Communities** - helping each worshipping community to be inspired to plant one new worshipping community by 2030, and looking at specific strategic planting / collaborative mission opportunities
- **Developing Missional Leadership** - encouraging and supporting our existing leaders (ordained, licensed, employed, volunteers), and creating the pathways to ensure that we can grow, train and release more people into missional leadership.

Meeting our Objectives – Performance and Review

Strategic development to enable recovery and growth

Building on the work of the previous year four areas were identified for further work:

- Service provision
- Children & young people
- Nurturing Discipleship
- Events

Service provision

We maintained the adopted service pattern:

- First and third Sunday 10:45am Holy Communion
- Second and Fourth Sunday 8am Holy Communion, 10.45 Morning Worship
- Fifth Sunday: A United Service with St. Cross.
- A monthly Contemporary Evening Service.

Children & young people

With a number of families with young children having recently joined the church, we have re-started Children's Activities during the 10.45am Holy Communion services. Several people have volunteered to assist with this. It currently consists of activity sheets which are done around one of the tables at the back of the church.

If there is sufficient demand for Children's Activities on a Sunday morning, and there are sufficient numbers, then the church hall is available.

We have re-started doing Extravaganzas, aimed at families, on a quarterly basis. This involves refreshments, crafts and a short service.

Nurturing Discipleship

During Lent and Advent, we hold a weekly service of Compline (or 'Night Prayer') which includes a reflection led by Alan or Linda. These usually follow a theme that encourages church members to consider how their own faith and discipleship might develop.

Coffee after services on Sundays and Thursdays often provides opportunities for church members to discuss matter that have arisen from worship and preaching.

Church Fellowship

The Church Fellowship has amalgamated with Connections and now has 28 members across the benefice. This year's speakers have included Clatterbridge Cancer Charity and Rev. Shawn Verhey, Chaplain at Thorn Cross. Other activities have included Afternoon Tea at Fryer's Garden Centre, a Whist Drive, Christmas Decoration making and a Christmas meal at The Cat and Lion. At Christmas the Fellowship supported the Room at the Inn and the Y Project.

The Singing Kettle.

The Singing Kettle has regular gatherings on the fourth Thursday of every month in the Church Hall with refreshments and an informal sing-along.

Events

A number of events were put on during the year for the local community, with the intention of reaching beyond the regular congregation:

Stretton: The Bridgerton Years

In November Clare Olver gave a talk on Stretton 200 years ago, as we are looking forward to 2026 being the bicentenary of the original church being built.. Clare had discovered a Stretton equivalent of Bridgerton's Lady Whistledown.

Quizzes

Linda Buckley has run a monthly quiz, which is hosted by the Stretton Fox..

Musical evenings

Two musical evenings were held in July and December featuring local musicians, ST. Matthew's Primary School, the Appleton Thorn choir and the Singing Kettle band leading everyone in song.

Heritage Open Days

On 14th September the Church was open as part of the national Heritage Open Days. The tower was also open up to the Ringing Chamber, and several people ascended to learn about bell ringing.

Christmas Tree Festival

The annual Christmas Tree Festival was held over the last weekend in November and the first in December with local businesses sponsoring and decorating the trees.

Continuing to develop links and promote positive action beyond the Church building into the community.

Communication is mainly electronic, using the church's website and Facebook page.

Facebook

Our Facebook page has 555 followers (64% of whom live in Warrington), but with sharing to other local pages our posts can reach more than double that number, with approximately a third engaging with the post (commenting, liking or sharing).

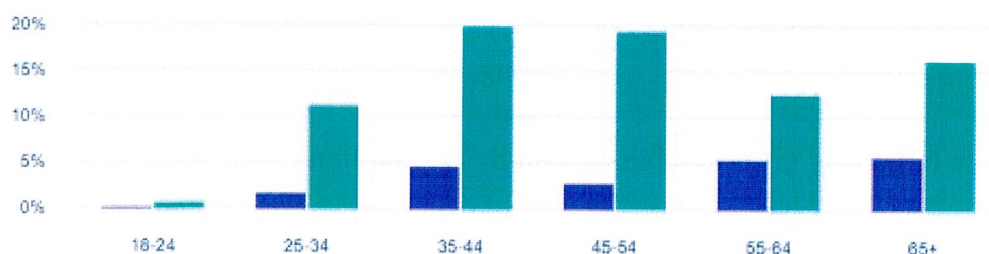
Our audience profile:

Audience

555 Facebook followers

Age and gender

■ Men 20.10%
■ Women 79.90%



You Tube

We continue to stream our main Sunday service live on You Tube, which benefits members who are not able to get to the church. Our YouTube channel has 24 subscribers and had over 1,000 views in 2024..

Website

Our website (www.stmatthewschurchstretton.org.uk) attracts over 1,000 visitors per month.

We are encouraged to see new people joining the church, and have started activities for young children at the back of church during Holy Communion services.

This objective is ongoing – improvements were made to the external noticeboards with the inclusion of the church's website. The website and our Facebook page require a continual flow of postings to keep them relevant..

Develop and progress our work on eco-church.

We have undertaken the Eco-Church survey to benchmark ourselves against the criteria which produced the following outcome:

Category	Award
Worship and Teaching	Gold award
Buildings	Bronze award
Land	No award
Community and Global Engagement	No award
Lifestyle	No award

. A Rocha have developed a new survey tool covering five key areas of church life:

- Worship and teaching
- Buildings and energy
- Land and nature
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle

There are simple things that can be done as part of our Eco Strategy and we are seeking someone with an interest in this area who will help us develop our Eco strategy

Promote the Diocesan strategy.

The PCC shares the aims of the Diocesan strategy as set out above under the Deanery Synod section.

Fabric

The PCC receives regular reports on the status of the fabric of the buildings, which requires a continued programme of repairs and maintenance.

The lights within the church do not all work. During the year work was undertaken when four lights on the north side of the nave stopped working due to a fault with one. The PCC would like to change the bulbs for LED lights when funding can be found, as this would reduce the on-going electricity consumption.

The gutters were all cleared in November by a company using a large vacuum cleaner and long pipes with a camera attachment.

During the year a number of small trees were felled and maintenance carried out on others. The timber was taken away by parishioners.

A revised quote was obtained for the repair of the tower clock, following the offer of funding in memory of two church members. An application was made to the diocese for a faculty, which was granted in January 2025. The work commenced in March 2025.

In October the Quinquennial Inspection was undertaken by the church's architect. The report identifies a number of minor repairs required, but also highlights that the church building is 150 years old and that repairs are required to the walls and eventually expensive reroofing.

We continue to benefit from the work done by the Community Payback Scheme in maintaining the churchyard..

Looking Forward to 2025

Whilst the challenges the Church faces are not underestimated, the church is growing in numbers across all ages. The PCC keeps the changes which have been made under review, and will make adaptations as necessary.

The PCC, Vicar and ministry team remain deeply committed to the development of St Matthew's, and are optimistic that 2025 will be a year of continued growth.

Financial Review

Income

Voluntary Giving

Total voluntary receipts from general unrestricted funds received was £52,703, received through planned giving, service collections, voluntary receipts, and gift aid tax recovery. Comparing voluntary giving against 2023, giving through Standing Orders decreased by 5% and collections at services declined by £1,000. The church is grateful for a donation towards the cost of tree work in the churchyard.

Other Income

The Church Hall has maintained its income despite changes in the number of regular hirers. The Church held several fundraising events throughout the year, raising £3,000.

The church is grateful to all those who give financially, whether through regular contributions, ad-hoc donations at services, or other means of support.

Expenditure

Parish Share

The largest expenditure item was the Parish Share, amounting to £44,619 in 2024. This contribution to the Diocese supports the provision and maintenance of mission and ministry, including clergy housing, stipend, pensions, new ordinand training, and shared diocesan costs. The contribution also assists churches with financial difficulties. The amount due from the Church for 2024 was £83,238. However, the PCC agreed that it was unable to pay the full Parish Share and instead contributed 50%. As of 31st December 2024, the unpaid amount stood at £111,893.34. While this is not a legal liability and does not show in the Financial Statements, the PCC is aware that it should be paid if sufficient funds become available.

Staff costs

The PCC paid for a church hall and office cleaner for part of the year, and a vergers for wedding and funerals.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC supported the clergy by paying Council Tax, Water and environmental charges for the vicarage amounting to £3,820. Additional costs included travel, telephone and broadband. No expense payments were made to persons related to, or connected to, the trustees.

Other charitable giving

During the year, the church was able to undertake its Christmas Tree Festival, this raised £1,522 and 50% (£771) of the amount raised was donated to St Rocco's Hospice.

Repairs

Routine maintenance and repairs were undertaken during the year to ensure the PCC met its responsibility for health and safety. Tree work was undertaken in the churchyard, supported by a generous donation.

Major Works

A new boiler was installed in the Church Hall, using the restricted Hall Fund. Additionally, the car park wall was repaired following an accident, with costs covered through an insurance claim.

Reserves

The PCC has a good reserves position, thanks to generous legacies given in the past. It is the policy of the PCC to keep two months general running costs as a general reserve, and an additional amount to cover committed contract costs and minor repairs. Major building works, including those identified under the Quinquennial Inspection, will only be undertaken once additional funding is secured. The reserve requirement under this policy is £25,000. Our current free reserves more than meet this policy and will enable the PCC to use the remaining reserves to support its cash flow during 2025, if required to continue its mission.

On 31 December 2024 unrestricted reserves were £63,698. There are no longer any designated reserves, so the unrestricted reserves are available to support the general running of the church. Additionally, the PCC had £23,266 in restricted reserves, including £18,504 for the church hall. The balance is made up of smaller funds belonging to groups within the church.

The investments are accumulation shares held with CCLA in The Church of England Investment Fund. These create capital growth rather than income.

Financial Recovery Plan.

Throughout 2024, the PCC continued implementing its Financial Recovery Plan. Repairs were kept to the minimum necessary for health and safety. High energy costs remain a challenge, slowing progress towards financial recovery.

Looking Forward

The continuing deficit is a concern. The PCC has looked to reduce costs wherever possible and will continue to do so in 2025. The PCC has made the decision to continue to not pay its full Parish Share to ensure sufficient reserves if required. The need to increase giving to meet regular commitments remains.

The PCC is aware of its current dependence on regular donors and regular hall hirers. The church remains grateful to all those who contribute to the Church financially and in other ways. As St Matthew's approaches the 200-year anniversary, there is an opportunity to engage the community and generate additional income to support maintenance and improvements to the church.

Matthew Heywood, Treasurer

Administration

Principal Address:	St Matthew's Church Stretton Road Warrington Cheshire WA4 4NT
Independent Examiner:	Hayley Jardine BFP ACA, Voisey & Co Chartered Accountants 8 Winmarleigh Street Warrington Cheshire WA1 1JW
Bankers:	HSBC 11 Bridge Street Warrington WA1 2EY CCLA Investment Management Ltd 1 Angel Lane London EC4R 3AB
Architect:	Richard Williams BA(Hons) BArch RIBA Williams Architecture 88 Cherry Lane Lymm Cheshire WA13 0PD

Charity Number 1132920

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON – ST MATTHEW'S
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2024**

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT
THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF STRETTON
(Registered Number: 1132920)**

Independent examiners report to the trustees of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthew's.

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthew's for the year ended 31st December 2024.

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 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

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 PCC 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 you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the Statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

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

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



Hayley Jardine BFP ACA
Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Date 8th May 2025

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS**
*Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2024*

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
RECEIPTS					
Voluntary Receipts					
Planned giving		30,478	-	30,478	31,982
Collection at services		7,246	-	7,246	8,213
All other giving/voluntary receipts	4	5,990	2,302	8,292	8,608
Gift Aid Tax recovered		<u>8,989</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,989</u>	<u>8,850</u>
		52,703	2,302	55,005	57,653
Activities for generating funds		3,108	665	3,773	2,957
Investment Income	5	556	209	765	537
Church Activities	6	19,361	-	19,361	19,273
Other Income	7	<u>1,334</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,334</u>	<u>13,405</u>
Total receipts		77,062	3,176	80,238	93,778
PAYMENTS					
Church activities					
Diocesan parish contribution		44,619	-	44,619	31,710
Clergy and staff costs	8	7,449	-	7,449	8,193
Church running costs	9	18,095	2,221	20,316	22,902
Hall running costs		4,383	-	4,383	5,922
Charitable donations	10	<u>1,010</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,010</u>	<u>673</u>
		75,556	2,221	77,777	70,120
Costs of generating funds		105	332	437	350
Other Costs	11	<u>1,584</u>	<u>2,777</u>	<u>4,361</u>	<u>19,006</u>
Total payments		77,245	5,330	82,575	89,476
Excess of receipts over payments		(183)	(2154)	(2337)	4,302
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 January		34,392	12,763	47,155	42,853
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 December		<u>34,209</u>	<u>10,609</u>	<u>44,818</u>	<u>47,155</u>

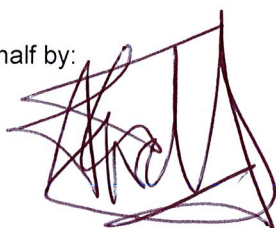
**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS**
*Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2024*

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Cash Funds					
Bank Current Account & Cash		23,185		23,185	23,392
Deposit Funds		<u>11,024</u>	<u>10,609</u>	<u>21,633</u>	<u>23,763</u>
		<u>34,209</u>	<u>10,609</u>	<u>44,818</u>	<u>47,155</u>
Investment Assets					
Investment Fund shares at market value		<u>29,489</u>	<u>12,657</u>	<u>42,146</u>	<u>40,099</u>
Assets retained for church use		<u>38,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>38,000</u>	<u>38,000</u>
Liabilities					
Due to Diocese		175	-	175	296
Other liabilities		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>175</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>296</u>

Approved by the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthews on 10th April

and signed on its behalf by:



Revd Alan Jewell

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS**
*Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2024*

Notes to the accounts

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, using the Receipts and Payments basis.
2. The fixed asset retained for the church use is the church hall at historical cost.
3. The PCC has considered its reserves in accordance with the policy set out in their report. The reserve requirement based on these accounts is £ 25,000 which is more than met by the PCC's free reserves.

		Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
4.	All other giving/voluntary receipts				
	Legacies and Grants	120	-	120	1,375
	Donations	2,219	2,302	4,521	4,284
	Other Income	3,651	-	3,651	2,744
		<u>5,990</u>	<u>2,302</u>	<u>8,292</u>	<u>8,403</u>
5.	Income from investments				
	Bank interest	556	209	765	537
6.	Church Activities				
	Fees for weddings and funerals	6,858	-	6,858	6,078
	Church hall hire	12,503	-	12,503	13,148
	Magazine Sales	-	-	-	-
		<u>19,361</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>19,361</u>	<u>19,226</u>
7.	Other Income				
	Insurance Claim	1,334	-	1,334	13,405
8.	Clergy and staff costs				
	Clergy costs	4,297	-	4,297	4,279
	Salaries	2,155	-	2,155	2,867
	Parish Office costs	997	-	997	1,767
		<u>7,449</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,449</u>	<u>8,913</u>
9.	Church running expenses				
	Church Music	493	-	493	782
	Bellringers	177	-	177	-
	Church flowers	495	-	495	500
	Church service costs	1,457	-	1,457	2,009
	Youth Work	166	-	166	145
	Insurance	5,927	-	5,927	5,777
	Light and heat	5,805	-	5,805	7,987
	Repairs and maintenance	2,219	2,172	4,391	4,004
	Sundries	396	49	445	731
	Professional fees	360	-	360	367
	Accountancy	600	-	600	600
		<u>18,095</u>	<u>2,221</u>	<u>20,316</u>	<u>22,902</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS**
*Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2024*

		Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
10.	Charitable donations				
	Christian organisations	239	-	239	173
	Secular organisations	<u>771</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>771</u>	<u>500</u>
		<u>1,010</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,010</u>	<u>673</u>
11.	Other Costs – major works				
	Hall Development	-	-	-	12,851
	Church Floor	-	-	-	4,841
	Re-ordering	-	-	-	1,314
	Hall New Boiler	-	2,777	2,777	-
	Car park Wall repair	<u>1,584</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,584</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>1,584</u>	<u>2,777</u>	<u>4,361</u>	<u>19,006</u>

12. Staff Costs

The PCC pays for the services of a Verger and paid for a Church Hall Cleaner for part of the year.

There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.

13. Transactions with Trustees

The incumbent was reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of the Church, totalling £ 493.

Accounts

**The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Stretton
St Matthew's**



**Trustee Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year ending 31st
December 2023**

Registered Charity Number: 1132920

Acknowledgement

This report pays tribute to all those in the congregation; the PCC and the Clergy team for all their work and ministry in supporting our church, often not seen, but for the benefit of the whole parish.

St. Matthew's Church

St. Matthew's Church is situated in the village of Stretton in Warrington with the parish boundaries encompassing Appleton and Stretton, and bordering Appleton Thorn and St Cross Church which is within the Benefice. The Parish of St Matthew's Stretton is in the Deanery of Great Budworth and is part of the Diocese of Chester.

The Church is a Grade II listed building with a rich heritage dating back to 1827.

The Church is built of red sandstone with Westmorland slate roofs and has a bell tower accommodating a ring of eight bells. It also has a tower clock with two unique clock faces (there are only about half a dozen church clocks in the country which have letters instead of numbers).



The Parish was originally in a rural village location, but now, north of the M56, is becoming part of the south Warrington conurbation, whilst remaining more rural south of the motorway. The recent housing developments have increased the population. New housing is proposed south of the church, which will place the Church at the heart of a housing community, rather than its previously rural position.

The Church considers itself very fortunate to have such a beautiful building, although maintenance of the fabric continues to be a challenge.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School is an integral part of the Church family. It is located next to the Church which facilitates the use of the Church by the School. This allows children of all ages to familiarise themselves with the building, not just for faith-related activities, but for its history, architecture, and heritage.

The Church Hall is located next to the School. It is used on a regular basis by several local groups such as Brownies and Stretton Parish Council as well as Church groups and hired out for celebrations. During the weekdays, it is used by Pre-School, which is very popular. There is an ongoing effort by the Church Hall Management Committee to market the benefits of hire within the local community.



The Vicar's Report 2023 – the Reverend Alan Jewell

I began the year in Melbourne, Australia, as part of a three-month sabbatical. I was away from parish duties from the beginning of November 2022 to the end of January 2023. As I said in last year's report, I am very grateful to the Churchwardens and others for their support, and to the clergy and Readers who kindly stepped in to take services. Foremost amongst these was, of course, our own Reader, Linda Buckley, who generously gave much of her time and energy to ensure that things went well in my absence. I am also grateful to the Revd Chris Moore who provided priestly ministry.

During my sabbatical, I worshipped in a number of cathedrals and other splendid churches: from Chester, Gloucester, York, and Canterbury, to Berlin and Melbourne. I was in Melbourne for the whole of Advent and Christmas 2022 to Epiphany 2023. I attached myself to St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, and was privileged to lead some midweek eucharists there and to take part in a couple of Sunday services. My aim (as well as visiting family) was to try to make sense of following the Church's calendar in the southern hemisphere. (Christmas in the summer?!)

Life Events

In 2023, our churches held **31 baptisms** (down from 37 in 2022), **6 weddings** (down from 11 in 2022) and **18 funerals** (down from 23 in 2022). Of the baptisms, 24 were at St Matthew's, and 7 at St Cross. Of the weddings, 4 were at St Matthew's, and 2 at St Cross. Of the funerals, 12 were the responsibility of St Matthew's, and 6 came under St Cross (including services conducted at the crematorium or cemetery, rather than in church).

I'm grateful to those who support our 'Life Events' services— the Vergers, Alan Bruce at St Matthew's and David Rose at St Cross, the Churchwardens, and Carol Rylett who is Baptism Administrator at St Matthew's.

Of course, the 'Life Events' statistics don't tell the real story. Among those for whom funeral services were conducted, there were some very familiar names. I was approaching the end of my sabbatical when I heard the news that our Reader, Alan Hibbert, had died. Alan had reached the age of 90 and had exercised an active ministry in both churches until very recently. We feel his loss deeply. I always valued Alan's support, encouragement, his deep faith, and commitment to prayer. He was godly, spiritual, and Christlike. We thank God for Alan's example of Christian discipleship.

We also said farewell to Dorothy Edwards, who had been such a significant figure in the life of St Cross and the wider community.

Volunteers

Churches, along with other charities and voluntary groups, have experienced a drop in the numbers of people who are able to give their time to support their activities. Studies suggest that formal volunteering is at a record low: in 2019, 11 million people were recorded as volunteering at least once a month. By 2022, that figure was down to 7 million. The think tank, Theos, reported in September 2023 that possible causes of the reduction in volunteers included:

“a combination of changed working patterns, retirement, economic pressures, and a difference in the 'offer' that volunteers are now looking for after the pandemic”

Church Times, 29 September 2023

Churches have long relied on retired people to take responsibility for many of the jobs that need doing. As our members age, we are always looking for younger people to take over, but that is proving difficult. Church regulations require each parish to have two elected Churchwardens, but there is a growing number of parishes that are unable to do that as it becomes ever more difficult to find people willing to undertake the duties and responsibilities of this role. I am very grateful to the Churchwardens for both parishes – Stephen Edwards and Kath Holbourn at St Matthew's, and David Shaw and Sandra Bates at St Cross. Kath stood down in October 2023 and we are very grateful for all her hard work as Warden. (We have yet to replace her!)

Many parishes also struggle to find volunteers to fill places on the Parochial Church Council. I'm grateful to those who do give their time in this way for both churches. At St Matthew's, we have not been able to fill all available places. We are blessed to have very competent and committed Treasurers: Catherine Edwards at St Matthew's and Tracy-Anne Clancy at St Cross. Particular thanks to Catherine who announced her intention to stand down, for all that she has done for St Matthew's.

Against this backdrop, it is good to note that both churches still have a remarkably dedicated band of lay people. The danger of naming individuals is that I'm bound to leave someone out: but thanks to the unsung heroes who support our churches – who give their time and money, who keep the buildings safe, clean, and comfortable, who change the altar frontals, decorate with flowers, ring the bells, play pianos and organs, welcome visitors, take, count, and bank collections, work the technology, make tea and coffee and provide biscuits... Thank you!

Worship

With the interruption to regular worship in church during the pandemic, we lost a lot of ground. We lost regular worshippers as people aged, continued to isolate, or simply got out of the habit of attending church. Numbers at St Cross on a Sunday morning are not bad, but St Matthew's often feels rather empty. (30 people at St Cross feels good. 30 people at St Matthew's, not so much!) There are positive signs, too, with new people joining both congregations and, at St Matthew's, a number of young families who regularly worship with us.

One of the things that vanished in the pandemic was the rota of people doing readings and prayers in church. We now have a smaller number of people participating more often. If you would like to help, please let me know.

At St Matthew's, we have been able to re-introduce Sunday activities for children, with a small band of volunteers working with colouring sheets and crafts during the 10.45AM service when it is Holy Communion. We try to make the Morning Worship services more all-age friendly. The 10.45AM service at St Matthew's is routinely live streamed – as we have the technology in place – and we have had some online worshippers who have become in-person worshippers! All live streamed services are also available as videos on the St Matthew's website.

The evening Contemporary Worship on the first Sunday of the month has a small band of regular attenders: those who come are very appreciative of what is on offer.

Conclusion

As we look back on the events of 2023, it is clear that both churches have faced challenges and have also seen signs of life and growth. As well as saying goodbye to significant members of the community, and grappling with issues of finance, fabric, and smaller, older congregations, we have witnessed the dedication and resilience of those who continue to support our churches. There is much to be thankful for.

As we look ahead, what can we say? I can do no better than this:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13.8

Every blessing,

Alan Jewell, Vicar

Aim and Purpose.

Aim

The primary object of all Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC has the responsibility to co-operate with the incumbent – the Reverend Alan Jewell – “in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.” (The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956).

At St. Matthew's the mission statement is “[Sharing the love of Jesus with all through friendship, prayer and service.](#)” The Church exists to serve its Parish – the whole local Community – not just its congregation.

Structure, governance, and management.

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England and is a Registered Charity (Charity No. 1132920). The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, the Church Representation Rules 2023, and the Charities Act 2011.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting by those on the electoral roll, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules and the Charity Commission Guidance. They are the charity trustees who are “persons having the general control and management of the administration of the charity” (Charities Act 2011).

The PCC is chaired by the Vicar and meets monthly, with the exceptions of August and December. Meetings alternate between a full business meeting and a discussion meeting of one or two items only. This allows for the business meeting to deal primarily with the operational and financial management of the Church, with reports from sub-committees, and any urgent business. The discussion meeting allows for in-depth debate on key items and is important both for the education of members and to allocate more time for topics which may have greater medium to long term significance than could be given in a bigger agenda.

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on Sunday 21st May 2023 the following proposal was adopted:

a PCC member may continue to serve for two consecutive three-year terms provided that they are nominated for a second term at the APCM at the end of their third year. There will not be any annual retirements.

There were no new nominations to PCC. Carol Rylett has agreed to remain on the PCC for a further three-year term.

The churchwardens were elected for a further year.

An active database is maintained ensuring that DBS checks are undertaken and maintained, and that all PCC members complete the appropriate level of safeguarding training. This is reviewed annually. Through the year we were seeking to appoint a Parish Safeguarding Officer (an appointment was made early in 2024). It was recognised that this was a serious gap for the Church, so to mitigate the impact, Stephen Edwards, Church Warden handles the administrative aspects of the role. This ensures that DBS checks and training records are accurately maintained and are current. Information as to where to access support is prominently displayed in Church, should it be required.

The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline

Measure 2016, fully recognising its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

During the year, the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex Officio	Revd. Alan Jewell
Church Warden	Stephen Edwards Kath Holbourn (resigned 20 Oct 2023)
Lay Representatives on The Deanery Synod	Linda Buckley Stephen Edwards Kath Holbourn (resigned 20 Oct 2023)
Treasurer	Catherine Edwards (resigned 8 Dec 2023)
Elected Members	
Elected until 2023	Chris Ellson (until 21 May 2023)
Elected until 2024	Andree Hillas
Elected until 2025	Jean Doherty
Elected until 2026	Carol Rylett

The Standing Committee of the PCC meets every two months prior to the full business meeting of the PCC in order to set the agenda and to ensure that relevant papers and information are ready to inform decision-making. It also has the responsibility to transact the business of the PCC between meetings.

The PCC is assisted by a Finance Sub-Group and the Church Hall Management Committee. There had been a Strategy Group which planned our emergence from the pandemic, but during the year this was disbanded as it is the role of the PCC to set strategy.

The Sub-Committee membership is voluntary with PCC members agreeing to assist with the work required in their specific area in order that the PCC is given detailed information on which to base decisions. Non-PCC members are also invited to participate, where their individual area of expertise greatly assists the work being undertaken. The Sub-Groups do not have executive responsibility. The Church Hall Management Committee is responsible for the operational management of the Church Hall, and the management of bookings.

St Matthew's is represented on the Deanery Synod by the Vicar and two lay members (with one vacancy). Our Lay Reader is the Lay Chairman. The Deanery Synod is an intermediary between the PCC and Diocesan Synod and usually meets three times per year. The Deanery Synod is made up of

Clergy and Laity members from across the Great Budworth deanery. It met three times during the year. The February Synod was held in our church, and Archdeacon Ian Bishop spoke about the Diocese's commitment to net zero carbon by 2030, and what churches could do to reduce their carbon footprint.

The July meeting discussed the Diocesan strategy, and in October (again at St. Matthew's) Harriot Roberts, Director of development (vision and strategy) explained the Diocese of Chester's vision going forward and Sharon Taylor-Booth spoke about support available to Treasurers across the diocese.

A key responsibility of the PCC is to identify how our activities are focused on achieving public benefit and positively impacting on the lives of people in our congregation and community. The Strategy work has focused significantly on how the Church can outreach and build increasingly stronger links with the local community. The incumbent, Alan Jewell, and the PCC are very aware of the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on "Charities for the advancement of religion" (2011) and are keen to demonstrate how this is being achieved in practice.

Objectives and Activities

Strategic development to enable recovery and growth.

This built on the previous year's work to review and develop activities to return the church to a more normal situation post COVID.

Continuing to develop links and promote positive action beyond the Church building into the Community.

This involves communication and events.

Develop and progress our work on eco-church.

The introduction on the diocesan website explains:

Eco Church is a scheme run by A Rocha, UK equipping churches to care for God's creation through their worship, buildings, land, community engagement, and individual lifestyles.

The ethos behind Eco Church is underpinned by the National Church's goal to become Net Zero by 2030. In simple terms, Net Zero means, making no contribution to global warming. This is achieved by ensuring that the amount of fossil fuels (carbon) we put into the atmosphere is matched by the amount of carbon we take out of the atmosphere. Hence the term 'Carbon Neutral'.

The Diocese of Chester is committed to working towards the 2030 target and many of our churches have already taken steps to improve their carbon footprint by implementing improvements to their heating systems, recycling waste and planting trees etc.

Big old churches, that were built hundreds of years ago, aren't the most heat efficient of buildings, which does present a challenge when it comes to reducing energy consumption. But the key to Eco Church scheme is all about balancing your carbon output. A church might not be able to make many improvements to its heating consumption, but there might be ways to offset your carbon consumption to 'balance your carbon books'.

Promote the Diocesan strategy.

The Diocese has been developing its vision through consultation, a process known as "Casting the net wide". The key message of the vision is "Together in Christ sharing hope".

Meeting our Objectives – Performance and Review

Strategic development to enable recovery and growth

Building on the work of the previous year four areas were identified for further work:

- Service provision
- Children & young people
- Nurturing Discipleship
- Events

Service provision

After discussion the service pattern adopted from 1st April is:

- First and third Sunday 10045am Holy Communion
- Second and Fourth Sunday 8am Holy Communion, 10.45 Morning Worship
- Fifth Sunday: A United Service with St. Cross.
- A monthly Contemporary Evening Service.

Children & young people

With a number of families with young children having recently joined the church, we have re-started Children's Activities during the 10.45am Holy Communion services. Several people have volunteered to assist with this. It currently consists of activity sheets which are done around one of the tables at the back of the church.

If there is sufficient demand for Children's Activities on a Sunday morning, and there are sufficient numbers, then the church hall is available.

We have re-started doing Extravaganzas, aimed at families, on a quarterly basis. This involves refreshments, crafts and a short service.

Nurturing Discipleship

After discussion and consideration of courses, how they should be run, for whom and when, the Vicar offered to put on a course after Easter.

The Big Story was for people new to the Bible and those who wanted to go deeper, showing how all the books, characters, and events, fit together to form one BIG story from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible Course also provides tools and skills to help apply the Bible to everyday life.

The sessions were:

1. Introducing the Bible
2. Creation and Covenant
3. Exodus and Promised Land
4. Judges and Kings

5. Exile and Prophets
6. Jesus and the Gospels
7. Acts and the Church
8. Revelation and Review

Church Fellowship

This group meets monthly and has changed its name from St Matthew's to St Matthew's and St Cross Church Fellowship, to better reflect the membership of the Fellowship and that the two Churches have increasingly worked together to their mutual benefit. The Fellowship had a variety of speakers during the year covering the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, Warrington Women's Aid, Warrington Street Pastors, craft events as well as an afternoon tea to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.

The Singing Kettle.

The Singing Kettle restarted in the spring with regular gatherings on the fourth Thursday of every month in the Church Hall with refreshments and an informal sing-along.

Events

A number of events were put on during the year for the local community, with the intention of reaching beyond the regular congregation:

Six Stories of Stretton

In October Clare Olver gave a talk on the local history that was very well attended by people from across the parish, with a notable representation from Lower Stretton.

Quiz

Linda Buckley held a successful Quiz in the Church Hall, which was well received, and so further quizzes are planned.

Musical evening

This involved a range of people from across the parish including violinist from the school, a local pianist, a singer, the Appleton Thorn choir and the Singing Kettle band leading everyone in song.

Continuing to develop links and promote positive action beyond the Church building into the community.

Communication is mainly electronic, using the church's website and Facebook page.

Facebook

Our Facebook page has 556 followers (63% of whom live in Warrington), but with sharing to other local pages our posts reach more than double that number, with approximately a third engaging with the post (commenting, liking or sharing).

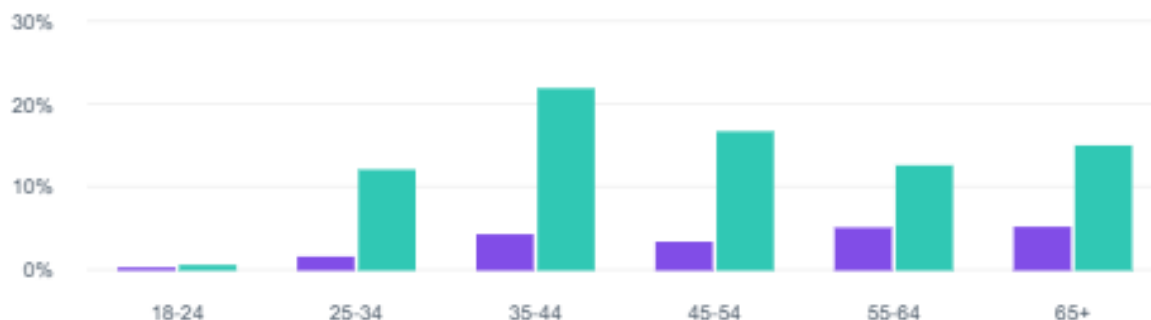
Our audience profile:

Audience

556 Facebook followers

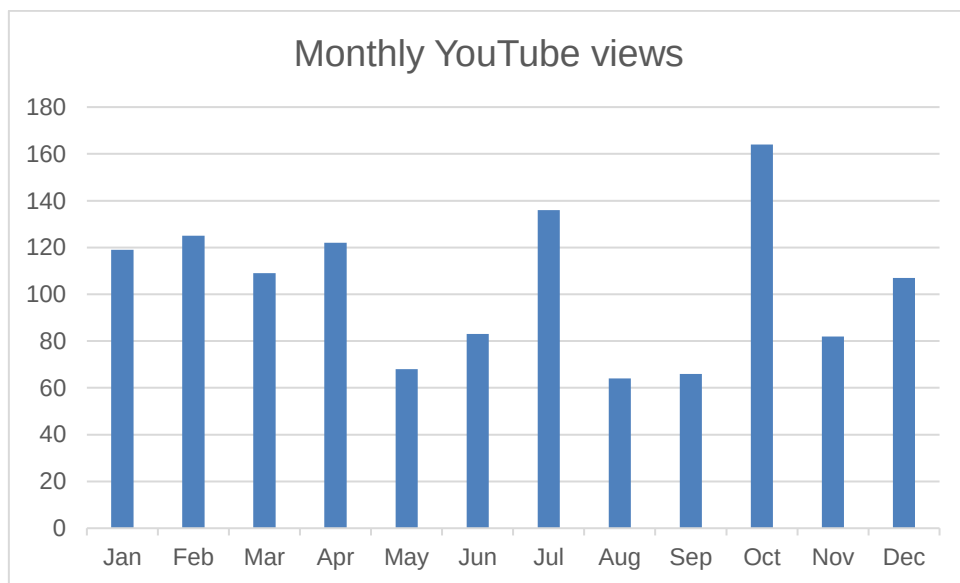
Age and gender

Men 20.50%
Women 79.50%



You Tube

Our main Sunday service is live streamed on You Tube, and averages over 100 views per month.



Website

Our website (www.stmatthewschurchstretton.org.uk) attracts over 1,000 visitors per month.



We have welcomed new people in the parish now that the housing developments have been completed. Our events have drawn in people from the wider community to make use of the church heritage.

This objective is ongoing – improvement in the external noticeboards is planned. Continuing development of the website and encouraging people to submit articles to keep a constant supply of quality information available, is essential to make the website the “go to” place for information.

The new housing estates have developed significantly over the past year with many families moving in during the Autumn months. Four hundred leaflets were distributed across the Parish, predominantly in the new estates, to advertise the Christmas services and events. It also presented an opportunity to speak to people as the leaflets were being posted. Attendance at the Christmas Tree Festival and Crib Services particularly, were excellent.

Develop and progress our work on eco-church.

We have undertaken the Eco-Church survey to benchmark ourselves against the criteria which produced the following outcome:

Category	Award
Worship and Teaching	Gold award
Buildings	Bronze award
Land	No award
Community and Global Engagement	No award
Lifestyle	No award

This objective needs more people to give it consideration to improve our ranking. Some of the questions we will not be able to change the answer, but there are areas where improvement could be made relatively simply:

Buildings

Questions relate to double glazing (not feasible as a Listed Building) and generating our own renewable energy. However, we could look at installing LED lights.

Land

Questions relate to encouraging wildlife (bird boxes and bug hotels), growing wild flowers, wild life surveys. Growing fruit and vegetables. Some of these could be done.

Community and Global Engagement

These questions are about organising events for people to engage with local leaders, MPs and environmentalists, organising litter-picking, local car-share schemes and environmental campaigns.

Lifestyle

Questions relate to having a champion to encourage the church community to become more environmentally sustainable, reducing car usage and personal energy consumption, personal ethical investment, and environmental lifestyle audits. It suggests having practical lifestyle tips on caring for God's earth which could be easily added to our website.

Promote the Diocesan strategy.

The PCC discussed the Diocesan vision "Together in Christ, sharing hope" in October, and considered how our church's strategy is aligned with the diocese. The diocesan vision has a number of sub-themes:

Growing braver, fuller faith

Getting out of the boat and taking steps of faith that feel strange and scary. Trusting God as we develop new ways and in unfamiliar places to make new disciples to live, love and grow in Christ.

Blessing 1.5 million lives, one life at a time

Engaging with people one at a time. Pointing people to Christ in everything we say and do. Prioritising introducing people to Jesus, sharing hope and inviting others to engage with the Gospel message.

Transformative loving service (in practice)

Sharing the love of Christ in diverse ways through the 'five marks of mission': Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure.

Engaged locally, working together in loving generosity.

Responding and relating in creative expressions of loving service, faith, prayer, and worship at local level: working in partnership and in harmony, according to the diverse places and local communities we serve.

This objective will be continuing as the vision evolves.

Fabric

The PCC receives regular reports on the status of the fabric of the buildings, which requires a continued programme of repairs and maintenance. From the Quinquennial Inspection in 2019, the major areas not completed are the masonry repairs and the roof. The latter has been patch repaired to prevent leakage until such time that external funding is available to assist with a more extensive project.

During the year the floor at the back of church was repaired with volunteer labour, and the area carpeted. Adjustments were made to the electrical sockets to provide power to the screens in the chancel, and to the Clavinova. Some of the high level lights in church failed, and work is in progress to resolve the problem, with appropriate access.

The Community Payback Scheme has continued to work in the Churchyard, which has been mutually beneficial. Those using the Churchyard have seen a major improvement over time as it is regularly tidied and cared for. The men appreciate the positive feedback they receive from the parishioners.

Looking Forward to 2024

Whilst the challenges the Church faces are not underestimated, the church is growing in numbers across all ages. The PCC keeps the changes which have been made under review, and will make adaptations as necessary.

The PCC, Vicar and ministry team remain deeply committed to the development of St Matthew's, and are optimistic that 2024 will be a year of continued growth.

Financial Review

Income

Voluntary Giving

The total receipts on general unrestricted funds received were £56,533 and are detailed in the Financial Statements. Planned Giving through Standing Orders decreased by 3%. The Church has seen a slow but steady increase in numbers attending services, particularly the special services and as a result the collections at services have increased by £2,000. The church is grateful to the Friends of St Matthews for a donation towards the cost of repairs to the lighting circuit.

Other Income

The Church Hall continues to increase the number of hirers and fees received but income from fees for Weddings and Funerals has fallen by £1,100. The Church held several fundraising events during the year, raising £1,000.

Restricted Income

No further work has been undertaken on the re-ordering project due to the lack of funds.

Expenditure

Parish Share

The largest item of expenditure was the Parish Share. The amount due from the Church for 2023 was £79,274. The Parish Share is a contribution to the Diocese towards the cost of the provision and support of mission and ministry. This includes housing, support, stipend and pension costs of the clergy of this parish, training of new ordinands, a contribution to national church funds and shared costs of the diocese, including assistance towards the upkeep of churches less able to manage than ourselves. The PCC agreed that it was unable to pay the full Parish Share for 2023. As at 31 December 2023 the amount unpaid was £47,564 with a further £25,710 owing from 2022. This is not a legal liability and so does not show in the Financial Statements, however the PCC is aware that it should be paid when appropriate.

Staff costs

The PCC paid for a church hall and office cleaner, and a vergers for wedding and funerals.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC also supported the clergy by paying Council Tax, Water and environmental charges for the vicarage amounting to £3,628 as well as other costs such as travel, telephone and broadband. There were no expense payments to persons related to, or connected to, the trustees.

Other charitable giving

During the year the church was able to undertake its Christmas Tree Festival, donating 50% of the amount raised to The Room At The Inn Charity.

Repairs

Routine maintenance and repairs were undertaken during the year to ensure the PCC met its responsibility for health and safety.

Major Works

During the year a major repair to the church floor was undertaken by volunteers. The Church is very grateful for their willingness to help in this. The Church paid for materials costing £4,600.

Restricted Reserves

During the year the refurbishment of the Church Hall took place following the fire at the end of 2022. The costs were covered by the insurance monies received.

Reserves

The PCC has a good reserves position, thanks to generous legacies given in the past. It is the policy of the PCC to keep two months general running costs as a general reserve, and an additional amount to cover committed contract costs and minor repairs. Major building works, including those identified under the Quinquennial Inspection, will only be undertaken once additional funding has been secured. The reserve requirement under this policy is £25,000. Our current free reserves more than meet this policy and enable the PCC to use the remaining reserves to support its cash flow during 2024 and to continue its mission.

On 31 December 2023 unrestricted reserves were £62,449. There are no longer any designated reserves, so the unrestricted reserves are available to support the general running of the church.

The PCC also had £24,805 in restricted reserves. These include £20,203 for the church hall. The balance is made up of smaller funds belonging to groups within the church.

Our investments are accumulation shares held with CCLA in The Church of England Investment Fund. These create capital growth rather than income.

Financial Recovery Plan.

During the year the PCC continued with its Financial Recovery Plan. Repairs were kept to the minimum required for health and safety and there has been no further progress on the re-ordering project. High energy costs continue to slow progress towards financial recovery. The next stage of the Financial Recovery Plan is to look at ways of increasing the income of the Church.

Looking Forward

The continuing deficit is a concern. The PCC has looked to reduce costs wherever possible and will continue to do so in 2024. The PCC has made the decision to continue to not pay its full Parish Share. The need to increase regular giving to meet regular commitments remains and the PCC has started looking at ways to increase Church activities. The PCC is aware of its current dependence on a limited number of donors and regular hall hirers. The PCC is grateful to all those who contribute to the Church, both financially and in other ways.

Catherine Edwards
Acting Treasurer

Administration

Principal Address: St Matthew's Church
Stretton Road
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 4NT

Independent Examiner: Lee Warburton, Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Bankers: HSBC
11 Bridge Street
Warrington
WA1 2EY

CCLA Investment Management Ltd
1 Angel Lane
London
EC4R 3AB

Architect: Mark Pearce BA(Hons), BArch, MA, AADiplCons, RIBA, AABC
Kepczyk Pearce and Sanderson
Architects, Surveyors & Historical Building Consultants
75 Wilmslow Road
Handforth
Cheshire
SK9 3EN

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON – ST MATTHEW’S
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT
THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF STRETTON
(Registered Number: 1132920)**

Independent examiners report to the trustees of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthew's.

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthew's for the year ended 31st December 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 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

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 PCC 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 you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the Statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

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

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

Lee Warburton BA FCA
Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Date 21.03.24

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2023**

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
RECEIPTS					
Voluntary Receipts					
Planned giving		31,982	-	31,982	33,073
Collection at services		8,213	-	8,213	5,410
All other giving/voluntary receipts	4	7,488	1,120	8,608	16,041
Gift Aid Tax recovered		<u>8,850</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,850</u>	<u>9,168</u>
		56,533	1,120	57,653	63,692
 Activities for generating funds					
Investment Income	5	2,252	705	2,957	1,790
Church Activities	6	325	212	537	205
Other Income	7	19,226	-	19,273	15,164
		<u>-</u>	<u>13,405</u>	<u>13,405</u>	<u>-</u>
Total receipts		78,336	15,442	93,778	80,851
 PAYMENTS					
Church activities					
Diocesan parish contribution		31,710	-	31,710	51,255
Clergy and staff costs	8	8,913	-	8,193	17,076
Church running costs	9	21,818	1,084	22,902	17,591
Hall running costs		5,922		5,922	5,243
Charitable donations	10	<u>673</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>673</u>	<u>1,839</u>
		69,036	1,084	70,120	93,004
Costs of generating funds		-	350	350	5,000
Other Costs – major works	11	<u>6,155</u>	<u>12,851</u>	<u>19,006</u>	<u>13,689</u>
Total payments		<u>75,191</u>	<u>14,285</u>	<u>89,476</u>	<u>111,693</u>
 Excess of receipts over payments					
		3,145	1,157	4,302	(30,842)
 Proceeds from sale of shares					
		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>20,000</u>
		3,145	1,157	4,302	(10,842)
 Cash at bank and in hand at 1 January					
		31,247	11,606	42,853	53,695
 Cash at bank and in hand at 31 December					
		<u>34,392</u>	<u>12,763</u>	<u>47,155</u>	<u>42,853</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2023**

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
Cash Funds					
Bank Current Account & Cash		23,392	-	23,392	21,104
Deposit Funds		<u>11,000</u>	<u>12,763</u>	<u>23,763</u>	<u>21,749</u>
		<u>34,392</u>	<u>12,763</u>	<u>47,155</u>	<u>42,853</u>
Investment Assets					
Investment Fund shares at market value		<u>28,057</u>	<u>12,042</u>	<u>40,099</u>	<u>35,623</u>
Assets retained for church use		<u>38,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>38,000</u>	<u>38,000</u>
Liabilities					
Due to Diocese		296	-	296	15
Other liabilities		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>296</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>296</u>	<u>15</u>

Approved by the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthews on 21st March 2024

and signed on its behalf by:

Revd Alan Jewell

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2023**

Notes to the accounts

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, using the Receipts and Payments basis.
2. The fixed asset retained for the church use is the church hall at historical cost.
3. The PCC has considered its reserves in accordance with the policy set out in their report. The reserve requirement based on these accounts is £ 25,000 which is more than met by the PCC's free reserves.

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
4. All other giving/voluntary receipts				
Legacies and Grants	1,375	-	1,375	2,274
Donations	3,369	1,120	4,284	11,377
Other Income	<u>2,744</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,744</u>	<u>2,390</u>
	<u>7,488</u>	<u>1,120</u>	<u>8,403</u>	<u>16,041</u>
5. Income from investments				
Bank interest	<u>325</u>	<u>212</u>	<u>537</u>	<u>205</u>
6. Church Activities				
Fees for weddings and funerals	6,078	-	6,078	7,765
Church hall hire	13,148	-	13,148	7,399
Magazine Sales	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>19,256</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>19,226</u>	<u>15,164</u>
7. Other Income				
Insurance Claim	<u>-</u>	<u>13,405</u>	<u>13,405</u>	<u>-</u>
8. Clergy and staff costs				
Clergy costs	4,279	-	4,279	4,085
Salaries	2,867	-	2,867	10,910
Parish Office costs	<u>1,767</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,767</u>	<u>2,082</u>
	<u>8,913</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,913</u>	<u>17,076</u>
9. Church running expenses				
Organist, Organ and Church Music	626	156	782	731
Bellringers	-	-	-	168
Church flowers	500	-	500	475
Church service costs	1,238	771	2,009	775
Youth Work	-	145	145	-
Insurance	5,777	-	5,777	5,252
Light and heat	7,987	-	7,987	4,416
Repairs and maintenance	4,004	-	4,004	4,395
Sundries	719	12	731	475
Professional fees	367	-	367	424
Accountancy	<u>600</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>600</u>	<u>480</u>
	<u>21,818</u>	<u>1,084</u>	<u>22,902</u>	<u>17,591</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2023**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
10. Charitable donations				
Christian organisations	173	-	173	549
Secular organisations	<u>500</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>1,290</u>
	<u>673</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>673</u>	<u>1,839</u>
 11. Other Costs – major works				
Hall Development	-	12,851	12,851	11,300
Church Floor	4,841	-	4,841	
Re-ordering	<u>1,314</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,314</u>	<u>2,389</u>
	<u>6,155</u>	<u>12,851</u>	<u>19,006</u>	<u>13,689</u>

12. Staff Costs

The PCC pays for the services of a Verger, and a Church Hall Cleaner.

There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.

13. Transactions with Trustees

The incumbent was reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of the Church, totalling £ 493.

Accounts

**The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Stretton
St Matthew's**



**Trustee Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year ending 31st
December 2022**

Registered Charity Number: 1132920

Acknowledgement

This report pays tribute to all those in the congregation; the PCC and the Clergy team for all their hard work and endless enthusiasm in rebuilding our Church following the pandemic. Whilst attendance has not always reached its pre-COVID state, what is encouraging is that we are seeing the shoots of recovery as more families come to Church and engage in our activities.

St. Matthew's Church

St. Matthew's Church is situated in the village of Stretton in Warrington with the parish boundaries encompassing Appleton and Stretton, and bordering Appleton Thorn and St Cross Church which is within the Benefice. The Parish of St Matthew's Stretton is in the Deanery of Great Budworth and is part of the Diocese of Chester.

The Church is a Grade II listed building with a rich heritage dating back to 1827.

The Church is built in red sandstone with Westmorland slate roofs and has a bell tower accommodating a ring of eight bells. It also supports a unique clock with an unusual inscription.

*



The Parish consists of both urban and semi-rural areas and is growing with new housing estates now being occupied, and further developments planned. If the proposed

developments take place, the Church will increasingly be located within a housing community, rather than its previously rural position. The socio-economic status of the local population is also changing, bringing new opportunities and challenges.

The Church considers itself very fortunate to have such a beautiful building, although maintenance of the fabric continues to be a challenge.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School is an integral part of the Church family. It is located next to the Church which facilitates the use of the Church by the School. This allows children of all ages to familiarise themselves with the building, not just for faith-related activities, but for its history, architecture, and heritage.

The Church Hall is co-located next to the School. It has previously been used on a regular basis by several local groups such as Brownies and Stretton Parish Council as well as Church groups and hired out for celebrations. Unfortunately, pandemic restrictions affected its usage with some regular hirers no longer in business, which has impacted upon income. During the weekdays, it is used by Pre-School, which is very popular, and this has been able to continue and expand with an extra half day hire. There is an ongoing effort by the Church Hall Management Committee to market the benefits of hire within the local community.



The Vicar's Report – the Reverend Alan Jewell

Looking at my notes for the first meeting of St Matthew's Parochial Church Council in January 2022, I see that in my opening prayer I remembered two former Churchwardens – Michèle Gwillim and Barbara Hamilton, both of whom died towards the end of 2021 and who were and are sadly missed by us all.

That meeting also looked ahead to what the year would hold: the updating of risk assessments and the church's recovery from the effects of the COVID pandemic. The Church of England was, and still is, considering its response to questions about identity, sexuality, relationships, and marriage, through the *Living in Love and Faith* process. At St Matthew's, we decided that we would, during Lent 2022, follow a Church of England course called *Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together*. This was developed to enable churches to look at how we live with difference and diversity, beginning with questions about how to better include LGBTI+ people.

As well as the blessings and challenges (documented elsewhere in this report) of fabric and finance, the church was instrumental in leading the community's celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. We held a *Big Jubilee Lunch* on the school field (with thanks to the Head and the school community) on what turned out to be a miserably cold and wet day. (In June!) Brave souls sat under umbrellas and gazebos to enjoy music from the outdoor stage and other attractions, but the weather meant that the event did not live up to its promise.

Then, in September, we marked the death of Her Majesty the Queen, with the church open for members of the public to sign a book of condolences. Prayers of thanksgiving were offered for Her Majesty's long reign of devoted Christian service.

During the Covid lockdowns and recovery, we had begun to learn the necessary skills to livestream worship and did so quite successfully using a cobbled together set of kit. St Matthew's took the decision to invest money (from a legacy) in the equipment to enable us to do this better, and to improve our use of audio-visual technology during main services. My thanks to all who support the church's worship.

As part of my personal ministerial development, I was granted a three-month sabbatical. I was away from parish duties from the beginning of November 2022 to the end of January 2023. I am very grateful to the Churchwardens, the ministry team, and others for their support, and to the clergy and Readers from other parishes who stepped in to take services.

In 2022, St Matthew's conducted 31 baptisms (up from 10 in 2021 – a bumper year!), 7 weddings (up from 5 in 2021), and 13 funerals (down from 25 in 2021). As always, the numbers hide the stories – joyful and heart-breaking – that lie behind them.

At our Annual Meeting, at which this report will be considered, there will be much to give thanks for. At the same time, we must be realistic about the challenges that we continue to face. (Not least the fact that now only 46% of people in England and Wales describe

themselves as Christian, and that is closely followed by the growth to 37% of those who say they have no religion.) The bible offers this:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)”

Alan Jewell, Vicar

Aim and Purpose.

Aim

The primary object of all Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC has the responsibility to co-operate with the incumbent – the Reverend Alan Jewell – “in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.” (The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956).

At St. Matthew’s the mission statement is “[Sharing the love of Jesus with all through friendship, prayer and service.](#)” The Church exists to serve its Parish – the whole local Community – not just its congregation.

Structure, governance, and management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England and is a Registered Charity (Charity No. 1132920). The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, the Church Representation Rules 2023, and the Charities Act 2011.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting by those on the electoral roll, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules and the Charity Commission Guidance. They are the charity trustees who are “persons having the general control and management of the administration of the charity” (Charities Act 2011).

The PCC is chaired by the Vicar and meets monthly, with the exceptions of August and December. Meetings alternate between a full business meeting and a discussion meeting of one or two items only. This allows for the business meeting to deal primarily with the operational and financial management of the Church, with reports from sub-committees, and any urgent business. The discussion meeting allows for in-depth debate on key items and is important both for the education of members and to allocate more time for topics which may have greater medium to long term significance than could be given in a bigger agenda. Having adopted this practice over the past three years, it has helped the PCC considerably.

This year, the PCC was able to meet in person although two members preferred to continue to meet via zoom. Whilst this was not ideal, it ensured that they could continue to contribute whilst remaining safe.

As there was only one new member volunteering to sit on the PCC this year at the Annual Meeting, the meeting agreed to waive the Church rule on length of term of office, to allow two existing members to extend their term for another twelve months.

A new Church Warden was appointed at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners to fill the vacancy left following the death of Michele Gwillim the previous year. The existing Church Warden was appointed for a further year.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer maintains an active database ensuring that DBS checks are undertaken and maintained, and that all PCC members complete the appropriate level of safeguarding training. This is reviewed annually. Unfortunately, part way through the year, the Parish Safeguarding Officer resigned and despite numerous efforts it has not been possible to replace him. It is recognised that this is a serious gap for the Church, so to mitigate the impact, Stephen Edwards, Church Warden agreed to take over the administrative aspects of the role. This ensures that DBS checks and training records are accurately maintained and are current. Information as to where to access support is prominently displayed in Church, should it be required.

The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, fully recognising its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

During the year, the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex Officio	Revd. Alan Jewell*
Licensed Workers	Sheila Goulston* (until 06.03.22)
Church Warden	Stephen Edwards* Kath Holbourn (from 20.5.22)
Lay Representatives on The Deanery Synod	Linda Buckley* Stephen Edwards
Elected Members	
Elected until 2022	Chris Ellson Kath Holbourn* Carol Rylett Jenny Snodgrass Neville Snodgrass *Standing Committee membership
Elected until 2023 – 1 year extension	Carol Rylett Chris Ellson
Elected until 2024	Andree Hillas
Elected until 2025	Jean Doherty

The Standing Committee of the PCC meets every two months prior to the full business meeting of the PCC in order to set the agenda and to ensure that relevant papers and information are

ready to inform decision-making. It also has the responsibility to transact the business of the PCC between meetings.

The PCC is assisted by a Finance Sub-Group; Strategy Group; Fabrics Committee and the Church Hall Management Committee.

The Sub-Committee membership is voluntary with PCC members agreeing to assist with the work required in their specific area in order that the PCC is given detailed information on which to base decisions. Non-PCC members are also invited to participate, where their individual area of expertise greatly assists the work being undertaken. The Sub-Groups do not have executive responsibility. The Church Hall Management Committee is responsible for the operational management of the Church Hall, and the management of bookings.

St Matthew's is represented on the Deanery Synod by the Vicar and two lay members (with one vacancy). Our Lay Reader is the Lay Chairman. The Deanery Synod is an intermediary between the PCC and Diocesan Synod and usually meets three times per year. The Deanery Synod is made up of Clergy and Laity members from across the Great Budworth deanery. It met three times during the year. In July there was a presentation by Neil Hudson on Mission and in October Harriet Roberts, the Diocesan Director of Vision and Strategy, spoke about Vision Café. Other matters discussed included the Visitation of the three Bishops to the Deanery, Covid recovery and wellbeing, and Safeguarding.

Members of the Deanery Synod vote during the year in elections to both the Diocesan and General Synods.

A key responsibility of the PCC is to identify how our activities are focused on achieving public benefit and positively impacting on the lives of people in our congregation and community. The Strategy work has focused significantly on how the Church can outreach and build increasingly stronger links with the local community. A key feature of the Strategy work was an honest appraisal of what the Church was doing well, but more importantly identifying areas of weakness and determining how these could be addressed. This evidence-based approach using the Church of England's document – "A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s" allowed the PCC to base its objectives on achieving improvement and greater effectiveness in a more structured manner. The incumbent, Alan Jewell, and the PCC are very aware of the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on "Charities for the advancement of religion" (2011) and are keen to demonstrate how this is being achieved in practice.

Objectives and Activities

Whilst government restrictions to manage the COVID pandemic lifted in late January, the PCC was very aware that, with an elderly congregation, there remained a distinct nervousness in changing too dramatically, and that a “new normal” needed to be created. Social distancing and mask wearing continued for some months, and gradually eased as people became more confident in socialising. Cleaning regimes remained strong. The return of hymn singing, and Church groups meeting restored confidence in many. Holy Communion was delivered by intinction, and congregations began to return. For some, physically returning to Church was not feasible, so the decision to continue live streaming via Facebook and then YouTube was made, although part way through the year zoom was discontinued.

Setting objectives for the post-COVID world has not been easy but the PCC was clear that the objectives which were set had to be realistic, achievable, and focused on delivering spiritual and financial recovery. Importantly, they needed to maximise the opportunities that were available as they arose, particularly in community involvement and integration. Objectives are rarely completed in one year, and the PCC is very mindful that developing a strategic direction to ensure that the Church is placed on a secure footing, is a medium-term goal with incremental improvement, rather than a quick fix. The objectives will of necessity feature annually for some time.

- Further develop the strategy for the Church to enable recovery and growth.

This built on the previous year’s objective which focused on the need to develop a clear pathway for both Church development and financial recovery as this is critical to the survival of the Church. With a worsening financial picture, locally and nationally, the need to take strong action beyond that already in place was imperative. It has always been the underlying premise that finance does not dictate but facilitates the Strategy work. However, it has needed to be a very clear stream of work this year, to prevent a worsening financial situation. The Strategy Group has led on this area of work, linking closely with the Finance Subgroup.

- Continue to strengthen governance in the Church.

Ensure that there is a clear process in place to ensure that policies and procedures are timely and evidence-based and reflect current legislation and good practice. The review of Church policies and procedures was a major undertaking last year, and it was essential that the impetus was not lost. The work is led by the Church Wardens.

- Improving communications

During COVID restrictions, as a matter of necessity and in order to react quickly, the equipment needed to stream services was literally “cobbled together.” Whilst somewhat Heath Robinson in appearance, it withstood amazingly well the length of time for which it was needed. The success of the streaming was felt to be such that a more permanent solution was needed. The objective was therefore to identify the most appropriate system to be installed,

with the requisite permissions, in order that a permanent audio-visual system could be implemented.

- Managing the Vicar's Sabbatical

The sabbatical was approved by the PCC and was seen to be a very important personal and spiritual time for the incumbent. However, three months without a permanent Vicar was initially of concern and this featured as a significant risk on the Risk Register. The PCC had the responsibility for ensuring that any impact of the absence was minimized.

- Beyond walls

Whilst this is part of the Church's strategy to grow the Church and its influence beyond the Church buildings, this objective concerned how practical action both in the locality and by parishioners could make a difference to others. Charity giving had reduced significantly over the pandemic period with a serious impact on charities, and it was felt by members that this should be an area of improvement this year. The work has been undertaken primarily by the Church Fellowship, overseen by the PCC.

- Restoring the fabric of the Church

Unfortunately, the Church has had some ongoing issues with the oak flooring which was laid as part of the re-ordering project. This became a priority to resolve so that the benefits of the open space at the back of Church were not lost.

Subsequently, through the careless act of a hirer, there was a small fire within the kitchen of the Church Hall in November which fortunately did not lead to injury. However, damage to the fabric within and around the kitchen has required significant work to be done. The objective has been to restore maximum function as quickly as possible, and ensure interim arrangements are safe and effective to mitigate the impact.

Meeting our Objectives – Performance and Review

Developing the strategy further

When the strategy was being developed, analysis of the Church's performance was measured against the eight factors likely to be found in any combination in growing churches. These had been identified by the Church Growth Research Programme (CGRP) in their research "From Evidence to Action." The eight factors framed both the areas of work and subsequent prioritisation. They will also allow measurement of progress at the point when it can be evaluated.

The eight factors are:

- Clear mission and purpose
- Actively engaging with local context
- Willing to change and adapt
- A welcoming culture, ongoing relationships
- Leaders innovate, envision, and motivate
- Lay people active in leadership
- Engaging children and young adults
- Nurturing disciples

Having made some initial progress the previous year, work started in earnest to focus on specific areas of work. We were very mindful of a quote from Bob Jackson (2008) *The Road to Growth towards a thriving Church*: Church House Publishing

“Lukewarm people will never have the energy and attractiveness to grow the Church. Churches grow when people are passionate about their faith and the business of sharing it. It is more important to reshape and refresh the people than to reshape and refresh the structures of the Church.”

Whilst often easier to focus on visible elements, it was recognized that cultural issues needed to be addressed as well.

- a) Welcoming and relationship building – has been a major area of work. Whilst we previously thought this was good, a more focused effort has occurred. Ensuring everyone is greeted warmly and invited to stay after the services for refreshments has allowed new people to not only be welcomed but feel part of the Church. Many of our new parishioners have recently moved into the area, so there has been a practical benefit as they have learnt about the area as well as meeting new neighbours. Feedback has been excellent:

“I love coming here, everyone is so friendly” (N).

“I have been looking for a Church for a while where I can belong – this is not my nearest Church, but I have been made to feel so welcome. I’m going to come here from now on” (J).

What has been so rewarding is seeing new friendships building across generations, particularly as more young families join us. Sharing advice on childcare, education and health issues are freely discussed across the coffee table.

Another important development has been the appointment of a volunteer Baptism

Coordinator. Not only has this helped improve the administration of the Baptisms but also has allowed greater input and liaison with the parents prior to and following the service. It is hoped that this will encourage ongoing relationships with the Church.

- b) Children and Young People – this year has seen the return of services which are focused more on children. A regular pattern of morning worship was established in the summer and the services are proving popular. The services are shorter and non-eucharistic and increasingly are involving children within the service, linking with songs sung at Praise and Play. Seeing the little ones dancing in the aisle or attempting to teach the rest of the congregation the actions to songs, makes for a very entertaining morning! The Extravaganzas, which are run on a Sunday afternoon, continue with four held this year. These are primarily for families with children, but all are welcome. They combine worship with crafts, activities, music, and refreshments and are very popular. The first one of the year focused on Candlemas with Christingles made. Often Christingle services occur in Advent but having them after Christmas has been really enjoyable. The second focused on the Easter story as it usually takes place the Sunday before Palm Sunday. This allows the children to see Easter as the important Christian festival that it is. The summer Extravaganza brought the beach inside and popcorn and ice cream were on the menu. Whilst Harvest saw the last one of the year. The children are very fortunate within the parish, as the surrounding fields show them about harvest, and they made some lovely collages to be displayed in Church.

Praise and Play continues to be popular for pre-School age children. Held weekly in term-time, the children and their carers enjoy an hour of crafts and music, ably accompanied by Alan, the Vicar, on his guitar and ukulele. On special occasions, he is also the grand master of the puppet show.

Importantly is the relationship with St Matthew's School which is going from strength to strength. Alan leads a weekly assembly and School comes into Church at least once a term for whole School Services. The strength of the bond between pupils and Vicar is clear to see in their enthusiastic greeting when they see him. This is an area which we continue to foster to the mutual benefit of School and Parish.

- c) Nurturing discipleship – for the first time for some years, we were able to run a faith course in February and March. Externally facilitated, the Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together course allowed analysis of worship within the Church as well as identifying barriers for those from minority groups who might feel unable to regularly practice their faith because of stigma and prejudice. The course was thought-provoking, sometimes uncomfortable as individually and collectively participants had to analyse their own beliefs, but encouraging as ways forward were identified.
- d) Lay people active in leadership - much of the Strategy work is inter-personal, encouraging participation in Church activities on a 1:1 basis – volunteers have increased in some areas which it is hoped will bear fruit as those individuals become more

confident and want to participate more in the life of the Church. A particular area has been in assistance for the Treasurer. This role is increasingly time-consuming and therefore difficult to attract to, so some elements of the role have now been delegated to volunteers under supervision. It is hoped that this will help with succession planning.

- e) Improving the financial position – considerable cost improvement work has been undertaken over the past few years. However, expenditure, particularly the onerous amount of Parish Share, continues to exceed income. Whilst congregations show signs of improvement, giving was not significantly changing. A further review of every budget line was undertaken, and two areas were scrutinised in depth – the waste contract, which was contractually difficult to extract from, but could be advantageous if an alternative provider could be found to commence when the contract expired in 2023, and staff costs. Certain budget lines were frozen e.g., repairs with no allowance made for any overspend. Two members very successfully worked through waste contract alternatives ready for early 2023 when the existing contract expired, resulting in considerable cost saving the next year.

Staff costs were the main area of review, and it was agreed by the PCC that a job review would be undertaken of the four posts which were on the payroll. A formal process was initiated, with consultation and individual interviews. Following the process, it was determined that two posts, that of the Verger and that of the Church Hall Cleaner, which are essentially self-funding would be retained. The post of Director of Music, which had become vacant, was agreed by the PCC would not be replaced. The Parish Secretary – a post of six hours per week, shared with the other Church in the Benefice, was made redundant. It was with great regret that this decision was reached, not only on a personal level for the individual who had been in the post for several years, but also because of the impact on the running of the Parish. This would inevitably place a greater strain on the Vicar and Church Wardens but was financially necessary.

The PCC also made the decision that the Parish was unable to pay the Parish Share in full so reduced its contribution to 50% from the summer. Whilst this has helped stabilise the financial situation, it has consequences for the Diocese of which we are only too aware.

Many consumables are donated in their entirety by individuals to reduce expenditure. Restrictions on heating temperatures in both Church and Church Hall are in place and ongoing discussions are identifying possible and cheaper alternatives for energy usage. Opportunities for cash and credit card donations at all services are in place, and publicity on different ways of giving, prominently displayed.

The PCC is acutely aware that growing the Church is the key to improving not only the finances in year, but providing longer term financial security. There is minimal scope for reducing expenditure, although every opportunity is taken to do this.

In reviewing progress on this objective, the PCC was concerned that having a three-month

period without a Vicar would impact on the Strategy's progress. It was not felt to be appropriate to start something new which could not be sustained during the absence, so certain developments within the Strategy had to be left in abeyance until next year e.g., service changes. However, overall, some progress has been made and there is a commitment to increasing the pace of change over the following year.

Continue to strengthen governance in the Church.

This has been an important underpinning objective for the PCC, not only in having robust policies but also ensuring auditing of key areas of risk management – safeguarding; fire; health and safety. The Church's Insurers Ecclesiastical produce some excellent risk assessments which have been used to monitor progress and ensure compliance. These assessments are all undertaken each year with a concomitant action plan to pick up any areas of weakness. The risk register is reviewed and presented to the PCC at least six monthly, or more frequently if changes are made. All PCC members have an electronic copy of the policies and guidelines. A hard copy is available for reference.

PCC meetings are minuted with an action log, so that actions not completed by the next meeting are not lost. The website shows the extent of PAT testing undertaken, and there is a log of all inspections and regular reviews by external experts of such things as electrical safety; fire extinguishers; lightning conductor and font chain.

It is felt that this objective has been achieved.

Improving communications

This has involved a number of different streams of work. Whilst the biggest element has been the installation of the new A-V system and monitors, other work has also been undertaken. We are fortunate to have a volunteer who runs the website, and he has done a sterling job ensuring the accuracy and timeliness of information on the website. He has also facilitated the live streaming of the Sunday morning service via the website.

DATE	VISITORS 2022	VISITORS 2021	CHANGE
01/01/2022 - 31/01/2022	1350	1136	+18.80%
01/02/2022 - 28/02/2022	1299	972	+33.60%
01/03/2022 - 31/03/2022	1669	1284	+30.00%
01/04/2022 - 30/04/2022	1518	1100	+38.00%
01/05/2022 - 31/05/2022	1747	1369	+27.60%
01/06/2022 - 30/06/2022	1636	1123	+45.70%

01/07/2022 - 31/07/2022	1535	1238	+24.00%
01/08/2022 - 31/08/2022	1368	1264	+8.20%
01/09/2022 - 30/09/2022	1481	1372	+7.90%
01/10/2022 - 31/10/2022	1671	1433	+16.60%
01/11/2022 - 30/11/2022	1827	1748	+4.50%
01/12/2022 - 31/12/2022	1950	1757	+11.00%
Total	19051	15796	

This table shows that each month there has been an increase in visitor activity on the website. We cannot capture the exact information that is being sought from visitors, so we endeavour to have general information available such as car parking for those attending special events, such as funerals and baptisms, as well as times of general services. Similarly, whilst we can count and record the number of “hits” for a specific service, we do not know if visitors are transient or watch most of the service. However, it is encouraging to see numbers rising.

Weekly notices are electronically sent to a large distribution list, and there has been a drive to increase circulation. These also appear on the website each week.

This objective is ongoing – improvement in the external noticeboards and internally within the Church is planned. Continuing development of the website and encouraging people to submit articles to keep a constant supply of quality information available, is essential to make the website the “go to” place for information.

Managing the Vicar’s sabbatical

This was a difficult objective in that the planning required was considerable. Covering the services, in parallel with the other church in the Benefice, was achieved by the sterling work of our Reader, Linda Buckley and the Rev. Chris Moore, who whilst a retired Vicar working full-time at a local Hospice, managed to commit an inordinate amount of time to us. The PCC is extremely grateful for the time and support they gave. They covered many of the Sunday services, with local clergy primarily covering the mid-week services and some special events. Their input was greatly appreciated by all, especially as Christmas is such a busy time in all Parishes. The support of the Rural Dean was very evident and particularly so for the Church Wardens. Communication with the parishioners was very important and the PCC ensured that it was very much “business as usual.” Despite the PCC’s concerns, the congregations continued to grow steadily, and the PCC leadership role became more evident. The PCC feel that this objective was well achieved.

Beyond walls

Whilst the Church's financial situation is difficult, the PCC was keen to ensure that charitable giving should develop. The Disaster Emergency Fund following the Russian invasion of Ukraine was strongly supported by parishioners and our local Christian Aid coordinator ensured that the congregation was very aware of both the need, and how resources were being used.

A number of charities have been supported through the work of the Church Fellowship. This group of ladies who meet monthly invited charities to come to their meetings, which were opened to any interested party, and money was donated to:

Royal National Lifeboat Institution	£130
Christian Aid	£100
Shropshire, Staffordshire & Cheshire Blood Bikes	£90

The Christmas charity this year was chosen as Room at the Inn, a Warrington-based charity which was formed following the closure of the YMCA. Their manager, Zoe, gave a very passionate and inspiring presentation about the work they do with the homeless and vulnerable adults, many of whom have suffered with addiction. Members not only contributed £80 but Zoe left with a carload of clothes, food, and bedding. All agreed it was a very worthwhile charity to support.

The local foodbank receives monthly collections of items donated by parishioners and the Christmas Tree Festival raised £850 for it in donations.

The Community Coffee Morning held each Wednesday ran two charity mornings – one for Parkinson's UK raising £100 and one for Macmillan Cancer Support raising £130. Donations to Christian Aid during Christian Aid Week raised £18. Donations to the Church raised £920 through the year.

Outreach into the Community has been developing. Stronger links have been made with the local Parish Council, and a joint event was held to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Unfortunately, it was a rather wet day which affected attendance, but a lot was learnt from the planning of such an event.

The new housing estates have developed significantly over the past year with many families moving in during the Autumn months. Four hundred leaflets were distributed across the Parish, predominantly in the new estates, to advertise the Christmas services and events. It also presented an opportunity to speak to people as the leaflets were being posted. Attendance at the Christmas Tree Festival and Crib Services particularly, were excellent.

Restoring the fabric of the Church

- a) Unfortunately, the Church floor has been the source of concern over the year with the Builder returning on several occasions to sort out a problem of the floor expanding. A

serious defect occurred in August with the oak floor lifting completely in one area, which effectively caused the whole area to be out of action. After some considerable discussion between the Architect, Builder and Church Wardens, this was rectified as a temporary measure in time for Christmas. A further problem has subsequently arisen which has necessitated the planned repair to be both expedited and significantly extended. This remains an ongoing objective.

- b) The Church Hall kitchen was damaged in a fire caused by the carelessness of a hirer. Though fortunately without any injuries, there was significant damage within the kitchen and smoke damage throughout the Church Hall. The Church Wardens and Church Hall Management Committee have been working with the Loss Adjuster to initially have the Hall deep cleaned and then for the necessary reparations to occur.

In both cases, there has been a financial impact on the Church through no fault of its own. The priority is to ensure that both areas can function effectively as quickly as possible. This objective will continue at least into next year.

Church activities

A number of Church activities have been mentioned throughout the Report, and the Vicar has highlighted some of the special events which took place. Fellowship is at the heart of many of these activities, be it Wednesday Coffee Morning, Church Fellowship with its reputation as the meeting with great supplies of cake(!) or Connections which also meets monthly. This mixed group of parishioners from across the Benefice, has an interesting agenda meeting over a sandwich lunch, with speakers and visits to areas of local interest.

A quiz is held every month in a local hostelry with great fun had by all. Individuals or teams can attend, and then individuals can either join or make up a team, so it has been a great bonding exercise. The unofficial goal is to beat the Vicar!

The Christmas Tree Festival was a great success this year with 17 local firms each sponsoring and dressing a small Christmas Tree, the trees then being displayed around the Church on windowsills and tables. The Festival runs over two weekends – the last one in November and the first in December and is a lovely start to the Christmas period. A charity is chosen each year to be the recipient of donations, as admission is free. This year Warrington Foodbank was chosen, particularly as the Church was very aware of the hardship some local people were experiencing and the food poverty which exists.

Once again, the Advent reflections were run for half an hour midweek. The opportunity to have a short break away from all the preparations for Christmas and have time to reflect is very much appreciated.

Fabric

The PCC receives a monthly report on the status of the fabric of the buildings, which requires a continued programme of repairs and maintenance. From the Quinquennial Inspection in 2019,

the major areas not completed are the masonry repairs and the roof. The latter has been patch repaired to prevent leakage until such time that external funding is available to assist with a more extensive project.

The faculty for Trees was approved to allow specialist pruning and lopping to prevent damage to the Church and adjacent structures. A faculty for the installation of the A-V system was also approved this year.

The Community Payback Scheme has continued to work in the Churchyard, which has been brilliant. Those using the Churchyard have seen a major improvement over time as it is regularly tidied and cared for. The men appreciate the positive feedback they receive from the parishioners.

Looking Forward to 2023

Whilst the challenges the Church faces are not underestimated, there is increasing confidence that growing the Church is a realistic objective. The PCC has agreed a number of practical measures which will commence in 2023, which it is anticipated will increase congregations. We hope to build on the trend of young families attending Church by making sure that worship is relevant and accessible, and demonstrate our willingness to change and be flexible where necessary. However, in the strive to increase our congregations we will not overlook our traditional parishioner base, which has tended to be of the older age group, and which is highly valued. Gaining feedback on any changes that are made will be an important part of any progress and the PCC is keen to give parishioners as many opportunities as possible to provide that.

The PCC, Vicar and clergy team remain deeply committed to the development of St Matthew's, and are optimistic that 2023 will be a year of growth.

Financial Review

Income

Voluntary Giving

The total receipts on general unrestricted funds received were £57,952 and are detailed in the Financial Statements. Planned Giving through Standing Orders decreased by 6%. The Church remained open throughout the year but numbers attending services have been slow to increase. Despite this the collections at services have increased by £2,000 largely from the services at Christmas. One legacy was received during the year as was a grant from the Diocese towards our increased energy costs.

Other Income

The Church Hall continues to increase the number of hirers and income from fees for Weddings and Funerals has remained constant.

Restricted Income

The PCC completed the kitchen stage of the Big Welcome Project and received donations to enable the purchase of a dishwasher and to tarmac the path where drains had been laid. The project will not progress any further due to the Church's financial position. All donations and grants received for the project have been utilized in the progress so far.

Expenditure

Parish Share

The largest item of expenditure was the Parish Share. The amount due from the Church for 2022 was £76,965. The Parish Share is a contribution to the Diocese towards the cost of the provision and support of mission and ministry. This includes housing, support, stipend and pension costs of the clergy of this parish, training of new ordinands, a contribution to national church funds and shared costs of the diocese, including assistance towards the upkeep of churches less able to manage than ourselves. The PCC agreed that it was unable to pay the full Parish Share for 2022. As at 31 December 2022 the amount unpaid was £25,710. This is not a legal liability and so is not shown in the Financial Statements, however the PCC is aware that it should be paid when appropriate.

Staff costs

The PCC paid for a parish secretary, church hall and office cleaner, Director of Music and a vergers for weddings and funerals. Owing to the financial situation of the Church the PCC made the difficult decision, following consultations, that it was no longer able to pay for a parish

secretary and redundancy costs are included within the salaries cost. The Director of Music resigned, and PCC made the decision not to fill the vacant post.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC also supported the clergy by paying Council Tax, Water and environmental charges for the vicarage amounting to £3,460 as well as other costs such as travel, telephone and broadband. There were no expense payments to persons related to, or connected to, the trustees.

Other charitable giving

During the year the church was able to undertake its Christmas Tree Festival, donating the funds raised to the Warrington Foodbank.

Repairs

Routine maintenance and repairs were undertaken during the year to ensure the PCC met its responsibility for health and safety.

Restricted Reserves

During the year the restricted reserve of £13,215 was used to install AV equipment into the church to enhance our worship and outreach to the community. The small amount of funds remaining have been reclassified as general reserves to fund the ongoing costs of the equipment.

Reserves

The PCC has a good reserves position, thanks to generous legacies given in the past. It is the policy of the PCC to keep two months' general running costs as a general reserve, and an additional amount to cover committed contract costs and minor repairs. Major building works, including those identified under the Quinquennial Inspection, will only be undertaken once additional funding has been secured. The reserve requirement under this policy is £25,000. Our current free reserves more than meet this policy and enable the PCC to use the remaining reserves to support its cash flow during 2023 and to continue its mission.

On 31 December 2022 unrestricted reserves were £56,172. There are no longer any designated reserves, so the unrestricted reserves are available to support the general running of the church.

The PCC also had £22,304 in restricted reserves. These include £16,830 for the church hall. The balance is made up of smaller funds belonging to groups within the church. In December 2022 there was a fire in the church hall kitchen. Most of the damage will be covered by insurance, however some costs may be incurred in restoring the kitchen and these will come from the restricted church hall reserve.

Our investments are accumulation shares held with CCLA in The Church of England Investment Fund. These create capital growth rather than income.

Financial Recovery Plan.

During the year the PCC agreed to commence work on a Financial Recovery Plan. As already mentioned, this included a reduction in staff costs and also included work towards a revised waste contract for the Church and the church hall. Repairs were kept to the minimum required for health and safety and the re-ordering project has been brought to a natural conclusion. Unfortunately, the increase in energy costs has negated much of the cost savings and the next stage of the Financial Recovery Plan is to look at ways of increasing the income of the Church.

Looking Forward

The continuing deficit is a concern. The PCC has looked to reduce costs wherever possible and will continue to do so in 2023. The PCC has made the decision not to pay its full Parish Share. The increase in energy costs has placed an additional cost on the Church and unfortunately negated most of the cost savings made by the PCC in 2022. The need to increase regular giving to meet regular commitments remains and the PCC has started looking at ways to increase Church activities. The PCC is aware of its current dependence on a limited number of donors and regular hall hirers. The PCC is grateful to all those who contribute to the Church, both financially and in other ways.

Administration

Principal Address: St Matthew's Church

Stretton Road
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 4NT

Independent Examiner: Lee Warburton, Voisey & Co

Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Bankers:

HSBC
11 Bridge Street
Warrington
WA1 2EY

CCLA Investment Management Ltd
1 Angel Lane
London
EC4R 3AB

Architect:

Mark Pearce BA(Hons), BArch, MA, AADiplCons, RIBA, AABC
Kepczyk Pearce and Sanderson
Architects, Surveyors & Historical Building Consultants
75 Wilmslow Road
Handforth
Cheshire
SK9 3EN

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON – ST MATTHEW’S
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

I report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2022 which are set out on pages 2 to 5.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

As the members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that the audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

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

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

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 PCC 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 you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the Statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep proper accounting records are kept in accordance with Section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts are prepared which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Lee Warburton BA FCA
Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Date 24.04.23

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2022**

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
RECEIPTS					
Voluntary Receipts					
Planned giving		33,073	-	33,073	35,174
Collection at services		5,410	-	5,410	3,302
All other giving/voluntary receipts	4	10,325	5,716	16,041	17,203
Gift Aid Tax recovered		<u>9,144</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>9,168</u>	<u>9,770</u>
		57,952	5,740	63,692	65,449
Activities for generating funds					
Investment Income	5	1,016	774	1,790	1,538
Church Activities	6	143	62	205	25
		<u>15,164</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,164</u>	<u>14,567</u>
Total receipts		74,275	6,576	80,851	81,579
PAYMENTS					
Church activities					
Diocesan parish contribution		51,255	-	51,255	75,269
Clergy and staff costs	7	17,076	-	17,076	13,717
Church running costs	8	17,424	167	17,591	19,702
Hall running costs		5,243		5,243	5,469
Charitable donations	9	<u>1,639</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>1,839</u>	<u>1,149</u>
		92,637	367	93,004	115,306
Costs of generating funds					
Other Costs – major works	10	-	5,000	5,000	345
		<u>1,041</u>	<u>12,648</u>	<u>13,689</u>	<u>36,653</u>
Total payments		<u>93,678</u>	<u>18,015</u>	<u>111,693</u>	<u>152,304</u>
Excess of receipts over payments					
		(19,403)	(11,439)	(30,842)	(70,725)
Proceeds from sale of shares					
		20,000	-	20,000	40,000
Reclassification of funds					
		1,957	(1,957)	-	-
Transfer to St Cross					
		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,373)</u>
		2,554	(13,396)	(10,842)	(33,098)
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 January					
		28,693	25,002	53,695	86,794
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 December					
		<u>31,247</u>	<u>11,606</u>	<u>42,853</u>	<u>53,696</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2022**

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
Cash Funds					
Bank Current Account & Cash		21,104	-	21,104	20,755
Deposit Funds		<u>10,143</u>	<u>11,606</u>	<u>21,749</u>	<u>32,941</u>
		<u>31,247</u>	<u>11,606</u>	<u>42,853</u>	<u>53,696</u>
Investment Assets					
Investment Fund shares at market value		<u>24,925</u>	<u>10,698</u>	<u>35,623</u>	<u>59,863</u>
Assets retained for church use		<u>38,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>38,000</u>	<u>38,000</u>
Liabilities					
Due to Diocese		15	-	15	533
Other liabilities		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>15</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>533</u>

Approved by the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthews on 20th April 2023
and signed on its behalf by:

Revd Alan Jewell

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2022**

Notes to the accounts

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, using the Receipts and Payments basis.
2. The fixed asset retained for the church use is the church hall at historical cost.
3. The PCC has considered its reserves in accordance with the policy set out in their report. The reserve requirement based on these accounts is £25,000 which is more than met by the PCC's free reserves.

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
4. All other giving/voluntary receipts				
Legacies and Grants	2,274	-	2,274	5,773
Donations	5,661	5,716	11,377	8,662
Other Income	<u>2,390</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,390</u>	<u>2,768</u>
	<u>10,325</u>	<u>5,716</u>	<u>16,041</u>	<u>17,203</u>
5. Income from investments				
Bank interest	<u>143</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>25</u>
6. Church Activities				
Fees for weddings and funerals	7,765	-	7,765	7,839
Church hall hire	7,399	-	7,399	6,728
Magazine Sales	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>15,164</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,164</u>	<u>14,567</u>
7. Clergy and staff costs				
Clergy costs	4,085	-	4,085	3,749
Salaries	10,910	-	10,910	8,554
Parish Office costs	<u>2,081</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,082</u>	<u>1,414</u>
	<u>17,076</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>17,076</u>	<u>13,717</u>
8. Church running expenses				
Organist and Choir Fees	731	-	731	940
Bellringers	168	-	168	256
Church flowers	475	-	475	379
Church service costs	629	146	775	770
Insurance	5,252	-	5,252	5,299
Light and heat	4,416	-	4,416	3,720
Repairs and maintenance	4,395	-	4,395	7,255
Sundries	454	21	475	211
Professional fees	424	-	424	392
Accountancy	<u>480</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>480</u>	<u>480</u>
	<u>17,424</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>17,591</u>	<u>19,702</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2022**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
9. Charitable donations				
Christian organisations	349	200	549	210
Secular organisations	<u>1,290</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,290</u>	<u>939</u>
	<u>1,639</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>1,839</u>	<u>1,149</u>
 10. Other Costs – major works				
AV Equipment	-	11,300	11,300	-
Re-ordering	<u>1,041</u>	<u>1,348</u>	<u>2,389</u>	<u>36,653</u>
	<u>1,041</u>	<u>12,648</u>	<u>13,689</u>	<u>36,653</u>

11. Staff Costs

The PCC pays for the services of a Verger, and a Church Hall Cleaner. The Director of Music resigned during the year and the post of Parish Secretary was made redundant. Salary and redundancy costs are included under the heading Clergy and Staff Costs.

There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.

12. Transactions with Trustees

The incumbent was reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of the Church, totalling £433.

Accounts

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton
St Matthew's



**Trustee Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year ending
31st December 2021**

Registered Charity Number: 1132920

Dedication and Acknowledgement

This report is dedicated to, and acknowledges, the work undertaken by the Ministry team, PCC and volunteers who have given so generously of their time and energy to ensure the work of the Church could continue throughout the pandemic.

Our special thanks go to two very dedicated people who made significant contributions to the Parish – Barbara Hamilton, a former Churchwarden, and Michele Gwillim, our current Churchwarden, both of whom have sadly died this year.

St. Matthew's Church

St. Matthew's Church is situated in the village of Stretton in Warrington with the parish boundaries encompassing Appleton and Stretton, and borders Appleton Thorn and St Cross Church which is within the Benefice. The Parish of St Matthew's Stretton is in the Deanery of Great Budworth and is part of the Diocese of Chester.

The Church is a Grade II listed building with a rich heritage dating back to 1827.

The Church is built in red sandstone with Westmorland slate roofs and has a bell tower accommodating a ring of eight bells. Their rich melodic tones can be heard all over the Parish summoning people to services and celebrating special events.

The Parish consists of both urban and semi-rural areas and is growing with new housing estates in the process of being built and further developments planned. If the proposed developments take place, the Church will increasingly be located within a housing community, rather than its previously rural position. The socio-economic status of the local population is also changing, bringing new opportunities and challenges.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School is an integral part of the Church family. It is located next to the Church which facilitates the use of the Church by the School. This allows children of all ages to familiarise themselves with the building, not just for faith-related activities, but for its history, architecture, and heritage.

The Church Hall is co-located next to the School. It has previously been used on a regular basis by several local groups such as Brownies and Stretton Parish Council as well as Church groups and hired out for celebrations. Unfortunately, pandemic restrictions have affected its usage. During the weekdays, it is used by Pre-School which is very popular and has been able to continue and expand. Gradually, groups are returning and usage for celebrations is increasing.

The Vicar's Report – the Reverend Alan Jewell

In 2020, we were forced to learn new ways of doing things and acquired skills we hadn't previously needed. In 2021, we continued to practise and polish those skills. On Sunday mornings we have gathered a well-prepared team of people who lead worship, some in church and some from their own homes via Zoom, with the liturgy presented using PowerPoint. The result is a hybrid: you can attend church in person or virtually. We are still at the mercy of the technology – a cobbled-together assembly of laptops and iPads, cameras and microphones, a router, a projector and screen... and every so often one piece of kit won't talk to another, or the internet connection drops. We have plans to invest in the technology, and hope to have a system that will make all of this very much easier and better.

We have learned to use video conferencing for meetings and services. St Matthew's PCC has held Zoom meetings. Each week since lockdown began, Linda Buckley, our Reader, has offered a reflection on the St Matthew's Church Facebook page. Praise & Play, and the Singing Kettle, were kept alive with online singalongs.

Limited personal contact took its toll on pastoral matters: making funeral arrangements over the phone is not the same as sitting with a bereaved family as they talk about their loved one and plan their goodbyes. Continued restrictions due to the pandemic meant that some of the funerals, which might have had a service in church, went directly to the crematorium or graveside.

There were just 5 weddings in 2021. Some of these had been postponed from the previous year. Other weddings have been pushed forward to next year. In August 2021 we were very pleased to hold a service of blessing for Linda and Dennis Buckley as they celebrated their 40th Wedding Anniversary.

In May 2021, new legislation changed the way in which marriages are registered. On the plus side, couples can now have the names of their mothers and stepparents, rather than simply the father of each, on their marriage certificate. On the downside, clergy can no longer issue marriage certificates. A marriage document must be completed and signed and sent off to the registrar. Couples then must apply to the register office for a copy of their marriage certificate.

There were 10 baptisms in 2021. Due to Covid, we have made some changes to how baptisms are conducted: for example, when we go to the font, I now ask a parent or godparent to hold the child rather than hand them to me. I have to admit, I miss the absolute pleasure and privilege of being entrusted with someone's baby, and hope that

at some point we will be able to reintroduce this part of the service! Baptisms have been greatly enhanced by the newly opened space around the font. Smaller gatherings can now be seated in that area, giving everyone a first-class view of the baptism.

The relationship between Church and School continues to enrich both. One particular highlight of 2021 (when so much had to be done virtually) was an outdoor 'Stations of the Cross' for Easter, with children following the story of Holy Week in the School grounds and Churchyard.

The Diocese expects clergy to take part in continued ministerial development. In 2021, I had my Ministerial Development Review meeting with the Archdeacon of Chester. I also met regularly with my clergy peer group and spiritual director. I attended a number of online training events, including safeguarding training, and a number of webinars provided by the Church of England's Evangelism and Discipleship team, and others.

We are hopeful that 2022 will see us not only recovering but flourishing and growing. We also face huge challenges which the pandemic has exacerbated.

In the letter to the Hebrews (12.1,2) we are encouraged to

run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Every blessing,

Alan Jewell

Aim and Purpose.

Aim

The primary object of all Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC has the responsibility to co-operate with the incumbent – the Reverend Alan Jewell – “in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.” (The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956).

At St. Matthew’s the mission statement is “[Sharing the love of Jesus with all through friendship, prayer and service](#)”. The Church exists to serve its Parish – the whole local Community – not just its congregation.

Structure, governance, and management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England and is a Registered Charity (Charity No. 1132920). The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, the Church Representation Rules 2011, and the Charities Act 2011.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting by those on the electoral roll, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules and the Charity Commission Guidance. They are the charity trustees who are “persons having the general control and management of the administration of the charity” (Charities Act 2011).

The PCC is chaired by the Vicar and meets monthly, with the exceptions of August and December. Meetings alternate between a full business meeting and a discussion meeting of one or two items only. This allows for the business meeting to deal primarily with the operational and financial management of the Church, with reports from sub-committees, and any urgent business. The discussion meeting allows for in-depth debate on key items and is important both for the education of members and to allocate time to topics which may have greater medium to long term significance, than could be given in a bigger agenda. Having adopted this practice over the past three years, it has helped the PCC considerably.

This year, it has not been possible to meet in person for some considerable period, so PCC meetings were held via Zoom from January to July inclusive. Whilst it had its limitations, especially for discussion meetings, it ensured the governance and management of the Church was uninterrupted. Importantly, it ensured the cohesiveness

of the PCC was maintained.

There was only one new member of the PCC this year following the Annual Meeting, who has previously served elsewhere on a PCC, so her induction was personalised. However, the recruitment, selection and induction process for PCC members and all volunteers was reviewed prior to the election as part of the governance review and is in place to ensure safe recruitment and support.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer maintains an active database ensuring DBS checks are undertaken and maintained, and that all PCC members complete the appropriate level of safeguarding training. This is reviewed annually.

The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, fully recognising its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex Officio	Revd Alan Jewell*
Licensed Workers	Sheila Goulston* (until 06.03.22)
Church Warden	Michele Gwillim* (until 23.11.21) Stephen Edwards*
Lay Representatives on The Deanery Synod	Linda Buckley* (until 20.05.21) Stephen Edwards
Elected Members	
Elected until 2021	Catherine Edwards (until 20.05.21) Alison Hughes (until 20.05.21) Rose Jewell (until 20.05.21)
Elected until 2022	Chris Ellson Kath Holbourn* Carol Rylett Jenny Snodgrass Neville Snodgrass *Standing Committee membership
Elected until 2024	Andree Hillas

The Standing Committee of the PCC meets bimonthly prior to the full business meeting of the PCC in order to set the agenda and ensure relevant papers and information are ready to inform decision-making. It also has the responsibility to transact the business of the PCC between meetings.

The PCC is assisted by a Finance Sub-Group; Strategy Group; Fabrics Committee and the Church Hall Management Committee.

The Sub-Committee membership is voluntary with PCC members agreeing to assist with the work required in their specific area in order that the PCC is given detailed information on which to base decisions. Non-PCC members are also invited to participate, where their individual area of expertise greatly assists the work being undertaken. The Sub-Groups do not have executive responsibility. The Church Hall Management Committee is responsible for the operational management of the Church Hall and the management of bookings.

St Matthew's is represented on the Deanery Synod by the Vicar and two lay members (with one vacancy). The Deanery Synod is an intermediary between the PCC and Diocesan Synod and usually meets three times per year. In 2021, the March meeting held via zoom considered clergy wellbeing – this has been an ongoing discussion across the Church of England since the General Synod voted to support an improved approach to the care and well-being of clergy. September's meeting had presentations on the course Living in Love and Faith, prior to its rollout across the parishes, as well as on COP 26. An open meeting was hosted in November with Bishop Sam attending for a question-and-answer session. Members of the Deanery Synod vote during the year in elections to both the Diocesan and General Synods.

Formal training for the PCC has not been possible, but the bimonthly discussion meetings have ensured that members are continually developing their knowledge and expertise.

A key responsibility of the PCC is to identify how our activities are focused on achieving public benefit and positively impacting on the lives of people in our congregation and community. The Strategy work has focused significantly on how the Church can outreach and build increasingly stronger links with the local community, particularly as the pandemic restrictions reduce.

When planning the activities for the year, our incumbent, Alan Jewell, and the PCC have considered the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on "Charities for the advancement of religion" (2011).

Objectives and Activities

With continuing government restrictions to manage the pandemic, the PCC felt that the objectives for 2021 should be curtailed. No-one had anticipated that the pandemic and its impact would still be a core part of life in 2021, and so it was essential that objectives were set which were realistic; achievable and focused on delivering spiritual and financial recovery. Importantly, they needed to maximise the opportunities that were available as they arose, particularly in community involvement and integration.

- Developing a strategy for the Church to enable recovery and growth.

The need to develop a clear pathway for both Church development and financial recovery is critical to the survival of the Church. Balancing aspiration and resources, both human and financial, has necessitated an in-depth and honest appraisal of current provision and areas of required improvement. The Strategy Group was established and has led on this area of work, linking closely with the Finance Subgroup.

- Completing the Phase 1 development of the kitchen installation.

This essential capital project continued from 2020, having acquired the requisite funding. Building work began following a series of planning meetings and completed in the late summer, allowing the kitchen to be used as soon as restrictions allowed. This objective was seen to be a key part of the strategy and an integral element of our purpose in promoting fellowship within our congregations, as well as having the ability to outreach into the Community. The Churchwarden led a small planning group to deliver this objective.

- Strengthening Governance

As a Church, as part of our review of processes, it was felt that risk management should be strengthened. A major review of all policies and procedures was undertaken with guidance produced on all key health and safety risks; formats standardised, and the risk register regularly submitted to PCC. COVID risk assessments had been undertaken at least monthly since the start of the pandemic with rigorous cleaning schedules in place. This allowed the Church to stay open at all times, except when lockdown prohibited it, even when other Churches stayed closed. This work was led by a PCC member.

- Building Community outside the Church Walls

It is our aspiration to be seen as an integral part of our local community, not just as a beautiful building. Our links with the Church School remain very strong and as new people move into the area, and confidence to mix socially increases, this work is

increasingly important. Whilst it is a key part of our strategy, its importance necessitates it being an objective of its own. The Standing Committee leads on this objective.

Meeting our Objectives

Developing the strategy

The Strategy Group, led by the Vicar, initially used “A Vision for the Church of England in the 2020s”, a document produced by the Archbishop of York in November 2020 as the starting point for discussion. However, it soon became clear that to focus debate and ensure its relevance to St Matthew’s, we needed to honestly appraise our Church, our ministry, and our performance.

The Vicar suggested using work undertaken by the Church Growth Research Programme (CGRP) who had identified several factors in their research “From Evidence to Action” relating to church growth. Whilst it is recognised that no one single factor guarantees growth in a Church, there were eight factors which were likely to be found in any combination in growing churches. Helpfully, they produce checklists which can be used by churches to identify their strengths and weaknesses in each area. These are followed by a series of questions to clarify your response.

The eight factors are:

- Clear mission and purpose
- Actively engaging with local context
- Willing to change and adapt
- A welcoming culture, ongoing relationships
- Leaders innovate, envision, and motivate
- Lay people active in leadership
- Engaging children and young adults
- Nurturing disciples

In a series of initially fortnightly meetings, the Strategy Group worked through the checklist, giving independent scores initially before discussion on each set of questions. All members agreed that to make the exercise worthwhile, brutal honesty was required and received! Scores out of 10 were given for each section and some of these started at 2/10. Whilst disconcerting and a little uncomfortable, by the end of the process it was felt that a truly honest appraisal had been undertaken. Some factors it was agreed that at the current time have less relevance, and we do not have the resources available to

make progress. An example of this is provision for young people. Whilst considerable work is done with pre-school and primary school age children, there are very few young people attending Church. In the locality however, there are facilities already available in adjacent Churches for young people which we can access and signpost to, so this was agreed to be a more sensible way to proceed.

Having completed the checklist and brainstormed areas of improvement in each factor, a priority order was agreed. Underpinning all the discussion was a need to balance the development of a clear pathway to recovery and that some desirable elements whilst very worthy would have to be deferred for the time being.

The Finance Subgroup were closely aligned with the work as they focused on financial recovery – identifying ways of increasing income, reducing expenditure and general cost improvement. It was essential that the two streams of work were congruent as Church growth is dependent on successful financial recovery.

Government restrictions limited some progress but gave the opportunity to prioritise areas of work. This objective will span a number of years, but work commenced in several areas as we developed an action plan:

- Communication about our mission and purpose – initially to the wider PCC via presentations and regular updates about the Strategy. The bigger challenge will be how do we effectively communicate with our community, which is geographically spread and increasingly diverse. Christmas was a great opportunity to start the process with a leaflet drop to all the new houses outlining the events and services and contact details for further information about the Church.
- Actively engaging with our local context – understanding the potential changes occurring around the Church and within the community following the publication of Warrington Council's Local Plan 2021. Whilst there is local opposition to the extent and location of housing development, we need to be positive about opportunities for mission and realistic about the impact of the Plan. The need for proactivity in responding to and shaping the Plan as it is revised was clearly recognised, in order to influence potential changes.
- Willingness to change and adapt – the pandemic necessitated changes to services and rather than return to the previous status quo, work is underway to identify areas of improvement as well as reflection on what has worked well. Streaming services remains popular so will continue. Funds have been identified to replace the audio-visual system with a permanent bespoke system which will be less susceptible to breakdown.

- Welcoming culture – the need to ensure that everyone, new to Church or regular worshipper, receives a genuinely warm welcome has been a focus for us. With COVID restrictions requesting limited personal contact and reduced communication between members of the congregation, this has not always been easy, but as restrictions lifted and the opportunity to offer fellowship and refreshment increased, this remains an important objective.
- Leadership – we have a small Ministry team and a small band of volunteers. Shielding has reduced the ability of many of our congregation from physically helping in Church. However, our volunteer base has increased as activities have developed notably for Praise and Play, the Community Coffee Morning and participation in streamed services. The latter allows volunteers to participate from their own homes, so for those shielding they can still contribute. Discussion about how the PCC can more visibly demonstrate its leadership has taken place.
- Engaging children – Praise and Play was able to resume in early October during school terms. This is increasingly popular both with pre-school children and their parents. The Vicar spends time each week in St Matthew's School and the close links between Church and School continue to grow. Visits to Grappenhall Heys County Primary School, a little further away but where increasing numbers of local children do and will attend, are also continuing. Whilst there is not the interest currently for a Sunday School, a popular pre-COVID activity were the Family Extravaganzas held quarterly on a Sunday afternoon. Planning for the first Extravaganza to take place in January 2022 is well underway.
- Nurturing Discipleship – The need to develop faith and understanding through small group working is a key action. Work has commenced on planning the "Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together" with an external facilitator. This five-week course was felt to be a good place to start.

The Kitchen completion

The long-awaited completion of the kitchen has been an overwhelming success. The picture below shows the space beforehand following the removal of pews in 2020.



A sensitive and aesthetically pleasing design incorporated pew frontals to form the base of the kitchen, ensuring that it blended perfectly with the adjacent structures. It has



allowed us to provide refreshments, once permitted, after each service and during meetings. Bishop Sam was our first “customer” to drop in for a drink when he visited.

Strengthening Governance

This piece of work had two main components – ensuring that the Church was compliant with legislative requirements; that it implemented good practice; ensured the safety of all who worked or visited the Church and could evidence this, as well as training the PCC in their risk management responsibilities. Whilst it is recognised that this is not necessarily the most interesting part of a PCC agenda, the consequences of failure to act can be severe. Whilst improving the governance structure and processes, it has been important that PCC approval of new and updated policies/guidelines has been received and regular governance items discussed.

Building Community outside the Church Walls

This objective will continue to be an important part of our Strategy. Whilst opportunities to meet in person have been curtailed, a considerable following of our streamed services has occurred. It has been very successful, with our audience even extending to Dorset! Weekly reflections on Facebook on a Wednesday evening undertaken by our Lay Reader have also continued and been very much appreciated.

The Community Payback Scheme members had to stop due to restrictions for several months but restarted in September and have made an amazing difference to our Churchyard. Relatives of those interred have commented on how well kept the graveyard is, and with their enthusiastic pruning, the men have ensured the shrubs and pathways are clear and safer for everyone. A strong, mutually beneficial partnership has developed with feedback stating that the men enjoy the work and the Scheme now operates on both days of the weekend.

The Community Coffee Morning was able to restart each week, and a steady stream of “regulars” are building up. It is most enjoyable when dog-walkers and passers-by pop in for free refreshments so that they can view the inside of the Church without feeling too conspicuous. A warm welcome as well as specialty coffees and biscuits/cake greets everyone.

Activities and Performance

Special Events

Fortunately, the restrictions on special events were less challenging for the majority of 2021. In the latter half of the year, numbers able to attend these services were lifted centrally but presented their own challenges in ensuring a COVID-secure environment.

Funerals continued to take place all year and eighteen services were held in total. Following the funerals, several burials in the churchyard took place, as well as interment of cremated remains.

Weddings are always a joyous occasion and this year we were delighted to be able to host five weddings from June. Most of the couples had previously had to cancel their ceremonies due to pandemic restrictions, so they were very pleased that these could now take place.

Welcoming children into the Church through Christening has been a casualty of the pandemic. However, from July, we were able to start an almost weekly Christening service with twelve taking place in the latter part of the year. Whilst most parents wanted an individual, private service, one child was christened in our Sunday Morning service to the delight of our congregation.

Church Activities

Several of our Church activities were unable to resume in 2021 due to concerns over meeting. However, the weekly Community Coffee Morning commenced in September along with the monthly Church Fellowship.

Church Fellowship is a group of ladies from across the Benefice who meet “to grow in understanding of Church membership, to play a full part in the life and mission of the Church and to share in the fellowship which it offers”. Each meeting has a different theme and activity, starting in September with afternoon tea at a local Garden Centre. As part of the Church’s Strategy, our Lay Reader led the October meeting with a mini-reflection and a discussion on how the group might help in the rebuilding of the Church post-pandemic.

November saw the Fellowship fulfilling one of its charitable aims in supporting Operation Christmas Child. The generosity and enthusiasm of members in filling twenty-one shoeboxes with goodies for all age-groups and genders was staggering. Fellowship funds paid the £5 postage donation per box which were then all taken to a local distribution centre during the National Collection week.

Christmas celebrations came early in the first week of December for Fellowship members, in the form of a Christmas afternoon tea thoroughly enjoyed by all. It has been wonderful to see the numbers of members increase so rapidly, and for the obvious enjoyment received by all who attend.

Praise and Play, as previously mentioned, recommenced in October for our pre-school children. It is a great opportunity not just for the children to familiarise themselves with the Church, but also to play and undertake some wonderful craft activities. For accompanying parents, they have the chance to meet other parents and socialise. Several newcomers to the area have attended and reported that they have found it most welcoming and supportive.

October also saw the return of our popular monthly Quiz night. Hosted by a local hostelry and run by our Lay Reader, teams battle it out to try and beat the Vicar!!! It is a great opportunity for those in the pub to see that Church people are human too! Whilst played in small teams, all are welcome and individuals attending on their own get to know new people as they join a team.

Once again, we were unable to hold our Autumn Fair, which has been a good fundraiser for the Church in the past. This has put continuing pressure on the budget as we are still unable to pass a collection plate during services due to COVID restrictions. Whilst there are options for giving – a contactless card machine; envelopes on entry; a centralised collection plate as well as publicised website opportunities, the reality is that these generate much less income than the collection plate in the pew, especially at larger services.

The Christmas Tree Festival was able to take place this year, although in a slightly restricted manner. It is held over two weekends at the end of November and beginning of December. Local businesses decorate a small tree, and these are displayed around the Church on windowsills and tables. When lit, the Church looks amazing - full of light. Donations this year were in aid of our local hospice, St Rocco's and the grand total achieved, despite our restrictions, was £969.32.

During Advent, the weekly reflection took place in Church for half an hour. This short opportunity to spend in peaceful reflection at such a busy time of year was much appreciated.

The Outdoor Carol Service was repeated this year, but we were not so fortunate with the weather which was very wet and blustery. However, a small number of hardy souls braved the elements and sang their hearts out.

The indoor Carol Service on the 19th of December was well attended and enjoyed by all participants. Along with the Crib Service on Christmas Eve, it sets the scene for Christmas, and we were delighted that so many people attended.

To encourage exercise, a Walk to Jerusalem was started on Christmas Day 2020. This is a virtual walk where participants record the length of their daily walking on the World Walking App. The distance from our Lychgate to Jerusalem is 6077km and the plan was to arrive in time for Easter. This became so popular that not only did we get to Jerusalem ahead of schedule by 26 days, but also walked back!! To make it even more interesting, the route home was via a walk in Israel, followed by another in Jordan. Having arrived home in Warrington, we virtually embarked upon a walk around the coast of Britain, starting in the South-West corner of Scotland and by the end of the year we were walking along the south coast of England. Regular updates are given to the congregation with encouragement to join in.

Fabric

As with many Churches, there is the need for a continual programme of repairs and maintenance. Externally, the Churchwarden has worked closely with the Community Payback Supervisor to work through several smaller painting and repair jobs, alongside their maintenance of the grounds. This has been very helpful. Volunteers continue to assist in painting doors and railings as part of an ongoing programme. A comprehensive Topple Test was also undertaken with all graves requiring attention signed and catalogued.

Legacy funding has enabled the purchase of tables to enable safe serving of refreshments, which was greatly appreciated.

A container adjacent to the Church Hall, which had been used by the Link Club, was left after their insolvency. Whilst it needed some repairs, undertaken by volunteers, it has proven a useful storage asset.

The Church has many trees within its curtilage and following specialist reports, a faculty was submitted to address the tree survey recommendations. The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) “resolved to recommend the works” on the 22nd of October. We are awaiting the grant of the faculty before this work is undertaken.

Charitable Giving

This has continued to be difficult this year as some of our charitable giving opportunities

have diminished. Regular donations to Warrington Foodbank continued and this was supplemented by a food collection being taken at Harvest Festival. A large amount of food from both the joint Church and School collections was very gratefully received. We were also able to deliver small gifts to frail and elderly members of the Church.

Collections for Christian Aid and The Children's Society were advertised as well as a collection point within Church. Unfortunately, due to smaller congregations, these did not generate large amounts of donations.

There are however many examples of individuals giving of their personal time and resources to assist both the Church and other members of the Community. Whilst shunning the limelight, these unsung volunteers are showing practically their Christianity in action.

Looking Forward to 2022

The task ahead of the Church in the coming year cannot be underestimated. Despite the excellent work undertaken by the Treasurer in constantly reviewing and helping the PCC manage expenditure, income loss has been significant. Our congregation has reduced because of the pandemic, and as a natural consequence of an older population, and so growing the Church is a key objective. However, within the context of inflation and job insecurities, there is no guarantee that increasing the congregation will proportionately increase income.

The PCC is determined that their financial recovery plan for 2022 will be robust and allow the Church to make headway with the strategy and deliver growth across a range of areas. Whilst the financial situation is of concern, there are shoots of opportunity about which to be positive. Increasingly, several young families amongst others, are beginning to participate in Church activities, which is both welcome and to be encouraged, as they are our future.

Financial Review

Income

Voluntary Giving

The total receipts on general unrestricted funds received were £55,282 and are detailed in the Financial Statements. Planned Giving through Standing Orders and Weekly Giving Envelopes decreased by 8%. Although the Church remained open during 2021, the necessary Covid 19 restrictions on services meant that the number of people attending services was reduced as was the number of services held. One legacy was received during the year.

Other Income

Due to the Covid 19 restrictions we were only able to open our Church Hall to educational groups for part of the year. At the beginning of the year, one regular hirer went into administration and so the Church Hall income from educational providers reduced. As restrictions lifted, the Hall has managed to increase the number of other hirers to negate this loss.

Restricted Income

The PCC continued to make the Big Welcome Project a priority and was grateful to receive donations and grants towards this totalling £10,167.

Expenditure

Parish Share

The largest item of expenditure was the Parish Share of £75,269, paid to the Diocese. We are grateful for the support given by the Diocese in reducing the payments for the first 3 months of the year to the 2020 level. The contribution from St Matthew's increased by 1% from last year. The Parish Share is a contribution to the Diocese towards the cost of the provision and support of mission and ministry. This includes housing, support, stipend and pension costs of the clergy of this parish, training of new ordinands, a contribution to national church funds and shared costs of the diocese, including assistance towards the upkeep of churches less able to manage than ourselves.

Staff costs

The PCC pays for a Parish Secretary, Church Hall and office cleaner, Director of Music and a Verger for wedding and funerals. Details of our staff costs are included in the Financial Statements.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC also supported the clergy by paying Council Tax, Water and environmental charges for the Vicarage amounting to £3,343 as well as other costs such as travel, telephone, and broadband. There were no payments to persons related to, or connected to, the Trustees.

Other charitable giving

During the year the Church was able to undertake its Christmas Tree Festival, on a reduced scale, donating the funds raised to St Rocco's. It has continued its donations to the Warrington Foodbank.

Repairs

Routine maintenance and repairs were undertaken during the year to ensure the PCC met its responsibility for health and safety. An electrical survey was undertaken as well as a survey of the drains to investigate the flooding in the basement. Repairs were made to the boiler.

Re-ordering

During the year we were able to continue the Big Welcome Project. Using funds raised specifically for the project, the kitchen was installed facilitating increased use of the area at the back of Church. The total amount spent during the year was £36,653.

Reserves

The PCC has a good reserves position, thanks to generous legacies given in the past. It is the policy of the PCC to keep two months general running costs as a general reserve, and an additional amount to cover committed contract costs and minor repairs. Major building works, including those identified under the Quinquennial Inspection, will only be undertaken once additional funding has been secured. The reserve requirement under this policy is £32,000. Our current free reserves more than meet this policy and enable the PCC to use the remaining reserves to support its cash flow during 2022, and to continue its mission.

On 31 December 2021 unrestricted reserves were £76,779. In support of the Big Welcome Project and other mission projects £10,677 is held as designated reserves, leaving £66,102 free reserves to support the general running of the church.

The PCC also had £36,780 in restricted reserves. These include £314 for the Big Welcome Project and £17,545 for the Church Hall. There is also a reserve for £13,215 which the PCC hope to spend putting AV equipment into the Church to enhance our worship and outreach to the community. The balance is made up of smaller funds belonging to groups within the Church.

Our investments are accumulation shares held with CCLA in The Church of England Investment Fund. These create capital growth rather than income. Despite the pandemic they continue to increase in value.

Looking Forward

The deficit for the year is a concern. The PCC has looked to reduce costs wherever possible and will continue to do so in 2022. The need to increase regular giving to meet regular commitments remains but with the general relaxation of restrictions in 2022 the opportunity for this to happen is increased. The PCC is aware of its current dependence on a limited number of donors and one regular Church Hall hirer. The completion of the kitchen area under the Big Welcome Project provides an opportunity to open the Church to the community.

Administration

Principal Address: St Matthew's Church
Stretton Road
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 4NT

Independent Examiner: Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Bankers: HSBC
11 Bridge Street
Warrington
WA1 2EY

CCLA Investment Management Ltd
Senator House
85 Queen Victoria Street
London
EC4V 4ET

Architect: Mark Pearce BA(Hons), BArch, MA, AADiplCons, RIBA, AABC
Kepczyk Pearce and Sanderson
Architects, Surveyors & Historical Building Consultants
75 Wilmslow Road
Handforth
Cheshire
SK9 3EN

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON – ST MATTHEW’S
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2021

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

I report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2021 which are set out on pages 2 to 5.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

As the members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that the audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

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

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

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 PCC 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 you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the Statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep proper accounting records are kept in accordance with Section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts are prepared which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Lee Warburton BA FCA
Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Date 05.05.2022

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2021**

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2021**

—	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
RECEIPTS					
Voluntary Receipts					
Planned giving		35,174	-	35,174	38,233
Collection at services		3,302	-	3,302	2,165
All other giving/voluntary receipts	4	7,542	9,661	17,203	14,427
Gift Aid Tax recovered		<u>9,264</u>	<u>506</u>	<u>9,770</u>	<u>10,116</u>
		55,282	10,167	65,449	64,941
Activities for generating funds		676	862	1,538	3,429
Investment Income	5	-	25	25	139
Church Activities	6	14,567	-	14,567	11,705
Other Income	7	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>		<u>16,454</u>
				=	
Total receipts		<u>70,525</u>	<u>11,054</u>	<u>81,579</u>	<u>96,668</u>
PAYMENTS					
Church activities					
Diocesan parish contribution		75,269	-	75,269	74,709
Clergy and staff costs	8	13,717	-	13,717	14,072
Church running costs	9	19,563	139	19,702	18,961
Hall running costs		5,469		5,469	4,854
Charitable donations	10	<u>1,149</u>	<u>-</u>		
				<u>1,149</u>	<u>334</u>
		115,167	139	115,306	112,930
Costs of generating funds		-	345	345	340
Other Costs – major works	11	<u>20,918</u>	<u>15,735</u>	<u>36,653</u>	<u>39,427</u>
					<u>39,427</u>
Total payments		<u>136,085</u>	<u>16,219</u>	<u>152,304</u>	<u>152,697</u>
Excess of receipts over payments		(65,560)	(5,165)	(70,725)	(56,029)
Proceeds from sale of shares		40,000	-	40,000	50,000
Reclassification of funds		10,101	(10,101)	-	-
Transfer to St Cross		<u>-</u>	<u>(2,373)</u>	<u>(2,373)</u>	
					=
		(15,459)	(17,639)	(33,098)	(6029)
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 January		44,153	42,641	86,794	92,823
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 December		<u>28,694</u>	<u>25,002</u>	<u>53,696</u>	<u>86,794</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2021**

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
Cash Funds					
Bank Current Account & Cash		20,755	-	20,755	22,019
Deposit Funds		<u>7,939</u>	<u>25,002</u>	<u>32,941</u>	<u>64,775</u>
		<u>28,694</u>	<u>25,002</u>	<u>53,696</u>	<u>86,794</u>
Investment Assets					
Investment Fund shares at market value		<u>48,085</u>	<u>11,778</u>	<u>59,863</u>	<u>87,729</u>
Assets retained for church use		<u>38,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>38,000</u>	<u>38,000</u>
Liabilities					
Due to Diocese		533	-	533	257
Other liabilities		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,896</u>
		<u>533</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>533</u>	<u>2,153</u>

Approved by the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthews on 05.05.2022
and signed on its behalf by:

Revd Alan Jewell

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2021**

Notes to the accounts

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, using the Receipts and Payments basis.
2. The fixed asset retained for the church use is the church hall at historical cost.
3. The PCC has considered its reserves in accordance with the policy set out in their report. The reserve requirement based on these accounts is £32,000 which is more than met by the PCC's free reserves.

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
4. All other giving/voluntary receipts				
Legacies and Grants	1,180	4,593	5,773	7,824
Donations	3,594	5,068	8,662	4,797
Other Income	<u>2,768</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,768</u>	<u>1,806</u>
	<u>7,542</u>	<u>9,661</u>	<u>17,203</u>	<u>14,427</u>
5. Income from investments				
Bank interest	<u>-</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>139</u>
6. Church Activities				
Fees for weddings and funerals	7,839	-	7,839	3,206
Church hall hire	6,728	-	6,728	7,271
Magazine Sales	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,228</u>
	<u>14,567</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>14,567</u>	<u>11,705</u>
7. Other Income				
Insurance Claim – wall and Lychgate	-	-	-	13,802
Job Retention Scheme	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,652</u>
	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>16,454</u>
8. Clergy and staff costs				
Clergy costs	3,749	-	3,749	3,347
Salaries	8,554	-	8,554	9,395
Parish Office costs	<u>1,414</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,414</u>	<u>1,330</u>
	<u>13,717</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,717</u>	<u>14,072</u>
9. Church running expenses				
Organist and Choir Fees	940	-	940	2,002
Bellringers	256	-	256	-
Church flowers	379	-	379	115
Church service costs	631	139	770	798
Youth work	-	-	-	262
Insurance	5,299	-	5,299	5,295
Light and heat	3,720	-	3,720	3,102
Repairs and maintenance	7,255	-	7,255	5,180
Magazine costs	-	-	-	639
Sundries	211	-	211	470
Professional fees	392	-	392	618
Accountancy	<u>480</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>480</u>	<u>480</u>
	<u>19,563</u>	<u>139</u>	<u>19,702</u>	<u>18,961</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2021**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Total 2020 £
10. Charitable donations				
Christian organisations	210	-	210	134
Secular organisations	<u>939</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>939</u>	<u>200</u>
	<u>1,149</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,149</u>	<u>334</u>
 11. Other Costs – major works				
Repair to the wall and Lychgate	-	-	-	13,977
Purchase of chairs	-	-	-	4,529
Re-ordering	<u>20,918</u>	<u>15,735</u>	<u>36,653</u>	<u>20,921</u>
	<u>20,918</u>	<u>15,735</u>	<u>36,653</u>	<u>39,427</u>

12. Staff Costs

The PCC pays for the services of parish secretary, director of music, verger, and a church hall cleaner and these costs are included under the heading Clergy and Staff Costs.

There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.

13. Transactions with Trustees

The Director of Music ceased to be a Trustee in May 2021 and received a salary and organists fees totalling £2,537 for the year to December 2021.

The incumbent was reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of the Church, totalling £771, for the period from August 2020.

Accounts

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton
St Matthew's



**Trustee Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year ending
31st December 2020**

Registered Charity Number: 1132920

St. Matthew's Church

St. Matthew's Church is situated in the village of Stretton in Warrington with the parish boundaries encompassing Appleton and Stretton, and borders Appleton Thorn and St Cross Church which is within the Benefice. The Parish of St Matthew's Stretton is in the Deanery of Great Budworth and is part of the Diocese of Chester.

The Church is a Grade II listed building with a rich heritage dating back to 1827.

The Church is built in red sandstone with Westmorland slate roofs and has a bell tower accommodating a ring of eight bells. Their rich melodic tones can be heard all over the Parish summoning people to services and celebrating special events.

The Parish consists of both urban and semi-rural areas and is growing with new housing estates in the process of being built. This is an exciting opportunity for the Church to outreach further into new communities.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School is an integral part of the Church family. It is located next to the Church which facilitates the use of the Church by the School. This allows children of all ages to familiarise themselves with the building, not just for faith-related activities, but for its history, architecture and heritage.

The Church Hall is co-located next to the School. It is used by a number of local groups such as Brownies, Stretton Parish Council and the Bridge Club as well as Church groups. During the weekdays, it is used by both Pre-School and Link Club which offer before and after School care. The Church is committed to assisting these groups in order that key worker and vulnerable children can attend school and that younger children of working parents can be supported.

The Vicar's Report – the Reverend Alan Jewell

2020: The year began like any other, but on the 16th March, the Prime Minister went on television to announce that all “non-essential contact” between people should stop. This meant that Churches had to shut with immediate effect, and that weddings and baptisms could not take place (except in emergencies).

Burials and cremations would still happen at the graveside or crematorium, but without a service in Church, and with only a handful of people in attendance. Even clergy were not allowed to go into Church to pray.

Mothering Sunday was the first big casualty. Instead of welcoming people to their mother church, we went online for prayers, streamed live on Facebook. It was a steep learning curve for all of us, but we got used to having worship led from the Vicarage, rather than in Church. A team of people from both Churches were willing to take part, and we learned some new skills as we faced new challenges.

Legislation, guidance and advice followed on a regular basis, sometimes changing from one day to the next. We lived through cycles of lockdown and the easing of restrictions. Risk assessments were completed. Churches were cleaned. Hand sanitiser was purchased. Some services resumed. As well as online worship, which reached people beyond our usual congregation, we had opportunities to try new things, including an outdoor Christmas Carol Service.

We took steps towards re-ordering our building in support of our vision: pews were removed, and new flooring installed. When we are able to re-open fully, we hope this new space will provide a valuable resource for our community (not just the congregation).

It is too soon to say what the Church has learned from this strange year. Some wondered what had happened to the Church when there were no Sunday services. We carried on though, even without access to our buildings. The Church has always been the people and not the places where we meet. I am grateful for the love and generosity that have been shown through these strange days. I am very grateful to all those who have risen to the challenges that we have faced. I am hopeful that the Church will find new vision and new life as we move towards a post-pandemic world.

Who knows what the year ahead holds? As someone has said:

I don't know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future.

Aim and Purpose.

Aim

The primary object of all Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC has the responsibility to co-operate with the incumbent – the Reverend Alan Jewell – “in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.” (The PCC (Powers) Measure 1956).

At St. Matthew’s the mission statement is “[Sharing the love of Jesus with all through friendship, prayer and service](#)”. The Church exists to serve its Parish – the whole local Community – not just its congregation.

Structure, governance and management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England and is a Registered Charity (Charity No. 1132920). The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956, the Church Representation Rules 2011 and the Charities Act 2011.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting by those on the electoral roll, in accordance with the Church Representation Rules and the Charity Commission Guidance. They are the charity trustees who are “persons having the general control and management of the administration of the charity” (Charities Act 2011).

The PCC is chaired by the Vicar and meets monthly with a business meeting alternating with a discussion meeting comprising of one or two agenda items only. Business meetings focus primarily on the operational and financial management of the Church, with the sub-committees which have been established reporting formally on their activities. The PCC has the responsibility of managing the Church estate, including the Church Hall, and for parish finances and therefore this can predominate meetings. In order for more focused discussions, alternate meetings on such items as development, strategy and governance have taken place. This has the dual benefit of more time being allocated to in-depth discussion and educationally for newer PCC members.

Recruitment, selection and induction for PCC members and all volunteers is in place to ensure safe recruitment and support. The Parish Safeguarding Officer maintains an active database ensuring DBS checks are undertaken and maintained, and that all PCC members complete the appropriate level of safeguarding training and reports back to

the PCC.

The PCC has complied with the duty under Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, fully recognising its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

The PCC are fully aware of their responsibilities under Health and Safety legislation to ensure effective risk assessments and policies and procedures are in place. Guidance, best practice and policies from government, charity and ecclesiastical sources are reviewed and implemented as soon as possible. Training is supported when required.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex Officio	Revd Alan Jewell*
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Licensed Workers	Sheila Goulston*
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Church Warden	Michele Gwillim* Stephen Edwards*
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Lay Representatives on The Deanery Synod	Linda Buckley* Stephen Edwards
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Elected Members

Elected until 2020	Laura Booth (until 15.10.2020) Barbara Hamilton (until 15.10.2020) Richard Johnson (until 15.10.2020)
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Elected until 2021	Catherine Edwards Alison Hughes Rose Jewell
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Elected until 2022	Chris Ellson Kath Holbourn* Carol Rylett Jenny Snodgrass Neville Snodgrass
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*Standing Committee membership

The PCC is assisted in its working by a Finance Sub-Group; Fundraising Committee which focused on the Big Welcome Project fundraising; Fabrics Committee and the Church Hall Management Committee.

The Sub-Committee membership is voluntary with PCC members agreeing to assist with the work required in their specific area in order that the PCC is given detailed information on which to base decisions. The Sub-Groups do not have executive responsibility. The Church Hall Management Committee is responsible for the operational management of the Church Hall and the management of bookings.

St Matthew's is represented on the Deanery Synod by the Vicar and two lay members (with one vacancy). The Deanery Synod is an intermediary between the PCC and Diocesan Synod and usually meets three times per year. In 2020, the planned Synod meeting in March was cancelled due to lockdown and the following two were held via Zoom. In September, there was a presentation by the Diocesan Director of Vocations and notification of changes in the number of Parish lay representatives. The November meeting saw the election of one of our representatives, Linda Buckley, appointed as Lay Chair. The Parish Share was announced as increasing by 1% from April 2021. There was feedback from the Diocesan Synod and an account of the Presidential Address by the new Bishop of Chester who said the key words for the Diocese were **Simpler, Humbler, Bolder**.

Formal training for the PCC has been constrained by the pandemic and inability to meet. The planned PCC half day seminar has been unable to take place, but several PCC members did attend an online training with other Churches' PCCs on the role of the PCC and improving effectiveness.

A key responsibility of the PCC is to identify how our activities are focused on achieving public benefit and positively impacting on the lives of people in our congregation and community.

When planning our activities for the year, our incumbent, Alan Jewell and the PCC have considered the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on "Charities for the advancement of religion" (2011).

Objectives and Activities

Our main objectives for the year were set building on work undertaken over previous years, as well as those specific to 2020 with our redevelopment plans.

Growing our Church across the age range in our Community

- Looking at how we run services and the type of services which appeal to a wider audience.
- Increasing and retaining our current congregations.
- Opening doors to community events – weekly Community coffee mornings and the monthly Singing Kettle occur but further opportunities need developing.
- Reducing loneliness particularly in the elderly.
- Increasing communication with new families moving into the area.

Nurturing Children

- Determining the next phase of development work with children as the Children & Family Worker contract ends.
- St. Matthew's has a Church School which has excellent links with Church. The School Senior Management Team has changed significantly in September 2020 so new relationship building has been an important factor.
- The Vicar has established links with Grappenhall Heys Primary School. This is the most likely School to be developed for accommodating families from the new housing, so further links will be developed.
- Supporting Pre-School and Link Club with preferential reduced hiring rates for using the Church Hall.
- Praise and Play further development – encouraging families with young children to enjoy Church.

Making our Church building fit for the future

- Creating space by commencing Phase 1 of the Big Welcome Project. St Matthew's is a beautiful Church with a traditional interior which minimises flexibility of use. The Big Welcome Project fundraising successfully achieved the costs of Phase 1.

Balancing the Budget

- Increasing income strategies
- Identifying further cost reductions – this has already been undertaken so the impact is likely to be limited.

Supporting local and national charities to help the disadvantaged.

- Regular donations are made to Warrington Food Bank and the Royal British Legion.
- Christian Aid and The Children's Society campaigns are supported.
- Continue to support in kind – food donations from Harvest; food and clothing to Warrington Open Door at Christmas and Macmillan Cancer Support through coffee mornings.
- Determine the charity to benefit from Christmas Sparkle.

Strengthening governance

- Review the Church policies and guidance.
- Participate in the Past Cases review and ensure adherence to the House of Bishops Key Roles and Responsibilities document (2017) in all activities.
- Increasing our volunteer base from both within the Church and wider Community.

Developing Community partnerships

- Strengthening ecumenical relationships – continuing active participation within the Deanery and Diocese, as well as locally with Bridgewater Churches Together.
- Active participation with Pewterspear Green Trust.
- Involvement with the Community Payback Scheme.

Activities and Performance

Meeting our Objectives

When the PCC set their objectives, there was no reason to believe at that time that progress would not be made in their achievement. The pandemic has for St Matthew's, as for many charities, made an enormous difference to our world. However, we believe that despite the difficulties, there have been opportunities which we have tried to grasp, whilst accepting that some of the objectives are not achievable this year. We are optimistic about our future – so challenges yes these are many, but we are proud of what we have been able to achieve despite everything.

Making our Church building fit for the future

2020 started as a year of much promise – the building work which was eagerly anticipated following the successful fundraising was planned with military precision in order to perform a major declutter and store safely all the displaced items. A band of volunteers suitably briefed did an amazing job in clearing the Church over several weekends, yet still allowing services to continue.

Phase one of the Big Welcome project, to create an open space at the back of church, was started in March by Lloyd and Smith Ltd, but was interrupted by the national coronavirus lockdown. After a delay, Practical Completion was achieved on the 5th of August 2020.



We also have some of the chairs needed, to provide rows of seating when required for services, or for other flexible uses, and have allowed a more intimate feel to Christenings, as the family can gather around the font.



Whilst work was in progress inside the Church, work was progressing outside with a tree survey and a major tidy up of the Churchyard with the assistance from the Community Payback Scheme. Repairs to the Church boundary wall, damaged by some errant motorist, were undertaken.

A new noticeboard, donated by a parishioner in memory of his wife, was erected by the Lychgate which provides a fitting and very practical tribute to her.

COVID-19 and strengthening Governance.

None of us had appreciated how 2020 would look at the beginning of the year. As COVID-19 emerged, we embraced the need for rigorous risk assessment and wrote new risk management procedures to minimise the risks of transmission, and importantly ensure that people felt safe in our Church. COVID has focused our attention on a whole range of policies and guidelines which were written. We have undertaken monthly (or more frequently if guidance changed) risk assessments and developed our risk register to incorporate the Church and Church Hall. The benefit of this has been that we have been able to open the Church and stay open whenever regulations allowed, and the Church Hall was able to open promptly after the first lockdown to facilitate use by Pre-School and Link Club. This was a very welcome benefit to both parents and children.

Whilst initially we were open for short services, we soon were able to identify

how Holy Communion could be delivered safely, in accordance with the Church of England guidance. This has continued and been very much appreciated by those attending.

For the majority of the time, funerals have been permitted in Church although with varying restrictions. We have always facilitated these, especially in the very difficult circumstances that many families have had to endure. In 2020, there were: 10 funerals held either in Church or in the Churchyard with a further 7 at the crematorium.

It has been very difficult for parents wanting to have their children baptised and for those wishing to marry. Several of these had to cancel arrangements due to changing restrictions. 4 baptisms did take place and 1 couple decided that they would like their cancelled wedding to take place on Christmas Eve and we were delighted to arrange this for them.

We worked hard to ensure that the baptisms and the one wedding which did take place were both personal and safe, whilst ensuring absolute compliance with the restrictions in place. We look forward to welcoming back our couples and parents for their deferred celebrations.

Whilst COVID has been a major influencer on our governance agenda, we have not allowed it to predominate. A review of all our Health and Safety policies was begun and importantly whilst participating in the Past Cases Review, the Parish Safeguarding checklist was undertaken.

The Safeguarding policies including safe recruitment, personal safety and lone working have all been revised.

Volunteers

A special mention needs to be made to all those unsung heroes who have worked so hard to keep the Church a living, breathing, relevant organisation. There have been many of them – those helping declutter the Church; those cleaning the Church regularly to keep it COVID-secure, the ladies creating beautiful flower arrangements to decorate the Church; those who help in the Churchyard and many more. The flexibility of volunteers is demonstrated by our Bellringers who have rung all bells, then none, then only three then stopped again. Not to be thwarted they took to practising with handbells in the Car Park over the summer, until the weather and Rule of Six defeated them. We certainly miss them.

We have been fortunate this year to benefit from the Community Payback

Scheme. On a number of Saturdays, a group of young people worked with gusto around the Churchyard, strimming, mowing and weeding. We were really delighted with the work they did until lockdown in March and hope that this can continue once restrictions lift.

The PCC and volunteers have shown their resilience, despite the ongoing pressures, to try to balance the work involved in remaining open for services with the mental health and spiritual needs of our congregation who see being able to come to Church as essential to their wellbeing.

Growing our Church

This objective could not be achieved as we originally intended, but we have gained a new audience online. Whilst our technology is not advanced, the Vicar has managed to both stream live services and produce additional online services. The use of the Church Facebook page and uploading videos to YouTube has gained a considerable number of views and feedback has been positive. Many of our older members were shielding and the provision of a Wednesday night “Reflections” online has been greatly appreciated. BL (92) stated “It is wonderful, very thought provoking and it has kept me in touch with Church”.

Having the option to attend in person or online has given people choice to worship safely and in the way they feel most comfortable. Not everyone has access to or feels comfortable with technology, and we have been very cognisant of this wanting to give freedom of choice wherever possible.

Carol Services are for many an integral part of Christmas and so following the Church of England’s guidance on risk assessing Outdoor Worship, we decided that if this was the only way we could hold a Carol Service, as singing indoors is not permitted, we would go outdoors. Despite a poor weather warning with heavy rain and strong winds we held our Carol Service in the local Sports Pavilion car park. The ticketed event was attended by 75 people and despite the gloomy prediction – the rain stopped, the wind eased, and we even had two shooting stars to accompany a wonderful service enjoyed by all.

The traditional Crib Service moved online and is always extremely popular. Whilst 777 views were recorded, it is difficult to calculate the exact number who participated, but 24 comments were recorded.

The Singing Kettle is a monthly group for those who are lonely; isolated or who just enjoy a sing in convivial company. Whilst normally meeting in the Church Hall,

this too has gone online. It continues to be enjoyed by those tuning in, with meetings themed around both the Church and national calendar.

THE SINGING KETTLE

The Singing Kettle is a friendly space where you can chat to others, make friends, relax & sing-a-long if you wish. If you are new to the area, being cared for or a carer, stuck at home talking to yourself, or just wanting to meet with others then maybe The Singing Kettle is for you.



The Singing Kettle meets on fourth Thursday of each month in St Matthew's Church Hall from 2 to 4 pm.

**The dates from January 2020 are
23rd Jan, 27th Feb, 26th March & 23rd April**

The format is very informal with light refreshments of tea/coffee/cake/biscuits & during our time together if you wish to join in we have an informal sing-a-long.

The postcode for directions is WA4 4NT.
If you want any further information please speak to our Pastoral Worker Sheila or
Revd Alan Jewell on Tel: 01925 730276



Under normal circumstances, postcard invitations are distributed, as above, to encourage people to attend.

Pastoral support has of necessity been minimally face to face for much of the year. The Vicar and Pastoral Worker share concerns of a pastoral nature confidentially. They have encouraged support in different ways. The Vicar established a WhatsApp group for Church where anyone could join and post items for information and discussion, as well as offering a communication channel about Church services.

Telephone support both by the Vicar and Pastoral Worker has been supplemented by members of the Church Fellowship. They have sent newsletters, Easter cards and Christmas gifts to their members who are predominantly older. Help with shopping and transport has been arranged when needed.

A new camaraderie has developed as people meet when outside exercising, and there is a feeling of genuine concern for those who are vulnerable. This is something which we hope to build upon.

To encourage exercise, a Walk to Jerusalem was started on Christmas Day 2020. This is a virtual walk where participants record the length of their daily walking on the World Walking App. The distance from our Lychgate to Jerusalem is 6077km and the plan is to arrive in time for Easter 2021. This is being thoroughly enjoyed by those participating as regular updates are received on progress and places reached so far.

Walking Day which takes place annually in July involving a walk of witness, church service, crowning of the Rose Queen and Rose King followed by a fete in the School grounds is a highlight of the Summer, which was another victim of COVID. Not only is it a demonstration of the School and Church partnership, but also it allows the Church to physically walk within the Community increasing awareness of us. It is also a significant fundraiser for School.

The Autumn Fair which contributes towards the general administrative costs of the Church was also cancelled this year, adding further pressures to the budget.

Similarly, the Christmas Tree Festival is an event where the Church is lit with numerous small Christmas trees decorated by local businesses. Free refreshments are served whilst children and adults choose their favourites in a competition. Donations from the event which takes place over two weekends are given to a local charity. This meant that its loss this year reduced our ability to donate monies.

Nurturing Children

The enthusiasm of our younger children is an absolute delight. Praise and Play a Friday afternoon group for Pre-School children has moved online. The Vicar and his ukulele are a regular feature much enjoyed by the little ones and around 12 adults and 17 children attend, although not all every week.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School goes from strength to strength. Our Lay Reader, Linda is Chair of Governors which is a great communication channel between School and the PCC.

We were delighted to welcome the appointment of Mrs Jo Costello as Headteacher from September 2020. Jo has made a great start, building on the success of her predecessor, Mrs Hazel Fryman, who retired at the end of the School year in 2020. Sadly, COVID restrictions meant that we were unable to mark Hazel's retirement in the way we would have liked, but we wish her well in this new phase of her life. The new Head and Management Team continue to develop

strong links which is hugely beneficial for us both.

The Vicar was able to perform a couple of key services in person for School – their New Year 2020 service and the Year 6 Leaver Service, minus parents this year, which were really important for the children. Like most other services, his weekly collective worship has moved online via MS Teams so when the children are in School, they join in from their classrooms.

He also has connections with Grappenhall Heys Primary School and led a Christingle Service via video link and an R.E. lesson.

Pre-School and Link Club have been supported by clarifying their responsibilities and assisting with Church Hall Risk Assessments. A new Users' Guide was produced to help them ensure a COVID-secure environment.

A strong element in 2019 had been Family Extravaganzas held on a Sunday afternoon approximately every three months. It was decided not to hold a Christingle Service in December 2019 but to move it to the Feast of Candlemas in February 2020 as a Family Extravaganza. 14 children and 31 adults attended and made their Christingles in a very enjoyable afternoon. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to arrange any further Extravaganzas this year.

Christingle is a very popular and joyful service for children, so as so much was missing at Christmas time this year, we reverted to our December service. This had 203 views, although it is doubtful so many Christingles were made. It was particularly important this year for children to understand the light of Jesus and the message of hope from the service when they have been surrounded by so much gloom and despair.

Balancing the Budget

The COVID pandemic has certainly made this objective unachievable this year. Income has dropped considerably with limited services in Church, and particularly those in the latter part of the year – Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and the related Christmas services. These normally attract large congregations who generously donate and despite strong advertising of online giving, it is a deficit that cannot be made up.

As the Financial Review demonstrates, the overall financial position with our reserves is not critical however the PCC are acutely aware that dependence on reserves which are finite, is not an appropriate strategy.

The Treasurer through good housekeeping over previous years has already revised spending and looked at all contracts to ensure value for money. There is limited scope to further improve.

Supporting local and national charities

We have continued our regular donations to Warrington Food Bank and the Royal British Legion. Food was collected at Harvest Festival for Warrington Food Bank rather than distributing gifts around the Parish, as it was felt this was a higher priority this year.

With the restrictions, Warrington Open Door at Christmas was not open this year and we were unable to run the Macmillan Coffee Mornings. Both The Children's Society and Christian Aid were supported by publicising online giving alongside collection boxes in Church.

We have not been able to support our charities to the degree that we have done previously which is a source of regret to the PCC. We are hopeful that next year this can be addressed.

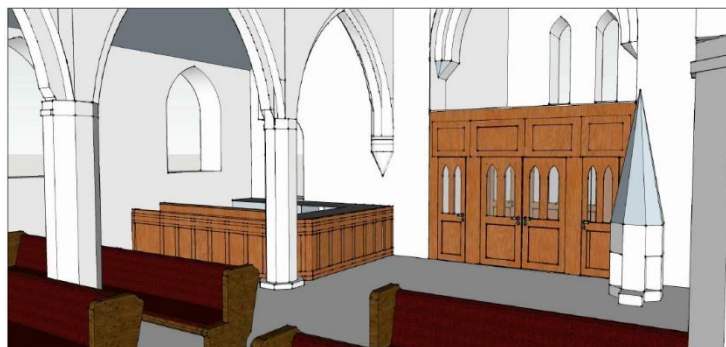
Developing Community Partnerships

The Pewterspear Green Trust manages an area of parkland and sports pitches in our Parish. The Vicar and a Trustee represent St Matthew's on their management committee. As the Church and Pewterspear Green are neighbours, we have a shared concern for the environment and for the amenities available to our community. For major services and events, the Trust kindly agree to allow us to place banners on their railings at the entrance to their land so that we can prominently advertise them.

We hope that our developing relationship with the Community Payback Scheme can be resumed in 2021.

Looking Forward to 2021

We look forward to 2021 with confidence. There are many challenges, as there is considerable work to be done to catch up on progress following the pandemic. Our biggest plan for next year is Phase 2 of the Big Welcome Project and the installation of a kitchen facility. The plan below shows its intended location.



This much needed facility will enable use not only for our Church and related activities, but also for wider community use. We will look forward to being able to accommodate a range of different community groups to our Church.

Making progress on our objectives, with particular regard to improving our financial position, will be our priority for 2021. Welcoming back our congregations both in person and online and growing our Church in 2021 will be an important step for us all.



Financial Review

Income

Voluntary Giving

The total receipts on general unrestricted funds received were £56,313 and are detailed in the Financial Report. Planned Giving through Standing Orders and Weekly Giving Envelopes decreased by 10%. The incidence of Covid 19 and subsequent lockdown necessitated the closure of the Church for part of the year. Very generously, some parishioners were able to continue their financial giving by using methods other than cash. No legacies were received during the year, but the PCC was grateful to receive a £2,000 grant from the Diocese of Chester to support the church through the pandemic.

Other Income

The PCC received income under the Covid 19 Job Retention Scheme, enabling it to continue supporting its employees. Due to the Covid 19 restrictions we were only able to open our Church Hall to educational groups for part of the year. This resulted in a decrease in Church Hall income. The PCC was grateful to receive some donations towards the running of the Church.

Restricted Income

The PCC continued to make the Big Welcome Project a priority and was grateful to receive donations and grants towards this totalling £8,375.

Expenditure

Parish Share

The largest item of expenditure was the Parish Share of £74,708, paid to the Diocese. The contribution from St Matthew's increased by 2.5% from last year. The Parish Share is a contribution to the Diocese towards the cost of the provision and support of mission and ministry. This includes housing, support, stipend and pension costs of the clergy of this parish, training of new ordinands, a contribution to national church funds and shared costs of the diocese, including assistance towards the upkeep of Churches less able to manage than ourselves.

Staff costs

The PCC pays for a Parish Secretary, Church Hall and Office cleaner, Director of Music and a Verger for weddings and funerals. Details of our staff costs are included in the Financial Statements. During the year, the PCC was very grateful to be able to claim a proportion of these costs under the Covid 19 Job Retention Scheme.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC also supported the clergy by paying Council Tax, Water and environmental charges for the vicarage amounting to £3,200 as well as other costs such as travel, telephone and broadband. There were no payments to persons related to, or connected to, the trustees.

Other charitable giving

During the year, the Church was unable to undertake its usual outreach activities. It has continued its donations to the Warrington Foodbank and The Royal British Legion.

Repairs

Routine maintenance and repairs were undertaken during the year to ensure the PCC met its responsibility for health and safety. The boundary wall and lychgate were damaged last year and the repair work was undertaken during 2020. The work done during the year cost £13,978 and insurance monies were received towards this of £13,802.

Re-ordering

During the year we were able to commence the first phase of the Big Welcome Project. Using funds raised specifically for the project, in 2019 and 2020, we were able to remove the pews at the back of church and level the floor. This creates a flexible usable space for church and community use. During the year £5,250 was raised by donation and fundraising, and £5,824 in grants, including a generous £3,000 from Allchurches Trust. The work and associated costs came to £21,856.

The PCC is responsible for keeping the Father Willis organ (which is an early model from the renowned organ builder) safe and in good repair. Due to the reordering work, it was necessary to take extra precautions to safeguard the organ. The cost of £936 was met from the restricted fund for music.

Reserves

The PCC has a good reserves position, thanks to generous legacies given in the past. The PCC has considered its policy on reserves and revised this policy from previous years in the light of recent events and guidance. It is the policy of the PCC to keep two months general running costs as a general reserve, and an additional amount to cover committed contract costs and minor repairs. Major building works, including those identified under the Quinquennial Inspection, will only be undertaken once additional funding has been secured. The reserve requirement under this policy is £33,500. Our current free reserves more than meet this policy and enable the PCC to use the remaining reserves to support its cash flow during 2021 and to continue its mission.

On 31 December 2020 unrestricted reserves were £121,855. In support of the Big Welcome Project the £22,134 held as a designated building reserve has been made available to the project, leaving £99,721 free reserves to support the general running of the Church.

The PCC also had £52,668 in restricted reserves. These include £5,765 for the Big Welcome Project and £15,503 for the Church Hall. There is also a reserve for £13,209 which the PCC hope to spend putting AV equipment into the Church to enhance our worship and outreach to the community. The balance is made up of smaller funds belonging to groups within the Church.

Our investments are accumulation shares held with CCLA in The Church of England Investment Fund. These create capital growth rather than income. Despite the pandemic they continue to increase in value.

Looking Forward

The deficit for the year is a concern. The PCC has looked to reduce costs wherever possible, but the need to increase regular giving to meet regular commitments remains. The PCC is aware of its dependence on a limited number of donors and one regular hall hirer. As restrictions are lifted the PCC hopes to continue its policy of opening the Church to the community, particularly through the Big Welcome Project.

Administration

Principal Address: St Matthew's Church
Stretton Road
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 4NT

Independent Examiner: Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Bankers: HSBC
11 Bridge Street
Warrington
WA1 2EY

CCLA Investment Management Ltd
Senator House
85 Queen Victoria Street
London
EC4V 4ET

Architect: Mark Pearce BA(Hons), BArch, MA, AADiplCons, RIBA, AABC
Kepczyk Pearce and Sanderson
Architects, Surveyors & Historical Building Consultants
75 Wilmslow Road
Handforth
Cheshire SK9 3EN

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON – ST MATTHEW’S
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

I report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2020 which are set out on pages 2 to 5.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

As the members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that the audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

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

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

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 PCC 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 you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the Statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep proper accounting records are kept in accordance with Section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts are prepared which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Lee Warburton BA FCA
Voisey & Co
Chartered Accountants
8 Winmarleigh Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1JW

Date 18.03.2021

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2020**

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020**

=	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
RECEIPTS					
Voluntary Receipts					
Planned giving		38,233	-	38,233	42,648
Collection at services		2,165	-	2,165	8,996
All other giving/voluntary receipts	4	6,052	8,375	14,427	32,196
Gift Aid Tax recovered		<u>9,863</u>	<u>253</u>	<u>10,116</u>	<u>15,103</u>
		56,313	8,628	64,941	98,943
Activities for generating funds					
		60	3,369	3,429	7,815
Investment Income	5	28	111	139	197
Church Activities	6	11,705	-	11,705	22,861
Other Income	7	<u>16,454</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>16,454</u>	<u>-</u>
Total receipts		<u>84,560</u>	<u>12,108</u>	<u>96,668</u>	<u>129,816</u>
PAYMENTS					
Church activities					
Diocesan parish contribution		74,709	-	74,709	72,887
Clergy and staff costs	8	13,222	850	14,072	19,122
Church running costs	9	17,484	1,477	18,961	24,205
Hall running costs		4,854		4,854	4,862
Charitable donations	10	<u>334</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>334</u>	<u>2,415</u>
		110,603	2,327	112,930	123,491
Costs of generating funds		-	340	340	1,597
Other Costs – major works	11	<u>18,506</u>	<u>20,921</u>	<u>39,427</u>	<u>1,316</u>
Total payments		<u>129,109</u>	<u>23,588</u>	<u>152,697</u>	<u>126,404</u>
Excess of receipts over payments		(44,549)	(11,480)	(56,029)	3,412
Proceeds from sale of shares		<u>36,798</u>	<u>13,202</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>22,134</u>
		(7,751)	1,722	(6029)	25,546
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 January		<u>51,904</u>	<u>40,919</u>	<u>92,823</u>	<u>67,277</u>
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 December		<u>44,153</u>	<u>42,641</u>	<u>86,794</u>	<u>92,823</u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2020**

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
Cash Funds					
Bank Current Account & Cash		22,019	-	20,019	13,730
Deposit Funds		<u>22,134</u>	<u>42,641</u>	<u>64,775</u>	<u>79,093</u>
		<u>44,153</u>	<u>42,641</u>	<u>86,794</u>	<u>92,823</u>
Investment Assets					
Investment Fund shares at market value		<u>77,702</u>	<u>10,027</u>	<u>87,729</u>	<u>127,390</u>
Assets retained for church use		<u>38,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>38,000</u>	<u>38,000</u>
Liabilities					
Due to Diocese		257		257	219
Other liabilities		<u>1,896</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,896</u>	<u>280</u>
		<u>2,153</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,153</u>	<u>499</u>

Approved by the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Stretton – St Matthews on 18.03.2021
and signed on its behalf by:

Revd Alan Jewell

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
31st December 2020**

Notes to the accounts

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, using the Receipts and Payments basis.
2. The fixed asset retained for the church use is the church hall at historical cost.
3. The PCC has considered its reserves in accordance with the policy set out in their report. The reserve requirement based on these accounts is £33,500 which is more than met by the PCC's free reserves.

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
4. All other giving/voluntary receipts				
Legacies and Grants	2,000	5,824	7,824	7,597
Donations	2,246	2,551	4,797	21,541
Other Income	<u>1,806</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,806</u>	<u>3,058</u>
	<u><u>6,052</u></u>	<u><u>8,375</u></u>	<u><u>14,427</u></u>	<u><u>32,196</u></u>
5. Income from investments				
Bank interest	<u>28</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>139</u>	<u>197</u>
6. Church Activities				
Fees for weddings and funerals	3,206	-	3,206	11,132
Church hall hire	7,271	-	7,271	10,308
Magazine Sales	<u>1,228</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,228</u>	<u>1,421</u>
	<u><u>11,705</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>11,705</u></u>	<u><u>22,861</u></u>
7. Other Income				
Insurance Claim – wall and Lychgate	13,802	-	13,802	-
Job Retention Scheme	<u>2,652</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,652</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u><u>16,454</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>16,454</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>
8. Clergy and staff costs				
Clergy costs	3,347	-	3,347	3,998
Salaries	8,545	850	9,395	12,978
Parish Office costs	<u>1,330</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,330</u>	<u>2,146</u>
	<u><u>13,222</u></u>	<u><u>850</u></u>	<u><u>14,072</u></u>	<u><u>19,122</u></u>
9. Church running expenses				
Organist and Choir Fees	1,066	936	2,002	2,138
Bell-ringers	-	-	-	351
Church flowers	115	-	115	1,227
Church service costs	664	134	798	1,662
Youth work	104	158	262	3,158
Insurance	5,295	-	5,295	5,192
Light and heat	3,102	-	3,102	4,396
Repairs and maintenance	5,180	-	5,180	6,145
Magazine costs	639	-	639	1,796
Sundries	221	249	470	1,591
Professional fees	618	-	618	461
Accountancy	<u>480</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>480</u>	<u>480</u>
	<u><u>17,484</u></u>	<u><u>1,477</u></u>	<u><u>18,961</u></u>	<u><u>32,412</u></u>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of the ECCLESIASTICAL
PARISH OF STRETTON - ST MATTHEWS
Financial Statements for year ended
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	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2020 £	Total 2019 £
10. Charitable donations				
Christian organisations	134	-	134	1,085
Secular organisations	<u>200</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>1,330</u>
	<u>334</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>334</u>	<u>2,415</u>
11. Other Costs – major works				
Repair to the wall and Lychgate	13,978	-	13,978	1,022
Purchase of chairs	4,529	-	4,529	-
Re-ordering	<u>-</u>	<u>20,921</u>	<u>20,921</u>	<u>294</u>
	<u>18,507</u>	<u>20,921</u>	<u>18,507</u>	<u>1,316</u>

12. Staff Costs

The PCC pays for the services of parish secretary, director of music, vergers, and a church hall cleaner and these costs are included under the heading Clergy and Staff Costs. Comparative figures for 2019 have been changed where previously the costs were shown in relevant cost headings. During the year the PCC employed a children and families worker, from funds given by the Diocese of Chester. Funds were received to cover a proportion of these costs under the government Job Retention Scheme.

There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.

13. Transactions with Trustees

The parish secretary became a trustee in April 2017 and received a salary of £3,490 relating to that employment only for the year to December 2020. The Director of Music became a trustee in April 2018 and received a salary and organists fees totalling £2,577 for the year to December 2020. Funds were received to cover a proportion of these costs under the government Job Retention Scheme.

The incumbent was reimbursed for expenses incurred on behalf of the Church, totalling £117.