

**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.

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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		-	5,000	5,000	345
Other Costs – major works	10	<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.