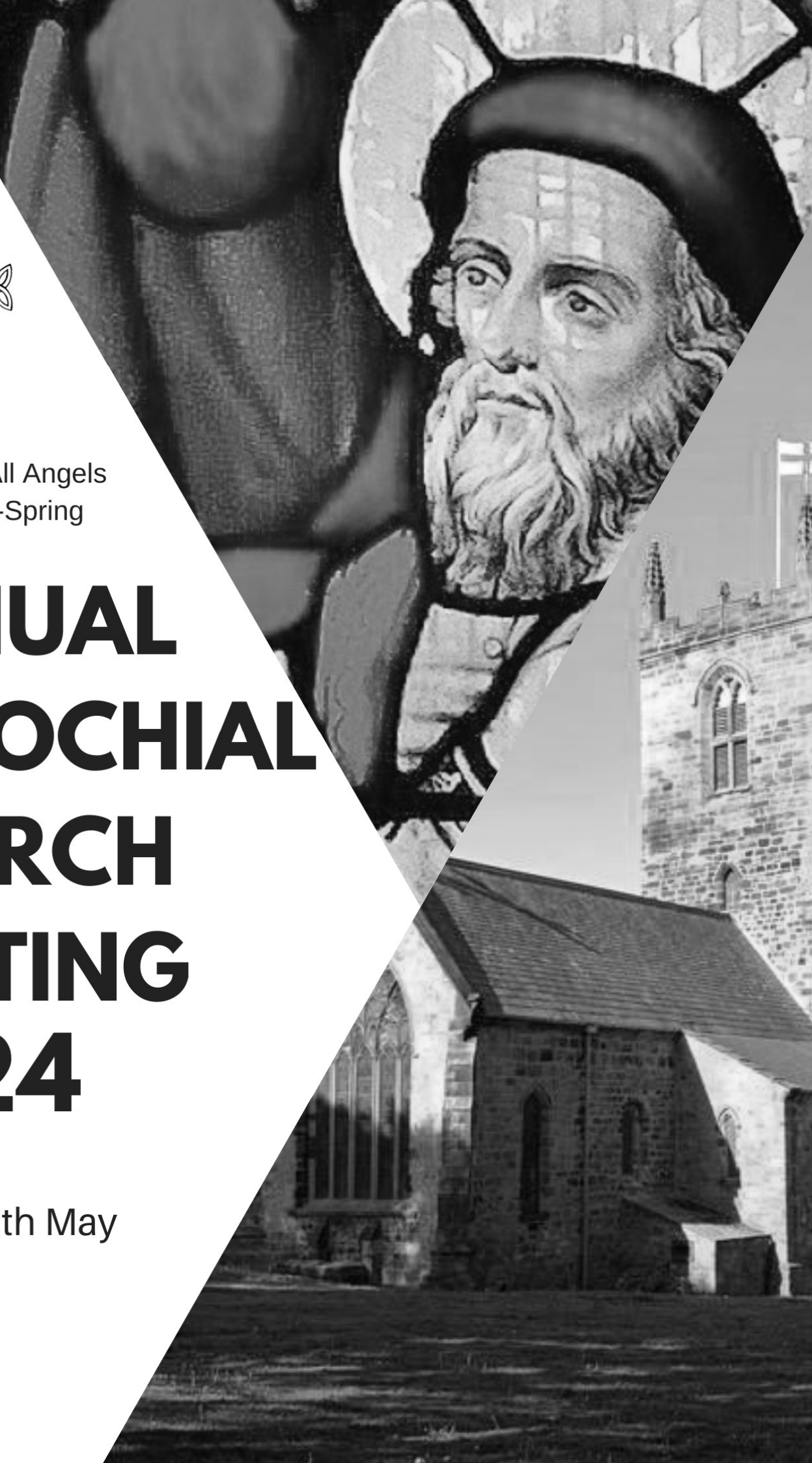




St Michael & All Angels
Houghton-le-Spring

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING 2024

Sunday 12th May
11.15 am



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The Church of England parish church of St Michael and All Angels in the ancient town of Houghton-le-Spring has been at the heart of our community for over a thousand years. Our magnificent church building stands as a visible symbol of Christ's presence, as do the many ways we reach out to support and serve our local community. This report celebrates the work of the church in the last year through our church groups, including the activities of our community project 'Space4', as well as the activities of organisations with strong affiliations to St Michael's. A report of our church finances is given and a report on the finances of Space4 which are managed separately. A consolidated report of both sets of finances is also provided.

Parochial Church Council 2023-24

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, as well as the maintenance and upkeep of the ancient building. The PCC meets monthly throughout the year and may hold extraordinary meetings as and when they are required.

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

The Standing Committee of the PCC is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. The Standing Committee consists of the Rector, Church Wardens, Assistant Wardens, Treasurer and Secretary.

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

Incumbent	Reverend John Barron
Church Wardens	Rita Turnbull, Alastair Bradley
Treasurer, Gift Aid Officer	Sue Bradley
Secretary	Angela Slater
Safeguarding Officer	Kevin Bond (until August 2023)
Ministry Team Representative	Reverend Margaret Lee
Deanery Synod Representatives	David Hann, Dian Scott, Sue Elsey Term of Office 2023-26
Elected members	Kathleen Close – Term of Office 2023-24 Malcolm Foster, Brian Scott (Asst.Church Warden), Clare Taylor, Jade Turnbull-Mason Term of Office 2023-26
	Lynn Scott, Simon Hardy (Asst.Church Warden) Term of Office 2022-25
	Sheila Foster, David Turnbull Term of Office 2021-24
Co-opted members	George Peebles (Director of Music)

Sidespersons

Joan Beattie	Sheila Gamble	Evelyn Garbutt
Elaine Harkness	Jean Henderson	Brian Scott
Dian Scott	Catherine Moore	David Turnbull
Rita Turnbull	John Wilde	Susan Wilde
Bob Wile		

Changes in membership of the Electoral Roll, 2023

The current number on the Electoral Roll is 124. 5 people have joined the Electoral Roll since last year but we have had 4 people who sadly are deceased.

We have three Ministers with 'Permission to Officiate' (PTO) who are members of the church.

Rita Turnbull, Electoral Roll Officer

Church Report for 2023: The Year in Review

Our parish church of St Michael and All Angels did much in the year to serve our local community and to enable the worship and prayer of the people of Houghton-le-Spring. Each week we held 3-4 services of Holy Communion, 1-2 Services of the Word and up to 4 Baptism services a month. We also hosted many extra seasonal, civic and special services for the community. As well as the worship in our building, we retain our weekly Facebook on-line service – we continue to have a small community who worship with us in that way. Others who are unable to physically come to church are part of our 'church at home' community and regularly receive Holy Communion distributed by members of our Ministry Team. Our 'Usual Sunday Attendance' in the church building saw a small increase to 82 towards the end of the year.

We hosted a number of civic services that continue to be important to our local community. These included our annual 'Feast Service' in October attended by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the Mayor of Sunderland and other civic guests (after the service all were welcomed to Kepier Hall for lunch!) We held a special service in May in honour of the Coronation of HM the King. Our traditional Remembrance Sunday was very full inside the church building with huge numbers of people also attending the outdoor Act of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. Advent and Christmas saw us hosting our traditional Carol Services which were very well attended: services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day welcomed 395 people (as compared with 377 the previous year).

Last year we prioritised the introduction and development of our monthly 'All Age Communion' service. We had a wide range of themes including 'kingship', 'environment' and 'friendship'. We have been really encouraged by feedback from families and grateful to the dedicated team who are involved in the preparation. The service is different for many of our regulars on Sunday but it feels an important thing for us to grow and develop in future as we seek to encourage our children and young people in faith. We had local Guides attend three services in the year and also last year Scouts at our Christmas Service. We were really pleased that all three primary schools attended church for Christmas services and visited church during the year; we also led services in Kepier school at Remembrance and Christmas. The number of children who are attending worship regularly and those in our 'worshipping community' is noticeably down and this is something we will need to give more priority to in future.

Music continued to play a major part in our church life last year. Our dedicated and talented Musical Director and Organist George Peebles leads our very accomplished robed choir: they support our worship at six or more of our services every month as well as some major seasonal and special services in the year. We also had a full wider music programme last year: Gilpin Singers, our community choir led by Laura Parkin, held their 10th anniversary concert; we hosted Concerts, Organ Recitals, Brass Bands and Sunderland Symphonia last year. As well as our more traditional worship, we hold services with more contemporary music, 'All-age' and 'Engage'. and are very fortunate that Stuart Clappison and Andy Slater lead this music for us. Andy also regularly plays organ for us at services. Very sadly, our dear brother-in-Christ Tom Ritson passed away last year – we have been very blessed over the years by his playing organ for us especially at mid-week services and funerals. We thank God for Tom's great service to our community and, with his loved ones, mourn his passing.

We made some great progress in working together with our brothers and sisters at St Matthew's Newbottle and St Michael & All Angels, Easington Lane with whom we are joining in a group ministry. We held a joint Lent course, 'The Folly of God', also joint services on Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday and during Holy Week. We shared in a joint pilgrimage walking between the three parishes and shared in fellowship in several events across the year. Our ministry team are now regularly supporting worship in St Matthew's. As well as regular Steering Group meetings throughout the year we held a number of joint PCCs to help us navigate our coming together. The year ahead is likely to see more formal arrangements coming into place as the parishes join more formally and work out what may need to change to accommodate this.

We conducted 48 baptisms in the year. This is less than the unprecedented 59 in 2022 but consistent with numbers held before the pandemic. There were 7 weddings in church (compared to 8 the year before). We held 36 funerals last year – this is less than previous years and is something that is a trend in the wider community. We are seeking to make sure we are working well with Funeral Directors but expect this to be a continuing trend in future. With the not insignificant numbers of funerals still coming to us, we very sadly lost some much-loved people from our church family. We've sought to care for each other in our bereavement and to reach out to support all those grieving: as well as our funeral ministry we held an 'All Souls' service, a Remembering Service at Christmas (with Derek Moss Funeral Directors) and a monthly bereavement support group in our Space4 Hub on Newbottle Street.

Across our ministry team we continued to operate a 'Pastoral Care Scheme' to seek to look after our wider church family. There is also some great informal pastoral care that takes place between our church members. The production and distribution of our parish 'Signpost' magazine continued to be an important way of remaining in touch with people who are still very much part of our church family even if they're less able to physically be present in the building on Sunday mornings. We are very blessed to have an active and hardworking chapter of Mother's Union at Houghton and they have provided a great point of focus and important care for members of church and wider membership.

We are very fortunate to have some great support from retired ordained ministers with PTO (Permission to Officiate): Rev'd Margaret Lee, Rev'd Judith Howes and Rev'd Claire Cullingworth, along with our dedicated team of Readers in Sue Elsey, Ros Pickersgill and Anne Clappison all of

whom have provided significant support to our church over this last year, not least over the time of the Rector's Sabbatical. We owe a great debt of thanks to them and our Standing Committee and PCC for the huge efforts that go on behind the scenes in keeping church operating, dealing with Finances, HR, Administration and Building Management.

There was, as ever, significant work behind the scenes to keep our church building operating: this includes great support from our church wardens, vergers, technical vergers, assistant vergers, cleaners, gardeners, stewards, linen and silver washers, brass polishers, tea makers, cake bakers, people on rotas etc etc, as well as our incredibly creative flower arrangers and dedicated open-church stewards. We're indebted to them and to our incredible Parish Administrator who also provided great support 'behind the scenes' for our church people, the wider community and the Rector!

Last year we made huge progress in serving our community through our Space4 project. We have been able to do this because of significant grant funding including from Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund and other funders. Our overall aim is to provide for a community with a 'Space4 everyone to flourish': focussing on responding to food poverty, supporting people struggling with isolation and anxiety (especially the elderly and those feeling marginalised), challenging inequalities facing children and young people. A good example of our shift in focus of the project is moving our foodbank to more of a community Foodstore where people can come and have agency to choose the food they need and make a donation if they're able to. In the past year we also began working with 'Tyne and Wear Citizens' to help us move into Community Organising as we seek to challenge some of the injustices people in our communities are facing.

As an indication of the impact we're having with our project, our Foodstore served a cumulative total of 1937 households in 2023 (that's 3043 adults and 1825 children) while our drop-in saw a total footfall of 7037 people over the year. We have a very strong and dedicated Project Board with members of PCC and Community representatives to lead our project. We have had a number of staffing changes over last year and are delighted to now have in place Justine Merton-Scott as our Space4 Manager and Natalie Jane as our Space4 Hub Coordinator. The early part of the coming year will see the need to secure additional funding from external grant providers to enable the project to continue delivering this increasingly important work.

Rev'd John Barron, Rector

**ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS
HOUGHTON LE SPRING**

**ANNUAL STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS**

1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2023

**PCC Treasurer
Mrs Sue Bradley**

**Independent Examiner
Mr Peter Brown**

**St Michael and All Angels Parish Church
Church Street
Houghton le Spring
DH4 4DN**

Registered Charity No. 1135095

St Michael and All Angels, Houghton le Spring

Treasurer's Annual Report for Year 1 January – 31 December 2023

Overall Bank Balance

The end of year Overall PCC and Next 900 Bank Accounts Balance at **31 December 2023** breakdown and comparison to previous years is detailed below:-

	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023
PCC - Unrestricted	£25,024.86	£31,869.61	£23,995.19
PCC – Restricted	£14,770.00	£21,078.00	£21,078.00
TOTAL	£39,794.86	£52,947.61	£45,073.19
 Next 900 Account	 £ 3,898.61	 £ 4,324.61	 £4,650.61
Overall Total	£43,693.47	£57,272.22	£49,723.80
 CBF Legacies	 £ 164.11	 £ 166.27	 £171.60

Assets

The PCC hold a log of all material assets and this report covers only the monetary assets.

Outstanding Liabilities

We have no outstanding liabilities.

Receipts and Payments for 2023 in comparison to previous years.

	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023
Receipts	£104,208	£118,057	£97,299
Payments	£104,915	£104,903	£105,173

An overview breakdown of some of the main headings of Receipts and Payments and comparison to previous year is detailed below:-

Receipts	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023
Planned Giving	£ 46,709	£44,719	£43,458
Gift Aid Recovered	£ 9,363	£11,578	£11,570
Collections	£ 7,168	£10,228	£9,296
Donations	£ 3,328	£ 9,261	£4,954
Online Donations	£ 1,017	£ 534	£ 470
Parish Magazine Sales	£ 1,881	£ 1,783	£1,713
Parish Magazine Adverts	£ 135	£ 1,013	£ 810
PCC Fees	£ 8,504	£ 9,569	£7,074
Fundraising	£ 4,644	£ 5,810	£5,535

Our Planned Giving income in 2023 was down by £1261, as a result of the number of Regular Givers reducing from those in 2022 as detailed below:-.

Regular Planned Givers	2021	2022	2023
Parish Giving Scheme	40	40	37
Standing Order	33	30	27
Stewardship Envelope	28	26	25
Total Regular Givers	101	96	89

Gift Aid recovered although claimed in 2023 relates to income from 2022 and for GASDS up to 31 March 2023.

Collections from our Church Services, Funerals, Weddings, Baptisms and Other Events has reduced in 2023 by £932 compared to the 2022 figure mainly due to a reduction in the number of Funeral Services held in Church.

Donations – although the £4,954 appears substantially lower than 2022 figure of £9,261, this included a one-off donation £5,308 from the Bellringers of Houghton Church who had disbanded.

The Gilpin Singers have generously donated £1,000 in 2023: thank you.

Parish Magazine Sales have been reasonably consistent over the last year, with a small reduction in income of £70. Our pricing structure for 2023 remained at £6 per annum for an email version and £1 per copy for the printed version or £10 instead of £12 for a full year. Thank you to all involved in the production of the Magazine especially Malcolm Foster, Philippa Elsey and the magazine distributors.

Parish Magazine Advertising, has reduced substantially from pre-covid days and has again reduced in 2023 by £203. This an area that will require review during 2024.

PCC Fees – 34 Funerals (26 in Church, 8 Crematorium Only), 5 Weddings and 1 Burial of Ashes took place in 2023. In comparison to 2022 overall Funerals reduced by 9, but those held in Church reduced by 12 as we had 3 more Crematorium only. Weddings reduced by 1 and Burial of Ashes reduced by 4.

Fundraising got underway with a coffee morning held in early March, and a further coffee morning was held in July. The late Summer Concert at the end of September was very enjoyable. It led into the celebrations and a busy time during Houghton Feast fortnight starting with a Feast Saturday coffee morning and lunches, Civic Service and concerts from Houghton Brass Band and Sunderland Symphonia. At the end of November we held a Christmas Fayre with Santa and stalls. Thank you to all involved in arranging and making these events happen and to those who contributed and participated. The Bonus Ball raised £1,225 during 2023 and continues to run smoothly. Thank you to Brian Scott for organising and to all who take part.

Payments	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023
Parish Share	£ 49,200	£48,000	£47,000
Clergy & Staffing	£ 9,303	£ 9,448	£11,637
Repairs & Redecoration	£ 921	£ 1,086	£1,593
Church Running	£ 18,816	£21,866	£27,452
Parish Magazine Costs	£ 1,037	£ 1,020	£1,020
Costs of Generating Funds	£ 12,296	£18,063	£11,280
Transfer to Restricted	£ 3,500	£ 6,308	£ 0

We paid £47,000 for our Parish Share in 2023, which met our pledge for the year.

Clergy and Staffing costs are higher this year due to increase in Salary and Retained payments and also expenses agreed at PCC for a retreat during the Rector's sabbatical.

Repairs and Redecoration costs – Repairs carried out in 2023 included an upgrade of the Vestry lights (£328.67) and an upgrade and replacement of lights in the North Chancel (£599.86). These works were paid for by the Friends of Houghton Church: thank you for your continued support. Also the main vestry door and back door were repainted: thank you to Simon Hardy for carrying out this work. Iona Glass carried out a survey of the Stained Glass windows and produced an assessment report and recommendations of jobs of work to be carried out, some urgent, some longer term.

Church Running – includes Utilities, Insurance, Maintenance and Servicing, Organ/Choir, Photocopying, Technology, Upkeep of Services and HR Dept Services. Gutter cleaning (requiring scaffolding), our new HR Dept contract and increase in costs overall contributed to the £5,586 increase for the year compared to 2022. Contracts are in place for the majority of these cost headings.

Costs of generating Funds – covers Fees paid out for Funerals, Weddings, Burial of Ashes and costs of activities and events in Church.

Restricted Budget Breakdown

Balance carried forward from 2022:

Organ / Music Fund	£ 2,000
Legacy	£ 770
Parish Share Contingency	£ 12,000
Bellringing Donation	£ 5,308
Legacy	£ 1,000
Income 2023	£ 0

Total as at 31 Dec 2023 **£ 21,078**

Next 900 Account

Balance carried forward from 2022	£4,324.61
Income in 2023	£ 428.00
Charges in 2023	£ -102.00
Total Balance	£4,650.61

(Please see attached detailed Receipts and Payments Accounts for Year ended 31 December 2023)

End of Year Summary

Overall, for the year we ended with a deficit of £7,874. We have been able to maintain reasonable Unrestricted Reserves of £23,995 to start 2024, although we need to carefully manage budgets: currently for most months our expenditure exceeds income.

As mentioned above our Planned Giving has reduced mainly due to the reduced number of givers. As well as reviewing within our Church community, we should also consider opportunities to further promote St Michael and All Angels to the wider community. Also review access to online giving.

At September PCC 2023 we agreed our pledge to pay a Parish Share of £43,000 in 2024 (our Guided Pledge from the Diocese is £49,350). We have agreed to review this on a quarterly basis.

In 2024, in addition to any smaller building repairs that are covered within the budget, we require roof repairs and gutter cleaning (approx £1000). Going forward, building remedial work is required on the walls in the North Chancel. Our Architect has provided a rough guided estimate for the work of £35,000. Work is also required on our Stained Glass windows. The most urgent work has already been costed and will be carried out in 2024. Further work will need to be scheduled over the next few years, and costings for this work will be undertaken when a timetable is agreed. Funding sources for these projects is to be looked at during 2024.

Thank you to all for your help, support and generosity throughout the year.

Thank you to Peter Brown, External Examiner, for reviewing and examining our Accounts for 2023. Your continued support is much appreciated.

Sue Bradley
PCC Treasurer

St Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December
Receipts and Payments Accounts

2023

	Note	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts							
Voluntary receipts:							
Planned giving		43,458	-	428	-	43,886	44,719
Collections		9,296	-	-	-	9,296	10,228
Gift Aid recovered		11,570	-	-	-	11,570	11,578
All other giving/voluntary	2	5,425	-	-	-	5,425	17,648
		69,749	-	428	-	70,177	84,173
Activities for generating funds	3	6,345	-	-	-	6,345	6,823
Investment income	4	125	-	-	-	125	120
Church activities:							
Income from trading	5	3,341	-	-	-	3,341	3,851
Asset sales	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other receipts	7	17,739	-	-	-	17,739	23,089
		21,080	-	-	-	21,080	26,940
Total receipts		97,299	-	428	-	97,727	118,056
Payments							
Church activities:							
Parish share		47,000	-	-	-	47,000	48,000
Clergy and staffing costs	8	11,637	-	-	-	11,637	9,448
Church running expenses	9	27,452	-	-	-	27,452	21,866
Hall running costs	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mission giving and donations	11	4,608	-	-	-	4,608	5,230
Costs of trading	12	1,605	-	-	-	1,605	1,210
Repairs and redecorations	13	1,593	-	-	-	1,593	1,086
Asset purchases	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
		93,894	-	-	-	93,894	86,840
Cost of generating funds	15	11,280	-	102	-	11,382	18,063
Governance costs	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Outgoing Resources costs	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments		105,173	-	102	-	105,275	104,903
Excess of receipts over payments		(7,874)	-	326	-	(7,548)	13,153
Transfers between funds	17	-	-	-	-	-	(6,308)
		(7,874)	-	326	-	(7,548)	6,845
Sale/(purchase) of investments		-	-	-	-	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 Jan		31,870	-	25,403	-	57,272	43,693
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 Dec		23,995	-	25,729	-	49,724	57,272

St Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December
Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the year

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Cash funds							
Bank current account		23,995	-	25,729	-	49,724	43,693
CBF deposit fund						-	-
						-	-
						-	-
Other cash funds						-	-
		23,995		25,729	-	49,724	43,693
Other monetary assets						-	
Income tax recoverable						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-
Investment assets							
Investment Fund Shares at market value						-	
						-	
						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-
Assets retained for Church use						-	
						-	
						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-
Liabilities						-	
						-	
						-	
						-	
		-	-	-	-	-	-

Further Analysis of Receipts and Payments

	Note	Unrestricted Fund	Unrestricted Designated Fund	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	✓ Total Funds 2022
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts							
All other giving/voluntary receipts:	2						
Other regular gifts		1,038	-	-	-	1,038	1,286
Donations, appeals, etc		4,386	-	-	-	4,386	3,328
Legacies		-	-	-	-	-	-
Recurring grants		-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-recurring one-off grants		-	-	-	-	-	9,218
Other funds generated		-	-	-	-	-	-
		5,425	-	-	-	5,425	13,832
Activities for generating funds:							
Bookstall sales - fund raising	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Magazine income - advertising		810	-	-	-	810	135
Fundraising Activities & Events		5,535	-	-	-	5,535	4,644
		6,345	-	-	-	6,345	4,779
Investment Income:							
Dividends	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trust fund interest		-	-	-	-	-	-
Bank and building society interest		125	-	-	-	125	101
Rent from lands or buildings		-	-	-	-	-	-
Rent from Masts and other property		-	-	-	-	-	-
		125	-	-	-	125	101
Income from Trading:							
Bookstall sales - trading	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Church hall lettings - trading		-	-	-	-	-	-
Parish magazine sales		1,713	-	-	-	1,713	1,881
Use of photocopier		-	-	-	-	-	-
Other income		1,627	-	-	-	1,627	-
		3,341	-	-	-	3,341	1,881
Asset sales:							
Sales of fixed assets	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other receipts:							
PCC Fees for weddings and funerals	7	7,074	-	-	-	7,074	8,504
Assigned Fees for weddings and funerals		10,665	-	-	-	10,665	10,640
Insurance claims		-	-	-	-	-	1,231
Surplus - sales of fixed assets		-	-	-	-	-	-
Sundry income for Mission		-	-	-	-	-	-
Sundry income		-	-	-	-	-	-
		17,739	-	-	-	17,739	20,375

Payments**Church activities:**

Missionary giving and donations	11	4,608	-	-	-	4,608	3,405
Clergy and Staffing costs	8	11,637	-	-	-	11,637	9,303
Church running costs	9	18,682	-	-	-	18,682	14,182
Church utility costs	9	8,770	-	-	-	8,770	4,635
Hall running costs	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Costs of trading	12	1,605	-	-	-	1,605	10,973
		45,301	-	-	-	45,301	42,498

Major repairs and building works:

Church major repairs	13	1,593	-	-	-	1,593	921
Hall + major repairs		-	-	-	-	-	-
New building costs		-	-	-	-	-	-
		1,593	-	-	-	1,593	921

Asset purchases:

Purchase of fixed assets	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
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Cost of generating voluntary income:

Costs of Church Activities & Events	15	499	-	-	-	499	1,079
Fees paid out for weddings and other services		10,120	-	-	-	10,120	10,634
Investment management costs		660	-	102	-	762	667
Bookstall costs		-	-	-	-	-	-
		11,280	-	102	-	11,382	12,380

Governance costs:

Examination/audit fee	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-	-

Other Outgoing Resources:

Other Outgoing Resources:		-	-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-	-

John Barr
S. Bradley

Rev'd JOHN BARRON
PCC Treasurer
S. Bradley

11/4/24.

11/04/24.

Independent Examiner's Report to the members of St Michael and all Angels Parish Church, Houghton le Spring, Parochial Church Council.

I report on the annual accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and Independent Examiner

The members of the PCC consider that an 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;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records 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 the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention

1. which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

- to keep accounting records in accordance with s.130 of the 2011 Act; or
- to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting records 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.



Peter Brown, BA(Hons)

42 Coptleigh, Houghton le Spring, Tyne & Wear, DH5 8JE

10 April 2024

**SPACE4
HOUGHTON LE SPRING**

**ANNUAL STATEMENT
OF ACCOUNTS**

1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2022

**Accounts Prepared by
Social Enterprise Acumen**

**Independent Examiner
Mr Peter Brown**

**Space4
76 Newbottle Street
Houghton le Spring
DH4 4GB**

Space4 – Statement of Accounts as at 31 December 2023

Overall Receipts of £142,125 this compares to £123,721 last year.

1. A total of £132,516 of receipts was restricted and £9,610 unrestricted.
2. Grant funding of £116,059 was received which was made up of:
 - a. £92,643 - National Lottery Community Fund: Reaching Communities/Partnerships
 - b. £23,416 - Grants Other
3. Donations of £8,822 were received with a further £4,200 coming from our PCC main funds, Gift Aid produced income of £1,883.
4. Sales of produce generated income of £8,818 and a further £2,343 was raised through fundraising.

Overall Payments of £162,555 which compares to £106,123 last year.

1. Staff salaries totalled £75,027 with sessional worker fees totalling £17,628.
2. Building rent were £14,730 with £5,705 costs for utilities and overheads.
3. Product costs for food distributed were £26,602.
4. A total of £5,584 was spent on developing our buildings and £2,428 on equipment.
5. Staff and volunteer expenses were £4,416 with a further £1,975 spent on office costs and training.
6. Professional fees of £8,461 were spent for bookkeeping, accountancy, payroll, HR and marketing.

Our balance at the beginning of the year was £114,429 and at the end of the year £93,999; £45,765 of which is restricted funds and £48,234 unrestricted.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Space4 Houghton-le-Spring

No (if any)

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

Period start date
01/01/2023

To

Period end date
31/12/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	6,698	2,124	-	8,822	6,759
PCC Grant		4,200	-	4,200	4,200
Other Grants		116,059	-	116,059	103,002
Fundraising	1,029	1,315	-	2,343	191
Sales		8,818	-	8,818	9,569
Gift Aid	1,883		-	1,883	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	9,610	132,516	-	142,125	123,721
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	9,610	132,516	-	142,125	123,721
A3 Payments					
Staff Salaries		75,027	-	75,027	46,391
Sessional Workers		17,628	-	17,628	11,007
Rent		14,730	-	14,730	9,556
Utilities and Overheads		5,705	-	5,705	6,236
Product Costs		26,602	-	26,602	19,193
Expenses		4,416	-	4,416	5,377
Transport		-	-	-	120
Food and Consumables		-	-	-	1,182
Equipment		2,428	-	2,428	2,409
Office Costs & Training		1,975	-	1,975	72
Professional Fees		8,461	-	8,461	4,580
Building Development		5,584	-	5,584	
Other		-	-	-	
Sub total	-	162,555	-	162,555	106,123
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	-	162,555	-	162,555	106,123
Net of receipts/(payments)	9,610	- 30,040	-	- 20,430	17,598
A5 Transfers between funds			-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	38,624	75,805	-	114,429	96,831
Cash funds this year end	48,234	45,765	-	93,999	114,429

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Account 33254356	46,258	45,765	-
	PayPal Statement	1,858		-
	Petty Cash	118		-
	Total cash funds	48,234	45,765	-

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

OK OK OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature

Print Name

Date of approval

John Barron
S. Bradley

2800 South BARRON
S. Bradley

11/4/24
11/04/24

CCXX R2 accounts (SS)

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts

Report to the Management Committee of Space 4 on the accounts for the year ended 31st. December 2023.

Respective responsibilities of the Management Committee and Independent Examiner

The Management Committee are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

As the Independent Examiner, it is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts (under section 43(3)(a) of the Act);
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act); and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

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 charity 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 the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records
 - to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting recordshave not been met;
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Peter Brown BA(Hons.)
42 Coptleigh, Houghton le Spring, DH5 8JE
10 April 2024

**ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS
HOUGHTON LE SPRING**

**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF
ACCOUNTS**

1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2023



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

No (if any)

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from 01/01/2023 To 31/12/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Voluntary Income	79,359	124,126		203,485	194,410
Income from Trading and Activities	27,425	8,818		36,243	43,523
Investment Income	125			125	158
Other				-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	106,909	132,944	-	239,853	238,091
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
Asset Sales	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	106,909	132,944	-	239,853	238,091
A3 Payments					
Cost of Generating Income	12,885	94		12,979	45,311
Church and Project Activities	63,267	162,517		225,784	115,876
Facilities Costs	29,044			29,044	41,153
Professional Fees				-	4,580
Other				-	-
Sub total	105,196	162,611	-	267,807	206,921
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Asset purchases	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	105,196	162,611	-	267,807	206,921
Net of receipts/(payments)	1,713	- 29,667	-	- 27,954	31,170
A5 Transfers between funds					
				-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	70,517	101,177	-	171,694	140,524
Cash funds this year end	72,230	71,510	-	143,740	171,694

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Account - Church	23,996	25,745	-
	Bank Account 33254356	46,258	45,765	-
	PayPal Statement	1,858		
	Petty Cash	118		-
	Total cash funds	72,230	71,510	-

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

OK

OK

OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature

Print Name

Date of approval

CCXX R2 accounts (SS)

John Barron
S. Bradley

REVO JOHN BARRON
S. Bradley

11/4/24
11/04/24

Report on church buildings & fabric

During the year we were plagued with water ingress in the south aisle. As there were roofers working on the Kepier Hall roof, I asked them if they could take a look. When we did, it was obvious that the north gutter of the south aisle roof was completely blocked by weeds and they agreed to do the work and also offered to fix the down comer. Due to there not being easy access, they had to arrange scaffolding and the actual work was done in a morning and has fixed the leaks.

Over time lights lose their luminescence and it was becoming obvious that the choir vestry was in need of an upgrade. Alex Scullion agreed to source suitable fitting and have them installed. The results are a great improvement and we can all see to read easily. At the time it was realised that the lights in the east chancel were also in need of an upgrade and George Peebles arranged for that and also the separate lights for the High Altar.

At sometime the glass in the entrance door of Church was broken, probably by someone pushing at it. I contacted Iona Glass who repair church glazing and as they were working on a job in Washington, they sent a glazier who repaired it with amazing skill, so that there is no evidence of a repair.

Every five years we must have a quinquennial survey carried out by a recognised Church Architect. Geoffrey Purves carried out our last one in 2019, and then retired. His final recommendation was that we had a survey of the Church windows carried out. Iona Glass agreed to carry out the survey which they did one day in August. The report which was produced has been circulated to the PCC and the work which was identified as urgent has been authorised to be done.

As I mentioned that our previous architect had retired, I set about recruiting a new one. The Diocesan Advisory Committee have a list of suitable architects and I began contacting them. I started with the nearest, but he responded that he was fully committed and could not take on any more work. The second did not reply to my invitation, but the third Michael Atkinson agreed to come to Church for an informal discussion. We met up and walked around outside and inside the building. He was impressed with the re-ordering that we had done and liked the way the Church worked.

We asked him if he would be willing to take on the role and what his fee would be to carry out our Quinquennial survey. The pricing structure is suggested by the DAC and we have accepted his proposal.

Alastair Bradley

Safeguarding Report

We continue to operate to the values and principles set out in the Parish Safeguarding Policy. Consideration and assessment of any actual or perceived safeguarding risks is given to all activities across the Church to ensure all participants are safe and protected.

The safeguarding training programme for PCC members, community outreach programmes and church activities continue.

DBS checks are up to date for salaried staff and church officers, and a programme of renewal is in place for all existing volunteers and staff.

A new Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) was appointed in January 2024. Using the online Safeguarding Dashboard, they are currently undertaking a review of safeguarding practice and procedures in line with the parish safeguarding policy.

A number of safeguarding issues have been reported in the last year. In line with our safeguarding policy, all incidents / issues are recorded by appropriate officers and are reviewed and monitored accordingly by the Church and the Diocese. Where appropriate, action plans are put in place and these are reviewed and regularly updated.

Chester-le- Street and Houghton Deanery Synod report

Since the last report there has been only one Deanery Synod. This was held on the 27th September 2023. The Revd Simon Spencer opened the meeting with prayer. There was a requirement for Committee Officers to be elected. The following Officers were duly elected:-

Simon Wilkinson-elected as Lay Chair

Marilyn Besford – elected as Deputy Lay Chair

Andrew Cresswell stepped down as Deanery Secretary. Simon Wilkinson agreed to act as Secretary for this Synod.

Appointments of Diocesan Synod representatives:-

Clergy - Christine Britcliffe, Tim Wall, Nick Barr-Hamilton

Laity - Simon Wilkinson, Lucy Barr-Hamilton, Margaret Whitely,

Finance and Guided pledges.

It was felt that the current guided pledge was not equitable between parishes and did not equate fairly to the income and expenditure of the working parish. Recent adjustments to the formula have resulted in increases in guided pledges for Churches with significant reserves. However, it was stated that some expenses for smaller Churches were equivalent with larger buildings which would impact on the number of clergy posts. It was also stated that Church attendances were still down on pre-Covid numbers and that income was becoming harder to predict. Also, larger Churches had more outgoings so basing pledges on income is not straightforward. Revd John stated that

Parishes unable to meet their guided pledges would be contacted by the Diocese's Generous Giving team.

Vacancies - St. John's, Birtley have commenced their vacancy audit , Holy Trinity Washington are coming to the end of their audit. St. Matthew's Newbottle are working in collaboration with St. Michael and All Angels, Houghton and St. Michael and All Angels, Easington Lane.

There was news from various Parishes. Representatives from St. George's, Fatfield, Maureen Killick, Hope Family Church, Oxclose, Christ Church, Great Lumley, Holy Trinity, Washington and Holy Trinity, High Usworth, all gave reports.

The next Deanery Synod was due to meet on the 16th January 2024 at Holy Trinity Church, High Usworth but was cancelled. Parish representatives were informed via an email from Simon Wilkinson, the Synod Lay Chair, on the 15th January. The reason given was because of illness and IT issues. People were also informed that the Revd. John Lintern would be in touch soon to re-arrange the Synod.

This concludes the Deanery Synod report.

David Hann, Dian Scott, Susan Elsey

REPORTS FROM THE CHURCH

Prepared for the

2024 Annual Parochial Meeting

Churchwardens' Report.

2023 has been a busy year for Rita, Simon and myself but as in all things "Hard Work is its Own Reward!" To ease our load we welcomed Brian Scott as a Deputy Warden at the APCM.

Sabbaticals

Rector Tim at Saint Michael's Easington Lane had a Sabbatical in the early part of 2023. Overall this had little impact upon us but Rector John was on hand to offer advice and support.

After Easter Rector John left on his Sabbatical!

"During the time of the incumbent's absence the Church Wardens are responsible for the running of the Church and the maintenance of order in the Church Yard! "

We were left in the safe hands of Bob Cooper our Archdeacon, who took services on two Sundays and arranged for visiting Ministers to officiate where necessary. Also Bishop Paul took a Sunday Service, which was heart-warming as he had announced his retirement the next year. We knew we were in the safe hands of Judith and Margaret, our retired Ministers, who stepped up and ensured the smooth running of services, as well as baptisms, funerals and weddings - not forgetting Claire, and also our Lay Readers Anne, Ros and Sue, who also played their part.

The daily opening of Church

The daily opening of the Church is now seen as normal. For our volunteers who steward the building through the day, the regulars popping in for a "cuppa" and the small but significant number of visitors walking in to visit the church make the effort worthwhile. Once again we are very grateful to the stewards. Thank you all and we would love to have more people to spread the load.

Unseen Work

During the later part of the year Simon Hardy has busied himself by painting the two vestry doors, which are now a resplendent black, and also he cleaned all the brass in Church, a task that has been neglected recently. It is an unseen task that people have done for years but since Covid, has been neglected. We all owe Simon our thanks.

Houghton Feast

This year's Feast was as enjoyable as the previous years. The versatility of the building was demonstrated and I am grateful to the people who gave up their time to move pews and catered for all the events that we hosted - from a Farmers' Market on Saturday to a performance by award winning Houghton Brass on Wednesday night, which sold out!

Remembrance Day.

The Remembrance Day Garden, where we place rows of small wooden crosses to represent the fallen from our region, has become part of our culture and this year was appreciated by many people. The Remembrance Day service itself was very well supported and Houghton Brass both played hymns during the service and led the parade into Church and afterwards through Newbottle Street.

Services over Christmas

Once again all of our scheduled services catered for all needs. The Rector, Margaret, Judith, Claire, Ros, Anne, Sue and George worked very hard to achieve a wonderful variety of services that fulfilled and uplifted us all. Many, many thanks for all their hard work.

Thank You

To the dedicated people who act as sides people throughout the year, turning up on time and welcoming worshippers with a smile and helping the smooth-running of our services. We always need more people to act in this important role. If you feel you can help, please let any of the wardens know and we'll tell you what the job entails and fit you in with an experienced sides person.

We all owe a great deal of appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the events of the past year and our report wouldn't be complete without a list of thanks: to George Peebles our Director of Music, Andy Slater our quiet and much appreciated deputy organist and Stuart Clappison who provides music on the guitar. To Angela Slater, our PCC Secretary, much of whose excellent work goes unseen as does that of our Treasurer Sue Bradley. To Philippa Elsey, who runs our Church Office and performs many other tasks to keep things running smoothly. To David Turnbull and Paul Armour our Verger and Assistant Verger. To the excellent teams of willing helpers who keep the church clean, arrange the flowers and provide music for our services. To the Next 900 team, those providing coffee and refreshments week by week, the team working with the Creche and Young Church, the Welcomers, Lay Readers, Pastoral Assistants, the stalwarts of our Church Choir...the list goes on and apologies if we've missed some...but to all, many thanks.

Sincerely we could not have managed without you. Thank You.

Rita Turnbull, Alastair Bradley, Simon Hardy and Brian Scott

Open the Book

We have recently restarted our Open the Book visits into Burnside School. It has been so good to be able to read Bible stories and act out scenes with the children. We currently have two teams of three people each but would love to expand our numbers to make more teams so we could take the Bible stories into other schools. If it's something you feel you might like to do, we would be pleased to hear from you to explain exactly what is involved.

Rita Turnbull

Flower Guild

Thank you to all who sponsor the flower pedestals and make contributions towards the flowers. The cost of the flowers has risen, like all other things, and your kind donations help to make sure that we can add to the beauty of the Church.

If you would like to sponsor a pedestal arrangement at any time of the year (other than Lent or Advent), the sign-up list is on the notice board at the back of Church.

Carole Cunningham

Hand-Bells

The group started to meet up in the autumn to practise in preparation for Advent and Christmas services, with one new recruit. We were pleased to be able to play at the Advent Carol Service and on Christmas Eve, and many of the congregation said how much they had enjoyed hearing the bells.

If you would like to join our happy little band please get in touch.

Carole Cunningham

Space4 Annual Report 2023

Summary

The past year has seen a number of challenges, not least the resignation of both the Operations Manager and Hub & Events Coordinator over the summer, and the refurbishment of the library upstairs from our Hub. The extended bus strike also impacted on footfall as many of our service users are reliant on public transport and were therefore unable to access Space4 during this period.

Despite all these challenges, Space4 staff and volunteers have worked together as a team to continue to offer the local community a safe and welcoming environment, access to free or low cost food and support to access other services.

There have also been some incredible highlights over the past year, not least celebrating our 10th birthday in October. We hosted events to commemorate both the Queen's funeral and King's Coronation and held a '200th' birthday party for two members of our Cake and Chat group who both turned 100. This attracted the attention of local media and was a huge success. Other highlights include leading the Houghton Feast parade with our new Space4 banner and having staff and volunteers speak on stage at the Tyne & Wear Citizens Delegates Assembly.

We ended the year with our new manager starting in post and the appointment of a new Hub Coordinator, whilst Jade, our community and children's work coordinator, welcomed her new daughter on January 1st, just one week after going on maternity leave!

Creatively addressing food poverty

We started the year with the completion of our new kitchen and registration with the local authority to be able to serve hot food. We were delighted to be awarded a 5* food hygiene rating, thanks to the hard work of Megan, our Food Coordinator. This has enabled us to offer meals in the Hub— we

have gradually increased the days we serve and now offer a brunch service Wednesdays-Fridays with both a donation based offer and a low cost offer.

Our community foodstore is open two days per week (Tuesdays and Fridays 10-12) and is supporting an average of 55 households every month equating to 140 unique individuals (adults and children). We have made several changes to the operation of the foodstore over the past year, including moving to a points based system and the introduction of a membership card system to help people budget. Our meal deal kits have proved very popular – for example, at Christmas we offered both a family size and single person Christmas Dinner meal kit.

Our Foodstore served a cumulative total of 1937 households in 2023, representing 3043 adults and 1825 children, whilst we served 651 meals within the Hub (excluding Tuesday Treat & Christmas events).

Responding to isolation

Our drop in sessions continue to be at the heart of our offer to the local community, offering a safe space for people to come and meet friends, old and new, and get support where needed. We offer a drop in service 6 days per week alongside our well established Cake and Chat group for the elderly, twice weekly Craft group and monthly Bereavement group. We secured funding from the local authority to offer extended hours over the winter months and to host some themed workshops.

Our children's work has continued to grow and develop with our weekly Tuesday Treat and twice weekly Toddlers sessions. We were able to secure funding from Sunderland City Council to run additional activities in the school holidays and ran some trips and special events over the summer which were accessed by a total of 73 children. We also had sell out parties at both Halloween and Christmas.

December was extremely busy with lots of festive events and parties. Highlights included a Christingle service followed by refreshments back in the Hub, Cake and Chat Christmas party, Toddlers parties and a children's party on 23rd complete with Santa's grotto. We were also able to hold our annual lunch on Christmas Day which was attended by 43 people with transport provided for 16 who would otherwise have been unable to attend.

Our drop in has seen a total footfall of 7037 people over the year. Tuesday Treat has had a footfall of 691 children and 519 adults, with an additional 727 accessing school holiday activities, whilst Toddlers has had 1062 children and 1156 adults.

Challenging inequalities

We officially signed up to become members of Tyne & Wear Citizens at the end of 2022 which enabled members of our community to attend a two day training course to introduce them to the principles and methodology of Community Organising.

Over the course of the year we have engaged in a number of group and one to one conversations to hear first-hand what local residents' concerns and issues are. On a local level, issues were raised around the cost of uniform, specifically for Kepier school, and issues with the new supplier which led to us arranging a meeting with Kepier to discuss this with them. As a result of this initial

meeting, a member of the team is now going to have termly meetings to develop that relationship with the school and proactively resolve issues around uniform.

The cost of living and housing were two issues that were identified through our listening as important to local residents. Staff and volunteers went along to the Citizens Delegates Assembly in November to speak about these issues and vote for the regional priority campaigns for 2024. It was great to see that their voices were heard as these were two of the chosen priorities, alongside racism in education.

We continue to be involved in the regional action groups on these issues and work will continue throughout 2024 as we prepare for important elections on a local, regional and national level.

Justine Merton-Scott

St. Michael and All Angels Toddler Group

The toddler group re-opened on 1.5.2022 after a two year absence due to Covid.

As a new member of the team, I was delighted that some of the staff who had previously volunteered decided to come back. Their experience and knowledge has been invaluable and helped me to settle in to my new role. I would also like to say that all of the volunteers at team toddlers are amazing and I could not run the toddler group without them.

The toddler group has grown and currently has approximately 50 children attending over the two sessions.

We cater for all ages/stages and abilities. Children with SEND are very welcome to attend as we are an inclusive group. The toys available to the children change each week and include, construction toys, problem solving toys, role-play, books, messy play, small world, large toys and our lovely slide which is always a favourite with the children. Through the activities provided children use their brains to problem solve, their hands to develop their fine motor skills and the large toys to develop their gross motor skills. Through the use of role play children's imagination is encouraged. The art and craft table provides the children with the opportunity to work with their parents/carers. All the activities provided help the children to develop holistically.

Some of the children who attend are on the pathway to being diagnosed with Autism. The parents keep me informed of their progress. It's nice that they feel they are able to confide in me. Many parents/carers confide other issues in me and the rest of the staff. I always tell parents/carers that if they need any help at all to speak to me or one of the other staff and I make it clear that we are there to support them.

I recently asked parents/carers if there was anything we did not provide that they would like. One response was to have the refreshments available throughout the session. This was acted upon and we have received lots of good feedback. This also provides the opportunity for parents/ carers to interact with each other while they sit around the refreshment tables provided.

The children's Christmas parties were a huge success with many families attending.

Some comments from parents/carers.

"Happy for him to come here, it's great".

"Nice today as the heating is on and nice to have the music". (I have bought a nursery rhyme CD to play throughout the session).

" You're all brilliant, Reuben loves coming here".

Nana said to Cameron who is 2. "Say bye to Susan".
Cameron "Bye, I've had a lovely time".

Susan Watson

Liturgical Choir Report

Another busy year for the choir which has led our church's big events: Feast services, Remembrance Sunday, and our Advent and Christmas Carol Services, all of which were well supported.

Our annual Summer Concert was a wonderful event and well supported with a large audience. A big thank you to all you performed. I would like to thank Laura and the Gilpin Singers, together with Graham Brown for accompanying the performers on the piano.

We are blessed to have musicians to help with the music especially Stuart Clappison and Andy Slater playing at our first Sunday holy communion and 'Engage' services. Andy also plays at our Thursday holy communion each week. It was very sad to lose Tom Ritson. He was a great help to me and the church, playing at funerals and also for our Thursday holy communion service.

I would like to thank the choir for their commitment and support. A big thank you to Nikki who has taken on the role of conducting the choir for our special services and for concerts. We are always looking and hoping for new members of the choir to maintain our choral tradition. You will be welcome, no matter how much commitment you can give.

I would like to say a thank you to Rector John for his support and encouragement to maintain our great music tradition at St Michael's.

George Peebles, Director of Music

Young Church

We are currently running sessions alongside the main eucharist at 10am in the meeting room which allows us to share our activities with the congregation at the end of the service. We still have a regular group of 4 or 5 children taking part each Sunday.

At present we follow the Gospel stories in church planning from Sermons 4 kids and other useful resources that support the children's faith journey each week. Alongside this, each week worksheets, word searches and colouring materials are available for any children who may want to take part. These activities follow the Gospel story theme in church.

As well as completing tasks/activities each session the children have also taken a role in the 'all age' worship in church each month where the children help with the sermon, take part in the offertory procession, choose the music and the older children support in giving communion. This continues to be an inclusive service and has proved very successful with children of all ages through to the adult congregation!

A huge thank you to Philippa, Janine and Jade who have taken more of an active role in running and supporting sessions, and sessions are covered on the monthly rota.

If anyone knows of any primary aged school children who would enjoy hearing a bible story and then making a craft, please feel free to invite them along.

Clare Taylor - Young Church Leader

'Light' Bereavement Group.

Light has continued to meet monthly; the first Tuesday of the month at 1.15pm-2.30pm. Our numbers fluctuate depending on members' other commitments, the important issue being that we are always there for them. We continue to receive members who have been attending over the years, as well as welcoming newly bereaved. The group may have a general conversation with regard to recent difficult times or events coming up on the horizon, or they may focus on a particular aspect of bereavement experience prompted by one of Tom Gordon's evocative stories. The value of the bereavement group comes in their collective experience and support for each other. It is reassuring to new members to find they are not alone on their journey, and they are perfectly normal, coping well despite the gaping hole inside.

Margaret Lee

Signpost

Signpost continues to provide the congregation and wider community with two way feedback on all issues relating to our church, St Michaels and All Angels. Still trying to shake off the legacy of the Pandemic, we are striving to get back to a kind of "normal" in which we can, together, share in our worship in church.

Ably assisted by the Rector, Ministry team, Churchwardens Rita and Alastair and our PCC, I continue to report on the events and activities that shape our month. My thanks to all who provide copy to the Signpost team, and especially our distribution group who deliver the magazine to your door.

Malcolm Foster

Gilpin Singers

Laura Parkin continues to teach and inspire the ladies, who gain much from being members of the choir, and we thank her for her dedication to the choir. Our summer concert marked the 10th anniversary of the choir. The Reverend Francis Wilson, who originally formed the Gilpin Singers, sent us a special message for the concert, the ladies were all given a souvenir pen, and Prosecco and nibbles were served afterwards.

September was busy as we held a concert at St Michael's RC Church at which just over £2000 was raised for cancer charities! The very next day we also took part in the Late Summer Concert.

In December we had our Christmas concert, another successful evening, with mulled wine and mince pies being served in the interval. Unfortunately we couldn't accommodate everyone who requested tickets so at our forthcoming summer concert we are going to try out having a Saturday matinee followed by another on Wednesday evening.

We are grateful to Graham Brown for continuing to accompany the choir and also George Peebles for helping when requested. There is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes, and thanks to all who contribute to that.

Carole Cunningham

REPORTS FROM THE CHURCH AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

Prepared for the

2024 Annual Parochial Meeting

2nd Houghton Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers

We have very full units at the moment with 30 Rainbows, 29 Brownies, 22 Guides and 5 Rangers. We have had a very busy year with the units including: -

All units took part in the Houghton Feast Parade. We also paraded the flags at the Mothers' Day service and the Harvest Festival service in church. All units took part in the parade for Remembrance Day.

All the units attended the pantomime at the Sunderland Empire which was really enjoyed by all.

All units took part in the Uniformed Carol service in December. Each group did a little performance for the parents. We held a Christmas party prior to the Carol service.

Rainbows

Held a joint sleepover with the Brownies in 2023 with the theme of Easter.

We had a visit to Whitehouse Farm for our Summer Day out.

Brownies

Pack holiday which was two nights sleeps was held in the Kepier hall.

We have a sleepover planned at Beamish Museum in April. We will be sleeping in the Masonic Hall after a campfire with marshmallows. We will be spending all day Saturday looking around the museum and going home Sunday morning.

Brownies have a PGL holiday at Newby Wiske planned in May.

Guides & Rangers

We took 10 Guides and Rangers to Waddow Hall at Clitheroe in August for 5 days of outdoor activities. This was enjoyed by all the girls who attended.

In September we took the Brownies, Guides and Rangers to Flamingo Land to take part in the Flamingo Fling. This was a Girlguiding North East England event and had Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers from across the region. Our transport was paid with a donation from Sunderland Community chest.

Guides and Rangers held a sponsored walk from South Shields to Roker to raise money for their trip to York.

Guides and Rangers held a stall at the church Houghton Feast coffee morning and the church Christmas fair to raise funds for their trip to York.

The Guides and Rangers had a weekend in York in February, 21 girls attended. They visited the Chocolate museum, York dungeons, escape room, York bus tour and Harry Potter mini golf. The Guides stayed in the York Youth Hostel.

Sheila Wynn

The Friends of Houghton Hillside Cemetery 2023

The committee resumed our meetings earlier in the year and started to organise litter picks and tidy-ups. Our website is being updated and is not available at present.

The weather this year has been against us at every opportunity, and our planned clean-ups have had to be cancelled. However we are grateful to members of our local community who have kept the place tidy.

We planned a big clean-up before Remembrance Day, but this had to be cancelled because of illness. Our AGM was held in Church on 19th October, and we welcomed Gareth Webb who introduced us to some of his historic family history.

For Remembrance Day, we laid a wreath at the Cenotaph at Church and one against the monument in the Cemetery. The War Graves Commission had cleaned the headstones in the cemetery prior to this and people have laid poppies and crosses on the graves.

We are looking forward to getting back to full swing in 2024!

Alastair Bradley, Chair.

Kepier Trust and Management Committee

I am very pleased to report that the Kepier Hall, after a tough few years, is looking good and its users appear to be happy with the building and its surroundings.

Our caretaker/coordinator, Mr. Darren Snaith, has proved to be very versatile and has tackled lots of practical work during this last year, as well as restoring the upstairs flat for occupancy.

As expected, this ancient building demands a lot of attention and there are constantly problems with either plumbing, heating, or water ingress, to name but a few. We are exploring grant funding opportunities in the hope that we will be able to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

We are fortunate to have a wide diversity of clients using the building which reminds us of the original Constitution of the Kepier Trust: to serve the community of Houghton both for leisure activities and to meet the needs of the parish.

This last year we said a sad farewell to Mr. Ron Young, a Trustee of many years standing. His knowledge and experience were invaluable. We are very pleased to welcome Ron's daughter, Alison, who is a huge asset.

Jean Henderson

Friends of the Houghton Parish Church Trust

The Friends Trust has had a successful year in 2023, being able to provide much needed funds for the fabric of the ancient Church of St. Michael's. We have been supported by dedicated members who have been with the Trust since its inauguration in 1993. Sadly this year we said

goodbye to three very dear friends who were ardent supporters. Unfortunately, the number of new members we have managed to gain is small compared to those we have lost.

The Trustees will have to think hard on how to recruit new members. It certainly was worth having a leaflet drop in 2019 when over 30 new members joined. This is a daunting task to organise and will need many helpers to target new houses in the area.

The Trustees have sanctioned expenditure by the P.C.C. to replace the stained glass windows protection throughout the church where it is required.

The Friends' musical weekend is scheduled for the beginning of May. Please look out for the details in the Signpost and in Church. If anyone can help with distributing posters, please let me know.

Jean Henderson, Chair

Mothers Union Report

We had 41 members at the end of 2023, and a member of the clergy.

We have sadly lost Evelyn Curry, Emily Forrester, and Maureen Bainbridge.

It's been nice to see Emma Hyden managing to come back to meetings and events.

We welcomed 2 new members: Joan Cummings and Fiona Holmes.

Summary

We have 41 members:

1 member of clergy

7 indoor members

34 active members of which 25 attend meetings regularly.

In 2023 we have supported;

Gillas Lane School

Providing year 6 pupils with a school bag filled with toiletry items and stationery items to take with them to Kesper school.

We had a stall at the school summer fayre. MU Members were very generous with donations of toiletry items which we gave to families free of charge.

Church

We continue to send Baptism anniversary cards, and knitted teddies for children who are baptised.

Refuge in Houghton

We were able to purchase items of food and toiletry items for the refuge.

Low Newton Prison

We donated 21 shower gels to the prison.

MU Monthly Programme 2023

January – held our AGM in the Kepier Hall

February – Ladies held an enjoyable meal at Homer Hill Farm Shop

March – We held an Easter service in church

April – We held a Coronation celebration in the Kepier Hall. Afternoon tea was provided by Ye Olde Stable tea shoppe with funding received by the Sunderland Coalfield. Entertainment was provided by the male voice choir. A great afternoon was held for all.

May – We held a beetle drive to raise funds for AFIA. We had a cupcake and cup of tea or coffee.

June – We had an exciting outing to South Causey Inn for lunch.

July – We held our annual strawberry tea and played bingo

September – We held our pie and peas harvest lunch in the Kepier Hall

October – Kate Welch from the Old Rectory came to talk about the wonderful work they have achieved since setting up the charity.

Fair at Houghton Feast coffee morning.

November – Kathleen Wilson came to talk about the Mothers Union branch that has been set up in Low Newton prison.

December – We held an Advent service in church followed by mince pies and refreshments. We had a three course Christmas meal at The Bistro with 22 ladies attending. The table was set for Christmas and the meal was enjoyed by everyone.

Joan Beattie, Branch Leader

St Michael & All Angels, The Church of England in Houghton-le-Spring

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