

The Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's



2023 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS **For the year ended 31st December 2023**

Issued 08 April 2024

**The Parochial Church Council of
The Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's**

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1.0 LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Full Parochial Name:	Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's
The Incumbent:	The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray BA (Hons), FCMA, Dip (HE)
Parish address:	Parish Office, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham Berkshire RG40 3AT Tel: 01344 761050 e-mail: office@stsebastians.org.uk www.stsebschurch.org.uk
Bankers to the PCC:	CAF Bank Limited, 25 King's Hill Avenue, King's Hill, ME19 4JQ Barclays Bank UK PLC Leicester, LE87 2BB
Independent Examiner:	Mr Michael Young FCA

The following schools are associated with the Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's:

- Hatch Ride Primary School;
- Holme Grange Independent School;
- Oaklands Junior School;
- Oaklands Infant School;
- St Sebastian's Church of England Primary School and Nursery;
- Wellington College.

The Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's is situated in Wokingham Without. It is part of the Sonning Deanery, Archdeaconry of Berkshire, Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England.

Correspondence address: Parish Office, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 3AT.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, as amended, Church Representation Rules 2022), and a registered charity of The Charity Commission for England and Wales.

Charity Registration Number: 1139933

2.0 TRUSTEES REPORT

2.1 Aims and purposes

To promote the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent, The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray, in promoting in the ecclesiastical Parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the following buildings:

- St Sebastian's Church
- St Sebastian's Parish Centre
- St Sebastian's Parish Church Hall
- St Sebastian's Lodge

Nine Mile Ride
Wokingham
Berkshire RG40 3AT

2.2 Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our churches and to become part of our Parish community of Wokingham Without. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the Parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our Parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Right Reverend Dr Steven Croft's (Bishop of Oxford) Common Vision of being called to be **Christ-like (Contemplative, Compassionate and Courageous)** for the benefit of our Parishioners, local residents and visitors. This also includes supplementary guidance from The Charities Commission (England and Wales) for the advancement of religion for the public benefit.

With the Parish *Interim* Mission Action Plan of "**a beacon of Christ loving God and serving others**", we enable ordinary people to live out their faith in response to us loving God and others through:

- becoming a welcoming Christ-like Church called by God;
- resourcing Pastoral Care for church members & local residents;
- building Missionary and Outreach work with Diocesan partnership;
- increasing Parish collaboration with local government bodies & local community groups;
- increasing Parish buildings' usage;
- being good stewards and guardians of resources in our care.

The detailed Mission Action Plan can be reviewed in **Section 7.0 (pages 34-35)**.

2.3 Achievements and Performance

PARISH REVIEW

I was installed on 10th May 2023 as the next Incumbent of St Sebastian's Church after sharing farewells in my last Parish of three churches: The Claydons in Buckingham. I now hold the Vicar role of Parish Incumbent and legal Chair of St Sebastian's, a UK registered charity of the Charity Commission (England and Wales). What an exciting time for Nicki and I as we

reset our journey with the Lord in a new Parish with great expectations. My predecessor, Reverend Canon Andrew Marsden, had been in this role for 25 years, the last three years of which he suffered ill health resulting in his departure in March 2022. The Parish and I wish Reverend Andrew and his wife, Ros, well.

So, I would like to acknowledge with thanks the special support of Clergy colleagues during the time of Reverend Andrew's absence: Archdeacon of Berkshire, The Venerable Stephen Pullin, Area Dean The Reverend Canon Richard Lamey, The Reverend Ian Seymour and The Reverend Marina Brain; Local Licensed Lay Ministers: Russell Shipton, Wendy Wickens and David Hare; Children and Family Workers: Marvin and Amy Vogel; Churchwardens: Mary Unwin and Nigel Wickens, succeeded by Chris Bull and Peter Thompson; Diocesan representative Rhodri Bowen, I also acknowledge the work of the Standing Committee, Parochial Church Council members (under the leadership of David Smart), Safeguarding Leaders, Helen Thompson, Mark Lee, Suman Shrestha and Murray Foulds, and members of the Parish Ministry Team for keeping the Parish events and activities on the road prior to my arrival.

I am also grateful for the hard work and administrative support of Kirsty Milam, Parish Office Manager, who remains an asset to the Parish. I would like to take the opportunity to show appreciation for her continuity of support, particularly, during the transition of clergy change and through 2023.

We remain in a transitional state of change as a Benefice as we discern a new sense of direction in which we pause for a refreshed anointing of God the Holy Spirit. A discovery of a new mission action plan, taking stock of our current ministries, re-building leadership capacity, understanding where we are, what is noticed, seeking where God wants us to be and taking stock of our Parish resources are all part of journeying together. But the primary aim is that God's presence goes with us and looks favourably on us.

We see a similar story in the 33rd chapter of the Exodus narrative below. "Then Moses said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you look favourably on me — on me and on your people — if you don't go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth." The Lord replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favourably on you, and I know you by name."

Albert Einstein once said, "There are two ways to live: we can live as if nothing is a miracle, or we can live as if everything is a miracle". The Parish and I choose the latter as we view the miracle landscape across our Parish and missional opportunities. We choose the latter as the driver of our faith, labour of love, devotion for the Lord and frequent prayers that change things.

According to Benjamin Franklin, "Change is the only constant in life, our ability to adapt to those changes will determine our success in life". It is to this quote I add "alignment to God's purpose", which brings the discovery of the Parish achieving more and changing more by doing less. Our course and direction as a Parish are set by God and our achievements will occur with success with the help of God. We work in ministry partnership with our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Lastly, we were encouraged by the very positive outcome of the Deanery Inspection in September 2023 of our Parish Governance systems, led by Area Dean The Reverend Canon Richard Lamey. This was the first for the Parish in the last five years. I am grateful to our

churchwardens, Chris Bull and Peter Thompson, and Kirsty Milam, Office Manager, for the sterling work of preparation and achievement for the Parish. Thank you.

MINISTRY ACTIVITIES

Parish Services

We held 131 events in 2023 covering Sunday Worship, All Age and Communion Services, Worship and the Word, The Base, Wednesday Communion and 5th Sunday Healing and Prayer. Included in this total were the following services: Easter and Christmas, Maundy Thursday, Three Hour by the Cross, Christmas Tree Festival, Christingle, Carols Service, Crib Service and Midnight Communion.

An additional 28 services were held for All Souls and Remembrance Day, Life Events (baptisms, weddings and funerals), Harvest Festival, School services and my Installation / Collation with Bishop of Reading, The Rt Reverend Olivia Graham. We have also begun holding monthly communion services at Buckler's Lodge Care Home.

Safeguarding

Work continued throughout the year on building on the good work undertaken by our leaders: Helen Thompson, Mark Lee, Suman Shrestha and Murray Foulds. Team Leaders have made great efforts to stay up to date with their training supplemented by a healthy attendance support of Deanery events including the latest learning around Pastoral visits in September 2023 as part of our overall pastoral ministry. We also attended in great numbers the other Deanery workshop two months later about "Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse". I am deeply encouraged by the support of our Parish leaders in this very important aspect of our ministry.

Little Angels

I am grateful for Little Angels, the Parent and Toddler group, which meets in St Sebastian's Church Hall each Friday during school term time. This has been running for a number of years under the leadership of Children and Families Worker, Amy Vogel, and our parishioners. For parents, other than a "Toddler Group", the event was their "Coffee Morning".

The Parish has built up a community of mothers and families joining us on Fridays, and I look forward to future opportunities of developing our engagement. I offer my thanks to Amy and all volunteers, who have helped run this essential event and particularly those who have regularly brought in cakes.

Update

We say goodbye to Amy Vogel whose last day was 14th February 2024. With her husband, Marvin, and family, Amy will be exploring new ventures and ministry opportunities. We wish her and her family well.

Youth

We are blessed to have a Parish Youth Ministry, which has been run by Youth Worker, Marvin Vogel, for several years. The club was held fortnightly and has become a friendly and safe space for teenagers to meet, to socialise, to explore basic bible truths with food and plenty of fun. Opportunities were taken to communicate the love of Christ in a way that is relevant

to our teenagers through the range of appropriate activities offered. The feedback received was of our Youth wanting more and we are looking at growing opportunities of engagement for taking their Christian witness forward.

We said goodbye to Marvin Vogel in January 2024 and thanked for all his work and efforts building Parish ministry in this area. We remain grateful for his contribution into this ministry, and we wish him well. In the meantime, we are exploring with the help of our volunteers options of additional resources for sharing with our Youth as they continue to meet fortnightly with the support of temporary leadership.

Life Events

In contrast to 2022, we had 19 (18) Life events, comprising 2 (1) weddings, 3 (6) baptisms (2 of which were held in church services) and 14 (11) funerals. We hope to build on this year's success with a greater push during 2024 in social media, announcements and publicity to build these missional opportunities.

Life events are a good indicator of growing engagement with our local community, and we are steadily breaking ground as more local residents and families with Parish connections look to the Parish for greater engagement, support and journeying.

Licensed Lay Ministry

I am thankful for the Parish resource and support of our Local Lay Ministers (LLMs) Russell Shipton and Wendy Wickens. Beyond the support prior to my arrival, they continue to contribute to the flourishing of local ministry, particularly, Pastoral Care and 6pm Worship services. In recognition of their contribution, fourth Sundays were earmarked shortly after my arrival and still remains for exercising their ministry in partnership.

Schools

St Sebastian's Church of England Primary School and Nursery

I regularly engaged with Headteacher, Martin Gater beyond the following school events of Easter, Summer End of Term, Harvest, Remembrance Day and Christmas. I also had the pleasure of joining the KS1 class Hat competition and other concerts, which saw an average 141 in attendance of children, parents and teachers, when held in our church building. School children were also invited and participated in the Christingle Service. Children and Families Worker, Amy Vogel also held several services with the school at St Sebastian's Church, which all contributed to progress by the school in spiritual values.

The school by virtue of historical partnership is supported by Foundational Governors from our church. Together, they have contributed to the School's governance and Headteacher, Martin Gater, and Teachers' support.

Lastly, in accordance with past agreement and tradition, we donated the cost of Bibles for final school year pupils in preparation for move to local secondary schools.

Oaklands Junior School

I had the privilege to lead and preach at the Harvest Service in Oaklands Junior School. The Schoolteachers' reception and children's enthusiasm were most welcoming. Our Youth Worker, Marvin Vogel, had undertaken some great work maintaining Parish relationship with the school for which I am appreciative. The school recently asked to be added to our website as a partner and, in return, I look forward to building Parish engagement during 2024.

Holme Grange Independent School

Youth Worker, Marvin Vogel, led the school engagement work at this school on Thursdays. He brought a variety of resources into school with energy and enthusiasm, which have been able to build good relationship with the school, particularly, its Christian Union. We are thankful for Marvin's work. We look forward to building school engagement during 2024 linking into Parish ministry following Marvin's departure.

Wellington College

College Volunteers assisted the Parish during 2023 with the preparation of food parcels under the leadership of Marvin Vogel. I am thankful for all the efforts expended in achieving the outcome of distributed food parcels.

Buckler's Lodge Care Home

The Parish began holding monthly Holy Communion services in the Care Home from October following September discussions. This followed their clergy invitation to the opening event shortly after my arrival. Holy Communion services have been wonderful and are growing to the extent that services can be found in the Parish Diary and the Care Home is now embedded on our website as a partner of the Parish. Praise the Lord!

I would like to acknowledge the warm hospitality of Business Support Manager, Anne Burroughs, Debbie Rapson and Aimee Hallcup. We also share our deepest thanks to the local residents who attend each service, their acceptance of our service books and the Holy Communion. We look forward to more collaborations and a flourishing relationship with the Care Home throughout 2024.

Prayer Group

Prayer is an embedded ministry at St Sebastian's and for that I am grateful. After all, the 7th chapter of Matthew's Gospel cites: "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you." This is what we do here at St Sebastian's as we seek a refreshed direction of travel on this ministry journey in order to "achieve more by doing less" with the help of God.

The Prayer Group meets weekly, mostly via Zoom, led by leaders: Alexis Clarke and Jill Gardiner for which I am grateful. I am also grateful for group members who join at these meetings. Prayer support was provided during Holy Communion, 5th Sundays and other unplanned occasions when needed. In our aspiration to locate in the heart of the community, we shall be establishing new channels for receiving prayer requests including via the website as well making connections through our home groups and pastoral care.

Home Groups and Pastoral care

The above ministries have been running at St Sebastian's for a considerable time, prior to my arrival. Several home groups have been meeting at regular intervals to cater for the supporting needs of our parishioners. I would like to give recognition to the groups of Russell and Angela Shipton, Paul and Claire Morrison, Sally and John Congram, Anne and Mark Andrews, Murray and Joy Foulds and others who will have occasionally met on the margins. Many thanks for all the efforts expended holding the emotional needs of the church community, which remains an essential aspect of our local ministry.

There is also another aspect to the above ministry. Paul and Claire Morrison have been frequently providing practical help, transport and food to vulnerable parishioners of our

church community during this year and in times before. An area of work that can be easily taken for granted. Paul and Claire have been coordinating a Parish team of support since May 2022 and I am sure many parishioners will be most grateful for their heroic work, also endorsed by me too. This recognition also extends to all Parish volunteers involved in home groups and pastoral care.

Cancer Support

I am grateful for the much needed support work of Anne Bone and team in this area. This ministry is so necessary for meeting the needs of the Parish demographics as well as those the church community. Thank you, Anne.

Churches Together Crowthorne

St Sebastian's Church is a member of Churches Together Crowthorne (CTC). CTC is an association of local churches from Crowthorne and Finchampstead, who come together to serve and bless our area and its people in the name of Jesus Christ including church communities: St John the Baptist, St James in Finchampstead, the local Baptists, Methodists, Roman Catholic and Vineyard Church groups. We are fortunate that CTC Chair, Janet Rogers, is a member of our local Parish community. I am thankful for all the work Janet is putting into this ecumenical ministry.

I had a privilege of frequently meeting local leaders several times at Vineyard Church Offices. I also took part in the organised summer event at the Morgan Recreation Grounds and the Christmas late night shopping event in Crowthorne High Street outside the local Baptist Church. Several members of our Parish community joined in and the events were successful.

Age UK Berkshire Dementia Club

We are honoured to be providing the use of our Church Hall for the above fortnightly event for an essential group of our local community. I reached out to Dementia Activities Coordinator, Adele Ireland, Age UK Berkshire, following a flourishing relationship and deep collaboration with Age UK Buckingham. The Wokingham Borough Council sponsored fortnightly collaboration and also created a window of opportunity for parishioner volunteers to join, following a short bout of training. This community service is growing, and we are looking forward to building engagement with our other church ministries in the future.

Food Distribution

The Parish via Marvin Vogel collaborated with Share Wokingham and Vineyard Foodbank for the distribution of food to parents at St Sebastian's School and local residents.

Sandwich Men's Club

This was a recent addition to Parish ministries, the vision of our parishioner and former Local Lay Minister, Ian Mackenzie. This is a welcome space for our senior men to meet over a cup of tea and share each month in the Parish Centre. I am grateful for Ian's vision and can see this ministry developing over the course of time. Like other ministries, I see this opportunity as an additional touch point for engaging with our church community and local residents.

COMMUNICATION

Website

The Parish website was refreshed during August and September 2023 as part of resetting what our community and stakeholders see of us. Opportunity was taken to refresh our Parish calendar now listing all events, safeguarding statement, setting out our services, charities supported and links to local community groups. We eased the Church Hall Booking service interface by introducing “Hall Booking software”, which displays all bookings and available slots in real time and automates customer invoicing. Donations and stewardship giving are easier to manage-with embedded software tools and pages.

Social Media

Steps were taken to rationalise the four Facebook social media public accounts to two (public and private) portals for Parish communications. We are steadily building membership of both groups. The former is now dynamically linked to the face of the website (display of the last five messages) and the latter has now got access into several local Facebook forums covering up to 15,000 residents. Opportunity has been taken to provide regular Christian quotes, bible readings, notices and prayers, which have drawn many positive responses, and they are increasing. Occasionally, relevant videos have been added.

VOLUNTEERS

I would like to thank all the volunteers who have worked so hard to maintain our Church and Parish buildings during 2023 from flower arranging, verging, polishing, cleaning, refreshments, baking cakes, Sound and Vision desk and modest repairs. You are too numerous to be named but you know who you are, and I am deeply grateful. Thank you for all your efforts.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Parish Treasury

The 2023 Parish Share of £82,622 was met in full, a modest 3 per cent reduction on 2022's £85,093. We praise the Lord for all donations, stewardship and other giving to meet in full our share of Diocese of Oxford's costs.

Supported Charities

The Parish donated £3,794 to the following in 2023:

UK Charities

- Yeldall Manor £600
- JAC £300
- Soulscape £300
- Royal British Legion £150

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Overseas Charities

- Tear Fund Quiz £644
- Mitiyana £600
- Open Doors £600
- Univida £600

This Parish is a registered charity of the Charity Commission (England and Wales). The support and contribution of the Parochial Church Council members (as Trustees) have helped to sustain our charity's legal and governance obligations during 2023, and for that I am thankful.

PARISH ATTENDANCE

Every effort will be made to refresh this data annually for the benefit of our Parish community.

Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's														
2023 Monthly Attendance Data														
	No. of Services	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Average per service
Parish Attendance Totals (Monthly)	159	361	688	322	331	576	749	615	390	431	937	648	1,174	45
8am Holy Communion Services	33	8	10	3	7	10	21	21	-	11	14	14	18	4
10am All Age Communion	11	57	75	55	62	53	64	69	-	89	72	71	62	66
10am Worship and the Word (inc 2 Baptisms)	24	84	95	110	-	105	87	203	124	78	95	40	172	50
10am Holy Communion	15	56	47	63	109	89	87	62	146	70	75	67	46	61
10am Holy Communion (Wednesdays)	16	8	12	6	-	-	14	10	-	9	4	6	4	5
6pm Praise and Worship	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	25	33	-	27
5th Sunday Healing Service	3	62	-	-	47	-	-	-	-	-	67	-	-	59
10am The Base	17	86	91	85	43	95	82	-	-	100	96	44	44	45
Easter														
Easter - Maundy Thursday	1	-	-	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Easter - 3 Hours by the Cross	1	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Christmas														
Christmas Tree Festival	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	26
Christmas Christingle	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43	43
Christmas Carols	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	106	106
Christmas Crib Service	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71	71
Christmas Cubs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	34
Christmas Midnight Communion	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	27
Christmas Day	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	98	98
Parish Attendance Monthly Totals	131	361	330	322	296	352	355	365	270	381	448	275	751	34
Special Services and Life Events														
Commemorative Events														
All Souls	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	-	33
Remembrance Day	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	104	-	104
Life Events														
Baptism	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	-	18
Wedding	2	-	-	-	-	120	-	-	120	-	-	-	-	120
Funeral Services	11	-	358	-	35	-	264	100	-	50	-	52	98	87
Harvest and Schools														
St Sebastian's and Oaklands Schools	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	375	-	-	188
St Sebastian's School Services	6	-	-	-	-	-	130	150	-	-	102	153	311	141
Care Home														
Buckler's Lodge Holy Communion	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	13	14	13
RSG Collation														
Installation and Collation Service	1	-	-	-	-	104	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	104
Special Services and Life Events Monthly Totals	28	0	358	0	35	224	394	250	120	50	489	373	423	808
OVERALL TOTAL	159	361	688	322	331	576	749	615	390	431	937	648	1,174	842
Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's Feb-24														

So, we come to the end of this Parish Review as we look forward to 2024. We keep on keeping on, watching and waiting for a new word from the Lord, affirmed direction of travel and engagement to be blessed. We remain encouraged that the Lord is with us as we pursue new horizons in this Parish to be a beacon of light and serve others with love.

Peace be with you

The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray
Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's
Diocese of Oxford | Church of England

OTHER PARISH REPORTS

Churchwarden's Report

2023 was a year of change within the church.

After three years of Andrew's illness and the interregnum we moved into a new season. This started with the recruitment day for the new Vicar in January 2023 where a large number of church members came to support the interview process including listening to sermons and meeting the candidates at break times. It was a joyous day resulting in the appointment of The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray, who took up office in May. Many thanks go to The Reverend Canon Richard Lamey, The Reverend Catherine Vaughan, Suman Shrestha and Mary Unwin who formed the interview team and all those who helped organise and run the day and those who attended.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) saw the two Churchwardens, Mary Unwin and Nigel Wickens, who had led us through the interregnum, standing down and Chris Bull and Peter Thompson were elected. A special note should be made of the efforts of Mary and Nigel who not only led us through the Interregnum but also the two years of Andrew's illness. In May 2023, Reverend Rickey was commissioned at a beautiful service at St Sebastian's. Thanks are due to Mary who was heavily involved in the organisation of this.

The Churchwardens are ably supported by three deputy wardens for the management of services, Jane Addison, Nigel Birch and Paul Morrison. We would like to thank them all for their dedication and service to this responsibility.

The arrival of Reverend Rickey has brought new energy to our church, and we thank God for his appointment.

We are grateful for the positive outcome of the Deanery inspection of our governance systems, with special thanks to Kirsty Milam, Office Manager.

Fabric Report 2023

We have been engaged in many different items sorting out issues that occur running the fabric of any church and related buildings.

Church

The main task this year was to clean and varnish the flooring in the extension at the back of the church. We had a few problems with the floor lifting but with thanks to Nigel Wickens this was completed in time for church on the following Sunday.

We have installed fibre internet in the Parish Centre and relocated the feed into the church. This now provides us with a high-speed internet service to allow livestreaming and related media opportunities.

Church Hall

Continual improvements being made to the church hall with the repainting of the toilets and entrance lobby. A window in the gents' toilet was replaced and was provided by the Wokingham 'Men's Shed' project team with help from Ian McKenzie.

Parish Centre and Flat

Continued maintenance has been carried out through the year. The flat will require a complete redecoration and upgrading now that Youth Workers, the Vogel's, have departed from the Parish. Concerns remain over the dampness in the roof of the building, which will need to be investigated.

Car Park

We have carried out some patching in the car park, but this is only a temporary solution to a much bigger problem (see below). We have also undertaken a general clear up and removal of trees, bushes and leaves ongoing with weekend clearing up days.

Major Projects

The main church roof on the north side of the building will need the rafters refitting at a cost of £40 000 at some stage in the near future. The car park needs a drain soak away replacing and complete resurfacing at an estimated cost of £85,000. We are in discussion with Keys Academy Trust on behalf of St Sebastian's School for resolving this issue. Redevelopment of the church hall remains a future consideration to provide more services into the community.

Church Hall users

Finally, we remain grateful to regular users of our Church Hall, which brings much needed income to our Parish: Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Age UK Berkshire.

Thanks to Fabric Team: Murray Foulds, David Metson, Paul Morrison, and Nigel Wickens for all their help. More members welcome. **Churchwardens: Chris Bull and Peter Thompson**

Safeguarding

The PCC continues to regard Safeguarding as one of its most important responsibilities. Understanding that Safeguarding extends to all, the PCC agreed a renewed Safeguarding Policy at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in May 2023. Key points were as follows:

Our Parish is committed to:

- Promoting a safer environment and culture;
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church;
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation;
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons;
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons;
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

2023 saw a continued focus on updating safeguarding training for many of St Sebastian's congregation in accordance with roles / responsibilities as per Diocesan guidance / requirements. Approximately 50-60 persons have completed safeguarding training at Basic Awareness &/or Foundation &/or Leadership Levels during 2023/2024. In addition 10 persons completed Domestic Abuse Awareness training in conjunction with others from the Diocese. A Parish Statement on Domestic Abuse was approved in January 2024. Work continues to embed an effective safeguarding culture within St Sebastian's - to date good progress has been made. **Helen Thompson, Mark Lee, Suman Shrestha and Murray Foulds**

The Base

2023 was a great year for The Base. We maintained services for families and children twice monthly, save for summer months and other seasonal festivals. We engaged with singing, dancing with all age groups whilst supporting parents who also attended. It was wonderful to see new families joining us out of connections to our other Parish ministries of “Little Angels”, St Sebastian’s School and Youth Club.

We wish to acknowledge the voluntary efforts of Suman Shrestha, Tracey-Anne Clarke, Mark and Rachel Portsmouth, The Foulds and other volunteers who have made this ministry effort possible. We are also grateful for the financial support and resourcing from Parish leadership and ministry colleagues too. Thanks.

Marvin and Amy Vogel

Little Angels

Throughout the school terms, Little Angels has been taking place every Friday morning in the Church Hall. It provides a warm, safe space for pre-school children and their carers. The highlight of the morning is probably the home-made cakes for the grown-ups, and the healthy snacks for the children. The children usually get to enjoy the cakes too!

There is a fabulous group of volunteers who bake, set up the hall and provide a listening ear to anyone who needs to chat. Everyone enjoys singing fun songs at the end and taking home birthday socks on special occasions. **Amy Vogel and Eve Bull**

Youth Club - Friday Night Live

2023 has been a fantastic year for the Friday night Youth Group. Currently, the group runs every fortnight. Numbers reached 25 at times as the young people are natural evangelists, bringing their friends along from school. The evenings were full of fun and games with a talk at the end from Youth Worker, Marvin Vogel.

A discussion group was started up for those who wanted to stay on for half an hour after the evening had finished. This quickly progressed to having its own night on the in-between Fridays in the Parish Centre where we discussed topics such as: fear, trust and choices. The year finished with a special time celebrating Marvin’s work and saying our goodbyes.

Sally Alexander

School Worship

St Sebastian’s Primary School and Nursery

We held regular School Worship in liaison with Headteacher, Martin Gater, and Schoolteachers between the School Hall and St Sebastian’s Church. Some of these events also included the assistance of our new Vicar, Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray. We gifted bibles for final year school children as they leave for secondary schools.

On several occasions, we welcomed school children into the Parish Centre to assist preparation of food parcels for local families in need. It is nice to see a growing awareness of our Christian faith amongst the school children and we are pleased with the impact of our ministry. We would like to offer our thanks to the support of Headteacher, Martin Gater, Governors, School Teachers, Parents and children. **Marvin and Amy Vogel**

Oaklands Junior School

Oaklands Junior School is a non-religious primary school in Crowthorne. It has always been open to having Christians in from the community to take assemblies on a regular basis. St. Sebastian's has had a long history of involvement in the school. I held monthly School Assembly services at Oaklands Primary School with assistance from Sally Alexander, a schoolteacher and members of our church. Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray also held a service at the school. School children were most engaged with our services, and it was great to see their growing interest in the Christian faith with thanks to Headteacher, Mrs West, Sally Alexander and fellow schoolteachers, Governors, Parents and children. **Marvin Vogel**

Holme Grange Independent School

I made regular Thursday visits to run the Christian Union club. This was attended by a small group of students and we have seen modest growth in this ministry. I would like to offer my thanks to the Headteacher, Teachers and School Students for these channels of engagement. **Marvin Vogel**

Wellington College

Regular engagement has been mainly around students' help for preparation of food parcels in the Parish Centre, which tied in with the study themes around local community support. A highlight has been the opportunity to respond to a student's bible request, which we duly met with the Teacher's approval. I would like to offer my thanks to the Headteacher, Teachers and School Students for these channels of engagement. **Marvin Vogel**

Home Groups

The Homegroup System was severely depleted by the Covid Pandemic between 2021 and 2022, there currently being only three groups meeting, with an additional group communicating online. With Reverend Rickey leading the Parish, our focus has begun rebuilding homegroup membership, along with the inherent pastoral care. **Russell Shipton**

Prayer Team

Prayer ministry is offered at each Sunday Communion service and at other times by request. We currently have 12 people on the Prayer Ministry team. Prayer and Healing services have been held whenever there is a 5th Sunday in the month, with a different prayer focus each time. We held a weekly prayer meeting on Zoom each Monday at 7.30 pm with a regular attendance of 13 (Zoom link on website). The online community has 39 members and receives regular requests for prayer and many encouraging answers to our prayers.

Jill Gardener and Alexis Clarke

Cancer Support Group

We met this year on the second Tuesday of each month with 5-7 people attending. Christmas Lunch at the Tally Ho in Eversley was very enjoyable. We would like a slightly larger number of regulars to cover times when folk are unable to come and inevitably there are people who feel ready to move on from the Group. **Anne Bone**

Sandwich Men

This new social group for men started meeting monthly in the Parish Centre in December 2023. Its purpose is to provide a lunchtime opportunity for men to share life experiences, hopes and fears while they eat their sandwiches - hence the name! Two of us also visited Crowthorne Baptist for one of their bi-monthly Saturday Men's Breakfasts. Although we have only met twice, numbers are growing as we plan future meetings for God to bless.

Ian Mackenzie

Worship and Music Report

Thanks to all the musicians and singers who have contributed their time and talents to the worship at St Sebastian's over the last year. Recent highlights have included the Christmas Choir conducted by Janice Ellwood and accompanied by Jill Metson at the Carol Service and the more regular participation in our services by the St Sebastian's Brass Band. Another delight has been the first Sunday in the month when we have enjoyed worship in the church lead by musicians from "The Base". Thanks again to all those who have taken part in enhancing our worship at St Sebs. **Eve Bull**

Communication

We were established in December 2023 to facilitate coordination and management of information and messages to our church communication as well as our broader community across the Parish.

Our primary goal is to facilitate effective communication within the church, ensuring that announcements, events, sermons, and other relevant information are delivered clearly and consistently through various channels, such as newsletters, social media, websites, and in-person interactions. This team may include roles like communication directors, writers, graphic designers, and social media coordinators who work to enhance the church's outreach and engagement.

We considered the following communication themes

- Website development;
- External notice boards;
- Informing the parish of St Sebastian's and its activities;
- Social media;
- Other forms of media;
- Day to day information.

To date we have met only once.

Chris Bull, Paula Morris, David Smart and Suman Shrestha

Sound and Vision Report 2023

Major upgrade to the internet provision was made when we were able to have the connection replaced to fibre into the Parish Centre. The wireless connection was repointed from the school to the Parish Centre. This now provides fast Wi-Fi internet access in the church to allow live streaming and other media opportunities. We have replaced the church overhead projector due to a malfunction over the Christmas period. New team members added on the vision rota, but we are very short staffed on running the sound desk. Thanks everyone who helps with the sound and vision in the church. More members welcome. **Chris Bull – Churchwarden**

2.4 Sonning Deanery Report from Area Dean

As well as excellent presentations around Youth and Children's Work and the building project at All Saints "Space for All", a major focus for Synod, this year has been the adjustments to Parish Share which were voted through with a large majority. We decided in the end to reduce the Parish Share payments immediately while staggering those facing an increase by making up the gap with Deanery Funds.

Our Deanery Green Fund has been very popular, and we have made grants for things like lightbulbs, a new door for a parish hall and sensors which turn lights off when people have

left the room. The application process is very simple, and we match the funding offered by the PCC to a total per grant of £1,000. Parishes may only make one application per calendar year but there is nothing to stop parishes applying year after year.

The total Share we paid in 2023 was £1.017 million, which is 93.6% of the total we are asked for by the Diocese. We were £69,797 short, a deficit made up of only two parishes. Thank you to all of the parishes, and all of the Finance Teams and Treasurers, for their excellent efforts to support mission and ministry across the Deanery and beyond. (We were £84,000 short in 2022 so this is a considerable and welcome improvement.)

The congregation of our Hong Kong community, who worship in Cantonese at St Mary's, Winnersh, are in good heart and steadily growing in number, to the extent that they now need to rent further space at The Forest School when they meet. It was good to have a presentation on this initiative at Synod in April 2023 at Owlsmoor.

The Deanery Plan was also voted through in 2023, with a limited reach and a focus on things like building support groups for people in set roles, like Safeguarding Officers and Treasurers. We are also working on a list of 'trusted traders' who parishes have used and putting on Deanery courses which all parishes can access, e.g. on spotting domestic abuse, and fundraising.

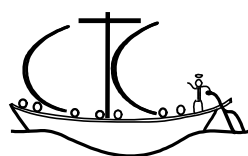
Deanery Chapter continues to be well attended and a real source of support and ideas. Part of the reason that we are keeping a narrower focus in our Deanery Plan is the significant number of parishes in vacancy at the moment. We are holding the line at the moment, through committed lay leadership, hard-working clergy in the parishes in question and willing support from the Deanery. I am really thankful for everyone's commitment and help in the four parishes of All Saints, Finchampstead, Ruscombe, Twyford and Hurst and Winnersh and Bearwood. At the start of 2024 we are still trying to work out what level of ministry is affordable for Winnersh and Bearwood, and how to split Hurst and Ruscombe with Twyford into two separate parishes.

The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray was installed as Vicar of St Sebastian's, Wokingham Without in 2023 and The Reverend Laura Wheatley Downs was licensed as Assistant Area Dean, alongside The Reverend Jane Kraft who continues in role. I was also relicensed as Area Dean in November 2023- those five years have gone very quickly indeed, since I was first licensed in 2018.

The Reverend Canon Richard Lamey
Rector of St Paul's Parish, Wokingham
Area Dean of Sonning

2.5 Other Churches and Community

Churches Together Crowthorne and Finchampstead



CTC is an association of local churches from Crowthorne and Finchampstead, who come together to serve and bless our area and its people in the name of Jesus Christ.

During 2023, we adopted our Purpose Statement adopted during 2023, following a year-long discernment process involving many people from our churches.

- [illegible]

We loved sharing our Knitted Angels (thank you to Jo Golding and her band of knitters!) and singing carols at different venues – including the Prince and Crowthorne Inn Pubs for the first time this year. Crowthorne Summer Activities attracted c700 children plus parents / grandparents over four Fridays in July and August for fun activities and prominent prayer and scripture-based craft activities. (Thank you to those from St Sebastian's who helped with this.)

We would love to see more St Sebastian's people join us – we need a representative to be part of the steering committee that meets four times a year and help us engage more within St Sebs. We also have a lot of fun working together – the best ideas usually emerge from conversations around the Christmas events and Summer Activities!

Wokingham Without Parish Council

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The Parish Council has eleven councillors (with two current vacancies), chaired by Cllr Lesley Foxwell (pictured). You will know Cllr Kevin Whitehead and Cllr Janet Rogers, both members of St Sebastian's! We are a "non-political" council which means that councillors do not represent a 'political' party on the Council, all sharing a desire to work to improve our local community.



Council Meetings: Members of the public are invited to attend any of our full council meetings (usually the first Monday of each month in the Howard Palmer Room (St Sebastian's Hall). The Annual Parish Meeting (this year 20 March 2024 7:30pm) provides an overview of our work and includes a speaker on a topic of general interest (this year road closures and road works!). This meeting is a good opportunity to meet your parish councillors, staff and our Borough Councillors. In 2023, The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray was able to establish many useful contacts at this meeting!

What we do: The Parish Council is responsible for managing the Pinewood Centre, situated along Old Wokingham Road. It is home to a variety of Clubs & Societies and boasts a large adventure playground, pond, woodland walks and fitness trail.

The Parish Council also hires out the St Sebastian's Memorial Hall for a variety of community activities and with Crowthorne Parish Council jointly manages the Walter Recreation Ground and Circle Hill sites, situated on the boundary between Crowthorne Parish and Wokingham Without Parish.

As well as managing the land and building that we are directly responsible for, the Parish Council is a statutory consultee for all Planning applications in the parish. This also extends to representation on the stakeholder groups of nearby developments such as Buckler's Park and the Broadmoor Hospital redevelopment. We are closely monitoring the planned "South Wokingham Major Development" to the north playing a key role in the planned community infrastructure (for example the Community Hall).



A large part of our work is improving the environment of Wokingham Without for our residents – we employ a part time litter picker and organise Community Litter picks (next one March 24th, 2024). We regularly highlight problems to Wokingham BC and Bracknell FC highways concerning road works / road closures and flooding/drainage issues, which have recently reached epidemic proportions!

Crowthorne and Wokingham Without Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) meet twice a year. The meetings are well attended by

residents, both parish councils and Thames Valley Police along with both Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough Councils. The group continues to provide a platform for residents and local stakeholders to discuss concerns.



Grants: In December, the council was pleased to approve more than £12,100 in grant funding for local organisations who provide valuable services to Wokingham Without residents.

(You will see that St Sebastian's PCC received a grant as well as CTC

for the Crowthorne Summer Activities.)

With Crowthorne Parish Council we hold an awards ceremony (November 2024) to also promote and celebrate the contribution that volunteers make to our community. The St Sebs

“Surviving the Breakup” group was recognised some time ago, but I would be please to assist in the nomination of any individuals or groups that you feel should be recognised in this way.

We always welcome contributions from our residents and are delighted with the growing relationship developing with St Sebastian’s Church. Please do talk to me or Kevin Whitehead (pictured) if you would like to know more about any of our activities (which space precludes me from including) or are interested in filling one of our vacant councillor positions!



Cllr Janet Rogers (a parish councillor since 2014)

2.6 Financial Review

The accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023 are presented on pages 24-33 and are in accordance with the PCC Accountability guidance, 5th edition, 2017, issued by the Finance Division of the Archbishops’ Council.

Review of the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023

In 2023 total **Income** £176,380 **exceeded** total **Expenditure** £175,150 resulting in a net Surplus of **£1,230** (before gains or losses on investments) compared with the net Deficit in 2022 of **£24,692**.

Income

Total income was £176,380 (2022: £147,727). (Note 2 of the financial statements provides further details.)

Our main income source is “Voluntary income” or congregational giving (plus associated HMRC tax recovery) and we are grateful to the many faithful and generous givers (some over many years) who contribute, and without whom the Church would not be able to run its programme of activities. This year total donations and legacy income has increased to £145,060 from £123,431 in 2022. Included in these totals the Regular Monthly Gifts increased to £110,286 from £101,503 (2022), in addition there was a further increase in One-Off Donations to £30,508 from £18,264 in 2022 and £4,109 in 2021. These one-off gifts were a major factor in the improvement the results for the year. We are particularly grateful for the members of the congregation who generously made these donations.

Activities for generating funds, arising from the letting of the Church’s premises, provided £24,456 (2022: £20,090). The income from the letting of St Sebastian’s Lodge amounted to £18,640 (2022 £15,610). There was no void period in 2023. Church Hall rent was £5,816 up from £4,480 in 2022 because of increased rents from the existing regular hirers and a new regular hirer.

Expenditure

Total expenditure in the year was £175,150 (2022 £172,419). (Note 3 of the financial statements provides further details.)

The largest single item of expenditure remains the diocesan parish share of £82,517 (2022: £83,718). The parish share is set by the Diocese and Deanery according to pre-determined formulae. We pay our parish share via a 12 monthly direct debit which provides us with a 1% discount. During 2023, we employed up to 5 staff members during the year, and their salary costs accounted for our second largest expense of £50,690 (2022: £46,222).

The Church is committed to give at least 10% of its unrestricted voluntary income to support the work of charities and reach out to those in need across the world and in the UK. However,

this year in view of our financial situation, it was decided to limit our giving. This decision is explained in the review of our Financial Position later in this report.

Our property costs in the year totalled £30,036 (2022: £20,638). In 2023 LED lighting was fitted in the Church Hall and Parish Centre at a cost of £1,850 which limited the effect of the increased cost of electricity. The cost of Gas in 2023 was £7,356 up £3,000 on the previous year. Other major building maintenance costs contributing to the increase were £1,561 reordering the plumbing in the Church building and £1,200 on replacing the Church Lightning conductor. In addition, it was necessary to replace the Parish Centre Flat boiler at a cost of £2,370.

We are also grateful for the many volunteers who generously provide their time and skills for the benefit of the Church and thus make a substantial saving on our running costs.

Net Current Assets

At the end of the year, the net current assets totalled £63,304 (2022 £62,680) made up of cash balances of £56,430, Debtors £1,206 and Investments valued at £18,646 less Creditors of £12,978.

Reserves policy

It has been the PCC's policy, where practicable, to maintain a minimum balance of free reserves (net current assets) equating to approximately two month's general fund payments or £30,000. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow and to meet emergencies. The balance of the General Fund at 31st December 2023 was £32,628.

The Designated Fund for Major Maintenance of £20,000

The PCC has designated three other funds:

- **"Major Maintenance Fund"**, setup in January 2012 to cover large repair and maintenance items relating to the church and buildings. This Fund has a balance of £20,000 at 31 December 2023, which is largely represented by the Current Asset Investment in Barclays Plc ordinary shares with a book value of £18,646. In September 2022, the PCC resolved to sell the Barclays Shares as soon as the opportunity arose to sell without a loss, unfortunately it has not yet been possible to make this sale.
- **"Jubilee Club Fund"**, relating to this church group.
- **"Legacy Fund"** – during 2019, the PCC received a legacy of £5,000 from the estate of Mike Page a much-loved member of the congregation. The PCC has designated these funds whilst considering options to invest funds in a way that would honour Mike's memory. In 2021 the PCC received gifts in memory of the wonderful servant of the church, The late Reverend Erik Fudge, and these have been similarly designated.

Financial Position

To shore up our Reserves, in the Autumn of 2022, an appeal made to the PCC and Ministry Team that had resulted in one-off donations of £17,250. Despite this, at the beginning of the year our Unrestricted Reserves had fallen to £56,318 and the forecast regular Expenditure for 2023 exceeded the forecast income for 2023 by £47,000. Our regular giving income was continuing to fall because of the disruption caused by the Pandemic and the fact that we were in an interregnum.

The PCC approved and implemented a plan to tackle the forecast deficit. In January, a video presentation entitled “The Voyage of the Lord’s Ship St Sebastian’s” subtitled “The Financial Storm” was shown to make both congregations aware of the seriousness of our financial position. In February, a more formal presentation to the church congregations was made of the forecast deficit for 2023 of £47,000, with an invitation to increase their monthly giving or make one-off donations to repair the reserves. There was an update of progress with a second video in early June. In September, the church used “Generosity Week” to report the progress that had been made and particularly to encourage regular monthly giving. As reported above, these efforts resulted in One-Off donations totalling £30,500 and contributed to a net growth in our regular monthly donations.

Total expenditure in 2023 was limited to the level of expenditure in 2022. This was achieved despite increases in utilities costs (up 50% by £3,500) and building repairs (Up £3,200). To offset these rises in costs, in July the PCC reluctantly decided to reduce our Mission Giving by writing back the unspent Mission Tithing Provision of £4,379, which was brought forward at the beginning of the year. In addition, the PCC paused the monthly donations made to our Mission partners switching to six monthly payments in January and July. This switch in the timing of payments reduced the 2023 deficit by further £3,000 without effecting the yearly totals of the donations received by our Mission partners. Following a change our accounting package to Quickbooks Online, the role of Finance Officer was made redundant, resulting in a saving of £1,300 in 2023 and an annual saving £3,750.

The combined effect of these actions resulted in a small surplus in 2023 against the budgeted deficit of £47,000! This has enabled the charity to maintain its Major Repair Designated Fund of £20,000 intact.

Outlook for 2024

The PCC considers that the level of One-Off gifts received in 2022 and 2023 to support regular expenditure to be exceptional. Consequently, after allowing for the increase in regular giving that occurred in 2023, it is anticipated that total income in 2024 will be £20,000 lower than 2023.

At the October 2023 Budget Meeting, the forecast for 2024 showed an Excess of Regular Expenditure over Expected Income of £14,000. In addition to this deficit, the charity faces the urgent needs to repair the Car Park (estimated cost £33,000) and to repair the Church Roof (estimated cost £35,000).

The other new factor affecting our forecast Regular Expenditure for 2024, is the resignations of our Family and Youth workers, Marvin and Amy Vogel in early 2024. This will result in savings in salary costs at least for several months, while the PCC plans the way forward. The Vogels leaving means the Parish Centre Flat will become vacant, and this opens the possibility to receive rental income from the Flat.

The PCC now expects to be able to manage our expenditure in 2024, so that our Total Income will exceed our Regular Expenditure. This will mean that, with the use of this surplus, and the Major Repair Fund together with specific fundraising, the PCC expects to be able to fund the Car Park and Roof Repairs over the next eighteen months.

Financial administration

A Finance Committee appointed by the PCC has responsibility for oversight of routine financial administration, annual budgeting, and preparation of financial reports.

Provision of information to independent examiners

Each of the members of the PCC at the time when this report is approved has confirmed that:

- so far as he/she is aware, there is no relevant financial information of which the charity's independent Examiners are unaware, and
- that he/she has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a trustee in order to be aware of any information needed by the independent examiners in connection with preparing his report and to establish that the independent examiner is aware of that information.

Independent Examiner

During the year, the PCC approved the appointment of Michael Young FCA, a member of the congregation, to act as Independent Examiner

John Congram - Treasurer

2.7 Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment of PCC (Parochial Church Council) members is set out in the 2022 Church Representation Rules.

In the Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's, the membership of the PCC consists of the Incumbent (our vicar), Churchwardens, and members elected by Electoral Roll members in the Parish. All those who attend our services / members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. In addition, the following officers are also members of the PCC, Secretary – Mrs Mary Unwin, Treasurer and Stewardship – Mr John Congram.

The PCC members, who carry the legal status of Charity Trustees, are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the Parish of Wokingham St Sebastian's. This also includes determining and prioritising how budgeted PCC funds are spent.

2.8 Parochial Church Council and Annual Parochial Council Meetings 2023

- 18 January 2023
- 15 March 2023
- 19 April 2023 (APCM)
- 17 May 2023
- 19 July 2023
- 20 September 2023
- 18 October 2023
- 15 November 2023

2.9 Parish Statistics

2024 electoral roll: 145 members (2023 - 151 members).

Parish Electoral Roll

Following the revision of the Church Electoral Roll for the APCM on 24 April 2024 there are 145 Parishioners on the roll as compared to 151 in 2023.

11 names were removed and 5 added.

The whole roll was renewed in 2019 and it is due to be renewed again in 2025.

Mary Unwin, Electoral Roll Officer

2023 Annual Report and Accounts

PCC members who have served at any time between 1st January and 31st December 2023 are as follows:

Ex Officio member:

Incumbent: The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray (Chair)

Licensed Lay Ministers:

Russell Shipton LLM
Wendy Wickens LLM

Churchwardens:

Chris Bull	from April 2023
Peter Thompson	from April 2023
Mary Unwin	until April 2023
Nigel Wickens	until April 2023

Deanery Synod members:

Janet Rogers	
Mary Unwin	from April 2023
David Hare	until April 2023
Peter Thompson	until April 2023
Wendy Wickens	until April 2023
There is currently one vacancy	

PCC Members:

Nigel Birch	
John Congram	
Murray Foulds	
Stuart Gatley	October 2023 to January 2024
David Metson	from April 2023
Paul Morrison	
Suman Shrestha	
David Smart (Deputy Chair)	
Sue Thomas	
There are 2 vacancies	

PCC Secretary:

Mary Unwin from May 2023
Peter Thompson until March 2023

Treasurer:

John Congram

Planned Giving Officer:

John Congram

Parish Safeguarding Officer:

Helen Thompson

Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer:

Mark Lee

Children's Advocate:

Suman Shrestha

PCC Safeguarding Lead:

Murray Foulds

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on: 27 March 2024

And signed on their behalf by:

Revd Rickey Simpson-Gray

**The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray
PCC Chair**

3.0 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

		General Fund	Designated Funds	Total Unrestricted Funds	Total Restricted Funds	TOTAL	TOTAL	Capital Reserves
£		2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022	2023
INCOME	Notes		note 7		note 9			
Donations and Legacies	2(a)	142,241		142,241	2,819	145,060	123,431	
Income Charitable activities	2(b)	3,967		3,967	0	3,967	2,164	
Income from Investments	2(c)	1,807		1,807	1,090	2,897	2,042	
Income from Trading Activities	2(d)	24,456		24,456	0	24,456	20,090	
TOTAL INCOME		172,471	0	172,471	3,909	176,380	147,727	0
EXPENDITURE								
Parish Share and Fees	3(a)	82,622		82,622	0	82,622	85,093	
Mission and Charitable Giving	3(b), 12	211		211	794	1,005	10,617	
Staff Costs	3(c), 4	49,665		49,665	1,025	50,690	46,222	
Ministry Costs	3(d)	5,477		5,477	0	5,477	4,686	
Premises Costs	3(e)	25,414		25,414	4,622	30,036	20,638	
Other Church Activities	3(f)	5,320		5,320	0	5,320	5,162	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		168,709	0	168,709	6,441	175,150	172,419	0
NET INCOMING RESOURCES BEFORE INVESTMENT GAINS (LOSSES)		3,762	0	3,762	(2,532)	1,230	(24,692)	0
Net (loss) gain on investments		(606)		(606)		(606)	(3,390)	
Adjustment to Restricted Funds							(550)	
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		3,156	0	3,156	(2,532)	624	(28,632)	0
OPENING BALANCES		29,472	26,846	56,318	8,112	64,430	93,062	296,495
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		3,156	0	3,156	(2,532)	624	(28,632)	0
CLOSING BALANCES		32,628	26,846	59,474	5,580	65,054	64,430	296,495

4.0 BALANCE SHEET

	£	2023	2022
	<i>Note</i>		
ASSETS			
Fixed Assets			
Investments Fixed Assets	5a	1,750	1,750
Tangible	5b	296,495	296,495
Total Fixed Assets		298,245	298,245
Current Assets			
Debtors and Prepayments	6	1,206	1,167
Current asset investments	7a	18,646	19,252
Cash at bank and in hand		56,430	55,292
Total Current Assets		76,282	75,711
Current Liabilities			
Creditors - falling due within one year	8	12,978	13,031
NET CURRENT ASSETS		63,304	62,680
TOTAL NET ASSETS		361,549	360,925
PARISH FUNDS			
Restricted Funds	9	5,580	8,112
Unrestricted Funds - Designated Funds	7b	26,846	26,846
Unrestricted Funds - General Fund		32,628	29,472
		65,054	64,430
Church Capital Reserves		296,495	296,495
CLOSING BALANCES		361,549	360,925

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 27 March 2024
and signed on its behalf by:

Revd Rickey Simpson-Gray

The Reverend Rickey Simpson-Gray
PCC Chair



John Congram
PCC Treasurer

5.0 NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

THE PARISH OF WOKINGHAM ST SEBASTIAN'S PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL For the Year ending 31st December 2023

1. Accounting policies

Basis of Preparation

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 governing the individual accounts of PCCs, and with the Regulations' "true and fair view" provisions, they have been prepared under FRS102 (2016) as the applicable accounting standards and the 2016 version of the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP(FRS102)).

The PCC is a public benefit entity within the meaning of FRS 102.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention except for the valuation of investment assets and certain of the freehold properties which are at valuation as described in the notes.

The financial statements include all transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible in law. They do not include the accounts of church groups that owe their main affiliation to another body, nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

Funds

Capital reserves (or permanent endowment funds) are funds, the capital of which must be maintained; only income arising from investment of the capital reserves may be used either as restricted or unrestricted funds depending on the purpose for which the capital reserve was established. The PCC has a single permanent endowment (capital reserves) established by trust in 1968 relating to the Upkeep of the Church and Churchyard.

Restricted funds represent income from trusts and endowments which may be expended only on those restricted objects provided in the terms of the trust or bequest, and donations or grants received for a specific object or invited by the PCC for a specific object. These funds may only be expended on the specific object for which they were given. Any balance remaining unspent at the end of each year must be carried forward as a balance on that fund.

Restricted funds include an upkeep of church and churchyard fund held under trust deed together with several other restricted funds.

Unrestricted funds are general funds that can be used to fund ongoing Church expenditure. These represent the remaining income funds of the PCC that are available for spending on the general purposes of the PCC, including amounts designated by the PCC for fixed assets for its own use or for spending on a future project and which are therefore not included in its 'free reserves' as disclosed in the trustees' report.

Designated unrestricted funds are monies set aside by the PCC from unrestricted funds for specific purposes. That purpose is not binding on the PCC, though the PCC must be mindful of the intent when considering using the funds for other purposes. It is the simplest and most flexible way to ring fence money for special needs.

"Major Maintenance Fund", setup in January 2012 to cover large repair and maintenance items relating to the church and buildings.

“Jubilee Club Fund”, setup in September 2017 representing funds and expenditure relating to this church group.

“Legacy Fund” (formally “Mike Page Legacy Fund”) – during 2019, the PCC received a legacy of £5,000 from the estate of Mike Page a much-loved member of the congregation.

The PCC has designated these funds whilst considering options to invest funds in a way that would honour Mike’s memory. In 2021 the PCC received gifts in memory of the wonderful servant of the church Eric Fudge, and these have been similarly designated.

Income

Planned giving, collections and donations are recognised when received. Tax refunds are recognised when the incoming resources to which they relate is received. Grants and legacies are accounted for when the PCC is legally entitled to the amounts due. Rental income from the letting of the PCC property is recognised when the rental is due. Investment income is included in the accounts when receivable. Investment gains and losses include any gain or loss on the sale of investments and any gain or loss resulting from revaluing investments to market value at the end of the year. All other income is accounted for gross.

Expenditure

Grants and donations are accounted for when paid over, or when awarded, if that reward creates a binding or constructive obligation of the PCC. The diocesan parish share is accounted for when due. Amounts received specifically for mission are dealt with as restricted funds. All other expenditure is generally recognised when it is incurred and is accounted for gross.

It is the policy of the PCC that at least 10% of our voluntary unrestricted giving (and related recoveries of income tax) should be used for missionary and charitable giving: at the year-end amounts are accrued to comply with this policy.

Fixed assets

As Consecrated and benefice property of any kind is excluded from the statutory definition of “charity” by Section 10(2) (a) and (c) of the Charities Act 2011 such assets are not capitalised in the financial statements.

Moveable church furnishings held by the vicar and churchwardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal are inalienable property, listed in the church’s inventory, which can be inspected (at any reasonable time). No value is placed on these assets in the financial statements. No individual item has cost more than £1,000 so all such expenditure has been written off when incurred.

Freehold properties are either stated at cost when built by the Parish or stated at valuation when donated to the PCC.

Fixed asset investments are stated at cost.

Other Tangible fixed assets are capitalised if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £1,000. They are valued at cost or else, for gifts-in-kind, at a reasonable estimate of their open market value on receipt. Depreciation is calculated to write off the capitalized cost of fixed assets less their currently anticipated residual fair value over their estimated useful lives as follows: *Land* - Nil / *Buildings** - Nil / *Fixtures & Fittings* - 20 years.

*No depreciation is provided on buildings as the currently estimated residual value of the properties is not less than their carrying value.

Current assets

Current asset investments are stated at current market value.

2. Income and Endowments

	General Fund	Designated Funds	Total Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Total
	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022
INCOME						
2(a) Donations and Legacies						
Gift Aided Income						
Planned Giving	90,259		90,259	550	90,809	84,250
Tax recoverable	19,477		19,477		19,477	17,523
One-Off Gifts	19,204		19,204		19,204	12,769
Tax recoverable	6,035		6,035		6,035	2,950
	134,975	0	134,975	550	135,525	117,492
Other Donations non gift aid	5,269		5,269		5,269	2,545
Collections at Services	1,998		1,998		1,998	1,619
Nominated Gifts				794	794	
Grant Received			0	1,475	1,475	1,774
Legacies			0		0	0
Sub-Total Donations and Legacies	142,241	0	142,241	2,819	145,060	123,431
2(b) Income Charitable activities						
Charitable Activities - Fees	3,426		3,426		3,426	1,976
Charitable Activities - Other	541		541		541	188
Sub-Total Income Charitable activities	3,967	0	3,967	0	3,967	2,164
2(c) Income from Investments						
Sykes Legacy Divds & Interest	1,807		1,807		1,807	958
Dividends Restricted Funds				1,090	1,090	1,084
Sub-Total Income from Investments	1,807	0	1,807	1,090	2,897	2,042
2(d) Income from Trading Activities						
Church Hall Rental Income	5,816		5,816		5,816	4,480
St Sebs Lodge Rental Income	18,640		18,640		18,640	15,610
Sub-Total Income from Trading Activities	24,456		24,456		24,456	20,090
TOTAL INCOME	172,471	0	172,471	3,909	176,380	147,727

3. Expenditure

	General Fund	Designated Funds	Total Unrestricted Funds	Total Restricted Funds	TOTAL FUNDS	TOTAL
	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022
EXPENDITURE						
3(a) Parish Share and Fees						
Diocese and Deanery Fees	105		105		105	1,375
Parish Share	82,517		82,517		82,517	83,718
Sub-total 3(a) Parish Share and Fees	82,622	0	82,622	0	82,622	85,093
3(b) Mission and Charitable Giving						
Gifts Made	4,590		4,590	794	5,384	10,617
Provision written back	(4,379)		(4,379)		(4,379)	
Sub-total Mission & Charitable Giving	211	0	211	794	1,005	10,617
3(c) Staff Costs	49,665		49,665	1,025	50,690	46,222
3(d) Ministry Costs						
Church Services Costs	3,576		3,576		3,576	2,131
Education Evangelism & Pastoral	55		55		55	73
Family and Youth	1,846		1,846		1,846	2,482
Sub-total Ministry Costs	5,477	0	5,477	0	5,477	4,686
3(e) Premises Costs	25,414		25,414	4,622	30,036	20,638
3(f) Other Church Activities						
Communications	2,696		2,696		2,696	2,417
Independent Examiner's Fee			0		0	500
Other Administration Expenses	2,624		2,624		2,624	2,245
Sub-total Other Church Activities	5,320	0	5,320	0	5,320	5,162
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	168,709	0	168,709	6,441	175,150	172,419

4. Staff Costs

	2023	2022
Salaries	49,892	45,539
Social Security Costs		
Pension Contributions	798	683
Total Staff Costs	50,690	46,222

There were five (5) employees in post until July when one employee left, there were four employees for the rest of the year. There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in this year or previous years.

5. Fixed assets**5 (a) Investments – at 31 December 2023**

	£
CBF Investment fund - 1,764 shares	1,750
	<u>1,750</u>

The CBF Investment funds represents permanent endowment (capital reserves) relating to the Upkeep of the Church and Churchyard restricted fund.

5 (b) Tangible fixed assets - freehold land and buildings – at 31 December 2023

	£
Actual/deemed cost	296,495
Accumulated Depreciation	<u>0</u>
Net Book Value	<u>296,495</u>

Freehold land and buildings comprise the church hall and the parish centre, both of which were built by the PCC and are stated at cost of £201,495, and St Sebastian's Lodge which is stated at a valuation made in the year of donation to the PCC of £95,000. It is not considered that the current value of the freehold properties is lower than their stated cost and accordingly no depreciation has been provided. The PCC do not see any benefit in obtaining a current valuation of these properties.

6. Debtors

	<u>31 Dec 23</u>	<u>31 Dec 22</u>
	£	£
Tax Recoverable	442	83
Other Debtor	146	230
Accounts Receivable	618	854
	<u>1,206</u>	<u>1,167</u>

7 (a) Current Asset Investments

The investments being Barclays Ordinary Shares are stated at the market value prevailing at 31 December 2023.

7 (b) Designated Funds

	Major Maintenance Fund	Legacy Fund	Jubilee Club Fund	Total Designated Funds
Opening Balance (01/01/23)	20,000	5,453	1,393	26,846
Total Income	0	0	0	0
Total Expense	0	0	0	0
Transfers to General Fund				0
Closing Balance (31.12.23)	<u>20,000</u>	<u>5,453</u>	<u>1,393</u>	<u>26,846</u>

8. Creditors - amounts falling due within one year

	31 Dec 23	31 Dec 22
Rent in Advance -Hall	0	330
Accruals	905	1,919
Utilities Accrual	6,735	3,244
Tithing Provision	0	4,379
HMRC Payroll Creditor/Debtor	1,358	797
Verger & AV Operator Fees	70	740
Parochial Fees	300	
Peoples Pension Creditor	438	285
Accounts Payable	3,172	1,337
	12,978	13,031

9. Restricted Funds

	Total Restricted Funds	Church & Churchyard Fund	Other Restricted Funds			Specific Charity Collections
			Family Worker Salary	Wokingham United Charity	Youth Friday Nights	
Opening Balances 1st January 2023	8,112	4,120		3,992		0
Restricted Donations	1,344		550			794
Grant from Wokingham Without P. C.	475		475			
Grant Archbishop's Council	1,000				1,000	
Dividends	1,090	1,090				
Total Income	3,909	1,090	1,025	0	1,000	794
Salaries	1,025		1,025			
Reorder Plumbing in Church	2,761	2,761				
Hall Upgrade Expenditure	1,861			1,861		
Charities	794					794
Total Expenditure	6,441	2,761	1,025	1,861	0	794
Closing Balances 31st December 2023	5,580	2,449	0	2,131	1,000	0

10. Disclosure of trustee and staff remuneration, related party and other transactions

PCC member, Mary Unwin, is a Governor of St Sebastian's School. During the year, the PCC made grants of £690 to the school to pay for bibles for the children and staff and pay the Core Support charge from the Diocese.

PCC member, Peter J. Thompson, is a Trustee of the Mitiyana Charity. During the year, the PCC made grants of £700 to support this charity.

PCC Member, Janet Rogers, is a Councillor of Wokingham Without Parish Council.

No other payments or expenses were paid to any other member of the PCC or person closely connected to them or related parties, other than the re-imbursement of expenses incurred by PCC members in respect of Church activities.

PCC indemnity insurance cover is provided for all PCC members as part of the Ecclesiastical Parish Plus Insurance policy entered on annual basis. The annual premium for the combined

church, parish centre and hall insurance, which also covers areas such as employer's liability, property damage, consequential loss, and financial loss, is £4,178 for the year to 30 April 2024. The cost of the indemnity insurance cover is not separately identifiable.

11. Fees payable to the Independent Examiner

The Independent Examiner, Michael Young, who is a member of the congregation did not charge a fee. He is not a person closely connected to any member of the PCC.

12. Charitable grants and special collections

The Church is committed to give at least 10% of its unrestricted voluntary income to support the work of charities and reach out to those in need across the world and in the UK. However, in view of our financial situation, in July 2023, the PCC decided reluctantly that we should concentrate our resources on our own local mission objectives. Therefore, it was agreed that the unspent Tithing Provision of £4,379 brought forward at the beginning of the year would be written back to our reserves. Further, rather than stopping our giving to existing mission partners, the PCC approved the move from monthly donations to six monthly gifts in January and July. This move reduced this year's deficit by £3,000 without effecting the annual receipts to our partners.

During 2023, charitable grants were made to the following organisations:

	£	£
St Sebastians C of E Primary School -Diocesan Core Support	500	
-Bibles for Children	190	690
Yeldall Christian Centre	700	
Just Around The Corner (JAC)	350	
Soulscape	350	
Pastoral Gifts	400	1,800
Mitiyana Charity	700	
Open Doors	700	
Univida	700	2,100
Specific Collections - Royal British Legion	150	
- Tearfund Quiz	644	794
Total Gifts made in 2023		£5,384
Write Back of Unspent Provision		(4,379)
Net Mission and Charitable Giving per Statement of Activities 2023		£1,005

6.0 INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Parochial Church Council of St Sebastian, Wokingham

Financial statements

For the year ending 31 December 2023

To the members of the Parochial Church Council of St Sebastian, Wokingham

I report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2023, (which are set out on pages 6 to 14).

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and the examiner

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the Financial Statements; you consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 3(3) and section 144 (2) of the 2011 Charities Act do not apply. 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 Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- 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 Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and to be found in the PCC Accountability guidance, 5th edition, 2017 issued by the Finance Division of the Archbishops' Council. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering 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 I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

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 accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the 2011 Act and the Regulations 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.

Mr Michael Young

Crowthorne

Date:

16th March 2024

7.0 MISSION ACTION PLAN

A BEACON OF CHRIST LOVING GOD AND SERVING OTHERS

TO BECOME A WELCOMING CHRIST-LIKE CHURCH CALLED BY GOD (COMPASSIONATE, COURAGEOUS AND CONTEMPLATIVE)

- Encourage worship in all services on Sundays, Wednesdays and at special events;
- Create leadership opportunities for parishioners' contributions;
- Build on existing 5th Sunday Healing Services;
- Develop Weekly Prayers in support of Parish ministry, Life events and community needs;
- Create a culture of invitation and welcome hospitality in all church services;
- Introduce regular "Livestream" services and offer costed option for Life Events;
- Promote Parish collaboration in Sonning Deanery and Churches Together Crowthorne events.

TO RESOURCE PASTORAL CARE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS

- Promote Church members' home groups and regular bible studies;
- Grow Life Events' Pastoral home visits for weddings, baptisms and funerals;
- Maintain Schools' ministry / support for Headteachers, Teachers, Parents and Children;
- Pastoral Care support for users of "The Base", "Little Angels" and other ministries;
- Re-establish Parish "Jubilee Club" in partnership with Age UK Berkshire;
- Promote Home Communion for local Care Home residents;
- Parish Safeguarding leadership and compliance, as per Diocesan and Church of England rules;
- Wokingham Without and near and far residents' support, engagement and advocacy;
- Social media monitoring for ministry and pastoral opportunities.

TO BUILD MISSIONARY AND OUTREACH WORK WITH DIOCESAN PARTNERSHIP

- Grow Parish membership via Sunday Worship services and new mission initiatives;
- Grow Children, Young People and Families' (CYPF) Outreach opportunities via "The Base", "Little Angels", "Youth" and other Fresh Expressions;
- Build Worship engagement and opportunities with St Sebastian's School and other local schools;
- Build mission engagement with TRL Estate residents and Traveller's Community;
- Replace website and streamline four Facebook accounts to two (Public and Private)
- Regular local resident engagement at Easter and Christmas Festivals;
- Grow presence in social media, website, Mail Chimp circulation and future online magazine;
- Identify new music opportunities with the abundance of giftings within Parish;
- Increase Life Events' engagement: weddings, banns, baptisms and funerals;
- Explore St Sebastian's Film Club for younger families using existing Film Licence;
- Promote Parish Emergency Food provisions for local community and explore new opportunities;

TO INCREASE COLLABORATION WITH WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL, WOKINGHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL AND LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Explore partnership opportunities with local charities, Community Groups, Social Services and National Health Service.

TO INCREASE PARISH BUILDINGS' USAGE

- Promote Parish buildings usage with own funding, grants and stakeholder opportunities;
- Make Parish buildings and surrounding space fit for ministry, community engagement and other purposes via repair, refurbish and renew;
- Ensure full safeguarding compliance throughout all Parish Buildings' usage;
- Diocesan and Health and Safety compliance of Parish buildings, users and visitors' duty of care.

TO BE GOOD STEWARDS AND GUARDIANS OF RESOURCES IN OUR CARE

- Commitment to prioritise Parish Share and a balanced budget;
- Caring Staff employer: clear Job objectives and annual review, regular 121 meetings, training, opportunities and End of year appraisals;
- Exemplary management of Parish volunteers;
- Promote good governance and robust financial controls as a UK registered charity;
- Aspire to reduce Parish Buildings' Energy footprint;
- Express our care for God's world by securing Parish Eco Church Award;
- Charitable donations for Parish appointed national and overseas charities.

Parochial Church Council
July 2023