

Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, West Mersea

Annual Meeting

Sunday 21st April 2024

11.30 am.

AGENDA for the ANNUAL MEETING

To be held on Sunday 21st April 2024 @ 11.30 am in the Church Hall,

1. Attendance
2. Welcome
3. Appointment of Clerk to the meeting
4. Apologies for absence

MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

1. Minutes of the 2023 meeting
2. Matters arising
3. Election of Churchwardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING, 2024

1. Minutes of 2023 meeting
2. Matters Arising.
3. **To accept:**
 - 3.1 Copy of the new 2024 Electoral Roll
 - 3.2 Annual report on the proceedings of the PCC in 2023
 - 3.3 Deanery Synod report
 - 3.4 The independently examined accounts and statements of funds and property for the year ended 31st December 2023.
 - 3.5 Fabric report
 - 3.6 Pastoral Care Report
 - 3.7 Reports of Children's activities/Families Worker'
 - 3.8 Music Report
 - 3.9 Gift Aid Report
 - 3.10 Chairman's Report
 - 3.11 Mothers' Union
 - 3.12 Bereavement Drop-In
 - 3.13 Porch Pantry
 - 3.14 Health and Safety/ Safeguarding/ Eco Church/ Catering/Social

4. ELECTIONS

- 4.1 Parochial Church Council 2 vacancies
- 4.2 Deanery Synod – no vacancies
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2024
6. Any other business
7. Notices
8. Date of Next Year's meeting – TBC
9. Closing Prayer

BACKGROUND

St Peter and St Paul's PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with incumbent, in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has the maintenance responsibilities for the Parish Church in West Mersea.

Membership The Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parish and Parochial Meetings in accordance with the Church Representational Rules.

During the year the following served on the PCC:

Incumbent: Rev.Jo Parrott

Assistant Priest: Rev. John Pantry

Wardens: Mr Peter Easy and Mrs Barbara Peter

Health & Safety Officer and Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Cathy Roberts

Families Worker: Mrs Heather King

Treasurer: Mr Roland Gardener

Representatives on the Deanery Synod: Dr. Martin Parsons and Mr Geoffrey Hills

Elected Members:

Mrs Emma Cornwell

Mrs Cathy Roberts

Mrs Barbara Peter

Mr Peter Easy

Mrs Pauline Low

Mrs Pauline Sanderson

Mrs Val Bocking

Mr Stan Joslin

Number of meetings of PCC during the year 5

Report from Deanery Synod Representatives

Martin Parsons and Geoff Hills are the two representatives from St Peter and St Paul, West Mersea.

The Deanery Synod met 3 times in the past 12 months. The meeting on the 14th of June had no representation from West Mersea, owing to notification of the meeting from the Deanery administration office not being received before the meeting.

A second meeting was held on the 19th of October and was attended by Martin Parsons. A report of this meeting was provided to the PCC in November.

The final meeting was held at Wickham Bishops on the 28th of February. Both Martin Parsons and Geoff Hills attended.

Report of Deanery Synod meeting of 28th February 2024

The meeting commenced with a presentation by two , diocese trained, lay representatives who undertake C of E funerals. The resource of these trained officials, it was felt, is not widely known within parishes.

As one of the main agenda items was postponed the area Dean agreed that the (agenda item) brief update on LLF could have a little more time. St Peter and St Paul Deanery representatives had, prior to the meeting requested that this item is given greater prominence on this and future agendas.

The area Dean , Simon Garwood, did emphasise that he did not want the matter debated but would allow questions following his update.

Geoff Hills thanked Simon for the update and asked
“However polarised the subject may be, it should be given a clear platform at future meetings, not least because the whole matter may lead to a major fracture in the Anglican Communion.”

Supporting the urgency for discussion the point was added: “ that over 130 clergy attended a meeting in Chelmsford with the Bishop recently to voice their concerns.”

Simon explained about parishes opting in or out and mentioned that no parishes will be forced to comply with the change in doctrine.

Geoff Hills raised a further comment in reply :
“ Are our leaders being simplistic in this approach as “around the corner” any parish voting not to offer the LLF menu will certainly be labelled homophobic by the media and wider community. This would be a tag no church would wish to have.”

Martin Parsons asked if the consequences of the C of E roll out of LLF had been considered when evaluating the negative effect that similar measures have had on other Churches. He

gave an example of the Church of Scotland losing over a third of their congregations following their decision to adopt liberal theology and conduct same sex unions. A similar outcome in C of E rural parishes would result in many congregations being unsustainable.

Only one parish PCC in the deanery has actually decided on a decision concerning LLF with Simon Garwood stating that all PCC's will eventually have to consider the LLF adoption or opt out question.

Deanery vacancies were discussed and with planned retirements Simon Garner explained that a third of the deanery clergy posts will be vacant later this year. The area Dean has not yet resolved how the parishes will be served but he is planning to discuss this with the Archdeacon.

No financial update for the deanery was possible due to absence but the Area Dean commented that the Witham Deanery was registering about 70% of parish share for 2023 had been met but these figures may change if more year end updates are forthcoming.

The meeting ended with Compline.

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. PETER
AND ST. PAUL, WEST MERSEA**

ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

Registered Charity Number 1142676

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, WEST MERSEA
Registered Charity Number 1142676

ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

2022	INCOMING RESOURCES	2023
£	On Unrestricted Funds	£
	Incoming Resources from Donors	
6,423.98	General Collections	6,360.30
35,085.35	Parish Giving Scheme	35,337.20
35,907.00	Standing Orders(incl Family Worker donations)	25,095.00
650.43	Donations for General Fund	1,986.17
19,621.03	Gift Aided Tax Reclaim	16,188.64
88.91	Good Plate Online Giving	1,283.54
145.40	Messy Church Donations	669.85
30.00	Carol Services	81.15
207.10	Midnight Mass & Christmas Day	277.19
-	Confirmation Service	46.84
-	Civic Service	366.00
<u>98,159.20</u>		<u>87,691.88</u>
	Other Voluntary Incoming Resources	
366.51	Donations for Mary's Meals	234.23
3,000.00	Musical Instruments Donation	-
600.00	Laptop Donations	-
367.50	Terry Walker Thank You Donations	-
995.00	Christian Aid (in lieu of Lent Lunches)	-
-	Diocesan Fuel Award	855.00
395.90	Ukrainian Appeal	-
-	Rev Jude Leaving Collection	708.70
-	Ghanaian Evening	291.99
<u>5,724.91</u>		<u>2,089.92</u>
	Income from Ancillary Trading	
6,253.40	LPWS Grant	1,233.63
-	Beacon House Service Collection	-
4,945.00	Hall Hire	4,978.00
620.00	Tearfund Collection	131.00
-	Insurance Claim re Wall	1,660.00
-	Donations for Jamie & Helen Nightingale Gift	80.00
<u>11,818.40</u>		<u>8,082.63</u>
	Ordinary Incoming Resources	
45.54	Bank loyalty Reward	47.81
-	Interregnum Fees refunded by CDBF	2,204.00
16,498.95	Fees from Funerals & Weddings	16,213.90
200.75	Catering/ Refreshments	32.00
1,026.49	Benefice Team Ministry Expenses Reimbursed	393.72
<u>17,771.73</u>		<u>18,891.43</u>
69.76	Interest Received	172.24
<u>133,544.00</u>	Total Incoming Resources	<u>116,928.10</u>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, WEST MERSEA
Registered Charity Number 1142676

ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

2022 £	OUTGOING RESOURCES On Unrestricted Funds	2023 £
	Ministry	
63,443.16	Diocesan Family Share	55,194.48
3,767.48	Team Ministry Expenses	1,643.01
<u>67,210.64</u>		<u>56,837.49</u>
	Running Expenses	
	Good Plate Fees	208.67
469.14	Water & Sewerage	217.99
2,274.77	Insurance	2,506.80
2,127.09	Heating Oil	3,025.37
2,286.02	Electricity	3,134.52
259.20	Altar Requisites	857.32
11,108.52	Parish Office	24,446.95
1,819.00	Office Machines & Equipment	202.50
1,479.53	Printing, Postage & Stationery	4,179.31
52.78	House Group Costs	183.42
4,446.02	Hall Costs	4,539.90
46.33	Catering Costs	770.68
478.35	Audio & Video Costs	522.42
1,210.00	Organists Fees	740.00
3,148.14	Musical Instruments	-
374.53	Messy Church Costs	745.93
4,664.84	General Running Repairs	2,019.65
520.14	Flowers/Oasis	626.70
-	Rectory Repairs	36.73
5,633.19	Families Worker Costs	5,671.57
588.05	Evangelism	334.84
-	Rev Jude Gift	750.00
7,302.86	Charities and Missions - see schedule	5,626.63
296.51	Mary's Meals Donation Made	-
-	Confirmation Service	46.84
410.24	Bank & Audit Charges	415.97
367.50	Gift for Terry Walker	-
-	Interregnum Fees	2,358.00
11,567.90	Funeral & Wedding Fees Costs	11,280.33
216.00	Sunday School Sponsorship	216.00
28.43	Sunbeams	-
254.67	Refreshments for Installation Service	-
-	Lent Lunch Cost	47.75
-	Jamie & Helen Nightingale Gift	200.00
<u>63,429.75</u>		<u>75,912.79</u>
130,640.39	Total Outgoing Resources	132,750.28
-		
133,544.00	Total Incoming Resources	116,928.10
<u>2,903.61</u>	Net Change on Year	<u>-15,822.18</u>
99,068.94	Balance at 1st January 2023	101,972.55
<u>101,972.55</u>	Balance at 31st December 2023	<u>86,150.37</u>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, WEST MERSEA
Registered Charity Number 1142676

ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023
RESTRICTED FUNDS

2022		2023
£	BELL FUND	£
8,173.20	Balance at 1st January 2023	8,280.70
107.50	Interest Received	265.38
-	Repairs	-
<u>8,280.70</u>	Balance at 31st December 2023	<u>8,546.08</u>
	FABRIC FUND	
7,902.16	Balance at 1st January 2023	5,790.03
103.92	Interest Received	207.46
-	Donations from Friends WMPC	12,355.78
-	Replacement Triangular Window	(3,700.00)
-	Back Board Bell Tower	(156.99)
-	Church Wall Repair	(2,160.00)
-	Church Hall Floor Replacement	(7,401.78)
(299.99)	Wheelchair Ramps	-
(954.00)	Good With Devices Station	-
-	Tower Cupboard	(1,520.00)
(962.06)	Tower repairs (2022 Retention Fee)	-
<u>5,790.03</u>	Balance at 31st December 2023	<u>3,414.50</u>
	COMMUNITY CHEST FUND	
4,581.95	Balance at 1st January 2023	312.96
-	Transferred from General Fund	-
670.00	Donations Received	295.00
(4,938.99)	Good Causes	(299.99)
<u>312.96</u>	Balance at 31st December 2023	<u>307.97</u>
	PORCH PANTRY FUND	
1,764.20	Balance at 1st January 2023	2,162.23
-	Transferred from General Fund	-
10,387.23	Donations Received	17,842.71
(9,989.20)	Purchases	(13,017.74)
<u>2,162.23</u>	Balance at 31st December 2023	<u>6,987.20</u>
	TITHE CHANCEL ENDOWMENT FUND	
15,373.05	675.39 Shares held 1st January 2023	13,954.50
407.79	Dividends in the year (reinvested in shares)	421.82
(1,826.34)	Shares re-valuation	1,331.84
<u>13,954.50</u>	694.8883 Shares held 31st December 2023	<u>15,708.16</u>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, WEST MERSEA
Registered Charity Number 1142676

ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023
RESTRICTED FUNDS

2022		2023
£	AUDIO VISUAL FUND	£
4,128.07	Balance at 1st January 2023	4,128.07
-	FWMPC donation towards new Sound System	-
-	Sound System Costs Including Installation	-
4,128.07	Balance as at 31st December 2023	4,128.07
	CHURCH & COMMUNITY(CCTV) FUND	
307.00	Balance at 1st January 2023	1237.16
1,143.57	Jubilee Flower Festival Income	-
(213.41)	Jubilee Flower Festival Costs	-
1,237.16	Balance as at 31st December 2023	1,237.16

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, WEST MERSEA

Registered Charity Number 1142676

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2023

2022		2023
£		£
	CURRENT ASSETS	
13,954.50	Central Board of Finance Investment Fund Units	15,708.16
102,639.28	Cash with Barclays Bank	90,773.14
21,660.72	Cash with Central Board of Finance of the Church of England	20,089.75
57.23	Cash in hand	57.23
4,016.08	Debtors and Prepayments	2,901.60
(4,489.61)	Liabilities	(3,050.37)
<u>137,838.20</u>		<u>126,479.51</u>

REPRESENTED BY:

Totals		Restricted	Unrestricted	Totals
101,972.55	General Fund	-	86,150.37	86,150.37
2,162.23	Porch Pantry Fund	6,987.20		6,987.20
8,280.70	Bell Fund	8,546.08		8,546.08
5,790.03	Fabric Fund	3,414.50		3,414.50
312.96	Community Chest Fund	307.97		307.97
4,128.07	Audio Visual Fund	4,128.07		4,128.07
1,237.16	Church & Community (CCTV) Fund	1,237.16		1,237.16
13,954.50	Tithe Chancel Trust- held by Diocese	15,708.16		15,708.16
<u>137,838.20</u>		<u>40,329.14</u>	<u>86,150.37</u>	<u>126,479.51</u>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, WEST MERSEA
Registered Charity Number 1142676

ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

SCHEDULE OF GIVING TO CHARITIES AND MISSIONS

2022		2023
£		£
500.00	Essex Clergy Charity (LMDC)	500.00
500.00	Leprosy Mission	628.90
500.00	Mersea Beach Club	500.00
500.00	Mission to Seafarers	500.00
189.06	Royal British Legion Remembrance Day	278.25
500.00	Barnabus Fund	-
500.00	Colchester Beacon House	500.00
862.00	Christian Aid	244.24
133.00	Christian Aid Week	-
500.00	Cochester CYO	500.00
500.00	Fellowship Afloat	500.00
40.00	Childrens Society (Balance)	-
500.00	Colchester CAP	500.00
620.00	Tearfund - Earthquake Appeal	131.00
500.00	Colchester CAB	-
388.80	Ukranian Appeal	-
-	Colchester Mayors Charities (2 Services)	284.78
70.00	Mary's Meals	59.46
-	Help The Persecuted	500.00
<u>7,302.86</u>		<u>5,626.63</u>

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Parochial Church Council of St. Peter
and St. Paul, West Mersea Registered Charity Number 1142676**

I report to the members of the Parochial Church Council of St Peter and St Paul,
West Mersea on my examination of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As members of the P C C you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the P C C's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

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

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

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

L C Tippet ACA
Chartered Accountant

West Mersea
10 April 2024

Fabric Report

APCM 2024

The Fabric Committee meet regularly to ensure that the church, hall and churchyard are kept in good condition. We are aware that this there has been a church on this spot for over 1,000 years and we all intend that this will continue for another millennium.

Many of the recommendations in the latest Quinquennial Inspection report, in 2022, have been addressed and the rest will be dealt with soon.

These are some of the works that have been carried out since the last APCM in 2023.

Church

- New storage in the tower room for Porch Pantry goods.
- Bell rope cabinet has been strengthened and a new backing sheet installed, showing the bell numbers. (Thank you to Anne Moscrop).
- A ramp which will enable wheelchair and mobility scooter access to the chancel.
- After debris was found by the porch, this was inspected, and remedial work will begin soon. * We are fortunate that Geoff Sexton prepared the preliminary paperwork, thus saving considerable costs.
- An electronic giving machine has been installed. *

Churchyard

- The wall, by the hall path, has been repaired.
- The path lighting bollards have been refurbished.
- Sadly, some trees had to be removed as they were beginning to rot. Although this was not visible, investigations revealed rot on the core of the trees. The stumps were also removed. This work was carried out by West Mersea Town Council using contractors. Fruit trees have been planted as replacements.
- The wiring to various outside lighting has been tidied and made safer.

Hall

- Major work was undertaken in the hall as the flooring was deemed unsafe. The subfloor was in poor condition and had to be replaced. A new floor was laid. *
- A new, bespoke, double-glazed widow has been installed in the upper room, replacing a window that was showing signs of rot. *
- A deep clean and sort out of the kitchen has taken place.
- Reorganisation of storage in the upper room and office is well underway. This will provide a room for all non-office activities. Much of the equipment for children's work and clergy robes are now in there with a desk, printer and photocopier.

Rectory

- Whilst the Rectory was unoccupied, a splendid team of volunteers kept the house and garden in good repair.

Other

- Lightning conductors, the boiler and fire extinguishers have been serviced.
- Various minor electrical jobs have been done e.g. new switches and timers fitted.

*These works have been paid for or funds promised by the Friends of West Mersea Parish Church. We are all very grateful for their support.

Many thanks must go to the members of the Fabric Committee -

Alan Hammond, Alan Brook, Pete Easy, Pete Rudlin, Roland Gardener, Geoff Sexton and myself. Between them, they do many minor repairs, move items, sort out cupboards, replace batteries, reprogramme clocks & timers etc, etc, etc. We must be very grateful to them.

Barbara Peter. Chair.

Pastoral Report 2023 – Val Bocking

Our congregation are very friendly and welcoming and makes pastoral care happen in a very encouraging way. It's very important that we notice when people are missing and are aware of those on zoom.

I would like to thank everyone for the part they play and also thank those who care about the people who attend services other than our Sunday morning united service.

Home groups and weekday activities also help to make people feel valued.

It's like a huge web that touches the lives of everyone and connects them to others in our large church family.

Jesus is at the centre reaching out to all with his love and his peace.

The last year has flown by, Sunbeams and Messy Church continue to flourish and we had the joy of welcoming Jo, Tom, and the children into our church family.

SUNBEAMS

Sunbeams is such a joy we have a really lovely group of children who have gone from cuddly babies last year to toddlers this year, our mums have formed strong friendships and the session is enjoyed by all. With Jo's approval I will be extending Sunbeams to an all-day group later this year with tea/coffee and bacon rolls available lunch times, using the church in the morning and hall in the afternoon. The Sunbeams Christmas party went well with 13 children and 10 adults attending and Malcolm Peter as our resident Santa as usual.

MESSY CHURCH

Messy church has continued to flourish with the support of our amazing team of volunteers, Sue and Cathy are producing a hot meal for everyone attending, they even cooked a full roast for the Christmas session. We had 29 Children and 18 adults which is the average number attending each session, there are dads as well as mums/carers and a really happy time is enjoyed by all.

BAPTISMS

Baptism meetings are now booked for one Saturday in the month at church so that Jo and I meet the families together, this works well for the families and us. It is always a pleasure to meet and get to know the families and then welcome them into our church family at the baptism.

BEACH CLUB

Beach club 2023 was as always, a pleasure to be part of, it's nice to be working alongside the free church and meeting the families. The weather was not brilliant every day, so it was run from the free church on those days, the numbers were good and we averaged out 100 children a day over the course of the week. I am looking forward very much to this year's again as it's one of my favourite weeks of the year. I also spent a morning at Waldegraves car boot collecting money on the gate and ran a cake stall to help raise funds for this years.

I have continued to source items support and visit any families in the community that have found themselves in need of furniture, bedding, flooring, benefits advice or just a porch pantry delivery. Our amazing community always supports us with items when asked.

I will continue to work to support our families, strengthen our links within our community and to carry information and a welcome to our church into our community.

Heather King (Families Worker) 11/3/24

Music Report

The 10am worship team aims to provide a mix of traditional and modern hymns and songs. Jo has introduced some catchy new ones recently, and it has been good to have the I-sing Worship app to help us introduce them to the congregation. Our group has re-instated its pre-covid name of PP+ and will be singing at the Mersea Island Music Marathon in the MICA Centre on Saturday 18th May at 8.30am, along with some former members of Pianissimo. Do come and sing along!

Liz Willey and Joan Sanderson

GIVING & GIFT AID DURING 2023

giftaid it



We are blessed here at West Mersea Parish Church (WMPC) in that so many of our regular supporters chose to support us via 'non cash' methods which does significantly help Gift Aid and other financial administration. A huge 'THANK YOU' to all who have continued their faithful donations during the year.

As per last year I thought it may be helpful to list and summarise some of the methods already available to support our church financially both for its immediate well-being and as potential for its future.

1. **The Parish Giving Scheme (PGS)** is the **most efficient way** to make donations to our church. During 2023 donations totalling £43,171.07 (inc. £8,242.26 Gift Aid reclaim) were received from 32 regular donors. This scheme enables donations via Direct Debit and any associated Gift Aid reclaim is received locally within 10 working days. All costs of the Scheme are borne by the Diocese with no charge to WMPC.



A convenient and relatively new way to access and set up donations (single or regular) to WMPC via PGS is via a "QR" code which, if you point a smartphone camera at it should display a link to enable donations to this church via the PGS scheme. **Why not give it a go? ☺**

There are, however, other ways in which you can set up a PGS Direct Debit to WMPC

- a) via paper 'Gift Form' – available from our Churchwardens or Treasurer
- b) via the PGS telephone service on 0333 002 1271, Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm
- c) via: <https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/> quoting PGS Parish Code: **080608478**

2. **In-house Gift Aid scheme:** Donations of £31,352.59 (inc. £7,838.18 Gift Aid reclaim) were received from 38 regular donors. The total sum also includes receipts of £6,647.54 from the HMRC 'small donation' (cash) concession. The HMRC reclaim is processed by myself manually on a quarterly basis in arrears so not all may appear in the 2023 accounts. **Note:** The 'traditional' donations via cash, envelopes, cheques and/or Banker's Order are still available and gratefully accepted. However, our bank (Barclays) have now moved from the Island and make significant handling charges for both cash and cheques that serve to reduce the value of donations made this way.

3. **Cashless donation device:** this device is situated near the main church entrance and is available anytime to church members and visitors for donations via credit/ debit cards and smartphone Apple/ Google Pay.

4. **Legacies:** from time to time our church has been blessed to receive legacy gifts. Our legacy policy is: *"West Mersea Parish Church welcomes gifts in Wills, however large or small. We promise to use such gifts to make a difference to our church (e.g. by funding development projects, whether buildings, equipment or staff). However, since needs change over the years we encourage gifts for the general purposes of the parish rather than for a restricted use. We may consult with executors about the most appropriate use of the gift in light of current projects. We will respect a donor or executor's request for PCC acknowledgement of a gift within existing parish policy or, equally, we can make sure that gifts remain anonymous if that is preferred."*

5. **"Friends of West Mersea Parish Church":** is a registered and non-religious charity "established as a group of interested people from the wider community who wish to support and maintain this wonderful Mersea ancient building, recognised as requiring a long term sustainable commitment. In this way we will ensure that this generation hands the Church on in good order to the next, just as previous custodians have done". More details are available on the web-site <https://www.fwmpc.org/> or by post to: 'Friends of West Mersea Parish Church', c/o Church of St Peter & St Paul, High Street, West Mersea, Essex, CO5 8QD.

6. **Direct Donations:** of course it is always possible to support the work of our church by direct bank transfer(s). If you favour this method then bank details are below – **thank you** (and please let us know if donations can be Gift-Aided):

- a) To the church directly = sort-code 20-22-67; account no. = 20935557; name = 'West Mersea Parochial Church Council'
- b) Or via the 'Friends' = sort-code 20-22-67; account no. = 43164136; name = 'Friends of West Mersea Parish Church'



Last thoughts (for now!): ... a) Gift Aid allows donations given to this church by **ANY TAXPAYER** (church members, or the wider public – and eligible taxes should **not** include VAT or Council Tax) to be increased by 25% via tax reclaim. The offerings may be made for any church purpose ... and, **b)** it is now 35 years since I inherited the role which has become Gift Aid

secretary for West Mersea Parish Church. It would be good for both myself and this church to discover a new member to undertake the role for the future and I would be happy to explain more to anyone expressing a genuine interest.

Contact: Alan Hammond ... 3, Stable Mews, West Mersea, CO5 8HR (tel: 383 383) alan@3stablemews.co.uk

APCM 2024

Chairman's Report

This last year, since Easter 2023, has been eventful. It began with us having to say goodbye to Rev. Jude Bevan, who had only been with us for 18 months. But personal circumstances made this inevitable. We were very sorry to see her go as she had made a strong impression on the whole benefice and introduced some new initiatives. This meant that we entered another interregnum. However, Bishop Roger reassured us that this vacancy would not be long. The post was advertised, applications came in and an interview took place. The wardens of the four parishes in the benefice were unanimous in their choice of the Rev. Jo Parrott to be our new incumbent. Jo was installed in a wonderful licensing service at the end of September 2023. Jo, her husband Tom, children Isaac, Esther and Martha have settled in and are enjoying the delights of Mersea and surroundings. We pray that they will have a happy life here. Jo has inspired and encouraged us in our worship in a joyous way with new, imaginative, passionate ideas.

Our pattern of services at West Mersea remains the same. We are pleased that we can offer two services on Sundays, one on a Wednesday and a regular, monthly Sunday evening service with a choir. However, this only a small part of our life. There is Messy Church, Sunbeams, a Bereavement group, Pastoral team, Porch Pantry, Mothers' Union, house groups, regular prayer meetings, outreach to sheltered housing, Lent lunches. (Please forgive me if I've missed anything out). You are able to read about these in other reports. We are able to have our church open everyday thanks to a team who unlock and lock the main door. This allows anyone to come in, have a look around and/or spend time in personal prayer.

Christmas services were particularly successful. The Christmas Eve outdoor Carol Service attracted about 500 people. Later, the Midnight Service had a congregation of 102.

In addition to the usual Civic Service for West Mersea, for the Mayor, Sophie Weaver, we were asked to host a Civic Service for the Colchester City Mayor, John Jowers, a Mersea resident. Following this, he asked for a Carol Service as well.

The Friends of West Mersea Parish Church are a wonderful organisation. Their hard work at fundraising means our church is in good condition. We are very grateful to them for not only does their activities provide funds for maintenance, refurbishment and repairs, their events are great fun to attend.

Our PCC is a strong committee. We meet regularly and our discussions are robust, far reaching and amicable. The church here is West Mersea is blessed with a host of talented people who work hard – children's activities, fabric, flowers, making sure we have clean linen and communion requisites, stacking the Porch Pantry, providing music for our services, making stars to give out at Mersea Lights Up, keeping the churchyard tidy, taking

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on Verger duties, reorganising furniture and many other things. And of course, giving generously to keep all these important aspects of our church life in place. Thank you all.

MOTHERS' UNION ANNUAL REPORT FOR APCM 2024

We started the year with 18 members but ended with 17.

Mary Mayears sadly passed away, and 2 ladies are no longer able to attend due to severe ill-health, but we welcomed 2 new members who were formally admitted in September by the Revd. Keith Lovell.

Our meetings are open to anyone, not just members.

I am very pleased to report that we have monthly contact with Mary Trenter as she is still a member. She has continued her membership of our Branch of Mothers' Union as an Indoor Member. This type of membership is for those who, for whatever reason, are unable to attend meetings. We have 3 such members in our Branch. I keep in regular contact with them, and they receive special letters, cards, prayers, etc. from the Diocesan Indoor Members Officer.

We meet monthly – on the 3rd Friday of each month – in the Parish Hall.

There are “special” months throughout the year:-

A New Year Party in January / A Lent Quiet Afternoon in March / An outing to somewhere in May / A Garden Party in July / “A Celebration of Christmas” in December.

After a break in August, our September meeting was held in the Church, and we are so grateful to the Revd. Keith Lovell who has led us in a traditional Evensong for many years.

We continue to serve Tea, Coffee and biscuits in the Parish Hall after the 10am service on the 4th Wednesday of each month. It is truly wonderful to see up to 20 people chatting away – some very reluctant to go home! Fellowship at its best!

Members receive communications from our Central Office in London, and our Diocesan President and Council in Chelmsford. Our Worldwide President and Diocesan President work very hard behind the scenes to keep our members here, and across the world, informed and provided with spiritual encouragement. I, and other Mersea Island members, attended Diocesan Services, Council Meetings and events in Chelmsford during the past year.

Mersea Island Mothers' Union co-ordinates the Mersea Island Churches “Annual World Day of Prayer Service” held across the world, always on the first Friday in March. Representatives from each of the 5 main churches meet together in January to prepare and share responsibility for all involvement, and we take turns to host the Service. This year the Methodist Church gave us a very warm welcome, and the service was prepared by the Christian ladies of Palestine. 30 ladies and gentlemen met for the service, followed by tea, coffee and biscuits. A lovely afternoon of worship and fellowship.

Our meetings are open to all. Please come and join us!

For more information, please contact me on 01206 383166

Bridget Smith
Branch Leader, Mersea Island Mothers' Union

The Bereavement Drop In seems to be much appreciated by those who come and to be meeting a very definite need. We meet on the 1st Saturday of each month (except August) and have recently been seeing up to 20 guests coming along; each time there have been new people to join those who have come before, occasionally, or regularly. We have a very committed team who chat with our guests as well as making delicious cakes and treats to offer with the teas and coffees. Our aim is to provide an accepting space where each person feels welcomed and their loss understood and accepted, whether or not they want to talk about it.

It has been good to see supportive friendships develop and a number of those coming have also started to attend our services and are finding these helpful too.

We are on the lookout for another man to join our team. Please talk to me if this is something you might be interested in.

Pauline Low

PORCH PANTRY REPORT - APCM APRIL 21st 2024

The Porch Pantry enters its fifth year and continues to meet the ever increasing need on our Island. Fortunately, we have been awarded substantial grants from the EALC (Essex And Local Councils). These have enabled us to provide winter warmth for residents by purchasing and distributing electric blankets and draught excluders. We also produced and delivered 40 Christmas Hampers to individuals and families.

To date, we have received £700 from just 9 donors on our 2024 Just Giving Page! Many further donations have been received from other charities and organisations on the island.

January saw our first online shop for the Porch Pantry with Asda who can deliver direct to the church. This has saved the team from shopping, lifting and delivering invariably heavy food items. It also reduces our own carbon footprint as this means 5 cars less travelling to shop separately. The same team members now take turns meeting and sorting the delivery at church. So far, it is proving far easier, safer and eco-friendly. A huge thank you to the team who work like a well-oiled machine! Without them the Porch Pantry simply wouldn't be.

April sees the launch of an exciting new initiative we are calling The Moses Basket Mission. A similar scheme is currently run by a church in Debenham, Suffolk. We aim to provide a brand new Moses basket and start-up essentials for new Mums and their newborn baby. This would be for Mersea residents who are experiencing significant financial hardship. I am keen to up-cycle good condition actual stands for the baskets but every other item will be brand new. For example, the mattress, bedding, muslins, nappies, sleep-suits, toiletries, hooded towels etc. We are hoping members of our congregation may be able to knit/crochet a blanket for each basket.

We recently applied for a £500 start-up grant from Mersea Community Support following their article in The Courier. I am pleased to report that this was awarded over Easter. An answer to prayer indeed!

I am in contact with the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service to discuss the logistics so watch this space!

We welcome your continued pray for those who are struggling right now. 'Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth' 1 John 3: 18

Safeguarding

Both at West Mersea and throughout the Benefice we continue to strive to keep our churches a Safe and Inclusive place for ALL.

Our congregations are growing, our children's work and our Pastoral care are expanding and so safeguarding awareness is vital and something we must ALL take responsibility for.

All our staff and volunteers who may work with unaccompanied children or vulnerable adults are required to have a DBS check, so if this is you and you're not sure if you have an up to date check, please ask me.

We have run several Safeguarding awareness sessions, initially directed at relevant volunteers but are planning more, in the near future, to which we will be inviting everyone. For those who prefer, safeguarding training is available online through the Chelmsford Diocese website. Thank you to all who have participated so far. If you've never taken part in safeguarding training I urge you to do so and to regularly refresh training. It's amazing what you forget!

My thanks to Emma for initiating 'Hidden Disabilities' awareness – such an important part of our inclusivity and something to continue to work on this year.

Health and Safety

Making our church a safe place also involves many, very practical, aspects. Risk Assessments are necessary and highlight potential hazards, both for the regular use of the building and for specific events. But on a day to day basis we do value the eyes of the congregation and visitors to report potential problems. Please never feel you might be making a fuss.

My thanks to the Churchwardens and Fabric Committee who help to rectify things where necessary and my thanks to Sally for her help with Risk Assessments!!

Eco Church

Our main focus in the last few months has been the wildlife area, with continuing development of the Bug Church, additional bird and bee boxes and introduction of more pollinating plants for insects. Our thanks to the local Guide Company who again came to help and thanks to Stan for his faithful service.

But..... there is a very long way to go if we are going to meet our targets. We need you!

I would really like to gather a group of volunteers who are passionate about improving our green credentials and would be able to give just a few hours on various tasks. There are some amazing webinars on the Cof E website to get you motivated. Please let me know if you are interested.

Catering/Social

Apart from our regular 'after service' coffee, most of this year's activity in the kitchen has been supporting events within the church put on for other purpose (Lent lunches, Messy Church etc). But we are back with Parish Breakfasts and very keen to offer more opportunities for 'fellowship with food'.

Have you got ideas of what you would like? Would you be keen to organise something? There are a lot of lovely volunteers now who would help make things happen.

BEACH CLUB REPORT

Beach Club went well in 2023 but we were a little hampered by the wet weather, and for two days the Club was held at the Mersea Free Church with tents outside for registration and coffee and groups meeting in the Methodist and Free Church buildings. It was held on 24 to 28 July.

The theme for the week was The Wonder Zone and the leaders did various science experiments to show how wonderful God's creation is.

For attendance, we had 89 children on Monday, 104 on Tuesday, 107 on Wednesday, 73 on Thursday and 80 on Friday. Overall, we reached 197 different children.

Beach Club takes a lot of work with the setting up of many gazebos, chairs and tables etc, the team found it hard to manage the workload as many of us are getting older and there was a lot of heavy lifting. This prompted an after-Beach Club follow-up meeting with all those involved and it was felt that we couldn't sustain Beach Club in its present form, unless we had more help from fit and able volunteers. It was agreed to write to the other churches in Colchester to ask for help, but this proved a dead end as people couldn't commit to being available in that summer week. The planning now is for a different format for Beach Club which is still underway for 2024. It is hoped it will be more of an Open Day on the grass behind the beach huts with a craft area, a games area, story telling and puppets, and a play area for the under 4-year-olds. There is also going to be a separate group for the 11+. The main emphasis this year will be on parents staying with their children and being responsible for them throughout the morning.

This year we had the sad news that Rob and Jenny Hughes, Pastors at the Free Church will be leaving in May 2024 so we will really miss their input this year. The Steering Group is well represented by all the churches and Rev Jo has joined us too with offering help in 2024.

Beach Club this year is from 29 July to 2 August 2024 with Beach Club Sunday on 4 August.

Fundraising events last year included a Coffee Morning and Bring and Buy at the Methodist Church, and the Parish Church held a Bric a brac sale and coffee morning in April and another Christmas themed one in November.

On Sunday, 28 April we are doing a bucket shake at Waldegraves Car Boot from 8 to 12 noon to raise money for Beach Club and also will have a table top sale there to sell any items that people can donate. Please see Cindy Rudlin if you can help in any way with this fundraising effort.

Cindy Rudlin
for Beach Club Steering Group
21 March 2024

CHURCH BELLS ANNUAL REPORT - MARCH 2024

Annie Moscrop has written a sign for the new bell ringing chart which has been fixed on the new wooden backing board made by Andy Bacon.

The tidy up session on the bell ringing level of the tower has been completed.

CHURCH CLOCK REPORT

The Church clock level of the tower is due for a spring clean to remove cardboard boxes and odd timber.

The clock seems to be keeping reasonable time and is running well. Adjustments are generally made regularly due to changes in outside temperature. I aim to keep it accurate within two minutes.

TOWER FLAG AND HALYARD

There has been an agreement to keep the church flag raised all week during the summer, wind and weather permitting.

Periodically the flag post nuts are checked for tightness and all seems secure.

A new flag is due to be ordered from Piggots of Witham as a spare.

We are hoping to have the weathervane and post repainted this year and the gulleys in the tower have been cleaned out recently.

Peter Rudlin

March 2024

Report to APCM on 2023 Activities

Open the Book

The OtB group of storytellers continued to deliver weekly sessions at Mersea School through the first term and a half at Mersea School with Bible stories for assemblies of Key Stage 1 students. We took a break for the second half of the Summer Term as there were several other activities at the school which took up a number of our usual Thursday afternoon slots. We were expecting to return in the Autumn Term but were then advised by the school that they would be too busy with other activities on their Thursday afternoon assemblies so there was no opportunity for us to return that Term. We had already begun a monthly session on Friday morning at Fingringhoe Church to the whole of Fingringhoe School and we have continued to present to them with a really encouraging response from children and teaching staff. A big thank you to those who lead teams and to everyone who participates in the telling of the stories.

Margaret and Steven Gaunt, OtB Team Leaders

Mersea Lights Up

The Mersea Lights Up event is a locally inspired event and is gaining in popularity. In 2023 it again provided a missional opportunity for our church.

We started our **Stars Distribution** later than planned as the weather was wet but, as the sun broke through around noon, we were able to establish our usual distribution point outside the church gates from a wooden stand formed as a Christmas tree. A small group of women from our church had met weekly and worked through the year making stars in various media; on painted silk, clay, patterned card, felt and cross-stitch. Each star bears a message inviting people to join our Christmas services; I must particularly thank the wonderful star makers as they continued with production in November when I was indisposed.

Hot Chocolate was again served in the afternoon from the churchyard.

On this occasion, with poor weather again threatening, we moved our **Carol Singing** inside the church. Many visitors as well as those from the regular congregations filled the church where the carol singing was ably led by Rev Jo.

Margaret Gaunt