

Parish of St John the Baptist, Heathfield, with Cotford St Luke

Churchwardens' Report for the year ending 31 December 2023, presented to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in May 2024 and to the Charity Commission.

The ecclesiastical parish of Heathfield with Cotford St Luke includes the small community of Heathfield and the new village of Cotford St Luke, built in the grounds of the old Tone Vale Hospital. We worship in the ancient church of St John the Baptist in Heathfield and in St Luke's Centre in Cotford. The parish, with the parishes of Oake and Hillfarrance, forms part of the Deane Vale Benefice in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The boundaries are due to change early in 2024 and the parishes of Bradford-on-Tone and Nynhead will be included with the Deane Vale churches to create a new, larger Benefice.

People

Rector: There was a vacancy for Rector of the Benefice throughout the calendar year, following the early retirement of Rev Clarissa Shaw-Notice in September 2022. A new incumbent, Rev. Suzanne (Suzy) Kirkham, has been appointed and is due to take up the post in January 2024. During the first half of 2023, the Deanery released Rev Emma Kendall, curate at St. Michaels', Milverton, to work as interim curate in the Dean Vale Benefice, taking on many of the tasks which would normally fall to the incumbent. Later in the year retired priests, Rev Martin Kirkbride, Rev David Ager and Rev Christabel Ager presided at communion services in the parish.

PCC Secretary: Lindsay Hall

Elected Churchwardens: Dawn Mitford-Slade (Heathfield); David Rhodes (Cotford).

Elected PCC members: Claire Bleloch, Jane Durrant (until May, 2023), Phil Hall, Jacqueline Hay-Berry, Sue Harris, Clare Reid, Anthony Reyre, Katy Stirzaker (from May 2023), Roberta Winterson.

Treasurer: Mark Turner

Deanery Synod representatives: Dawn Mitford-Slade, Jacqueline Hay-Berry

Youth leaders: Tom and Claisse Tame

Safeguarding Officer: Lindsay Hall

It is sad to note that two long standing, very active and much loved members of the congregation (Marilyn Power and Matthew West) died during the year. Their contributions to the daily life of the parish are sorely missed.

Structure, governance and management:

PCC members are appointed in the manner set out in the Church Representation rules. All who attend church are encouraged to register on the church Electoral Roll and may stand for election to the PCC. The full body has eleven voting members including the clergy, the treasurer and the two churchwardens, who represent the Bishop. (The PCC Secretary is a non-voting member of the PCC). The Electoral Roll was fully revised in 2019, is reviewed annually, and decreased from 68 members at the beginning of the year to 67 by the end of the year. However, the active adult membership increased slightly to about 50. Activities other than worship which take place at St Luke's Centre (e.g. community activities and upkeep of the premises) are the responsibility of the St Luke's Centre Management Committee which reports to the PCC but which also includes representatives of the wider community.

A regular “Benefice Churchwardens’ Meeting” also allows the Rector and the churchwardens of all three parishes in the benefice to co-ordinate services and other activities.

In 2023, the PCC met 6 times. All meetings were held in person.

Objectives: The PCC has the responsibility of supporting and working with our Rector to promote the whole mission of the church: worship [prayer and praise, through liturgy]; discipleship [fellowship and teaching]; ministry [service and evangelism]. It also maintains the buildings – St John’s in Heathfield and (through the SLC Management Committee) St Luke’s Centre in Cotford St. Luke.

Our aims, set out in our entry on the Charities Commission website, are:

- To celebrate God’s love through worship in a variety of styles and settings for all ages.
- To care for and serve all people in our church, our community and the wider world.
- To grow, spiritually, through teaching, listening, prayer, fellowship and service.
- To make known the Good News of the love of God in Jesus.
- To provide a centre in the village of Cotford St Luke, as well as in the ancient building in Heathfield, where everyone is welcomed.

Achievement and activities:

St Luke’s Centre

Services were held at St Luke’s Centre almost every Sunday, with communion services being held at least once each month. On the fifth Sunday of each month one main morning service of Holy Communion was held for the whole Benefice, the four places of worship (Cotford, Heathfield, Oake and Hillfarrance) taking it in turns to host the service. In addition, informal “Ignite” services were held once a month on Sunday evenings.

In October, we celebrated 5 years since St Luke’s Centre was opened. The celebrations included a service of re-dedication of the Centre, led by Rt Rev Ruth Worsley, suffragan bishop of Taunton.

At most services at St Luke’s Centre we have a music group which is able to lead singing in contemporary worship songs and traditional hymns. In various combinations, Katy, David and Toby Stirzaker, Ant Reyre, Derrick Reid and David Rhodes provide the music and Wilf Stirzaker prepares PowerPoint slides for songs, prayers and Bible readings for most services. Thanks to all concerned!

The Hub Café in the centre opens for three mornings each week, run by a team of volunteers, led by Roberta Winterson and Jane Durrant; A mother and baby group meets every Monday and there is a parent and toddler session every Friday. The centre is also open for a Breakfast Café on the first Saturday of each month (thanks again, Roberta) and for a Farmers’ and Crafts Market on the second Saturday (thanks to Laura Hills). Quiz evenings have become a regular activity, normally taking place every two months. Other regular events included a Memory Café and a Bereavement Support café. The hall at St Luke’s Centre is also used by many other organisations in the village for exercise classes and others on a regular basis and for one-off events such as children’s birthday parties.

Our other big fund raising event was the ever popular fun dog show which was run in conjunction with the fete. Thanks are due to many people, but especially to Derrick Reid and Dawn Mitford-Slade.

Taken together, the café and these other “community” events raised a net total of £11,108 contribution to the parish funds.

David Rhodes

With SLC being over 5yrs old the majority of manufacturer's or builders' warranties/guarantees have now expired. During 2023 there were no structural issues with the building to report with only superficial damage to the brick facing near the entrance to the main hall and on the wall around the garden adjacent to the sanctuary. Attempts have been made to seek quotes for the minor repairs to no avail to date.

There was an issue with the PIR sensors controlling the lights in the meeting room and corridor which had to be replaced. The highest LED light in the kitchen also has to be replaced which proved costly due to personnel and equipment necessary.

Running repairs and maintenance and re-certification of equipment are dealt with as and when issues arise.

Derrick Reid

St John the Baptist, Heathfield

The services at St John the Baptist in Heathfield have continued on the same basis as in 2022 with a once a month 9 am holy communion service. Without a resident priest we have had a number of excellent part time or retired vicars; Rev Emma Kendal was kindly loaned to us from Milverton and took most of the services but Revs David & Christabel Ager also helped out as did Rev Martin Kirkbride. We are very grateful to them all.

There was one burial in April, that of Ruth Summers, who was the widow of a local farmer. In May Jack Dowling was christened & welcomed into the church family.

Our special services included the Good Friday walk of witness around the benefice, when Heathfield was the first stopping place with prayers, a hymn and hot cross buns. On Christmas Day the little church was full for the traditional family communion when the Rev Preb Simon Hill, Archdeacon of Taunton, took the service.

The main change has been the clearing of the churchyard. The spinney had all the weak & damaged trees felled, exposing the stone foundation of the old school. With donations and grants we are gradually re-planting with specimen trees and wild flowers to make a tranquil spot for reflection & services named Memory Wood. Several willing volunteers have worked hard moving rubble, tree stumps & weeds but special thanks must go Andrew & Jacqueline Hay-Berry & Richard Payne who farms opposite.

Nothing would function here without our small band of hard working & reliable helpers The Hay - Berry's are invaluable for maintaining both inside and outside the church; Sue Harris does all the sacristan duties as well as the cleaning; Kathy Urquart keeps the brass shining and the outside drain weed free; Martin Bougham tends the churchyard. Then there are the key holders who do their weekly stint of opening & closing the church Philip Wade, Laura and Peter Lewis, the Hay-Berrys, Julia and Richard Payne and Sue Harris.

The Quinquennial Inspection was brought forward because of concerns about the plaster on the north wall of the church. As a result, work is now in hand for roof maintenance and re-plastering, depending on how much we can afford. Prayers and cash needed!

Dawn Mitford-Slade

Children and young people

Work for children and young people is centred around “Powerhouse” – Bible teaching and worship which takes place during the 10.30 service at St Luke’s Centre – and the Friday evening youth club, “Blaze”.

Powerhouse

2023 was an up and down year for children's work with lots of changes of leadership. We started the year with our regular 5 children and with Powerhouse on the 2nd and 4th Sundays. Rev Emma took over from Rev Clarissa and was very good at providing resources and including children in worship on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. As we approached the end of the year we had more families join us, one from Zimbabwe with 4 children and 3 Ukrainian families with 4 children between them. With the sharp increase in the number of children we tried to provide more children's work and have steadily provided an increase in provision.

During the Christmas period with no priest-in-charge the young people were involved in an inclusive all-age Christingle which was very well received and on Christmas Eve delivered 'Come to the Manger'.

Louise Frost

Blaze

2023 at Blaze has been a real success in both developing the provision we have been able to provide for the young people in the community as well as relationships we have been able to develop between the church community and the young people who attend. Over 2023, we saw Blaze Youth expand and grow on Friday nights, with an average of between 40 to 50 young people attending each Friday night. We have been able to collaborate with other local youth organisations, as well as run regular events such as our annual Christmas dinner, with much success.

In addition to the regular Friday night youth group, we also launched two new weekly groups - Blaze After Hours, and Sunday Pod Group. These two groups have allowed more young people to explore the big questions of life in a relaxed and friendly environment and are well attended each week. We have also expanded our volunteer team, recruiting new volunteers to help at Blaze on Friday nights.

In June of 2023 we took six young people to Spree, an annual summer camp organised by SWYM and Urban Saints. The young people who attended engaged with the whole weekend with much enthusiasm, and we are looking to take another group this year.

Looking ahead through 2024, we are aiming to add two new youth provisions to our program - a weekly kids club for primary school aged children, and a detached youth ministry project to engage with more young people positively in the community.

Tom Tame

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains a standing item on the agenda for all PCC meetings, which are held every 6-8 weeks. The need for awareness and safer recruitment and training is emphasised.

There were five incidents brought to our attention in 2023:

- In June, a member of the clergy was concerned about the mental health of someone connected to the church.

- In May there was concern about the welfare of one of the boys attending Blaze youth club.
- In November a member of the church asked our advice about concerns a neighbour had about the neighbour's daughter possibly being groomed.
- Also in November someone at the Hub cafe asked our advice about an adult neighbour who appeared to be vulnerable.
- In December there was concern about the welfare of one of the girls attending Blaze youth club.

Where appropriate, the advice of the safeguarding team at Wells and the police was sought.

The Church of England now expects DBS certificates to be renewed every three years and this was completed before the deadline of 31 December 2023.

Phil and Lindsay Hall

Heathfield with Cotford St Luke PCC Treasurer's Report for APCM – 19 May 2024

Overview

Total receipts [income] during 2023 were 73,339, and total payments [expenditure] were £76,783, as summarised at the annex.¹

During the year, the PCC set aside a general reserve of £15k and separate reserve funds totalling £24k for the estimated cost of repairs to Heathfield church. Year-end balances were:

Account	Balance
NatWest 40881989 (general)	£5,934
NatWest 75149303 (special funds)	£1,205
CCLA 015250001D (deposit)	£39,000
Petty cash - Hub Café	£300
Cash in hand at year-end	<u>£1,187</u>
Total	<u>£47,626</u>

SLC Loans

We have now reached an agreement with the Diocese of Bath & Wells regarding the loans for building and fitting out of SLC. The existing loans will be replaced with an interest-free loan to be repaid at £15k per year for the next 26 years. For context, net income from the Hub Café, hall bookings and events (breakfasts, quiz nights, murder mystery evenings, farmers' markets and the dog show) totalled £19k in 2023.²

Parish Share

The final parish share request for 2023 was £24.7k; in 2024 it is £27.4k, which works out at £548 (£46 per month) per regular worshipper. This money is essentially used by the diocese to provide, train and house clergy – in other denominations, these costs are typically met directly by individual congregations. We have to pay this money before we think about our local expenditure.

The diocese is planning to phase in a new system from 2025-2029 to replace the existing parish share with apportionment at benefice level. Spoiler alert: this is likely to result in a

¹ The figures for 2022 are not directly comparable as the apportionment was carried out on a different basis.

² After deducting costs directly attributable to the Hub Café but excluding any contribution towards energy costs, insurance, etc.

significantly increased contribution from the PCC, not to mention some difficult negotiations within the benefice.

Benefice Expenses

The estimated costs for the benefice and Rector's expenses are £3k per year. If the benefice appoints a part-time paid administrator, the additional costs have been estimated at approx. £5k per year.

Historically, the PCC has contributed 50% of benefice costs and discussions are under way to agree an appropriate apportionment for the expanded benefice. Proposals for the PCC's future contributions range from 35% to 54% – hopefully this issue can be resolved without taking too much time and effort away from the ministry of the church.

Youth Work

The original funding for the part-time youth workers was due to expire in September 2023. A member of the congregation very generously funded a year's extension to this and we have also been successful in obtaining grants from Cotford St Luke Parish Council, Neighbourly (on behalf of the Co-op) and the Bishop Radford Trust, so this important work is now funded through to the end of 2024.

Individual Donations

We are part of the Parish Giving Scheme, allowing people to make either one-off or regular donations online – and the diocese collects the Gift Aid for us free of charge. I would encourage everyone who provides regular financial support to the church to consider giving this way in future.

We also have a contactless giving device that allows card payments in individual services – Gift Aid will be collected automatically after your first donation.

Looking Ahead

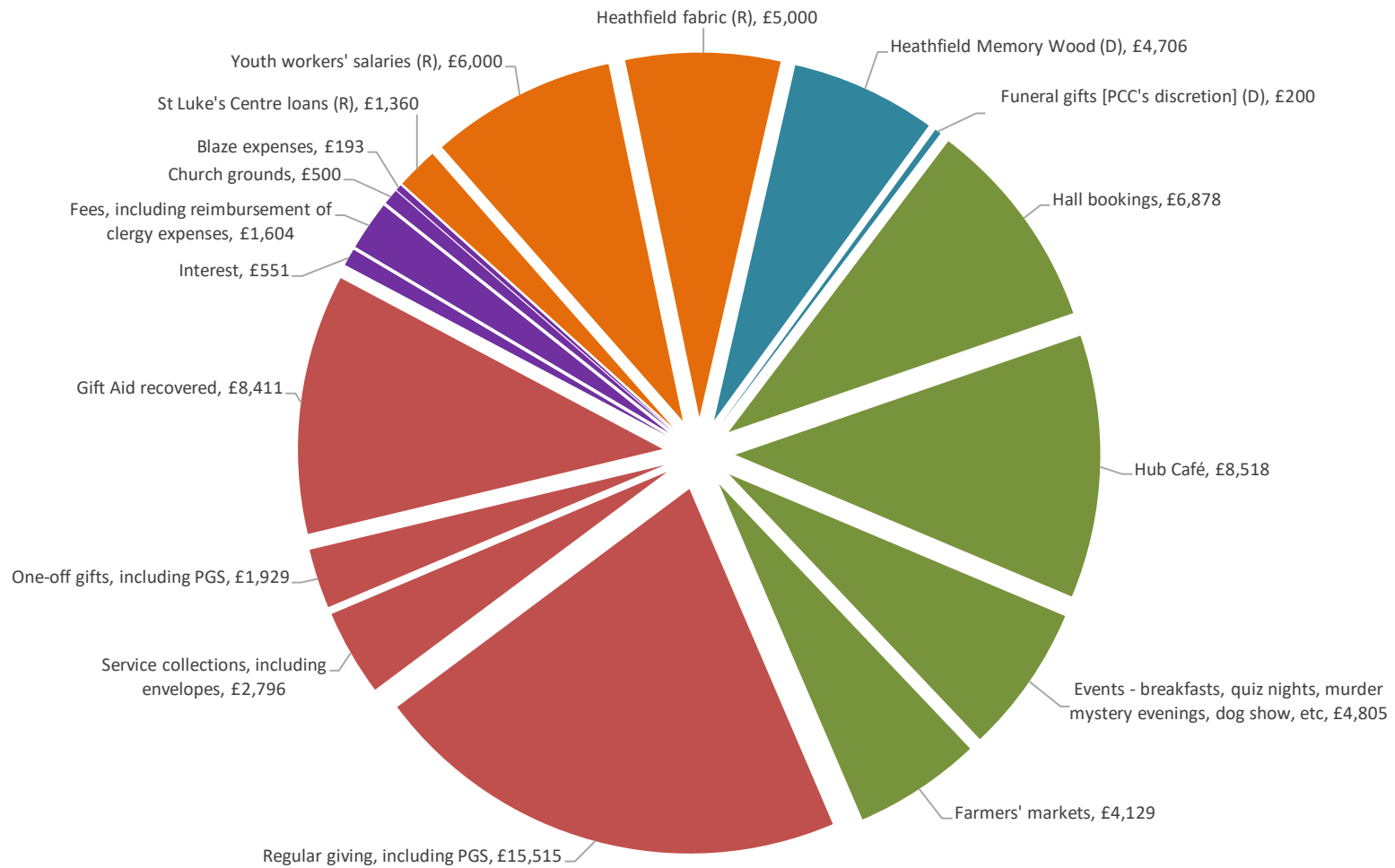
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Mark Turner, PCC Treasurer – May 2024

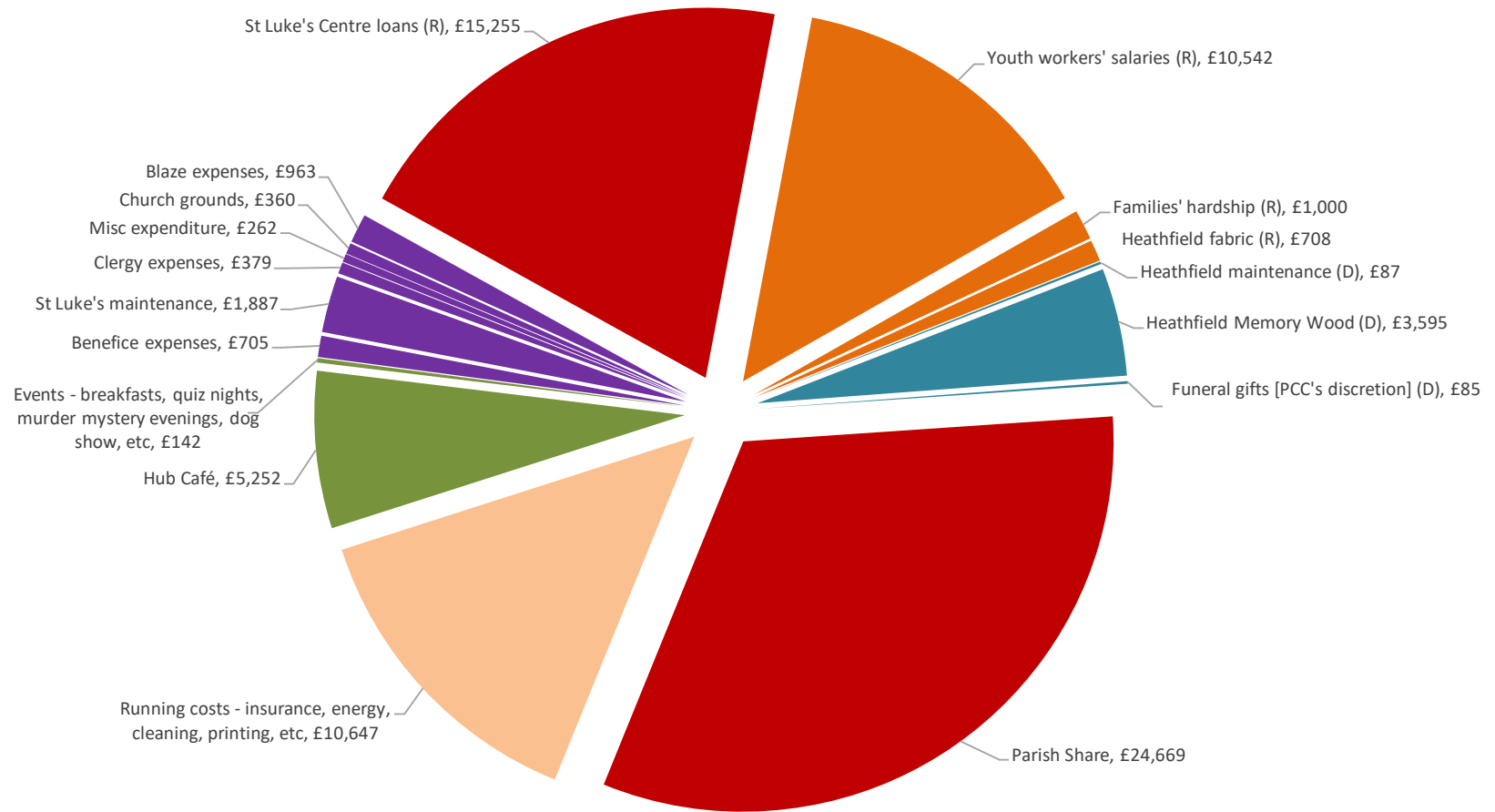
Annex – Heathfield with Cotford St Luke PCC accounts for the year ending 31 December 2023

	Notes	General fund £	Designated fund £	Restricted fund £	2023 £	2022 £
Receipts						
Donations and Legacies:						
Planned giving		16,955	-	5,360	22,315	16,722
Collections, donations & other giving		4,030	4,868	7,000	15,898	23,332
Income tax recovered		8,411	38	-	8,449	6,981
Legacies		-	-	-	-	-
Other Trading activities						
Magazine/Bookstall sales/Hall Lettings etc		6,878	-	-	6,878	-
Income from other Properties		-	-	-	-	-
Annual Fete/events		8,933	-	-	8,933	864
Receipts from Investments:						
Interest & dividends		551	-	-	551	61
Receipts from Charitable activities:						
Parochial fees		1,226	-	-	1,226	469
Other Receipts						
Insurance claims		-	-	-	-	-
Sale proceeds from fixed assets		-	-	-	-	-
Loans received		-	-	-	-	-
Other		9,089	-	-	9,089	8,423
Total Receipts		56,073	4,906	12,360	73,339	56,852
Payments						
Charitable activities:						
Donations/Grants to charities		-	-	-	-	-
Mission & Evangelism		(983)	(85)	(1,000)	(2,068)	-
Parish Share		(24,669)	-	-	(24,669)	(23,272)
Clergy expenses		-	-	-	-	-
Church running expenses		(6,451)	-	-	(6,451)	(4,134)
Churchyard maintenance		(360)	(3,390)	-	(3,750)	-
Cost of raising funds		(11,646)	-	-	(11,646)	-
Support costs		(1,125)	-	-	(1,125)	-
Administration costs (inc. staff costs)		-	-	(11,250)	(11,250)	(13,442)
Governance Costs		-	-	-	-	-
Other		(364)	(205)	-	(569)	-
Major expenditure						
Repairs to church buildings		-	-	-	-	-
Repairs to other property		-	-	-	-	-
Capital purchases/additions		-	-	-	-	-
Loan repayments		-	-	(15,255)	(15,255)	(11,772)
Total payments		(45,598)	(3,680)	(27,505)	(76,783)	(52,620)
Surplus/(Deficit) of Receipts over payments		10,475	1,226	(15,145)	(3,444)	4,232
<i>Transfers between funds</i>		(46,967)	33,073	13,895	-	-
		(36,492)	34,299	(1,250)	(3,444)	4,232
<i>Cash at bank and in hand at 1 Jan (Actual Balance)</i>		39,445	800	10,825	51,070	46,837
<i>Cash at bank and in hand at 31 Dec (Actual Balance)</i>		2,953	35,099	9,575	47,626	51,069

Heathfield with Cotford St Luke PCC - Receipts 2023



Heathfield with Cotford St Luke PCC - Payments 2023



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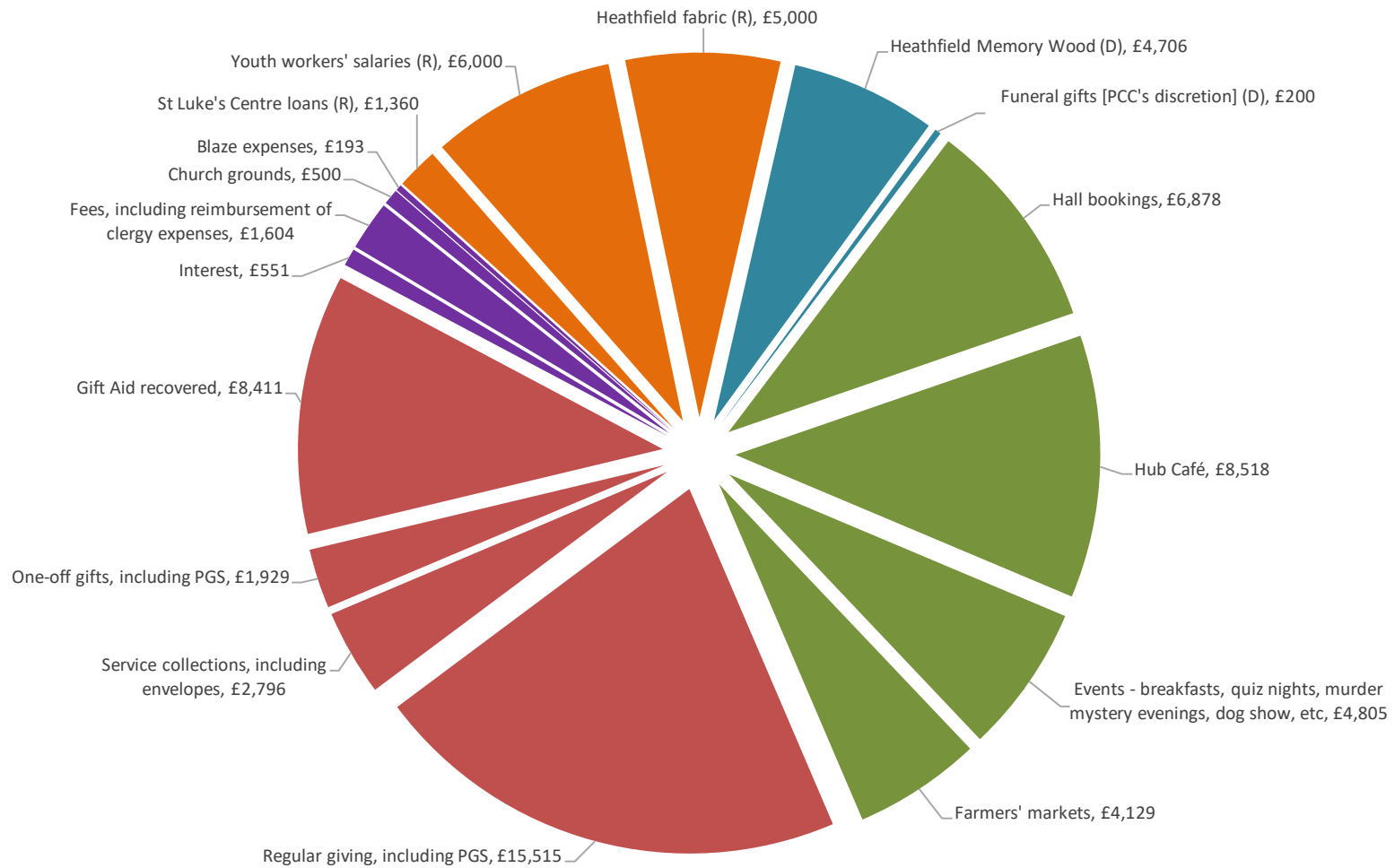
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