



# **St Martin's Church Sherwood**

**Annual report and financial  
statements of the Parochial Church  
Council for the year ended  
31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

**Signed on behalf of the PCC**

**Church wardens** *G. H. H. H.* *S. H. H.*

**Vicar** *Sue Pendergue*

**ST. MARTIN, SHERWOOD  
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
OF THE  
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED  
31ST DECEMBER 2023**

# PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN - SHERWOOD

## Reference and administrative details

Charity number:	1153828																						
Address:	Trevose Gardens Sherwood Nottingham																						
Trustees serving during the year were:																							
Associate Minister:	Rev S Pendenque																						
Licensed Lay Ministers:	Mrs L Cohen Mr G Hickson																						
Church Wardens:	Mr C Morris Mrs S Estella																						
Representatives on The Deanery Synod:	Rev Sue Pendenque Mrs L Cohen																						
Elected Members:	<table><tr><td>Mrs C Morris</td><td>until 2026</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs H Shipston</td><td>until 2025</td></tr><tr><td>Mr J Hepworth</td><td>until 2026</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs G Hepworth</td><td>until 2026</td></tr><tr><td>Ms P Breakwell</td><td>until 2026</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs A Rogers</td><td>until 2026</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs J Milbourn</td><td>until 2024</td></tr><tr><td>Mr C Budd</td><td>until 2024</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs E Barnabas</td><td>until 2024</td></tr><tr><td>Mr R Kitson</td><td>until 2024</td></tr><tr><td>Mrs J Day</td><td>until 2025</td></tr></table>	Mrs C Morris	until 2026	Mrs H Shipston	until 2025	Mr J Hepworth	until 2026	Mrs G Hepworth	until 2026	Ms P Breakwell	until 2026	Mrs A Rogers	until 2026	Mrs J Milbourn	until 2024	Mr C Budd	until 2024	Mrs E Barnabas	until 2024	Mr R Kitson	until 2024	Mrs J Day	until 2025
Mrs C Morris	until 2026																						
Mrs H Shipston	until 2025																						
Mr J Hepworth	until 2026																						
Mrs G Hepworth	until 2026																						
Ms P Breakwell	until 2026																						
Mrs A Rogers	until 2026																						
Mrs J Milbourn	until 2024																						
Mr C Budd	until 2024																						
Mrs E Barnabas	until 2024																						
Mr R Kitson	until 2024																						
Mrs J Day	until 2025																						
PCC Secretary:	Mrs R Fisher-Redel																						
Treasurer:	Mr I Gordon																						
Bankers:	National Westminster Bank Plc 536 Valley Road Nottingham NG5 1JD																						
Independent Examiner:	RWB CA Limited Northgate House North Gate New Basford Nottingham NG7 7BQ																						

## PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN – SHERWOOD

### Trustees Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

#### Aims and Purpose

St Martin's Parochial Church Council (the PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent in promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. This includes responsibility for the financial affairs of the church, and provision and maintenance of the fabric of the Church building for worship and other activities for the benefit of the local community in and around Sherwood. The PCC complies with its duties under section 17 of the 2011 Charities Act with regard to Public Benefit.

#### Structure, Governance and Management

The Parochial Church Council is a statutory body and is governed by the regulations as set out in the official Church of England Church Representation Rules. This is supplemented by the Handbook for Churchwardens and parochial church councillors (revised edition 2010).

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. The PCC consists of the clergy, church wardens, those elected to Deanery Synod, and other elected representatives. Members of the congregation are encouraged to join the electoral roll and to stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance in the parish, and for all financial matters. The full PCC met 6 times during the year. The PCC operates through a number of committees, each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life.

The Standing Committee meets only when necessary - none this year.

Fabric and Finance Committee oversees the right management of those two areas, and oversees works to be done on the building. The treasurer is not a member of the PCC, but is a member of the committee.

The Worship and Discipleship Committee plans and oversees the church's worship, small groups and discipleship programmes.

The Community and Justice Committee leads on social action, partnering with other agencies for mission, and shapes our financial contributions to charities.

The Children and Young People's Committee develops the growth of young people, and oversees Sunday children's ministry, the Sunday evening youth group, Jolly Tots, Bumps to Babies, ministry in schools, and special children's services/events.

The leadership team consists of the Associate Minister (Vicar Designate from Oct 31<sup>st</sup> 2023), Church Wardens, LLMs, Children/Families Minister, and Administrator. They meet weekly (or as in the case of the Associate Minister & Church Wardens each month) to review and plan church activities, and to pray for the church.

The APCM for 2022 was held in church on April 23, 2023.

*It should be noted that our Vicar Revd Bridget Baguley died on Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 2023. Consequently the church entered an interregnum period and was led collaboratively by Revd Sue Pendenque Associate Minister and Church Wardens Sue Estella & Chris Morris until Revd Sue Pendenque was appointed Vicar designate; effective from 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 until her licensing Jan 14<sup>th</sup> 2024.*

#### Objectives and Activities

The diocesan vision is *Growing Disciples younger, wider and deeper.*

The St Martin's Vision is *Growing and Going in the love of God.*

We intend to be: a church of all ages, transformed by the love of Christ: partnering with our local community to nurture God's kingdom of welcome, hope, and social justice, for the flourishing of our community, city and world.

#### **Our purpose:**

As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to:

worship God

cultivate community

live generously

make a difference

## PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN – SHERWOOD

### Trustees Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

#### **Objectives and Activities** *continued*

The PCC is therefore committed to enabling people of all ages to become followers of Jesus Christ, to grow as disciples, and to become active participants in the church family. We aim to equip ordinary people to live out their faith in everyday life, through:

- Worship and prayer: learning and worshipping together in a variety of settings, that we may grow together in Christ, and be empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Pastoral care for those living in the parish, or otherwise connected to the church body: including occasional offices.
- Growing together as a community through welcome and hospitality, in small “Life Groups” and informal gatherings
- Mission and community engagement: including social groups, action with other charities and organisations working for the common good, and hiring of the church building for community use.

#### **Achievements and performances**

##### **Overview 2023**

In January 2023 our Vicar Revd. Bridget Baguley died after a period where her health declined due to secondary breast cancer. The church entered a wholly supportive period of mourning and sadness following this – we made room for our sadness, our lament through our Lent Course ‘Journey to Hope’ and through times of open church for prayer and our conversations. We continued to hold to hope even in our sadness, believing firmly in the hope of the resurrection for Bridget. Revd. Sue Pendenque together with the Church Wardens took responsibility for the overall leadership of the church as supported by the Arch Deacon for Nottingham Revd. Phil Williams. The church navigated its grief well and continued to more than function and grow. People pulled together, supported each other and worked hard to allow ministries to function and flourish. The Revd. Sue wishes to express her deep thanks for all who call St Martin’s their home and lovingly supported each other and the wider community throughout this last year, who worked so hard to keep us moving forward and to navigate through the vacancy process. She particularly thanks Chris Morris and Sue Estella, Church wardens for their unwavering care for her personally and the church and its wider community along with Lesley Cohen and Glenn Hickson (LLMs) and Revd. Alan Hargrave (retired minister) for their incredible support.

The church entered vacancy with the death of Bridget and made a decision early on to begin the process of recruiting a new Vicar as soon as was reasonable. The church and a designated team worked incredibly hard to produce a Parish Profile which was published when the advert went live in Sept 2023. Two applicants were shortlisted, however one applicant pulled out of interview with only Sue Pendenque remaining as the active candidate. Sue was interviewed and appointed as Vicar Designate Oct 31<sup>st</sup> 2023.

The church serves its community of Sherwood with love, commitment and compassion in many ways – please see sections below – younger, wider, deeper.

Easter saw many of the leadership and worship teams go down with Covid. Yet, the church continued to function. The remaining leadership team and our wonderful retired minister faithfully making it still a great occasion of joy. This year also saw us resume our Maundy Thursday fellowship meal.

TKC was led this year by Sue Estella, it was a quieter week due but of great value none the less.

The PCC grew along with the church electoral roll. Sue proudly boasts of the best PCC in the diocese and again expresses gratitude for all of their hard work with particular mention to Russell Kitson for his care for the church premises and grounds.

Building for growth was halted as Sunday morning needs are now not as pressing – many of the children have got older and are now part of the Sunday evening youth group.

Hiring of the church building has resumed during 2023 returning to pre-Covid use. Our income from this has caught up with pre-paid fees and has become a helpful source of income. We were pleased to have the church used for various choir concerts over the year again.

## PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN – SHERWOOD

### Trustees Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

The PCC remains committed to our church vision “Growing and Going in the love of God” as our particular local outworking of the diocesan vision. It informs all our activities and priorities.

#### ***Growing disciples: Younger***

Sunday children’s attendance is down on last year, largely due to children getting older and moving on to the evening youth group. We have seen some new families settle with us and become regular with young children.

Jolly Tots and Bumps to Babies continues to grow and is known as a safe place, where support can be found and where people are welcomed.

Our Children and Families Minister worked hard to create positive contact with our local primary school – Seely. A successful Advent assembly took place in school, which was then followed by two successful *Experience Christmas* days where 4 school year-groups visited the church across the days. This led to very positive feedback from the school and new opportunities for 2024.

The youth ministry has grown, with up to 17 regulars by the end of the year. Many of these young people are not children of church members but wider contacts. It is a group which feels safe, allows the young people to be themselves and is a credit to the volunteer leaders who have worked hard to grow this ministry. And SDF4 funding has been granted for the appointment of a youth minister – who was interviewed and appointed in November 2023 with a view to starting in January 2024.

For more details on “Younger” see attached reports from church groups and committees.

#### ***Growing disciples: Wider***

Our engagement with the local community has continued through social media for daily Morning Prayer, Sunday services, and children’s ministry.

We continue to stream services through Facebook (Sunday services and Morning Prayer) daily, 6 days of the week. We are grateful to the Morning Prayer team for continuing what began in lockdown and is now a daily feature for up to 10 people daily. Thanks are also due to the tech team for their continued hard work to keep the Sunday technology in all its varieties working so well.

Throughout the year Nourish has continued to serve meals for takeaway weekly, with a decision taken to stop taking meals to the local Woodthorpe flats and thus scale down and simplify the catering needs. There is now a wider team who make meals. Funding continues to come in and meals are gratefully received by many in Sherwood. Alongside this, Nourish Café has become a ‘home’ for many people who are building support networks and community through it. It is a joy to see this wider ministry which particularly serves the needs of many people who struggle with their mental health. Both Nourish and Nourish Café are a collaborative partnership between church members and people who would not necessarily call themselves Christian.

A new initiative was begun by two church members who recognized the need for space for families to be supported, have family fun and food – *Toast Club* began summer 2023– two mornings a week to come have breakfast and space to play during school holidays, Harv-Fest grew out of this – an alternative harvest celebration for local families, and also a November ‘Glow Party’ which saw upward of 100 children and adults come and enjoy space to be together in a safe environment. These events are aimed at building contacts with our local area, with a view to leading to those all-important conversations about Jesus.

Knit and Natter continues to provide a warm and welcoming space for people to meet, chat, craft together – people who might often be isolated or lonely.

The chaplaincy team continue to visit local businesses although not as regularly as they would like

Many members of the church continue to be involved in mission in various ways throughout and beyond the parish, including collections for Foodbanks.

We were pleased to partner with Sherwood Arts Week (SAW) again this year, hosting a local dance troupe and choir for performances during SAW.

We take seriously our commitment to mission beyond our local area, and are committed to financial giving to other charities. 10% of St Martin’s given income is tithed and the PCC vote on the charities to be supported each year, from nominations from the congregation.

For more details on “Wider” see attached reports from church groups and committees.

## PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN – SHERWOOD

### Trustees Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

#### ***Growing disciples: Wider***

Our engagement with the local community has continued through social media for daily Morning Prayer, Sunday services, and children's ministry.

We continue to stream services through Facebook (Sunday services and Morning Prayer) daily, 6 days of the week. We are grateful to the Morning Prayer team for continuing what began in lockdown and is now a daily feature for up to 10 people daily. Thanks are also due to the tech team for their continued hard work to keep the Sunday technology in all its varieties working so well.

Throughout the year Nourish has continued to serve meals for takeaway weekly, with a decision taken to stop taking meals to the local Woodthorpe flats and thus scale down and simplify the catering needs. There is now a wider team who make meals. Funding continues to come in and meals are gratefully received by many in Sherwood. Alongside this, Nourish Café has become a 'home' for many people who are building support networks and community through it. It is a joy to see this wider ministry which particularly serves the needs of many people who struggle with their mental health. Both Nourish and Nourish Café are a collaborative partnership between church members and people who would not necessarily call themselves Christian.

A new initiative was begun by two church members who recognized the need for space for families to be supported, have family fun and food – *Toast Club* began summer 2023– two mornings a week to come have breakfast and space to play during school holidays, Harv-Fest grew out of this – an alternative harvest celebration for local families, and also a November 'Glow Party' which saw upward of 100 children and adults come and enjoy space to be together in a safe environment. These events are aimed at building contacts with our local area, with a view to leading to those all-important conversations about Jesus.

Knit and Natter continues to provide a warm and welcoming space for people to meet, chat, craft together – people who might often be isolated or lonely.

The chaplaincy team continue to visit local businesses although not as regularly as they would like

Many members of the church continue to be involved in mission in various ways throughout and beyond the parish, including collections for Foodbanks.

We were pleased to partner with Sherwood Arts Week (SAW) again this year, hosting a local dance troupe and choir for performances during SAW.

We take seriously our commitment to mission beyond our local area, and are committed to financial giving to other charities. 10% of St Martin's given income is tithed and the PCC vote on the charities to be supported each year, from nominations from the congregation.

For more details on "Wider" see attached reports from church groups and committees.

#### ***Growing disciples: Deeper***

We continue to meet for worship, prayer and study in various ways. As for previous years that meant two morning services and a monthly Unplugged (informal contemporary worship, always lay-led), and most Life Groups. Life Group leaders meet quarterly for support, inspiration and prayer. Some people still join in online and a number of new people have joined the church this year.

The Worship team has met, and a regular pattern of worship leading for Sunday services has emerged and is working well. We remain committed to using a variety of worship styles through the month whenever possible.

St Martin's Life Groups often offer good pastoral support beyond their usual groups. Daily Morning Prayer on Facebook live has continued as a regular community of approximately 12 people, meeting every day except Sundays since the end of March 2020 and a prayer group meets regularly specifically to pray for the church, the local area and other concerns.

For more details on "Deeper" see attached reports from church groups and committees.

## PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN – SHERWOOD

### Trustees Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

#### **Safeguarding**

St Martin's continues to be mindful of its Safeguarding responsibilities to its congregation and the wider area of Sherwood, and there appears to be an increased awareness of issues that need reporting. Any matters that have arisen have been forwarded to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team for advice when that has been necessary. The diocese have regularly supported the Parish Safeguarding Officers with online seminars and updates, and a conference was held locally last summer so that we could meet each other face to face. The Safeguarding officer's role can feel a bit isolated at times, and so it was good to share experiences and ideas. Every attempt has been made to encourage anyone with a role in the church to complete their required training modules, with some moderate success. We have a way to go!

**Janet Kitson**

#### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks**

The Disclosures and Barring Service (DBS) checks continued to be temporarily carried out by Gill James and Sue Pendenque in 2023. A number of checks have been carried out through the year, with Judith Walker and Lesley Cohen taking over this role on a more permanent basis in the near future.

#### **Financial Review**

##### **General Funds**

The Church is dependent financially on offerings received from the congregation, donations from individuals and grants from charitable trusts.

In 2023 our income and expenditure were both broadly in line with our forecasts. Regular giving rose by 7% to just under £62K. Other income remained stable with the exception of a one off donation from an ex-parishioner of £10K.

Due to the diligence of the PCC and the Fabric and Finance committee expenditure was controlled to the extent that it was only £2K higher in total than in 2022. This was despite an increase in energy costs of £6.2K. We were able to avoid any costs for major projects in 2023 although we do expect some in 2024, particularly regarding lighting.

##### **Restricted Funds**

These are sums of money that are held on trust for a specific purpose and can only be spent for that. On 31 December 2023 we were holding £2,702 in the Nourish fund, £201 given for Families in need, and £2,281 in total for children and youth work.

##### **Designated Funds**

Other monies that have been set aside for an individual project are shown as designated under the heading of unrestricted funds. On 31 December 2023 £17,023 was held for the ongoing (until 31.12.2024) children and families ministry, £9,000 for the Youth Worker staff costs we have £6,641 left in the Building Fund, £478 was held to be used towards the next parish weekend and there is a further £1,000 put aside for Nourish.

##### **Policy on Reserves**

The policy of the Parochial Church Council is to hold a sufficient sum in reserves to cover six months of normal expenditure. On 31 December 2023 £45,000 was held in an interest bearing account to satisfy this policy.

**Ian Gordon**

##### **Growing Disciples:**

We will be continuing to inhabit our vision of "Growing and Going in the love of God", as we aim to grow connections with Sherwood, to nurture and welcome younger people into our community of faith, and to explore creatively what it means to be church in today's world.

Following the bereavement of Bridget, we have worked hard in connecting with each other and our community, supporting mental health, and recovering our sense of well-being and hope.

We have successfully reopened our relationship with Seely Primary School which we will continue to develop into 2024 through further visits to the school, and from the school to the church.

We will continue to develop the Nourish cafe along, providing friendship and community as much as food. This is also starting to act as a place of faith-exploration; we will continue to offer periodic faith exploration courses such as Alpha or start to enable people to further engage with faith. The Chaplaincy team will



PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN – SHERWOOD

Trustees Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

continue to visit the shops and businesses on Mansfield Road to continue to spread wider and possibly invite people to join in any Start/Alpha courses.


As the agreed funding for the children / families minister ended at end of 2024 we need to either reallocate funding or source outside funding to continue this employment if we feel it is appropriate.


We look forward to taking up opportunities to engage again with events such as Sherwood Art Week and Sherwood Sponsors Refugees.


**Thanks**

The PCC would like to thank all those who participate in so many ways to make our church a welcoming, gracious, and transformative community. The strength of our pastoral care for each other and neighbours, and our growing passion for evangelism and mission, have been very evident this year. The church community have been unfailingly supportive of the leadership team in all the decisions we have had to make. Our particular thanks go to the Church Wardens and all the PCC, who have led us prayerfully and faithfully through this extremely challenging year.

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 14 April 2024 and signed on its behalf by: -

 ..... Rev. Sue Pendenque - Chair

 ..... Mr Chris Morris - Church Warden

 ..... Mrs Sue Estella – Church Warden

 ..... Mr Ian Gordon - Treasurer

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN - SHERWOOD**  
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023**

	Unrestricted funds				
	General	Designated	Restricted	2023	2022
	Fund	Funds	Funds		
<b>RECEIPTS</b>	£	£	£	£	£
Regular Giving	61,929	-	-	61,929	57,993
Gift Aid	14,998	-	-	14,998	13,872
Projects	-	-	7,755	7,755	9,184
Church Hire	8,280	-	-	8,280	7,685
Fees	1,858	-	-	1,858	3,340
Maintenance	3,785	-	-	3,785	-
Other	2,062	10,000	-	12,062	1,898
Interest on deposit funds	1,637	-	-	1,637	817
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>94,549</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>7,755</b>	<b>112,304</b>	<b>94,789</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>					
Parish Share	50,676	-	-	50,676	50,676
Staff Costs	7,721	-	-	7,721	5,130
Maintenance	20,307	-	1,000	21,307	17,305
Finance	4,419	-	-	4,419	5,653
Worship/ Discipleship	2,581	-	-	2,581	2,989
CYP	1,006	14,868	544	16,418	15,387
Mission	6,966	-	6,201	13,167	13,947
Projects	-	-	-	-	3,987
Pastoral	940	-	71	1,011	236
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>94,616</b>	<b>14,868</b>	<b>7,816</b>	<b>117,300</b>	<b>115,310</b>
Net of receipts/(payments)	(67)	(4,868)	(61)	(4,996)	(20,521)
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand at 01.01.23	36,382	38,858	5,245	80,485	101,006
<b>Cash at bank and in hand at 31.12.23</b>	<b>36,315</b>	<b>33,990</b>	<b>5,184</b>	<b>75,489</b>	<b>80,485</b>

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN - SHERWOOD

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2023

ANALYSIS OF FUNDS

	At 01/01/2023 £	Receipts £	Payments £	Transfers £	At 31/12/2023 £
Unrestricted Funds					
Designated Funds					
Legacies	-	-	-	-	-
Building fund	1,641	-	-	5,000	6,641
Building for Growth	5,000	-	-	(5,000)	-
Children's Ministry Salary	31,740	-	(14,868)	-	16,872
Gravity Course	-	-	-	-	-
Nourish	-	1,000	-	-	1,000
Youth Worker Staff Costs	-	9,000	-	-	9,000
Parish Weekend	477	-	-	-	477
	38,858	10,000	(14,868)	-	33,990
General Funds	36,382	94,549	(94,616)	-	36,315
	75,240	104,549	(109,484)	-	70,305
Restricted Funds					
Appeals	-	-	-	-	-
Families in Need	272	-	(71)	-	201
Nourish	4,756	4,147	(6,201)	-	2,702
Diocesan Grant	-	-	-	-	-
Rose Window	-	1,000	(1,000)	-	-
Oakes Trip	217	1,209	(544)	-	882
Childrens' Ministry Salary	-	1,400	-	-	1,400
	5,245	7,755	(7,816)	-	5,184
TOTAL FUNDS	80,485	112,304	(117,300)	-	75,489

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 14 April 2024 and signed on its behalf by: -

Sue Pendeneque Rev. Sue Pendeneque - Chair

Ian Gordon Mr Ian Gordon - Treasurer

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN – SHERWOOD**

**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS**

	2023		2022	
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted
	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds
	£	£	£	£
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Church of England Deposit Fund				
- PCC Building Funds	1,760	-	1,705	-
- Reserves Account	52,585	-	61,003	-
PCC Current Account	14,793	4,102	7,981	-
No 2 Current Account	1,167	1,082	4,550	5,246
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>70,305</b>	<b>5,184</b>	<b>75,239</b>	<b>5,246</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>OTHER MONETARY ASSETS</b>				
Income tax on deeds of covenant gift aid due	3,060	-	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
Independent Examiner fees	768	-	744	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	768	-	744	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN - SHERWOOD**

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE**

**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARTIN, SHERWOOD**

---

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Parochial Church Council of St. Martin for the year ended 31 December 2023.

**Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity's trustees of the Parochial Church Council of St. Martin 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 Parochial Church Council of St. Martin'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 Qualified 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:

- accounting records were not kept in respect of the PCC as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with those records.

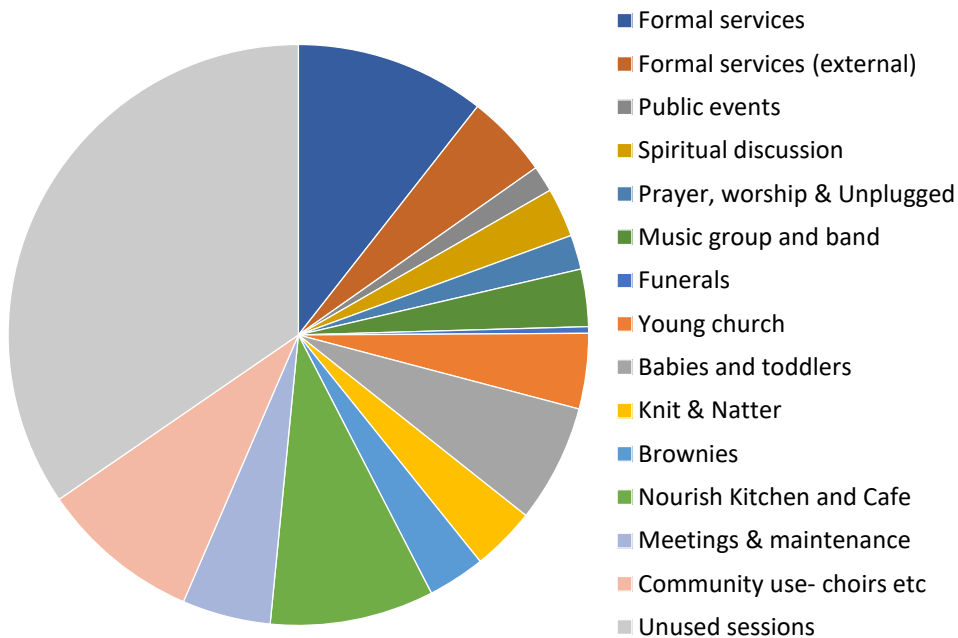
I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**Neil Coupland FCA DChA**

Dated: 14 April 2024

**RWB Chartered Accountants  
Northgate House  
North Gate  
New Basford  
Nottingham  
NG7 7BQ**

## Use of the Church Building 2023



**Baptisms 2023**

**3**

**Funerals 2023**

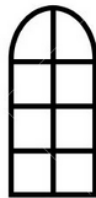
**3**

**Weddings 2023**

**0**

**Usual  
Sunday  
Attendance**  
**75**

**Sunday  
Ministry  
teams**  
**32**



**Life  
Group  
members**  
**42**

**Christmas  
attendance**



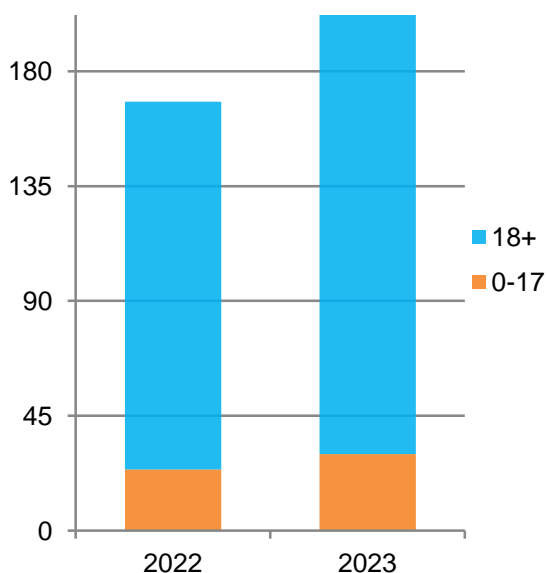
**153**

**Easter  
attendance**

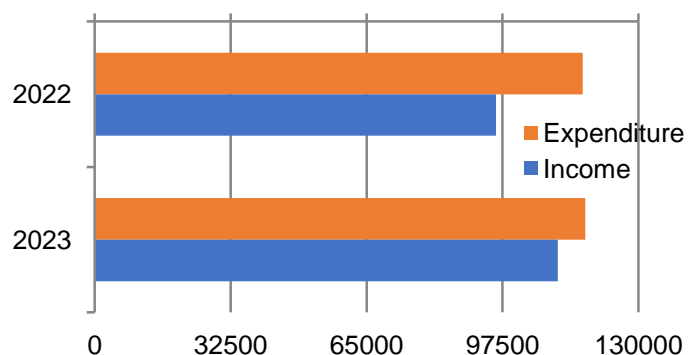


**97**

### Worshipping Community



### Church Finances



## The Electoral Roll

At the end of December 2023 the Electoral Roll stands at 102.

As at December 2022 our roll stood at 100. During the revision of the Roll in 2023, 3 people were removed and 6 added giving 103 at the 2023 APCM. Since then, we have had 2 people leave plus 1 new addition, therefore St Martin's Electoral Roll as at the end of December 2023 is 102.

**Julie Day**

## Nottingham North Deanery APCM Report for Jan – Dec 2023

During 2023 we held three Synods:

- 7 February 2023: Renew and Refresh  
Our first Synod was held at Christ Church, Cinderhill and we looked at the Deanery responses to the Diocesan consultation on renewing and refreshing its vision.
- 13 July 2023: Vocations and the Environment  
This Synod was held at St Helen's in Stapleford and included the swearing in of some of our churchwardens who were unable to attend the Visitation service in Southwell.  
We were joined by Craig Hunt, the Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations Advisor. He shared about the training pathways available in the Diocese and highlighted the resources available on the Learning Hub.  
Robert Cleave, the Diocesan Environmental Officer, spoke to Synod about the diocesan commitment to become net carbon zero by 2030 and the various ways it is doing this. He also encouraged churches to work towards eco church status.
- 15 November 2023: AGM and Renew and Refresh  
The meeting took place at St Martin's in Sherwood.  
Tim Pullen, our area dean, updated Synod on the renewed diocesan vision that had been shared at the Diocesan conference.  
Greg Cowley, the Deanery Treasurer, shared about the change in allocation of parish share in 2024 and the review taking place around allocation from 2025 onwards.  
This meeting was also our AGM.

Our Deanery Prayer meetings have also continued on the first Tuesday of each at Christ Church, Cinderhill.

This year we have had a number of clergy move within the Deanery and Diocese. Karen Hanford, previously at Stapleford, was licensed as Priest-in-Charge at Awsworth, Cossall and Trowell, Emmie Walford, curate in Woven, was licensed as Mission Associate Aspley St Margaret with Christ Church, Cinderhill and Anna Clarke, curate in Woven, was licensed as Pioneer Minister for Students and Young Adults at Trinity Church, Nottingham.

Peter Shaw moved from St John's Bilborough to be Team Rector at Emmanuel with St Paul Plymouth in the Diocese of Exeter.

Sadly, Bridget Baguley Vicar of Sherwood St Martin, lost her brave fight against cancer.

We would like to thank you all for your generous and faithful giving during 2023. We may not have achieved payment of the full 100% of our parish share allocation but we did manage to pay 85% a real achievement in such challenging times.

**Rev'd Canon Tim Pullen**  
Area Dean

**John Cartwright**  
Lay Chair

## Worship and Discipleship committee

We have maintained in person and online Sunday worship throughout 2023 this being two Sunday services weekly, plus monthly Unplugged (a contemporary worship evening). The 8.30am said Eucharist service remains consistent in form; the 10.30am service pattern has settled into pattern of more contemporary worship for the first and second Sundays, an All-Age Café service on the third week and a more traditional service (music and liturgy) for the fourth Sunday. Any Fifth Sunday is a service of the word at 10.30am.

This year we explored themes of lament and Hope through our lent course, and Generosity, Deeper Discipleship as themes for Sermon Series.

During the year we have maintained effective teams for sound and visuals, music, Bible readings, intercessions, preaching and leading. Sunday attendance is slowly creeping back up, averaging 68-70 across both services.

Communion is not yet back to pre-covid, we infuse bread with wine and offer uninfused bread and the chalice. People still do not feel confident about taking communion as we would have done pre-covid. We are discussing how to move this forward.

Discipleship happens in a number of settings: life groups, chaplaincy, Nourish, Unplugged, Alpha and Start courses, as well as the Lent course, and ad hoc conversations.

**Sue Pendenque**

## **Prayer Ministry**

Prayer ministry is a very important part of St. Martin's Church and it has been an honour to pray and know that God has helped and comforted many with his love and healing. The aim is to provide a ministry of prayer for individuals, which is approved and overseen by the church. This is additional to the personal prayer for one another within the fellowship. A new team of about 10 people has been formed and we have held a training session. There are normally two members of the team ready to pray after the 10.30 service each Sunday. The prayer time is confidential, though if anything arises which gives rise to safeguarding concerns, then this would have to be passed on to those responsible for safeguarding. The team is led by Glenys and John Hepworth and Helena Shipston.

**John & Glenys Hepworth and Helena Shipston**

## **Lunchtime Prayer**

Church members continue to meet for one hour weekly on a Wednesday morning at 11.30 a.m. Over the winter months it was decided to meet at Chrissie Morris' home where it is warmer and we share lunch. We bring our concerns before God and pray for our Church family, our neighbours, neighbourhood, country and the world. Anyone with a prayer request can contact us, or if anyone wishes to join us, they would be most welcome.

Matthew 18 vs 20

"For where two or three gather in my name there am I with them."

**Judith Milbourn**

## **Community and Justice Committee**

Saint Martin's engages with community and justice issues both locally and globally in a variety of ways and this is reflected in our worship, prayers, giving and practical action. Our involvement during 2023 included the following:

### **Charity Giving**

St Martin's continues to give 10% of its income to charity, shared between 4 "major" charities usually nominated on a 4-year cycle, and up to 4 minor charities. The major charities for 2023 were as follows: Emmanuel House receiving £1000, and Refugee Roots, Change4Change and Children in Distress each receiving £1250. The "minor" charities were Sharewear, Hope into Action, Bags of Blessing and Arimathea Trust sharing gifts totalling £1250.

### **Christian Aid**

St Martin's hosted a Christian Aid fund raising afternoon in September including tea and cake, musical interludes, and a "mini market" with stalls. This social event was enjoyed by the community and raised over £1000 for Christian Aid.

### **Environment/ Climate change**

A small "eco church" group has been meeting since June 2023 involving members of our congregation and a neighbour from Trevoze Gardens. The group has reviewed St Martin's relationship with our environment using A Rocha's eco church survey as a starting point. Three focus areas were agreed: Church Building and land (especially energy and carbon emissions); Waste and Recycling; and Culture, Lifestyle and Engagement. Activity has included: liaising with the Fabric and Finance Committee regarding actions to optimise our energy use and potential opportunities for grant funding (e.g. for improved cycle parking); reviewing bins and processes to support recycling; and engagement through church noticeboard and notices.

### **Amnesty International**

members of the congregation signed around 50 physical "solidarity" cards to prisoners/ activists for justice as part of Amnesty International's annual "Write for Rights" campaign during Advent 2023. Links were provided to online materials in newsnotes.



### **Sherwood Sponsors Refugees**

The Syrian family supported by this group has now settled well in our neighbourhood. There are no current plans to sponsor another family.

### **Food Bank**

St Martin's members continue to make donations which are much appreciated. These are usually taken to the Daybrook Trussell Trust Foodbank.

### **Nourish and Chaplaincy**

are also an important and valued part of St Martin's work with the community (see separate reports).

**Liz Cordle**

## **PCC committee for children and young people (PCC CYP)**

### **PCC committee for children and young people (PCC CYP)**

This group takes a strategic overview of our ministry with children and young people at St Martin's. This year we agreed the following priorities:

#### **Engaging with the community**

We continue to do well in engaging with preschool children and their families through Jolly Tots and Bumps to Babies, with around 70 children attending with their carers each week. A new initiative, "Toast club" has been offered during school holidays and has been a growing success. This was developed and coordinated by a member of the congregation. Also well attended and received were parties (Harv-fest and glow party), a cafe style improvised nativity, the Carol Service and Christingle'.

Good news this year is that we have renewed links with Seely School. This has included leading assemblies and hosting 300 Seely pupils at St Martin's for "Experience Christmas".

#### **Nurturing next steps**

Some of those attending our community groups have made steps in faith, bringing children for baptism and attending Sunday worship. After - group sessions offered to Jolly Tots participants on exploring faith were not taken up. However, there are informal conversations happening, which we pray will sow seeds for people to want to find out more about Jesus.

#### **Growing discipleship**

Sunday children's church and youth church are thriving. This has been enhanced by holiday clubs (with St Nic's) and youth weekends away at a Christian residential centre. Good news this year is that our bid for funding from the diocese to develop our youth work has met with success. Freddie Kofi was appointed as Youth Minister at the end of the Year.

**Lesley Cohen**

## **The Fabric and Ornaments of the church**

The fabric and ornaments of the church continue to be in good order. A number of pieces of work have been completed, co-ordinated by Russell Kitson, including

- Repair of nearly 30 chairs with fraying fabric

- Replacement of part of the chancel carpet

- Electrical safety tests

- On-going maintenance of the building

Projects for 2024 being considered include

- Replacement of the building lighting

- A thorough clean and polish of our flooring

- Repair of more chairs

- Finding "new homes" for unused items accumulated over the lifetime of our church!

**Chris Morris and Sue Estella**

## **Younger**

### **Children's and Youth Ministry**

The children and youth ministry at St Martin's is going from strength to strength, supporting the faith development of our existing families and exploring ways to reach the wider community of Sherwood. Our three goals for this area of ministry are growing discipleship, engaging with the community, and nurturing next steps.

## Growing discipleship

The children and youth ministry has continued to grow from last year. We have maintained our core group of children and young people and increased greatly in our number of youth. Our crèche groups and primary group runs concurrently with the 10.30 service. Our youth group is year 6 and above and it runs on a Sunday evening. We successfully applied to the diocese for funding for a youth minister to carry on the growth and the development of the youth group. The youth minister Freddie Kofi starts in the beginning of January 2024. We have a committed children's ministry and youth team, who have lead the group with great passion and care.

Following the success of our trip to Oakes, we ran an Oakes reunion with St Mark's for those children and young people who attended Oakes the previous November. The activities organised for this were photos of the previous trip, human bingo, food, Lego challenges, games, picture card, worship and Twister.

We were excited to return the Oakes Christian Centre in November 2023 for a weekend of outdoor fun and fantastic Gospel teaching. We managed to fit in *mudder* (muddy assault course) woodland high ropes, cars, crafts, chess, bouncy castle, face painting, archery, wide games, a fire alarm, worship, and teaching. We took children and young people aged 9-15 from St Martin's and a few other local churches as well as some of their school friends. The weekend was a blessing to us all as we saw friendship's grow and young people grasping a bit more of how great God's love is for them, and how they can respond to that. It was great to see so many come out of their comfort zone. Many were impacted by the faith talks, with one of the children saying what they learnt was "I learnt that God loves you no matter what and that he wants to be your friend. The Oakes leadership team encourages us with their testimonies, their joy and their care for everyone. We had loads of fun, energy, laughter and friendship. We are so thankful to everyone who supported this venture in both prayer and finances. We are already looking forward to the Oakes weekend 2024.

We also supported faith development through our collaboration with St Nic's church again, for a continuation of the Powerlab holiday club, which was run for three afternoons in the Easter holidays. The holiday club followed the same format as the last one with the faith message being delivered through science, story, cooking, physical activity, craft, film, and song. We were able to take a few members in teams to join with the St Nic's holiday club team. Several of our youth also joined with the youth team, had fun and developed their leadership skills and are looking forward to being part of the youth team again this year. We took children from our core group, fringe families and siblings of those attending our toddler and baby groups. Those children who participated in the Powerlab really enjoyed the experience and it was significant for their faith journey

## Engaging with the community

We continue to run our successful toddler group on Tuesday mornings, *Jolly Tots*. The toddler group is seen as an opportunity to reach out to our community with Jesus' love. We have continued to build on its success. A big thank you to our wonderful, dedicated team for making this group possible. We are building strong community relationships, with attendance at the group remaining at 40-60 children with their parents and carers. The toddler group provides an opportunity for children to play, have a snack, listen to a story, make a craft and have a singing time, and parents/carers are able to have a space to have refreshments, spend some time with their children and get to know other parents.

Research by the Scripture union shows that 95% of under 18's in the UK, are not in church, the task of reaching them with Jesus' love is immense, but it is also an exciting opportunity to reach our community with Jesus' love. The Talking Toddlers report released in May 2020 shows that 74% of parent of all parents with children under the age of five have attended a church-run activity in the past year presenting a huge missional opportunity for the church.

We have also continued to support parents with babies through our *Bumps to Babies* group, which is aimed at 0-1 year olds, their parents and pregnant mums. This group runs on a Wednesday morning 10-11.30. Bumps to Babies continues to support local mums to adapt to their role as parents, creating a calm, safe space where mums can meet other mums and develop a community. This group meets a different need from our more hectic toddler group. We have had a number of Baptisms through the year.

We have started "Toast club" through the school holidays, initiated by Charlotte and Hope. This has been popular and helps to support families with food during school holidays and provide community. This has also led to the development of community events such as *Harv-Fest* and glow parties, which were well attended. These were fun events which allowed us to build relationships with the wider Sherwood community and get to know some families in our area.

We have also had the opportunity to renew links with Seely Primary School and had a wonderful time with our "Experience Christmas" We transformed the church to biblical times and dressed up to take 300 children through the story of Christmas. The event started with an introductory Lego video of the Christmas story after which the children divided up into groups to explore the storytelling stations. There were five story stations starting with the preparation which talked about Advent. The announcement, told the story of Mary, the promises told them about the prophecies that led to the coming of Jesus, the Journey, told the story of the Mary and Joseph's journey, the message talked about the shepherds' experience. They also enjoyed a craft and refreshment station. The focus of the Experience Christmas was to talk about Jesus as a gift to us. The children, parents and teachers enjoyed the experience and we are looking forward to storytelling and Experience Easter events in this coming year.

Other events which we ran over the Christmas period, were a fun filled Café Style Nativity, our Carol Concert with highlights including a ballet performance by one of our young people Eliana, and a interactive Christingle which involved games, making their own Christingle, an explanation of the meaning behind Christingle and singing away in a manger and Silent night. These were well attended and helped us to focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

### **Nurturing next steps**

Within the children's ministry and youth group we have provided lots of opportunity for faith development through Sunday groups, holiday club, Oakes and opportunities to use their gifts in the wider church. With our interactions with the community we are exploring ways to support members of these groups to make their next steps in faith. A number of the group members already have a faith and we have had informal conversations about this in group. We have found that a number of the families have brought their children for Baptism and have attended Sunday worship, but moving forward into the next year, we would like to find more stepping stones for faith for the children, youth and families we have relationships with within the community. The team is open to talking to the community about faith when the topic arises and are happy to pray with group members on request.

**Gill James**

## **Wider**

### **Chaplaincy**

We have continued to head out in twos onto Mansfield Road; popping into the businesses, saying "hi", asking how people are and offering to pray - although not as often as we would have liked. Even so, we have been warmly welcomed. We are continuing to establish good relationships. We regularly hear about genuine concerns from the people we talk to and it is an honour to be asked to pray for them.

Monday's Nourish café is flourishing, with regular numbers of around 25-30 people enjoying friendships, a warm space and a 'cuppa'. Regulars are now seeing this as a community that they can contribute to – one man continues to do gardening for us and provide beautiful planters with flowers, a regular now always arrives early to set out the tables, others provide biscuits, bring information that's helpful to our guests and so on and two women in particular have become such welcomers – their table is always full and there is mutual support, laughter and care when there are tears. New members of the Chaplaincy team have been added and are a vital part of the Nourish Café team. Many conversations about faith now take place organically during the café and prayer is asked for and received.

**Sue Pendenque**

### **Communication**

#### **Website Team During 2023**

The website has been maintained without significant changes during 2023. Regular updates to information on the website are ably handled by Judith in the church office, with other team members making changes if required. We are still unable to embed recordings of our services on the website. Instead, there are clickable links that redirect to the videos on Facebook. 2024 may be the time for another full review of the website content.

#### **Tech Team During 2023**

The Tech Team provided projection (to church monitor screens) and live streaming video (to Facebook) for the main service each Sunday and for the occasional services, weddings and funerals. Live streaming via Zoom was also provided when requested.

Our new roll-top operators' desk has proved itself fit for purpose. In January 2023, the roll-top was replaced under warranty. However, it is again showing signs of damage. The shorter time required for setting up for a service leaves more time pre-service for last minute checks with musicians, readers and leaders. Operators also have time to adjust and test pre-set scenes on the camera.

The trial of keeping the projection software database and files on Cloud storage has worked well. It allows those who create the files which are needed to project the services to do so remotely from their own computers without having to come into the church.

Towards the end of the year, we gained another operator for the Tech Team. This means in a team of six there are now three who can load services to the system and five who can operate the system for services. More training will follow in 2024.

**Chris Hellen**

### **Nourish**

#### **Nourish Meals**

Nourish has now been running since November 2020. Last year we stopped providing 45 meals for the flats as they decided that there was no longer a huge need, now 9 meals are collected and distributed to those still in need. We now give out an average of 70 meals a week, down from a maximum of 120. Some of the

people coming for meals are not in great need, others it is so needed. Many are lonely and benefit from the friendships made. Nourish Café is a wonderful time for many and it is great to see people thriving there. We are still providing a hot meal, homemade cake and a piece of fruit per person every week. The menu has been cut down to two different meals, Sausage and Mash and Mince Stew, Mash and Mixed Veg, Simple but enjoyable wholesome meals. Preparation, cooking and serving has been so much easier. Everything is done by volunteers, of course, although we have fewer available in the afternoon, which makes cleaning and tidying harder. Shopping and cooking is shared between more volunteers. People keep funding Nourish in a variety of ways and we are thankful for this and the generous provision of the St Martin's building and resources. We continue into 2024 with a heart to love and serve our community, always praying that many will find joy in a relationship with God and peace in a world full of trouble for some.

### **Nourish Café**

Nourish was set up on 20th November 2020 during the Covid Pandemic lockdown.

In the early summer of 2021 we decided to provide hot drinks and biscuits outside in front of the Church for people coming to pick up the hot meals. As winter approached we wanted to serve refreshments inside the Church but we were concerned that the people would not "come in church"

We had nothing to lose and turned the back of the main Church into a 'Cafe style' with tables and comfortable chairs. The rest is history.

Now we have a very successful cafe. Anyone and everyone is welcome at Nourish Café.

Approx 12-15 core people stay until we close at 4pm but we can serve refreshments up to 20 + on any Monday 2pm - 4pm. There are attenders who actually look after one another in their own special way. They all say they love coming and it's a special part of their week and that it is a welcoming, safe, warm place to come to.

Nourish Café continues to flourish and we now are recommended by different organizations / agencies as a warm and welcoming environment. Also, some have expressed an interest in looking at faith and "who is Jesus". So in February 2024 (in line with developments within nurturing and disciplining) we are starting the Start Course.

The Lord is at work through Nourish in many ways and it's a privilege and joy to be part of it.

I am excited to know what the Lord will do next and where Nourish Café will develop from here.

**Chrissie Morris & Helena Shipston**

### **Pastoral Outreach**

The Pastoral Outreach is, at present, a small team of three people who visit members of our church who are no longer able to come to church on a regular basis. This can be for reasons of ill health, long or short term, or simply because getting to church has become too difficult for them. Sometimes we make visits to church members whom we and the vicar agree are lonely and in need of more connection with St. Martins.

The visits are predominantly for friendship, prayer and occasionally for a short communion service.

We believe that it is important for all members of our congregation to feel connected to and included by their church.

Presently, we visit 5 people but will always welcome being contacted by family or friends where a need arises. Visits take place approximately every four to six weeks. We also try to visit or make contact with people in hospital or who are recuperating after an operation.

We would welcome more volunteers to our team. You may not be asked to make visits straight away but it is useful to know that there are people available to spread the load when and if a need becomes evident.

**Penny Breakwell**

### **Services at Abbeyfield**

A small team of 4 people continue to enjoy sharing Morning Prayer with residents at Sandwood residential home on a monthly basis. As we meet in the day room, residents who attend have chosen to come. They are Christians who cannot access services at St Martin's without support. Our worship includes singing, prayer and reading and reflecting on God's word.

We also keep in touch with the bungalows and Larch House through Diane, the Support Worker, who lets us know of any pastoral concerns. A big group from St Martin's led a carol service at Larch House which was much appreciated. Residents fully joined in the singing.

Thanks to Sue White, Beryl Clough and Brenda Charles for faithfully leading Sandwood services and to Glenys (who played the keyboard) and all singers for the carol service. Thanks too to Emma (Activities Coordinator at Sandwood) and to Diane who make us really welcome in the Abbeyfield complex.

**Lesley Cohen**

### **Buildings, and hiring out of church premises**

Presently the church has regular weekday external bookings for two choirs and an orchestra. We have continued to offer a discounted supplementary use of the main church hall where previously some groups had used the chapel. There were several evening concerts during 2023, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Nottm Brownies continued to meet each Friday night, and the Church of Pentecost UK services on Sunday afternoons continued to be well attended by their congregation.

**Judith Walker**

## **Knit & Natter**

The knitting group continues to meet weekly on Monday afternoon between 2pm & 4pm. Our numbers fluctuate from week to week due to other commitments like holidays and childcare. Our members produce good quality items for local & national charities as well as working on personal projects.

During the last twelve months we have donated the following items ;

Lap blankets & twiddle muffs for Hayward House

Chocolate orange covers & chicks for Maggie's Christmas & Easter Fairs

Jumpers, hats & scarves for Share wear

Sheep for our church treasure hunt

Baby jackets for Prem babies at City Hospital

Various items for sale at the Christian Aid fundraiser

A tea cosy for the church coffee bar

I am very thankful for the generosity of our group in giving time & expertise for the benefit of the local community & beyond. New members are always welcome

**Christine Baldwin**

## **Cursillo**

We at Southwell and Nottingham Anglican Cursillo have had the privilege of using St Martin's Church and its facilities for our Cursillo meetings, services, and training over the last few years.

Cursillo is an International -

*'movement of the Church providing a method by which Christians are empowered to grow through prayer, study and action and enabled to share God's love with everyone.'*

We are a family of Christians who love and support one another to grow deeper in our faith and search out our personal mission given by God. We have yearly spiritual pilgrim weekends, where lay people within Cursillo organise and lead pilgrims through a journey to experience the love of Jesus and be empowered in their faith.

Our next pilgrimage is 24-26 May 2024 @ Launde Abbey. We also have open meetings for those searching, as well as past pilgrims, on a regular basis. The next meeting in St Martin's church will be on 4th May 2024 beginning at 2pm until 4pm.

**Helena Shipston**

## **Deeper**

### **Thy Kingdom Come**

During the 10 days of prayer leading up to Pentecost members of St Martin's enjoyed taking part in various ways. These included an evening of listening prayer at church, the very moving Bow Down event in the Market Square, and a united gathering for worship and prayer at the Vineyard Church. Thanks also go to Liz Cordle for producing our local prayer walk guide, taking in different corners of our Parish where God is at work in nature, businesses and social activities. We look forward to getting involved again in 2024.

**Sue Estella**

### **St. Martin's Men's Group**

We are pleased to report that the Men's Group is up and running again (from November 2023). There are currently 13 of us involved and who belong to our WhatsApp group. We meet every other month on a weekday evening at a local venue, or at St. Martin's on a Saturday morning, to share a meal and plan events linked to our faith and shared interests.

So far, we have visited a Christmas Tree Festival in December, and we are planning a themed county walk for after Easter. Going forward, we are organising a programme of events throughout the year that will incorporate visits to places of religious, historic, or cultural importance, guest speakers at St. Martin's and community events. One area we are keen to develop in the future is how the Men's Group can reach out into the local community as part of the church's mission to "make a difference".

**Glenn Hickson**

### **Unplugged**

We continued to meet together most months on the fourth Sunday evening at 6pm to have an extended time of worship, pray and share together in a relaxed atmosphere where the gifts of the spirit are encouraged.

We are thrilled that

we have both continued to worship our Lord and to encourage and bless each other, learning to recognize what Father God has been doing in each of our lives.

**Chrissie Morris**

### **Facebook Morning Prayer**

Almost 4 years on from the pandemic and we are still 'meeting daily at 9.15' on Facebook for Morning Prayer. We have a team of 6 Facebook Morning Prayer Leaders and a regular 'attendance' of between 6 and 12 people depending on the day of the week. Numbers are down on last year as parents are busier and generally not joining us, however this continues to be a ministry appreciated by those who attend. This year Helena Shipston took over the admin side, organizing the rota and our readings. Thank you Helena and the whole team.

**Sue Pendenque**

## **Contemplative Prayer**

During the Summer of 2023 at St. Martin's Glenn Hickson, one of our Licenced Lay Ministers, led a short series of contemplative prayer sessions. These were held on Sunday afternoons in the side chapel with a small group of regular attenders looking for a quieter, more meditative approach to worship. Together we explored the office of Celtic Daily Prayer, "Centering" Prayer, Examen Prayer and Lectio Divina. We enjoyed being able to sit in quiet stillness, simply resting in God's presence, away from the "busy-ness" of everyday life.

**Glenn Hickson**

## **Burlington Life Group**

We continue to meet at Chris and Chrissie's on Wednesdays, just doing life together, sharing, worshipping, praying, bible study, eating, drinking, laughing and crying. We are family! Some have had many challenges this past year and, I hope, have felt the love and support that being in a life group can give. 10 of us call this "our" group – not all can attend every time we meet together, so there is room for more who want to come.

**Chrissie and Chris Morris**

## **Seekers Life Group**

Throughout the year we have met on a fairly regular basis, albeit it has been more difficult with Sue and Catherine both involved in house moves.

Now that they are both more or less settled we are planning a new series of fortnightly daytime meetings and seeking inspiration for study and discussion topics.

In the lead up to Christmas we looked in detail at The Lord's Prayer and we have encouraged group members to bring and present poems or readings that gave special meaning for them.

Above all we are thankful for the opportunities afforded to grow fellowship and offer support to each other.

**Sue White & Catherine Lowe**

## **Acorn Life group**

We meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month at the home of Brenda Charles. Over the last few months we have been watching The Chosen series, which we have enjoyed and which has shone a very realistic light into the life of Jesus and his disciples. In the summer we shared a meal in the garden with the Burlington Group. We support one another in love, friendship and prayer.

**Russell and Janet Kitson**

## **Sanctuary Life Group**

We meet every other Wednesday at 5pm – 6.30pm in the side chapel. We have a mix of personal support and prayer, friendship and fellowship and study/discussion to help us in our growth as disciples. We draw on materials (Bible study; books or videos) suggested by our members or St Martin's as a whole. Last year this included a sermon collection by John Bell of the Iona Community ("States of bliss and yearning") and reflections on "The art of Advent" by Jane Williams. We are very thankful to Sue Bellamy who faithfully provides refreshments on our arrival. We all enjoy sharing food and fun. We had a lovely summer visit to Newstead Abbey.

**Lesley Cohen**

## **Orchard Life Group**

The Orchard Life Group continues to meet on the first and third Tuesday evening of each month. Our aim is to grow together as disciples and support one another through our Christian fellowship.

We meet in one another's homes where we enjoy worshipping God, reflective study, and praying together. We take turns in hosting and leading sessions and over the past year we have explored a wide range of themes including contemplative worship, the Book of Proverbs, the Psalms, Celtic Daily Prayer. and Christianity expressed through war poetry.

During Lent each year, we suspend our regular meetings as we gather in Church weekly from Ash Wednesday to Easter. We also break up for the summer at the end of July and resume in early September.

This year, the Orchard Life Group has reduced from 10 to 8 members currently, so we have the capacity to welcome others who would like to join us.

**Glenn Hickson and Helena Shipston**