

THE OCTAGON PARISH

Westbourne Deanery

Diocese of Chichester

Comprising the Parish Churches:

**St Mary, Compton;
St Peter, East Marden;
Christchurch, Forestside
St Peter, Racton
St Mary, Stoughton**

the Chapels of Ease of:

**St Mary, North Marden
St Michael, Up Marden**

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT of the PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

For the year ended 31st December 2024

INCUMBENT – from 29th January 2024

The Revd Christopher Hancock
The Vicarage, Compton, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 9HD

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Mr Charles Lawton

BANK

NatWest Bank

WEBSITE

<http://www.theoctagonparish.org.uk>

Charity Registration No. 1156866

The Octagon Parish – Open for All

*“Showing God’s love and caring for our community and churches in
the beautiful South Downs National Park”*

Administrative Information

The Parish is a Charity Registered with the Charity Commission under the name of **The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of the Octagon**, with the Registered Charity Number of 1156866.

During the year 2024 the following served as members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC):
(year of election/re-election)

Incumbent: Reverend Christopher M.J. Hancock

Churchwardens:

- Mrs Carol Stamper (2022)
- Mrs Sarah Lawton (2018)

Treasurer: Mr Edward Cottrell (2017)

Deanery Synod Reps:

- Mr Edward Cottrell (2024)
- Mrs Jennie Dolman (2024)
- Mrs Annabelle Hancock (May 2023)
- Dr Richard Hancock (May 2023)

Elected members:

- Mrs Sally Ablewhite (2020)
- Mrs Annie Barnes (2024)
- Mr Richard Barnes (2022)
- Mr Tom Maier (2019)
- Mrs Audrey Hamilton (2024)

Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Fiona Mullett (2022)

Data Protection and Compliance Officer: Mrs Carol Stamper

Ex-officio members:

Secretary: Ms Rachel Foister (until August 2024) thereafter Mrs. Jennie Dolman

Electoral Roll Officer: Ms Rachel Foister (until August 2024) thereafter Mr Peter Taylor

Standing Committee: Rector, Churchwardens, Treasurer

**Lay readers are ex officio members unless requesting not to be on the PCC*

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STRUCTURE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

PCC Membership

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of the Octagon (hereafter referred to as “the PCC”) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Power’s Measure. The PCC is a registered charity – Reg. No. 1156866. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. For 2024, the membership of the PCC of the Octagon Parish is detailed on page 1.

Parish Local Committees

Each of the historic Parishes of the Octagon Parish is administered by a Parish Local Committee (PLC) representing members of its regular congregation. Each PLC is represented on the Octagon PCC by one of their members or by a Churchwarden.

Standing Committee

The Standing Committee comprised the Rector, the two Parish Churchwardens: Mrs Sarah Lawton and Mrs Carol Stamper and the Treasurer of the Octagon Parish Mr Edward Cottrell.

Members of Parish Local Committees (PLCs) in 2024

Compton and Up Marden	East and North Marden	Forestside	Stoughton	Racton
Sally Ablewhite*	Edward Cottrell *	Jennie Dolman *	Steve Barrett	Annie Barnes*
Barlie Adams	Annie Judd	Sarah Hutchinson	Rosy Bell	Richard Barnes*
Fiona Baker	John Robinson	David Parker	Didi Burden	Anna Blencowe
Annabel Keville	Valerie Robinson		Pamela Harry	Peter Blencowe
Amanda Jackson	Penny Walder		Di Hughes	Philip Cooper
Tom Maier *			Sarah Lawton *	Ros Gordon-Cumming
Steph Newell			Caroline Taylor	Audrey Hamilton *
Robert Sawers			Ros Velton	Elizabeth Stanley
Valerie Seddon			Jane Venables	

*Elected member of PCC

Octagon Voluntary Roles in 2024

Octagon Bell Ringing

Tim Wright and Joanna Woodcock

Octagon Music Licensing

Richard Barnes

Octagon Magazine Editor

Caroline Taylor

Octagon Choir Lead

Martin Phillips

Octagon Magazine Advertising

Roy Fulker till October

Marilyn Clark from November

Ministry Team

Reverend Christopher M.J. Hancock MA FCA (instituted 29th January, 2024)

Mr Edward Mynors – Octagon Lay Reader (retired September 2024)

Mr David Parker – Authorised Lay Minister (from January 2022)

Sidespersons for Local churches 2024

Compton	East Marden	North Marden	Forestside	Racton	Stoughton	Up Marden
Barlie Adams	Penny Walder	Carol Stamper	Jennie Dolman	Annie Barnes	Rosy Bell	Michael Ablewhite
Fiona Baker	Annie Judd		Roy Fulker	Audrey Hamilton	Barney Gowar	Sally Ablewhite
Amanda Jackson			Linda Fulker	Gill King- Smith	Fiona Gowar	Valerie Seddon
Annabel Keville			Paul Holmes		Pam Harry	
Tom Maier			Nonie Holmes		Di Hughes	
Jessica Maier			Helen Honeyman		Charles Lawton	
Thomas Newell			Sarah Hutchinson		Sarah Lawton	
Steph Newell			David Parker		Chris Veltom	
Robert Sawers					Ros Veltom	

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2024

Our Aims and Purposes as a Charity

The Octagon Parochial Church Council has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent (the Rector), in the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The Parish was in vacancy until the institution of Revd Christopher Hancock as Rector on 29th January 2024. During the interregnum leadership of the Parish was provided by the two Churchwardens Sarah Lawton and Carol Stamper as Sequestrators with the support of Archdeacon Luke Irving-Capel and the Rural Dean, Mother Jessica Reid.

The PCC is specifically responsible for the maintenance of the five historic Parish churches of St Mary Compton, St Mary Stoughton, St Peter Racton, St Peter East Marden, Christ Church Forestside together with two chapels of ease St Mary North Marden and St Michael Up Marden. These came together to form the Octagon Parish in 2012. Responsibility for the upkeep of the Chapel of St Paul at Stansted Park has been transferred to the Stansted Park Foundation though the Parish remains responsible for the services which take place there. The PCC is also responsible for supporting the Rector in:

- The promotion of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England;
- Promoting in the Parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, social, evangelistic and ecumenical;
- Enabling our churches to be accessible to all regardless of their age, colour, sexual orientation, physical ability or economic status.
- Pastoral support and care for people in the Parish, from the eldest to the youngest;
- Providing financial support to those in need.

What We Planned to do In Order to Achieve our Charitable Objectives

When planning our activities for the year, the PCC considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on 'charities for the advancement of religion'.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, fully recognizing its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

For 2024 we discussed and planned the following objectives and activities to fulfil our aim. These included:

- Institution and onboarding of a new Rector
- Enabling as many people as possible to worship in our churches and to become part of our Parish community
- Teaching, baptising and nurturing new and existing believers
- Putting faith into action through community engagement
- Offering a range of services with participation opportunities for worship in prayer and scripture, music and sacrament

- Working to make our churches more welcoming and accessible to the people that live in the Parish and to visitors
- Reaching out to the community through provision of village events, festival services, support of the Octagon Choir, the Stoughton Bell Ringers, the Octagon Magazine, the Octagon Parish Website, the weekly bulletin and the Facebook Group
- Maintaining the fabric of the church buildings as historic centres and focuses of community life in our villages
- Ensuring the provision of pastoral care to people living in the Parish
- Providing assistance to the poor and needy of the Parish.

What We Achieved and How We Affected Beneficiaries' Lives

Revd Christopher Hancock was instituted as Rector of the Parish and presented with cure of its souls by Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner on 29th January 2024. His focus in the first year has been to get to know the Parish - the needs and aspirations of its people, communities, and churches,

From an administrative perspective, during the year we lost the services of our longstanding Parish Administrator and PCC Secretary, Rachel Foister, when she moved to Cornwall. Her many roles have been distributed through the leadership team of the Rector, Churchwardens and Treasurer with the key function of advertising and communications being taken on by Michelle Wooding and the role of secretary being taken on by Jennie Dolman.

This team operated alongside committed local teams in our seven churches to ensure that we were able to keep running for our beneficiaries. Indeed, the Parish is dependent on over 70 people who give their time to support the work of our Parish.

Provision and Attendance at Worship

Weekly worship is focussed on Holy Communion which is celebrated every Sunday rotating through the five historic parishes on a monthly cycle with evensong held at Racton unless there are five Sundays in the month. Use is also made of the smaller churches: evensong is celebrated once a month during the summer months at Up Marden; special services are held at North Marden on Good Friday, on Ascension Day and on Sea Sunday and midday prayer is said once a month at St Paul's Chapel, Stansted Park. In addition, we look to celebrate each church by keeping its Patronal Festival and by holding additional services in Holy Week and Christmas. We resumed our Tuesday morning online Morning Prayer services during Lent and Advent and in 2025 have commenced a mid-week communion once a month at noon in Compton.

To cater for children and families, a successful and growing family service is held once a month at Compton overseen and co-led by our Authorised Lay Minister, David Parker, and Mrs. Fiona Mullett. They make a very effective team and attendance has risen to over 40 each month.

We continue to support Compton and Up Marden Church of England school, by providing opportunities for prayer and worship through assemblies in the School each week and by hosting end of term services in church.

We are grateful for our band of Octagon organists who accompany our worship under the leadership of Richard Barnes. His fellow organist, Martin Phillips, directs the Octagon Choir which continues to grow and to enhance the worship at festivals and other important services. The bell ringing group have been very active not only in Stoughton but in visiting other churches and hosting visiting bell ringing groups. The choir and the bell ringing group attract several people who are not regular church goers.

In total we held 154 services in 2024 (111 in 2023) with an aggregate attendance of 5,158 people.

There was a small but welcome 5% increase in average weekly church attendance with an encouraging 10.9% increase in attendance at Easter and 13.6% increase in attendance at Christmas. We saw a remarkable 410 people over Christmas in a Parish of just 1,267 souls.

Recent Attendance Across the Octagon:

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Easter	-	120	154	178	213
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day	20	285	292	316	410
Usual Sunday	-	-	18	25	28

(Data taken from CofE Statistics for Mission)

After a decline over the last 5 years, the renewal of the roll for the 2024 APCM has seen a material increase. At the 2023 APCM the electoral roll had 119 members. Since then, two parishioners have died, seven have moved from the parish and one had been ordained (Maria Sadler is now a priest serving her curacy in Bosham and licensed clergy not allowed be members of the electoral roll). The net brought forward electoral roll therefore stood at 109 but 65 new members have joined and the roll now stands at 174, an increase of 46%.

The evolution of the numbers on electoral roll in recent years has been as follows:

2019	139
2020	138
2021	134
2022	127
2023	125
2024	119
Current	174

In 2024 our long-serving LLM, Edward Mynors, and much-loved retired priest, Revd Andrew Stamp, both decided not to renew their licences and so retired from ministry. We are very grateful to them for their long service to the parish and, in particular, for their support during the recent interregnum.

We are excited that two parishioners, Michelle Wooding and Ian Coleshill have started their training as Authorised Lay Ministers. When authorised in summer 2025 they will join our existing ALM, David Parker in leading worship, especially at family services.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Social

In a parish where there are limited venues and social services, the church people and buildings provide an important focus for community and care.

Our extremely successful Parish magazine, *The Octagon*, has a circulation of approximately 280 and provides an important service to our dispersed rural community. Caroline Taylor and Malcolm Lamb jointly edit the magazine and Marilyn Clark looks after advertising revenue. We are very grateful to all of them and to those who generously give their time to distributing the magazine each month. We held a tea party to show our appreciation of them in the summer.

During the year Michelle Wooding took on the Sisyphean task of producing the weekly Octagon Bulletin. Distributed by email to 276 people, the Bulletin provides up to date information on services and parish events. The Octagon Parish website also provides a valuable communication medium. It enables the distribution of material within the Parish, and (together with our entries on A Church Near You) provides information about the Parish to the wider world and enables those outside the Parish to contact us.

Monthly coffee mornings are held in Compton and in Forestside and our monthly pub lunch continues at the new venue of the Hare and Hounds. Such community events are an important resource in reducing rural isolation and loneliness, especially amongst the elderly in winter.

Sadly, 2024 saw the closure of two of the four public houses of the Octagon resulting in a significant reduction in informal public meeting space and a general loss of amenity to the community (not least its Rector). The Langdale Trust stepped up in Compton organising villagers' drinks on the last Friday of each month. These have subsequently moved to the re-opened Tea Rooms.

Hospitality before and after our services provides an opportunity to get to know new people attending and strengthen our relationships one with the other. Coffee and pastries are served before each family service. Coffee is served after each Octagon Eucharist with the exception of East Marden where sherry is provided. We celebrate the churches' festivals with prosecco.

Many non-liturgical events were held during the year which brought people together to enjoy fun, food and to fund raise. These included a Daffodil Day and Harvest Fair at Stoughton, Christmas Fairs in Compton and Stoughton and the usual Lent lunches which in 2024 raised over £900 in support of the Rural Refugee Network.

Evangelistic

The task of forming and nurturing parishioners in their faith is paramount if the life of the church is to be sustained into the next generation. Encouragingly, there were six baptisms in 2024. All those baptised have been followed up with a card on their birthday for three years post-baptism. Importantly, there were also six confirmations in a joyous deanery service held at Holy Trinity, Bosham and conducted by the Bishop of Horsham.

Significantly, two of the recently confirmed went on to apply for training as Authorised Lay Minsters. This is a short course provided by the Diocese to give guidance on how to lead worship and which can provide a stepping stone to future vocations.

During Lent we held a series of talks following the Diocesan theme on the New Testament.

We are exploring the idea of a homegroup to enable people to explore and expand their faith in a less formal setting.

The seven places of worship for which the PCC are responsible remained open for private prayer and exploration every day of the year. The offering of our church buildings for prayer and peace and quiet is an important part of our mission and outreach and we are grateful to all those across our villages who help to clean and maintain our churches as well as those who arrange flowers in them.

In 2024, over 905 people signed our visitor books, some were walking groups or groups interested in historic churches. Our churches may well have been visited by over 1,000 people this year. They include walkers and cyclists. These buildings are havens in this frantic world and offer a place to “be still and know that I am God”.

Pastoral

To the extent it can, the PCC looks to make provision for the pastoral care of the population of the Parish. The church has a particular role to play around the significant moments in peoples’ lives: at marriage, in childbearing, in sickness and in death. In our community, even those who are not regular attenders at services will look to the church at such times and we welcome them.

We held a well-attended All Souls Service parishioners and families of former parishioners to remember loved ones inviting especially the friends and families of those who had died recently. The PCC plan to provide more special services designed to meet particular needs.

Summary of Birth, Marriage and Funeral Services Across the Parish:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Marriage Services	9	0	9	8	3	4
Marriage Blessings	2	0	3	1	0	1
Baptisms	9	3	6	10	6	6
Burials in our Churchyards	6	2	6	5	2	2
Interments of Ashes	6	4	2	5	7	7
Funeral Services only	3	5	5	4	6	1

In 2024, the PCC looked to organise provision of pastoral care beyond the occasional offices: to make an offer for the long-term sick and those who care for them, for the bereaved and those who live alone. Carol Stamper established a pastoral team of those who offer to call on those who find themselves in such situations and a day of training has been held to offer a structured approach to visiting and listening. A series of ‘networking’ lunches has also been organised for those who find themselves alone.

A number of donations were made from the Rector’s Discretionary Fund to those in need across the Parish at Christmas and throughout the year.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Below are the Consolidated Accounts for the Octagon PCC for the year ending 31st December 2024 based on the five constituent PLC annual statements and the Octagon central account.

The statements have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis by the following:

	Treasurer	Independent Examiner
Compton and Up Marden PLC	Robert Sawers	Sarah Hutchinson
East and North Marden PLC	Christopher Tite	Edward Cottrell
Stoughton PLC	Steve Barrett	Ken Symons
Forestside PLC	Sarah Hutchinson	Robert Sawers
Racton PLC	Philip Cooper	Helen Spilsted
Octagon Central Account	Edward Cottrell	Charles Lawton

Copies of the separate annual statements are available on request.

2024 saw continued heavy expenditure on the fabric of our beautiful ancient churches. The turnover and expenditure were pushed higher than usual as the local churches got to work on the long list of quinquennial tasks augmented by the cost of architects' fees and requests for faculty permissions. St Mary's Stoughton saw expenditure on the fabric rocket from £2000 in 2023 to over £35,000 in 2024. As their reserves are limited this might have been impossible had it not been for the generosity of The Friends of St Mary's who supplied the lions' share of the costs. St Peter's Racton and St Peter's East Marden also saw unexpected expenditure. At East Marden the previous repairs performed to the Victorian chimney proved to have failed and a further expenditure of over £10,000 was required on the redundant feature for which the boiler has long since been removed. At Forestside, having managed to escape any expenditure the previous year the Parish Local Council had to spend £7,000.

At the same time inflation is still with us and costs were rising across the board not least in the Parish Mission Cost. This rose by 2% to £52,557. All this meant that the churches were very grateful to receive their investment income and, in some cases, had to withdraw capital sums to meet costs. Despite this the parish accounts show a loss for the year of only £15,872.

However, the arrival of our new Rector appears to have had a beneficial effect on activity levels including donations within the Parish. Donations, collections and planned giving were all higher in the year. The latter benefitted from an irresistible encouragement from PCC member Dr Richard Hancock for parishioners to join the Parish Giving Scheme. All churches and the central Octagon were all quickly signed up to the scheme and the uptake has been most satisfactory.

Sadly, during the year our very capable administrator has moved away but with the input of the Rector and some volunteers her duties have been taken up without incurring any costs. This has been very beneficial to the finances of the parish. It is to be hoped that this can be sustained in the future.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC provides a contribution towards the heat, light and maintenance for the Vicarage and pays its council tax.

Many thanks to everyone who has donated or helped to raise money for our small parish and thank you to all the treasurers and examiners for the individual churches and the overall parish accounts.

Edward Cottrell, Octagon Treasurer

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2024

STATEMENT OF MOVEMENT IN TOTAL FUNDS

	2024 £
Total funds at beginning of year	664,994
Deficit of income over expenditure	(15,872)
Sale of investments	(12,721)
Change in value of investments	25,124
Net movement in total funds	(3,469)
Total funds at end of year	661,525

The Accounts were approved by the Parochial Church Council on 26 March 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:



Christopher Hancock
Rector, The Octagon Parish



Edward Cottrell
Treasurer, The Octagon Parish

Statement of Income & Expenditure

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
	£	£
INCOME		
Incoming Resources from Donors		
Planned giving (Gift Aid)	32,238	30,789
Collections (inc. wall safes)	14,887	10,502
Income tax recovery	10,200	11,791
Other Voluntary Incoming Resources		
Fundraising	14,871	16,357
Donations and miscellaneous	54,928	21,478
Incoming Resources from Operating Activities		
Fees received	1,614	3,012
Investment Income	14,451	20,310
Sale of investments	12,721	-
Total receipts	155,910	114,239
EXPENDITURE		
Grants to charities	810	390
Church Activities		
Parish contribution and Deanery expenses	55,835	51,662
Church running expenses (inc. admin)	31,238	27,407
Octagon Costs (inc. Clergy expenses)	12,681	5,105
Church repairs and maintenance	71,218	28,818
Total payments	171,782	113,382
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) OF RECEIPTS OVER EXPENDITURE	(15,872)	857

STATEMENT OF TOTAL ASSETS At 31st December, 2024

Cash at bank and in hand	74,682	
Cash deposits	116,421	
Investments	470,421	
Total	661,525	664,994

THE OCTAGON PARISH
Compton and Up Marden, East & North Marden,
Forestside & Stansted, Stoughton, Racton

Independent Report by the appointed PCC Inspector of Accounts

The Consolidated Accounts for the Octagon PCC for the year ending 31st December 2024 are based on the five constituent PLC annual statements and the Octagon Central Account. Separate statements have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis as follows:

	<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Independent Inspector</i>
Compton and Up Marden PLC	Robert Sawers	Sarah Hutchinson
East and North Marden PLC	Christopher Tite	Edward Cottrell
Stoughton PLC	Steve Barrett	Ken Symons
Forestside PLC	Sarah Hutchinson	Robert Sawers
Racton PLC	Philip Cooper	Helen Spilsted
Octagon Central Account	Edward Cottrell	Charles Lawton

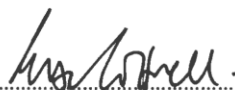
As the appointed Independent Examiner of Accounts for the PCC, I have seen all of the separate accounts and copies of the reports by the six Independent Inspectors listed above. I have also checked that the published consolidated accounts of the Parish, as prepared by the Treasurer Edward Cottrell, are an accurate statement of the facts presented to me.

A copy of the inspected Consolidated Accounts 2024 is part of the annual report of the parochial church council.

Signed 

Date 3/5/2025

Inspector of Accounts
Mr Charles Lawton
Walderton House
Walderton
Chichester PO18 9ED

Signed 

Date 3/5/2025

Octagon PCC Treasurer
Mr Edward Cottrell
Battine House
East Marden
Chichester PO18 9JE

THE OCTAGON PARISH PCC INVESTMENT POLICY

Adopted by the PCC, November 2017, reviewed May 2025

Introduction

The Parochial Church Council (PCC), as trustees of Parish funds, are responsible for investment policy. The purpose of financial investment is to yield the best financial return within the level of risk considered to be acceptable - this return can then be spent on the charity's aims. It is recommended that PCC members read what the Charity Commission says on the matter: <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/detailed-guidance/money-and-accounts/charities-and-investment-matters-a-guide-for-trustees-cc14/>

In order to act within the law, the PCC must:

- know, and act within, their charity's powers to invest
- exercise care and skill when making investment decisions
- select investments that are right for their charity
- take advice from someone experienced in investment matters unless they have good reason for not doing so
- review investments on a regular basis
- explain their investment policy in the annual report.

The PCC manages an 'unincorporated charity' and as such the trustees are personally liable for their actions. However, if trustees can demonstrate that they have considered the relevant issues, taken advice where appropriate and reached a reasonable decision, they are unlikely to be criticised for their decisions, or for adopting a particular policy.

Parish Funds and Investment Policy

Parish funds are currently managed in six separate 'pots': the five main churches (Compton, Stoughton, East Marden, Racton and Forestside) and a central fund. It is proposed, until otherwise instructed by the PCC, to continue to manage the six 'pots' separately but to set an investment policy based on the combined financial aims and needs of the Parish. As such, the investment policy will allocate to a combination of suitable investments, taking into account the particular needs of a church and the Parish's needs as a whole. All funds will be either deposited in recognised UK bank accounts or collective investment schemes managed by an authorised investment manager, approved by the trustees.

Investment Objective

The combined investment objective is to protect the capital value of the funds in real terms and to provide sufficient income for any shortfall in cash flow raised annually by the Parish. To this end, the PCC with the advice of the PLC committees will determine from time to time the appropriate investment vehicle given the financial needs of the Parish specifically:

- immediate cash needs (e.g. deposits)
- funds that can be invested for the short term (up to 2 years- e.g. fixed income)
- funds that are not required for the foreseeable future (longer term investments – e.g. balanced funds of equities, bonds and property)
- funding for unforeseen circumstances

Risk Policy

In order to meet the investment objective, some risks need to be taken. These risks will be continually assessed considering the Parish's financial needs. The PCC may also give guidance on capital, market, valuation, liquidity, regulatory, counterparty and governance risks. Above all, the investment policy is to be diversified across asset classes and sectors.

Delegation of Investment Powers

The PCC is responsible for all investment decisions and risk assessments. It may take investment opinions from their appointed Finance Committee, and it will delegate the day-to-day management of funds to the same committee. The PCC may also seek a third-party opinion. The day-to-day management will be performed by the Treasurer with the guidance of the Finance Committee and based on the investment policy and risk profile the PCC determines from time to time given the expected financing needs of the Parish.

Investment Performance

The PCC will review investment performance as a regular item on the PCC agenda.

THE OCTAGON PARISH RESERVES POLICY

Adopted by The Octagon PCC November 2017, reviewed March 2023

The Octagon Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for the upkeep and administration of seven churches (the upkeep of St Paul's, Stansted is the responsibility of the Stansted Estate) and for the pastoral care of its Parishioners. The churches are old, some dating back to Saxon times, and require constant upkeep and repair. Their collective insured value is over £16 million.

The PCC has determined to accrue for known expenses relating to the annual running repairs based on previous years' experience but has also set aside reserves of £75,000 per building, for unforeseen repairs identified by the rota of quinquennial inspection reports.

The PCC has also determined to reserve an additional sum of £70,000 to administer the Octagon Parish in case of emergency.

The PCC has designated the responsibility of investing the reserves to the PCC Finance Committee, chaired by the Treasurer. The committee consists of the PCC treasurer, the local church treasurers, and a churchwarden. All investment decisions will pass through the committee. The committee meets at least once per year. Decisions between meetings, if they are necessary, are made by email.

The reserves are generally to be allocated and invested in recognised and agreed funds of differing risk profiles, managed by UK-regulated Fund Managers, or a bank deposit account. The asset allocation mix of the reserves takes into account the risk profile of each fund and an assessment of the date at which the reserves may be required.

The PCC, together with the Finance Committee, regularly reviews the policy and investments throughout the year based on a continual assessment of expense risks.

MATERIAL STATE OF THE CHURCHES OF THE OCTAGON PARISH

OCTAGON PARISH CHURCH REPAIRS REPORT MAY 2025 to cover 2024/2025

Over the past year, there have been post Quinquennial Inspection (QI) works within the parish and our churches are mostly in good order.

In summer 2024, Simon Dyson, the new inspecting architect for Compton and Up Marden, inspected both churches.

Around the parish, new, updated noticeboards are finally going up showing the name of our new Rector.

Compton, St Mary

The QI indicated that the church building is generally in good order. However, the decorations in the south aisle are in a poor state and redecoration is recommended. The PLC would like this to be undertaken as a priority.

Whilst the major part of the building appears to be watertight there is a recurring leak at the west end of the nave which requires closer examination to inform the likely scope of repair required. This will necessitate the expense of scaffolding for further inspection and the likely requirement of bat surveillance which the PLC wish to defer until after the internal works have been undertaken.

The next QI is due in 2029.

Up Marden, St Michael

It was reported that “The PCC and Friends have kept the building fabric in good order and the roofs are watertight, the structure seems generally sound, and the grounds well maintained.”

However, the tower requires repairs, particularly to the upper stage constructed in timber.

Prior to any works on the bell tower taking place, bat surveillance is being undertaken to assess if a licence or mitigation measures are required before any works take place.

The next QI is due in 2029.

North Marden, St Mary

No works have been necessary within the past year.

The next QI is due in 2025.

East Marden, St Peter

In October 2024, the ongoing problem of water ingress necessitated an investigation of the redundant chimney for which a Revised Interim Faculty was obtained. The chimney was dismantled, the cause of the problem established and repaired before the chimney was reinstated as was required. A Minor Works grant from the Diocese was secured for this to be done.

The church path is in urgent need of maintenance. Minor Works Direction has allowed this to be done with self-bonding Romsey Gravel.

Following plaster-fall from the porch ceiling, a quotation is being sought for repairs to the plaster.

The next QI is due in 2026.

Stoughton, St Mary

With List B approval, post QI remedial works were undertaken to masonry on the belfry louvres, pointing and repairs to the external paving.

Also with List B approval, a redundant water butt causing damp within the sanctuary north wall, has been removed and downpipe adapted.

In September, urgent repair to the organ was required as the bellows failed. The reconditioned blower was re-installed in time for the Remembrance Service.

The next QI is due in 2026.

Racton, St Peter

No works have been required within the past year.

The next QI is due in 2026.

Forestside, Christchurch

This is the only church within the parish which is not listed which cuts off potential sources of finance for renovation. A Heritage Listing application is therefore being made in the hope that listing status will ensure its long-term future and, for the moment at least, allow reclaim on VAT for repair works.

Urgent repairs were undertaken to the North side of the church roof in August 2024 but water ingress continues to be a problem in the church, particularly where there are roof gullies.

In April 2025 part of the blistered painted wall surface which has been peeling away (noted in the last QI) fell from the chancel arch. The inspecting architect has been invited to advise on repair and ongoing damp problems.

The next QI is due in 2027.

Sarah Lawton, Churchwarden, May 2025

SAFEGUARDING IN THE OCTAGON PARISH

Fundamentally, safeguarding is about the use and misuse of power and the exploitation or protection of the vulnerable. Given this, safeguarding is important to a 'healthy' church life and the Octagon Parish works to strengthen a good safeguarding culture and continues to follow sound safeguarding practice. Safeguarding is included as a key area on the Octagon community website, and we continue to prioritise loneliness and isolation issues within our community.

Mrs. Fiona Mullett became the Parish safeguarding officer in 2022 and she has worked during the past year to raise the profile of safeguarding in the Parish and to encourage those who are active in the Parish, especially its officers to undertake training.

The Parish is adopting the Safeguarding Dashboard which has been adopted by the Diocese. Members of the PCC are in the process of undertaking the appropriate levels of Safeguarding training as advised by the Diocese.

All relevant staff and volunteers are up to date with their DBS checks.

A small number of referrals was made to the Diocese in 2024. No further action was required by the Parish in respect of any of the referrals made.

Safeguarding policies (in addition to our Health and Safety Policies) for the Parish are published on our website and are regularly reviewed following the guidance and requirements of the Diocesan Simple Quality Protects system.

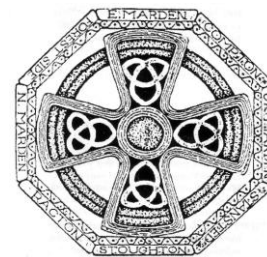
DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Westbourne Deanery is ably led by Mother Jessica Reid (Rural Dean) and Jane Wilkinson (Lay Chair). Matters discussed at synod in the last year have included Safeguarding, Eco Church and Bishop Luffa School. There was also excellent discussion about what makes each parish special.

The Parish enjoys good relationships with deanery colleagues. It hosted choral Evensong for the Deanery in September and is planning a Deanery Pilgrimage to Chichester Cathedral starting at Stoughton in Rogationtide (31st May, 2025).

With its four lay representatives as well as the Rector, the Parish was able to be represented at all meetings of the Deanery Synod in 2024. In 2025, Octagon Deanery Representative, Annabelle Hancock, will take on the role of Secretary to the Deanery Synod where she follows in a long tradition of Octagon representatives who have held the post.

THE OCTAGON PARISH
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Forestside & Stansted
Stoughton, Racton
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The Vicarage, Compton, Chichester, PO18 9HD
Tel: 023 9263 1252



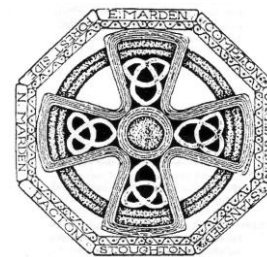
**Annual Meeting of Parishioners to be held at
Compton and Up Marden CE School Hall at 7:00pm on
Thursday 14th May 2025
AGENDA**

*The meeting will be chaired by Jennie Dolman
Secretary of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of The Octagon*

*Only those whose names are entered on the Octagon Parish Electoral Roll or the Local
Government Electoral Roll may attend and vote.*

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting dated 23rd May, 2024
2. To re-elect Mrs Carol Stamper as Churchwarden of the Octagon Parish.

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THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 23rd May 2024
at Compton and Up Marden CE School and Community Hall at 7pm

Present: -

Members of the PCC

- Sally Ablewhite (SA)	Local Warden and PLC Rep. (Up Marden)
- Annie Barnes (AB)	Elected member
- Richard Barnes (RB)	Elected member
- Edward Cottrell (EC)	Octagon Treasurer and Deanery Synod Rep
- Jennie Dolman (JD)	Deanery Synod Rep.
- Christopher Hancock (CH)	Octagon Rector
- Sarah Lawton (SL)	Parish Churchwarden
- Fiona Mullett (FM)	Octagon Safeguarding Officer
- Tom Maier (TM)	Octagon fundraising advisor and Compton PLC Rep
- Rachel Foister (RDF)	PCC Secretary and Octagon Administrator

15 members of the electoral roll were present.

The meeting was chaired by Rachel Foister, PCC Secretary

Apologies were received from :

Richard Hancock (RH)	Deanery Synod Rep.
Annabelle Hancock (AH)	Deanery Synod Rep.
Carol Stamper (CS)	Churchwarden
Ros Veltom (RV)	PLC Rep. (Stoughton)

1. The minutes of the Annual Meeting of Parishioners held on the 18th May 2023 were approved with one change. Patrick Balfour's role, under the listing of 'those present' should be changed from Churchwarden to PCC representative for North Marden and Octagon Data Protection Officer.

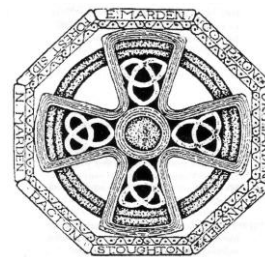
2. Election of Churchwardens of The Octagon Parish:
Carol Stamper and Sarah Lawton were re-elected as Churchwardens of the Octagon Parish by unanimous vote.

The meeting closed at 7:10pm

Approved by: _____

Date:

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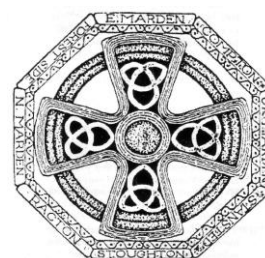


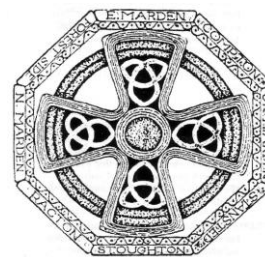
**Octagon Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024 to be held at
Compton and Up Marden CE School Hall on
Thursday 14th May 2025 at 7:10pm
AGENDA**

Only those whose names are entered on the Church electoral roll may attend and vote.

The meeting will be chaired by The Revd Christopher Hancock, Rector of The Octagon Parish

1. Opening prayer
2. Apologies for absence
3. To approve the minutes of The Octagon Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting 2023 held on 23rd May, 2024
4. Reports -
 - a) Annual report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the Parish
 - b) Changes to the electoral roll since the last annual meeting
 - c) The independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ending the 31st December 2024
 - d) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the churches of The Parish
 - e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
 - f) Safeguarding report
5. To adopt the 2024 Annual Report
6. Elections of parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC
7. To appoint the independent examiner of accounts for next year
8. Notices
9. Closing prayer





ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OCTAGON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of meeting held on 23rd May 2024
held at Compton and Up Marden CE School and Community Hall at 7:11pm

Present:

- Sally Ablewhite (SA)	Local Warden and PLC Rep. Up Marden Church
- Annie Barnes (AB)	Elected Member
- Richard Barnes (RB)	Elected Member
- Edward Cottrell (EC)	Octagon Treasurer and Deanery Synod Rep
- Jennie Dolman (JD)	Deanery Synod Rep.
- Christopher Hancock (CH)	Octagon Rector
- Audrey Hamilton (AH)	Local Warden (Racton)
- Sarah Lawton (SL)	Churchwarden
- Fiona Mullett (FM)	Octagon Safeguarding Officer
- Tom Maier (TM)	Compton PLC Rep
- Rachel Foister (RDF)	PCC Secretary and Octagon Administrator

15 other members of the Electoral Roll – were present.

The meeting was chaired by The Revd Christopher Hancock, Rector of The Octagon Parish

1. The meeting was opened at 7:11pm with a prayer.

2. Apologies for absence were received by:

- Richard Hancock (RH)	Deanery Synod Rep.
- Annabelle Hancock (AH)	Deanery Synod Rep.
- Carol Stamper (CS)	Parish Churchwarden
- Ros Velton (RV)	PLC Rep. Stoughton Church
- Peter and Anna Blencowe	

3. To approve the minutes of The Octagon Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the 18th May 2023:
The minutes were unanimously accepted subject to one change: Patrick Balfour's role, under the listing of 'those present' should be changed from Churchwarden to PCC representative for North Marden and Octagon Data Protection Officer.

4.a) Annual Report on the Proceedings of the PCC and the Activities of the Parish.
SL gave an overview of the activities across the Parish as set out in the 2023 Octagon Parish Annual Report which had been written by her colleague Carol Stamper.

She noted that there had been 852 entries in visitors' books across the Parish in 2023 and that we will continue to extend our welcome to visiting groups to our churches in 2024. Charitable support in 2023 included help for Chichester Food bank, with Lent lunches raising over £1,500.

The Family Service at Compton had grown from strength to strength and 6 candidates came forward for confirmation in 2024.

It was noted from the floor that enormous thanks should go out to our churchwardens for all their efforts in keeping the Parish active and in good shape during the interregnum.

4.b) Changes to the Electoral Roll.

There has again been a drop from 125 to 119 mainly due to deaths and churchgoers moving away from the area. CH stated that he aimed to see an increase in numbers on the electoral roll over time to around 20% of the populace (200) and encouraged those present to spread the word. RDF noted that there was a lot of background information available to anyone interested on The Octagon website.

4.c) The independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ending the 31st December 2023.

EC noted that there had been a small surplus of £857 in 2023, but that looking at figures for individual churches revealed a different picture with Compton, Stoughton and East Marden all in deficit. The very successful Racton fete has masked these figures somewhat in the overall accounts. It should be noted that emerging from Covid and an interregnum last year has taken its toll on fundraising and he hopes that events and initiatives will increase in 2024.

Contributions towards the Diocese in 2024 will be £52,000. Our insurance premium for 2024 is £7,640 to keep all 8 churches open 24/7. Heating costs are also significant, but necessary to make churches welcoming. As such, it is expected that the Parish will need to raise over £100,000 to cover costs for the coming year.

Of this, a 3% income from our investment funds would raise around £20,000. Vicarage garage rental brings in £1,300. The Stansted Foundation kindly donates £6,000 per year. Magazine subscriptions bring in £1,500 and our portion of the income from Marriages and Funerals in our churches is expected to be around £6,000.

The remaining £65,000 will need to be found and this will mainly come from regular donations. The spread of the load for these costs between the churches works out as:

£15,000 from Compton PLC

£15,000 from Stoughton PLC

£12,000 from East Marden PLC

£8,000 from Forestside PLC

£5,000 from Racton PLC

Other important sources of income include:

- Legacies which can make a huge difference, but do not represent regular income. The Parish will provide more information on how legacies will significantly help the Parish in 2024.
- QR code giving and digital card readers – he is keen for both systems of giving to be available in our churches, especially as mobile phone signal will be improving imminently across the Parish, making phone giving much simpler.
- Parish Giving Scheme. The Parish will be signing up to the Parish Giving Scheme now that the system allows for multi-church Parishes. The scheme is especially useful for those that wish to donate regularly, giving much more control to donors. Full details will be made available once the system is set up.

£7,000 from central reserves was spent on vicarage repairs and maintenance in 2023. Further work is still required and the Diocese have stated that they will complete the final window painting works in 2025. The Rector agreed to fund work in the coming year personally as it needs addressing urgently to avoid a deterioration of the fabric of the building..

EC expressed thanks to the Friends of Stoughton St Mary and The Friends of St Michael, Up Marden for their help in the ongoing costs of maintaining and running the two churches

Thanks were given to EC for all his work as Treasurer over the past year.

d) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the churches of The Parish

SL presented her report. She noted that there have been delays to quinquennial inspections and reports because of post-Covid backlogs and that not much work had been completed in 2023. Works are scheduled for East Marden and Stoughton in 2024. Water ingress at the site of an old chimney and the state of the roof beams at East Marden will be investigated. Costs to repair storm roof damage at Stoughton have been covered by insurance and a dangerous tree has been removed. Masonry repairs, repointing and repairs to uneven paving works are forthcoming. It was stated from the floor that The Friends of Stoughton St Mary will contribute a significant amount to the cost of these repairs in 2024. North Marden and Compton churches are awaiting the results of their next quinquennial inspections before embarking on any further works.

e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod.

JD presented her report, commencing by summarising the Deanery size, function and membership. RH, AH, JD and EC are all Octagon Deanery Synod Reps. The Deanery arranged for confirmations to take place in 2024 with Bishop Ruth at Fishbourne Church, for which The Octagon Parish had provided 6 candidates. There will be a Deanery evensong in The Parish in September. JD recently attended the Diocesan synod as Deanery representative. 2024 will be the year of the New Testament, with 2025 a year to celebrate 950 years of celebrating and proclaiming the mystery of the Christian Faith in Chichester. There will be a cathedral exhibition highlighting faith across the Diocese all year long.

The Lent course in 2025 will cover the Nicene Creed.

CH thanked JD for her report and her work with the Synod.

f) Safeguarding update.

FM presented her report, noting that:

- She had attended a course on modern slavery which provided information of relevance.
- The Diocese will be outsourcing some of its Safeguarding provision to reduce bias
- She has been attending PLC meetings to introduce herself, her work and the topic of understanding abuse and the systems in place for reporting it, including confidential conversations and where to find contact information on The Octagon website.
- The Diocesan website safeguarding information will be improved over the coming year.

5. Elections of lay members of the Parochial Church Council.

Re-election of Sally Ablewhite – all voted unanimously to re-elect

Re-election of Annie Barnes – all voted unanimously to re-elect

6. Elections of Deanery Synod representatives.

AH, RH, EC and JD will continue in their role as Deanery Synod representatives. There was no call for elections this year.

7. To appoint the independent examiner of accounts for next year.

A conflict of interest was declared at this point due to Mr Lawton being married to SL.

Notwithstanding the notified conflict, all voted in favour of re-electing Charles Lawton.

8. Notices – CH summarised his impressions since arriving in the Parish. He acknowledged the kindness, care and engagement shown by churchgoers and those present at the meeting. He also thanked Parishioners for their patience during the interregnum.

He remarked that he was keen to maintain a regular schedule of holy communion across the Parish but also to add extra services for which communication will improve so that Parishioners have fair warning.

He also noted that he wished for the Parish to become more systematic with its pastoral care offering in a similar fashion to our safeguarding systems.

Succession planning was an important element in the Parish with a younger generation being encouraged to take on roles across the Parish.

He also wanted to see the Parish becoming more fit for the 21st Century, especially with regard to facilities at our main churches. He encouraged Parishioners to be ambitious and make a difference to the Parish.

He was also encouraging of time for contemplation and was eager to re-establish a weekly prayer group.

CH went on to thank those present for all their hard work and distributed gifts to those in significant roles.

9. The meeting closed with The Grace

Signed:

Date:

The Octagon Parish – Open for All

