

**The Ecclesiastical Parish of Potters Bar
St Mary the Virgin & All Saints Church**

**Annual Report
and
Financial Statements
for the year ended
31st December 2022**

**Registered Charity Number:
1174737**

www.stmaryspb.org.uk

ANNUAL REPORT OF POTTERS BAR PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

St Mary the Virgin and All Saints Church is situated in The Walk, Potters Bar. It is the parish church of the town and is part of the Diocese of St Albans within the Church of England. The correspondence address is the Church Office, The Walk, Potters Bar, EN6 1QQ. The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2020) and is a Registered Charity with the Charity Commission (number 1174737).

PCC MEMBERS who served during 2022 were:

Ex Officio members

<i>Vicar</i>	The Revd Stefan Chrysostomou (Chairman)
<i>Churchwardens</i>	Mr Mark Jones Canon Richard Osborn (also Licensed Reader & PCC Vice Chairman)
<i>Deanery Synod representatives</i>	Mr Geoffrey Foster Mrs Sue Loader Canon Richard Osborn

Elected members

Ms Beverley Ashdown
Mrs Shirley Baker (Honorary Secretary) (*from 24th April 2022*)
Mrs Christine Beland-Hancock (Honorary Treasurer)
Mr Paul Camp
Mrs Heather Hawkes
Dr Gillian Hilton (*until 24th April 2022*)
Mrs Elizabeth Liney (Electoral Roll Officer) (*until 24th April 2022*)
Mr David Miller (Health & Safety Officer)
Mrs Elizabeth Nethercott (Stewardship Secretary)
Mrs Pearl Shepherd

The PCC met five times during the year with an excellent average attendance. The following sub-committees are in place:

- Standing and Finance Committee
- Charities Committee
- Pastoral Care Group
- Mission Committee

Apart from the Standing and Finance Committee, all committees draw on people from the wider congregation for their membership.

The method of the appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St Mary the Virgin and All Saints Church, the membership of the PCC consists of the Vicar, Churchwarden, and members elected by those members of our congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. All those who attend our services/members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and to consider standing for election to the PCC. The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. No member of the PCC has received any remuneration in relation to their duties as members of the PCC.

AIMS AND PURPOSES

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Potters Bar has the responsibility of cooperating with the Vicar, The Revd Stefan Chrysostomou, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Church and Hall of St Mary the Virgin and All Saints, The Walk, Potters Bar, EN6 1QQ.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our Church and to become part of the parish community. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can reach and involve the people of the parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament and encourage us to express our faith in practical ways in our day to day living.

When planning our activities for the year, the Vicar and the PCC have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary, outreach and education work.

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Mary the Virgin and All Saints Church and Hall to a high standard. We also take responsibility for the Health and Safety Policy and the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

We are very grateful that our worship and activities returned to normal during 2022 after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our pre-COVID pattern of services is now fully restored. We have continued to livestream the Sunday Parish Eucharist and Sunday Evensong on Facebook, as well as services on major midweek festivals, and this is much appreciated by those who are housebound, unwell, on holiday or live some distance away from Potters Bar. We are fortunate and thankful that, unlike many churches across the country, practically everyone in our congregation has returned to in-person worship. Our thanks go to Meryl Chrysostomou, our main camera operator, but also to Brenda Chisholm and Chris Cook who have assisted when Meryl has been unavailable.

The weekly email bulletin using Mailchimp, initiated at the start of the pandemic and sent out each Saturday, is now a regular feature of parish life. It includes a message from either Fr Stefan or Richard, links to the weekly news sheet and readings, words of the Sunday hymns, prayers and other relevant information. Currently there are 152 subscribers, reaching 170 individuals when couples are taken into account.

Worship and Prayer

The PCC maintains a range of services during the week that we hope our community finds both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. In 2022, we offered:

- Sunday Eucharists at 8am (traditional language rite) and at 10am (contemporary language rite).
- Sunday Evensong on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. This is much appreciated by the small congregation who gather in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. We have been delighted that on some occasions, the chapel has been almost full for the service.
- Two midweek Eucharists have been celebrated. The Wednesday service attracts a congregation in the range of 10-16, of which approximately 5 people do not regularly attend on a Sunday. The Thursday Eucharist is celebrated according to the Book of Common Prayer rite and has a congregation in the range of 6-10.
- Morning Prayer takes place on Tuesdays and Fridays. Evening Prayer is said Tuesday to Friday each week. Fr Stefan is grateful to the small number of people who join him in each day for these services.
- A full programme of Holy Week and Easter services.
- The Royal British Legion observance of Remembrance Sunday at the War Memorial.
- Christmas Carol Service, Christingle and Crib Service, Midnight Mass and Christmas Day Eucharist. Total attendance across these services was 375 (264 in 2021).

All are warmly welcome to attend our services. At the 2022 Annual Meeting, there were 142 members on the Electoral Roll, of whom 56 were non-resident in the parish - an increase of 6 people on 2021. We are sad to report the deaths of Avis Smith and June Twyman during 2022.

The usual Sunday attendance was 82 adults (77 in 2021) plus 2 children (the same as in 2021), but this number increased at festivals. Sadly, the number of families with children attending services has remained low and we have still not been able to progress our plans to re-start Junior Church. However, it was good to re-instate Parade Services during 2022. 5 such services took place with an average attendance of 84 adults and 13 children.

From a survey undertaken for the national Church of England statistics collection, we calculated that an average of 15 people had watched services online each week in October, in addition to those attending services in person in church.

We are appreciative of the high standard of our music at our Sunday services and at festivals and are indebted to our organist Dave Miller, choir director Julian Zerbahs and assistant organist Oliver Matley. We are also grateful to Keith Wiseman who has played the organ for some services of Evensong.

As well as our regular services, we warmly welcome the wider community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of their journey through life. Through baptism, we thank God for the gift of life; in marriage, public vows are exchanged with God's blessing; through funeral services, family and friends express their grief and commend the person into God's keeping. During 2022, we celebrated 5 baptisms (10 in 2021), 6 marriages (0 in 2021), and held 3 funerals in church (5 in 2021), with a further 18 funerals conducted in local crematoria (24 in 2021). Our annual Memorial Service held close to the Feast of All Souls was well attended and much appreciated by those who had suffered bereavement over the past two years.

We were delighted to welcome Bishop John Gladwin, an Assistant Bishop in the diocese, for our Patronal Festival Eucharist in September at which he confirmed 7 members of our congregation – Malcolm Golland, Grace Mahabir, David Neal, Karen Pond, Sally Prigg, Roger Taylor and Carrie-Ann Williamson-Santos. In addition, Jayne Hutton was confirmed at home by Bishop John earlier on the same day.

The Vicar took a group on a weekend retreat to Worth Abbey in September and the participants found this to be a valuable time of spiritual refreshment.

Barnet Deanery Synod

Three members of the PCC sit on the Deanery Synod. This provides the PCC with a link between the parish and the wider structures of the Church of England. Richard Osborn remains as Deanery Lay Chairman and will serve in that capacity until May 2023.

The Church

Thanks to the work of the Watchers and Welcomers, the church has been open on three days a week from 10.30am to 12 noon for people to drop in, to pray or light a candle. We are grateful to Heather Hawkes, our Watchers and Welcomers Co-ordinator.

The church continues to be in a good state of repair and we are meticulous at keeping on top of items of maintenance. New handrails have been fitted on the pulpit steps, at the entrance to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and at the other end of this chapel, on the steps up to the sanctuary. We received a grant from the City Church Fund (administered by the diocese) to fund these improvements which will appear in the 2023 accounts. The PCC is now considering options for replacing the lighting and hope to move this project forward during 2023.

The Church Hall

We are pleased to report another busy year for church hall bookings with a pleasing increase in income. We are most grateful to Jessica Hollings, our Hall Lettings Secretary, who has worked diligently to maximise income from both regular and one-off lettings. We have gained some new regular bookings and continue to benefit from an arrangement with a local podiatrist, Ms Asha Bhundia, who hires the small hall three days per week for her clinics. The hall remains popular for children's parties at weekends.

Pastoral Care, Outreach and Education

Music plays a significant part in church life and is an important element of our outreach to the local community. The well-established lunchtime recitals on the first Tuesday of the month continue to be supported by a loyal audience and light lunches have been re-instated. Thanks are due to Dave Miller for co-ordinating the programme of recitals and to the team of ladies who prepare and serve the lunches. We also hosted several concerts by local orchestral and choral groups, as well as concerts by pupils of local piano teacher Anya Kirby.

During the year, study groups led by the Vicar and Reader met during Lent and Advent and these were much appreciated. In addition, we hosted the 'Living in Love and Faith' study course early in the year, led by Fr Will Gibbs (then Vicar of Redbourn, now a Residentiary Canon at St Albans Cathedral). We were pleased to welcome some members of other churches in the deanery to this course.

The Pastoral Care Group continues its work. They assist the Vicar in pastorally caring for the congregation and those in the wider parish community. Regular services have resumed at one of the care homes in the parish and links are maintained with two other homes

A full programme of work with schools resumed in 2022. The Vicar has continued to have strong links with Ladbrooke Primary School, organising visits to the church and also going to the school to conduct teaching sessions. Strong links have also continued with St John's Schools, with their regular services and concerts in church re-starting in the summer. In

addition, Chancellors and Ladbroke schools held their Christmas celebrations in church. Sadly, Owens had to cancel their carol service due to heavy snow.

Mission and Evangelism

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. We continue to actively support USPG, Christian Aid and the Children's Society, as well as other local charities and organisations. We have supported the Potters Bar Foodbank with donations of food and other essential goods, though the PCC is investigating whether to focus our main support as a church on one of the foodbanks in Borehamwood.

We are very grateful to Dave Miller for his work on the website and social media. Our number of Facebook followers continued to increase during 2022. Our intention is to inform as wide a circulation as possible of the important matters affecting our church and the Christian Faith.

Discussions have started on the review of our **"Mission Action Plan"** (MAP). A new MAP will be agreed in 2023.

Ecumenical Relationships

The church is an active member of **Churches Together in Potters Bar**. We hosted the Easter Dawn Service, two of the Saturday morning prayer sessions and welcomed visitors from other churches to our Advent Procession. In addition, we hosted a special Choral Evensong to celebrate and give thanks for the life of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This was attended by over 150 people. We participated in other activities, e.g. the Good Friday Walk of Witness, the summer holiday club and the 'Discover Christmas' event.

The Vicar became Chair of Churches Together during the year. He is an active member of the Ministers' Fraternal group which meets on a regular basis. The Reader led services and preached for the United Reformed Church and Baptist Church on several occasions during the year.

Social Life

With the lifting of all COVID restrictions, it has been a delight to resume our social gatherings. Refreshments after the Parish Eucharist are now established in the church hall, having moved to that venue in 2021 to comply with COVID restrictions. The numbers gathering in the hall each week seem to grow and the opportunity to sit around tables (rather than standing at the back of the church) has been a great success. We held two very well-attended bring and share lunches for both the Patronal and Harvest Festivals – and the annual quiz night and supper returned in November. The Friendship Group meets on a monthly basis on a midweek morning and has returned to the Oakmere Tea Room in the High Street. We are very grateful to Jenny Pearce for co-ordinating all these activities and thank Beverley Ashdown for her assistance with the Friendship Group.

Financial Review

Total incoming resources in 2022 were £151,900 and total expenditure was £116,447 resulting in a surplus of £35,453.

We were fortunate to receive a grant of £250 from the diocese which is to be used to create a more family-friendly room at the back of the church.

The PCC is very grateful to Christine Beland-Hancock our Honorary Treasurer, assisted by Liz Nethercott our Stewardship Secretary, for their work and is also grateful for the generous giving of our church members during these difficult times.

The PCC remains committed to the ongoing promotion of stewardship. We currently have 103 members enrolled in planned giving (including couples), most of whom give by standing order and can Gift Aid - something which we actively encourage. The PCC decided to defer holding a Commitment Sunday in the autumn due to the cost-of-living crisis which is being felt by many people at this time. It is planned to hold Commitment Sunday on 11th June 2023, the Sunday closest to our Dedication Festival.

Risk Review

The PCC does not consider that there are any significant financial exposures. It is the policy of the PCC to maintain wherever possible sufficient reserves in the General Fund to cover three months unrestricted expenditure. At the year end, the PCC complied with this policy.

Safeguarding

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, with regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. We wish to thank Gillian Hilton who served as our Parish Safeguarding Officer for many years. She retired at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting and has been succeeded by Carrie-Ann Williamson-Santos to whom we are most grateful for taking on this important role. Richard Osborn continues as Lead Recruiter for DBS checks. All PCC members and church officers have been DBS checked and completed the online training modules required by the diocese.

Data Protection

The PCC takes seriously its responsibilities in maintaining, storing and using information held on individuals, as required by data protection legislation.

Volunteers

We remain grateful to all those who give an enormous amount of their time and talents in enabling our Church to both function and flourish – our Sacristan David Hancock (assisted by Chas Nethercott), altar servers and those who care for the altar linen (Liz Nethercott and Pat Vince), our choir, our Intercessors and Lesson Readers, our Sidesmen, the Flower Arrangers, our Cleaning Teams, Gardeners, the Watchers and Welcomers, those who serve refreshments and organise social events – and many others. Geoff Foster continues to do much to assist with the maintenance of our buildings and we are very grateful to him. We also thank Elizabeth Liney for serving as PCC Secretary for 6 years. Elizabeth stood down at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting and we are grateful to Shirley Baker who agreed to succeed her. Our thanks also go to Richard Osborn who continues to offer a very active contribution to our worship and life as Reader.

Conclusion

St Mary the Virgin and All Saints Church aims to build a stable and secure congregation and actively seeks to grow and to ensure that newcomers are always quickly welcomed and encouraged to feel an integral part of the Church community. We thank God for his continued blessings richly given to us all.

The Revd Stefan Chrysostomou (PCC Chairman)

March 2023

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN & ALL SAINTS POTTERS BAR
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2022

Receipts & Payments	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
Receipts					
Voluntary Receipts	70155	8542	309	79006	76333
Tax Recovered	23941	770		24711	11794
Investment Income	11674		3171	14845	14144
Rental Income	27589			27589	15167
Fees	4722			4722	3295
Miscellaneous Income	777			777	93
	138858	9312	3480	151650	120826
Grant			250	250	6000
Total Receipts	138858	9312	3730	151900	126826
Payments					
Charitable Donations	3286	4063		7349	4799
Church Expenses	27194	2621		29815	27888
Hall Expenses	5011			5011	5699
Parish Share	67264			67264	65816
Fundraising Costs	361	1018		1379	0
Sundry Administration	5629			5629	2990
Total Payments	108745	7702		116447	107192
Excess of Receipts over Payments	30113	1610	3730	35453	19634
Funds Transfer	(10000)	0	10000		
Cash at Bank 1 January 2022	43242	4240	46887	94369	
Cash at Bank 31 December 2022	63355	5850	60617	129822	

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN & ALL SAINTS POTTERS BAR
STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2022

ASSETS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
Bank Current Accounts	63355	5850	49857	119062	86781
Bank Deposit Accounts			318	318	317
CBF Deposit Fund			10442	10442	7271
Total	63355	5850	60617	129822	94369
Investment Assets					
CBF Investment Fund (1)	102445			102445	116045
CBF Investment Fund (2)	388574			388574	440159
Total	491019			491019	556204
Total Assets	554374	5850	60617	620841	650573

Non-Monetary Assets

Moveable church furnishings held by the Churchwardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal.

Photocopier purchased 2011

LIABILITIES

Nil

Restricted Funds

The movements on the Restricted Funds during the year were:

	Bal. Brought Fwd	Receipts	Payments	Bal. Carried Fwd
Flower Fund	1062	2016	(2621)	457
Organ Fund	3093	3233	(1018)	5308
Hall Equipment	85	0	0	85
Charities	0	4063	(4063)	0
	4240	9312	(7702)	5850

Designated Funds

The movements on the Designated Funds during the year were:

	Bal. B/Fwd	Transfer	Receipts	Payments	Bal. Carried Fwd
Lighting Fund	38000	10000	0	0	48000
Organ Fund	0	0	243	0	243
Office Equipment	1023	0	0	0	1023
Church Refurbishment	94	0	0	0	94
Robes	438	0	0	0	438
Friendship Group	60	0	66	0	126
Capital Fund	7272	0	3171	0	10443
Family Room	0	0	250	0	250
	46887	10000	3730	0	60617

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN & ALL SAINTS POTTERS BAR
NOTES FOR THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2022

Information re: Receipts & Payments

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Designated Funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
Receipts					
<u>Voluntary Income</u>					
Planned Giving	55448			55448	54547
Collections	7055	3420		10475	6451
Donations & Legacies	4754	643		5397	8736
General Fundraising	1519			1519	2923
Votive Candles	337			337	350
Sunday Refreshments	1042			1042	397
	70155	4063	0	74218	73404
<u>Other Fundraising</u>					
Organ Restoration Fund		2463	243	2706	1257
Flower Fund		2016		2016	1613
Friendship Group			66	66	60
	0	4479	309	4788	2930
Payments					
Church Expenses	21081			21081	19487
Clergy Expenses	6133			6133	5075
Flowers		2621		2621	1426
Recital Expenses		1018		1018	521
	27194	3639		30833	26509
Sundry Administration	5629			5629	2469
	5629			5629	2469

Notes

1. CBF Investment Funds

The number 1 investment represents units purchased in 1995. The last of the original investment of 11,744 units was withdrawn in 2015 but we still have a remaining balance of 4,962.02 units (2021 – 4,962.02) which represents accrued income. The market value of this at the 31st December 2022 was £102,445.37 (2021- £116,045.27).

Following the sale of the house at Otways Close the sum of £410,129 was remitted to the DBF. £26,500 was sent to the PCC to repay the loans from parishioners and a further £34,239.30 was received to boost the General Fund. The remaining £349,389.70 plus accrued interest of £610.30 (total £350,000) was invested in a second fund with the DBF (investment no.2) with the intention of generating quarterly interest for the General Fund. It was agreed by the PCC that £50,000 of those proceeds would be allocated to the Organ Fund and the Organ Fund would also receive a pro-rata portion of the investment income generated. During 2019 that £50,000 was withdrawn and all income is now directed to the General Fund. At the 31st December 2022 the total value of this fund stood at 18,820.89 units valued at £388,574.21 (2021- £440,158.51).

2. Charitable Donations

During 2022 we made the following donations to charities:

1250.00	USPG *
965.66	Christian Aid
304.00	Toilet Twinning
432.74	The Children's Society
625.00	Bishop's Harvest Appeal
2000.00	The Diocese of Europe's Ukraine Appeal
330.00	Herts Young Homeless
700.00	Housing Justice
451.52	The Peace Hospice
250.00	St Chad's Church, Bradford *
40.00	Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust *

7348.92	

With the exception of the payments marked * these payments were mostly, or entirely, funded by collections in Church.

3. Staff Costs

During the year the PCC paid small honoraria to the organists and choir-master and made small payments to the church cleaner but no payments were large enough to attract social security costs.

4. Payments to PCC Members

During the year, the sum of £2,050 was paid to the parish Organist who is a member of the PCC. £200 was paid to one of the Churchwardens and £125 was also paid in Verger expenses to the husband of a PCC member. A small immaterial portion of the expenses paid to the Incumbent may have related to his services as Chairman of the PCC. No other payments or expenses were paid to any PCC member, persons closely connected to them or related parties.

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN & ALL SAINTS POTTERS BAR
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

This is my report to the members of the PCC on my examination of the Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2022.

Respective Responsibilities of the PCC Members and the Examiner

The church's PCC members are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and they consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the financial statements under section 145 of the 2011 Act.
- Follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- State whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of Independent Examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the church and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeking explanations from you as PCC members concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, consequently no opinion is given as to whether the financial statements present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statements below.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with my examination no matters have come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and
 - to prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Acthave not been met, or
2. to which in my opinion attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Oscar Dodd FCA
27 Richardson Crescent
West Cheshunt EN7 6WZ

TREASURER'S REPORT

As in previous years I am attaching to the accounts some comments that I hope will help to explain some of the main figures in them. If, after reading this report and studying the accounts, you still have any questions or queries, I shall be pleased to answer them at the annual meeting.

Thankfully we have now returned to relative normality and have seen regular attendance return to pre-Covid levels. This has meant that we are receiving more money by way of collections and have also been able to hold more fund-raising events. I am therefore pleased to report an overall surplus of income over expenditure over of £35,453.

Income

If you compare income this year with last year you will note that it is some £25,000 more (£151,900/£126,876). In 2021 we received a grant of £6,000 from the City of London Churches Fund, so the increase in income in 2022 is very pleasing.

We have continued to benefit from web-site donations which have meant that those joining us on-line for services are still able to make a financial contribution to the work of the church. I must also remind everyone of our SumUp card reader which enables you to use your plastic for making donations; it is proving to be helpful. We were delighted to receive Meryl (and Bertie's) sponsorship money in 2021 and we wish Meryl well when she undertakes the London Marathon which will raise funds for our Lighting Project.

I am pleased to report good news in respect of our rental income. We still have the podiatrist as a tenant and also a good selection of other long term renters. We have also seen a general increase in booking for both parties and community events/classes. This all has generated an uplift of over £12,000. I must take this opportunity to thank Jessica Hollings, our Hall Letting Secretary, for her diligent work in ensuring that tenants are invoiced in a timely way and rents collected.

We are pleased that at our monthly recitals we now offer lunches and indeed this month we returned to offering the food buffet style. The proceeds continue to generate funds towards the Organ Fund.

Unfortunately, the Diocesan Board of Finance, which administers our invested funds, reports a fall in the value of our holdings of some £65,000 due to fluctuations in the stock market. However, our dividend income has slightly increased.

Outgoings

Payments out have increased by some £9,000 which was only to be expected. We have succeeded in keeping costs down as much as possible and part of the increase in expenditure has been an increase in our charitable donations across a variety of good causes.

Our Parish Share was increased to £67,264 in 2022 and I can report that it has been increased to £70,679 for 2023. That equates to *£193.64 per* day before we switch on a single light or heater or light a single candle. We were able to pay our Parish Share in full and received a letter from the Diocesan office thanking us for our contribution.

This all means that the General Fund, which covers the day to day income and expenditure is showing a surplus of £20,113 a decided increase on 2021, and we have not, unlike many other parishes, been obliged to dip into our reserves to meet our commitments. I am therefore hopeful that our finances will continue to improve.

I will conclude by thanking everyone for their financial support this year and reminding you all that if you give any money to St Mary's (or buy a gift for the church) then do please Gift Aid it.

Finally, managing the accounts for St Mary's continues to be an enjoyable and interesting task made much easier by the help I have received from Liz Nethercott, Oscar Dodd, Pearl Shepherd, Geoff Foster and Richard Osborn. My grateful thanks to them all.

Christine Beland-Hancock
Honorary Treasurer