

**Annual Report
and
Financial Statements
of the
Parochial Church Council
of
St Helen's Witton**
(also known as Northwich PCC)

for the year ended 31 December 2023

Incumbent:

Rev Andrew Ridley

Readers

Mrs Berenice Kirwan

Mr David Drinkwater

Bank:

HSBC Bank plc, Northwich

Independent Examiner:

Mr Frank Strange

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1. Reference and administration details

Charity name: Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Helen's Witton

Also known as: St Helen's, Northwich

Registered charity number: 1179543

Principal address: The Vicarage, 61 Church Road, Northwich, CW9 5PB

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Andrew Ridley	Chairman		Chester Diocese
Mr Gordon Atkinson	Church warden		APCM
Mr Kenneth Moth	Church warden		APCM
Mrs Berenice Kirwan	Deanery Synod Rep		APCM
Mrs Barbara Spencer	Deanery Synod Rep		APCM
Mr Andrew Cannon	Deanery Synod Rep		APCM
Mrs Louise Begent-Piers		Until 22 nd April 2023	APCM
Mrs Rachel Clarke			APCM
Mrs Joy Montgomery			APCM
Mrs Amelia Visscher			APCM
Mrs Jennifer Thomas			APCM
Mr Andrew Cannon	Deanery Synod Rep		APCM
Mr Tim Finlay		From 23 rd April 2023	APCM
Mr Andrew Jeapes	Secretary & Treasurer		APCM
Mr Michael Roberts		From 23 rd April 2023 to 21 st February 2024	APCM
Mr Paul Tott			APCM

APCM = Annual Parochial Church Meeting

2. Structure, governance and management

Type of governing document:	Act of Parliament Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as amended and Church Representation Rules (contained in Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 as amended)
How the charity is constituted:	Parish Church Council
Trustee selection methods:	Members of the PCC are either ex-officio due to an office or appointment they hold from Chester Diocese or are elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in accordance with the Church

The parish consists of one church: St Helen's. The vicar also has responsibility for St John's, Lostock Gralam.

3. Aims and Objectives

Aims and purposes

The PCC of St Helen's, Witton (also known as St Helen's Northwich) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting, in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for St Helen's Church, the Sexton's House and 4 houses which are rented to produce income.

Objectives and activities

When planning our activities for the year, the incumbent 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. We aim to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community. We have adopted the overall objectives of being:

“ Serving Christ, Serving the Community”

The primary object of St Helen's Parochial Church Council is the promotion of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrine and practices of the Church of England within the ecclesiastical parish.

Reference: “The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit”, Crown Copyright 2008

To this end we undertake activities in the following 4 areas:

- To maintain, develop and renew public acts of worship held regularly within our church building.
- To provide pastorally-relevant religious ceremonies open to all parishioners for baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- To extend the knowledge of and education in Christian teaching to both church members and members of the parish, within our acts of worship and through specific teaching opportunities, such as, confirmation groups and Sunday schools
- To provide pastoral care to members of the church and any parishioners in need of spiritual, social or practical support.
- The PCC acts to underpin all these activities by provision of well maintained buildings.

4. Performance & Achievements

4.1 Vicar's Report

Our Parish Church is dedicated to St Helen, Protector of the Holy Places. A photograph of a statue of her can be found, together with a short introduction to her remarkable life, in the entrance porch and on the display board at the back of church. Her special day is 21st May. No one knows how or why Helen came to be our church's patron saint. What we do know is that shortly after her son, Constantine, became the first Christian Roman Emperor, he gave her unlimited access to the Imperial Treasury to locate Christian relics and build churches at Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives, where Jesus was crucified on Good Friday and where he was raised from the dead on Easter Day. I like the idea of our holy place being under the protection of Helen, Protector of Holy Places.

St Helen's Church is first and foremost a place of worship, where we gather to meet the Living, Loving and Forgiving Christ in Word and Sacrament. The age and size of our church are a help to worship and visitors often comment on the peace they encounter on entering through the glass doors Bishop Mark dedicated on St Helen's Day two years ago. Of course, St Helen's is more than

a building: it is a worshipping community that cares for the visitor and the enquirer, offering generous hospitality without strings but always hoping that the service we offer speaks of the love God has for everyone.

2023 was memorable in all kinds of ways. Numbers attending Sunday worship increased and scarcely a week went by when there wasn't someone new to welcome. There were 84 Easter communicants (55 in 2022), 123 in total (compared with 77 in 2022). Christmas communicants were 91 (66), total attendance 314 (251). Usual Sunday attendance (averaged across the year) was 50 Adults (48) and 4 children (4), and the 'Worshipping Community' stood at 128, which is 14 up on 2022. All these figures are derived from careful recording keeping - in the Register of Services and a People Register - and numbers have been submitted to the Church of England's 'Statistics for Mission' database.

We have live-streamed and recorded on YouTube virtually every Sunday morning service. There is a small, faithful following of parishioners who watch online.

Bishop Sam celebrated and preached on the last Sunday in July and was back in the Autumn to visit and lead Collective Worship at Witton Church Walk School.

The number of weddings was up (from 1 to 5) and we invited the couples to a Valentine's Day Service. The number of funerals in church was up (from 21 to 29) and 14 (18) funerals were conducted at crematoria. Early in April we celebrated the life and commended to God's keeping Dave Hodgkinson and at the end of May, Marjorie Jobber. Grieving families were invited to a Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving in the Autumn and to the Christmas Carol Service. After a post-Covid high of 36 in 2022 there were 22 baptisms in 2023. I have continued to invite baptism families to the following month's Worship Together Communion to pick up their child's baptism certificate and a Hannah Dunnitt print for their child's bedroom wall, a gift from their church family at St Helen's.

Witton Church Walk School pupils and staff have continued to attend St Helen's for Collective Worship every fortnight during School Term. WCWS had its Harvest Service, Christmas Christingle Service, Easter Service and Leavers' Service in St Helen's. Victoria Road School and Rudheath Senior Academy held their Christmas Performances in church, too.

In May Bishops Julie and Sam took a walk down Witton Street as part of a Deanery Visit and stayed for a Place of Welcome lunch. May was also the month King Charles was crowned and St Helen's celebrated his Coronation in style, with a Big Screen, lavish refreshments and bells rung on the Saturday and a Special Service on the Sunday. In October Bernice Kirwan was licensed as a Parish Reader in Chester Cathedral. Welcome to the Worship Leaders' Team, Berenice! With me to share in leading the Service at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday was Fr. Paul from St Wilfrid's.

The third Wednesday in the month Communion Service in the Holy Cross Chapel continued, followed by CAMEO lunch. 'Praise and Play' met weekly during term time. Seasonal occasions such as Ash Wednesday, Holy Week and Ascension Day were observed. St Helen's was well represented on Good Friday at the Churches Together Service at the Salvation Army, followed by an Open Air Service in Baron's Square.

Just before Christmas and on behalf of St Helen's I expressed an interest in the Jesus Shaped People Project. This is a national initiative by the Church of England and I am sure St Helen's will benefit from it in 2024. JSP is described as a 'Whole Church Discipleship Adventure' that: recognises five priorities that Jesus modelled in his three year ministry; helps churches explore these priorities in enjoyable and practical ways; inspires churches to reshape themselves in response to this in practical ministry; has a special focus on including children and young people; helps churches evaluate their progress and maintain their Jesus Shaped focus. I am hoping that St Helen's JSP discipleship adventure will see us grow in confidence, vision and in engaging with the local community. That our discipleship deepens and is more purposeful. And new members are added.

Thank you, everyone who has contributed to the worshipping, serving life of St Helen's in 2023. 2024 promises to be an exciting, challenging and enjoyable year!

Andrew Ridley

4.2 Churchwardens' Report

The Church Wardens have continued to carry out their primary responsibility of supporting the Vicar throughout the year. Regular meetings, mainly two weekly, have been held in order to help develop the mission of the Church and to progress administrative and maintenance matters.

In terms of the Church building and facilities the last 12 months has again been a busy period.

Inventory

We are grateful for the work that Ann and Frank have carried out to update the Church inventory records. The previous document was hand written some years ago and has been annotated many times to the point where it was difficult to follow. Ann and Frank have re typed the majority of the detailed records to create a modern useable document. We hope for a visit by the Archdeacon to check our inventory at some time.

Roof - Repair already complete and future plans

The re-roofing of the north aisle and vestry was finally completed on 20th September. During the work the contractor had observed problems on the nave roof due to slipped and delaminating slates. In late October during exceptionally heavy rain there was a leak at the junction of the nave roof and tower on the north side caused by a couple of slipped slates which were put back. Following this the wardens asked the architect to submit a service and fee proposal to carry out a scoping study on addressing the nave roof issues to include the nature and extent of the problems and the options for their remedy including phasing, timescale (including securing necessary consents), materials, temporary protection and cost. A proposal was received and the PCC has instructed the study to be carried out.

Tower room

Following consultations with the DAC some minor amendments have been made to the design of the Tower Room. In addition the DAC advised that a Heritage Impact Assessment of the new room on the heritage of the building be prepared by an appropriate consultant. Accordingly Kathryn Sather & Associates of Altrincham who are Heritage Conservation Consultants have been briefed and we await their proposal.

Food Hygiene

It has been brought to our attention that because St Helen's hold regular weekly event where food is provided then we must register as a "food business". This is true even though no food is sold. This registration is likely to result in an unannounced inspection by the Cheshire West and Chester regulatory team. We are checking all our ways of working and procedures to ensure we can continue to provide these important outreach services and be compliant with regulations.

Clock

The clock refurbishment was completed in December but unfortunately the mechanism failed to keep accurate time. At the time of writing this report we are waiting further work by Cumbria Clock Company. We have an outstanding invoice that will not be paid until we are satisfied the clock is working correctly. An update can be given at the time of the annual meeting.

Organ

Work on removing the organ from Dorset and making good the building it was dismantled from was completed on time and on budget. The various pieces of this complex instrument are currently being checked and refurbished in the organ builders' workshops. This is taking longer than originally anticipated but remains within the cost budget plans. The estimate is that work in St Helen's to dismantle the current organ and rebuild the replacement will commence in early summer.

Grounds

Work to maintain the Church grounds continues with help by volunteer teams. There have been a number of positive comments from both Church members and members of the public about the improved condition of our Church grounds.

Sextons House

At the time of writing all known permissions to allow for the sale of the Sexton's House are in place and the property is being marketed in readiness for it to go to auction at the end of March.

An update can be given at the time of the annual meeting.

Gordon Atkinson, Ken Moth, February 2024

4.3 Place of welcome (& All Friends Together) and Four C's

Rachel Clarke offers her views on Place of Welcome: I have been regularly attending the Place of Welcome group on a Thursday lunchtime over the last year. It continues to grow in numbers between 30 and 40 attending most weeks all different age groups. Many people who attend come through the bereavement group, through Facebook, the local Guardian newspaper or even referred by occupational health, feeling lonely, isolated in need of a friendly chat or advise. The volunteers who serve in the kitchen often have no way of knowing how many people will turn up from week to week but there is always enough food for everyone no matter their circumstances at a place of welcome there is no charge for a meal and hot drink. Some weeks there may be new people who come along they are given a great welcome with a hot drink by either Gordon, Angela or Pat and Keith who are reassuring to someone who is unsure. Before we all sit down for our bowl of homemade soup and bread, we will say grace and have a moment to think about other people who may not be as fortunate as ourselves who may not be able to enjoy a hot meal together in company. Many Thanks must go to the volunteers that continue to help behind the scenes including Bob, Christine and Keith who help set up and prepare the tables along with Barbara, Berenice, Andrew J, Gordon and Angela providing the delicious soup and homemade cake

4Cs: Coffee, Cake, Company, Conversation

Every Saturday morning, between 10am and 12noon, hospitality is provided by regulars, Dorothy Bostock, Barbara Jones, Paul and Lesley Tott. A regular group of about 20 gather plus some who drop in occasionally. Good coffee and home made cake is provided every week as well as a warm welcome. The atmosphere is further enhanced by the three talented flower arrangers and the equally talented knit and natter group! From April 2023 until the end of February 2024 approximately £1890 has been raised for both local and national charities.

Paul & Lesley Tott

4.4 Praise & Play

Praise and Play meets on a Friday morning between 9.30am and 11.00am and is slowly growing in numbers. We are in regular contact with 15 families.

The morning is specially prepared for pre-school children and their parents or carers and starts with a short service lasting about 10 minutes, during which we sing a couple of simple worship songs with actions, listen to a story and say a short prayer. Worship time ends by everyone, including the children, saying the Lord's Prayer with actions. After the service there is a craft activity linked to the theme of the worship for the children and a chance to have a drink and a snack, usually toasted teacakes, and for parents to enjoy a chat whilst the children play. There is no charge for "Praise and Play".

Topics explored this year during the worship session include;

- Stories Jesus told – a selection of parables written and illustrated by Mick Inkpen and Nick Butterworth
- God is always with me.
- Thank you, God for days out and about.
- God made a wonderful world.
- Getting Ready for Christmas.

We have been able to display the craft activities the children have taken part in on the notice board at the back of church.

We would like to thank Angela Atkinson, Jennifer Thomas and Barbara Spencer for all their help

and support in welcoming and chatting to parents and providing the refreshments. We are looking for more Church members to help and support this outreach initiative. Anyone is welcome to come along to join in with the worship and find out how you could help.

4.5 Sunday Club

Sunday Club has continued over the last year on the second and third Sunday of every month in term time. We regularly have 4 children attend who range in age 6-11 years. We continue to use Godly Play stories during the time in the upper vestry. The children will listen to the story and can ask questions related to the story then they are able to choose a craft activity to complete based on the story they have heard. Sometimes they choose Lego to build or complete a drawing or make something in clay they can choose from all the craft equipment available. The children return to the service at the end for a blessing. We have been recently looking at the Jesus Shaped People resources. We began a small trial of the materials available online during Lent. They are easy to use and give ideas in age groups from 5 – 7 years and 7- 11 years with Games, prayers, and craft activities to make. We would like to continue to try the new resources with the children that attend Sunday Club when the next course of JSP begins later in the year. Thank you to Ruth, Amelia and Carol this last year with the help and support they have given to maintain a Sunday club for the children who attend St Helen's Church. Rachel Clark

4.6 Choir

Did you know that the choir meets every Thursday evening in the church vestry between 7.15 and 8.15pm? Apart from practicing the hymns for the following Sunday, we enjoy the opportunity to sing some choral anthems from our collection. If you like to practise some sight-reading, David Nangreave can always find something new to try. We are all supportive of each other and enjoy the fellowship. If you would like to join us, we would love to welcome you. No matter if you haven't sung for a while, David is always encouraging and helpful. No audition is necessary. Occasionally we have to cancel the practice, so should you wish to come along, please mention to David, our choirmaster or one of the choir who will confirm if we are meeting. Singing is beneficial to physical and mental well-being, which is a very good reason to practise it!

4.7 Bell ringers

We are an active group of ringers who ring regularly for Sunday services and practice on Monday evening. It was with great sadness that we rang half muffled for the funeral of our previous tower captain Dave Hodgkinson on the 3rd of April 2023. On the 6th of May we rang for the coronation of King Charles III. We will once again be ringing with demonstrations for the tower tours which begin on the 5th of May. We are grateful for the support of visiting ringers from local towers who have been a great help.

4.8 Parish Recorder's Report

The planned giving in the Parish continued with a Weekly Thanksgiving Envelope scheme, Yellow Envelopes, individual Standing Orders arranged through the bank, Contactless Payments, Open Plate donations and Annual Gifts.

Our Annual review for 2023 was distributed in May 2023 together with a Letter of Thanks from Rev. Andrew Ridley to all regular givers and a renewal of pledge forms for 2023. A full set of Thanksgiving envelopes was issued in Dec 2023 for the period Jan 2024 to Dec 2024.

The following shows the profile of giving and donations received for 2023 (Jan to Dec) compared to January to December of 2022.

	2023		2022	
Weekly Donation Value	No of donors	% of total	No of donors	% of total
less than £5	18	37%	24	47%
£5 - £10	7	15%	7	14%
£10 - £20	12	25%	10	20%
£20 - £30	3	6%	1	2%
£30 - £100	7	15%	9	18%
over £100	1	2%	0	0%
Total	48		51	
		Total Donations		Total Donations
Weekly Envelopes	7	£2213	11	£3295.44
Standing Orders	36	£28,667	35	£29254
Annual Gifts	5	£1,035	1	£100
Yellow Envelopes	13	£11,498	14	£2455
		£43,413		£35104
SCDS (including contactless)		£7567		£6192
Grand Total		£50980		£41296

Special Projects -Figures show that members of the congregation, (plus other donors NOT included here) have been very generous in giving for special projects such as the church clock, stained glass cleaning and the new church organ in the last 12 months. This is tremendous and greatly appreciated.

Contactless & Open Plate - The amount given has increased from £6192 to £7567. Thank you to everyone who gives in this way.

Regular Giving- Once annual gifts and yellow envelopes have been excluded (As these are primarily special project donations) overall regular giving has decreased by approx. 6 %.

Comparison of donor giving in 2022 and 2023

(This excludes donations to special projects).

%	Of donors
36%	are giving more in 2023
18%	are giving less in 2023
30%	no change in regular giving amount from 2022-2023
16%	of donors are no longer giving

For the tax year purposes

In the tax year 2022/23-

During the tax year 2022/23, Regular Gift Aid Giving and Giving for Special Projects, totalled £33294 enabling us to claim £8323.50 for the parish on this sum.

A further £1791.25 was claimed on donations made through the Small Cash Donations scheme, (those donations made via contactless, open plate and other donations), plus £99.84 in interest, so a total of £10,214.59 for the parish.

In the tax year 2021/22

In the tax year 2021/22, we claimed £6,760.73 Gift Aid on £27,043 of Regular gifts and Weekly Gift Aid giving.

A further £1452 was claimed on donations made through the SCDS, plus £85.57 in interest, so a total of £8298.59 for the parish.

Hilary Ritchie

4.9 Safeguarding Report

There were no safeguarding incidents in 2023. The PCC has reviewed our safeguarding policy and has implemented the diocesan requirement to obtain DBS checks on all PCC members. Where necessary, new and refresher on-line training requirements have been completed. Our safeguarding officer resigned in Feb 2024, due to ill-health and a replacement is being sought.

4.10 Health & Safety Report

Summary

During the year 2023-24 the following UNOR reportable incidents have occurred:

Level 1	1
Level 2	1
Level 3	3

Level 3) Near miss incident/Observed Hazard: This is an incident or observed hazard/behaviour that could have resulted in an injury or damage to property if nothing was done about it. An example could be a damaged electrical socket or a spill of water that is not cleared up.

Level 2) Incident that caused damage to property or a minor injury requiring first aid: This is an incident that would have caused injury had there been a person in the wrong place at the wrong time or a minor injury not requiring professional medical attention. An example of this could be an overloaded electrical socket or a minor lighting fire. Level 1) Incident that led to a more severe injury requiring first aid/emergency services call out/RIDDOR report: Any incident that requires an emergency services call out is the highest level of UNOR.

Incidents

Incidents are rated according to the severity or potential for harm that could arise from the incident. Following each reported incident or near miss, an evaluation of the incident and the events leading up to the incident are undertaken by the H&S Officer and other members of the PCC if required. The investigation will result in a number of recommendations being made to the PCC.

Of the above incidents, one was rated as a level 1 and resulted in injuries being sustained by a parishioner that required medical help.

The level 2 and 3 incidents were near misses, with the potential to cause injury or damage. The most serious of which was related to anti-social behaviour being observed in the churchyard, of which the police have been made aware.

Once again, can I ask that you let me know if you have seen anything that you consider to be a hazard or an unsafe event occur. There are forms available in the vestry and these are checked regularly.

All of the above incidents have resulted in recommendations being made to the PCC or the persons involved. The list of recommendations is available if required.

Policies and Risk Assessments

All policies and Risk Assessments are currently under review.

Andrew Cannon

4.11 Deanery Synod Report

Deanery Synod met on 7th February 2023 at Sandiway Church Hall.

The meeting clashed with Debbie Dalby's induction at Christ Church, Barnton meaning St Helen's representation was split.

Harriet Roberts, Diocesan Director of Development (Vision and Strategy) led an Open Meeting of Synod. She encouraged participants to try their hand at a variety of hands on activities to articulate their feelings/concerns about the diocese, how well or otherwise their parishes were doing, what things needed to improve and did they have a vision going forward? Harriet explained that what our deanery said would be fed into her Vision Report, soon to be submitted to the Bishops and a small Working Party which would then be published. A Strategy Document for the Diocese would follow in about a year's time. This document's thinking would underpin the diocese's use of resources, including those which can be bid for from the National Church's Strategic Development Fund.

Deanery Synod met on 20th June at Sandiway Church Hall.

The speaker was the Archdeacon of Macclesfield, the Venerable Ian Bishop, a previous Vicar and Rural Dean of Middlewich and soon to become the Bishop of Thetford in Norwich Diocese. He asked Synod to consider the church's response to Net Carbon Zero. , while noting that Care of Creation is the 5th Mark of Mission and our link diocese, Melanesia, is gradually disappearing under the waves as a result of climate change and rising sea levels. The Church of England has agreed a Route-map to Net Zero (available on its website). Points to consider are: technology is developing fast; church buildings generally have a fairly low carbon footprint (about 5% of the C of E's footprint); clergy housing is responsible for 25% and church schools the rest. The Archdeacon urged PCCs to put Net Zero on the agenda; keep up with maintenance; install draught-proofing where possible, complete the C of E's energy footprint tool; consider more efficient ways of heating church buildings. The diocese is appointing a Net Zero Carbon Officer (if a grant is made available). The Church Commissioners are making £150m available to dioceses from reserves to boost Net Zero implementation.

Deanery Synod met on 17th October 2023 at Holy Trinity, Church, Castle.

The speaker was Bishop Sam who turned the tables by inviting Synod members to talk to one another about what they were praying for and what they were most thankful for. He continued by speaking very personally about his time at Leeds Parish Church and the need to face change expectantly and hopefully. His message seemed to be that we must be prepared to face the soon-to-be-released Diocesan Strategy, hopefully and expectantly. Members were promised that the next meeting of Synod - on Tuesday 6th February 2024 at St Luke's Church, Winnington - would be an Open Meeting when we would be briefed on the Diocesan Strategy by Rev Peter Froggatt, Director of Outreach.

Andrew Ridley

4.12 Northwich & District Churches Together

NDCT meet quarterly when we exchange news from each church and plan how we might effectively work together for the year ahead. This year the production of hundreds of Christmas cards containing details of the various churches' Christmas services were handed out at the switching on of the Christmas lights along with hot chocolate from the Salvation Army which were gratefully received by passers by. More cards were then distributed at the December Artisan market. Another Songs of Praise will hopefully be held during the summer when The Condote Singers will lead the singing, details will follow later. Good Friday Walk of Witness this year will be slightly different. It will begin at the Salvation Army at 11.15am then walking down Witton Street and Leicester Street for an Open Air Service in Baron's Square.

Joy Montgomery

4.13 CAMEO

We continue to meet on the third Wednesday of each month after the midday Communion service. Twice a year we go out for Lunch, in the summer and in December. Two of our long standing ladies can no longer attend due to ill health but recently we have welcomed a few new members. During Lent we are happy for others who have attended the Communion service also join us afterwards for a Bread and Cheese lunch. Anyone who is of retirement age will be made very welcome to join us each month.

5.Financial Review

The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Charity Commission requirements for England and Wales, and are shown in tabular form at the end of this report.

We entered 2023 knowing that there would be a major challenge from greatly increased electricity and gas cost but the reality has proved to be less severe. In terms of day-to-day income and expenditure we managed to break even over the year. Setting aside the funds we raised for projects like the clock and organ, our total income was £9000 more than in 2022. However this difference was entirely due to exceptional factors: additional gift aid tax refund, refund of VAT, grants to support Welcoming Place, increased interest from savings and a legacy.

Our giving income was actually about lower than in 2022, as noted by the Parish Recorder. Our other major income, from rental properties, has held steady.

In terms of expenditure, the biggest difference from 2022 was the large increase in utilities costs, of nearly £12,000. Reassuringly, this was about £4000 lower than predicted at the start of the year due to careful control of the heating system. Expenditure on major building works has been lower than 2022. Some costs were due to completion of the disabled WC and S Porch but about £40,000 has been spent on repair of the N Aisle roof.

With the exception of major building projects, other costs are roughly in-line with the previous year's spending. Charitable giving has matched that from 2022.

As well as funds for our day to day operations, we also sought monies to fund 3 projects. These were cleaning of two stained glass windows, refurbishment of the clock and replacement of the organ. Two donors generously paid for the entire costs of cleaning the stained glass windows. Grants and donations have provided for the full cost of the clock refurbishment (excluding VAT). Replacement of the organ is funded in part by an insurance claim for water damage to the current organ. Grants and donations towards the organ project have accumulated during the year have now reached £19,000 which is 2/3 of the target (of £31,000) that we set.

The trustees' policy on reserves:

As a PCC, we are well aware of the forthcoming challenges in terms of repair and maintenance of the church building and of meeting our aspirations to develop the growth and ministry of the church. Equally, we do currently hold significant assets (cash, investments and buildings) which we need to manage effectively for the best outcome for St Helen's Church. Our saleable property portfolio as at Dec 2021 is valued at approximately £660,000.

A reserve policy clearly will help with our future funding strategy.

In the light of the foregoing background, the PCC agreed a revised reserve policy as follows:-

Reserves Policy for St Helen's (Witton) Northwich

What:

The following risks should be addressed

1. Loss of three months income from residential properties, say £6,000.
2. Decline in planned giving and collections (annual), say £18,000.
3. Unforeseen eventuality (say building or services failure), say £36,000.

TOTAL CASH RESERVE £60,000

Why:

These reserves are held to cover significant unexpected reduction in income or unexpected and unplanned urgent expenditure. However, the PCC will also need to take action to remedy deficits in its funding over the longer term and to rebuild the reserve whenever it is called upon.

When can these reserves be used:

Money held in reserve can only be allocated by the Parochial Church Council. If an urgent response is required an emergency PCC will be called.


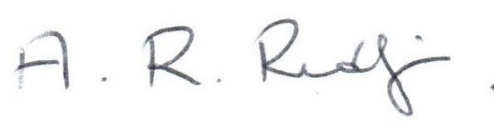
Review:

The PCC will review the reserves policy annually, as recommended by the Charity Commission, in sufficient time to present the revised policy to the Annual Parish Church Meeting.

6. Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees.

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Andrew Jeapes	Andrew Ridley
Position	Secretary of PCC	Chairman
Date	22/3/24	22/3/24

Receipt and Payments Account from 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
A1 Receipts	To the nearest £				
Voluntary income	40,523	21,167		61,689	44,067
Tax Receipt	18,513			18,513	8,820
Income from events & activities	11,685			11,685	8,630
Income from investments	7,414			7,414	3,607
Income from rental properties	32,311			32,311	31,794
Grants	2,840	11,150		13,990	10,680
Other Income	9,377	41,180		50,557	17,389
Sub-total (Gross income for A1)	122,663	73,497		196,160	124,987
A2 Asset & Investment Sales (see table)					
Total Receipts	122,663	73,497		196,160	124,987

A3 Payments

Missionary & charitable grants	3,724			3,724	3,807
Church-related:					
Ministry & worship	46,461	511		46,971	45,212
Events	2,623			2,263	1,157
Building running costs	27,478			27,478	16,790
Minor repairs & maintenance	8,529			8,529	4,350
Costs of rental properties	7,449			7,449	10,429
Admin & IT	2,807			2,807	3,226
Sub total church-related	95,347	511		95,857	81,164
Major works & repairs	72,712	15,489		88,201	124,508
Professional fees					
Sub-total A3 Payments	171,783	16,000		187,783	209,479

A4 Asset & investment Purchases

Sub-total A4		61,200		61,200	
Total Payments	171,783	77,200		248,983	209,479
Nett of receipts/(payments)	-49,120	57,498		8,378	(84,479)
A5 Transfer between funds	-101	101			
A6 Cash funds 31 st December 2022	145,788	13,231		159,019	243,512
Cash funds at 31st December 2023	96,568	70,829		167,397	159,019

Section B Statement of Assets and Liabilities at the Year End

		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	
B1 Cash Funds					
Cash at bank		96,568	70,829		
Total cash funds		96,568	70,829		
B2 Other Monetary Assets		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)	
CBF Institute		Unrestricted		41,119	
CBF Witton Sunday School Fund		Restricted		24,278	
Total				65,397	
B3 Investment assets					
Cornerstones (Sexton's House)		Unrestricted	125,000		
8 St Chads Fields		Unrestricted	115,200		
17 Hollybank Close		Unrestricted	150,000		
16, St Chads Fields		Unrestricted	130,000		
1 Scholars Rise		Unrestricted	140,000		
		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)	
B4 Assets retained for charity's own use					
		Fund to which liability belongs	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)	
B5 Liabilities	Organ refurbishment	Restricted	60,600	31/10/24	

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of St Helen's Witton, Parochial Church Council

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the **St Helen's Witton, Parochial Church Council** (the Trust) for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust 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 Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

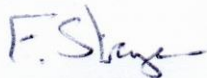
Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect: 1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or 2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or 3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination. I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

I see that my previous recommendation that formal expenses claim form is introduced which details the claimants name, the item of each expenditure in terms of description, date and cost and the date of the claim has been mostly implemented and I would like to see this continue.

I noted that detail of Rev Andrew Ridley's expenses claim in March were not available, but I accept that the value was inline with previous and subsequent claims and so I am not registering this as a concern.

Signed:



Name: Frank Strange

Address Westerhow, Waste Lane, Cuddington, Northwich Cheshire CW8 2TD

Date: 17th July 2024