

ANNUAL REPORT

The Bridge Coventry &
St James Fletchamstead



2024

This is the annual report of both The Joint Council of The Bridge Benefice, Coventry and The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St James Fletchamstead Coventry. Although this is a shared report, where required there are two reports for, one for each of the benefices.

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VICAR'S LETTER

The night that summer became autumn in 2023, the season changed.
It seemed that was what the Father was saying, to me and to others.

During that night the wall came down between our vicarage and St John's graveyard.
The tree that had been growing there for many years finally moved the wall out of its way.

The season changed as it does every three months, but the spiritual season changed in a big way.

Sharing the good news to my generation has always been hard, Gen X is still a vastly atheist generation. Gen Y isn't far behind, but the young adults (Gen Z) and children (Gen Alpha) now coming up are open to Jesus like we haven't seen in a while.

Old folks and young ones are open. One in three young adults will say yes to an invite to church. Young white men are walking into churches up and down the nation.

The church in the nation is growing. Something has shifted in the atmosphere.
The Lord is calling His church to collaborate, get close to Him and experience new life and many coming to faith.

Locally the season has changed for us as a church.
As I write in the warm spring of 2025, I remember 2024.
Lots of change, lots of growth, lots of things coming together.

A year where we started to live in financial strength, if not abundance, where we saw people come to faith, new initiatives start and a huge uptick in the numbers of people outside church engaging with us.

In memory 2024 will be the year when Hope Springs and St James came in, it will also be the last full year I live, work and love here.

We didn't know that was even a likelihood until mid December.
The role we were given in 2015 was to build a foundation for something that could multiply.
To take the fabulous church that we were called into and make it ready to multiply and grow fast.
Ready for a move of God.
To grasp the nettles and brambles, move the rocks and dig down.

In 2019 I felt like that foundation was almost done.

Then we had to dig in and overcome a once in a lifetime situation.

Many are starting to say the move of God is coming,
maybe it's already here.

We've restructured, rebuilt and reorganised.

God has brought a new team alongside those who've been here for the whole journey. It may not be the Hammond family privilege to get to build on the foundations with you. But 2024 felt like the last year of building those foundations together; Getting the right people on board, clearing the decks, counting the cost, overcoming.

I have faith in everyone here, even more so in our Glorious God and I'm full of Hope for the future of The Bridge.

David Hammond (Vicar of The Bridge Benefice and Priest-in-Charge of St James, Fletchamstead)

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORTS

St Stephen's Church

As Churchwardens, we give thanks to God for a year of growth, encouragement, and fresh vision at St Stephen's.

2024 marked a new chapter for our church family with the arrival of Rev. Erin Gilmour. Erin's leadership has brought renewed energy and a deep sense of hope to our community. We are particularly grateful for the way Erin has helped us focus on building an inclusive and vibrant church life, where every age and stage is welcomed and valued.

This year has seen exciting developments in our ministry among children and families. We are thrilled to see more children than adults joining us most Sundays, and we wholeheartedly support the work that has gone into making our worship truly intergenerational and accessible to all. The progress made in securing grant funding for building improvements is a significant achievement, and we look forward with anticipation to a transformed, welcoming space in 2025.

Our outreach to the wider Canley community has grown stronger, through deepened partnerships, particularly with Leigh CE Academy. The success of the Easter Trail and the recognition of St Stephen's as a Growing Faith Learning Hub are real signs of God's favour and of the strong foundations being laid for future ministry, especially among families of children with additional needs.

Initiatives such as "BREATHE Canley" and our involvement in community events like the Canley Parade and Big Lunch reflect our ongoing commitment to sharing God's love in practical and creative ways. Likewise, our collaboration with St James Fletchamstead for the Light Party was a wonderful example of churches working together in mission.

We want to express heartfelt thanks to every member of the St Stephen's family. Whether through hospitality, worship, children's activities, practical support, or prayer, each contribution has been vital to our shared life and witness.

Looking ahead, while challenges remain, we are filled with hope. We believe that 2025 will be a year of continued growth in faith, confidence, and outreach, as we seek to welcome more families and see God's Kingdom grow in Canley.

Tom and Katie

St John's Church

It's been a momentous year for St John's (in a good way!). Hope Springs church joined us informally to begin with, then more formally with everyone's agreement in September. We at St John's have benefited enormously from this merger, and I believe Hope Springs has too.

It brought us Steve and Susie Elton as the new St John's church leaders, and we are indebted to them for their supportive and encouraging Barnabas-style leadership. Events this year have included a Fireworks Party in the Garden of Hope (over 500 came and we nearly ran out of hot dogs), multiple Christmas events including a very popular Quiz Night, and more recently the Hot Cross Bun parties and the wonderful Easter Garden Adventure. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make these events happen and be so successful.

We are grateful to the staff team, and to those who lead ministries, for their faithful and inspiring work this year: thank you, David, Caroline, Kathryn, Sarah, Jenni, Liz, Emily, Rachel, Anna, Beth, Stuart, Amy, Mark, and Trevor.

More people have signed up this year for ministries which serve our church on Sundays – hospitality, children's work, youth work, students, stewarding, welcoming, sound and vision desk, worship groups, Dwell. Thank you – the church couldn't run without you. And many more are serving now on our Outreach ministries like Garden of Hope, Westwood Lunch, Dandelions, Art and Craft group, Memory Café, the Football team, Refresh, and Alpha courses. Bless you, as you work hard to bless our friends and neighbours.

Future challenges include the renovation of the St John's building – re-tiling and insulating the roof, and re-ordering inside to make our church more user-friendly to our local community - but plans are being laid, and it feels like we are moving in a good direction.

Ben and Carolyn

St James Church

This year we had the pleasure of appointing Reverend Mohammad Eghtedarian as Associate Minister of our congregation and in September welcoming him and his family, wife Mariam and children Immanuel and Elise, to our fellowship.

Sadly, we also mourned the loss of our former Vicar Steve and his wife Kathy, who tragically were killed in an RTC while on holiday in Wales. Steve had been our Vicar for 19 years during which time we were greatly blessed by their ministry with us and had seen their children David, Jonathan and Sarah grow up and become strong believers with their own ministries. We grieve and pray for them and rejoice also that their parents and grandparents are now at home together with the Lord.

This year has been a very busy year again as we interviewed for an Associate Minister and carried the responsibilities of an interregnum and are grateful to our Priest in Charge, Reverend David Hammond and Archdeacon Barry for their help and support in appointing our Associate Minister Reverend Mohammad.

We also wish to thank all who helped during the interregnum with services including Reverend Kathryn Hammond who regularly conducted our Wednesday Communion Services, and Revd Don Alcock, Revd Clive Hicks and also Pastor Wicklife who was with us from Kenya and who preached at several services. There were many other interim speakers we had – including Rev Annie McCormick who helped us during both our Easter and Pentecost services (and helped me to experiment with the liturgy and service styles); and of course we were also very grateful to Bishop Ruth for Palm Sunday.

We also want to thank all the many leaders and helpers who have faithfully carried out many tasks and ministries and without which our church would not function.

From Tim: - On a personal note, this marks the end of my 6th year as Church Warden. It is customary to step down after 6 years, and so I plan to take a break. Serving as Church Warden has been a privilege, first with Steve, then during the interregnum, and now with Mohammad. I am grateful to my co-wardens, Marlene and then Des, and everyone who has served on PCC and in ministry.

Finally, I am reminded:

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”.

I have found that passage from Isaiah 43 has been coming back to me again and again over these past months. I believe they are both for me and for St James wider. I do not yet ‘perceive’ what it means exactly – but I am starting to see.

I am excited to see where God will be leading us. May the next 6 years be full of his spirit in a new and deeper way. As someone said – may we go Deeper In and Further Out.

Tim and Des

THE BRIDGE JOINT COUNCIL REPORT

The Joint Council of The Bridge Benefice, Coventry

The Joint Council of the Bridge Benefice has met seven times throughout the year to oversee the governance, mission, and operations of the Benefice, comprising St John's, St Stephen's, and associated ministries.

Our meetings were consistently conducted in a spirit of collaboration and prayerful discernment. Standing Committee decisions were noted and ratified as appropriate. It is a registered charity, and its members are the charity's trustees. They are:

Clergy (ex-officio members)

- David Hammond, Vicar
- Erin Gilmour, Associate Minister
- Caroline Hammond, Curate

Lay Leaders (ex-officio member)

- Stephen Elton, St John's Lay Church Leader*

*awaiting charity commission to update to add details.

Elected members (Base, year of the APCM when their term ends)

- Michael Lane (Canley, 2026)
- Tom Hickinbottom (St Stephen's Churchwarden, 2027)
- Matt Jermyn (Canley, 2025)
- Abigail Baxter (Canley, 2027)
- Carolyn Howarth (St John's Churchwarden, 2026)
- Michelle Robinson (St John's, 2027)
- Jan Sayer (Burton Green, 2025)
- Jeff Smailes (St John's, 2026)
- Graham Thomas (St John's, 2025)
- Lydia Sampson (St John's, 2025 - Co-Opted from Hope Springs community)

Staffing and Ministry

This year there were significant staffing updates, including maternity and adoption cover, the appointment of new roles such as the SEND Outreach Worker and Young People's Discipleship Enabler, and developments in safeguarding leadership. Discussions took place on future staffing structures to support the growing demands across the three churches.

Finance

Throughout the year, finances were closely monitored. While income generally tracked close to budget expectations, concerns over deficits were a recurring theme. We felt called to trust God and he has been faithful in his provision this year. Providing us with the resources to extend our staff team as well as undertake new mission and ministries.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remained a key focus, with regular updates, DBS compliance tracking, and policy reviews. Work on improving systems and communication around safeguarding procedures was prioritised.

Buildings and Fabric

Significant projects included preparations for major renovations at St John's, and improvements to accessibility such as handrail installations. Grant funding was sought for building projects which we hope to undertake at Stephen's in 2025.

Mission and Outreach

New initiatives included the Catalyst Student Ministry Project, a proposed new worshipping community in the Garden of Hope, and strengthened school partnerships through the Growing Faith initiative. Work with external organisations such as Hope into Action continued.

Challenges and Priorities

Key challenges included financial sustainability, succession planning for key volunteer roles (e.g., Treasurer, Secretary), and fostering a greater sense of belonging and engagement across congregations. The leadership emphasised prayerful dependence on God's provision and guidance for future growth and unity.

Future

With David's recent appointment to the position of Warden of Leigh Abbey we have begun the process of putting together a parish profile that will help us recruit a new leader for the Bridge, please continue to lift the whole church in your prayers as we move forward.

We thank God for the leadership and vision that David and Caroline have brought us through their time with us and we are excited for their next steps as a family at Leigh Abbey.

Tom Hickinbottom (Lay Chair of the Joint Council)

FLETCHAMSTEAD PCC REPORT

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST JAMES FLETCHAMSTEAD COVENTRY

Clergy: David Hammond (Priest in Charge since 2024);
Mohammad Eghtedarian (Associate Minister since September 2024)

Officers:

Tim Pollard (Warden since 2019)
Des French (Warden since 2022)
Des French (Secretary since 2020)
Dave Cuttler (Treasurer since 2022)

Members:

Until 2027: Marlene Pearson, Trecia Davidson, Sally Noon (since March 2025)
Until 2026: Helen Kearney; Arthur Street (left September 2024) vacancy.
Until 2025: Emmanuel Davidson; Sue Clayden (left March 2025); vacancy.

Other Roles:

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Sue Clayden (September 2023 to March 2025) Sally Noon
(From March 2025)
Electoral Roll Officer: Sue Clayden (2022 - March 2025)
Deanery Synod Reps: Tim Pollard; Sue Clayden (Till March 2025).

The PCC is constituted in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. Its business is to “work in cooperation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church; pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical,” by working with the Vicar and the Associate Minister to ensure the smooth running of the church.

The PCC met 9 times since the 2024 AGM. Buildings, Finances and Safeguarding are set items. The main additional items on the agenda were the appointment of an Associate Minister, linking with the Bridge group of churches, Hall refurbishment, AV upgrade and church boiler replacement.

Our charitable giving in 2024 included: Core Charities: Coventry City Mission £500; Coventry Youth for Christ, £500; Gilead Health Development, £900; British and Foreign Bible Society, £500; HOPE Coventry. £500; Thrive, £500; Coventry Resource Centre for the Blind, £500; Lighthouse Trust, £500; Coventry Food Bank, £500; Christ Care Kuria Rescue Shelter (Kenya), £500.

Des French (PCC Secretary)

SAFEGUARDING REPORTS

The Bridge Coventry

Safeguarding continues to be a high priority for the Bridge keeping all parishioners, church members or anyone within our care safe. In light of the current contextual climate within the Church we are endeavouring to be beyond reproach in our transparency and conduct with safeguarding including safer recruitment.

During 2024 our team has evolved to include Susie Elton, our Bridge Safeguarding Officer, and Lydia Sampson , Assistant Safeguarding Officer. The team also continues to include Emily Newbury who is Safeguarding Champion for St Stephen's. We also give thanks to Rebecca Torpey for her time as Safeguarding Champion at St John's.

Safeguarding continues to be a key agenda item at the Joint Council and the leadership team have ensured that we are compliant with the Church of England's Promoting a Safer Church Policy.

We have recently purchased I know safeguarding- a website allowing us to keep better detailed safeguarding concerns and safety plans confidential and centralised. This allows us to connect with our website , use QR codes so as anyone at any point can refer to a safeguarding concern. This also allows us to produce detailed reports for JC, joint church meetings and also for the Diocese. This also shows us the trends and predominant issues arising and allows the team to attend bespoke training around such things.

Susie Lydia and David continue to have meetings with the Diocese to ensure we are continuing to be outstanding in our approach.

We are currently preparing training within the church for anyone who would Like to have a wider understanding of safeguarding and for volunteers to feel more confident in their role.

Susie Elton (Benefice Safeguarding Officer)

St James Fletchamstead

Safeguarding along with promoting a safe environment and culture has continued to be a priority at St James Fletchamstead where we have a team of volunteers and employed staff who work tirelessly to deliver the church's programmes and events.

The previous Parish Safeguarding Officer had worked very hard to ensure accurate records were maintained and safe recruitment guidelines were applied.

There was a change of Parish Safeguarding Officer in February 2025 with the position being ratified at PCC in March 2025 as the appropriate training was completed. There have been no reports of safeguarding incidents in recent months.

Although it is a requirement in line with Safe Recruitment that all church volunteers and/or employees are DBS checked and complete Safeguarding training before they take up their positions, there have been some incidents of new people joining teams without safe recruitment being followed. They are subsequently being chased up for DBS checks and Safeguarding training which they have been very cooperative with.

Job descriptions for church volunteer roles are being reviewed and updated.

As plans are progressed for St James to join the Bridge the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer will change.

Sally Noon (Parish Safeguarding Officer)

STAFFING REPORT

Staffing in 2024 remained relatively stable in terms of personnel, but it was still a stretching and formative year. We learnt a lot about one another and began shaping a new culture for the season ahead.

Several members of our Bridge staff team were on leave for wonderful reasons: David was on sabbatical, Anna on adoption leave, and Sarah on maternity leave. During David's sabbatical, Erin stepped in as *Acting Vicar*. We were really grateful to welcome Amy Cole and Beth Ferguson, who joined the team in the interim as *Children's Discipleship Enabler* and *Operations Manager*. They were a real gift and brought a huge amount to the team.

Emily joined us at the start of the year as our *Cleaner* and cared beautifully for the St Stephen's and St John's buildings. We said goodbye to her in the summer as she returned to Germany, and Rachel has taken on the role with great energy and care.

Liz and Trevor also joined the team in voluntary capacities as *Administrator* and *Youth Leader* respectively. Liz supported St John's brilliantly in the interim and we are so thankful for her time and commitment. Trevor has brought real energy and passion to youth discipleship, working alongside Amy to help lead our youth work.

As St John's explored a partnership with Hope Springs, and with Erin's calling to St Stephen's, the Joint Council created the part-time role of *St John's Lay Church Leader*. Steve Elton, was appointed through the usual recruitment process and it has been a joy to have him on the team and to see what God's doing through Erin's leadership in Canley.

Mark began as a volunteer *Student Worker* at St John's and is now employed in the role through grant funding as *Student and Social Media Discipleship Enabler*. You can read more about his work with students below, and the exciting growth we have seen.

Mohammad joined the team as *Associate Minister*, with responsibility for leading St James Fletchamstead after a period of interregnum. He stepped with gentleness into the role during a particularly difficult season, as the congregation continued to grieve the loss of their former incumbent and his wife, Steve and Kathy Burch. Steve was well known to the Bridge staff, having joined us for prayers during the latter part of his time at St James.

In September 2024, Ben Packwood and Katherine Martin began training as *Ordinands* at St John's and St James respectively. It is a real privilege to have people serving and learning within our churches, and we remain committed to championing leadership development across the benefice, both in ordained and lay, paid and unpaid positions.

At the start of 2025, we were delighted to welcome Amy Cole back onto the team as *SEND Outreach Worker* and *Young People's Discipleship Enabler*, supporting the Growing Faith Hub project based at Leigh CofE Academy and working in Canley too.

We also said farewell to Sue Clayden in January, following her faithful service at St James as both *Children's and Families Discipleship Enabler* and, later, as *Administrator*. She served diligently throughout the pandemic, through interregnum and saw their new Church Leader arrive and settle.

This year we rejoiced. Our capacity was stretched, as it often is. We grieved as individuals, with one another, and as a team. We had honest conversations. We reconciled. We moved towards new structures. Through it all, we've been learning how to work well together, building stronger relationships and deepening a shared sense of calling.

I (Sarah) am hopeful as we head into 2025. We are continuing to grow into an organisation where multiplication is central to who we are, with strong, resilient structures that support our staff and facilitate the spiritual and numerical growth of our churches, led by our Church Leaders.

Sarah Packwood (Operations Minister)



Staff Team May 2025

Back row: Mark, Stuart, Mohammad, Ben, Andrew

Middle row: David, Sarah, Steve, Trevor, Erin

Front row: Anna, Rachel, Jenni, Caroline, Amy

ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH, CANLEY

Overview

New Year's Day 2024 marked an exciting new chapter for St. Stephen's as Erin joined us from St. John's to lead our community.

This past year has been a journey of deepening and strengthening our faith together. We've focused on nurturing our church family and actively seeking ways to bring blessings to our local community.

One of our particular joys is that we regularly welcome more children than adults each week, inspiring us to actively explore truly intergenerational worship experiences every Sunday. This has involved exploring different biblical themes and stories through engaging games and creative activities that involve everyone.

Recognising that a significant number of our children have additional needs, we prioritized making 'church' accessible to all ages and stages early in the year. We began addressing barriers within our building and were successful in securing grant funding, with the hope that 2025 will see the completion of much-needed work to transform our space into a warm, attractive, and accessible environment.

Outreach and Community

Throughout the year, we have diligently fostered strong relationships with key stakeholders in Canley, leading to increased opportunities for community involvement. Our connection with Leigh Academy has strengthened, and as a result of this we were able to have the Easter Trail held at the school for the first time, this was a wonderful day attended by over 100 people, including a surprise visit from Bishop Ruth. Furthermore, our commitment to the school has deepened with Erin joining Anna Hickinbottom as foundation governors, alongside our continued leadership of weekly collective worship.

A significant highlight of 2024 was St. Stephen's being selected by the Church of England as one of just 13 Growing Faith Learning Hubs nationwide. This exciting partnership with Leigh CE Academy will focus on supporting families with children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

June saw the sun shining on the vibrant Canley Parade and Big Lunch, where our church creatively represented St. Stephen's with fantastic costumes, joining the wider community in celebrating God's wonderful creation (complete with rather snazzy t-shirts!).

New Wine, always a summer highlight, provided a valuable time of refreshing and re-envisioning for our church, inspiring many to consider new ways of serving our local community. This inspiration directly led to the November 2024 launch of "BREATHE Canley," a monthly sanctuary for those caring for individuals with additional needs, offering a literal space to breathe. This vital ministry is led and supported by a dedicated team of women from St. Stephen's, and we eagerly anticipate God's work through it.

In October, we partnered with St. James Fletchamstead to host a fantastic Light Party for our local communities, a joyful evening celebrating Jesus as the light of the world.

The year concluded in true St. Stephen's style with our engaging Christmas Events. The Nativity Trail warmly welcomed families from both our church and the wider community to explore the wonder of Christmas. Our Carol'oke event once again brought delightful surprises with enthusiastic participation and even a music video or two!

The Christian life is sometimes described as a journey of blessings and battles, and the life of a church can often feel similar. However, throughout this past year, for every challenge St. Stephen's has faced, we have also experienced abundant blessings.

As a close-knit community, it feels inappropriate to single out individuals for thanks, St. Stephen's is truly a family where each person has played a special role in supporting one another and reaching out to our community throughout the year.

My hope for 2025 is that it will be a year of significant growth in missional confidence, where we welcome more families into our community and see God's Kingdom come in Canley.

Erin Gilmour (Associate Minister)

Growing Faith Hub

In 2024, St Stephen's was honoured to be selected by the Church of England as one of 13 Growing Faith Learning Hubs nationwide. The successful application was to partner with Leigh CE Academy to support families with children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Growing Faith aims to shift the culture and practice of churches to place children, young people and families at the centre of their ministry and mission. Its goal is to unite churches, schools, and homes to help families experience life to the full. The Church of England's ambition is to double the number of active young disciples by 2030.

Our hub will aim to:

- Empower children and young people as decision-makers, particularly those with SEND whose voices are not often heard.
- Work with the school to put on events that invite families to start their faith journey
- Be an innovation centre that inspires and supports church leaders and contributes to the Diocese by sharing transferable learning

"He called a little child to him and placed the child among them. And he said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'" - Matthew 18:3

Amy Cole (SEND Outreach Worker and Young People's Discipleship Enabler)

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, WESTWOOD

It's with both joy and astonishment that I am writing this report just over a year since we planted Hope Springs Church as a seed within St John's. How has it only been a year? Reflecting back to our first shared service in February 2024, it's clear how much God's faithfulness, the Spirit's leading, and the openness of hearts at both St John's and Hope Springs have shaped this beautiful journey.

The first half of 2024 was marked by a strong sense of unity—two communities with a shared calling not just to gather or do good, but to resource, support, and empower others in mission. A rare calling, with a vision that has grown and deepened.

Our commitment to “practising the practices”—prayer, worship, fasting, generosity—has laid a vital foundation, for both now and what's ahead. These rhythms have helped us remain rooted in Jesus as we deepen our relationship with God and one another, preparing for what God has for us. The teams who serve on Sunday mornings - welcome, audio, visuals, worship, preaching / leading, intercessions, hospitality - have done an amazing job of creating a culture and environment where people can meet with God and one another, being transformed in the process! The fact people don't want to leave on a Sunday is testament to the work everyone does to create such a wonderful space

In July, we hosted our first St John's Learning Community. Leaders and teams gathered to pray, encourage one another, and sharpen our collective sense of mission. It was a key moment as we discerned priorities for the next 6–12 months and reflected on how to keep a missional edge at the heart of all we do, and something I think has played a key role in seeing lots of new people coming the Sunday meetings and other groups and events, with many getting involved in the life of the church.

A major milestone came in September when the integration of Hope Springs and St John's was formalised, and Steve was appointed Lay Leader. Since then, we've intentionally continued to look for even more opportunities to create accessible, welcoming spaces for the wider community—through our existing groups, targeted outreach events, and clear pathways like Alpha for those exploring faith. The Alpha course, led by Jan and a gifted team (including some amazing cooks!), provided a space for deep conversations, strengthened relationships, and meaningful encounters with Jesus. We are excited to run it again in Spring 2025. September also saw the launch of the Garden of Hope worshipping community, which builds on the fantastic work that Caroline and the team have done to cultivate a peaceful and welcoming environment where people can meet with God!

Outreach and Community

October saw the return of students, and it's been a blessing to welcome both familiar and new faces. Mark and the student team have cultivated an inviting, vibrant,

outward-focused environment where students are encouraged to grow in discipleship and live out their faith. Similarly the work that Anna (and previously Amy), Trevor and their teams have done over the last number of months with kids and youth has been great to see! There is the beginnings of a movement stirring in this generation!

October also saw the launch of our new volunteering model, and the response has been incredible. Over 75 Christmas cards were written to individuals, couples, and families (which probably represented nearly 100 people) who serve across our church community. This is a powerful testament to the heart of everyone at St Johns—to love others, extend God's Kingdom, and lift high the name of Jesus through faithful service. This heart was evident in the significant uplift in giving that happened as we transitioned from 2024 into 2025! Thank you, your generosity is inspiring!

In November, over 500 people attended our Fireworks Extravaganza, with several connecting into church life afterward. Christmas followed with 11 unique events that reached a wide demographic—over 1,000 people attended the events across the Autumn season. Each event created space for people to engage, connect, and hear the unchanging good news of Jesus in ways that were accessible and relevant to them and where they were at!

The Football Group, which began casually in June, has grown to over 15 regulars, around 50% of which are not yet connected into a church. We're now exploring a larger training venue, the possibilities of setting up a Connect group linked to it and even considering joining the church league in September 2025—an exciting step in relational mission.

Refresh continues to flourish, with there continuation of the monthly morning gathering and the addition of an evening gathering, leading to the fostering deeper relationships and new connections. Westwood Lunch and the Memory Café remain significant places of welcome and support, providing consistent, outward-focused care for those in need. They are such a beautiful ministry!

Dwell, which originally met at St James, has expanded with a second monthly gathering now taking place at St John's. We're encouraged by its growth and the spiritual nourishment it offers. Likewise, Dandelions and the Art & Craft group are seeing growth and increasing numbers, to the point where the space is being filled even more—a good challenge to face!

Thank you for all you do. As we look to 2025, we believe God is calling us to go deeper in discipleship, bolder in mission, and wider in outreach. Every contribution matters. Let's continue to bring what we have, trusting that God will use it for His glory.

2024 has been a great year, I have loved journeying it with you all! Bring on 2025!

Students

In September, we were joined by a wonderful group of first-year students who have been a real joy to work with. We spent the first term getting to know one another, and during that time we began hosting weekly student lunches after the Sunday service.

Since Christmas, we've been running the Alpha course. It's been amazing to see people encountering the Holy Spirit throughout the year—He moved with particular power during the Alpha Holy Spirit Day.

Over the past year, we've also increased our use of social media, sharing short videos from our services on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Please check out our videos and give them a like!

Several students have shared with me how their excitement for the Bible and their faith has grown over the course of the year. I was especially encouraged by a recent story of a student who shared their faith with a parent, leading to that parent responding positively and starting to attend church.

In the coming term, we'll be launching Kintsugi Hope, a Christian course designed to support mental health and build resilience.

Mark Ahmad (Student & Social Media Discipleship Enabler)

The Garden of Hope

This year the Garden of Hope has gone from strength to strength. The wonderful team of volunteer gardeners and mowers continue to transform the space. This year we have erected a 3 side shelter (thanks to some generous personal donations), this has made the garden even more popular to visitors.

In September we launched a new worshipping community that gathers 4pm-5pm every Sunday in the garden. Although it is only attended by a small number of people it has a lovely atmosphere and we are hoping that it continues to grow through the warmer months. The service has a strong focus on connecting to God through nature and we have a lovely mixture of ages who gather. From June we will be meeting on the first Sunday of the month rather than weekly.

Over the last year The Bridge and St John's have hosted some events in the garden which have provided opportunities to make connections with people in the local community. These events have been fruitful, well attended and joyful.

As well as hosting large scale events, we have run various retreats/events for smaller groups too. It was wonderful over the summer to build relationships with regular visitors

to the garden who had been impacted by the peace of God there. One lady said she experienced peace as she was lying in a hammock for the first time in 18 months! The garden is a sacred space for many unchurched people and we are excited by how God is meeting with people in the garden. We have finally spent all the money that was awarded through the Offa House Spirituality Capital Fund and this has helped us to set up the garden well. Over the next year we have lots of ideas for how to improve the garden as well as maintain it well. If you'd like to give financially to the project to help it be sustainable, either regularly or through a one off donation you can do so with this link:

<https://thebridgecoventry.churchsuite.com/donate/fund/ojcmchjg>

You may be aware that I (Caroline Hammond) will be leaving Coventry in July and although it's sad to leave behind a labour of love, I am happy to announce that Ben Packwood will be taking on oversight of the Garden of Hope for the next year.

Caroline Hammond

ST JAMES FLETCHAMSTEAD

Overview

We give thanks for the arrival of our new minister, Rev Mohammad, who joined us recently. Although a health issue at the beginning of his ministry caused some delays to planned activities, we are pleased to report that he has now returned to full-time ministry with renewed energy.

Under his leadership, we have seen thoughtful changes to our worship services, including the introduction of new liturgical and practical elements. These have helped make our services more engaging and increasingly intercultural. A new rota has also been established, with more volunteers now involved in preaching, readings, intercessions, and various ministry teams.

Regular meetings with the Standing Committee and PCC have resumed, with intentional steps taken to diversify its membership. In addition, new discipleship resources and teaching materials are being developed.

Our Sunday worship continues to thrive, with rising attendance at both the 9:00 am and 10:30 am services, alongside special services such as Remembrance, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, and Easter Dawn.

We are addressing practical challenges, including the Quinquennial Report, a faulty boiler, ceiling leaks, and PCC House management. A new visual system is now in place.

Please continue to pray for building repairs and that all who use our church may encounter Jesus.

Discipleship

Over recent months, we have made several key changes to enhance our worship and community life at St James. A revised order of service has been introduced, bringing renewed structure and flow to our gatherings. Additionally, new members have joined the rota for preaching, reading, intercessions, and teaching, enriching our services with fresh voices and perspectives.

A major development has been the installation of a large TV and visual system, significantly improving the overall quality of worship through clearer displays and multimedia integration.

We launched a new fasting course, which was well received and encouraged deeper spiritual reflection. Furthermore, the Diocese-led "Stage of Life" course was hosted at St

James and attended by a strong number of congregation members, offering insight and support across various life stages.

Key liturgical events such as Remembrance Sunday, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, and Easter Sunday were delivered with updated formats, bringing renewed meaning and engagement for attendees.

Life Groups have also benefited from a structured Bible study guide, fostering more consistent and meaningful discussions.

We give thanks for these positive developments and look forward to continued growth in faith and fellowship across all areas of church life.

Life Groups

Life Groups are a valuable support network for our journey through life as a Christian. They are safe places where members can ask questions, pray for each other, study the Word, have fun together, challenge each other and learn from each other. They meet in people's homes or in Church and consist of about 6-8 people, meeting on weekday afternoons or evenings weekly or fortnightly. We encourage everyone in church to belong to a Life Group. Please speak to myself or Mohammad if you are not yet a member of a group.

Emergency Prayer Chain

Jeremiah 29 verse 12 Our heavenly Father says, 'When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen.' The Emergency Prayer chain is part of our care for one another as the body of Christ at St James. There are 20 folk who can respond promptly to prayer requests. Anyone who needs urgent prayer please contact: Chris Maud 07702841804

Outreach and Community

St James continues to be a place of welcome, hospitality, and mission within our neighbourhood. Our buildings are regularly used by a wide range of community groups, reflecting the openness of our church. Notably, a local Muslim group recently used our hall to celebrate Ramadan. This was a significant moment in our witness, reminding us that our mission is to show the love of Christ in action. We continue to pray for opportunities to share the Gospel of Christ with all who enter our space.

We are also blessed by the growing diversity within our congregation. People from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia have joined our services, enriching our worship and fellowship. This multicultural presence reflects the universal nature of the Body of Christ and reminds us of our calling to be inclusive and welcoming.

New relationships have also begun to form with local schools and community organisations, opening further doors for engagement and service. We are excited about the potential for future collaboration.

Our partnership with a Christian orphanage and school in Kenya remains a strong and valued part of our mission work. Alongside this, we continue to support a variety of local and international charities through regular giving and special appeals.

We ask for continued prayer: for more opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, for deeper connections with those using our facilities, and for stronger partnerships with local businesses and community leaders.

May we continue to be a faithful presence in our area, offering compassion, hope, and the light of Christ to all who cross our path.

Mohammad Eghtedarian (Associate Minister)

Jigsaw

Before having to close Jigsaw in early February due to the failure of the church heating system and later by the loss of four team members due to moving house or changing job. We were celebrating God's continued blessing as we sought to provide a safe place where parents/grandparents and toddlers (average attendance 44) could experience something of the Kingdom of God. Our prayer time before each session enabled us to continue drawing on God's amazing resources to love as He has loved us and to be open to people sharing their problems and praying with them. Parents and grandparents were encouraged to help their children/grandchildren learn to play safely, share toys, develop language and manual skills and enjoy craft sessions celebrating God's wonderful creation. Their continuing willingness to be involved in whatever their child was doing and provide the necessary encouragement and monitoring, especially during the tidy-up time, continued. Song time, signalled by the lighting of the Jigsaw candle, ended the session. This is a special time for the Jigsaw family to come together to share information and prayers, celebrate birthdays and remind ourselves that our God is a great big God who holds us in His hands. As families start to leave, there is always a queue of children waiting to practise blowing out the candle so they can do it successfully when it's their birthday.

Rosemary Line

Pastoral Care Ministry

The Pastoral Care Team has had one meeting so far this year and continues to function with five members. Throughout the interregnum we managed to oversee the people of St James to ensure their needs were met.

Life Group Leaders have been responsible for members of their groups but anyone who is not in a Life Group has been overseen by the Pastoral Care Team. We have been visiting

and phoning as the need requires both Church members if they are unable to attend Church and had referrals to visit and phone others if they require spiritual support and care. One Bible has been given out to a non-Church member and spiritual support offered and received on a regular basis.

Anne Richards has agreed to join our team and help with the running of the Pastoral Care Team. We will therefore be updating our current team members and looking for new Team members in the near future. We thank God for his Pastoral gifting of our team members and pray that the needs of St James congregation and the surrounding areas are met with his loving care.

Helen Kearney & Chris Maud

Open Doors

Open Doors is for people over the age of 50 years, and we meet on Monday afternoons during school term times 2.00 - 3.30pm. We have regular attendance of around 25 – 31 members who are both Church members and non-church members.

We are a friendly group who welcome new members to come in and have a chat over a cuppa, cake and engage in various activities. These include quizzes, guest speakers, live entertainment, skittles, crafting, bingo, occasional outings and seasonal meditations.

We have introduced prayer during the session and encourage prayer for family and friends who are going through difficult circumstances or ill health. Members have been good at asking for prayer since this was introduced and we ask for feedback when prayers have been answered to encourage people on their faith journey as we feel this is an important part of the group's ministry.

We have had several people leave the group due to being fragile or incapacitated and some have moved into care/nursing homes. We try to stay in touch with their relatives to update the group and continue to pray for them. If anyone would like to join us either as a member or as a volunteer, they would be made very welcome.

Helen Kearney, Des French, Diana Bartlett.

Knitting Group

The Knitting Group meets fortnightly on Thursdays afternoons from 1.45- 3.30pm at church, we have about 6 regular members. We knit shawls and scarves for the Shawl Ministry, and we knit for shoeboxes, we also knit for ourselves. We give a donation to the church, and shoeboxes. We have tea, coffee and biscuits and chat while we knit. New members are always welcome.

Marlene

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Children

Firstly, I want to say a huge thank you to Amy Cole, for taking on the Children's Discipleship Enabler role whilst I was on adoption leave. Amy did a fab job keeping everything going and implementing helpful changes from November 2023 until August 2024. Amy has expanded and strengthened children's and youth ministries across the two church bases, launching new groups, writing bespoke curriculums, and organising well-attended outreach events. Despite challenges to do with workload and having enough team, strong progress has been made in inclusion, team building, and transitions to youth work. It is a joy to get to work alongside her now, in her new Growing Faith job at St Stephen's!

Before going on adoption leave, I was only actually in my new CDE role across the Bridge for one week! Since my return in August 2024, it has been great getting to know St John's families better, as well as continuing relationships with St Stephen's families, and a pleasure to work alongside an amazing team of volunteers - at both bases. A big shout out to you guys - thank you so much for all you do to serve our kids - you are literally AMAZING!

Thanks also to Rebecca Torpey and the Dandelions team, who serve young families in our church and local community so committedly, week in week out. Toddler groups are often called the hidden treasure of church life - they're not seen on a Sunday, but the way they serve God in the week is outstanding. (Joey and I have very much benefited from the team's care and fun activities on adoption leave!)

During the Autumn term, the Kids Connect Group restarted after the Summer break, and we had great fun getting children to ask 'big questions' they have about God, faith... anything! We explored their questions over the term - which led to some very interesting discussions.

This term, a lot of my time was spent trying to gather more kids team volunteers at St John's. This is an ongoing challenge, which means we currently aren't at the point where we can split back into 5-7s and 8-11s. But despite this, God has blessed the ministry with some amazing volunteers who work their socks off! I also spent time thinking strategically about the shape of our Kids team, and felt God give me the vision to set up a Bridge Kids Leadership Team, with leaders from across bases. The purpose being to support and resource them as they lead their groups, pray together, plan together, and get excited together. Watch this space!

In November we had a fun month - a Movie Social for families across The Bridge (including hot chocolate mountains!) as well as a 4-week online training course for

parents of young children in our church. It was run by Parenting for Faith, about nurturing the spiritual lives of babies and toddlers. Nine parents attended, and it provided a great space to stop and think, chat/pray with each other and share ideas/resources.

December was full of festive fun! From the Nativity Trail to the Pop Up Nativity - we saw many non-church families come through our doors. (A huge thanks to Jenni Dunne, Rebecca Torpey, Kathryn Hammond for leading these events and all who volunteered!) And for the first time, we invited the local community and St John's families to 'Family Carols in the Community', in partnership with Crest Nicholson on the new estate further up Westwood Heath Road,. It was such a special and fun event, singing around a big Christmas tree, with lots of instruments, backing tracks and mince pies! A great opportunity to work with Crest Nicholson - a relationship we are continuing to build upon.

Another new opportunity has developed with Cannon Park Primary School, where one class came to St John's for a tour of the church and the Garden of Hope. It was a fun time - and as they left, one teacher said she had learnt so much! As a result, the door has opened to go into Cannon Park to do assemblies.

Sunday services continued to include groups for 0-5s (at St John's) and 5-11s (monthly at St Stephen's, 3 times a month at St John's). The main challenge this term has been balancing my hours between the two bases, but despite this, I have loved working with our children, watching how enthusiastic they are, with a special mention to our wonderful young children (we adults have a lot to learn from them)! So I finish with a big thanks to all you children, for being awesome and such a joy to serve!

Anna Martin (Children's Discipleship Enabler)

At St James, we are blessed with a wonderful, diverse group of children aged 4 to 15 attending our Sunday sessions. Numbers vary weekly, with up to 15 children at times. Some are new to the Christian faith, eager to explore and learn. We continue using the YFC 'Go' curriculum, supplemented by Mustard Seeds resources to cater to the wide age range. This term, we've focused on themes like 'Living Wisely' and 'Connecting with God', exploring topics such as teamwork, worship, and the Easter story. Children have also been learning Bible navigation and memory verses, and some now share what they've learned with the wider church family. A highlight has been our outreach, including, Christmas Eve family service, a school assembly at Templars and Leigh Primary schools and a well-attended Good Friday Family event.

Marit & Fiona

It's encouraging to see children building friendships, growing in faith, and feeling truly accepted and valued in our church communities.

Youth

November 23:

- 15 rising youth linked to St Stephens (10-11 year olds).
- Anna, Jonathan, Amy, Emily, Michael and Mo gathered and pastored these children via two Kids Connect groups from 8 years old.
- Dec 2023: Observed no longer “kids” and now “youth” needing something new to meet their developmental/spiritual needs.

January 24:

- Strategically gathered St John's young people (YP) into St Stephen's Kids Connect groups
- Trevor worked hard to gather team and set the vision of the Bridge Youth.

Summer 24:

- April: Launched Bridge Youth with 21 YP
- Ran Youth Alpha
- Took YP on several trips/events: Snowdonia, Youth City Prayer and Praise, Thrive, Night Hike, Bowling
- YP exploring faith, prayer and asking big questions.

Winter 24:

- Growth to 30 YP on Bridge Youth register
- 18 YP are linked to St Stephens
- Bridge YP bonding as group with a good community feel
- Weekly Thursday attendance at Bridge Youth between 18 and 22.
- Sunday attendance of youth at St Stephens between 6 and 10.
- St Stephens' YP being trained up and put on team rotas for tech and hospitality on Sundays.
- Seen influx of “unaccompanied” YP linked to Bridge Youth on Sunday mornings
- Several St Stephens youth also attending and inviting friends to youth group at St James.

Trevor Chappel & Amy Cole

FABRIC REPORT

St Stephen's, Canley

This report outlines the condition and status of the fabric of St Stephen's Canley for the current year, noting that no material changes or alterations have been made to the property. It serves to document the upkeep and preservation efforts in maintaining the church in accordance with the guidelines and requirements of the Church of England. The church has been awarded a number of grants specifically for improvements to the building which we hope to undertake in 2025.

The roof tiles and gutters have been inspected and cleaned. The walls and stained-glass windows remain in good condition. The window in the nave has a small hole. The toilet windows are in need of replacement. The main entrance and side doors are in reasonable condition.

Both the nave and sanctuary are in reasonable condition, though could warrant redecoration. The floor in the sanctuary is in need of replacement as elements of the laminate flooring are lifting up causing a trip hazard. This has been mitigated with tape for the time being. The chairs are in good condition. The electrical systems, including lighting and heating, have been regularly tested and are fully operational. The kitchen circuit is limited in its capacity and would warrant an upgrade when possible. There are no known issues with the plumbing.

Landscaping: The churchyard is well-kept, with regular maintenance of the grounds. The pathways and lawns are in good condition, with no significant changes.

Boundary Walls and Gates: The boundary walls and gates have been inspected and are in stable condition, requiring no immediate attention.

Routine maintenance tasks have been carried out consistently throughout the year to ensure the preservation of the church's fabric. This includes cleaning, inspections, and minor repairs as necessary.

Tom Hickinbottom (Churchwarden)

St John's, Westwood

The major work on the building in 2024 was the recovering of the flat roof and associated works. The overall cost of the project was nearly £100,000 and was funded by a grant for FCC Communities Foundation and a claim to recover the VAT on the project. The work was completed in Q1. This work has eliminated the leaks, improved the drainage from the roof and around the porch as well reducing the heat loss through the roof.

A handrail has been added on the path from the car park to the main entrance to the church extension. This has significantly improved access for people who found the change in levels and camber difficult to manage. Additionally, there were two working parties in 2024, these helped to keep on top of the maintenance of the grounds. The list of jobs at these events is always more than can be achieved in half a day. It was fantastic to see support from new people as well as the 'regulars'.

Work has continued into how best to manage recovering the roof in the main church buildings. There has been a site visit to a church with solar panels. Further visits are planned to churches to understand heating solutions as our gas boiler is nearing the end of its life. Consultations have taken place with a number of experts including people from the diocese. The next step is to finalise a brief to architects to develop a scheme for the new roof and associated works. The scheme will be shared with everybody, hopefully, later this year.

A Quinquennial Inspection took place in March 2025 and apart from the need to recover the roof in the church, there are a number of actions needing to be addressed over the next few months so more support for the working parties will be much appreciated.

Jeff, Phil & Dave (Fabric Team)

St James, Fletchamstead

Church Hall: A Phase 2 upgrade was completed with Coundon Care and included complete refurbishment of the kitchen, replacement of radiators with double units and construction of a ramp at the front door. Phase 3 is currently underway with the help of a paid part time fundraiser and project manager which will include replacement of all windows with double glazed units.

Church: Failure of the gas boiler in February 2025 has entailed investigating electric replacements to comply with the CofE commitment to net zero by 2030. A temporary electric heater has been purchased and long term options are being investigated. The 5 yearly electrical inspection was completed and resulting work is to be carried out. The Quinquennial report was also completed and actions are to be carried out including electrical work and roof rain water leaks..The AV system was upgraded. A building fund for donations and grants has been started to enable the necessary church building works to be completed.

Rental House: A letting agent has been employed to manage the house.

Des French (PCC Secretary)

FINANCIAL REPORTS

The Bridge Coventry

Finance Report – full details in the year end accounts

The Joint Council of the Bridge Benefice, Coventry has now been in operation for 4 years. The Charity Commission has sanctioned that the existing charity registration of St John's can be re-named 'The Bridge Benefice Coventry' whilst keeping the existing charity number.

The accounts of the two Parishes of St John's Westwood and St Stephen's Canley were transferred to the Joint Council on 1st January 2021 and this is the report of the combined accounts for 2024. The Bridge is two bases namely St John's Westwood, St Stephen's Canley.

The Bridge Benefice Increased by £16,038 (all funds) for 2024. The performance for unrestricted funds only is as follows: -

In comparison to 2023 income was: -

- Planned giving was £235,462 including Gift aid. In 2023 giving was £214,016.
- Gift Aid was £35,912 of the planned giving. In 2023 Gift Aid was £39,575.
- The trading activities of Occasional Offices, room hire and Car park rental, totalled £19,997. In 2023 was £16,571.
- There was Other Income of £393.
- In addition, there was grant income of £6,053 used to replace the flat roof, a further gift of £25,000 towards the main church roof.
- Overall Income was £286,905
-

In comparison to 2023 expenditure was as follows: -

- The total cost of staff was €94,106. In 2023 it was £75,561.
- Groups and meetings expenditure was £11,663. In 2023 it was £12,075.
- Spend on buildings, equipment etc was £76,909. In 2023 it was £58,097.
- Parish Share was £80,000. In 2023 it was £80,000
- Gifts to supported organisations was on budget at £23,270. In 2023 £32,400 was given to these organisations. The support percentage of forecast income was reduced from 12% to 10% from 2023 to 2024 hence the drop in amount given away
- Overall expenditure was £285,948, In 2023 it was £258,303

Overall, this resulted in a surplus of £957 in 2024 on unrestricted funds. In 2023 the deficit was £27,619. This leaves cash in the bank at year end of £35,590 in the general account plus £29,792 in a designated building fund for St John's, so a total of £65,382 in unrestricted funds.

Thus, the finances of The Bridge Benefice are in a stronger position at the end of 2024 with unrestricted and designated funds representing 22.7% of the turnover in 2024 which is above the target range of 10% to 15%.

The strong year end financial position is thanks to donations totalling £45,000 in the last few months of 2024.

The fiat roof at St John's was replaced in the spring of 2024. The overall cost of the project was £86,646. This was funded by:

- A grant paid directly to the contractor by the grant funding body of £60,974 ex VAT
- recovering the VAT on the project of £15,894
- The Church using its designated building fund to cover the balance of £16,494

To grow the continuing work of the church, as we hope to do, we need to encourage some further increases in regular income

The buildings at both St Stephen's and St John's require investment

- At St John's a new roof for the main church building plus associated add-ons. This is yet to be costed but likely to be over £1,000,000.
- At St Stephen's is continuing consultation with the Canley Community Centre to build a new building which is both a church and a community centre. Further preparatory work will continue in 2025.

God's generosity and blessings are again recognised by the Joint Council as He continues to grow His work, and we continue to seek His will to further develop and grow His kingdom through His churches St John's Westwood, St Stephen's Canley.

It is expected that St James Fletchamstead will join the Bridge during the second half of 2025.

Jeff Smailes (Treasurer)

St James Fletchamstead

At first glance, it could appear that 2024 was a year in which we managed to balance the books in that all our charitable enterprises made a net operating profit of £4k taking our total funds to

£214k (See statement of financial affairs). This however masks a significant challenge in that a considerable amount of our unspent income came from restricted grants for upgrades to the Hall. We knew at the outset that 2024 would pose a number of challenges as we navigated our way through an interregnum, hence we had agreed to set a deficit operating budget of £12k, but the financial reality was tougher in that our net deficit in general funds was over £22k. This was due principally to a reduction in both regular and one off donations of £14k. We managed to offset this with a reduction in expenditure of £4k.

The net result is that going into 2025, we no longer have any cash reserves to draw down on, so expenditure cannot be allowed to exceed income. A neutral budget has been set and agreed by the PCC on this understanding. It has also been assumed that giving from donors will increase by £10k. We are expecting a number of cost increases, but have reduced the proposed

expenditure by £14k. To balance the books, we have reduced the Parish Share by £20k to £37k. This is not sustainable in the long term if we expect to continue to have a full time minister leading our congregation.

Whilst we need to exercise prudence, there is much to give thanks for and celebrate. Our charity shop continues to be an effective source of help and support to our local communities, whilst adequately balancing the books. We have also embarked on major upgrades to the Hall.

During 2024 we raised £74.5k in grants, of which £45k has been spent on building repairs and improvements. This will culminate in the full refurbishment of the kitchen which is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2025. We have committed to continuing this work with a plan to raise a further £100k for additional improvements to the Hall and adjacent facilities.

Going into 2025, we know that we need to address issues such as a heating system that needs replacing, a building that needs major repairs to make it fit for purpose, as well as a need to strengthen and grow our community. We need to continue to pray for growth in engagement of current and new members, spiritually and practically. Please pray that we will be given the wisdom to use what we have and what we receive effectively. Pray that we will see an increase in financial support from our donors, and that we are diligent and successful in finding grants, developing income streams and reducing expenditure.

Dave Cuttler (Treasurer)

ELECTORAL ROLLS REPORT

This report is for the year January to December 2024. The Electoral Roll included the two congregations of St John's and St Stephen's. We began the year with 149 people on the electoral roll.

The electoral roll has been revised for 2025 with the following numbers:

- 20 members at St Stephen's Church, Canley
- 97 members at St John the Baptist, Westwood.
- 40 members at St James, Fletchamstead

DEANERY REPORT

David Hammond continued as Area Dean there has been a continued commitment to praying together and building relationships between churches.

Deanery Synod acts as an intermediary between the Councils of each parish and the Synod of the diocese as a whole. With representatives from each parish.

While typically Coventry South and Kenilworth have met together in the past - more recently we have been having separate meetings (for Coventry South) allowing us to spend more time on local matters roughly twice a year.

Parishes take it turns to present the battles, breakthroughs and blessings that they are having.

Tim Pollard (Deanery and Diocesan Synod Representative)

MISSION HUB REPORT

2024 marked our second year as a Mission Hub. To summarize our journey so far: 2023 was about laying the foundation, and 2024 has been the year we've started to build upon it.

We continue to gather church leaders from our local area for monthly prayer and mutual support. We continue to be a supportive and encouraging presence at our monthly deanery meetings, always looking for ways to bless and support those churches around us.

Highlights

Some highlights include the launch of a new worshipping community in the Garden of Hope and the growing opportunities to collaborate in mission with other churches in our deanery.

We have received a warm welcome from and strengthened our connections with our local schools, we have also had opportunities to connect with several secondary schools in our area. One significant highlight is the grant we have received to launch a Growing Faith Learning Hub in our local church of England school. There is great vision for this and a hope that in coming years this will not only lead to church growth but also the creation of new communities of faith in our wider community.

New Growth

Early in 2024 we saw Hope Springs join St John's with Steve Elton taking on leadership of the church, this has brought renewed missional energy to the church and we are excited for what God has in store as we seek him for new opportunities to plant or to graft in the coming years.

We have appointed a volunteer student worker who has gathered and galvanised a wonderful group of students at St John's. This new growth is significant for our ongoing vision to plant new worshipping communities. Through grant applications, this role has become paid for 2025, as Mark takes on the role of *Student & Social Media Discipleship Enabler*, with a missional focus on the role of social media for Gen Z students.

The addition of Steve and Mohammad to the Bridge Leadership Team, alongside David, Erin and Sarah, has fostered a more collaborative approach to shaping the Mission Hub Flight Plan. After many years of conversation and prayer, the decision was made for St James Church in Tile Hill to join the Bridge Benefice. We feel privileged, as a Mission Hub, to come alongside St James as they seek revitalisation and growth after a very difficult year. This step forward has brought fresh energy and a renewed sense of anticipation as we look ahead to the coming season and explore contextual, differentiated expressions of suburban mission together.

Throughout the year we have come to a greater understanding that the Mission Hub is not a stand alone project or something that is only for the 'leaders', but is a way of life that is weaved into everything we do and everything we plan. Just as Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and share the good news, we are called to follow the example of the apostles in planting new seeds of faith and strengthening existing believers wherever God may lead us. This is our shared mission, woven into the very fabric of who we are and what we do.

THE BRIDGE
www.thebridgecoventry.org

AGM annual finance report for 2024 - St James Fletchamstead

At first glance, it could appear that 2024 was a year in which we managed to balance the books in that all our charitable enterprises made a net operating profit of £4k taking our total funds to £214k (See statement of financial affairs). This however masks a significant challenge in that a considerable amount of our unspent income came from restricted grants for upgrades to the Hall. We knew at the outset that 2024 would pose a number of challenges as we navigated our way through an interregnum, hence we had agreed to set a deficit operating budget of £12k, but the financial reality was tougher in that our net deficit in general funds was over £22k. This was due principally to a reduction in both regular and one off donations of £14k. We managed to offset this with a reduction in expenditure of £4k.

The net result is that going into 2025, we no longer have any cash reserves to draw down on, so expenditure cannot be allowed to exceed income. A neutral budget has been set and agreed by the PCC on this understanding. It has also been assumed that giving from donors will increase by £10k. We are expecting a number of cost increases, but have reduced the proposed expenditure by £14k. To balance the books, we have reduced the Parish Share by £20k to £37k. This is not sustainable in the long term if we expect to continue to have a full time minister leading our congregation.

Whilst we need to exercise prudence, there is much to give thanks for and celebrate. Our charity shop continues to be an effective source of help and support to our local communities, whilst adequately balancing the books. We have also embarked on major upgrades to the Hall. During 2024 we raised £74.5k in grants, of which £45k has been spent on building repairs and improvements. This will culminate in the full refurbishment of the kitchen which is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2025. We have committed to continuing this work with a plan to raise a further £100k for additional improvements to the Hall and adjacent facilities.

Going into 2025, we know that we need to address issues such as a heating system that needs replacing, a building that needs major repairs to make it fit for purpose, as well as a need to strengthen and grow our community. We need to continue to pray for growth in engagement of current and new members, spiritually and practically. Please pray that we will be given the wisdom to use what we have and what we receive effectively. Pray that we will see an increase in financial support from our donors, and that we are diligent and successful in finding grants, developing income streams and reducing expenditure.

Dave Cuttler
Treasurer - St James Fletchamstead

Balance Sheet detailed

	As at 31/12/2024	As at 31/12/2023
Fixed assets		
40000005: PCC house	126,000	126,000
40000007: Grand Piano	1,200	1,200
Total Fixed assets	127,200	127,200
Current assets		
A1502: Co-op current account xxxx5805	45,781	29,398
A1505: CCLA deposit account xxx968-001	10,462	10,884
A1550: Petty Cash	59	74
Z05: Accounts Receivable	3,152	10,970
St James Fletchamstead Other	1,360	1,170
Community Care Centre	36,893	40,839
Total Current assets	97,707	93,336
Liabilities		
Z04: Accounts Payable	11,185	11,190
Total Liabilities	11,185	11,190
Net Asset surplus (deficit)	213,722	209,346
Reserves		
Excess / (deficit) to date	4,376	-14,755
Z01: Starting balances	209,346	224,101
Z03: Gains and losses own use	—	—
Total Reserves	213,722	209,346

Represented by Funds

Unrestricted	16,581	28,164
Designated	165,453	180,093
Restricted	31,688	1,088
Endowment	—	—
Total	213,722	209,346

Summary

St James Fletchamstead Income	2023	2024	2024	2025
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
Resources from donors	68115	57188	71500	66400
Other Voluntary Income	4869	975	0	500
Fees	1614	751	1000	800
Activities for generating funds	8920	15743	15549	19100
Investments	8713	8526	9340	8850
Other	495	0	0	0
Unrestricted INCOME	92726	83183	97389	95650
Restrctied INCOME		79725	83000	25000
TOTAL INCOME	92726	162908	180389	120650
Expenditure	2023	2024	2024	2025
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
Contributions to wider Church	54000	57000	57000	37000
Ministry Expenses	183	1698	750	750
Church Buildings	9448	10006	15000	13825
Worship resources	877	1419	2250	1500
Hall	15304	18224	8150	18100
PCC houses	956	-235	1150	3600
Vicarage	975	517	674	1000
Parish Office/Communications	3405	3440	4850	3980
Fees	1456	248	800	400
Mission	7338	8188	8500	9500
Education	844	55	400	200
Giving	12219	4900	10000	5500
Pastoral & Social	0	91	100	150
Other	600	127	0	0
Unrestricted EXPENSES	107603	105678	109624	95505
Restrctded EXPENSES		49098	83000	25000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	107603	154776	192624	120505
Excess (Income - Expenses)	-14876	8132	-12236	145

Current Assets/Liabilities	175469
Accounts Receivable Z05	3152
Accounts Payable Z04	-11185
Co-operative account A1502	45781
CCLA account A1505	10462
Cash in hand A1550	59
Fixed Assets	127200

Funds	167337	175469
Designated	138084	127200
Restricted	1088	31688
Unrestricted	28164	16581

Delta

-10884

30600

-11583

16726

Monthly turnover

divide by

8807

equals

1.88

Operating margin (months)

divide by

7959

equals

2.10

					Variance
					2024
Income	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2024 Budget	2025 Budget	
<u>Resources from donors</u>					
Regular giving (Giftaided)	37776	12509	14500	12500	-1991
Regular Giving (PGS)		22743	26500	27500	-3757
Plate Collections	2073	3091	3000	2800	91
One off gifts (gift aided)	6562	3772	3000	3500	772
Tax Recovered (SJF)	11759	4928	5000	4000	-72
Tax Recovered (PGS)		5286	6000	6100	-714
Regular giving (not gift aided)	9945	4620	9750	6000	-5130
One off gifts (non-gift aided)	0	239	3750	4000	-3512
Sub total	68115	57188	71500	66400	-14313
<u>Other Voluntary Income</u>					
Legacies	0	500	0	0	500
Donations - general fund		475	0	500	475
Grants (Restricted)	2228				0
<i>Intern support</i>	472		0		
Youth Work/Leaving Collections	2170		0		
Sub total	4869	975	0	500	975
<u>Fees</u>					
Wedding and funeral Fees	1614	751	1000	800	-249
Sub total	1614	751	1000	800	-249
<u>Activities for generating funds</u>					
Church Lettings	370	0	300	300	-300
Hall Lettings	7364	14875	14500	17500	375
Land Rent	275	300	275	300	25
Photocopying		55			55
Other		40	0		40
<i>Vicarage Gas</i>	912	473	474	1000	-1
Sub total	8920	15743	15549	19100	194
<u>Investments</u>					
Other funds generated	153	0	100	0	-100
Interest on accounts	0	711	400	0	311
PCC House	8560	7815	8840	8850	-1025
<i>PCC house deposit</i>	0		0		
Sub total	8713	8526	9340	8850	-814
<u>Other</u>					
Other	495	0	0		0
Sub total	495	0	0	0	0
Unrestricted INCOME	92726	83183	97389	95650	-14206
Hall Grants (Restricted)	0	74500	80000	25000	-5500
AV Upgrade	0	5125	3000	0	2125
Other Restricted Funds		100			100
Restricted INCOME		79725	83000	25000	
TOTAL INCOME	92726	162908	180389	120650	

					Variance
Expenditure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2024 Budget	2025 Budget	
Parish Share	54000	57000	57000	37000	0
Sub total	54000	57000	57000	37000	0
Ministry Expenses					
Incumbent expenses	183	0	500	500	-500
External ministry costs		55	0		55
Recruitment		1642	0		1642
Vicars training/retreats/books	0	0	250	250	-250
Sub total	183	1698	750	750	948
Church Building & Grounds					
Gas (Utility)	2610	2623	3750	4375	-1127
Electricity (Utility)	1742	1986	1750	2100	236
Insurance	4164	3172	3750	3300	-578
Church Building R & M	149	1700	1000	750	700
Church Fittings R & M	758	445	3000	2000	-2555
Furnishings & Equipment	0	0	250	250	-250
Church cleaner	0	0	1150	800	-1150
Church Consumables		0	100	100	-100
Upkeep churchyard	24	80	250	150	-170
Sub total	9448	10006	15000	13825	-4994
Worship resources					
Upkeep of services	208	170	450	250	-280
Flowers	0	0	100	50	-100
Organ/piano tuning	0	0	750	0	-750
Music and music group	0	0	100	0	-100
Operational Licences & Subs	669	1250	850	1200	400
Sub total	877	1419	2250	1500	-831
Hall					
Gas	663	1452	0	3100	1452
Electric	3349	6594	0	6000	6594
Insurance	1593	1057	0	1250	1057
Operational Costs	582	340	500	500	-160
R & M (inc. grounds)	3720	984	1000	1250	-16
Staff (cleaning/caretaker/admin)	0	2979	1150	5500	1829
Upgrades (General Fund)	5396	4818	5500	500	-682
Sub total	15304	18224	8150	18100	10074
PCC houses					
Water (+ Gas/Elec/Council)	0	0	250	0	-250
Insurance	456	461	500	500	-39
Agents Fees				1100	
R & M	500	4	400	2000	-396
Deposit		-700	0		-700
Sub total	956	-235	1150	3600	-1385

Expenditure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2024 Budget	2025 Budget	
Vicarage					
Redecoration	0	0	100	0	-100
Vicarage Gas	975	477	474	1000	-3
Maintenance	0	40	100	0	-60
Sub total	975	517	674	1000	-157
Parish Office/Communications					
Salary of parish administrator	2252	2459	3500	2700	-1041
Photocopier (rent)	480	480	550	480	-70
Office supplies	0	0	150	150	-150
Postage	21	3	50	50	-47
Printing	123	138	200	200	-62
Telephone/Broadband	530	359	400	400	-41
Sub total	3405	3440	4850	3980	-1410
Fees					
Dioc.Board of Fin.	1456	248	800	400	-552
Sub total	1456	248	800	400	-552
Mission					
FME	6780	8188	8000	9000	188
Youth Work	558	0	500	500	-500
Sub total	7338	8188	8500	9500	-312
Education & Training					
Adults		55	100	100	-45
Young People	844	0	200	50	-200
Creche & JIMS	0	0	100	50	-100
Sub total	844	55	400	200	-345
Giving- tithe					
Overseas missionary Societies	4000	1900	4000	2500	-2100
Home mission	6000	3000	6000	3000	-3000
Giving to individuals	2219				
Sub total	12219	4900	10000	5500	-5100
Pastoral & Social					
Social Events/Hospitality	0	91	100	150	-9
Sub total	0	91	100	150	-9
Other					
Miscellaneous	489	127	0		127
Account Charges	111		0		
Sub total	600	127	0	0	127
Unrestricted EXPENDITURE	107603	105678	109624	95505	-3946
Hall Grants (Restricted)	0	45162	80000	25000	
AV Upgrade		3022	3000		
Other Restricted Funds		914			
Restricted EXPENDITURE		49098	83000	25000	
Total EXPENDITURE	107603	154776	192624	120505	

Statement of Financial Activities

For the period from 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

Charity name

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE
ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST JAMES
FLETCHAMSTEAD COVENTRY**

Charity number

1180328

	Unrestricted Funds	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Prior Year Total Funds
<i>Incoming Resources</i>						
Incoming resources from donors	57188		595		57783	68115
Other voluntary incoming resources	975		79030		80005	4398
Activities in furtherance of the councils objects	751				751	1614
Activities for generating funds	15743		100		15843	9608
Income from investments	8526				8526	8322
Other incoming resources		2382			2382	2644
Community Care Centre		15617			15617	18264
Total Income	83183	17999	79725		180907	112964
<i>Resources Used</i>						
Costs of generating funds	18466		45962		64428	956
Grants	4900				4900	12219
Activities relating to the work of the Church	82312		3136		85448	91063
Support costs						3405
Other resources used		2191			2191	2411
Community Care Centre		19564			19564	17682
Total Expenditure	105678	21755	49098		176531	127736
<i>Gains / losses on investment assets</i>						
Net Inc. / Exp. before transfer	-22495	-3756	30627		4376	-14772
<i>Transfers</i>						
Gross transfers between funds - in	10932	10884	10904		32720	133510
Gross transfers between funds - out	-20	-21768	-10931		-32720	-133510
St James Fletchamstead Outreach						
Community Care Centre						
<i>Other recognised gains / losses</i>						
Gains on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use						17
Net movement in funds	-11583	-14641	30600		4376	-14755
<i>Reconcilliation of funds</i>						
St James Fletchamstead Main	28164	138084	1088		167337	182923
St James Fletchamstead Other		1170			1170	937
Community Care Centre		40839			40839	40240
Total funds brought forward	28164	180093	1088		209346	224100
St James Fletchamstead Main	16581	127200	31688		175469	167337
St James Fletchamstead Other		1360			1360	1170
Community Care Centre		36893			36893	40839
Total funds carried forward	16581	165453	31688		213722	209345
Fixed Assets		127200				
Liquid Assets	16581	38253	31688			



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name

St JAMES FLETCHEMSTEAD (SJF)

On accounts for the year
ended

2024

Charity no
(if any)

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above
charity ("the Trust") for the year ended DD / MM / YYYY.

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").

Independent
examiner's statement

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 the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission
under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have
come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with
the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material
respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of
the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

BBG

Date:

12-5-25

Name:

BABY DARBOE

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

AAT

Address:

3 ALDRICH AVENUE
TILE HILL
COVENTRY, CV4 9LS