

**The Ecumenical Church Council
of
Sturry and District United Church
within the parish of
Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden
Charity Commission reg no: 1181753**

ANNUAL REPORT

for the year ended 31 December 2023

STURRY & DISTRICT ANGLICAN & METHODIST CHURCH



St Mary Fordwich



St Nicholas Sturry



All Saints Westbere

The Ecumenical Church Council of Sturry and District United Church

Joint Annual Report of the Ecumenical Church Council and of the Parochial Church Council for 2023

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Joint Annual Report of the Ecumenical Church Council and of the Parochial Church Council for 2023

The Ecumenical Church Council of Sturry and District United Church

This **Annual Report**, accompanying the parish and partnership annual accounts, is compiled in line with the requirements of the Charities Act 2006, the requirements of the Charity Commission and the public benefit reporting requirements that now apply to all charities.

Following the formal adoption of the new constitution on 20 February 2013, the responsibilities and the membership of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of the Anglican Parish of Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden and those of the Ecumenical Church Council (ECC) of Sturry and District United Church are inevitably closely linked, and accordingly the following is a joint report approved by both councils.

Administrative information

Sturry and District United Church is a joint Anglican-Methodist Church serving the above-named parish. The Local Ecumenical Partnership in this parish was set up in September 1970 and its Sponsoring Body is Churches Together in Kent. It meets in two parish buildings, St Nicholas' church in Sturry, and All Saints' church in Westbere, both Anglican-owned but the subject of sharing agreements signed in 1988. (The church building of St Mary the Virgin in Fordwich was declared redundant in 1996 and is vested in the Churches Conservation Trust.)

As an Anglican-Methodist partnership, Sturry and District United Church is part both of the Diocese of Canterbury and Deanery of Canterbury within the Church of England and also part of The Canterbury and East Kent Circuit of The Methodist Church. The correspondence address is:
C/O The ECC Secretary, 88, Sweechgate, Broad Oak, Canterbury, CT2 0QU

The Ecumenical Church Council which was set up alongside the new Parochial Church Council from 20 February 2013 fulfils within this parish and partnership the roles normally carried out by a Parochial Church Council and a Methodist Church Council, and is therefore a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006). Sturry and District United Church was registered as a charity in January 2019.

Given the suspension of the right of Presentation dated 18 May 2021 which is still in force, Revd Preb. Gillean Craig was licensed as interim 0.2 part time priest in charge rather than incumbent in September 2022. . Revd Catherine Wagstaff was welcomed to the LEP as interim part time methodist minister also on 0.2 in September. Both had been in conversation with the church in the months leading up to their joining us.

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(1) PCC members who served during the period 1 January – 31 December 2023 were:

Part time interim Anglican Priest	Revd Preb Gillean Craig
Part time interim Methodist Minister	Revd Catherine Wagstaff
<i>Retired minister with Permission to Officiate</i>	The Revd Peter Freeman
<i>Churchwardens</i>	Mrs Anne Stevenson (until 28 May 2023) Mr Martin Pilgrim (from 28 May 2023) Mrs Jane Freeman (from 28 May 2023)
<i>Representatives on the Deanery Synod</i>	Mrs Georgina Glover
<i>Elected members</i>	Mr Paul Haines (lay vice-chair until 28 May 2023) Mr Gavin Kennett (secretary) Mrs Angela Pilgrim Mrs Pauline Louch
Co-opted	Mr Philip Lewis (from 19 Oct 2023)

(2) ECC members who served during the period 1 January – 31 December 2023 were:

Part time interim Anglican Priest	Revd Preb Gillean Craig
Part time interim Methodist Minister	Revd Catherine Wagstaff
<i>Retired minister with Permission to Officiate</i>	The Revd Peter Freeman
(The Circuit Superintendent minister, together with other ministers who have pastoral responsibility within the circuit, and the Bishop of Dover or her appointed representative, may also attend meetings)	
<i>Church Stewards & Churchwardens</i>	Mrs Anne Stevenson (until 28 May 2023) Mr Martin Pilgrim (from 28 May 2023) Mrs Jane Freeman (from 28 May 2023)
<i>Representatives on the Deanery Synod</i>	Mrs Georgina Glover. Mrs Angela Pilgrim (until 28 May 2023)
<i>Members of the Circuit Meeting (as churchwarden until 28 May 2023))</i>	Mrs Anne Stevenson Mrs Angela Pilgrim (<i>ex officio as circuit steward</i>) Mr Martin Pilgrim (<i>elected at AGM</i>)
<i>Elected members</i>	Mrs Jane Freeman (Church Steward / Churchwarden) Mr Paul Haines (lay vice-chair until 28 May 2023) Mr Gavin Kennett (secretary)
Co-opted	Mr Philip Lewis (from 19 Oct 2023)
In attendance	Mr Peter Bartlett

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Structure, governance and management

Since 20 February 2013 the method of appointment of PCC members and ECC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules of the Church of England, the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church and the constitution of the Sturry and District United Church within the parish of Sturry with Fordwich and Westbere with Hersden, with the exception that in this parish and partnership those whose names are on the Methodist membership list enjoy the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as those whose names are on the Anglican electoral roll.

There is no pre-determined 'quota' governing the balance between Anglican and Methodist members on the church councils; candidates are elected without regard to their formal denominational allegiance. All who attend worship regularly in our churches are invited to register on the electoral roll or Methodist membership list and stand for election to the PCC and ECC.

In 2007 a Joint Membership List was created, consisting of those who had registered on the electoral roll or Methodist membership list, and it is noteworthy that since that date all such church members have wished to regard themselves as joint members of both denominations. At the Joint Church Council (JCC) meeting of 30 March 2009 it was resolved that following the Annual General Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Meeting the numbers reported to our parent denominations would each be one-half of the total figure for the Joint Membership List.

Under the new constitution which came into force from 20 February 2013, the maximum number of elected representatives on each of the PCC and the ECC is nine. Elected representatives are elected to serve for three years. At the end of their first period of three years they are eligible for election for a further three years, but after a service of six consecutive years there must be a gap of at least one year before they can stand again for election.

Objectives and activities

As laid down by the PCC (Powers) Measure 1956, the PCC and ECC of Sturry and District United Church have the responsibility of co-operating with the Anglican and Methodist minister(s) in promoting in the parish and partnership the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC also has maintenance responsibilities for the church buildings of St Nicholas, Sturry, and All Saints, Westbere, and the churchyard only (not the church building) of St Mary the Virgin, Fordwich, and also exercises functions with respect to the Church of England Primary School in the parish.

The PCC and ECC met in person seven times during the year, including a brief meeting after the 2023 AGM and APCM. The PCC and ECC generally have joint meetings, at which the business of each council is handled separately, and a similar principle applies with respect to the AGM and APCM. The Standing and Finance Committee has generally met between meetings, and minutes of their deliberations were received by the full PCC and ECC and discussed where necessary.

The purpose of Sturry and District United Church as a charity

The purpose of the Sturry and District United Church as a charity is to advance the Christian Faith in the area of benefit in accordance with the principles and practices of both The Methodist and The Anglican Church. The charity identifies its work as a charity in six areas;

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The celebration of public worship – this included regular Sunday worship at Sturry, a return to regular monthly services at Westbere and special services at Fordwich.

The Teaching of the Christian Faith has been carried out through services, work in our local schools, and articles in the church magazine “Link Up”.

Mission and Evangelism has been reviewed and a plan of action drawn up.

Pastoral Work is carried out by our Ministers and others such as by members of the Pastoral Committee which includes phone calls / visits to those who need support.

The provision of facilities within a Christian Ethos for the local community: We encourage the use of the church by all members of the community and amongst other things hold weekly coffee morning, a warm space during the winter months, children’s activities during the school holidays, craft afternoons and hosting Sturry Singers. Sturry Church is also open on Wednesdays and Sundays all day for people to come and visit and the building to pray and find out about its history.

Support of Other Charities in the UK and Overseas. The church has supported other charities through raising recognition of their work, praying for them and raising money during special services and events. We have regularly donated money to the Church Army and have collected money for Action for Children, The Children’s Society, The Kajojeji Educational Trust Africa, The World Methodist Mission Fund amongst others. More details of how we meet our objectives as a charity are given in the different sections of this report.

Ministers’ reports

2023 was a year of consolidation, recovery and development. Consolidation, especially because it was the first full year for both my colleague Methodist Catherine Wagstaff and I to enjoy our interim ministries (each part time, 0.2 and non-resident) among you; recovery, because we enjoyed steady building up of life in our communities and church after the catastrophe of Covid 19 lockdown; development, because we enjoyed finding together new ways of being Christ’s Church to and for Sturry, Broad Oak, Fordwich, Westbere and Hersden.

A key development has been a renewed celebration of our joint Methodist/Anglican traditions – a learning curve for me as I discover over and over how ignorant about the riches of Methodist ethos and organisation. An example is the election of Jane Freeman and Martin Pilgrim as both Church Stewards and Churchwardens. We were saddened to say farewell to Anne Severson who until the ‘23 AGM had served our church faithfully over many years as Warden, and in many other capacities, in partnership with her late husband Dave whose early death still casts a shadow. We have sought to play a full part in the life of our local sponsoring churches – the Methodist Circuit and Church of England Canterbury Deanery to assure them of our current vitality and great potential for significant future growth. One particular triumph has been to sort out a longstanding error in the calculation of our Parish Share – the money we pay to the Diocese. As a result this was more than halved, the Circuit agreed a similar reduction, and we have been able for the first time for many years to pay the full amount, putting us in a far stronger position going forward.

A particular delight for me has been the recovery of regular worship at All Saints Westbere. Since September we have offered a first-Sunday-in-the-month 11.00am Communion, renewing old friendships and cementing new ones. Particularly memorable was the Christmas Morning Parish Eucharist there – nearly 50 people joined us. Our thanks to Georgina Glover for her tireless commitment to keeping the church clean

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and beautiful. St Mary the Virgin Fordwich is a Redundant Church – but with the constant energy of Philip Lewis we have offered there the absolute maximum number of services that we are allowed, attracting strong congregation from that community.

We enjoyed several special celebrations and events – in particular the Coronation of King Charles III in May, when many members of the congregation were surprised to find themselves similarly crowned, and the Christmas Tree Festival in December, which achieved enthusiastic involvement from a large number of local organisations and businesses. Our Remembrance Sunday attracted the largest congregation for many years.

For Catherine and me, ministry to local school is a key priority, leading assemblies and services at Sturry CofE School and Junior King's Canterbury – which worships in our church every week and has contributed special services in both Sturry and Fordwich including a Sung Evensong and Compline. Our ministry to children and families is promoted with marvellous energy and imagination by Angela Pilgrim and her team creating a series of terrific activities afternoons each school holiday. Our Warm Wednesday afternoons, responding to last winter's fuel crisis, offers week by week a varied programme embracing all tastes and interests, open to all.

Our new wardens/church stewards have embraced their great responsibilities with remarkable energy and tireless commitment: their various reports below indicate only the tip of the iceberg of all they actually do, day by day, hour by hour. Gavin Kennett offers a similarly absolute devotion to the life and work of the parish, embracing more responsibilities than I can count. We are greatly in their debt – as we are to my colleague Revd Peter Freeman, who despite major surgery in 2023 offers a remarkable pastoral and liturgical ministry, deeply rooted in our community. So many others – Phyllis Neaves, Pauline Louch, Ian Carmalt, Juliet Woolcombe – too many to name individually – offer a splendid range of week-by-week contributions to our worship and life in our villages. We thank them all.

Linda and I greatly appreciate the welcome and friendship you offer us. It is a great privilege to know the presence of God in you and through you. I commend this Report as a living-out – however much we may be aware of its shortcomings – of the grace of God, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in and to and for this place.

Revd Preb. Gilleen Craig.

Our Church Annual Report reflects a great deal of hard work on the part of many people. As a church we exist to worship God and to witness to the love of Jesus within our community and these reports demonstrate in some small way just how we are doing that day by day and week by week here in Sturry and District. There is much to celebrate; this report is not the same as it was last year because we are not the same people – we are 'growing up in to God' and as we do that we seek to serve God in ways that are appropriate not only for the times we live in but also for the individuals and church community that we are today.

The past year has brought us joys as well as challenges; our churchwardens/stewards and church officers have worked tirelessly to ensure not only the smooth running of the day-to-day life of the church but to help us as we seek to move forwards in God's work here. I would like to say a huge thank you to them for all their

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efforts. But of course Church is not just about those who are more 'up-front' as it were, it's together that we make the body of Christ in this place and we all have our own, invaluable, part to play. We can all encourage one another, support one another and above all pray for one another. Prayer is absolutely vital – indeed it is our life blood – and if you remember nothing else about this report, I would encourage you to remember that we are all called to pray, for prayer changes things! May everything that we do be undergirded by prayer.

Our weekly worship is a core part of all that we do and are at Sturry. We continue to be blessed by the music that is offered by our organist and his occasional assistants - and we are blessed also with a great team of readers and intercessors. The Anglican and Methodist traditions have continued to be reflected in our services with usually two Sundays in each tradition a month. They are generally services of Holy Communion although we do have lay-led services from time to time as well. It is right to say a special thank you to our visiting preachers as well as to those from this church who occasionally prepare all-age worship which is much appreciated by the congregation. It was a delight to share in our Annual Covenant service with Revd Preb Gillean Craig at the beginning of the New Year as we reminded ourselves of God's covenant faithfulness to us and reaffirmed our desire to be more fully committed to God. We have had several Baptism services during the year too which are always a great joy. It has been very good too that Westbere has been able to open its doors once again to regular monthly worship led by Gillean who has also been able to undertake one or two 'special' services in Fordwich as well.

Following the completion of work in the kitchen, our monthly 'Soup on Saturday' event returned much to our delight! Many thanks to Jane and Peter for taking up this work again. Wednesday coffee morning has continued throughout the year and as winter approached, as last year, the duration of this was extended, creating a 'warm space' where folk from the community could come and find a warm place to be together. Occasional children's events have taken place during the year when local children have had a lot of fun engaging in activities inside and outside the Church building – and the Sturry Singers have continued to meet - and to perform at various occasions. A big thank you to all involved in these endeavours. Our contact with the Junior King's and Sturry Primary schools continues – with Gillean and me going into Sturry Primary to lead assemblies and Junior King's coming into church regularly for school worship.

There is so much more that could be said about all that makes up Sturry – it is a great place to be! From embarking on becoming an eco-church to making connections with the new housing developments that are going up, we look to ourselves and who God wants us to be as well as to our community and where God wants us to serve. All that we do and engage in plays a valuable part in the life and work of the Church and our AGM is an opportunity to celebrate all that we are and do.

I will be very sad to say, 'Goodbye' to Gillean early in June when he must 'sit down' (to use a very Methodist term!) from his appointment here in Sturry. He has worked tirelessly since we started back in 2022 and leaves a very positive legacy for us to continue to build on. I do want to say a very big thank you to Gillean for his colleagueship and to everyone who is involved in whatever way in the mission and ministry of the church in Sturry.

Revd Catherine Wagstaff

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Achievements and performance

Worship

The table below gives a summary of key numbers reported annually with the previous year's figures given by way of comparison. Following the pandemic, a few members of the congregation continued to 'worship at home', through the provision of printed or emailed worship resources, a live Zoom service held by the Methodist Circuit, pre-recorded services from other churches or broadcast worship on the BBC.

The figure for funerals included those conducted were held by parish ministers either in one of the church buildings, at a local cemetery or at a crematorium.

	2023	2022
Number on the Joint Membership List	43	46
Anglican Electoral Roll	21	23
Methodist Membership	22	23
October Count figure reported as part of Anglican Statistics for Mission	43	25
Usual Sunday figure reported as part of the Anglican Statistics for Mission	25	21
Baptisms	6	7
Weddings	5	6
Funerals	11	9

¹Churchwardens' / Church Stewards' Report

1. Communications

The church recognises the importance of good communications and the fact that these can reach very many more people than those who regularly attend church services.

We have an **online presence**. Our website is active, and we are working on making the site more accessible and linking it to other social media platforms. Our Facebook page is an important medium for many people.

We also produce an **A5 format magazine, Link Up**, 10 editions each year, 24 or 28 pages each edition, professionally printed in colour. Each print run is 450 copies and most of these are distributed to subscribers around our five villages by a team of helpers; other copies are available in our churches, in local schools and shops and at the Hersden Community Centre. The magazine can also be read for free online (from our website and our Facebook page).



¹We use the role tiles from both the Methodist and Anglican Churches to recognise our Local Ecumenical Partnership

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Our weekly noticesheets are available electronically and in hard copy. As well as paper copies in our churches, each week 36 are distributed by email and six printed versions are posted.

2. Community Payback



Community Payback at work in the Sturry Churchyard.

For some years, the church has worked with Community Payback. Community Payback is the scheme under which offenders carry out **unpaid work in the community** instead of undergoing a custodial sentence. Most Sundays, a team of between 10 and 20 offenders and their supervisors can be seen working in the churchyard and the Milner Ground. The Milner Ground is the land between the churchyard and the A28 road which the church holds on trust for the community. Since we brokered the relationship with CP, they have been working on projects for other organisations in our villages, including Sturry Parish Council and the Scouts. Also, most Sundays the congregation and the offenders share in the after-service tea, coffee and biscuits. We hope this shows that we are a welcoming and accepting body.

3. Sturry Church: A Well-Maintained Asset for the Whole Community

Building

We are entrusted with the **care and maintenance of two Grade 1 Listed Buildings**, St Nicholas' Church, Sturry and All Saints' Church Westbere. Every five years, an architect must inspect our buildings and identify the needs for repairs and improvements; these are called "Quinquennial Inspections".

The 2017 QI for Sturry church identified the need for urgent roof and other repairs. This was the stimulus for a £300,000 project financed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and local donations and fundraising. Just before this, we had installed a new heating system.

The scope of the NLHF project went beyond the immediate repairs and included improvements to the kitchen, material to explain our heritage, and, a commitment to widening use of the church. The physical work was largely completed before the first coronavirus lockdown in March 2020. But it was not until February 2022 that most coronavirus restrictions were lifted, and life was slow to return to normal. 2023 was the first full year that we could use a warm, weathertight and improved church building for our Christian mission and for the extended use envisioned in the NLHF project.

We are now working on the issues identified in the 2022 Qis for Sturry and Westbere.

Care of the building is necessary, but not sufficient. As Christians, we are aware of our **responsibilities to protect and restore God's creation** and to be conscious of the impact we have on it.

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In total, our Church Council has stake in **two church buildings, three churchyards and an area of open space**, the Milner Ground. In October 2023, we registered with **Eco-Church**, a Christian charity working to inspire individuals and families; to equip churches and church leaders; to build partnerships, and to manage land for nature and people. In the face of accelerating climate change and species loss, we need more than ever to take action to protect and care for nature today. We aim to involve church members and the wider community in this work. We have regular suggestions in Link Up magazine and in our weekly church noticesheet (see above). And our activity afternoons for children (4-11yrs) encourage eco awareness.

We are also challenged to use cleaning products which are environmentally friendly. Here we need to thank the team of five **volunteer cleaners**, not all of whom are regular church-goers, who spend Thursday mornings keeping the church clean and tidy. We also must thank those who provide and arrange flowers in the church throughout the year. We rely greatly on artificial flowers but – thanks to donations – we have fresh flowers for the major festivals.

A Church for the Whole Community

As part of the NLHF project, we made some major improvements to the kitchen in Sturry church. New equipment includes a refrigerator, a hob, an oven, and an industrial-strength catering dishwasher. The new kit was not enough. To receive certification from the City Council's Environmental Health team, we carried out some further repairs and improvements to the kitchen walls and some colleagues did basic training in hygiene and kitchen practice. We now have **official five-star status** and can lawfully cook and serve hot food in the church. As well as our much-loved monthly Soup on Saturday, we plan further events making good use of this facility.

Open Church

The NLHF project also made us think about public access to the church – for private prayer and contemplation and to appreciate its heritage. The church is now open to all on Wednesdays, Thursday mornings and all-day Sunday after the service.

Events and Activities

The church is pleased to provide a home for a number of regular events, largely weekly. There is a Craft Group working on a range of skills, including knitting, sewing and papercrafts. Every Wednesday, there is a Coffee Morning providing a warm welcome and good company. Since winter 2022-23 and the hike in fuel prices, this has been extended to Winter Wednesday Afternoon Activities – talks, games, refreshments and – in school holidays – children's events.

In February, we ran a **half-term event for children** focussing on the history of St Nicholas' Church. The activities included making graffiti (without vandalism to our walls but echoing the medieval graffiti in the church), stone rubbing and exploring the graveyard. There was a **Celebration of Spring** event on 25 March. And there was the annual **pre-Easter cleaning** of the church and fish and chip lunch on 8 April for *how many people*.

King Charles III was crowned on Friday, 6 May. We recognised this in our services and in a special edition of Link Up (see where in this Annual Report?) where we published memories of past Coronations. One of our

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members recalled that a family friend, as the Bishop of Bath and Wells (“Uncle Billy”), actually participated in the Coronation of King George VI in 1937. We held a special service on Sunday, 8 May followed by a “bring and share lunch” and activities.

One other sign of the post-covid existence was the revitalisation of our villages’ **twinning links** with the town of Aire-sur-la-Lys in the north of France. Our French friends visited the church at the end of May and used the NLHF-funded heritage material, some of which we had translated into French, to learn about its history.

Our annual **Strawberry Tea** is a social event for the church family and the wider community; it is also a fundraiser. This year it took place on 2 July, in and around the church.

Sturry celebrated the **Harvest** at the service on 17 September and with a Harvest Supper. Our clergy also participated in Harvest services at the schools in our parish.



The approach to **Christmas** 2023 and Christmas itself were further evidence of our post-pandemic life. We hosted a concert by the City of Canterbury Band on 3 December, this was an event for the whole community. Over the weekend of 8/9 December we organised a Christmas Tree Festival in the church, once again aimed at all local people. We invited local businesses, schools and groups to submit decorated Christmas trees and had 25 trees on display from a range of people and organisations. At the beginning of the school Christmas break, we ran an activity afternoon making Christmas decorations. Our Christingle service on 17 December was well attended. Over all our services in the Advent and Christmas period, we had 314 worshippers.

Martin Pilgrim & Jane Freeman
Churchwardens & Church Stewards

Ecumenical links Sturry and District United Church is a member of Churches Together in Sturry and District, the other members being Broad Oak Chapel and the Roman Catholic parish of Hersden and Sturry. We are also associate members of Christians Together in Canterbury.



Deanery Synod Report

In the Church of England, all individual parishes (like ours) are grouped together into Deaneries – we are in Canterbury Deanery. It is the administrative level lying between each parish and the whole Diocese, and each Deanery has a Deanery Synod whose members are lay and the clergy of each individual congregation. It meets usually three times a year – but this year its regular programme has suffered from the prolonged long-covid illness of our Area Dean (Jo Richards, who visited a Sunday Service here in July) and the ill-health of our Lay Chair, Liz Morrison, well known to us. Perhaps our most interesting meeting was the occasion when David Montieth spoke at length about his vision of how the life and work of Canterbury Cathedral – he’s been Dean for over a year now – relates to its neighbouring parishes and our shared ministry to Canterbury as a whole. The Synod also sponsors an annual ‘Roadshow’ at which Diocesan officials present

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key items of information – usually the financial figures for the year ahead, but on this occasion also short workshops on the difficulties and available resources of caring for our buildings, and engaging with the Diocesan initiatives for growth and evangelism.


Methodist Circuit

Sturry Church is a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the Anglican and Methodist Churches and as such plays an active part of the Canterbury and East Kent Methodist Circuit. Our Circuit stretches from Faversham to Dover and across to Thanet. This year we have welcomed a new Superintendent minister for the Circuit, Rev Danny Wheadon. We look forward to his preaching at Sturry in the summer.

Our ministers, Catherine Wagstaff and Gilleen Craig, our two churchwardens and church stewards, Jane Freeman and Martin Pilgrim, all attend the Circuit Meeting along with Angela Pilgrim, who is currently Senior Circuit Steward.

The Circuit Meeting is the local decision-making body for finances and the deployment of staff including ministers. Methodist ministers move churches regularly and this year we are looking ahead to work out how our human and financial resources can support God's work across East Kent including Sturry.

Angela Pilgrim

Pastoral Committee.

The pastoral committee meets usually three times a year. We have worked to establish an open, welcoming church and have been pleased that people have joined us for Sunday worship and our weekday and holiday activities. Wednesday coffee mornings and afternoon talks and activities have been well supported as have the children's holiday activities. We are considering how we could develop these further.

We are keen to set up a bereavement support group and are looking for support and guidance for this new venture. We try to keep in touch with our congregation and provide pastoral support where we can but are very aware that there are few of us and needs are many.

Angela Pilgrim

Safeguarding: Sturry and District United Church follows the safeguarding policy of the Church of England. Together with the Parish Safeguarding Officer the ECC discusses safeguarding on a regular basis. The parish's website has a link to safeguarding information on its home page, including contact details within the parish and at diocesan level for anyone who has a safeguarding concern. The ECC has complied with the duty to have 'due regard' to the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. There were no major incidents during 2023 and the diocese has provided us with helpful advice.

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Junior King's School: The preparatory school for the King's School, Canterbury is a very near neighbour. Over the past 18 months the Junior School has continued to build up a strong relationship with St Nicholas church. The school uses the church at least once a week for an act of worship often including the participation of Fr Gillean. We also use the church for special services including harvest, Christmas, Easter, and the end of each term. On some Sundays the boarding community attends morning worship in the parish and on two occasions the school choir has sung choral evensong. The school knows the importance of this link with its neighbour and delighted to be able to support the parish in different ways whether that be the sharing of resources, the chaplains covering worship when no parish clergy are available or putting on joint services. We hope that the arrival of a new chaplain will help build this link further, especially as Revd Preb Gillean Craig steps down from his Sturry role in June 2024. Future ideas for the partnership include the supporting of joint local causes and developing a series of services for all-ages which are accessible for all.

Revd Thomas Pote

Chaplain, The King's School, Canterbury.

Sturry Singers Tuesdays 2.00 - 3.30 pm

Sturry Singers have been busy. Apart from the practices on Tuesday afternoons, the group has travelled out on several occasions to the wider community to sing to: Age UK (Canterbury) We have had several bookings for Age UK, and for the St. Valentine Fair, and the upcoming Spring Fair at the Church The group continue to increase their repertoire with a variety of familiar songs, Songs from the musicals and Songs from the 1940s. We aim to get those toes tapping whatever the age!!

The Annual Lunch was held at the Crown Cherry Brandy House, Sarre.

Sturry Singers is a non-profit group and is grateful to St. Nicholas Church and committee for the use of the church for practices. The Singers practice on Tuesday afternoons 2-3.30pm

All newcomers are welcome to join us

Pauline Louch

CraftyAllsorts - Monday 2.00 – 4.00 pm

CraftyAllsorts is a group of lovers of all things crafty. It began with a group of Knitters and Stitchers, however, it is now open to all types of craftiness. At present there are lace work, crochet, knitting, crystal art, colouring, lino cutting, machine embroidery and a variety of cross stitch and embroidery.. We also have had patchers, quilters and rug makers.

Currently, the group is putting together a panel depicting places of interest in Sturry – (new and old) completed in machine embroidery with some fabric painting. It is hoped to be ready very soon. It has been an experience to do some fabric painting and have finished a cushion cover and have produced 2023 Christmas Cards.

The group is grateful to the church for the to use the church on Monday afternoons.

Pauline Louch

Joint Annual Report of the Ecumenical Church Council and of the Parochial Church Council for 2023 (continued).**Sturry Bell Ringers**

The bell ringers continue to maintain a high standard of ringing. Practice takes place each Tuesday and the bells are rung every Sunday for the 10am service. The band also rang for two weddings and for the King's coronation. Further, in May, a visiting party from France were entertained with a display of English change ringing, which was well received by all.

The Sturry band won the annual Canterbury District (East Kent) striking competition held at Chislet, a recording of which subsequently featured on the radio (BBC Radio 4 "Bells on Sunday"). The band then went on to win the Kent County Striking Competition, held at Monkton. Regarding expenditure, this year entailed no maintenance costs, although we may need to replace some ropes in due course. Finally, the ringers undertook the various CoE safeguarding courses required of the bell ringing community.

Stephen J. Marsh

Fordwich

For the first time in very many years it has felt that St Mary's Fordwich has felt part of the Parish. As well as enjoying a Palm Sunday Service in 2023, we had the first Harvest Festival Service for very many years. This was followed by a Carol service. But beyond the relationship with the building that is held by the Churches Conservation Trust, it has been the interest taken in the churchyard - which is the responsibility of the parish as it is a 'living' churchyard. The 'new' grave area has been excellently plotted, with details for each grave added by Kitty Bennett as a project for her Duke of Edinburgh award. That was completed just as the original plans came to light. There is still much work to be done, but the plan has been begun to have the Community Payback team involved again in bringing into order those bit that are presently a mess, not rewilded!. There is also some more extensive tree work required, for which a very sensible quote has been received, which, hopefully, the community may be able to raise in part, if not in its entirety. We have also been approached to see whether we might begin the Bronze award as an eco-churchyard.

Philip Lewis



Pilgrim Cross made and Blessed in 2023
Fordwich Church

Joint Annual Report of the Ecumenical Church Council and of the Parochial Church Council for 2023 (continued).

Financial review We are grateful to those church members who reviewed their giving through the church over the year, and to all who have organised and supported fundraising events. However, we need to increase our income if we are to become truly sustainable. Details of our receipts and expenditure, including our parish share and circuit assessment by which we contribute to ministry costs not only in this parish but in the wider churches, will be available in the financial accounts.

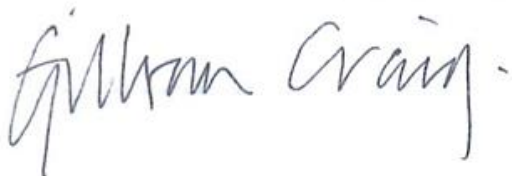
At the end of 2022 Liz Morrison stepped down as Treasurer. Gavin Kennett agreed to take on the role of “book keeper” and with the guidance of Martin Pilgrim and others, has produced the end of year accounts. The ye 31/12/20 and ye 21/12/21 2022 accounts were independently examined and filed with the the Charity Commission during 2023

Given the late filing of the accounts, we have not yet been able to finally account for the NLHF project to NLHF because of the lack of financial information for the financial years 2020 and 2021. At the time of writing the report Martin Pilgrim is progressing work on this.

We are very grateful for those who give generously both in terms of time and of money.

Reserves policy The PCC has reviewed the church's needs for reserves in line with the Operational Guidance No 43 (Charity Income Reserves) issued by the Charity Commission. The income of the Parish, as well as its financial demands, are subject to fluctuation. Maintaining two listed buildings can be costly and in order to meet the cost of major repairs and other calls upon parish funds, the PCC consider it prudent to maintain substantial reserves.

**Report approved by the Parochial Church Council and the Ecumenical Church Council on 5th March 2024
and signed on its behalf by Revd. Preb. Gillean Craig**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Gillean Craig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Gillean" is written with a large, stylized 'G' and the last name "Craig" follows in a similar cursive script. There is a small horizontal line at the end of the signature.

Joint Annual Report of the Ecumenical Church Council and of the Parochial Church Council for 2023 (continued).**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the Ecumenical Church Council of Sturry and District United Church**

I report on the accounts of the church for the year ended 31 December 2023 which are set out on pages 17 to 19.

Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2011 Act);
- To follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act); and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's report

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

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

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

(Name) (Date) MRS. CLARE SUTCLIFFE - 8.4.2024 .

(Relevant professional qualification or body)

(Address)

128, SANDWICH ROAD, WHITFIELD, DOVER, KENT. CT16 3JP.

Joint Annual Report of the Ecumenical Church Council and of the Parochial Church Council for 2023 (continued).

SADAMC							
Receipts and Payments Summary 2023							
			Unrestricted	Restricted	Endowment	2023 Total funds	2022 Total funds
RECEIPTS							
Voluntary receipts			£	£	£	£	£
Planned giving			12111.00	-	-	12111.00	16,755.00
Giving at services			2640.68	-	-	2640.68	702.43
All other giving / voluntary receipts	KSC		5,040.00	-	-	5040.00	5,040.00
	Donations (general)		4,214.45	-	-	4214.45	1,763.89
	Fees to PCC		1,912.00	-	-	1912.00	1,631.50
	1 Fees due to DBF			2,430.00	-	2430.00	1,783.00
	2 Wedding staged payments		962.00	1,688.00	-	2650.00	4,803.00
Tax Recovered							
	3 Gift Aid (planned giving)		11,024.20	-	-	11024.20	2,934.00
	VAT (NLHF project)		-	-	-	0.00	1,188.40
			37,904.33	4,118.00	-	42,022.33	36,601.22
Activities for generating funds							
	Coffee		589.95	-	-	589.95	663.29
	Fundraising events		1,368.83	-	-	1,368.83	1,675.00
	Soup lunches		166.50	-	-	166.50	584.96
	4 Warm Space		1,422.26	-	-	1,422.26	859.31
	Diocesan heating grants		-	-	-	-	2,400.00
	5 Sundries		3,428.15	-	-	3,428.15	
Investment Income			3,919.17	-	-	3,919.17	4,063.69
Church Activities							
	Magazine		1,911.50	-	-	1,911.50	1,475.60
	Charity Collections		633.50	-	-	633.50	
Total Receipts			55,462.19	-	-	55,462.19	48,323.07
PAYMENTS							
Church Activities							
Stipend contribution/share/assessment			24,299.00	-	-	24,299.00	10,000.00
Clergy and staffing costs	6 Ministry Costs		1,277.50	-	-	1,277.50	-
						-	
Church running expenses	Heat, light,water,insurance		14,727.83	-	-	14,727.83	16,835.63
	Upkeep of services		198.10	-	-	198.10	177.38
	Bells,organists, virgers		2,365.00	-	-	2,365.00	2,515.00
	Minor repairs, organ tuning		2,344.08	-	-	2,344.08	1,679.27
	Churchyard maintenance		2,761.72	-	-	2,761.72	2,610.00
	7 Admin		1,191.22	-	-	1,191.22	68.00
	8 Magazine		3,689.33	-	-	3,689.33	2,378.24
						-	-
Fees returned	Deposits		-	-	-	-	-
	to Diocese		1,655.40	-	-	1,655.40	3,000.00
						-	
Hall running costs				-	-	-	
Mission Giving and donations			950.50		-	950.50	651.75
Sundries	9		1,387.92		-	1,387.92	-
						-	
NLHF Project						-	5,114.10
			56,847.60		-	56,847.60	45,029.37
Costs of generating funds			240.19		-	240.19	
						-	
Total Payments			57,087.79		-	57,087.79	45,029.37
Difference between receipts and payments						- 1,625.60	3,293.70
Cash in bank and at hand at 1 January 2023			£ 38,822.09				
Cash in bank and at hand at 31 December 2023			£ 37,196.49				

[illegible]

Joint Annual Report of the Ecumenical Church Council and of the Parochial Church Council for 2023 (continued).**Notes to the accounts.**

1. Includes fees paid to PCC for payment to Diocesan Board of Finance for funerals. From Jan 2024, Diocesan Board of Finance required PCC to pay 70% directly to non-stipendary ministers.
2. Wedding Fees may be paid in total or as part of staged payments. The PCC is no longer allowed to take a deposit. Some of this money is restricted to pay to the DBF, Organist, Virgers and Bells.
3. Gift Aid claimed back for previous three years for planned giving (£11024.20)
4. Warm space receipts included a grant of £1000 from the Methodist Church
5. Includes a refund from British Gas of £3118.15 for overpayment of incorrectly estimated gas bills.
6. Includes fees paid by PCC to non-stipendiary ministers for occasional offices, paid by PCC acting as an agent for DBF.
7. Includes fee for examination of accounts by accountancy firm (£570) and payment of expenses to minister (£282.90)
8. Printing costs have risen.
9. One off payments for Payaz Giving Card station (£461.15) , Kitchen Equipment (£106.77), Childrens Activity Day (£175.00)