

# Annual Report

Name of Charity:	<b>The Parish of Saint Melangell</b>
Operating name:	<b>Saint Melangell's Orthodox Church</b>
Charity Number:	<b>1195091</b>
Trustees:	<b>Cyprian Astley (Chair)</b> <b>Joseph Smith (Secretary)</b> <b>Susan Fozard (Treasurer during the reporting period)</b> <b>John Hopkins (Treasurer at the time of this report)</b>
Reporting Period:	<b>12<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023</b>

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## From the Rector

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I am pleased to commend to you the following report of the Trustees for last financial year.

At the time of writing, it has been nearly four and a half years since our first offices of prayer were offered to God by a small group, gathered in a private home, with uncertainty about whether our mission would ever become a reality. In this time God has richly blessed us, as well as a number of people who have come into contact with us, and the below report shows just some of the work that we have been blessed to do in our little corner of God's vineyard.

None of this would have been possible without the contributions made by each and every one of you in the form of time, effort, prayer, finances, and fellowship that you all offer so freely. For this I offer my wholehearted thanks.

Our new location has provided us with many opportunities to be faithful witnesses to the Apostolic Faith in Jesus Christ before the people of Greater Manchester and beyond, and we must continue to pray for the humility and the fortitude to accept the mission with which God seems to have charged us, seeing beyond our individual weaknesses and imperfections, and having faith always in the One Who gives us strength, and in whose Name we are called to proclaim the unchanging, Orthodox Christian Faith.

Yet we are broken human beings, and as such we will be keenly aware of the ways in which we fall short of the ideal that we perhaps have before our eyes. Our liturgy, our music, our preaching, our weekly attendance, our efforts at mission and outreach, and much else – these all have the potential for improvement, and if we look for the shortcomings, we are certain to find them.

Yet the benefit of having to review our activities every year shows us the other side of this story, and serves to remind us of what has been accomplished by the Holy Spirit working in, with, and through us, showing us that even when we are weighed down by practical matters and worries, God is still working his wonders.

Therefore, let us entrust ourselves, our labours, and our efforts to the prayers of our heavenly patroness, Saint Melangell of Powys, that we may continue to work to bring all people to salvation through the Faith once delivered to the saints.

With love in Christ,

*Cyprian +*

Hieromonk Cyprian  
Rector  
Chair of Trustees

## From the Trustees

Dear members and friends of The Parish of Saint Melangell,

The time has come once again to reflect and report on how we have fulfilled our charitable aims. These are the aims that we have set for ourselves and for which we were granted status as a Registered Charity, and we have a duty to demonstrate to the Charity Commission and to the public that we have used our resources responsibly for the fulfilment of those aims. Here is a reminder of what they are, as outlined in our Constitution:

*The advancement of the Orthodox Christian religion in its Western European liturgical, musical, and spiritual expression (known as the "Western Rite"), for the public benefit in the United Kingdom, by conducting public acts of worship and other religious devotional acts, and providing instruction in Orthodox Christianity by means in particular but not limited to public teaching and the dissemination of online and printed materials.*

*The advancement of such charitable purposes (according to the law of England and Wales) for the public benefit in the United Kingdom as the trustees see fit from time to time, in keeping with Orthodox Christian principles, in particular but not limited to defending human rights and the relief of those in hardship, by means including but not limited to the making of financial donations to individuals, as well as to charities promoting such purposes.*

*For the purpose of this clause, "Orthodox Christian" means the faith subscribed to by those churches commonly designated "Eastern Orthodox", "Oriental Orthodox", and "Western Orthodox".*

### **A New Location**

During the summer of 2022, the Trustees reassessed our situation and considered whether to move our church to a new location. A number of factors were taken into consideration:

- The Willow room at Hope Methodist Church, which we hired for services, was used as a children's playgroup during the week and hosted other groups on Saturdays, which limited our ability to celebrate solemnities and feasts that fell on days other than Sunday.
- The provision for the storage of our items on a different storey from our worship space meant that set-up and put-away for church services was a physical challenge.
- Of our regular and prospective worshippers who had previously lived in a cluster in or near Oldham, most had either stopped attending, moved to South Manchester, or died. At the same time, of the remaining and newer regular worshippers, there was an identifiable cluster who lived in South Manchester.

After some considerable searching for a building that was suitable for our worship and mission in an accessible location, we came to a hire arrangement with the

Anglican church of St Luke the Physician in Benchill through the kind hospitality of their Parochial Church Council, and commenced our worship there from the beginning of December 2022. This has come with a number of benefits, some foreseen and others which were only realised after we had moved.

The church of St Luke is diagonally opposite the Benchill Metrolink stop, and is served by a number of bus routes which pass close to, or directly outside, the church. This public transport provision connects the church to the entire Metrolink network, Manchester City Centre, Manchester Airport, Altrincham, Stockport, and the universities, as well as a number of residential areas between those locations. This makes the church much more easily accessible than any location where we have worshipped previously.

### **Regular Worship**

Throughout this year, we have maintained regular Sunday worship in celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord, with only occasional weekends without services.

At the start of the liturgical year, we were still in our previous pattern of Sunday Vespers (sometimes followed by Compline) each Saturday evening, with the Divine Liturgy being celebrated approximately one Sunday every month. However, in December 2022, Reader Joseph Smith, who serves as our cantor for the Divine Liturgy, and who had until then travelled to Manchester once per month, moved to Manchester permanently, thus enabling us to expand our pattern of worship to include the Divine Liturgy nearly every Sunday.

Our new location at St Luke's has also meant that we have been able to offer public worship for a number of holy days that fell on days other than Sunday. Among them, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday and the Holy Friday offices, The Ascension of the Lord, our Patronal Festival, the Nativity of St John the Baptist, and the feast of St Cyprian of Carthage.

This is a great blessing in the life of a new parish such as ours, as it provides us with a fuller diet of the observances of the Church calendar, and reminds us that the Christian life is more than a couple of hours offered to God at the weekend.

It has also provided us with the opportunity to form links and friendships with Christians from other churches in the area, who have been able to attend our services and experience something of our Orthodox worshipping life in a way that they might not had our services been limited to Sundays.

### **Occasional Services**

There was one request for the blessing of a home during the past year. There were no weddings or funerals in the parish.

### **The Blessing of the Waters**

The custom of blessing an open body of water to commemorate the Baptism of the Lord in the River Jordan is a hallmark of Orthodox worship, and happens in many parishes across the world. While we established this as part of our parish practice in January 2022 with the blessing of the Manchester Ship Canal, this did not take place in 2023 due to Fr Cyprian's health at the time. However, the plan remains for this to be an annual event in the life of our parish and an opportunity for public witness.

### **Catechesis**

Regular instruction and reflection on the way of life in Christ in the Orthodox Christian Faith is provided in the parish in the form of homilies on most Sundays. These are live-streamed via the parish Facebook page for the benefit of those unable to attend in person.

A copy of *An Introduction to God* was given to a catechumen as a study text for discussion as part of his regular online catechism sessions under the direction of Father Cyprian.

### **Guest Speaker**

In May 2023, noted iconographer and icon-painting teacher, Father Justin Venn, who is a priest of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, currently serving in a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, visited Saint Melangell's to deliver a talk on the subject of iconography. With his characteristic warmth he explained the history and development of different types of iconography, the doctrines that underpin the use of icons in Orthodox prayer and worship, and various methods of iconography. This was well attended by a number of regular worshippers at our parish, as well as visitors from other churches in the local area and beyond. A video of Father Justin's talk has been made available on the parish YouTube channel.

### **Pilgrimages**

A number of circumstances meant that there were no parish pilgrimages last year. We hope to resume this part of our parish life.

### **Mission and Outreach**

The parish Twitter account has been retired due to the lack of interest in the content that we shared. The TikTok account content will remain for the time being but will not continue to be updated as, while it has garnered considerable interest, very little of this has been from our target demographic of local people.

We have continued to maintain a robust presence on Facebook, sharing the videos of our services, information about feasts and saints' days, and other information about the Orthodox Christian Faith in various groups where these items are likely to pique interest.

A number of us from Saint Melangell's have also become involved as volunteer leaders at Revolution Youth, which is a youth outreach project in the Wythenshawe area that operates with a Christian ethos, intended to encourage young people to explore important issues in their life, and provide them with the opportunity to form relationships of trust with mature Christians to help them if they wish to join a community of faith and explore Christian discipleship.

### **The Saint Melangell Prayer Book**

In July 2023, work began in earnest on the production of a collection of Western Orthodox prayers and spiritual guidance for publication, having received the blessing of His Grace Bishop Gregory of Arles.

### **Growth**

We had two catechumens for much of last year, although both ultimately decided not to continue their exploration of Orthodoxy.

We had an enquirer for part of last year who began her journey of exploration of Orthodoxy with us and was subsequently received as a catechumen in another parish. We are pleased to have been able to contribute to her Orthodox formation.

Towards the end of our last reporting period, two couples began to worship with us on a regular basis as enquirers into the Orthodox Faith, and have quickly become established as part of the family of our parish.

### **Inter-Church Relations**

In April 2023, our parish became involved with Churches Together in Wythenshawe and has been a presence at the semi-regular meetings of this informal affiliation of churches since then. It is important to note that our participation has been on the basis of joining other Christians to bring about common good, with nothing being done to compromise our profession of the Orthodox Faith.

In May 2023, our previous arrangement of attending the monthly Liturgy at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church was brought to an end. While the personal friendships we made will continue to be treasured by us, it was deemed a more responsible use of our limited resources to foster our mission and efforts at Saint Melangell's.

From April until August, Reader Joseph, John Hopkins, and Father Cyprian took part in the planning and execution of The Big Feed, an initiative of Churches Together in Wythenshawe to provide free food and social events in an effort to combat and raise awareness of food poverty in the Wythenshawe area. Father Cyprian and John were interviewed on local radio station, Wythenshawe FM, to help publicise the events.

### **Charitable Giving**

In April, the parish paid for the safe transport home of an injured minor who had come into the church seeking assistance. In May 2023 the parish made a donation of £100 to an individual in financial distress.

### **Christmas Dinner Volunteering**

On Christmas Day 2022, Reader Joseph and Father Cyprian spent much of the day volunteering at St John's Catholic Club in Benchill, to help with the effort of providing free Christmas dinner to individuals and families who might benefit from this.

### **Marathon Fundraiser**

Since the establishment of our mission, we have taken part as volunteers in the Manchester Marathon in order to raise money to aid parish funds. This continued last year when, for the first time, we also sent a group of volunteers to the Half-Marathon.

### **Office Holders**

The trustees of our parish for the reporting year were:

- Father Cyprian (Astley) – *Ex Officio* Chair of trustees as Rector of the parish.
- Reader Joseph Smith – Secretary, appointed as trustee for an initial period of 3 years, with 1 year remaining to be served.
- Ms Susan Fozard – Treasurer, appointed as trustee for an initial period of 2 years, now having completed her term.

Susan indicated to the Trustees that, due to increased obligations in other parts of her life, she did not wish to continue in this role. We will ever be grateful to Susan for

her service and friendship, especially during the early days of our mission when often she was the only person in attendance apart from the rector.

Our new friend, Mr John Hopkins, kindly agreed to take on the role of treasurer for our parish, and was voted into the role unanimously by the trustees, as Susan's final act as a trustee. John is the director of Revolution Youth and has considerable experience in fundraising and grant applications, which we hope will be of benefit to our parish.

This Annual Report was approved by the undersigned Trustees of the Parish of Saint Melangell at the Annual General Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2024.

Cyprian +

Hieromonk Cyprian  
Rector  
Chair of Trustees

Joseph Alexander Smith

Reader Joseph Smith  
Secretary

John Hopkins

Mr John Hopkins  
Treasurer

## From the Treasurer

Dear friends,

The accounts for the financial year 12/11/2022 to 11/11/2023 are attached for your interest.

Yet again, by God's mercy, we successfully met the costs associated with our regular activities. We were also able to make some charitable donations. Thanks are due to our regular and occasional donors, and all who helped in any way.

However, it is important to note that this was not without some difficulty.

Our building hire fees increased over the previous year due to the additional benefits of our new hire agreement, and for the first time we had insurance costs to cover. At the same time, our small number of regular donors remained the same. Historically, we have relied heavily on donations from Human Race (the organisers of the Manchester Marathon) to supplement our income. However, last year, due to a severe shortage of volunteers, we received the lowest amount ever, despite also having sent a group to the Half-Marathon for the first time.

In addition to the above, some of the items for our worship were given directly by private individuals, meaning that the true cost of running our church is not reflected in the expenditure as detailed in our parish accounts.

It is important for us to consider in a realistic way how our activities as a parish are to be funded, bearing in mind that we want to do more than simply pay the bills but rather put ourselves in a position to use our resources for mission and outreach, funding activities to bring people to faith.

This will mean changing the way we think about money for church, and we hope to address this together in the season after Pentecost.

In the meanwhile, let us pray for inspiration as we seek new and imaginative ideas to raise funds to allow us to continue and expand our work through the current year and into the future.

Cyprian +

Hieromonk Cyprian (Astley)  
*On behalf of the outgoing Treasurer*



**Summary of Accounts for the Financial Year 12/11/2022 to 11/11/2023**

	<b>Amount (£)</b>
Opening Balance 12/11/2022	800.53
Income	4070.93
Expenditure	4267.56
Closing Balance 11/11/2023	609.90

**Breakdown of Income**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Amount (£)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Private Donations (Inclusive of Gift Aid)	3595.27	Inc. Net Gift Aid £655.68
Easyfundraising	37.96	
Manchester Marathon Donation	437.00	
Bank Account Interest	0.70	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4070.93</b>	

**Breakdown of Expenditure**

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Amount (£)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Building Hire Fee	100.00	Hope Methodist church
Regular Building Hire Fees	2796.00	St Luke's Anglican church
Regular Bank Account Fees	60.00	
Insurance	380.70	
Parish Website	244.20	
Incense	25.90	
Altar Wine	12.50	
Candles	51.71	
Cruets	38.68	
Bible	29.85	Gift for an enquirer
Printer Ink	224.89	
Printer Paper	34.96	
Sundry non-consumables	14.92	Matches, tacks, &c.
Microphone for live-streaming	44.26	
Charitable donations	125.97	
Hospitality	83.01	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4267.56</b>	