

**ST. HELEN'S CHURCH
ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH**

Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year ended

31 December 2024



The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
**INDEX TO THE ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

	Page
PCC Reference and Administrative Details	3
PCC Annual Report	4 - 22
Independent Examiners Report	25
Receipts and Payments Account	26
Statement of Assets and Liabilities	27
Notes to the Accounts	28 – 29
Detailed Income & Expenditure Accounts	30 - 31
Restricted Funds Analysis	32 - 33

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

PCC Name:	The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch		
Charity Registration No:	1200922		
Address:	St Helen's Church 3 Lower Church Street Ashby-de-la-Zouch Leicester LE65 1AA		
Parochial Church Council Members:			
Ex-officio member – Team Rector	Rev'd Susan Field		
Ex-officio member – Churchwarden	Judith Lewis		
Ex-officio member - Churchwarden	Anne Heaton	Resigned 16 April 2024	
Treasurer	Catalina Chan	Co – opted 16 January 2024 and Appointed 16 April 2024	
Ex- officio member / Reader – Parish Safeguarding Coordinator	Elizabeth Smith		
Vice Chair	Lynda Price		
PCC Secretary	Christopher Lewis	Resigned March 2024	
Deanery Synod Rep	Maureen Clark	Co opted by Synod in June 2024	
Deanery Synod Rep	Eileen Coombs	Until 16 April 2024	
Electoral Roll Officer	Eileen Coombs	Elected as PCC member 16 April 2024	
Giving Officer	Cornelia Wright	Resigned from PCC 16 April 2024 but still PGS officer	
	Sam Blatherwick		
	Emily Darlington		
	Shan Dyer		
	Caroline Millward		
	Peter Rose	Appointed 16 April 2024	
	Malcolm Salter	Appointed 16 April 2024	
	Laura Tucker	Appointed 16 April 2024	

All the PCC are also Trustees of the charity.

Independent Examiner:	Richard Vann 9 Saxon Way Ashby-de-la-Zouch Leicestershire LE65 2JR
Bankers:	CAF Bank 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling Kent MR19 4TA

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

**PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

The PCC is pleased to present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charity Commission's Receipts and Payments basis.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC registered with the Charity Commission on 7 November 2022. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 (as amended) and the Church Representation Rules (contained in Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 as amended). The members of the PCC are the charity's trustees under charity law.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

PCC Membership

Appointment of PCC members are governed by the Church Representation Rules. The Team Rector, other clergy licensed to serve in the Parish and the churchwardens are automatically members. Other members are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting by church members who are on the Electoral Roll of the Parish. We encourage everyone (aged 16 and over) who attends church regularly to register on the Electoral Roll.

Churchwardens are elected each year at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners, which is open to all residents of the Parish. They serve from the date they are subsequently admitted to office by the Bishop and continue in office until their successor is admitted by the Bishop following election.

Elected members of the PCC serve for a term of 3 years from the date of election. They may stand to be re-elected for a further 3-year term.

Under the Church Representation Rules, the PCC has the power to co-opt additional members to fill casual vacancies. Co-opted members serve until the next Annual Parochial Church Meeting when they may stand for election.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The PCC has the responsibility of promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical. The PCC undertakes their mission through prayer, worship, learning and action. It also has responsibility for the maintenance of the church building and the Community Heritage Centre and its associated grounds.

When planning our activities, the PCC has considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including the guidance 'public benefit: running a Charity (PB2)'. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. We try to enable people to live out their faith as part of our community.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES (continued)

Our objectives are to:

- nurture and sustain growth in the Christian life by teachings, worship and prayer to develop knowledge and trust in Jesus;
- enable existing churchgoers to be confident in their witness to the ongoing life of Jesus Christ;
- engage with the local community in Ashby-de-la-Zouch in loving service, working with others.

To facilitate this work, it is vital that we maintain the fabric of the Church, the Churchyard, and the Heritage Centre and its associated grounds.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

PCC Secretary Report

The PCC met 8 times during 2024. Chris Lewis resigned from the PCC and as Secretary in March 2024 and we were unable to find a replacement in 2024 so Catalina Chan and I have done most of the PCC administration, and Eileen Coombs, Shân Dyer, Laura Tucker and Emily Darlington have all assisted with taking minutes of meetings for which we are very grateful.

The PCC was delighted that, at last, we were able to appoint a Treasurer in Catalina Chan and she has got to grips with the job very quickly. We said a big thank you to Andy Smith for holding that responsibility and he is owed continued thanks as he has supported Catalina and helped her to find her feet.

The PCC has made some changes to staff appointments this year. On the recommendation of our musicians, Andrew Chapman reduced his hours and salary and relinquished his role as Director of Music to become the organist and Caroline Essex became Choral Director in a paid capacity. She is assisted by Anna Haines who particularly looks after the junior choir. This arrangement seems to be working very well.

The PCC also decided to recruit a verger at 8 hours per week and were pleased to appoint Pete Hyland from Breedon in that role from April. Following the resignation of Carole Nettles, we reshaped the administrator role to be a Parish Administrator and Communications Officer. This is now ably filled by Tim James for 12 hours a week. Elaine Shaw, our other employee continues to do sterling work as Bookings Officer for the Heritage Centre.

Having set some priorities in 2023, the PCC has continued to monitor progress with those and decided in 2024 to give a percentage of our income away to charities. The charities we supported were Embrace the Middle East, Open Doors, Hoveraid, Loughborough Town of Sanctuary, Ashby Foodbank, Ashby Street Pastors and the Phoenix Foundation. We hope to hear more about the work of these charities in 2025 so that we can support them in prayer as well as financially.

Sue Field (in the absence of a PCC Secretary)

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Team Rector's Report

As you will see from the reports below, 2024 was quite a busy year for St Helen's and I am enormously grateful to all those who gave their time to the ministry and mission of God in and through St Helen's. I know that I function best when I am working as part of a team and there are several teams at St Helen's so it is a joy to be working with you. In this report, I just want to highlight a few areas for which I have particular responsibility.

Ministry Team – this consists of our Readers (Andy Smith, Judith Lewis, Liz Smith and Sue Brown), Caroline Essex as Choral Director and me. We meet about every two months and reflect on services we have had as well as forthcoming worship. At the end of 2024, we began thinking about the ministry of St Helen's to children and young families and how we can better map pathways from initial contact to discipleship. We had a study morning with Matt Long who is the Diocese of Leicester's Intergenerational Officer and that gave us food for thought which we are still digesting.

Rev. Canon Richard Andrews – we have been delighted that Richard (retired Precentor from Derby Cathedral) now has Permission to Officiate in the Diocese of Leicester and he and Alison attend St Helen's twice a month. I have really valued being able to share the presidency at Holy Communion with Richard and have also appreciated his preaching.

Worship – at the beginning of 2024, our pattern of worship changed across the Flagstaff team changed to enable me to be at St Helen's on the second Sunday of the month for our morning communion as well as on the fourth Sunday. It means that I have more continuity with the congregation and I am grateful to the village churches for agreeing that change. Earlier in the year, we had a Stewardship Sunday when we focussed on giving and this is something we will do annually as I feel strongly that giving of our money and our time is a core part of discipleship. As others have mentioned, the Soirées initiative seems to have been popular and means that our congregations have increased in size significantly at Evensong on those Sundays. Our Advent Carol Service doubled in size from 2023 (the weather may also have been a factor) as did many of our services around Christmas. I am hugely grateful to all of those who lead worship including our excellent choir and musicians.

Baptisms, weddings and funerals – unlike many churches, St Helen's remains popular for baptisms, weddings and funerals. In 2024, we had 14 baptisms. Liz Smith and I visit each of the families before the baptism to get to know them, to talk through the service and to give them information about the work that St Helen's does with children and young families. Liz then keeps in touch with them, notifying them of various events and services. We had 6 weddings at St Helen's in 2024 and I am very grateful to Andy and Helen Smith who worked with me to lead a Saturday Marriage Preparation Day for couples getting married at St Helen's and in the village churches. This was very much appreciated by the couples. We also conducted 14 funerals for people with a connection with St Helen's and I am very grateful to those who have volunteered to help welcome when we have had large services. We held our annual 'Time to Remember' service in October and we hope to be able to offer some more follow up pastoral care through the Pastoral Team.

We also hosted a Confirmation service in July at which two of our congregation were baptised and six were confirmed.

Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team which had formed in 2023, was commissioned in June 2024 and we meet every couple of months. We also have a WhatsApp group to arrange any visits. Contact is via any member

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Team Rector's Report (continued)

of the team but that is fed into the whole group and visits allocated. Every Sunday, a member of the Pastoral Team is located by the font to be available and also to look out for newcomers, and members have supported the 'Time to Remember' service at St Helen's and a similar service at Breedon in the summer.

Minster Communities

Some of us attended a day at Mountsorrel with representatives and clergy covering a large area of North West Leicestershire and from that meeting, four Minster Communities have been agreed. We are in Group A of Area 2 and our Minster Community includes Ibstock and Heather, the Woodfield Team, the Flagstaff Team, Blackfordby and Woodville, Castle Donington and Lockington. Judith Lewis and I have been part of the coordinating group for this area and the main task in 2024 was to prepare a document covering various aspects such as finance, buildings, people and ministry. This was based on the documents that each parish put together in 2023 and some research done by working groups. Further work will continue in 2025 and I imagine that, by the time I write next year's report, things will be very different.

Rev. Canon Sue Field, Team Rector

Churchwardens' Report

It is the responsibility of the Church Warden to provide to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting a report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church. However, as much of this has been covered in other reports, especially the Fabric Report, I am happy to refer you to them and keep my report briefer than might otherwise be the case. I do, however, wish to highlight the rewiring of the church, which has taken place this year. This has been a huge undertaking, and enormous thanks are due to Simon Starkey for project managing it and to an anonymous donor for funding it. Our electrics are now both far more reliable and much safer. Outstanding work in the chancel area is to be completed in early 2025.

2024 has been the first full year in which Rev'd Sue Field has been Team Rector of St Helen's and the wider Flagstaff Family of Churches. It has been a year marked by several new initiatives and changes of personnel.

The general trend in numbers attending services over the past year has increased, especially for usual Sunday services, with an average attendance of 65, compared with 52 in 2023. Some of this is accounted for by the numbers attending the Sunday Soirees on the first Sunday evening of the spring, summer and autumn, where Choral Evensong is followed by a short musical recital – from an average of 24 in 2023 to 58 on the Soiree evenings. Numbers attending over Easter and Christmas were also up from 2023 – from 115 to 125 and from 97 to 115 respectively. However, although our All Age services are appreciated by those who attend, growing this congregation remains a challenge, with numbers largely unchanged from 2023 – excluding special services, the average attendance in 2023 was 8 children and 30 adults; in 2024 it has been 9 children and 27 adults.

Over the past year we have said goodbye and thank you to Carole Nettles as Parish Administrator and been pleased to welcome Tim James in September. We have also been extremely pleased to have been able to appoint a new vergers for 8 hours per week, spread flexibly across the week, with Pete Hyland taking up this role in April. Pete's primary responsibilities are to ensure that the church is

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Churchwardens' Report (continued)

opened and locked up on a daily basis, that the interior of the church is kept in good order and having everything set up as necessary for services, including weddings and funerals. His appointment has relieved me, as Warden, of a number of responsibilities. The other significant change in personnel this year has been Andrew Chapman stepping down as Director of Music, but remaining our regular organist, while Caroline Essex and Anna Haines have divided the Director of Music responsibilities between them.

We have had to replace our flagpole this summer, after high winds caused damage to our existing one. Sadly, this coincided with the 80th anniversary of D Day, meaning we were unable to fly the Union Flag, but at least we should be able to fly it for the anniversary of VE Day in 2025.

Appropriate and necessary annual checks and services in both our buildings have taken place over the past year – these include servicing the fire extinguishers, fire safety and emergency lighting checks in the Heritage Centre. The boilers are also serviced annually but remain unreliable, often tripping out so that the heating does not come on. Either I or Pete Hyland check on a Saturday that they are working, but they still trip out far too frequently between then and Sunday morning – our assumption is that this is related to damp in the boiler room and plans are in hand to try to remedy this.

The Church Wardens' report for 2023 refers to seeking a faculty for a commemorative plaque in honour of Canon John Bowers. As is so often the case, progress with this has been slow and took up most of 2024, but permission to do so had been granted by the end of the year and a date arranged for its installation in early 2025. The process for arranging necessary repairs to the memorial in the chancel to Selina, Countess of Hastings, has been equally slow, having started back in 2022 and which also required a faculty. The conservation work was completed just before Christmas 2024.

Looking to the future, we are in the early stages of thinking about re-ordering the interior of the church, which will be a large, lengthy and expensive project, but is an extremely exciting prospect. A number of people are already involved with this, many of whom are bringing to bear their professional skills and/or expertise from their previous working on the Heritage Centre.

Also, looking to the future, it is difficult to escape noticing that we are all getting older and that rotas are becoming harder to fill as people who have served many years are needing to step back. I was particularly struck by this when I realised that the 2 people recently clearing the leaves and debris from the gulleys on our roof were both over 70. So this seems an appropriate time both to thank all who have contributed so much and for so long to the life of our church and to ask among younger and more recent members of our congregation to consider areas where they might be able to volunteer – the stewarding rota, sound system, contributing to maintaining and caring for the grounds and the coffee rota, as well as the roof gulleys, all being areas where we would welcome and value new recruits.

I am not seeking re-election as Church Warden for the forthcoming year. It has been an immense privilege to have served in this role for the past 4 years and I have learned a great deal – including how much I still do not know. Thankfully, there are always people who do know! I could not have done this job without the support of innumerable people and could not possibly list them all. However, I would like to mention specifically the support of the Building Team, especially of Helen Smith and Simon Starkey, for their commitment to the care and maintenance of our much-loved but understandably fragile building. And thank you to Rob and Caroline Millward and to Susan Boardman-Weston and others who spend so much time looking after our grounds. I am also inordinately grateful to Anne Heaton, who has continued to do our faculty applications and review PCC policies since

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Churchwardens' Report (continued)

stepping down as Church Warden and to another former Warden, Shân Dyer, who has continued to be our point of contact with our energy suppliers. Thank you, also, to the many, many others, but especially to Eileen Coombs and Elizabeth Smith, for their willingness to be available to help with the infinite variety of major and minor tasks that make all the difference to how the church functions.

Judith Lewis, Churchwarden

Fabric Report

On behalf of the Buildings Group, I'm pleased to report on the state of the fabric of the church and the work that has been carried out during 2024. We strive to be good custodians of our Grade 1 listed church and are grateful to those who freely give their time and expertise to maintain, clean, repair, and generally care for both our buildings, the churchyard, and the Heritage Centre garden – you know who you are.

We continue to keep up to date with routine testing and servicing of the boiler, security alarms, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and fire alarm in the Heritage Centre, room divider in the Heritage Centre, and our electrical equipment so that we are fully compliant as public buildings. Any recommendations and remedial actions are carried out.

A big focus of our work this year has been to the church electrics. In July old and failing wiring circuits which have been added to over the years were replaced with modern supply cables, wiring and a new distribution board in the Priestroom. This will make our lighting and sockets more reliable, safer, and compliant with modern standards. A further phase of the work in the Chancel area will be carried out early in 2025.

In November work on the Selina Memorial started after concerns that it had become a trip hazard and was also at risk of theft. The brass inlay was taken away for expert conservation which involved straightening the distortions in the brass, cleaning the back and face, restoring decorative work, cleaning the stonework and reattaching the brass. We were pleased that the work was completed just in time for Christmas (23rd December!) It now looks better and is more robust, but we should avoid walking on it to prevent any future damage.

We now have received condition reports from Skillingtons on some of the other memorials in the church, especially the Nundi Slab and parts of the Hastings Chapel so some big projects to tackle in the next few years. And we have a new memorial – to Canon John Bowers – which was installed at the end of the year and will be unveiled in January 2025. The flagpole on the tower roof has also been refurbished this year.

We continue to find ways to run our buildings efficiently and sustainably. In March we had work done on the heating controls in the Heritage Centre so there are now two separate zones rather than the entire building being heated.

And finally, a reminder that if you do see any issues with either of our buildings, please can you let the Buildings Team know. We do keep a look out for issues but not everything is obvious or constant – like the kitchen taps in the Heritage Centre kitchen which had to be replaced to stop the banging through the water pipes in the building which happened some of the time.

Helen Smith, Chair of the Buildings Group

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

St Helen's for the future

Very soon after I arrived in May 2023, it became clear that there were substantial issues with our church building. The tower (including the clock) requires major work, the memorials and the organ need refurbishment and there are many ongoing repairs which are necessary. In addition, the word 'reordering' was mentioned and a few people who had been involved in the Heritage project said that they were now ready and had energy to embark on another project. To that end, a group of us has been meeting since August 2024 to try to assess what ours and the community's needs might be for the building in the future. We have had an adviser from the Diocese supporting us and we have been to visit St Mary's, Melton Mowbray to see how they have developed their building. Further updates will follow as we continue to form our thinking in 2025 and to consult with and listen to members of the congregation and people in the wider community.

Sue Field, Chair of the St Helen's for the Future group.

Servers

SERVERS

Since last year we have been joined by Alison Andrews, a welcome addition inasmuch as she is also capable of carrying the processional cross, making the full complement of Sue Evans, Greg Wells and myself with Lyn Price. It has not always been possible to have a full team, especially at Christmas. As Sacristan I have received some help from Laura Tucker. However, we do our best and I would like to express my appreciation to every one of our team for their loyalty.

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

Although strictly speaking they do not come under the heading of servers, we do have some members of the congregation who have been approved by the PCC to administer the sacraments, namely Shân Dyer, Eileen Coombs, Peter Maunder, Lyn Price and Adrienne Sedgman. These are all very valuable members of our team. Sadly, Adrienne has had to relinquish this as it proved difficult with being in the choir. Again, I am very grateful to these people for their loyal help.

Sadly, the responsibility of being Sacristan is now proving a little too much and I am giving up this position as of this APCM. I thank all those who have helped me in this respect particularly when the altar frontals needed to be changed for each church season.

Eileen Mary Barradell, Head Server/Sacristan

Safeguarding

'Safeguarding' means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture in all our churches.

St Helens is committed to high standards in the safeguarding and care of children, young people and adults. For St Helens church in 2024 there were no concerns reported.

As the DBS administrator I continue to complete new checks and renew checks for the Flagstaff family of churches. DBS certificates must be renewed every 3 years. Online Safeguarding training has been offered and accessed for new and existing volunteers and PCC members. This training is also required to be renewed every 3 years.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Safeguarding (continued)

We are working with the Parish Handbook and the Leicester Diocesan requirements which set out the Church's approach to safeguarding. This supports the day-to-day work of safeguarding and those that have a role with children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable.

St Helens follows the Safer Recruitment process set out by the Church of England for all new volunteers and employees.

Information about Safeguarding and reporting concerns/seeking help and advice is displayed in the church and the St Helens Community Heritage Centre.

A dedicated phone number and email contact are now available for concerns to be reported 24 hours a day.

The Church of England has been in the process of developing a set of National Safeguarding Standards since 2020. These standards have now been approved and launched.

The Standards are essential for the Church to understand the quality and, most importantly, the impact of its safeguarding activity. In addition, the Standards provide a simple construct which integrates the complexity of all safeguarding activity in the Church. All such activities, at all levels across the Church, will relate to at least one Standard

St Helens church is registered with the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard which ensures that we receive up to date information and provides a plan of any actions required. This dashboard is to be updated in January 2025 to include the introduction of the national standards for Safeguarding. The PCC will start working on adopting these standards in 2025.

The safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults at St Helens Church and the Flagstaff group of churches must be a thread which runs through everything we do and the policies and practices we put in place for our church and church community. It is essential to ensure that a healthy church culture can be developed in which people feel confident to share concerns and where all people feel safe in every respect. In order to highlight this need for awareness of safeguarding culture, Safeguarding Sunday in November was the start of a series of awareness-raising sermons delivered in each church across the Flagstaff family.

The safety of children, young people and all adults is "everyone's business."

Elizabeth Smith, Parish Safeguarding Coordinator

Stepping Stones – children's group

No report received

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Children and families

Young children and families are welcomed and warmly included at the All Age service which is held at 3.30 pm on the first Sunday of every month. This is always followed by tea and cake and a time to *chat*, in the Heritage Centre. The number of families attending this service is increasing slowly, and it still seems that the afternoon is a more convenient time for families to bring their children to church. This matches the time of Messy church which also runs on a Sunday afternoon at 3.30-5.00pm on the fourth Sunday of every month, alternating between St Helens Community Heritage Centre and Viscount Beaumont School, Coleorton as the venue. Messy church continues to be a relaxed and informal time when children and families are welcomed and can engage in creative activities.

Willesley School visits

It has been an enormous privilege and source of joy to be able to welcome children from Willesley Primary School to our church and to our church family this year.

Each class spends a morning or an afternoon session engaging in activities related to the set RE curriculum for each year stage. Within this, all children (and adults) have the opportunity to explore the church both inside and outside and learn a little more about church life, the building and the church family.

The roof of the church was certainly raised with the singing of Key Stage 2 children and their families at their harvest celebration held in St Helens in October. 2024 ended with a visit from the very youngest children from foundation stage who followed a trail around the church, guided by a helpful star, to the crib where we all shared the story of Nativity.

It is a privilege provided by God to welcome and include children and their families to our church. They are our tomorrow so, let us welcome them today.

Elizabeth Smith

Choir and Music

Full Choir

We began the year with 4 regular trebles. Over the autumn it became clear Will's voice was dropping and so he ended the year as a tenor having passed briefly through the alto line. Emily F understandably needed to take a bit of a step back to focus on A level work but was able to join us for Christmas, Aimie continues to sing whenever she can and Annabel has remained a reliable regular as Head Chorister. We still have 3 regular sopranos (with Anna on maternity leave from December), 4 altos, 3 adult tenors and 1 bass. At Easter and Christmas, we welcomed our usual extras to swell the ranks plus a new face, Jo, recruited from Concordia who sang for our Advent and Christmas Carol Services and hopes to continue joining us for Evensongs in the future. It was particularly wonderful to have former trebles Anna & Jenny W and Amelie M back with us for Christmas.

During 2025 we will be looking at ways to boost the treble/soprano line before all our trebles disappear to university.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Choir and Music (Continued)

Special Services

In addition to our usual services, in 2024 we introduced our Sunday Soirées on the first Sunday of the month from May to October (excluding August when the choir are on holiday). The Soirées consist of Choral Evensong followed by refreshments and a short recital. For our Harvest Evensong in October, we welcomed two extra tenors and a bass from Concordia to join the choir for the anthem and hope we might encourage them to join us again, perhaps more regularly. We were treated to wonderful musical performances by The Capriccio Ensemble, Tesserae, Andrew Chapman, Ashby Baroque Strings and Tori Norman & Jeremy Kimber and were delighted that the Soirées drew new people in to experience worshipping at Evensong with congregations averaging nearly 60 people.

In June we took part in a special service to commemorate the anniversary of D Day and in December we were pleased to sing for the Carol Service at Staunton Harold.

Music

We purchased three new pieces of music for the choir during the year and suggested to Ministry Team and PCC that it was time to purchase new hymn books for the congregation which would contain some of the more modern hymns we enjoy singing as well as familiar old favourites, some with updated and more accessible words. This was agreed and the order made in the autumn (though the books themselves did not appear until the new year).

In addition to the new hymn books, we have taken the time to put together a booklet of songs which do not appear in either of our books and these are due to be printed for use in 2025.

Junior Choir

Junior Choir had a wonderful start to the year under the expert tuition of Anna. We had a new singer for Mothering Sunday, Delilah, as well as singers from previous years all ably supported by Annabel and Liz. We also had a new look with T shirts purchased by Anna for Junior Choir to match the colour of the choir robes. Junior Choir also sang at Harvest and Christingle, and we are delighted that, following the Christingle Service, we have one or two new singers signed up for 2025.

The hope is always that some Junior Choir members will feel able to join the full choir at some stage, but this is not a requirement.

Thank you

Finally, I would like to thank all our singers for their hard work over the year and their support of me personally as I took over the choral reins from Andrew. Special mention to Andy S for always staying behind after choir practice to help me clear away and lock up. Thanks also to the Ministry Team and wider congregation for their appreciation and support of the choir and all we strive to bring to the worship at St Helen's. And finally, thanks to Anna for her wonderful leadership of Junior Choir and the trebles/sopranos and Mr C who not only plays the organ and piano but who sings whichever part I randomly throw at him on a Sunday!

Caroline Essex, Choral Director

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Choir and Music (Continued)

Music Group / Duet

- + continues to play for the All Age Service on the first Sunday of the month
- + a valuable additional resource to the music at St Helen's
- + Pete H (guitar) and myself (piano), being the regular musicians

Organ & Pianos

- + the organ continues to be tuned twice a year, - and is generally in pretty good order – I continue to liaise with the tuners – Cousans Organs (based in Coalville)
- + during 2024 a few more problems occurred – sticking keys in particular & tuning the reeds (oboe, corneopane, trumpet & trombone pipes) was more challenging
- + the last major overhaul and upgrade was during 1985/86 – almost 40 years ago; in October we invited our organ builders (& tuners) – Cousans Organs & Mike Thompson (Organ Builder, Burton on Trent, – who tunes Breedon & other instruments in the area) to quote for restoration work – mechanical, electrical & electronic work, plus some tonal improvements
- + the quotes and specifications were quite different (financially as well as structurally); we then invited Anne de Graeve (Leicester Diocesan Organ Adviser) to visit St Helen's and comment on the quotes – further advice will be sought from Paul Hale who has a similar role in the Southwell Diocese [tragically, Mike Thompson died a few weeks ago]
- + we envisage the restoration work being a part of the wider reordering projects being explored at St Helen's
- + any visiting organists comment very favourably about the current instrument, it would be a great loss if the instrument were not to be overhauled, and left to gradually decline & eventually be replaced by an electronic instrument – particularly as we continue to develop our soirees and use of St Helen's as a concert venue
- + the piano keeps in tune well, but some work on the case of the piano still needs undertaking; during times when the church heating is off, or we have prolonged cold spells, some notes/keys become damp and 'sticky' making playing a little more unpredictable/adventurous!
- + the digital piano jointly owned with Concordia Choir continues to be securely stored in the Heritage Centre - being used few times (by both owners) during 2024

I wish to acknowledge the support of Howard Marriott and Laurence Rogers who have played the organ on occasions when I have been on leave.

Andrew Chapman, Organist

Connections

In 2024, we trialled a session called "Connections". These were reflective sessions and activities to help us to spend time in God's presence and to "connect" – with God, with Ourselves, with Others and with Creation – and so deepen our discipleship.

We began by marking the feast day of Ignatius of Loyola by trying out the principles of Ignatian spirituality, led by Debbie Challenor, from the St. Beuno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Connections (continued)

We also looked at the Return of the Prodigal Son, through the work of Henri Nouwen, and considered our “call to obedience” to mark the feast day of St. Hilda of Whitby.

We’ll be getting underway with Connections again in 2025, possibly in a more regular spot, and there will be some special guests coming too – as part of the textile exhibition “Crying in the Silicon Wilderness”, May 2nd–5th, the artist Romola Parish will lead a quiet session for us. And later in the year we hope to have sessions led by Natalie Twigg, who encourages reflection through oboe improvisation, and also by the Revd. Dr. Rhona Knight.

And we’ll have some sessions when we simply gather to “be still and know that I am God”. If you’d like to know more, please ask Andy Smith.

Andy Smith

Events and Activities Team (EAT)

In 2023, this became more of an oversight group than a team which organised events and I took over chairing this group from Caroline Essex. We met twice during 2024 – in January and July and we shared details about events planned for the year. Members of the group represent different areas of church life as follows – Helen Smith (Sew it don’t throw it and follow up), Liz Smith (children’s workshops and Eco group), Julie Starkey (Heritage), Peter Rose (concerts), Anna Haines (children’s workshops), Jill Chapman (publicity) and Sue Field (chair and Soirées). We meet to consider any issues we need to bring to the PCC but also to ensure that there are no clashes or too many events in quick succession.

Towards the end of the year, a Social Committee was formed and met once in 2024 under the leadership of Alison Andrews. They organised a very successful Christmas Cracker evening in December featuring carols, Christmas readings and mince pies.

Sue Field

St Helen’s Bellringers

In 2024, the bells were rung for 4 weddings thanks to the continued support of ringers from neighbouring churches as there are still currently only 3 St. Helen’s ringers.

The bells were rung on Thursday, 6th June to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings.

During the year, we have rung for Evensong with support from ringers from other towers who also supported us with ringing for the Sunday morning, and for the first time in over 40 years, the bells were rung on Christmas morning.

The roof continues to be inspected periodically and maintenance such as weeding and sweeping carried out as necessary by local ringers who also put up the flags.

In November the clapper shaft on the 3rd bell broke during Sunday Evening ringing, with the help of 3 of the ringers, the clapper was repaired and installed in time for the wedding on the following Saturday and ringing for Remembrance Sunday, whilst the ringers installed the clapper on the 3rd,

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

St Helen's Bellringers (continued)

they checked all the bells and carried out any necessary maintenance. I would like to thank them very much for their help in getting the bell repaired in such a short time.

Since December we have started to have a monthly 10 bell practice on the 1st Tuesday of the month which has been well supported.

Catherine Baker, Acting Tower Captain

Heritage Centre

The Community Heritage Centre is well used for church activities throughout the year. It is regularly used for refreshments after services on Sunday and for the popular Friday afternoon Warm Space. We make use of the centre for church meetings including the Ministry Team, Building Project Team, and PCC, and to support events in church such as concerts, tours and, school visits.

There are lots of other church supported activities which use the venue regularly including Little Fishes, We're In Stitches; Street Pastors; the Heritage Talk series; PRG and sometimes Messy Church. All these are well attended and as such the Heritage Centre is important for our role in the local community.

Unfortunately, in June the NHS stopped their booking of the Heritage Centre which they had been using two or three times each week so that has implications for our revenue. We do however still have many regular hirers who run a variety of exercise and language lessons at the centre each week, as well as monthly bookings by Ashby Strings and Ashby Civic Society.

One off bookings are also important to us and include various local artists and crafters running workshops, private parties, and bookings associated with baptisms and funerals in church. All these give us an opportunity to showcase the venue. The Community Heritage Centre continues to serve us well as a nice space to be, a source of income, and place in our local community.

Helen Smith

Community Heritage Garden

Volunteers:

Regulars - Peter Maunder, Martin Vaughan, Simon Starkey, Rob & Caroline Milward, Chris Wood & Hugh Millward (hope I haven't missed anyone)

Activities:

Mainly trimming, pruning (some of it quite severe), cutting back, grass mowing & strimming, watering, WEEDING, & planting in the gaps!

Helen & Andy did some tidying up & clearing out of 'stuff' along the side by the children's water play area.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Community Heritage Garden (continued)

During the storms in early December, the roofing felt on one of the sheds became detached. It was temporarily secured. It will need replacing in the better weather, at some point in the spring – we hope. I believe there should be adequate funds to cover the costs.

Andrew Chapman

Heritage Events

We are privileged to use the Heritage Centre to showcase the fascinating heritage of our site, with a regular winter programme of talks plus an additional heritage talk during the July Festival of Archaeology. Our talks have an average audience of around 40 people and up to 60 on occasion. From January to March 2024, we hosted three speakers: Peter Liddle talked about death and burial in Leicestershire over the past 5000 years, Ursula Ackrill spoke on the Parish Libraries of Leicestershire, including our own, and Lesley Rowe came to talk about Puritanism in Leicestershire. In July we welcomed Mathew Morris from the University of Leicester to talk about the recent Leicester Cathedral dig. In early October Gay Evans visited to talk about genealogical research, in late October Rachel Askew spoke on the Anglo-Saxon Sculptures at Breedon Church and in November Anthony Yates came to talk about his ancestors, the Bate and Kirkland families of Ashby.

Anne Heaton and I delivered two successful tours in July as part of the Festival of Archaeology, one of the church and a brand new tour of the churchyard. This has proved to be very popular, with several subsequent bookings from local groups.

For 'Hello Heritage' in September, we designed an A2 board for the churchyard gates, also on the subject of the churchyard, which was our main Heritage focus for 2024. A small group, under Anne's guidance, spent several Saturday's cleaning and re-recording some of the graves which were last recorded around 20 years ago by an Ashby Museum team. This work is ongoing.

Julie Starkey

Prior Park Ministry

Attendance at Tea Time over the last year has dwindled as some residents have died, and many have moved to Care/ Nursing Homes. The faithful few who did manage to come regularly continued to enjoy each other's company and all the delicious homemade cakes.

Thank you again to the loyal team who bake sumptuous cakes, make and serve tea and of course wash up. Without their invaluable support, our church's outreach to the community would not be possible.

On the second Wednesday of each month, we have a communion service in the small community hall and the attendance has been very encouraging in the past year, averaging 14-18 each time, including some church members,

A Christmas Carol service was led by Canon Sue Field, followed by mince pies and a wee drop of sherry.

Eileen Coombs

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Welcome and Hospitality

The church is open every day during daylight hours, welcoming everyone who wishes to come in, sit quietly, pray, or enjoy the tranquillity of our beautiful and historic building. For centuries, people from all walks of life have come and worship, give thanks and be blessed. This tradition is very important to us and we want to keep it going.

Flower arrangements adorn various areas of the church, with additional ones during Christmas and Easter, lovely to behold and an aid to worship.

Colourful notice boards displaying posters and notices keep the congregation and visitors updated of upcoming events and services.

Tea lights are always available by St Michael's Chapel to remember loved ones. There are also vases by the Book of Remembrance area for people to put flowers in to remember loved ones on birthdays or anniversaries.

Eileen Coombs, Assistant Warden

Parish Magazine

The Parish Magazine continues to offer a reflection of the life of our church, with columns focusing on groups/ ministries within the church and on the varied ways we live out our faith in everyday life. These sit alongside other regular articles from members of the community, such as a gardening column and one on local history. The magazine draws attention to upcoming events and services and promotes regular missional activities such as the Heart Warming Space and Pause for Paws. 80 copies of the magazine are printed and sold each month, and it is also uploaded to the website. Sincere thanks go to everyone who has contributed an article to the magazine over the last year, and to those who have helped to assemble and deliver them each month.

Emily Darlington (Editor)

Flower Arranging

Throughout the year, flower arrangements adorned the High Altar and the Choir Stall. At Christmas and Easter, there were flower pedestals at the entrance, St Michael's Chapel, the High Altar, Lady Chapel and by the Choir stalls.

Margaret Lawrence has continued to do the Advent wreath and Paschal Candle for us and we are truly grateful. We are very thankful that two new, but very experienced members of the congregation have joined our team this year. A big Thank You to all the faithful and willing flower arrangers who, week by week, creatively and lovingly, arrange flowers to adorn the church, making it warm, beautiful and welcoming to visitors.

If you are interested and feel this is a ministry you can help with, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Eileen Coombs (Flower Co-ordinator)

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

St Helen's Sound Team

Over the past 12 months the sound team have attempted to provide an operator for all the major services in the church. We believe this is an essential part of the church life ensuring the services can be clearly heard by all listeners. We have welcomed another member to the team which eases pressure.

We are still keen to get others involved in this part of the churches work. It's not difficult; training and support will be given. For more information, please contact Simon (simon.starkey@gmail.com) or any member of the sound team. Any feedback about the quality of the service is gratefully received. We will be looking at upgrading some components of the system over the next 12 months.

Simon Starkey

Priest Room Gang (PRG)

Hospitality and supporting and serving others.

There are 10 young people who are members of the PRG. The young people meet on Thursday evenings 5.00-6.30pm every fortnight in term time and, more often by arrangement, in the Community Heritage Centre. It is a time for the young people to come together sharing food and friendship. Some time is always spent at each meeting reflecting and recognising the pattern of the church's year from Advent through to harvest.

A thread running through the group is a focus on considering and supporting the needs of others and supporting charitable organisers. In 2025 the focus will be on MND.

Following the introduction of a PRG Book group in autumn 2023 and the book chosen being "the Diary of Anne Frank" the group agreed that they would like to visit Amsterdam – And they did!

27 May to 30 May 2024.

Seven young people and 3 adults made the trip with the help of a grant from the Ashby Education trust, generous donations and support from the church family members and a great deal of fundraising activity. The main focus for the trip was to visit the house of Anne Frank but also, to engage in the culture of the city, and we were able to link with an Anglican church in the city and spend some time meeting their young people.

In June the group shared their experiences with the church family in a service of Morning worship in church followed by a thank you lunch and quiz, to which everyone was invited.

There are plans for a fundraising sleep out in 2025.

In the autumn the group cooked and hosted a Thanksgiving meal, to which family and friends were invited.

PRG continue to support the provision of the after-service refreshments on the first Sunday of every month after the All Age service.

Thank you to the young people and thank you to Emily Darlington and the adults who have helped. The PRG are a positive star of hope for the future of our church and the community we will serve.

Liz Smith

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Eco-Initiative Group

At the end of 2023, 500 spring flowering bulbs were obtained from Ashby Town Council and were planted in the church grounds.

The Group met in December 2023 to make initial plans for our proposed Fairtrade Promotion. The date for this event was agreed by the Ministry Team as Sunday 12 May 2024, to coincide with Christian Aid Week. The event incorporated a brunch breakfast, held before morning worship, with around 30 attendees. The work of the Fairtrade Foundation was highlighted, and their produce was promoted. £100 worth of goods was sold on behalf of Fair2All of Ashby, and £55 was received in donations. The sermon included reference to the work of Fairtrade and its positive effects on the lives of poorer people of the world. We were also promoting the availability of the household cleaning products refill system and the importance of trying to reduce plastic waste.

On 14 September 2024, Liz Smith and Caroline Millward attended an Eco Church Event, held in Holy Trinity Church, Leicester. Representatives from eco organizations and nature welfare groups gave presentations and advice, and we obtained a lot of useful information, tips and inspirational ideas.

In November 2024, 1,500 spring bulbs were donated by Ashby Town Council, and these have now been planted in the churchyard circular beds, borders and the Heritage Centre Garden.

Caroline Millward

Friends Fellowship and Faith Group

This is an informal friendship group, continuing to meet every second and fourth Tuesday each month, from 2.30pm until 4pm. The meetings are supported by up to eight attendees; we don't follow a formal agenda, but we feel free to share together, and encourage and support one another.

Jenny Hedges

Pause for Paws

Pause for Paws, an outreach initiative to reach the wider community, was launched in October 2024

It runs from 10.15-12.15 pm on the first Saturday of every month. The west door of the church is opened and passing dog walkers are invited to come in and to take a look inside the church and see that it is a friendly and welcoming place where all are welcome.

Refreshments are available -tea/coffee and squash and biscuits and dog biscuits /treats and water. A poo bin is set up outside the church door with a plentiful supply of poo bags available.

There are three volunteers at each session who provide a friendly face and can engage in conversation – be ready to listen and, where appropriate, to pray with and/or for people.

We look forward to the growth of this initiative in the year to come.

Elizabeth Smith

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

We're in Stitches

We are in stitches, stitch and chat group.

We meet monthly in the Heritage Centre. The group is well attended by keen stitchers who are very happy to share expertise with one another. Some knit and crochet, but others stitch, and if wanted they can have use of a sewing machine. They enjoy a chat with a cuppa and biscuits. We also now have a WhatsApp group which is well used and helping to develop a community feel to the meetings. Some of the stitchers, wanting to meet more often, now go to the Warm-hearted space on a Friday afternoon with their stitching, but in a more limited way.

Mo Clark

Little Fishes

Little Fishes had a good start to 2024 with numbers attending remaining at an average of 25 children with their parent or carer each week. We continued to see new faces and learned that, though we have never officially advertised, Little Fishes was being recommended by local health visitors as well as by word of mouth between mums. It was also a joy to welcome 3 new babies, siblings to established Little Fishes!

In July we said goodbye to 7 children, 4 who were moving up to school and 3 to nursery/playgroup, celebrating this as is our usual custom with small gifts and prayers for both them and their mums.

During the year we purchased some new aprons, a mat, books, craft materials, storage boxes and replaced a few smaller toys. No major expenditure was required.

In the autumn term, our numbers dipped to 10-15 children attending each week. This meant our income from donations dropped but despite this, and a noticeable increase in the price of snacks we provide, we were able to maintain our policy of "no charge but donations welcome" and our provision of healthy snacks, small Christmas gifts for children and parents/carers and our donation to PCC of £15 per week with heating and £10 per week without heating.

Little Fishes continues to run with five main volunteers plus two occasional volunteers to help cover absences. We have also been pleased to have Annabel Fraser attending for an hour once a fortnight as part of her school enrichment for university. We are very grateful to all our volunteers for their time.

Mothers' Union

Sadly, in January this year, at our AGM it became necessary for us to consider our way forward because we had lost so many of our members due to various reasons and it was not viable to invite speakers to address so few people. It was therefore agreed that after over 100 years, the St Helen's Mothers' Union Branch be closed. Members were urged to become Diocesan Members where they would still receive the magazines and information on what was happening in the MU. Eileen Coombs was happy to be a point of contact within the Church for any service that may be required that was previously provided by members of the Branch. The MU bank account was duly closed and the monies transferred to the PCC account to be kept solely for the purchase of bibles that will still be provided

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Mothers' Union (continued)

for wedding couples at St Helen's – we are happy to continue providing this outreach service as in the past.

Eileen Barradell, Diocesan Member

Open Bible Discussion Group (Monday House Group)

After many years of hosting this group and meeting together to help us understand more about our faith, and learn more about the Bible, it was with regret that we had to close down our group at the end of last year as we were down to just 3 people.

Many people have been with us over the years. Some of them have now departed this life and some have moved away. I can't remember when we first started but it was a long time ago. One thing I can remember very well is the year when Rev. Ken Toovey joined us and led our Lenten meetings. We had 18 people here for some of those meetings – where did I put them all?

We have had some very good discussions and different people leading the sessions. Thanks very much to those who are still with us. I was pleased to be able to join these and host them.

Margaret Worrall

"Pilgrim Group"

"Pilgrim" – Learning together to be disciples.

The "Pilgrim" discipleship group has continued to meet most Mondays during 2024. We now have 12 members, although not everyone is always able to be present. We have studied and reflected on a range of study materials over the past year, including a series of studies on prayer, the Beatitudes and the film "The Way" about a group of people walking the Camino de Santiago di Compostella and the impact that pilgrimage can have on one's relationship with oneself, others and with God. We would be happy to welcome new members and it would be lovely to have enough people to form 2 groups. We would also be very grateful for any suggestions as to other resources we might be able to use.

Judith Lewis

Warm Hearted Space

Launched in 2023, this initiative continued to grow in popularity. The Heritage Centre provides a warm, safe and welcoming space for anyone to drop in, enjoy cups of tea/ coffee and cakes and make friends. It is adult and child friendly too. Apart from the regulars, a few newcomers gave it a try, liked it and stayed. There is no charge and it is an excellent way to meet new people, socialise and have fun.

So do come to the Heritage Community Centre, bring a friend or two, EVERY Friday from 2-4pm, and enjoy the warmth and hospitality.

Eileen Coombs & Liz Smith

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

St Helen's Website

There have been very few changes to the website over the past year. Tim James has joined Jill Chapman and Julie Starkey as a website administrator. Between us, we keep the 'What's On' pages up to date, add a list of services each month, upload the Parish Magazine and add short reports of previous activities.

The Heritage pages continue to develop, with new research articles added from time to time, creating an online resource for visitors and researchers.

Julie Starkey

Deanery Synod

Deanery synod meetings were held in -

June 2024 (where I was co-opted as a new member), and an inspiring presentation was given about outdoor worship/ forest church.

October 2024 meeting had a guest speaker talking about Diocesan Finance where he tried to answer some concerns and questions. Also, an update on the progress of the Minster community.

December 2024 meeting was held at St John's Donisthorpe to hear about and view their recent refurbishment. Discussions also continued about concerns around the Minster community.

Over the summer there had been a prayer walk between some churches which I was unable to attend.

Mo Clark

Treasurer's Report – Financial Year 2024

As of 31 December 2024, St. Helen's funds totalled £137,227, up £15,504 over the previous financial year.

- ◆ The enclosed accounts showed an overall increase of £18,969 in **Donations and Legacies**.
 - The increase in using Parish Giving Scheme income compensated for the decrease in Direct debit/Standing donations.
 - Donations via contactless device (Collectin) offset a decline in cash collection from Wall Safe & Loose Plate.
 - The Bellringers' Fund £4,839 and the Mothers Union Fund £611 were put under the management of the PCC.
- ◆ **Activities for generating funds** (mainly income from room hire and events) increased by £14,372. However, £10,311 in rental payments were delayed and brought forward from 2023.
- ◆ £28,260 was spent on church buildings, primarily for repairs. Designated donations of £14,000 and special grants of £5,317 (Archbishops Council ChurchCare Grant and the Listed Places of Worship Grant) were obtained to cover some costs.
- ◆ **Running costs** dropped by 11%, with a £6,530 reduction in utility costs.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

Treasurer's Report – Financial Year 2024 (continued)

- ◆ £6,000 donation was made to nine organisations, including AYFC, Loughborough Town of Sanctuary, Open Doors, HoverAid Trust, Ashby School Welfare Fund, Ashby Street Pastors, The Phoenix Children's Foundation, Ashby Foodbank and Embrace the Middle East.

The net income in 2024 was a surplus of £15,504. However, this included delayed rental income and funds entrusted to the PCC. Moreover, we spent £17,618 more in 2024 than in 2023, representing a 14% increase.

St. Helen's current finances remain sound. The church has more than £45,000 in its general fund, and the PCC policy is to keep £14,000 of it "in reserve" in case of an unexpected event or set of circumstances. There is also £49,000 in the Legacy Fund, which will be used for major building works. As a result, when planning for 2025, the PCC continues to allocate resources carefully to meet our needs and achieve our mission. This includes:

- ◆ £21,220 on church buildings (25% decrease on 2024)
- ◆ £4,000 on charities donations (38% decrease on 2024 – based on 2024 donations income)
- ◆ £49,120 on Parish Contribution (10% increase on 2024)
- ◆ £25,742 on salaries (33% increase on 2024 – based on National Living Wage)

This budget estimates a deficit of £18,000. Our current funds can sustain this deficit, but to maintain a healthy financial situation, we must raise our income from Activities for generating funds and personal giving. Let us pray and reflect on whether we can increase our contributions.

This being my first Treasurer's report, I would like to give grateful thanks to Andy Smith for his initial instruction on the treasurer's role as well as his continuing assistance throughout the year. I would also like to thank the PCC and the congregation for their support and understanding.

Catalina Chan

Heritage Centre

As the Heritage centre is owned by St Helen's Church, the Trustees have considered and resolved that it should be included in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. A valuation will need to be undertaken, and this will then be included in the year ended 31st December 2025 accounts.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
PCC ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(continued)

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The members of the PCC, who are also trustees of the charity, are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The trustees are required to prepare accounts for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the PCC and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the PCC during the year.

In preparing those financial statements, the PCC is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements in accordance with the Church Representation Rules;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the PCC will continue in operation.

The PCC is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time, the financial position of the PCC and to enable the PCC to ensure that the financial statements comply with the requirements referred to above. The PCC is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Church Representation Rules and applicable UK Accounting Standards

Approved by the PCC on 18 March 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



[S E Field \(Mar 19, 2025 07:22 GMT\)](#)

Rev'd Canon Sue Field
PCC Chair

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
Saint Helen, Ashby-de-la-Zouch
INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS' REPORT TO THE PCC/TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

I report to the PCC on my examination of the Receipts & Payments Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on pages 26 to 33.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

(1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or

(2) that accounts do not accord with those records; or

(3) that accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than the requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Richard Vann
9 Saxon Way
Ashby-de-la-Zouch
Leicestershire
LE65 2JR


R P Vann (Mar 18, 2025 09:21 GMT)

Dated:

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Receipts & Payments Account
for the year ended
31 December 2024**

RECEIPTS	Note	2024			2023		
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
Donations & Legacies							
Planned Giving		58,569	-	58,569	55,728	-	55,728
Loose Plate Collections & Donations		4,040	-	4,040	3,771	-	3,771
Legacies		-	-	-	-	2,216	2,216
Other giving	5	2,008	20,750	22,758	4,801	-	4,801
Gift aid		14,522	-	14,522	14,404	-	14,404
Total Donations & legacies		79,139	20,750	99,889	78,704	2,216	80,920
Grants	6	-	6,693	6,693	1,087	3,223	4,310
Other income							
Activities for generating funds	7	33,982	1,640	35,622	20,681	569	21,250
Fees - Weddings & Funerals		10,724	30	10,754	10,135	-	10,135
Bank interest		3,152	-	3,152	2,124	-	2,124
Collections funds		-	1,843	1,843	-	1,478	1,478
Sundry income		231	-	231	447	-	447
Total receipts		127,228	30,956	158,184	113,178	7,486	120,664
PAYMENTS							
Charitable Activities							
Parish Contribution		44,660	-	44,660	40,600	-	40,600
Charitable Donations		6,050	433	6,483	3,250		3,250
Employment Costs		19,412	-	19,412	14,205	2,994	17,199
Running Costs		31,679	4,120	35,799	37,509	2,659	40,168
Fees - Weddings & Funerals		5,846	140	5,986	6,090	-	6,090
Building Maintenance & Development		816	27,444	28,260	766	15,219	15,985
Collections funds		-	2,080	2,080	-	1,770	1,770
Total payments		108,463	34,217	142,680	102,420	22,642	125,062
Net receipts/ (payments)		18,765	(3,261)	15,504	10,758	(15,156)	(4,398)
Transfers between funds		(5,195)	5,195	-	(12,292)	12,292	-
Cash funds @ 31.12.2023		37,835	83,888	121,723	39,369	86,752	126,121
Cash funds @ 31.12.2024		51,405	85,822	137,227	37,835	83,888	121,723

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities
as at 31 December 2024**

CASH FUNDS	Note	<u>2024</u>			<u>2023</u>		
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds
Bank Current Account		9,510	-	9,510	3,906	237	4,143
Bank Deposit Account		41,895	85,822	127,717	33,929	83,651	117,580
Total cash funds		51,405	85,822	137,227	37,835	83,888	121,723
INCOME NOT YET BANKED							
Cash	3	4,711	1,000	5,711	11,406	-	11,406
		4,711	1,000	5,711	11,406	-	11,406
LIABILITIES							
Suppliers	4	4,202	5,501	9,703	3,156	1,203	4,359
		4,202	5,501	9,703	3,156	1,203	4,359
REPRESENTED BY							
Funds	13/14	51,405	85,822	137,227	37,835	83,888	121,723
		51,405	85,822	137,227	37,835	83,888	121,723

The receipts & payments accounts were approved by the PCC on 18th March 2025 and were signed on their behalf by:

S E Field

[S E Field \(Mar 19, 2025 07:22 GMT\)](#)

Rev'd Canon Sue Field
PCC Chair

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Notes to the Accounts
for the year ended
31 December 2024**

1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations using the Receipts and Payments basis.

2 Third Party Fundraising

All funds passing through the PCC accounts are shown as income and expenditure, including specific "Collections Funds" that are collected on behalf of, and then forwarded on to, third parties.

3 Income invoiced/received not yet banked

At the end of the financial year the following income had been invoiced or received but not yet banked:

	2024	2023
Wall safe & Loose plate collections	915	114
Contribution towards Rectors expenses	645	-
Sum Up - CollectTin church donations	132	450
Gift aid - claimed January	1,906	1,195
Events income	30	
Room Hire - NHS	-	9,647
Room Hire - Heritage Centre	2,083	-
	5,711	11,406

4 Expenditure not yet paid

At the end of the financial year the following expenditure related to 2024 but was paid in 2025:

	2024	2023
Payroll Services	150	75
Telephone	56	49
Gas	345	621
Electric	509	860
Expenses	2,317	1,022
Building repairs	851	921
Conservation work - Selina Memorial	4,650	-
Photocopier rental	-	310
Occasional Office Disbursements	825	265
Collections to be paid (restricted)	-	236
	9,703	4,359

5 Other Giving

	2024			2023		
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
General Fund	1,978	-	1,978	4,801	-	4,801
Building Fund	-	14,000	14,000	-	-	-
Bell Fund	-	4,861	4,861	-	-	-
Mothers Union	-	611	611	-	-	-
Organ Fund	-	60	60	-	-	-
PRG Trip	-	1,218	1,218	-	-	-
Flower Fund	30	-	30	-	-	-
	2,008	20,750	22,758	4,801	-	4,801

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Notes to the Accounts
for the year ended
31 December 2024**

6 Grants

	2024			2023		
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
Leicester Diocese - Grant towards increased energy costs	-	-	-	1,087	-	1,087
Leicestershire County Council - Sew it, don't throw it project	-	-	-	-	1,798	1,798
Listed Place of Worship scheme	-	2,943	2,943	-	1,425	1,425
Ash Education Fund	-	1,376	1,376	-	-	-
Archbishops Council - Churchcare Grant	-	1,800	1,800	-	-	-
LPW Grant	-	574	574	-	-	-
	-	6,693	6,693	1,087	3,223	4,310

7 Activities for Generating Funds

	2024			2023		
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
Events and Activities	3,429	1,640	5,069	5,236	569	5,805
Room Hire	29,901	-	29,901	14,841	-	14,841
Magazine	370	-	370	604	-	604
Refreshments	282	-	282	-	-	-
	33,982	1,640	35,622	20,681	569	21,250

8 Building Maintenance and Development

Building Maintenance refers to maintenance or repair works carried out on a planned or emergency basis to maintain or repair the buildings to allow the ongoing use of the buildings.

Building Development refers to (mainly) larger projects which improve and enhance the buildings or enable such improvements.

9 Building Fund

Given the historic nature of the church buildings, and a general lack of investment in recent times, it is important that funds are regularly transferred to the Buildings Fund to enable repairs and improvements to continue and keep the buildings in use.

10 Legacy Fund

The legacy fund is where significant sums given to the church are held. The PCC policy is for such funds to be used solely for the development of the buildings and grounds of St Helen's i.e. not for building maintenance or for day to day operating costs (unless specified by the donor).

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCHE
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Receipts & Payments Account - Church
for the year ended
31 December 2024**

11

	2024		
RECEIPTS	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
Planned giving	58,569	-	58,569
Loose Plate collection	4,090	-	4,090
Donations	1,958	20,750	22,708
Gift Aid	14,522	-	14,522
	79,139	20,750	99,889
Other income			
Occasional Offices	10,724	30	10,754
Charity Collections	-	1,843	1,843
Grants	-	6,693	6,693
Events	2,080	411	2,491
PRG Trip	-	1,229	1,229
Refreshment	282	-	282
Parish Magazine	370	-	370
Bank interest	3,152	-	3,152
Other income	231	-	231
Total receipts	95,978	30,956	126,934
PAYMENTS			
Parish Contribution	44,660	-	44,660
Services	1,493	342	1,835
Choir/Music	1,574	-	1,574
Salaries	13,172	-	13,172
Occasional Offices	5,846	140	5,986
Events & Trips	292	3,778	4,070
Refreshments	444	-	444
Expenses	2,235	-	2,235
Donations Given	6,050	433	6,483
Charity Collections	-	2,080	2,080
Utilities	4,882	-	4,882
Office	8,376	-	8,376
Insurance	6,227	-	6,227
Building - Cleaning	3	96	99
Building - planned	786	845	1,631
Building - repairs	-	23,432	23,432
Total payments	96,040	31,146	127,186
Gross receipts/(payments)	(62)	(190)	(252)
Transfers	(5,195)	5,195	-
Net receipts/(payments)	(5,257)	5,005	(252)

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Receipts & Payments Account - Heritage Centre
for the year ended
31 December 2024**

12

	<u>2024</u>		
RECEIPTS	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
Events	1,349	-	1,349
Room Hire	29,901	-	29,901
Other income	-	-	-
Grants	-	-	-
Total receipts	31,250	-	31,250
PAYMENTS			
Salaries	6,240	-	6,240
Events	247	-	247
General Expenses	170	-	170
Utilities	4,181	-	4,181
Office	283	-	283
Insurance	1,275	-	1,275
Building - cleaning	27	-	27
Building - maintenance	-	955	955
Building - Repairs	-	2,116	2,116
Total payments	12,423	3,071	15,494
Gross receipts/(payments)	18,827	(3,071)	15,756
Transfers	-	-	-
Net receipts/(payments)	18,827	(3,071)	15,756

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Restricted Funds Analysis
for the year ended
31 December 2024**

13	Balance @ 1.1.2024	Receipts	Payments	Transfers	Balance @ 31.12.2024
Restricted Funds					
Building Fund	12,483	19,317	27,144	5,000	9,656
Mothers Union	-	611	342	-	269
Bell Fund	-	4,892	440	240	4,692
Legacy Fund	70,421	-	-	-	70,421
Garden Fund	314	-	-	-	314
Team	433	-	433	-	-
PRG Trip 2024	-	3,823	3,778	(45)	-
Organ Fund	-	470	-	-	470
 <u>COLLECTIONS</u>					
Phoenix Children's Charity	124	55	179	-	-
Children's Society	113	108	221	-	-
Christian Aid	-	407	407	-	-
Gifts	-	879	879	-	-
Fair Trade	-	94	94	-	-
Mayors Collection	-	205	205	-	-
Ripple Effect Charity	-	95	95	-	-
	83,888	30,956	34,217	5,195	85,822
 Designated Funds (unrestricted)					
Choir	2,221	1,444	817	1,638	4,486
PCC Charity Donations	800	-	6,000	6,000	800
Little Fishes	868	-	-	(190)	678
Children & Young persons Ministry	-	-	-	45	45
Flower fund	-	30	7	-	23
	3,889	1,474	6,824	7,493	6,032
 General Funds					
Free reserves	33,946	125,754	101,639	(12,688)	45,373
 Total Funds 31.12.2024	121,723	158,184	142,680	-	137,227

**ST HELEN'S CHURCH, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Restricted Funds Analysis
for the year ended
31 December 2023**

14	Balance @ 1.1.2023	Receipts	Payments	Transfers	Balance @ 31.12.2023
Restricted Funds					
Building Fund	14,277	1,425	15,219	12,000	12,483
Heritage Fund	2,995	-	2,995	-	-
Legacy Fund	68,205	2,216	-	-	70,421
Garden Fund	314	-	-	-	314
Team	433	-	-	-	433
Sew it, Don't Throw it	-	2,367	2,659	292	-
	-				-
<u>COLLECTIONS</u>	-				-
Phoenix Children's Charity	-	137	13	-	124
Children's Society	145	112	144	-	113
Christian Aid	-	434	434	-	-
M Greg Gift	53	-	53	-	-
Toilet twinning	330	-	330	-	-
Mayors Collection	-	236	236	-	-
Bishops Appeal	-	350	350	-	-
Rainbow Hospice	-	209	209	-	-
	86,752	7,486	22,642	12,292	83,888
Designated Funds (unrestricted)					
Rector's Discretionary Fund	2,050	-	-	(2,050)	-
Choir	1,955	350	684	600	2,221
PCC Charity Donations	1,950	-	3,200	2,050	800
Little Fishes	868	-	-	-	868
	6,823	350	3,884	600	3,889
General Funds					
Free reserves	32,546	112,828	98,536	(12,892)	33,946
Total Funds 31.12.2023	126,121	120,664	125,062	-	121,723