

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE
ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF
ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, STROOD

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1206134

Annual Reports and Accounts
For the year ending 31st December 2024

ST FRANCIS STROOD

Real faith - Real lives - Real people

APCM Reports Consisting of:

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Introduction

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. Francis of Assisi, Strood

About St Francis Church, Strood

St Francis is a vibrant multigenerational church in Strood West. We are all about bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to everyone, sharing together, and seeking the Lord Jesus in all we do.

VISION

We seek to create and grow disciples of Jesus
so that together we build the Kingdom of God in Strood West.

MISSION

At St. Francis Strood, we are passionately committed to nurturing disciples of Jesus, fostering transformation in lives and communities through the following core values:

REAL FAITH

Embracing trust in God, we seek to cultivate a deep and authentic relationship with Him. Our aim is to equip every individual with the tools to pursue a life guided by the Holy Spirit. We aspire to witness the discovery of genuine faith in Jesus within our community.

REAL LIVES

We are dedicated to sharing life's journey together, fostering renewal, reconciliation, and hospitality. Our commitment to embracing all members of our community mirrors God's love for the world. Recognizing God's heart for the marginalized, we actively pursue justice within our lives and in our world.

REAL PEOPLE

Our mission is to boldly proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God to all. We envision the transformation of Strood West through the radical message of Jesus Christ. We believe that joy and authenticity are integral to our identity as followers of Jesus, and we value the importance of genuine relationships as a testament to God's Kingdom on earth.

Together, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we strive to build a community where faith flourishes, lives are transformed, and people are empowered to share the transformative message of God's love.

For more information: www.sfrancisstrood.org

Facebook: [SFSTROOD](https://www.facebook.com/SFSTROOD)

Administrative Information

Incumbent:	Rev. Adam Pyrke
Wardens:	Catharine Kinnon Vacant
Secretary to the PCC:	Catharine Kinnon
Treasurer:	Louise May
Elected Members:	Rev. Adam Pyrke (Chair) Cathy Kinnon Carole Coles Giovanni Parrales Iain Ambler Antonietta Ogundimu Mick Brown Deborah Brown
Representatives on the Deanery Synod:	Adam Pyrke Iain Ambler Sue Jones

Church Address:

St Francis of Assisi Church
Galahad Avenue
Rochester, Kent
ME2 2YS

Bank:

CAF Bank Ltd
25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill
West Malling, Kent
ME19 4JQ

Address Independent Examiner:

Mrs Ibiye Zeporah Dokubo
16 Wakefield Close
Rochester, Kent
ME2 2RL

APCM Report 2024 from the Vicar

We seek to create and grow disciples of Jesus so that together we build the Kingdom of God in Strood West.

St Francis, Strood Vision Statement

How are we doing in achieving our vision?

The past year at **St Francis, Strood** has been marked by **growth, discipleship, and deeper community engagement**. God's grace has been evident across every ministry, and I want to thank every one of you who has served with faithfulness and love.

Whether you've led prayers, offered hospitality, mentored youth, contributed behind the scenes, or simply welcomed others with warmth—**thank you** for being part of this Kingdom work.

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people." – Ephesians 6:7

A Year of Growth and Transformation

In 2024, we witnessed God moving powerfully through:

- **Worshipping Community Growth:** Our Sunday congregation has continued to grow steadily, with new families, individuals, and returning members calling St Francis their spiritual home.
- **Children and Youth Ministry:** We have taken bold and intentional steps to invest in the next generation. The launch of **After School Clubs** in Elaine and Bligh Primary Schools—**Muddy Fingers gardening club** and **Crafty Fingers Bible Club**—has borne great missional fruit. The Bible Craft Club in particular has grown significantly and is helping to disciple young hearts.

In September, we launched **SFS Youth**, a dedicated youth programme for 11–16-year-olds. Beginning with **Youth Alpha**, this ministry now runs alongside **Infusion**, offering weekly discipleship tailored to our young people.

Our **Easter and Christmas ministries in schools** also saw significant growth. Building on previous relationships, we engaged all three primary schools in our parish in various activities and services, embedding them into the seasonal programmes at St Francis. Invitations to deliver in-school teaching sessions have increased, and we are committed to continuing this vital work.

Messy Church continues to flourish as a key outreach to unchurched families. It remains a relational bridge and an accessible space where families encounter the love of Jesus.

- **Discipleship and Spiritual Growth:** Discipleship remains a core pillar of our ministry. We have run **Alpha Courses**, **Wednesday morning Bible studies**, and **Infusion discipleship evenings**. In Infusion, the use of the **New City Catechism** has led to meaningful conversations as we wrestle with theology and life application. These spaces continue to empower people to grow in faith and serve boldly.

Outreach and Community Engagement

- Our **Easter and Summer HAF Clubs**, delivered in partnership with Medway Go, provided essential meals and enriching activities for children aged 4–11 during the school holidays. These clubs have enabled us to make deeper connections with families in need and invite them further into the life of the church.
- **Café Francis** continues to be a vibrant hub for connection and community. This year, we've experienced healthy and consistent growth in engagement, and we are grateful to the committed team who serve so faithfully.
- **Café Elaine**, our parents' café based at Elaine Primary School, has been a fantastic gateway to building relationships with younger parents and carers. From this initiative, we ran a **Thursday morning Alpha course**, specifically tailored to suit parents' schedules—a beautiful example of ministry meeting people where they are.
- Our **Christmas Market** was a standout event, welcoming **over 600 people** from our parish and beyond. With festive stalls, joyful atmosphere, and a special performance by the **Bligh Choir**, it was a powerful expression of joyful Christian witness.
- The **Welcome to Medway** event brought together over **25 local organisations**, strengthening our shared mission of hospitality and support for newcomers.
- Our active participation in the **Strood Cluster** and **Strood Deanery** has brought spiritual encouragement and missional collaboration. It was a great privilege to **host the Deanery Confirmation Service** at St Francis this year—a celebration of unity in the wider Church.
- Our partnership with the **Community Payback Team** continues to be a blessing. Simon and his team have worked diligently to maintain and enhance our grounds and hall, making a tangible difference to our environment.
- **Fundraising** has been a key part of our journey this year, especially in raising **£26,000** for the hall floor renovation. A special thanks to **Mick's Quiz Nights**—fun-filled evenings that not only raised funds but strengthened community spirit. Your generosity made the vision reality.
- We were also delighted to take part in community-led initiatives such as the **Macmillan Coffee Morning**, raising **£450** for cancer support—a small but significant expression of love beyond our church walls.

"The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." – Psalm 126:3

Leadership Development

One of the clearest signs of God's work among us at St Francis this year has been the way He continues to raise up and release leaders into His service. 2024 has been a year marked by calling, commissioning, and celebration as members of our church family step into new roles to serve God's Kingdom.

Janet's Journey to Licensed Preacher

Following a time of discernment, we recognised a clear sense of calling for Janet to explore preaching ministry. After delivering a powerful and Spirit-filled first sermon, she was encouraged to undertake the diocesan Listening and Speaking God's Word courses. Having completed these with distinction, Janet was licensed by the Bishop this year to preach at St Francis. We give thanks for her faithful response and look forward to the fruit of her ministry among us.

Iain's Expanding Role as Licensed Lay Minister (LLM)

This year saw Iain respond to a wider call across the diocese. With St Francis committed to sharing generously, Iain has begun supporting other churches in need of encouragement and leadership. His willingness to step out and serve beyond our own parish is a powerful witness to the servant-hearted culture we are building here. We are grateful for Iain's ministry and his example to others across the diocese.

Antonietta's Licensing as a Lay Minister

We also celebrated the licensing of Antonietta as a Lay Minister—an achievement reflecting both academic depth and a clear sense of vocational calling. Her passion for God, her theological insight, and her pastoral sensitivity are a gift to our church, and we are thankful for all she brings to the life and leadership of St Francis.

Giovanni's Discernment Toward Ordination

Giovanni continues to serve faithfully while exploring a potential call to ordained ministry. In 2024, he completed Phase 1 of the Church of England's discernment process and is now preparing for the Bishop's Advisory Panel in the coming year. We continue to pray for him as he listens for God's guidance and steps forward in faith.

Louisa's Appointment as Chaplain to St George's School, Gravesend

This year we celebrated Louisa's new appointment as chaplain to St George's Church of England School in Gravesend. As a church, we wholeheartedly embrace this role and are proud to stand alongside her in this ministry. It reflects the outward-looking heart of St Francis and our shared commitment to reaching the next generation. Through Louisa's chaplaincy and our involvement in school-based mission, we had the privilege of serving around 1,500 children with the good news of Jesus Christ. We thank God for this incredible opportunity and continue to pray for fruitfulness in her ministry and our partnership together in the future.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead to 2025, we do so with faith and expectation. Who might God be calling next? If you sense a stirring to serve in a more formal role—whether through preaching, leadership, chaplaincy, or other ministry—please speak with me (Adam). As a church, we are committed to encouraging vocations and raising leaders who will build God's Kingdom here in Strood West and far beyond.

The Year Ahead - 2025

Looking to 2025, we are praying for and expecting more of God's favour as we pursue:

- **Continuing to grow our church younger** through expanded children's and youth ministry.
- **Strengthening discipleship pathways** for every stage of the Christian journey.
- **Deepening our outreach**, so St Francis remains a place of welcome, hope, and transformation.

May we continue to grow in unity, maturity, and boldness as a **Christ-centred, disciple-making church** in the heart of Strood West.

May God bless you and keep you,

Rev. Adam Pyrke

Priest-In-Charge

CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT ON THE FABRIC, GOODS AND ORNAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

As with any church, maintaining the building is an ongoing task. Repairs are needed from time to time, and some items eventually reach the end of their useful life and must be replaced. We are very fortunate to have a vicar who is skilled in DIY, and we continue to benefit from the support of the Community Payback scheme, with a team attending St Francis weekly. They have completed excellent work, including painting the hall and helping to keep the grounds tidy.

Last summer, Billy kindly offered to volunteer with maintenance tasks. He has supported various projects, including painting the church and assisting Adam in sorting through the attics. As a result, both the church and the hall are looking welcoming and well cared for—something reflected in a rise in hall hire enquiries.

The hourly hire rate for the hall was increased this year, with all regular hirers—Guides, GKR Karate, and NCC—notified in advance. Medway Council hired the hall for the elections on 2 May (Police and Crime Commissioner) and have booked again for the General Election on 4 July. The hall also continues to be used for private functions, such as children's birthday parties, with a volunteer generously opening and closing the building on our behalf—thank you.

The church and hall remain covered by Ecclesiastical Insurance. As part of the annual risk assessment, the lightning conductor was tested and certified as compliant in March (these must be formally tested every four years), and 103 electrical items underwent PAT testing in September. Three items were repaired following failure, and one (an electrical floor scrubber) was scrapped. We're grateful to Michael Brown for carrying out this work.

In May, all fire extinguishers and the hall fire alarm system were tested and certified. Unfortunately, in July, there was an attempted theft of copper from the church roof, resulting in damage to several panels. Repairs were carried out using a liquid roofing method, and a claim was submitted to our insurers.

Antisocial behaviour has continued, with benches from the memorial garden being moved to the Assisi Room bridge and used as gathering spots. In response, the benches have been stored away to help discourage this behaviour.

In October, the church hosted Medway Council's 'Welcome to Medway' event. With both Adam and Gio away, I stepped in to oversee the event, including the set-up the day before. It was hard work but well worth the effort. The event was a great success, with positive feedback from the Council. Special thanks go to John for serving refreshments all day (ably supported by Tyler and Liz), Sue Souter for her wonderful cakes and for running the cake stall, Billy for his help throughout, and all others who supported the event.

Thanks to successful grant applications, generous donations, and enthusiastic fundraising, we reached our target for a new floor by December. We are deeply grateful to everyone who prayed, donated, or attended a fundraising event. A particular thank you goes to Mick for his much-loved quizzes—there will always be a need for another Mick's quiz!

Our thanks also go to Susan, Jenny, and the flower-arranging team, who continue to make the church beautiful and inviting. Their creative use of mainly silk flowers has reduced costs and ensured long-lasting displays.

We also appreciate all who mentored our young people through their apprenticeships.

On a personal note, I extend heartfelt thanks to Adam for his ongoing support—especially for his encouragement during wobbles, his patience, his chocolate, and even for occasionally driving me mad! Thanks also to Carole and Roger for their steadfast help as assistant wardens, and to Adam, Tyler, Simon, and others who have stepped in for more physically demanding tasks. Your support means so much.

Any church community depends on volunteers, and I want to thank everyone who gives their time to keep St Francis a loving, welcoming, and thriving place. God bless you all.

If you feel called to volunteer in any capacity, please speak to me, Adam, or Gio. We are always open to new volunteers, and it's true—many hands make light work.

This past year has been a steep learning curve. I've made mistakes (and will undoubtedly make more), but I've also learned a great deal—especially how much effort goes into running a church. Thank you to Adam, Gio, Roger, Carole, and all who have offered guidance, encouragement, or support along the way. Here's to the year ahead!

Cathy Kinnon
Church Warden

PCC Secretary Report

The PCC met six times in 2024.

At the PCC meeting in May, it was decided to move our meetings from weekday evenings to Sundays after church. This has proved to be much more practical.

At the APCM last year, I was elected Churchwarden, and it was hoped that someone else would take on the secretary role. Unfortunately, this has not happened, so I have done my best to juggle both roles—with varying degrees of success!

Most of what I would say in this report has already been covered in my Churchwarden's Report. However, this next part can never be said enough:

Thank you to everyone who helps keep St Francis running. To the leaders, the PCC, and all our volunteers—no matter how big or small your role—thank you for all you do and continue to do. You are very much appreciated.

God bless you all.

Cathy Kinnon

PCC Secretary

The Electoral Roll

Electoral roll was renewed this year and stands at 47.

Cathy Kinnon

PCC Secretary

Strood Deanery Synod Report

Deanery Synod met on 14 March 2024 at All Saints, Frindsbury.

Nicholas Cooper, Area Dean, welcomed The Reverend Canon Pamela Ive, Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations. Pamela gave a presentation to Deanery Synod members about the discernment process in the Diocese of Rochester. She highlighted publications of interest: Church of England Everyday Faith resources, Kingdom Calling, Calling All God's People and publications from LICC (London Institute for Contemporary Christianity) and

training courses, drawing particular attention to short courses: Caring Concerns and Caring for Creation.

In News from the Deanery, Nicholas Cooper introduced Ken Reynolds, Churchwarden of St Nicholas Strood. Ken gave a very informative talk, with photos, on the re-ordering of St Nicholas Church, Strood.

In June, a Big Green Hike was organised for the Deanery by the Parish Walk Team from Frindsbury with Upnor and Chattenden. Starting from St Francis, Strood, a circular, 6 mile sponsored hike took place in Ranscombe Farm, Plantlife's flagship reserve and donations of £370 were raised for Plantlife.

Sue Jones

Strood Deanery Secretary

Safeguarding Report

The year 2024 has certainly put safeguarding on the church map again with the publication of the Makin Review into historical mishandling of safeguarding reports in the church. The Archbishop of Canterbury resigned from his position following acknowledgement from him that the church could have done better in hindsight. Disciplinary proceedings under the Clergy Discipline Measure were also brought against several clergies. However, it must be stressed that the current safeguarding structures and processes in the Church of England are robust enough to ensure that historical mishandling of safeguarding issues are never repeated.

That said, the robustness of all safeguarding structures is very much dependent on our willingness to engage fully with them. This why we have trainings in place dependent on roles people undertake in the church.

Domestic Abuse Awareness Training

A course to equip participants to engage thoughtfully and proactively with the issue of domestic abuse and those affected, by developing a greater understanding of what Domestic Abuse is, who it affects, as well as its impact on individuals, children, the wider family, and the community.

Those required to undertake the training are as follows:

- Anyone holding the Bishop's licence, commission, authorisation, or permission (clergy, PTO, Readers, LLMs) Bishops' Visitors / Pastoral Visitors.
- Safeguarding Officers, Ordinands during IME 1, PCC Members / Lay Chapter Members, staff at Theological Education Institutions with student-facing roles.
- Members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel.
- It is recommended that persons holding any other pastoral role within the Church also attend this training.

Electronic Renewal/Application System:

Thirtyone:eight have introduced a DBS three-year renewal reminder service. Thirtyone:eight will email the current Lead Recruiter around three months before any previously submitted applications are approaching the three-year anniversary of being sent to the DBS. The email makes clear that if this person is still active in their role, a renewal will need to be completed.

The above helps to ensure that DBSs are renewed in a timely fashion.

Parish Safeguarding Dashboard

The Diocese has subscribed to the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard online tool to make it easier for our churches to manage their safeguarding requirements.

It is free for parishes to register, update and receive action plans on demand. The Dashboards also enable the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and senior clergy to ensure each parish is up to date with its safeguarding administration and offer support to those who may be struggling.

Key features include:

- The Dashboard has been designed to display a clear and simple dashboard on a computer, mobile phone or tablet.
- Each dashboard can have one 'owner', who can update and amend it, and multiple 'viewers' who are able to see its progress.
- The dashboard overview page allows the owner and viewers to see the current status of compliance at a glance. A green light would mean all is well, amber would mean that action is needed and red would mean urgent action is required.

St Francis has successfully signed up to the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard and we are in the process of ensuring that we have all the relevant documents on the Dashboard.

Number of DBS for 2024:

Four people were safely recruited in 2024, although two of those were renewals. The DBSs are coming through quite quickly compared to the delays experienced in 2023.

Direction for the PCC

All PCC members to:

To keep abreast of safeguarding changes and requirements: The Safeguarding Learning and Development Matrix shows who is required to undertake what training.

These are the expected trainings every PCC member should have completed:

- Basic Awareness
- Foundation
- Domestic Abuse Awareness Training

Please read the document below:

[safer-environment-and-activities-oct19_0.pdf](#)

Conclusion:

Safe recruitment of all volunteers and paid workers continues to be top priority at St Francis. Parishioners are also aware of the need to protect the vulnerable people in our midst. Two matters of concern were shared in the past year, which indicates that people are

familiar with the process of reporting concerns. The notice board at the back of the church displays the contact details of the PSO and the vicar and relevant info on safeguarding.

Thanks to all PCC members and parishioners for your anticipated support in the coming year.

Antonietta Ogundimu

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Estates Evangelist Report

Messy Church: As Messy Church enters its fourth year, it continues to be a thriving and valued worshipping community initiative. With Easter and Christmas attendance consistently averaging around **50 people**, and monthly gatherings drawing between **20** and **30** attendees, its success is well established.

To ensure long-term sustainability, maintaining strong relationships with local primary and secondary schools, as well as with the Parish, remains essential. This year provides an opportunity to reflect on the future of Messy Church, focusing on how it can continue to flourish. A key element of this will be investing in leadership development, equipping new missional leaders with the skills and confidence to take the initiative forward.

Café Francis - Wellbeing Group: Café Francis continues to grow in popularity, providing a valuable weekly gathering for our Parish every Tuesday. This year, we've extended our opening hours to start at **8:30 am**, welcoming parents from Elaine Primary School who have begun attending.

Led by **Debbie** and **Sue**, the café offers a warm and inviting space where guests can enjoy delicious homemade food, with a consistent weekly attendance averaging **30** people. Beyond serving great snacks and treats, Café Francis also provides an opportunity for engagement with our wider community. Local service networks in Medway are able to connect with the people of Strood at St Francis Church, fostering meaningful conversations and support.

Funky Fridays – Parents and carers toddler group: This beloved community activity in Strood West continues to draw new families each year, fostering connection and participation. In 2024, attendance remained strong, averaging **30** adults and children, reinforcing its popularity within the parish.

To ensure its long-term sustainability, we are actively seeking volunteers who can help us continue serving our community in this meaningful way. By bringing people together, this initiative not only strengthens local bonds but also encourages involvement in other church/community events, including Messy Church, fairs, and holiday clubs.

Holiday Activities & Food Programme (HAF): As in previous years, I successfully organized the annual Easter and summer holiday clubs for children aged **5–11**, ensuring they remained a cherished and impactful initiative. Thanks to funding from Medway Council, we

were able to continue serving the community, providing much-needed support during the school holidays.

Through our partnership with Medway Council (Medway GO), we secured the delivery of this vital program—not only for children entitled to free school meals but also for families connected to St Francis who benefit from these activities. With an average attendance of **25** children, supported by a dedicated team of **10** volunteers, the program continues to strengthen community engagement and offer meaningful experiences for local families.

Local Schools Connections: St Francis Church has fostered strong and lasting relationships with three local schools, creating meaningful opportunities for community engagement. Elaine Primary School continues to play a key role in this connection, One way in which we have served is through the Parents Café, which provides a welcoming space where parents can participate in workshops and discussions on school-related themes. This has allowed us access to serve the parents and engage in conversations, including faith-based discussion. This year we were able to run an Alpha course for some of the parents (see below).

Additionally, we have established an after-school club featuring two enriching activities—Gardening Club in the spring and Bible Club throughout the rest of the year—offering children valuable learning experiences in a supportive environment. These initiatives are running in Bligh and Elaine Schools.

Last year, we were delighted to welcome Elaine Primary School for special Easter and Christmas round-robin activities, where children explored the Church, learned the stories behind these celebrations, and even took part in a nativity presentation. St Francis Church also hosted Cedar Children’s Academy for a Christingle service and church visits focused on the Easter and Christmas stories, while Bligh Primary School joined us for similar celebrations, including their own Christingle service.

This year, we have had the privilege of welcoming 3,000 children from these three schools during Easter and Christmas, highlighting the Church’s vital role in the Parish and the meaningful impact of these connections with the gospel news.

Outreaching the community of Strood – Seasonal Events: During Christmas, St Francis hosted the **Strood Christmas Market**, a vibrant community event made possible with the support of over 40 local groups. These groups came together to offer a wide range of seasonal products, creating a festive and welcoming atmosphere.

The event was further enriched by live entertainment, featuring a wonderful performance from the **Bligh Primary School choir** and a talented musician group, bringing joy to attendees. With over **600 people** visiting St Francis, the market proved to be a resounding success—not only as a celebration of the season but also as an opportunity to connect with new families and strengthen our Parish community.

Recruitment of volunteers: As St Francis continues to expand its missional work within the Strood community, the need for dedicated missional leaders to sustain and grow these efforts has become increasingly urgent. With our engagement in local schools now firmly established, recruiting and equipping missional leaders and volunteers is more essential than ever. Their support will be key to ensuring the continued success of the various

initiatives St Francis is involved in across the Parish, allowing us to further strengthen our impact and outreach.

Alpha Course: Last year, St Francis hosted an **Alpha Course**, creating a meaningful space for parents from Elaine Primary School to explore faith and community. The course started with a shared **breakfast**, strengthening connections and fostering lasting relationships. Since then, many of these families have continued to engage with **Elaine's weekly café**, both at the school and at St Francis Church, further deepening their involvement in the community. This ongoing connection highlights the impact of the Alpha Course in building relationships that extend beyond the sessions.

Bible Study: Our **weekly Bible Study**, held every Wednesday from **10:30 am to 11:30 am**, continues to serve as a vital space for discipleship, particularly for those new to faith. Recognizing the importance of spiritual growth, these sessions provide an opportunity for individuals to deepen their understanding of scripture and explore their journey of faith in a supportive environment.

Welcoming an average of **10 participants** each week. Attendees include members of St Francis Church, individuals from our local schools, and those who have recently joined the community through the **Alpha Course** and wish to strengthen their connection to faith.

Through meaningful discussions and shared reflections, the Bible Study nurtures both spiritual learning and fellowship, equipping participants with a deeper awareness of biblical teachings while fostering lasting relationships within the Church. As we continue to offer this space for engagement, we hope to encourage even more individuals to join, making it a cornerstone of discipleship within our Parish.

Giovanni Parrales

Estates Evangelist

MLLM Annual Report

This is the first report from me as St Francis' Missional Licensed Lay Minister, or MLLM for short.

What is an MLLM and what makes it distinctive from other Lay Ministry Roles?

The role of an MLLM is unusual and possibly a first in the Diocese of Rochester – at least, St Francis Strood calling it that is a first, I think. LLMs are usually licensed to the incumbent or priest-in-charge of a parish – so myself, Giovanni and Antonietta are licensed to Adam. We have a working agreement which sets out what we will do, and this should reflect our individual gifting and how that will be expressed as ministry. Broadly speaking, we are called to lead, preach, and teach within our parishes. Our licence also grants us “permission to officiate” anywhere within the diocese with the permission of our incumbent or priest-in-charge – and it is this which enables me to be an MLLM by leading, preaching, and teaching at other churches in the diocese.

Why minister elsewhere?

The short answer is “because we can.” Whilst I am called, for the current season, to be at St Francis, my primary calling is to share the ministry of the Gospel wherever it’s needed – which includes my day job! As you will appreciate, when a parish goes into vacancy, they need someone to lead services – and there are a number of parishes which have no lay ministers at all. Clergy and lay ministers take well-earned holidays. Sometimes it’s good for congregations to hear a different voice speaking into the ministry of their setting. Those are the main reasons why I’ve been away more Sundays than usual from SFS over the last year or so. We are blessed with having three LLMs here at SFS, and it’s fair to say that along with others who have permission to preach, there is an abundance of people to preach and lead! The Christian response to abundance is not to hoard it but to share – so we do!

So where have I been and what have I done?

Over the past couple of years, I’ve had various “taps on the shoulder” for assistance. Each third and fifth Sunday, I lead a Service of the Word at Christ the King, Princes Park, whilst they are in vacancy. I share this work with another LLM in Rochester, along with clergy who are leading communion services for them. CTK have no lay ministers at all, so are very grateful for our assistance – particularly as clergy cover can be a challenge to get for 10am services. I’ve spent a couple of Sundays supporting St Mary the Virgin in Hayes – which is in my old stamping ground of Bromley. This has been to cover a short vacancy in Lay Ministry provision (their LLM is now ordained as a deacon) but also to provide support to their vicar by giving her a sermon-free Sunday. I’ve also covered some holiday in Hoo and have had the particular privilege of leading sung Evensong at St Nick’s Strood from time to time. My days as a chorister were not misspent youth!

Why me?

Okay – it’s Testimony Time!

When I moved to Rochester in 2015, it was primarily because, following my Mum’s death, Julie and I wanted to find a bigger house – and Bromley was very unaffordable for the step up we needed. So, after we found the right home and started packing up our belongings, I prayed a lot about what that might mean for my ministry as a Lay Reader. What that prayer revealed was not clearly defined – but there was a very clear intention that the Medway Towns was the place God was calling me to come, to listen to God’s voice and to give room to the Holy Spirit to work. So, I found myself praying the words, “Here am I; send me!” That missional prayer has been quite literally answered! It was during the period when I was working out where I might put my church roots down in Medway when I got a tap on the shoulder and was asked to consider helping at SFS for a short period. After a couple of visits, it was clear God was calling me to be in this place – but He was equally clear that this was not the only part of the adventure He has called me on. And that has led to my training to transfer from Reader to Licensed Lay Minister – and here we are now!

Where next?

I don’t know the answer to that question – being on an adventure with God means I have no idea what exactly His plans are. I am still praying “Here am I” and “Send me!” – and I am quite happy for God to give me an uncomfortable answer – because we only grow and develop when we are pushed out of our comfort zones. I wait, patiently, on the Holy Spirit to indicate what God has in store for me and also for this parish and the wider community

of Strood. The Church as a whole is seeing the green shoots of revival, and here at St Francis we are witnessing people coming to Christ through the faithful efforts of this Church Family. It is an exciting time to be involved in ministry!

What can you do?

Please pray for us on the ministry team, and please pray for me personally that I will continue to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Please prayerfully support all those who are called to be missional – that they will have the confidence to lead and preach in new places, and that their roles as ambassadors for Christ will be effective in sustaining and growing the Church.

I would also ask you to turn your prayers inwards to yourselves and ask what God is calling you to do. Perhaps He is prompting you to consider offering yourself as a lay or ordained minister? If you do feel that nudge from God, I'd love to chat with you about it!

Iain Ambler

Missional Licenced Lay Minister

Kids Ministry

Over the last year the pattern of discipleship for children continues:

- Week 1: Intergenerational worship
- Week 2: Mission folders in church (joining with families for communion)
- Week 3: Apprenticeship week
- Week 4: Discipleship in the SFS Kids room in church hall
-

Children who regularly attend have enjoyed the challenge of each new Mission Folder – the first one presenting the basics of faith, with follow up folder focusing on developing in their faith journey.

Several children have now also completed several apprenticeships, with some now serving regularly alongside adults in key areas of service.

A number of SFS Kids became young people across the last year, beginning their secondary schools and there was a pressing need to engage with them and other young people who had become regular worshippers with us.

SFS Youth was created, with a weekly discipleship group on a Wednesday evening. We have also engaged our young people in Diocesan Youth Council residential and other activities, so that they can connect with young people from other churches.

The key challenge continues to be a lack of leaders for this developing discipleship.

Louisa Parrales

Kids Ministry Lead

Finance Report

The finance accounts for the year 2024 were approved by the PCC and inspected by an Independent Examiner. Please find the Independent Examiner's report below.

Lou May
Treasurer

Independent Examiner's Report on the Account

Report to the Parochial Church Council	St Francis of Assisi, Strood		
On Accounts for the Year Ended	31 December 2024	Charity no (if any)	1206134
Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner	I report to the Parochial Church Council (PCC), the Trustees of St Francis Church Strood, on my examination of the accounts of the above Church for the year ended 31 December 2024. As the church's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act"), and the church's trustees consider that an audit is not required but an independent examination is needed under section 144(2) of the Act. It is my responsibility to: • Examine the accounts and report in respect of my examination of the church's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act; and • In carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act; and • To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.		
Basis of Independent Examiner's Report	My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you, as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the		

	accounts present a 'true and fair view', and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.
Independent Examiner's Statement	The church's gross income did not exceed £250,000, and in accordance with the 'Act', I can confirm that I am qualified to act as Independent Examiner under the provisions of the section of the Act and that my qualification is as shown below. In connection with my examination, I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention: 1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements: • to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and • to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met: or 2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: *IZ. Dokubo*

Date: *06/04/2025*

Name: Ibiye Zeporah Dokubo

Address: 16 Wakefield Close
Rochester, Kent
ME2 2RL

St Francis of Assisi RECEIPTS 2024

Months

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Regular Giving and One Off Receipts

	Envelope	Actual eligible for Gift Aid	Actual NOT eligible for Gift Aid	Area	Frequency	Actual
Regular Giving via Envelope Schemes	Cash	2,453.10	-	Giving	Regular	2,453.10
Sunday Morning Cash offering	Cash	2,049.78	-	Giving	Regular	2,049.78
Regular Giving Directly via Bank	Bank	15,897.79	-	Giving	Regular	15,897.79
Non GA Income	Cash	-	58.15	Giving	One-Off	58.15
Unrestricted Donation	Cash	220.78	-	Giving	One-Off	220.78
Sunday Service Giving Screen	Credit Card (CC)	329.53	-	Giving	One-Off	329.53
Web Based Donations	Online - CC	855.01	-	Giving	One-Off	855.01
Gift Aid Receipt from HMRC				Giving	Regular	-
Total - Regular Giving		21,805.99	58.15			21,864.14
						30%

Other Unrestricted Receipts

Community Fun Day	-	-	-	Bank Interest	One-Off	-
Bank Interest	-	-	86.40	InsuranceReceipts	One-Off	86.40
Insurance Claim: Roof	-	-	1,970.00	Solar	Regular	1,970.00
Income from Solar panels	-	-	-	ChurchRental	Regular	-
Rental Income: Church Building	-	-	-	Hall	Regular	680.00
Rental Income: Assisi Room:	-	-	680.00	Hall	Regular	12,747.50
Rental Income: Hall: Regular Groups	-	-	12,747.50	Hall	Regular	12,747.50
Rental Income: Hall: Party Bookings	-	-	4,672.79	Hall	LessRegular	4,672.79
Coffee Shop Donations	-	-	1,362.06	Fundraising	One-Off	1,362.06
Fundraising events Only	-	-	780.94	Fundraising	One-Off	780.94
Fees: e.g. Weddings, Funerals	-	-	2,227.00	Fee	Regular	2,227.00
						3%

Restricted and Designated Receipts

Sum up 2024 (Unknown Donations/Giving)	-	1,684.22	SUMUP - allocated donations	One-Off	1,684.22	2%
Designated: school garden club (Muddy Fingers)	-	600.00	Designated	One-Off	600.00	1%
Designated Christmas Market	-	1,154.28	Designated	One-Off	1,154.28	2%
Restricted Donations: HAF Play Scheme	-	6,078.15	HAF Play Scheme	Regular	6,078.15	8%
Restricted Donations: Sponsored Children	640.00	-	Sponsored Children	One-Off	640.00	1%
Restricted Donations: Church Floor	-	12,343.98	Church Floor Donations	One-Off	12,343.98	17%
Restricted Donations: Messy Curch (Kitchen Oven)	-	3,448.28	Messy Church	One-Off	3,448.28	5%
Restricted Donations: Christmas Tree	-	119.99	Chrismas Tree	One-Off	119.99	0%
Restricted Donations: Fundraising MacMillian	-	55.08			55.08	0%
Total other Unrestricted, Restricted and Designated Reciepts	640.00	50,010.67			50,650.67	70%
						100%

Total receipts for 12 Mths to 31 Decemember 2023

72,514.81

**St Francis of Assisi
2024 PAYMENTS**

Project linked

Project linked Restricted: Christmas Tree
Project linked Restricted: Holiday Club (HAF)
Project linked Restricted: Kitchen Equipment (Messy Church)
Project linked Designated: School garden club
Project linked Designated: Fate & Fairs
Project linked Children clubs + Messy church

2024.01	2024.02	2024.03	2024.04	2024.05	2024.06	2024.07	2024.08	2024.09	2024.10	2024.11	2024.12	Total
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(120)
-	-	-	-	-	-	(500)	-	-	-	-	(33)	(533)
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(2,896)
-	-	-	-	-	(381)	-	-	-	-	-	-	(381)
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(194)	-	(239)
(72)	(388)	(200)	(302)	(424)	(281)	(696)	(551)	(140)	(236)	(130)	(174)	(3,593)

Commitments

Commitments Diocese Funds HRF
Commitments Diocese Funds CRF
Commitments Diocese Fees
Commitments Away Giving
Commitments Pledge
Commitments Parish Share
Commitments Bank Charges
Commitments Go Cardless Charges

(72)	(388)	(200)	(302)	(424)	(661)	(1,304)	(551)	(223)	(366)	(433)	(3,255)	(7,761)
(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(1,200)
(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(150)	(1,800)
-	-	(60)	(333)	(1,462)	-	-	(285)	(350)	-	-	-	(2,490)
(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(82)	(984)
(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(600)
-	-	-	-	(13,050)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(13,050)
(5)	(20)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(75)
-	-	-	-	(62)	(156)	(45)	-	-	-	-	-	(263)
(387)	(402)	(447)	(720)	(14,961)	(543)	(432)	(672)	(737)	(387)	(387)	(387)	(20,463)

Property

Property Hall : Maintenance & Repairs
Property Hall : Water

(125)	(17)	(17)	(109)	(39)	(39)	(159)	(39)	(39)	(157)	(39)	(39)	(819)
(125)	(17)	(44)	(109)	(39)	(39)	(159)	(39)	(431)	(157)	(223)	(39)	(1,422)

Property

Property Church : Maintenance & Repairs
Property Church : Cleaning
Property Church : Waste Disposal
Property Church : Insurance
Property Church : Electricity
Property Church : Security
Property Church: Other Equipment & Items

(314)	(5,725)	(42)	(664)	(4,821)	(664)	(5,583)	(308)	(325)	(1,687)	(2,410)	(786)	(23,330)
-	(1,645)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1,645)

Working

Working Other staff costs (admin/parish office)
Working Church admin and cleaner pay
Working Postage & Stationery
Working Office Equipment - Licence Wifi
Working Crossley
Working Hospitality/Refreshments
Working Mobile
Working Other general costs

(400)	(398)	(371)	(622)	(420)	(426)	(402)	(438)	(408)	(420)	(444)	(384)	(5,132)
(65)	(125)	(82)	(141)	(234)	(1,126)	(1,080)	(935)	(90)	(72)	(78)	(72)	(4,100)
-	-	-	(284)	(120)	-	(223)	-	-	-	(24)	-	(651)
(106)	(7)	(24)	(24)	(24)	(42)	(42)	(42)	(42)	(42)	(42)	(42)	(373)
-	-	-	(53)	(56)	(162)	(90)	(53)	(126)	(49)	(90)	(49)	(834)
-	-	-	(106)	-	-	(90)	(88)	-	-	(57)	(51)	(392)
-	(66)	-	-	(44)	(34)	-	-	-	-	(76)	(22)	(242)
(350)	(681)	(78)	-	-	-	(131)	(83)	(178)	-	(309)	-	(1,810)

General
Alpha

(921)	(1,278)	(554)	(1,229)	(898)	(1,790)	(2,058)	(1,639)	(844)	(583)	(1,120)	(620)	(13,534)
-	(164)	-	(45)	(863)	-	(19)	-	(17)	(8)	(109)	(200)	(1,424)
-	-	-	-	-	-	(109)	-	(83)	(84)	(77)	(65)	(418)

Worship
Worship

-	(164)	-	(45)	(863)	-	(128)	-	(101)	(92)	(185)	(265)	(1,842)
(1,820)	(7,975)	(1,288)	(3,068)	(22,006)	(3,698)	(9,555)	(3,209)	(2,578)	(3,187)	(4,681)	(5,287)	(68,351)

St Francis: Summary of Finances 2024

FUNDS
Months

PAGE 3

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<i>Fund</i>	<i>Opening Balance</i>	<i>Receipts</i>	<i>Transfer</i>	<i>Payments</i>	<i>Closing Balance</i>	<i>Fund Type</i>
Designated: school garden club (Muddy Fingers)	-	600	(219)	(381)	-	Designated Fd
Designated Christmas Market	-	1,154	(916)	(239)	-	Designated Fd
Insurance Claim: Roof	-	1,970	(1,970)	-	-	Designated Fd
Designated: Music Equipment/Tech etc	4,310	-	-	-	4,310	Designated Fd
Restricted Church Kitchen	963	-	-	-	963	Restricted Fd
Restricted:NGA: SDF	-	-	-	-	-	Restricted Fd
Restricted:NGA: SDF Administration	-	-	-	-	-	Restricted Fd
Restricted Donations: HAF Play Scheme	-	6,078	(5,546)	(533)	-	Restricted Fd
Restricted Donations: Sponsored Children	-	640	-	-	640	Restricted Fd
Restricted Donations: Church Floor	-	12,344	-	-	12,344	Restricted Fd
Restricted Donations: Messy Church (Kitchen Oven)	-	3,448	-	(2,896)	552	Restricted Fd
Restricted Donations: Christmas Tree	-	120	-	(120)	-	Restricted Fd
Restricted Donations: Fundraising MacMillan	-	55	-	-	55	Restricted Fd
Restricted & Designated Fund						
	5,273	26,410	(8,651)	(4,168)	18,864	
General Fund						
	39,851	46,105	8,651	(64,183)	30,423	
Total Funds - Cash at Bank						
	45,123.68	72,514.81	-	(68,351.33)	49,287.16	