

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The Parochial Church Council of
The Parish of St Leonard's
Stanton Fitzwarren

Reports and Accounts
For the Year Ended 31st December
2024

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Churchwardens Annual Report on the condition of the church building and grounds and the life of the Church December 2024

The Triennial Archdeacons inspection 22nd August 2024 by Area Dean Sally Robinson found that St Leonards is a very well maintained and organised Church. The report paid tribute to the diligence and hard work of the wardens who thank all on the church council, their spouses and the team of committed volunteers. The report recognises the good relationship with the local community and the adjacent hotel. It sums up with -- "It is a beautiful, historic church with a vivid sense of living faith today".

THE BUILDING:

The quinquennial report by Oliver Wilson, architect, on behalf of Andrew Townsend Architects, was carried out in November 2021. No urgent problems were reported. The architect was impressed by the condition of and regular care that the building receives. The lighting/rewiring project in 2021 has proved a success by giving us many options as to how we light the church for different services. We now have certificates showing that all the electrical installations are satisfactory (the highest category) and commenting on the high quality of the new lighting. The clock works well and is serviced by a qualified volunteer. Volunteers wind the clock regularly; we are proposing to install an automatic clock winder.

EXTERIOR:

Roofs- Satisfactory - Some stone slates have been replaced; moss is building up on the north roof slopes and on the south porch roof

Stonework- Is in good condition. Some new damage from masonry bees on the east walls of the chancel and south wall of the church. Some exposure of ancient loamy mortar on the north wall of the nave continues to be monitored.

Tower-This remains safe and waterproof. Urgent masonry repairs were completed in October 2015.

The P.C.C. continued with the regular maintenance programme and will consider the report from Peter Hawkins, the builder, of 23rd December 2024 (circulated to PCC members on 13th January 2025.)

The PCC's obligation to open the church building for 40 days a year expired in December 2024. We have continued to open the building on Wednesdays in school term time.

Water Disposal- Good. The roof gutters and downpipes were cleared of debris.
Windows and Doors- Satisfactory.

Boundary walls- the low wall to the west boundary with the Hotel Gardens has been repaired by the Hotel. The high wall to the south of the graveyard collapsed during Storm Ashley in October, it remains in need of proper rebuilding. It has been established that this belongs to the Hotel and repairs have been started. Warning tapes are in place. Regretfully a lot of the Eco churchyard improvements by John and Darylin have been damaged by the fallen masonry and the repair attempts.

INTERIOR:

1. Roof-Satisfactory.
2. Walls- Satisfactory.
3. Woodwork- Satisfactory –only one pew has no central support.
4. Doors- Satisfactory.
5. Windows- Safe and secure- one small broken pane in west window.
6. Flooring- The decorative tiles in front of the Altar are now secure. A brass plate which had come loose and was a trip hazard has been re-fixed as part of the annual maintenance.
7. Furniture- Satisfactory –A wooden panel in poor condition identified as a royal armorial dating from reign of Elizabeth 1st is being restored by conservators, grants have been obtained. This is as a result of the determined efforts, hard work and perseverance of our PCC secretary Mike Curtis
8. Heating- As part of the Eco awards project the diocesan advisor recommended increasing the number of under pew heaters and so reducing the time that the power-hungry overhead heaters needed to be on. This has been done and a grant applied for. Some further work to the power supply is in hand.

MAINTENANCE:

- Annual Maintenance by Mr Hawkins was done 23rd December 2024.
- Organ- The tuning of the organ is being arranged.
- Fire extinguishers- inspected and serviced in November 2024.
- Electrics-The five yearly safety check done in November 2021 found the wiring to be safe and satisfactory, The PCC rejoices that the new LED lighting remains an enormous improvement. The PAT testing has been done December 2024.
- Clean-up. This year on various occasions, volunteers oiled wood, treated floors and doors, vacuumed, mopped, dusted and polished.
- Routine graveyard maintenance carried out by Mr M Dyball.
- Volunteers John and Darylin Francis have continued their regular hard work to improve the appearance and biodiversity of the churchyard. We are enjoying the bulbs and other herbaceous plants. Due to their efforts the churchyard achieved Gold Standard in the living churchyard Eco awards.
- Eco Awards: - Overall, the church was awarded a bronze standard, the building is now carbon neutral. Thanks to Julia Nolan for leading this effort.
- Gravestones- Satisfactory. There are some that are leaning but safe.

CHURCH LANE:

Stanton House Hotel owns the lane (a private drive). People using the church have the right of access on foot and in vehicles, but the PCC has an obligation to contribute 'a fair share' of the cost of repair and maintenance. Residents have attempted temporary repairs. The PCC has restated a commitment to pay a fair share to the owners of the lane for a long-term solution.

LIFE of the CHURCH

Services take place in our beautiful building. The building has remained accessible, We enjoy being a parish in the Stratton Team ministry and support monthly team services and other events.

Rev Elveen Mead is now the Rector of the Benefice. Rev. Charlotte Stansfield joined us as Curate to the Benefice in July. We congratulate Elveen and welcome Charlotte.

Worship Services of Holy Communion, Morning Worship and Family service take place each month. Team services are also celebrated here from time to time; In December the Family Service Christingle was enjoyed and raised monies for the Children's Society. The outdoor Christmas Eve Nativity was organised involving village families and attended by many.

Mike Curtis is the PCC secretary and we are grateful for all he does and for the lead he has taken with the conservation of the armorial.

The website www.stantonchurch.info continues to be improved and updated by Robert Breakspear

Family Services continue to be a success –see separate report by Robert Breakspear Lent – meetings were held

Child Protection- PCC members continue to hold DBS certificates. and have attended Diocesan led training courses.

Safety- Mike Curtis our volunteer safety officer has worked with his colleagues in the other parishes and the PCC has accepted all his recommendations. Several members have current First Aid certificates

People work quietly behind the scenes-by keeping the church building clean and tidy, preparing for services, taking part in services and praying for the life of the church. This year many small jobs were done; these involved volunteers who do not all regularly attend services as well as many that do.

Wedding Ministry-Again this year no one was married at St Leonard. We continue to work with the Hotel on their annual wedding Fair. We look forward to being again able to welcome and get to know couples and their families who join our worship as they prepare for marriage.

A good relationship with the Hotel has been maintained. We are grateful for the use of their toilets and car park. It is great to welcome their guests when they come to explore the historic building or join us for worship.

Wiltshire Historic Churches Ride and Stride –The Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire presented a Plaque commemorating the 40 years that St Leonard's has taken part. Harvest Festival- Many people gave tins and non-perishable food to go to the Swindon food collective. The money collection was given to the 'Farmers in Crisis' charity

Christmas Eve- was busy the outdoor Nativity was valued by the many people who came. Carols by Candlelight was very well attended

Supporting others-food is still collected for the Swindon Food Collective. Contributions can be left in the porch, Collections were made for the Children's Society, Farmers in Crisis, Crisis at Christmas. As a church we support Emmaus homeless charity and Swindon Youth for Christ and Shine Pinehurst. Church members support many other charities.

Joining in with our Community: Church members visit and support fellow villagers; join in with village events ; serve on the Village Hall committees and support other activities as we try to be good neighbours.

Chris Pope and Liz Hillman

Coffee Morning Report 2024

Another year passes now it is 39 years since the coffee morning started in 1985. Nowadays we meet at Stanton House Hotel.

We have enjoyed being together again and listening to some amazing stories including: -

the work of the Bible Society, Pears Family School for excluded children, editing Highworth Link magazine, life as a Prison Chaplain, how to keep ourselves safe-Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust, working in the Pattern Church,

The year finished with singing carols and mince pies.

It is lovely to see more people coming to join in the Coffee Morning. Sadly, we have said "goodbye" to some of our friends

It is hoped that with the kind co-operation of Stanton House Hotel we can continue to look forward to our monthly meetings and listening to inspiring speakers who share with us something of their work and their Christian journey.

Looking forward to celebrating 40 years of coffee mornings in 2025.

Till then take care keep safe and God bless,

Liz Hillman

Safeguarding Report for the APCM April 2025

Since the last report in April 2024, Mary and Mike Boshier, Joint Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs), have been keeping a close eye on all aspects of safeguarding for the Parishes of St Margaret's Stratton, St Leonards Stanton, St Mary Magdalene South Marston and Coleview. Aply assisting us are the 'eyes and ears' in the parishes, Chris and Anne Pope for Stanton, Diane Whitford at South Marston, Liz Hillman and Dave Thomas who are the reserve Eyes and Ears for Stanton. The 'eyes and ears' are the close personal local contact in the churches who can pass safeguarding concerns onto us. Their contact details can be found in the porchway of each Church. We thank them as always for their support and vigilance.

The thrust of our work continues to ensure that all members of all the Churches are safe to worship and go about their church business without risk. To that end, Mike and Mary would ask every member of every Church, both leaders and congregation, to recognise their personal responsibility in making Safeguarding their concern. There is no option to leave a concern to someone else. If there is an identified issue, it must be passed on to the PSOs to be investigated and acted upon as a matter of urgency. "If you see something, say something" should be a point of action for everybody.

Mary and I would ask all of you to observe and exercise an attitude of informed vigilance. In that way, everyone will be as safe as possible. If you have a cause for concern no matter how trivial you think it might be, please talk to the 'eyes and ears' in your church or contact the PSOs Mike or Mary via the parish web site email address or call on 07799835437.

As in previous years, we have been keeping all members of the two PCCs current with their DBS certificates. There are 15 certificates that will need renewal this year as part of the 3 yearly renewal cycle.

A Safeguarding Report continues to be presented to every PCC meeting for both the Stratton and South Marston PCC and the Stanton Fitzwarren PCC to keep all members up to date with safeguarding developments and information. Safeguarding management is also monitored by the Diocese via the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard which is maintained by the PSOs

The Parish Safeguarding Officers have continued to meet every 3 months with the Rector. This enables both the PSOs and the Church leadership team to keep up to date with the most recent developments in safeguarding in the Diocese.

A training session will be held in May for the Foundations in safeguarding. If anyone would like to join the 22 people already signed up, please contact Mary or Mike. This training maintains accreditation for those who require specific training to maintain their posts in the parishes.

**Mike and Mary Boshier
Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) April 2025**

St Leonard's APCM 2025 – Environment Report for 2024

Building on our engagement with A Rocha's UK Eco-Church scheme, in 2024 we worked towards a Bronze Award for Leonard's. This involved practical changes including moving to a green electricity tariff in June 2024, and taking forward the recommendations from our carbon emissions audit. Our eco-champion also worked with others across the parish and within the wider Swindon area to raise awareness of our responsibility to the environment, to make our church activities more eco-friendly, and to offer ideas to our community for individual engagement.

The carbon emissions audit recommended that we extend our under-pew heating to all pews including those in the choir, and remove some of the less-efficient overhead heaters. The aim is to reduce use of overhead heating for all but the coldest months of the year, heating more efficiently the people in the church rather than the building itself. We invited bids for the work, the bulk of which was carried out in Jan 2025.

We held our first Team Eco-service in June at St Margaret's. This was well-attended and will become an annual fixture. We also used the weekly news sheet to alert the church community to environmental events and tips to reduce waste and use energy more efficiently.

Work on the churchyard has been a key part of this effort. Through the first half of 2024 we saw increasing use of the churchyard by wildlife (particularly around the feeding stations), and the 2023 planting brightened up the surroundings. We learned lessons around the need for effective communications with our mowing contractor. The autumn storms brought a setback to the nature area with the collapse of a 6ft high stone wall, and necessary clearing by heavy machinery to ensure safety. Once the wall is repaired, we hope to involve the village in restoring this area.

The expanded area for Remembrance Day poppies in 2024 was a great success. Villagers and members of the congregation met to put out around 1,000 hand-made poppies in the churchyard. The outside Remembrance ceremony and service was well attended, with the splendid poppy display a visual reminder for our younger members of the sacrifices involved. This year we added a few purple poppies in remembrance of the animals who also gave so much.

St Leonard's received a Bronze Award from Eco-Church in July 2024, now displayed on the porch noticeboard. This is a tribute to everyone involved in St Leonard's care for Creation in 2024, but is only part of the journey. We hope to work with the congregation and the village to do more for nature through 2025.

**Jules Nolan
John and Darylin Francis**

Swindon Deanery Synod Report

Deanery Synod met 4 times during the year, with the Deanery Leadership Team meeting between Synods to plan the agenda and work on the Deanery Vision. The highlight of the year was Elveen's election as Deputy Dean, supporting the Revd Sally Robertson who continues as Dean. The main work focus of the year was adding flesh and bones to the Deanery Vision and Action Plan.

The February meeting featured presentations on the breadth of initiatives enabling churches and church members to support schools. The Deanery Leadership team also launched working groups to support the Vision and Action Plan:

1. School Church Relations - creating partnerships between schools and parishes utilising Growing Faith Chaplains;
2. Discipleship - encouraging and promoting Diocesan, parish and deanery wide opportunities to deepen discipleship and evangelism;
3. Marginalised Communities - supporting those who are marginalised in the deanery through partnerships with local councils and other agencies;
4. New Estates - ensuring new housing estates throughout the deanery are served by congregations, outreach and spiritual support.
- 5.

At the May meeting, Archdeacon Christopher addressed Transforming Church. Together - a strategic plan for the Diocese, with local communities at its heart. He asked each parish to consider its vision for the future in this context. The Synod also heard about Eco-Church activities within Swindon. Several churches from the Deanery (including St Leonard's) are involved in this and had come together to form a Deanery-level group to learn from each other and coordinate initiatives.

In July the Deanery Synod held its annual barbeque and discussed the way our Benefice Plans linked to the wider Deanery Plan.

The October meeting focussed on a presentation and discussion of training opportunities for Lay leaders and congregations.

At every meeting we heard updates on local and diocesan priorities, as well as worshipping in a variety of styles and enjoying the hospitality of the host church.

We encourage anyone with an interest in the wider deanery and the topic under discussion to come to our meetings.

Jules Nolan
St Leonard's Deanery Rep

PCC Secretary's Report

The PCC is the executive committee of the parish and consists of clergy, churchwardens and elected representatives of the laity. Members of the PCC are: Rev. Elveen Mead, Rev. Charlotte Stansfield, Liz Hillman, Roger Hillman, Darylin Francis, John Francis, Sue Mackenzie, Julia Nolan, Chris Pope, David Thomas and Mike Curtis. Five full PCC meetings were held over the course of the year. These follow a standard agenda and typically cover apologies, approval of previous minutes, matters arising, clergy matters, finance, fabric, correspondence, environment, health & safety, safeguarding, deanery report and any other business.

We also hold an annual meeting of parishioners (APCM) to elect churchwardens and other officers. This was held last year on April 28th.

Our next annual meeting will take place on April 27th. Details will be published and posted giving a minimum of two weeks' notice.

During 2024 there were four baptisms at St. Leonard's, one memorial service, and two internments of ashes.

Mike Curtis

Health & Safety Officer's Report

There were no reported accidents or incidents at church over the past 12 months. In order to maintain this record, we ask all church users to act safely and report any concerns or observations to a member of the PCC.

Our annual Health and Safety inspection took place on June 5th. A few minor corrective actions were identified, however there were no major issues.

Initiatives taken over the past year include:

- the introduction of a Near Miss reporting policy (all church users are asked to look-out for, and report, situations which could lead to personal injury or property damage).
- a review of Risk Assessments
- the introduction of a code of practice for engagement and management of contractors
- the creation of a safety folder (containing up-to-date versions of all relevant documents), kept just inside the church entrance for ease of reference.

Any other suggestions for improving Health and Safety are always welcomed.

Mike Curtis

Family Service

Stanton's Family Service takes place on the second Sunday of each month, and is planned and led by a team of lay people from Stanton Church. Whilst the activities and formats that we use are always child-centred, the services are regularly attended and enjoyed by all ages, from babies to over-90s.

We began 2024 with a series of three services entitled "Women in the New Testament", where we focussed on Anna, Elizabeth and Mary. Luke tells us that Anna recognised Jesus as a baby, and so for our activity we were invited to identify various members of the congregation from pictures of them as infants. Some were obvious, others less so!

After Easter we looked at the story of "Doubting Thomas", including an entertaining round of "Would I lie to you". We celebrated the Church's birthday at Pentecost in May by decorating – what else? – a birthday cake. In June we looked at Samuel and Eli from the Old Testament, and on a lovely day in July we were able to worship outside, focussing on one of Jesus' miracles.

August was very special for Angela and Robert as Freya, their granddaughter, was christened in the Family Service. In September we looked at the story of Jesus walking on the water, and invited the congregation to each imagine themselves as one of the characters in the story and then share their thoughts. I think many of us gained a fresh perspective on a familiar bible passage.

As usual, the year concluded with Harvest Festival in October, and the ever-lovely Christingle service in December. The Walking Nativity on Christmas Eve has now become a firm tradition for church and village, and was again well supported and greatly enjoyed – thanks to all who took part.

I make no apology for repeating the same concluding thoughts as last year, as they remain equally true. Planning and leading these Family Services gives us wonderful opportunity to explore and grow our own faith and creativity, and our continued thanks go to Elveen for giving us the scope and trust to be engaged in this special ministry.

**Robert Breakspear,
on behalf of The Family Service Leadership Team**

Team Choir

The choir membership has remained stable over the last year and I continue to be humbled by the commitment and progress of those who sing with us – they really are a lovely bunch of people and we have a lot of fun. We spent the early part of the year rehearsing for a Passiontide service of readings and music from the Iona tradition, which brought the Easter Story to life and had some very dramatic and poignant moments, Hazel's solo at the crucifixion was particularly moving.

Easter was, as always, a busy time, with two services on Good Friday and three on Easter Sunday – it is a privilege to be able to sing anthems in each of our churches to support festival services.

After Easter much of the choir's time was taken up with rehearsals for "Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat" which we sang in July in St Margaret's. Choir and soloists did an amazing job and the service was very much appreciated by the congregation – there were some standout performances by Rob S as Joseph, Rob B as Pharoah and Hazel as narrator, but I was really encouraged by how many of the choir stepped up and took on small solo roles – all excellently performed. We then celebrated together at the Choir Summer BBQ before taking an extended break over the summer.

We started back in September, rehearsing pieces for Advent and Christmas. In November the choir sang a very well attended and beautiful Advent service in St Leonard's including two anthems, and followed this up with Christmas Carol Services in all three churches, with soloists Jean, Crystal and Hazel for the Once in Royal first verse and anthems including "The Truth from Above", by Vaughan Williams with an excellent solo by Jean, "In the Bleak mid-winter" by Harold Darke with lovely solos by Roz, Hazel, and Robert and a beautiful original carol written by Karen and Robert South "Hush the World" – which I'm sure will become a recurring Christmas favourite. All Christmas services were very well attended and we had many positive comments from the congregation.

My thanks go to the choir for their continued commitment and enthusiasm, to Geoff Walters for his support and amazing flexibility, whatever music I throw at him, and also to the two Roberts – South and Breakspear for their assistance in running the choir.

We are always looking for new members – no musical knowledge necessary, and no auditions. If you like to sing and would like to join in – just come along.

Angela Breakspear
Director of Music

Financial Statement for the year ending 31 December 2024

Note this financial statement is the unsigned unaudited version

Parochial Church Council of St. Leonards, Stanton Fitzwarren

Financial Statement for the year ended 31 December 2024

General Receipts and Payments Account

<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>2024</u> <u>Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2023</u> <u>Total</u>
<u>Voluntary Receipts</u>				
Planned Giving	12,031		12,031	11,343
Collections and other giving	292	424	716	1,030
Income tax recovered	4,469		4,469	1,058
VAT Recovered	0	776	776	0
Donations	2,073	500	2,573	2,006
	18,865	1,700	20,565	15,437
<u>Receipts from activities for generating funds</u>				
Other Fund Raising				220
	0	0	0	220

Receipts from Church Activities

Fees	219	55	274	
Wedding & Baptism Collections		260	260	33
	219	315	534	33

Other income

Fabric Fund (Designated Funds)			0	
Bank Interest Received	1,018	1,528	2,546	2,290
	1,018	1,528	2,546	2,290

Total Receipts

	20,102	3,543	23,645	17,980
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Payments**Grants**

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>2024</u> <u>Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>2023</u>
Mission & Charities	1,190	424	1,614	1,952

Church Activities

Diocesan Parish Share	11,175		11,175	11,500
Team Expenses	1,200		1,200	1,200
Church Running Expenses	2,601		2,601	3,945
Church Maintenance	520		520	10,639

	Churchyard Maintenance	1,376		1,376	640
	Cost of Services	200		200	356
	Administration	221		221	413
	<u>Total Payments</u>	18,483	424	18,907	30,635
	<u>Total Net Receipts</u>	1,619	3,119	4,738	-12,655
	<u>Balance Brought Forward</u>	45,895	4,030	49,925	62,580
	<u>Balance Carried Forward</u>	47,514	7,149	54,663	49,925
	<u>Monetary Assets</u>				
	Current Account	2659.21		2,659	467
	CCLA Deposit Account	52,004		52,004	49,458
	<u>Total</u>			54,663	49,925

<u>Debtors</u>	Income Tax Claim	1,510	3,162
	VAT Claim	0	776
<u>Creditors</u>	Electricity	100	300
	Team Expenses	300	300

The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts and Payments basis.

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 17 March 2025

Rev Elveen Mead

David Thomas - Treasurer