

St Philip and St James Parish Church Alderley Edge



Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31st December 2023

*“Whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through him.”*

Colossians 4.17.

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Knutsford Deanery (Ref 1403), Diocese of Chester
Registered Charity Number 1131416

FROM THE VICAR REV'D ROBIN PYE

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Ministry Team serving at St Philip and St James during 2023

Rev'd Robin Pye (Vicar)

Rev'd Canon Professor Loveday Alexander (Associate Priest)

Rev'd Linda Lonsdale (Retired Priest)

Rev'd Amy Ruston (Curate)

Ms Kate Pwaisiho (Ordinand)

Mrs Rachel Roberts (Reader)

Mrs Susan Mills (Pastoral Worker)

Mrs Clare Wearne (Baptism Visitor)

Introduction

2023 was a year of comings and goings at St Philip & St James.

We said goodbye to our ordinand, Kate Pwaisiho. We will greatly miss her infectious laughter and her sense of grace when she led us in prayer. Her generosity in presenting us with a cross from her native Solomon Islands on her last Sunday with us will live with us always and the cross itself will be a precious memory of her ministry among us and our connection in Christ with brothers and sisters on the other side of the world.

And then we said hello to our curate, Amy Ruston. Amy has already made an impression among us with the insightfulness of her preaching, her creativity in leading worship and ministry and her empathy for others. We look forward to two and a half more years of having her among us.

Possibly not as obvious to most members of our congregation, but nevertheless important for us in many ways are two new arrivals in our deanery.

Rev'd Eddie Roberts came to be the new Rector of Wilmslow. Eddie brings a lot of experience from Manchester Diocese and his passion for parish ministry will take some pressure off our own ministry team which, I suspect, will soon become apparent in the number of baptisms, weddings and funerals we are asked to take.

Rev'd Nathan Jarvis came to be the new Rector of St Mary's Alderley. Nathan was previously a canon at Bangor Cathedral and Chaplain at the University there. He will bring many new ideas to his parish. Immediately, the number of people attending worship on Sundays has doubled and the support our ministry team have been giving to that congregation will no longer be necessary.

This will allow us to focus more closely on our new relationship with St Catherine's Birtles. Our reader, Rachel Roberts has continued to take two non eucharistic services there every month. Canon Rev'd Peter Hunt has continued his important pastoral ministry in that parish. The remaining Eucharistic services (two or three depending on the month) have been taken by Linda, Loveday and Robin. The new arrangements for St Catherine's Birtles were formally celebrated and launched at a special service in February led by Bishop Sam of Stockport.

Back at our own church, this has been the year when Warm Wednesdays took off properly after the uncertainties that lingered in the wake of the pandemic. The art group came back, attendance at the midweek service and the lunch increased significantly and the singing group got its mojo back.

We were able to apply for some funding from the Co-op Bank to help with heating costs and also to support the work of our foodbank which has been busy during this period of sharp cost of living increases. Our relationship with the Primary School has been critical here in enabling people working hard and struggling to put food on the table to find their way to us for a bit of extra help to get them through to the end of the month.

Talking to people who have recently joined our congregation, I am always struck by how they tell me how welcoming the church was to them when they first came. This is, at least in part, due to the work of our welcome team and so we organised some training at the start of the year to help us develop ideas for how we can improve this aspect of our work.

Some of the ideas we generated were fed directly into the work of the new Worship Space Committee which has been focussed on how we can make the building more effective in welcoming different groups of people including families with children and people coming in for quiet private prayer. You will have seen some changes around the St James Chapel, the baptistry and the library and there are more ideas in preparation for 2024.

This work has, in turn, led us to a renewed focus on how we want to set out the church so that it is always welcoming of anybody who has come to pray. I am especially grateful to our churchwarden, Bob Tuffin, who put our votive candle stand on wheels so that it is much easier to keep in position and comes into church every Saturday to make sure everything is in the right place for Sunday.

We lost four members of our congregation this year.

I knew Paddy Keates as a founder member of the art group when it began to meet in church on Wednesday mornings before the pandemic. She never came back to church after the lockdowns. Her funeral service was a revelation as we heard about her wartime service in the Wrens, her tenacity in the face of misogyny and sexism in her working life and the astonishing strength and sacrificial love she brought to being a mother and grandmother.

Pauline Pitt was well known in this community partly for all the work she did for the Royal British Legion although this was only one of the many ways in which she served her community. She would very often draw to my attention somebody who could use some support. Huge numbers of people came to her funeral service and there was much laughter as one anecdote after another was shared.

Ann Brooks hadn't physically attended church for many years, but she was very much part of our congregation to the end, reading all the Thoughts for the Day, often responding to the author in writing and always in an encouraging way. When the rest of us came back to church after the lockdowns, Ann continued to join us for worship via the Facebook stream. We mustn't forget how important this aspect of our worshipping life is to people who struggle to get out of their own homes.

Jean Winter was an active member of this congregation for over 50 years. I first knew her as a very sweet person with an impish sense of humour. About four years ago we realised that she was unwell. Many people from church went to visit her, first in her own home and then when she moved to

residential care. The ministry team were represented among these visitors by Sue and Loveday, but I was able to pray with her in hospital a few days before she died at Christmas.

As I reflect on these four lives, I am reminded of the story about St Lawrence who was told by the emperor that he had to present himself before him with the treasure of the church. At the appointed time, Lawrence came with his congregation. When the emperor demanded where the treasure was, Lawrence indicated the people around him and said they were the true treasure of the church.

This is the true value of our church also. Lives of faith lived out in our community, in workplaces and in our homes. People like Paddy, Pauline, Ann and Jean.

Normal Pattern of Worship

Sundays

8.00am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel using Common Worship Order One using traditional language
10.00am Choral Eucharist using Common Worship Order One and Seasonal Material
6.30pm Evening Prayer generally alternating every week between Evensong or Taizé style service and online service using Zoom

Wednesdays

11.30am Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel following the Book of Common Prayer

Variations

On the first Sunday of every month at 11.45am we hold an additional service for toddlers and their families which is known as 'Pipnjay'.

On the third Sunday of the month the main 10am service is a shorter 'Family Communion' service using a simpler liturgy.

On the fifth Sunday of the month the main 10am Choral Eucharist service follows the Book of Common Prayer.

Morning and Evening Prayer

The vicar says Morning Prayer at 8.15 every weekday morning and is joined online by the ministry team on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The vicar says Evening Prayer at 5.30pm every weekday evening and is joined online by members of the congregation. When other matters call the vicar away, these prayers are still said by the congregation in his absence.

Occasional Services

We conducted 19 baptisms in 2023 of which one was an adult baptism. We appear to be sustaining a higher number of baptisms post pandemic than we were experiencing pre-pandemic.

2023	19
2022	20
2021	25
2020	6
2019	13
2018	14
2017	16

We conducted four weddings in 2023. The steep decline in church weddings is continuing.

2023	4
2022	6
2021	6
2020	1
2019	8
2018	7
2017	11

We held 11 funeral services in church this year and our Ministry Team conducted other funeral services elsewhere.

2023	11
2022	17
2021	17
2020	3
2019	14
2018	22
2017	18

These services included the services for Paddy Keates and Pauline Pitt. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Coronation

King Charles III was crowned on 6th May 2023. The church welcomed people into church to watch the Coronation on our big screen. On the Sunday after the Coronation the church hosted a 'Big Lunch' in the marquee. And on the Monday after the Coronation there was a special gathering of Voices Together in the West End.

Thought for the Day

Thought for the Day was sent out by email during Lent and Advent.

Ordinands and Curates

We were hugely blessed this year by the ministry of our ordinand, Kate Pwaisiho, who was ordained Deacon on Saturday 1st July at St Thomas Church, Stockton Heath. At the same service Amy Stevenson was also ordained Deacon and came to be our new Curate. Amy married Tom Ruston on Saturday 15th July and so became Rev'd Amy Ruston.

Average Attendance at Services by Month

2023	10am	8am	Evening	Wednesday
January	62	11	20	15
February	59	11	34	21
March	70	9	23	17
April	72	9	24	15
May	63	9	14	11
June	60	8	17	14
July	66	10	26	13
August	60	8	-	14
September	66	8	21	14
October	65	10	16	13
November	68	9	19	16
December	67	10	-	19

Special services have been excluded from these figures.

Figures in bold represent an increase on the equivalent figure for 2022.

These figures suggest that:

1. There has been a sustained increase in attendance at the Wednesday Eucharistic services at 11.30am.
2. There has been a steady increase in attendance at our main service at 10am on Sunday.
3. Attendance at evening services remain steady.
4. Attendance at our 8am Sunday service continues to decline slightly.

Special Services and Events through the Year

January

We joined other churches in Alderley Edge for a special service of prayers for Christian Unity at the Methodist Church.

We started our first 'Being With' course which was really successful.

February

We helped to launch a network of people to support Ukrainian refugees with a meeting at the Union Club chaired by the vicar.

Lent began with our Ash Wednesday services, attended by 51 people.

March

A service based on the World Day of Prayer was held at St Pius Church on 3rd March.

April

Services during Holy Week were shared with the Methodist Church and St Catherine's Birtles.

As usual, we held a Maundy Thursday Service with feet washing, a Walk of Witness service and Stations of the Cross on Good Friday and Easter Vigil service on Saturday and a Sunrise service at 6am on Easter Sunday. We had 125 people at the main 10am service.

May

We held a special service for Ascension Day with 24 people in attendance.

June

Just a normal month.

July

There was a parish pilgrimage to The Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham.

August

We decided to suspend evening services for the month of August.

We held a Parish Retreat at Foxhill.

September

Harvest Festival took place on 17th September with 82 people in attendance.

October

The Animal service took place on 1st October and 10 people were present.

The Civic Service took place on 8th October with 92 people present. On the day we heard the news of the terrorist attack on Israel we welcomed people of all faiths to pray for an inclusive society based on acceptance of all faiths in our community.

The All Souls Requiem Service was held on 29th October. The choir sang Faure's Requiem and 58 people came.

November

On Remembrance Sunday, after our usual service at 10am, we again held prayers at the cenotaph at 3pm.

December

The Christmas Fair was held for the first time for many years on 2nd December. With lots of community activities in the church and parish rooms, we had a wonderful time and raised £3,000 for church funds.

Christmas services were held as follows:

- 5th December Mothers Union and Toddler Advent Service
- 7th December Christingle Service with folk musicians, uniformed youth groups and the primary school choir
- 12th December AESG School Carol Service
- 14th December Ryleys School Carol Service
- 19th December AESG School End of Term Services
- 21st December Primary School Nativity Play and Carol Service
- 24th December 4pm Donkey Service
- 24th December 6pm Nativity Play Service
- 24th December 11.15pm Midnight Mass
- 25th December 9am Holy Communion
- 25th December 11am Family Communion

Numbers attending Christmas services were slightly higher than last year.

THANKS

This will be the last year that Alan Robinson will maintain our church grounds and the vicarage garden. Because he has done this on a voluntary basis for a number of years he has saved our church a lot of money. And he has done an outstanding professional job. Now retirement beckons and I would like to record my special thanks to him in this year's report.

I am particularly grateful to Wendy Davies who is now in her fourth year of office as Churchwarden. Wendy cares deeply about this church and its people. Her counsel is constantly kind and understanding and she works very hard on the many projects we undertake. Her leadership of the Christmas Fair was outstanding.

I would also like to thank everybody who is involved in the revived Voices Together that made its big comeback this year.

And the other category I would like to mention are those people who are relatively new to our church who have taken on significant roles in our church. They include;

- Amanda Brabban-Brown who joined the PCC and became our new Safeguarding Officer, bringing a fresh perspective to that role.
- Heather Jobling who joined the PCC and has delighted us with her fundraising afternoon teas and impressed us with her ability to generate donations to the foodbank.
- Rupert Downes who joined the PCC and also the livestreaming team
- Maxine Drabble who joined the PCC, helps out in the office when Maria is on leave and keeps us up to date with contactless giving.
- Kate Downes who has preached for us and coordinates the Wilmslow-based home group.
- Bethan Weston who is another key member of the livestreaming group.
- Linda Snape who joined the team at Voices Together.
- Glenys Grace who does so much for Voices Together.
- Alan Grace who sings at Voices Together and now also in the choir.
- Bev Gutfreund who has done so much to encourage us to try more meditation.

And there will be people I have forgotten here.

Churches that attract new people who are then drawn into servant leader roles in the church are the churches that thrive and grow.

Finally, let me also mark Maria's first full year as our Parish Administrator. We are very well served by people who are paid for only a few hours a week and yet do so much to keep us going as a church.

It is a privilege to serve alongside you all.

Rev'd Robin Pye

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a Charity (No 1131416) within the authority of the Charity Commission.

MEMBERS OF THE PCC 2023

<i>Clergy:</i>	Revd Robin Pye Revd Canon Loveday Alexander Revd Amy Ruston (from July 2023)
<i>Reader:</i>	Mrs Rachel Roberts (approved at APCM 23 April 2023)
<i>Churchwardens:</i>	Mrs Wendy Davies Mr Bob Tuffin
<i>Pastoral Worker:</i>	Mrs Sue Mills (Safeguarding Officer up to 23 April 2023)
<i>Deanery Synod Representatives:</i>	Miss Celia Berent (up to 30 June 2023) Mrs Mandy Parr (from 1 July 2023) Mr Michael Scaife (up to 30 June 2023) Mr Martin Steiger (from 1 July 2023) Mrs Sandra Thompson

Members:

Mrs Amanda Brabban-Brown	Safeguarding Officer (elected and appointed 23 April 2023)
Mr Simon Caporn	Health & Safety Officer
Mr Rupert Downes	
Mrs Maxine Drabble	(elected 23 April 2023)
Mrs Heather Jobling	(elected 23 April 2023)
Mrs Jen Pound	
Mr Charles Rogers	
Mr Michael Scaife	(elected 23 April 2023)
Mrs Margaret Seddon	
Mrs Gill Shone	Electoral Roll Officer
Mr Ian Standen	Treasurer
Mrs Clare Wearne	
Miss Rhona Dalziel	(co-opted PCC 23 April 2023)
Mr Brian Thompson	(co-opted PCC 23 April 2023)

Non-members:

Mr Martin Sinker	Fabric Committee Chair
Mr Peter Spooner	Secretary (appointed by PCC 23 April 2023)
Ms Gillian Swain	Mothers Union Liaison

The PCC met on seven occasions with overall average attendance at 68% (64% if non-members excluded). Of the seven meetings, six were ordinary and the other was to appoint officers following the APCM.

Delegated from the PCC were the Standing Committee and the Fabric Committee.

The following 'Mission Groups' reported to the PCC: Training and Discipleship; Pastoral Care; Youth and Children; Music; Worship Space Committee.

SIDESPEOPLE

At the year end the list of Sidespeople contained 23 names, as follows:

Alan Boyd	Jennifer Boyd	Amanda Brabban-Brown	Sheila Brown
Josie Dawes	Ann Estridge	Stuart Heaviside	David Hollas
Frankie Mulcahy	Anna Nicholson	Elaine Ockelton	Mandy Parr
Nick Parr	Alan Robinson	Michael Scaife	Martin Sinker
Sue Pawsey	Martin Steiger	Brian Thompson	Sandra Thompson
Bob Tuffin	Wendy Walker	Ian Wilson	

ELECTORAL ROLL

At the start of the year there were 135 names on the roll of whom 57 were non-resident. At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 23rd April 2023 there were 135 members of whom 56 were non-resident. At the end of the year there were 139 names on the roll of whom 57 were non-resident.

Mrs Gill Shone, Electoral Roll Officer

WELCOME COMMITTEE

St Philip and St James is noted for the warmth of its welcome, but this does not just happen. We have invested continuously in ensuring that anyone entering our church, whether a new or existing worshipper, can depend on a warm, friendly welcome. We have a team of Welcomers to make any act of worship or visit for any other reason an experience which reflects God's love.

To continue to build our church a Christian Welcome is a key 'element', but it needs to be versatile and to cater for people as they leave. We focus on: welcoming families with children, how we welcome people with special needs, how we approach people who look upset, how we offer to pray for people and how do we pray for people. And importantly how we collect people's details so that we can keep in touch with them.

Emphasis is also given to the fact we are an inclusive, but not an invasive church.

We have a new initiative on which the Worship Space Committee has recently been working, providing worship bags for children attending services who may need a little extra 'occupation'. The bags contain a range of items from books, puzzles and 'colouring in', to a couple of 'crafts'. The Welcome Team provides a crucial contribution to the ministry of St Philip and St James Church but just as importantly, all in our church can provide an uplifting welcome to those who attend our Services and other special events.

Sandra Thompson, Welcome Committee

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

2023 was a good year for our church: a year of growth and consolidation. New members joined our congregation and several 'newish' members took on positions for contribution and responsibility.

As Churchwardens we are privileged to serve and to lead a very dedicated congregation the great majority of whom contribute to the worship, support and continual drive to be at the very spiritual heart of our local community. The church is very welcoming, inclusive and outward-looking focused on the need to love God and our neighbours.

In particular, we thank Robin, Loveday, Linda, Rachel, Sue and now Amy (our Ministry Team) for their constant dedication to the cause and for leading our services. We were delighted to welcome Rev'd Amy Ruston in the summer as our Curate and the stimulation of training thus brought about.

Our music and choir are a joy. Thanks to all the altar servers at 8am who prepare for both this and also the 10am Holy Communion services and to the crucifers who lead during the latter. We need more of both.

Church Sound System

In December 2022 Cornerstone System Ltd., Stone, Staffs. had installed a new electronic control in the form of an iPad. Later, headsets were supplied for the Ministry Team: these improved the clarity of the speech received. However, some areas of the church remained with poor reception. Four new loudspeakers were installed (**UBL: Control 25-1L**).

We evaluated the existing loop system for hearing aids (installed c.1990) and whilst finding it to be generally competent were able to create improvements by electronic adjustments. We invited those who still had trouble hearing to come to a meeting where they were advised individually by the sound engineers. We encourage members of the congregation to tell the Wardens should they have problems hearing but at present we know of no-one with such difficulty. We continue to monitor this matter carefully.

Our upgrades appear to have produced considerable benefit. We need to train more operators to use the sound system during our church services.

Contactless Giving

Through the kind leadership of Maxine Drabble and guidance from the Diocese we have installed SumUp contactless giving in the church.

Maria developed a QR code which is now used widely on our publications. These methods of giving are much valued by donors.

Church Painting

In August the church walls, radiators, pipework and the north and south doors were painted by Northwich Decorating Company over four weeks. The congregation helped substantially moving items as directed by the company. An excellent result was achieved.

The paint applied to the walls was **Keim Exclusiv Nr 9437 Hellbezugswerdt 78**.

Church Office

Working with Maria the office was cleared and tidied, a new telephone installed, and a new desk was constructed for Amy.

The Chapels

After advice from the Worship Space Committee the pew rail in the St James Chapel was removed and repositioned to the rear of the Chapel of our Lady. This action has enlarged the St James sanctuary creating new opportunities for children's worship.

New carpet was laid in both the St James and the Chapel of our Lady - **Wester Ultima Major Fennel Blue** with underlay all supplied by Village Carpets, Cheadle.

Pew Runners

Samples were obtained from two companies and presented with costs to the Parish Plan PCC in Sept 2023. After a period of consultation and trial new runners for all the nave pews have been ordered and are expected by May 2024.

These are 1" thick heavy foam covered by **Pimlico Marine** from The Church Cushion Co., Bristol.

Events in the Marquee

We held several happy events in the marquee over spring and summer including a very successful Teddy Bears' Picnic with the Tuesday Tots in early July when about 25 children attended.

We celebrated His Majesty's Coronation on Saturday May 6th in church with streaming of the ceremony on our large screen - thanks to Brian and to Mandy for organising and for all the help with cakes and cuppas. Around 45 people from all across the community joined us and we celebrated again the following day after our special Sunday morning service with a picnic in the marquee.

Other summer marquee events included a farewell picnic to lovely Rev'd Kate Pwaishio, our Ordinand, our church's 170 Year Anniversary (and Rev'd Loveday and Philip's Wedding Anniversary) on July 16th and our "Songs of Praise" supper with the congregation of St Catherine's on July 30th.

Thank you to everyone who helped with these events and also to Marian and to Robin for their 'thank you' supper for the St Philip and St James and St Catherine's PCCs held on the evening of July 21st.

Christmas Fair - Saturday 2nd December

In July the church was approached as to its view on whether the grounds might be used for a traders' fair. We embraced this opportunity to hold a Christmas Fair inside the church. The congregation is to be congratulated on the sterling effort it provided. Wendy led the organisation supported by a strong team.

The weather was 2C but dry. A warm ambience was created by carol singing with visitors, choir and church members taking part, brass band music, mulled wine, refreshments, raffle and fun(d) raising sideshows. The Ministry table was busy dealing with many enquiries about Christmas services and Christian matters. A zip wire for teddy bears rigged from the bell chamber to the church lawn received much interest ... and considerable excitement when little children regained their treasures!

Maria and family transformed the Parish Office into a magical Santa's Grotto whilst three gents braved the tickly FC outfits becoming exceptional surrogates.

We were saddened that the traders did not make the sales that had been expected. Perhaps the very cold weather played a part. Our church was very blessed to receive a little over £3000 making this a worthy day for our efforts.

We would like to repeat our part of the Christmas Fair on 7th December 2024, especially now that a blueprint has been created.

Christmas Services

Christingle produced a *de-light*-ful setting. Young families crowded around their candles, church illumination dimmed.... inherent fire-risk managed oh so carefully! A good Collection for The Children's Society.

400 people welcomed Snowie the elderly and so gentle donkey to the 4pm Christmas Eve Crib Service. Such joyous crowds produce challenges for safety but these had been carefully considered.

Over 800 people attended our Christmas services and were very appreciative. Sincere congratulations to all those who enabled this.

Thanks

We would like to thank everyone who contributes to our church life and helps to build our community - that means nearly everybody in our church(!) but particularly we need to thank:

Martin Sinker for his tireless, often exacting and demanding work leading the team who look after the structure of this listed church building.

Ian Standen for being our Hon. Treasurer and for the diligent and most precise way in which he manages our church finances. His budget setting and daily management of the accounts are much appreciated.

Simon Caporn is our Health and Safety Officer. He is consulted over all major church events and was particularly involved in the major services held over Christmas and the Fair.

But at every service we are reminded how many people come together to make our worship a happy and inclusive experience and we would not be the same without you and we are so very grateful to you.

Wendy Davies & Bob Tuffin, Churchwardens

FABRIC REPORT

Early in the year the annual clearing of gutters, downpipes and flat roof areas of the Church and the Rooms was carried out by local roofer Danny Clifford. In the following months the roof alarm system was serviced and checks carried out to our gas and electrical equipment, also the fire extinguishers. The telecoms installation in the tower and spire continued to absorb considerable administration time. At EE's request, via Open Reach, a new fibre-optic link was installed following the drawing-up of a Wayleave document and the granting of a Faculty (planning approval) from the Diocese. It is good news that EE are keeping their system up-to-date because we benefit from rental income. However, in the light of Government legislation of 2017, that income is set to be greatly reduced. Having been approached with some derisory offers to negotiate the new income on our behalf, we discovered that the Church of England authorities were engaged in arriving at a national agreement covering telecoms installations in churches, with Net CS appointed as intermediaries. Since then, we have been in discussion with Net CS about a new Lease document to replace the original as set up in 1997 between Rev Brian Young and Orange. This process has rumbled on through the year end; another Faculty will be required but we must face the fact that our EE rental income will drop very substantially at some point in 2024.

The year's big event on the Fabric front was the full cleaning, repair and redecoration of all the interior walls, by Jim Pimblatt of Northwich Decorating Co and his young helpers, giving the entire Church a much brighter and cleaner feel. We are deeply grateful to the Institute Trust for a generous grant covering the overall cost. The decoration work also included all the painted and stained woodwork (excluding the pews) but not the sloping ceiling areas which are all behind netting, in protection against any loose plaster. Also, internally the sound system had further upgrades and two more trolleys were purchased to help with safe stacking and transport of the blue hard-seated chairs. The ten half-globe pendant lights were fitted with LED bulbs; research continued into new lower energy lighting solutions internally and with the external floodlights.

Keeping the Church warm while aiming towards 2030 Net Zero continued to be a major topic for research and investigation. However, in the light of our 2022 decision to press on with our two

existing gas boilers for the time being, work started late in the year to restore the second of these to full working order and this operation was ongoing at the year end.

The Marquee, purchased via a grant to help us through the Covid restrictions, had a relatively quiet season. There were no significant problems with intruders or vandalism, but also not a great deal of use other than by Tuesday Tots. The future of the marquee is under review. Alan Robinson, our truly dedicated mower of grass and trimmer of hedges, retired at the end of the season, earning the gratitude of us all. Meanwhile Martin Steiger continued to maintain and develop the flower-beds, with splendid floral displays throughout the year. Plans are afoot to reduce the mown grass areas and move towards a wilder approach.

Martin Sinker, Chair of the Fabric Committee

HEALTH & SAFETY

Health & Safety Officer Simon Caporn continues with regular risk assessments and inspections and reports to the PCC. Sometimes inspections involve consultation with external companies. In July, he arranged a full 'electrical installation condition report' on the status of appliances and circuitry. In August, Simon worked with the Painters to deliver a full risk assessment in advance of the interior painting. In preparation for the Christmas Fair in December, he worked with churchwardens and the organiser of the events and stalls in the church grounds to ensure the event passed safely. Three relatively minor accidents causing injury and generating an accident report took place in the church over the year. Following such incidents, we learn lessons and act to minimise future risks.

Simon Caporn, Health & Safety Officer

SAFEGUARDING

There have been no formal internal safeguarding issues arising from within our church community. There are no internal safeguarding cases to currently report.

There have been two cases in the wider community of Alderley Edge that Rev'd Robin Pye has been directly approached about. These have been appropriately raised with Cheshire East and are being handled by the relevant departments within social services or have been concluded.

A spreadsheet has been compiled of all members of the Church community who are required to undertake safeguarding training and an assessment of the level of training required for everyone is being undertaken. This training will then be monitored to ensure that the correct training is undertaken in a timely manner.

All DBS checks have been completed and are up to date.

Amanda Brabban-Brown, Safeguarding Officer

MISSION GROUPS AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

A TRAINING PARISH: **TRAINING AND DISCIPLESHIP** in the life of our church

Training and discipleship are integral to the life of our church, and all contribute to the overall aim of 'making disciples' (Matt 28.20, Acts 2.42). In this report I have tried to pull together all the information I have on training in different aspects of church life. Please let me know if you are involved in any aspect of training which you would like me to include!

- 1. Ministry training creates two-way links with Chester Diocese and with the wider church.** We continue to benefit from being known as a "Training parish". During 2023 our ordinand **Kate Pwaisiho** completed her training and was ordained Deacon at St Thomas, Stockton Heath, on July 1st. Kate is now a Curate at St Wilfrid's Grappenhall. On July 1st we also welcomed our new Curate **Amy Ruston** (after 3 years training at Westcott House, Cambridge). **Robin** continues to run regular evenings of **Theological Reflection** for our own Ministry Team and other Readers.

Sue Mills completed the diocesan training module on **bereavement and funerals**.

Rachel Roberts continues to serve on the diocesan Committee for Ministry and is regularly involved in diocesan lay training events like **Called to Serve**. In **September 2023** Rachel began a new phase of training at Luther King House, Manchester, where she is enrolled on a Master's programme in Theology, Mission and Ministry at the **Luther King Centre** for Theological Education in Manchester.

Rhona Dalziel was accepted onto the diocesan **Foundations for Ministry** course in September 2023.

Loveday continues to be involved with continuing theological education in the cathedral, the diocese and the wider church, leading Bible Talks at Chester Cathedral and Reader Training events at Foxhill.

- 2. Study groups and digital communications**

- The **Bible Study Group** meets monthly (on the first Monday of the month) and welcomes around 20 people including friends from the Methodist Church. In the first part of 2023 we completed a series on Creation, Climate, and the Bible, which led to the setting up of an Eco-Church group. October 2023 saw the start of a new series on the Prison Letters of St Paul (Philippians, Colossians and Philemon).
- Churches Together Lent Groups** in 2023 were led by Robin and by Nick Thompson, the new Minister at AEMC.
- Robin and Kate** led the "Being With" study group through the first part of 2023, based on materials prepared by Sam Wells.
- Thought for the Day (TFTD)** is sent out electronically during Lent and Advent 2023 to 300+ people on the database. The Lenten TFTD in March 2023 was based on the Gospel of Matthew. The Advent TFTD in December 2023 followed a series of readings from the OT prophets leading up to Christmas. TFTD is co-ordinated and sent out by Amy, ably supported by a team of local clergy and Readers.

Rev'd Canon Professor Loveday Alexander

PASTORAL CARE

Our main aim is to make sure that someone in the congregation can respond to those who need a bit of extra support. This could be support from one of the Care Group members, or that we ask among the congregation to provide a listening ear, or practical support.

Home or Hospital and Care Home Visits

Services and visits to Nursing homes are now well established and shared out with other local Churches. This is always dependent upon individual homes policies. Home visits were carried out on an individual basis, taking into account vulnerability, government and Church of England Guidelines, and need. Care group visitors continued to use traditional and more innovative ways of keeping in touch: telephone calls, Zoom calls, e-mailing, door visits and walking.

Transport

A big thank you to Jenny Pound who has fronted the transport requests for the past nine years. She has retired from this role, and we have a WhatsApp "Transport and Pastoral Care" which has 20 volunteers, willing to take people to appointments for those who couldn't drive a distance, and lifts to and from church. This also encompasses those who we support for one-off tasks, and using this system we continue with connections in the local community.

Warm Wednesdays

This is a big part of our Pastoral Care Mission, and continues weekly, with a short break in August and over Christmas. The activities include an Art and Craft group, Mid-week Communion, Lunch, and "Voices Together". All aspects of this day are well attended with numbers on the increase.

Sue Mills, Lay Pastoral Worker

FOODBANK

The Foodbank continues to be used regularly and I deliver food to folk who are referred by Social Services and the Doctor.

More recently I set up a new way of requesting items required on the weekly pew sheet and a notice in the porch by the yellow bin. This has proved to be very helpful and successful.

We have had a couple of very generous cash donations which have been used to help a family new to the village until they are financially established.

Many thanks to everyone who have very kindly donated over the past year. Without this we would not be able to operate and help folk less fortunate than ourselves.

We continue to pick up and deliver from Tesco and Waitrose in the Foodshare scheme on a daily basis. Many thanks to volunteers who give up their time weekly.

Jen Pound, Foodbank Coordinator

ST ELIZABETH FUND

The St Elizabeth Fund exists to allow people in Alderley Edge to give a regular amount of money each month to help neighbours who are struggling financially and to address poverty in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

The fund is administered by St Philip & St James Church and is overseen by three trustees: Rev'd Nick Thompson, Minister at Alderley Edge Methodist Church, Sue Mills, licensed pastoral worker at St Philip & St James and the Vicar.

In its first year the Fund raised £5,348.18 and made a total of 12 grants to local households, paying off utility bills, buying new appliances when old ones had broken down, assisting with costs associated with homeless people setting up new homes and making it possible for children to take part in school trips. The average grant size was £229.19.

In addition, the Fund made donations to Christian Aid totalling £1337.03 and also supported two other local charities: Hope Central – a foodbank and poverty support centre operating in Handforth, Wilmslow and Knutsford and ROAR (Reach out and Recover) – a Macclesfield based organisation that supports people overcoming addiction problems.

We could quite easily make twice as many grants per year as we did last year. Many households in our community are living hand to mouth and with rents and food prices going up faster than inflation and wages, it only takes the slightest thing to go wrong and the debts start to mount up and spiral out of control.

Please consider making a standing order to support the St Elizabeth Fund. Most people donate £5 per month. To find out how to do this just send an email to churchoffice.spsjae@gmail.com. Similarly, if you would like to apply for a grant or know somebody who should apply for a grant, email revrobinpye@gmail.com.

Rev'd Robin Pye

THE CHOIR, OPALS AND OUTREACH THROUGH MUSIC

The choir has continued to flourish throughout the year. Membership of the Choir includes those who ordinarily sing for Sunday morning services and those who join with our ordinary members to sing as part of the Deanery Choir. Ordinary membership rose by two during the year and the Deanery Choir gained two external members. By the year end the total membership was:

Ordinary Members		Deanery Choir
Soprano	11	13
Alto	5	9
Tenor	2	4
Bass	5	6
Total	23	32

Locally, the choir has been pleased to provide a strong choral input to our regular 10am Sunday services plus other occasional services. These included:

- Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance
- Two weddings including one at St Mary's Alderley
- Six Funerals
- Requiem for All Souls
- Nine Lessons and Carols

The Deanery Choir has sung choral evensong at:

- St Luke Goostrey
- Holy Trinity Rainow
- St James Congleton
- St Bartholomew Wilmslow
- St Michael & all Angels Bramhall
- St Cross Knutsford
- St Mary's Alderley
- Christ Church West Didsbury

Additionally, we provided a choir for the following services:

- Installation of our Vicar as Vicar of St Catherine's Birtles
- Institution and Induction of Reverend Nathan Jarvis as Rector of St Mary's Alderley
- Commissioning of Reverend Paul Deakin as Rural Dean of Knutsford

We are fortunate to have several members who are multi-talented, being able to conduct, accompany and sing more than one voice part. This has given us greater flexibility to achieve a well-balanced choir.

OPALS have continued to sing for Taizé services once a month and have boosted choir numbers at weddings and funerals. There are four members. Several choir members have joined with OPALS to lead singing and provide cantor parts and harmony at the Taizé services.

Peter Spooner, Organist and Choirmaster

THE WORSHIP SPACE COMMITTEE

"In my Father's house, there are many rooms"

Someone recently said to me completely spontaneously, that the layout of our church reminded her of the verse in the Bible when Christ said to his disciples "In my Father's house, there are many rooms."

These were very encouraging words because creating clear, uncluttered, well-defined, and beautiful dedicated spaces in our church where everything is in its logical place has been one of the Worship Space Committee's (WSC) priorities this year.

These are some of the tasks we initiated in 2023 to make that happen:

- Tidying the corner behind the font and re-purposing it as a dedicated space for activities with children.
- Tidying the St James' Chapel and re-purposing it as a dedicated space for worship with children.
- Moving the books and bookcases to a new dedicated space for study at the top of the Lady Chapel and cataloguing all the books.
- The removal of the pew-rail from the St James' Chapel and its re-installation at the end of the Lady Chapel to act as a safety barrier.
- The adoption of a new sub-logo to promote our church's ministry to children and young people.



- New carpets in both the St James Chapel and the Lady Chapel.

In September, we presented our first Parish Plan proposal to the PCC. The essence of the proposal was around enhancing our worship space to ensure children and their parents felt welcome. Some of the main initiatives we are delivering in 2024 to support the renewed ministry of our church in this area are:

- Welcome bags with activities for children who attend our services.
- A sensory trail around our church designed for children on the autistic spectrum.
- A bespoke rug in the Baptistry area with funds from the Kempster legacy.

The Worship Space Committee has recently been asked to take on the excellent work done by Charles Rogers and the lighting project group. This represents a step change in the work undertaken by the WSC and will constitute a key part of our next Parish Plan proposal.

Sincere thanks to all the committee members for their enthusiasm, creativity, and dedication: Rhona Dalziel, Bob Tuffin, Amy Ruston, Sue Mills, Mandy Parr, Michael Scaife, Clare Wearne, Charles Rogers, and Rachel Roberts.

Rachel Roberts, Worship Space Committee

MOTHERS' UNION

A busy year – normal service resumed!

Members enjoyed presentations by
Victoria Armstrong – Founder of Oasis
Pam Thomson – Fairtrade
Philip Alexander – Jewish Festivals

Our Lent Reflection was led by Rev'd Loveday and Kate Pwaisiho conducted the Wave of Prayer service in May.

In October we welcomed Rev'd Amy, who compiled a thought-provoking service for us as a precursor to the 16 Days of Activism campaign, which focused on domestic violence. Members gave a short presentation in church using "the silks rising" information provided by Mary Sumner House staff.

Members prepared the posies for Mothering Sunday and later in the year prepared Christingles. An enjoyable Cream Tea was held in June. In November we hosted a Coffee Morning which included our deanery friends and prayer partners from St Luke, Holmes Chapel. Our Alternative Carol Service included our Tuesday Tots families and was enjoyed by all. It was a delight to see the wonder on the faces of the tots during Robin's Christmas story.

To celebrate Mary Sumner Day, we joined the regular Communion Service conducted by Rev'd Linda. She highlighted the work and legacy of Mary Sumner. The service was followed by a themed lunch.

We continued to support:

C.W.A. (Cheshire Without Abuse) – providing 50 Easter Eggs, 50 Selection Boxes and Christmas Presentation Gift Boxes of toiletries.

Oasis - Easter Eggs, Selection Boxes and crockery.

The S.C.B.U. units at Wythenshawe and Stepping Hill Hospitals - tiny garments and blankets.

Macclesfield Hospital – 30 emergency toilet bags and 14 knee blankets

Ukraine – 10 Bags of Education and 20 shoeboxes for the elderly.

In addition we provided

for the residents of ROAR 12 emergency toilet bags and assorted toiletries and Christmas gift items

and, following a request to Revd Robin from A.E.C.P. School, 30 Desmond Tutu Children's Bibles

Clare Wearne is our baptism visitor/contact and has been continuing to prepare prayer cubes/activity sheets and to welcome families to their special services for 24 years.

No baby boxes have been delivered to HMP Styal, but 6 birthing bags have been funded via the diocese.

Linda has continued doing sterling work contacting members. She provides a listening ear for "fedupness". Josie and Sandra have continued with their responsibilities for social concern, faith and policy.

A big "thank you" to everybody – clergy, church family and wider community for their support.

The committee thanks everyone who has contributed in any way at all during the year.

Mrs Sheila Rayner, Mothers' Union

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ALDERLEY

At the AGM in January 2023, Loveday Alexander retired as Chair of CTIA and Robin Pye took over. In April we welcomed the Revd Nathan Jarvis as the new Rector of St Mary's Alderley.

The annual service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25 January) was led by the Rev'd Nick Thompson at Alderley Edge Methodist Church on 22nd January with the theme "Be-longing: Praying for Unity amidst Injustice". The same theme inspired the daily readings which were sent out for TFTD.

TFTD for Lent 2023 provided daily readings from Matthew's Gospel. Matthew was also the theme of an afternoon Lenten group at AEMC led by Nick Thompson.

Robin Pye and Kate Pwaisiho led a group at SPJ based on the Sam Wells course *Being With*. Holy Week services followed the normal pattern with evening services at SPJ (Mon-Weds) and the Walk of Witness from AEMC to St Philip and St James on Good Friday (April 7th) and the Sunrise service on the Edge on Easter Sunday (April 9th).

With the aid of Ian Wilson and his team, envelopes for Christian Aid Week were distributed along with our parish newsletter. Quiz Aid in aid of Christian Aid was organized by Chris Wearne and Pam Thompson at the Scout Hut on October 7th (with fish and chips).

On Remembrance Sunday a short service of prayers, with readings by children from the Primary School, was led at the War Memorial by Robin Pye.

We were welcomed to St Mary's on Advent Sunday for a candlelit service for Advent, and the year ended with carol singing outside Waitrose and a wonderful service of Nine Lessons and carols at AEMC.

Thanks are due as always to our CTIA reps, Pam Higham and Sandra Thompson, for their help and support.

Loveday Alexander

KNUTSFORD DEANERY SYNOD ANNUAL REPORT

Since our 2023 AGM there have been meetings of the Deanery Synod (DS) in July and November and at which we were represented. In November the Rev'd Paul Deakin of St Cross (Knutsford) succeeded Canon Ian Blay (Mobberley) as Rural Dean. Most DS business has been routine but some items may be of interest to our congregation and are summarised below.

1. Following extensive research, the diocese has embarked on its "Diocesan Vision" and appointed as its Director Jon Pocock, formerly of Lee Abbey, North Devon. Time will tell just how much the Vision will affect our own parish and others in the Deanery but details can be found on the diocesan website: www.chester.anglican.org.
2. At the November Synod Keith Davies, a local representative of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), spoke on the extensive persecution of Christians across the world. Cards

to prisoners whose whereabouts are known is one way of boosting their morale and we were all encouraged to spread the word.

3. Same sex marriage is a topic which, in the Church of England, has generated more heat than light despite being made lawful in the United Kingdom by Act of Parliament in 2013. This was addressed at the July Synod in presentations by the Rector of Knutsford and our own Vicar. The current approach of the church hierarchy appears to approve blessing such relationships by prayers in routine worship provided congregations are content (PLF). In due course stand-alone services of blessing are anticipated (LLF) and, perhaps eventually, actual marriages. This is a topic beyond the remit of your DS representatives but we will aim to report back, if asked, on the views of the congregation should such become evident.
4. Finally (and leading on from the previous paragraph) there seems to be a lack of clarity in the precise role of DS lay members: are we there to report upwards on what our congregation thinks or to pass on to them views from above such as the Diocesan Vision? The ostensibly democratic framework of Deanery, Diocesan and General Synods masks any genuine attempt to respect the views of the laity as happens in Municipal and Parliamentary Elections. Since DS members vote on General Synod candidates, the genuinely democratic view would be for our lay congregation to be asked.

Martin Steiger, Sandra Thompson & Mandy Parr, Deanery Synod Representatives

THE ALDERLEY HISTORY GROUP BASED AT ST PHILIP & ST JAMES

2023 was a historic year due to the Coronation of King Charles III in which the History Group helped organise a fun day at the church. We displayed photos, brochures and memorabilia of past Coronation celebrations around the village, and with the help of Brian Thompson operating an extra-large screen, we watched the actual Coronation, (with a group of 50+ people), prosecco and delicious cakes made it a memorable occasion.

We continue to meet every Wednesday, as part of the Warm Wednesday initiative. People regularly come down to pursue, research and catalogue our archives - several of our group have joined the singing group.

We held two meetings in the Westend.

22nd May – Elizabeth Garner and Tim Campbell-Green, from Blackden Trust, gave us an update and interesting stories from Blackden (home of Alan Garner) in Goostrey.

17th July – we held our annual summer social with Pimms and a chance to look through our archives.

The Alderley History Group wish to thank the church for its continued support.

Visitors to the church can use a map which the group helped to produce, with notes of interesting and historic facts about the Church.

Mandy Parr, Secretary AHG

TREASURER'S REPORT

FINANCIAL REVIEW FOR 2023

- In 2023 we had a surplus of £30,845.89. In 2022 it was £13,051.43 compared to £4,725.05 in 2021.
- Planned Giving was £78,213.00 and we also received £3,346.50 in Gift Aid envelopes. This gives a total (both subject to Gift Aid) of £81,559.50. In 2022 we received a total of £80,486.02 and 2021 it was £79,502.50.
- In 2023 we received legacies of £15,189.75 compared to nil in 2022. In 2021 we received £1,500.00.
- The Spire, Organ and Redecoration Appeal was closed as the spire and organ and redecoration works are now complete.
- In 2022 we set up the St Elizabeth Fund and were able to start making donations as appropriate. During 2023 we donated £3,514.93 and were left with a balance of £1,054.95.
- In 2023 we set up the Conservation Fund, where, for a donation of £5 per month (or £60 p.a.) participants are entered into a monthly draw and the surplus at the end of 12 months will be put towards the church fabric. At the end of 2023 there were 59 members, £206.25 had been paid out in prize money and £1,058.75 had accrued to the church.
- We made a donation of £168.34 to the Children's Society (Christingle) and via Churches Together in Alderley, we gave £156.30 to Christian Aid. We continued to make distributions through the Food Bank and the year-end balance was £540.26. The Christmas Appeal raised £3,665.08 and was shared between the Rossendale Trust, CRIBS International, Embrace the Middle East, Reach Out and Recover and Hope Central. We also gave £395.35 to Christians Against Poverty from Votive Candle donations and £172.97 to St Francis House Children's Hospice from the collection at the Primary School Nativity Play.
- A usual, our largest item of expenditure was the Parish Share (which funds our vicar and the vicarage). In 2022 it was reduced for the last three months because we created a benefice with St Catherine's, Over Alderley. This reduction has been used to fund a part-time administrator. Consequently, our expenditure was £80,400.05 compared to £91,615.96 in 2022 and £94,086.92 in 2021. The next largest items were – general PCC expenditure at £14,117.43 (including rent for the curate's house, a new chapel carpet and the marquee), repairs at £7,662.56, insurance at £7,248.74 and utilities (there was no boiler service) at £6,552.96. The significant purchases included new speakers at £2,088.00.
- Gift Aid payments received from HMRC, based on Pledged Giving and Gift Aided donations in 2023 were £22,518.07 compared to £25,526.13 in 2022. In 2021 they were £23,097.82.
- Apart from Regular Donations and the associated Gift Aid, the largest income category this year was General Donations. We received £8,074.15 which is similar to £7,747.57 in 2022. The income from the Everything Everywhere Transmitter was £15,863.64 compared to £11,820.00 in 2022. However, income will reduce sharply when the new contract is implemented.

- £7,095.25 of Endowment Income was received (compared to £7053.73 in 2022) and is “Unrestricted”. Our book value of the relevant Endowments is £6,975.00. Accounting regulations do not require us to obtain a current valuation. However, the two components appreciated by 9.5% compared with a depreciation of 11.8% in the previous year. At the end of 2023, the main Endowment Fund was valued at £187,714.41 (£171,443.55 at the end of 2022) and the McElpatrick Fund was valued at £71,749.22 (£65,530.00 at the end of 2022). The former cannot be accessed since it arose from investments to pay the stipend before the Diocese assumed responsibility, but the latter can be spent as the PCC sees fit (but it does provide an extremely useful income).
- We hold two accounts with Church Board of Finance Deposit Fund (CCLA). The balances at the end of 2023 were £44,935.78 and £36,301.87. Interest is paid quarterly but only three payments were made in 2023.
- Ministry Costs were £1,030.5 compared to £1,994.67 in 2022.

Ian Standen, Treasurer

PARISH PLAN

The Parish Plan is a vehicle whereby members of the congregation may present ideas or projects to the PCC for consideration and request the necessary funding. The PCC sees this as an important matter because it must always be listening to the congregation.

In September 2023 the following items were presented for consideration and were included in the budget for the forthcoming year:

Rachel Roberts on behalf of the Worship Space Committee:

Logo and design for our work with children

Welcome/pew bags for children

Sensory trail accentuating theological matters

Sanctus bells

Two dedicated spaces in the church designed and equipped with children in mind

Bespoke rug on the theme of baptism using the Kempster appeal fund

2. Bob Tuffin:

Recarpet the sanctuaries of the Chapel of Our Lady and that of St James (extended in area) in Westex Ultima Major “Fennel Blue” and underlay at £2673.71 inc. VAT

Replace all the pew runners in the nave in “Pimlico Marine” from The Church Cushion Company. Price £3133.08 inc. VAT for 20 runners

You will note there were no proposals from individuals in the congregation this year but we very much look forward to your ideas in September 2024.

Please send me your ideas by 1st July. A member of the PCC will help you work up your proposals which we would like you to present at the September PCC meeting with help should you wish.

Email: jamesroberttuffin@gmail.com

Bob Tuffin

HOW TO GIVE TO THE CHURCH

We are always very grateful for donations to our Church which help us continue our work and enable us to maintain our building. Below there are details of how to donate which can also be found on our website www.stphilipandstjames.co.uk

By Bank Transfer to our main church account

Barclays Bank

The Parochial Church Council of St Philip & St James

Account Number: 40696668

Sort Code: 20-53-77

By Bank Transfer to the St Elizabeth Fund

Barclays Bank

The Parochial Church Council of St Philip & St James

Account Number: 33999939

Sort Code: 20-53-77

Or via this QR code

