

Anglican Diocese of Chester – Middlewich Deanery
Mid Cheshire Circuit of the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District of the Methodist Church
St Mary's Church, Weaverham



Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Ecumenical Church Council
for the year ended 31 December 2023

Incumbent

Reverend Paul Withington, The Vicarage, Church Street, Weaverham, NORTHWICH,
 CW8 3NJ

Minister

Reverend Janet Aspey, 38 Earls Way, Kingsmead, Northwich, CW9 8GQ

Secretary

Pam Thomson, 4 Barley Castle Close, Appleton Thorn, WARRINGTON, WA4 4SA

Treasurer

John J C Freeman, Stable Court, 20a Leigh Way, Weaverham, NORTHWICH, CW8 3PR

Banks

Santander, Bridle Road, BOOTLE, L30 4GB
 CCLA Investment Management Ltd., Senator House, 85 Queen Victoria Street, LONDON, EC4V 4ET

Honorary Independent Examiner

Kevin D Pickering, 5 Withens Close, Weaverham, NORTHWICH, CW8 3JJ

Registered Charity Number: 1135093

**ST. MARY'S CHURCH, WEAVERHAM ANNUAL REPORT FOR
THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH COUNCIL [ECC] FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31st DECEMBER 2023**

St. Mary's Church is situated in Church Street, Weaverham. It is a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) between the parish church of the Church of England in the parish of St Mary in the Middlewich Deanery and Chester Diocese and the Methodist Church within the Mid Cheshire Circuit of the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District. The partnership looks for support, encouragement, advice and overview to the relevant denominations, the Diocese and the Methodist District. The correspondence address is St Mary's Lighthouse Centre, Church Lane, Weaverham, NORTHWICH, CW8 3NN.

ECC members who have served in the year are: -

<i>Incumbent:</i>	Revd. Paul Withington	Chairman
<i>Curate</i> <i>Methodist Minister:</i>	Revd. Phil Bishop Revd. Janet Aspey	To June 2023
<i>Wardens:</i>	Vicky Rushton Colin Weeks	
<i>Representatives on the Deanery Synod:</i>	Pam Thomson John Freeman David Whitfield John Freeman	Secretary Treasurer Elected 2023 ACM Elected 2023 ACM 1 vacancy
<i>Methodist Stewards:</i>	David Whitfield Mike Hornby	
<i>Representatives from lay church roles:</i>	Gilly Latham Linda Jones Jules Sanders Mike Sanders	
<i>Elected members:</i>		
Gillian Horth (<i>né Edwards re-elected 2023</i>) Jonathan Gore (<i>elected 2021</i>) Mike Hornby (<i>elected 2021</i>) Sue Winnington (<i>re-elected 2023</i>) Jerry Marshall (<i>elected 2022</i>) 9 current members 3 vacancies	Marion Wilson (<i>elected 2022 resigned Sept 2023</i>) Pam Thomson (<i>elected 2022</i>) Bob Hough (<i>co-opted 2023</i>) Lindsay Hough (<i>co-opted 2023</i>) Christine Weeks (<i>co-opted 2023</i>)	

Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of ECC members (trustees) is set out in the Constitution of the Local Ecumenical Partnership signed in November 2009. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the ECC.

Objectives and activities

St Mary's ECC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Revd. Paul Withington and Methodist Minister the Revd. Janet Aspey in promoting the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical in the ecclesiastical parish. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the buildings associated with the church.

St Mary's is fully integrated as an LEP between the Anglican and Methodist Churches in Weaverham. We worship at the Anglican Church building with our services varied between Anglican and Methodist styles and leadership.

The vision statement for St Mary's Ecumenical Church, Weaverham is as follows:

St Mary's Church Weaverham, sharing the light and hope of Jesus with our community.

Achievements and performance

Church attendance

The current electoral roll has 128 members. We have a duality of Anglican and Methodist members; members can be either or both. Attendance varied during the year, with an average attendance on a usual Sunday at 87 [79 adults and 8 children].

25 Funerals and 4 weddings were conducted and 10 baptisms took place during the year.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding committee has met in the last 12 months to ensure our Safeguarding Policy remains up to date and complies with the Church of England Requirements, and those of the Methodist Church. As an Ecumenical Church we must follow the policies of one of the denominations and at St Marys we follow the policies of the Church of England. This includes displaying posters which include relevant information and contact details which we do. A copy of our policy is available to anyone who may want to see it. The policy has been approved by the ECC which has complied with the duty imposed under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

Review of the year

The ECC met eight times during the year with Standing Committee meetings between when needed. The ACM was held on the 13th February 2023.

2023 saw the continuation of Café Church, held in The Lighthouse on the first Sunday of the month. This is a more informal service aimed mainly at young families and has been successful. The service pattern for other services remains the same with a "United Service" held whenever there was a fifth Sunday.

The Lent Course was initially well supported but attendance dropped off as the weeks progressed so for 2024 it was decided to run multiple courses at different times and locations in the hope of encouraging more people. At Easter we joined with The Stronghold Church who organised an outreach event called "EasterFest" which attracted many people.

The coronation of King Charles III took place in May. St Mary's joined with the other village churches in a special service at the Community Centre to celebrate the event.

In June we said goodbye to Rev Phil Bishop as he became Vicar of Burley in Wharfedale. A coach party from Weaverham travelled to Yorkshire on a very wet Sunday in July but we were met with a warm welcome at Phil's Installation Service, we wish him well in his new ministry.

Harvest was celebrated in October with the harvest gifts donated to the Northwich Foodbank which we continued to support throughout the year. We also enjoyed a Harvest Supper provided by The Mother's Union. We were back to a normal format for our Remembrance Day services held in November, with uniformed groups filling the church in the afternoon.

The services at Christmas were very well attended with an increase in numbers compared to 2022 at almost all services. A new event this year was "Experience Christmas". Children from Weaverham Forest Primary School and Weaverham Primary Academy came to St Mary's during the first week of December to visit different "stations" depicting the Christmas Story, complete with props and volunteers to provide help and explanations. Older students from Weaverham High School came to help and the whole event was very successful and hopefully it will be repeated in 2024. School Carol Services were also held at St Mary's.

Baptism preparation/enquirers' courses - Initial requests come through the church office or from the vicar and contact is made with the parents to arrange the preparation sessions, eligibility etc. Café Church enables personal contact to be made. The enquirers' courses have proved to be more effective on Zoom as parents do not need to leave home on a weekday evening or find a babysitter/childcare. Alpha course material has been used and it has been found to be engaging and accessible for all. Attendance was good, six weeks with two short sessions per week was better than one long session per week. The families are still in regular attendance at Café Church.

The Lighthouse Café on Tuesdays continues to be very well attended by both church members and a significant number of people who don't come to church but find a warm welcome.

The Wednesday food distribution continues in the Lighthouse in partnership with Northwich Community Support.

The following groups have all continued to thrive during 2023.

Sticky Fingers - Toddlers group that runs every Monday during term time.

YPF - Young People's Fellowship [YPF] meets on Sunday evenings and is aimed at children in school years 7 to 11.

Home Groups - We have a good number of Home Groups who meet around the village on different days, times and places.

Rambling Group - Meets for occasional Saturday morning walks of 3-4 miles.

Upcycling Shed and Crafts - Meets on Thursdays in the Lighthouse Annexe.

Mothers' Union - Meet every second Thursday of the month in the Lighthouse

Men's Breakfasts – 8.00am on occasional Saturday mornings – Full English and a speaker on a variety of topics.

Bell Ringing – we have a thriving band of all ages who ring regularly for Sunday services, weddings and other special services and national events. We practice on a Tuesday evening.

We supported the community playscheme in the summer holidays providing crafts activities, games and stories.

During the year several faithful members of the congregation died and they will be greatly missed.

Fund Raising

Urgent work needed to repair part of the roof and some of the pointing was reported last year. When the work began we anticipated the following costs-

Roofing £13,000: the roof work consists of lead weathering to copings and sills, parapet gutters, refix loose flashings and patch repairs to the tower roof.

Pointing £15,000: pointing is needed to large areas of the external wall.

Contingency £2,000: estimates and prices only ever go up! We need to allow for inevitable extra work and overruns. **TOTAL: £30,000**

The fund-raising activities began in earnest in 2023 with a launch concert in May featuring the Weaverham Community Choir and Cheshire Music for Life Jazz Band and it was a great success. Several other successful and enjoyable concerts have taken place in church and more are planned. Other events included a "Promise Auction" and the highlight of the year was the abseil down the tower. 57 people completed the abseil and £4,500 was raised in that one event on a wonderfully sunny day in September. During the year we have raised almost £18,000. On top of this we have received grants from the Garfield Weston Foundation of £3,000 and the Benefact Trust of £2,300. The work repairing the roof has now been completed but unfortunately more damage to some of the timbers was found and had to be included in the repair. We will continue fund raising to meet these extra costs and the forthcoming pointing work, which hopefully will be completed in 2024. Support has come from the village and beyond as well as St Mary's congregation and we are very grateful for this. We still have more work to do, so thank you to everybody who has contributed so far and we look forward to raising more funds to keep the building in good order for the future.

Finally

We have come through the pandemic and are making a good recovery with increased numbers at some services and more social events and with the help of God we look forward with hope and optimism to the next year.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS'S REPORT TO THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN, WEAVERHAM

This report on the accounts of the ECC for the year ended 31 December 2023 is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with the Church of England Accounting Regulations 2006 (the Regulations) and Section 3 of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act). As members of the ECC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that the audit requirements of the Regulations and Section 43(2) of the Act do not apply. It is my responsibility to issue this report on those accounts in accordance with the terms of the Regulations.

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 43(7)(b) of the Act and to be found in the Church of England Guidance, 2006 edition. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the ECC and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given on the accounts.

In accordance with my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 41 of the Act, to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirement of the Act and the Regulations have not been met; or to which, in my opinion attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Kevin D Pickering – Hon Independent Examiner – February 2024

FINANCIAL REVIEW

There was an overall excess of income over expenditure of £55 307 helped by catching up with our Gift Aid claims, a kind bequest of £18 000 and the Raise the Roof Appeal. The latter has received 2 grants, one from the Benefact Trust of £2300 and the other from the Garfield Weston Trust of £3000. Our modest investment made a gain of £137.

There was a welcome increase in tax efficient giving. The Lighthouse again made an operating surplus on the year as activities continue to increase. The fund raising group has become the “Raise the Roof Appeal” so far apart from grants raised £19 779. Unfortunately, as work has started on roof repairs more work has been found necessary costing a further £8000, raising the original target to over £30 000. Work on roof repairs to date has cost £9721.

Energy usage for the year was as follows, 2022 figures in brackets. gas, church 58 229 kWh (77 580 kWh), Lighthouse 20 563 kWh (14 997 kWh) and electricity, church 4027 kWh (3852 kWh), Lighthouse 7138 kWh (7284 kWh).

RESERVES POLICY

Reserves policy remains to hold at least £25 000 to cover three months of normal church activities and £10 000 against any urgent repairs. The potential VAT liability is now time expired. Given the large amount of repair work to the Church following the last quinquennial report that is being helped by the Raise the Roof Appeal it is planned to review the policy on completion of the repair work and upgrades to the sound systems in the Church and the Lighthouse.

Looking ahead the need to increase income including voluntary giving, encouraging legacies and supporting the Raise the Roof Appeal are ever with us. Keeping the Church in a good state of repair remains a priority, it has been agreed to increase charitable giving and our 4 energy contracts all come to the end of their 3 year terms during the year and are likely to increase.

ACCOUNTING POLICY

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Church of England Accounting Regulations taking into account the SORP 2005 revisions on a receipts and payments basis including as far as possible most Church activities being reported on a gross basis. Movable church furnishings are held on trust for the Council by the Churchwardens and would require faculty approval before removal. The Mothers Union accounts are not included as they respond to their headquarters for accounting purposes.

ACCOUNTS FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	2022
		£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS					
Voluntary income	A	146383		146383	93248
Church activities	B	16836		16836	14509
Fund raising		19779		19779	
Income from investments	C	<u>1622</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>1701</u>	<u>679</u>
TOTAL		184620	79	184699	108436
PAYMENTS					
Church activities	D	125734		125734	111982
Fund raising		1842		1842	
Salaries		<u>1816</u>		<u>1816</u>	<u>1175</u>
TOTAL		129392		129392	113157
NET INCOMING RES.		55228	79	55307	-4721
Gain on investments		<u> </u>	<u>137</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>-202</u>
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		55228	216	55444	-4923
BALANCES AT 1 JANUARY		<u>747308</u>	<u>2541</u>	<u>749849</u>	<u>754772</u>
BALANCES AT 31 DEC		802536	2757	805293	749849

BALANCE SHEET 31 DECEMBER 2023

FIXED ASSETS

Tangible asset – Lighthouse		684440		684440	684440
Investment assets			1665	1665	1529

CURRENT ASSETS

Short term deposits	E	83224	1092	83224	45635
Cash at banks	E	<u>34870</u>	<u> </u>	<u>34870</u>	<u>18245</u>
TOTAL		802534	2757	805291	749849

The notes A to F form part of the accounts

A Voluntary income

Planned giving					
Gift aid		68801		68801	66562
Tax recovered		40730		40730	
Other		6259		6259	5247
Collections		4364		4364	3780
Donations	general	2519		2519	7443
	Curate	410		410	3160
Grants	Benefact Trust	2300		2300	300
	Garfield Weston	3000		3000	1089
Legacy		<u>18000</u>		<u>18000</u>	<u>5667</u>
		146383		146383	93248

B Church activities

Lighthouse		9244		9244	6377
Food sales		1233		1233	1409
Fees		<u>6359</u>		<u>6359</u>	<u>6723</u>
		16836		16836	14509

C	Income from investments	£	£	£	£
	Deposit account	1602		1602	601
	Wayleave	20		20	20
	War Memorial		<u>79</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>58</u>
		1622	79	1701	679
D	Church activities				
	Giving				
	Overseas missions	1000		1000	1000
	Overseas development	3000		3000	2000
	Home missions	3025		3025	2025
	Ministry				
	Parish share	64923		64923	62991
	Circuit fee	5834		5834	5738
	Other ministry costs	7051		7051	6082
	Curate	3426		3426	5962
	Church heat, light and water	5757		5757	7310
	Church running and maint.	11723		11723	10505
	Training				353
	Lighthouse	7588		7588	5747
	Major projects	10206		10206	
	Administration	<u>2201</u>		<u>2201</u>	<u>2269</u>
		125734		125734	111982

During the year the ECC employed a verger and relied on casual organists. The organists deal with their own tax liabilities and payments to the verger are too small to attract social security payments. Reimbursement of out of pocket expenses were made to some members of the ECC, all supported by the necessary invoices.

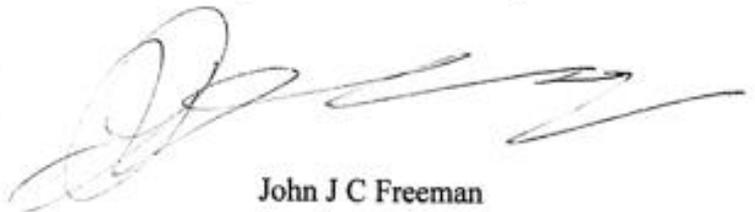
E Cash balances at 31 December

Current account	18529		18529	6153
Deposit account	83224		83224	44622
Lighthouse	16341		16341	12092
War Memorial deposit		1092	1092	1013
War Memorial 74 CBF shares		<u>1665</u>	<u>1665</u>	<u>1529</u>
	118094	2757	120851	65409

Approved by the Ecumenical Church Council at its meeting held on 12th February 2024



Reverend Paul Withington
Incumbent



John J C Freeman
Hon treasurer