



# Stretton Parish

STRETTON PARISH  
ST LAURENCE, CHURCH STRETTON  
ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, ALL STRETTON  
ALL SAINTS', LITTLE STRETTON

## Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024/25

**STRETTON PARISH**  
ST LAURENCE, CHURCH STRETTON,  
ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, ALL STRETTON  
ALL SAINTS', LITTLE STRETTON.

**Independent Examiner**  
T Lunt MA FCCA MRPM  
Whittingham Riddell LLP, Chartered Accountants  
Shrewsbury

**Bankers**  
CAF Bank  
25 Kings Hill Avenue  
West Malling

Barclays Bank  
Shrewsbury

**Churchwardens:**  
Steve King & Julie Lawton

**Deputy Warden – St Laurence's**  
James Foster

**Deputy Warden – St Michael's**  
Vacancy

**Deputy Warden – All Saints**  
Moira Matthews

**PCC Treasurer**  
Graham Vince

**PCC Secretary**  
Jo Aze

The Parish Office  
The Parish Centre  
Church Street  
Church Stretton  
SY6 6DQ

## **BACKGROUND**

The Parochial Church Council has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent, in promoting the Mission of the Church. The PCC is also responsible for the care of the Church property and fabric. It is charged with framing an annual budget.

## **Membership**

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected in accordance with the Church Representation Rules under Synodical Government by those on the Electoral Roll at the time of the Annual Meeting. During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

### **Clergy:** (*ex-officio*)

The Revd Steve Johnson, Rector  
The Revd David Andrews, Curate  
The Revd Christobel Hargraves, Associate Minister

### **LEP Minister** (*non-voting*)

The Revd Hazel Allen

### **Churchwardens:** (*ex-officio*)

Steve King  
Julie Lawton

### **Deputy Churchwardens** (*ex-officio*)

James Foster, St Laurence  
Moira Matthews, All Saints'

### **Treasurer** (*ex-officio*)

Graham Vince

### **Deanery Synod Representatives 3 year term expiring 2027** (*ex-officio*)

Andrea Graham  
Dan Wallis  
Mike Edmunds  
Gail Dyer  
Sarah Robinson

### **PCC;**

#### **Elected for 3 year term expiring 2025**

Cathy Watson (2<sup>nd</sup> term), St Laurence  
Daniel Robinson, St Laurence  
Anne Braddick, St Michael's

#### **Elected for a 3 year term expiring 2026**

Graham Shuttleworth, St Laurence

#### **Elected for 3 year term expiring 2027**

Ben Roberts, St Laurence  
Lorraine McCrohan, St Laurence

#### **Elected for 1 year term expiring 2025**

Graham Jackson, representing All Saints

**Finance Committee:**

Rector  
Julie Lawton  
Steve King  
John Bennett  
Christine King  
Graham Vince  
Dan Wallis

**Standing Committee**

Rector  
Julie Lawton  
Steve King  
Graham Vince  
Mike Edmunds

The PCC met 6 times during the year and the average attendance was 14.

**ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT**

**Church Electoral Roll Officer:** Jo Aze

The numbers on the Electoral roll are:

St Laurence	155
St Michael's	18
All Saints'	26

<b>Total on Roll</b>	<b>199</b>
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The number on roll has reduced from 276 in 2024 to 199 in 2025

## RECTOR'S REPORT, Rev Steve Johnson

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

*John 15:5*

As we reflect on 2024 and all that we have achieved together 'Making Jesus Known', I give thanks to God for an amazing year of encouragement and growth. It calls to mind our verse for the year, which reminded us that as His Church and as followers of Jesus, we are called to live lives that honour God and we can achieve this by abiding in Jesus, the true vine, and relying on Him in all we do.

Many aspects of our life together as Stretton Parish equip us in our "abiding". Life Groups are one example; our Parish groups are the places where we do life together, studying God's word, praying for one another and the Parish, serving together, caring for each other and, of course, having fun. These groups are at the heart of our life together and over the year we have seen groups grow, we have safely recruited new leaders, and the Parish Life Group leaders have met together to share good practice and resources and to encourage each other.

We give thanks for our Worship together, as we gather each Sunday across the Parish in different congregations, with different styles. It has been good to see the worship pattern from 2022 continue to bed in and see people move across the Parish to the service that enables them to connect with God. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays, it is always a joy to come together as the whole Parish to worship, we take the opportunity to invite an outside preacher and in 2024 we welcomed the Diocesan Environment officer - Steve Hollinghurst and also Emma Worrall from Open Doors UK. Of course, our worship each Sunday is enhanced by our choir, our organists and Music group- huge thanks go to all those involved.

And as we come together from our different perspectives, putting others' needs before ourselves, we continue to reach out into the wider community, we go to the edges.



Once again, we ran our Harvest Barn Dance, which gives us an opportunity to open the doors for a social event that engages with the wider community. And being there for the wider community means that once again we have had the successful Winter Warmer sessions on Saturday mornings, as well as Lent lunches, coffee mornings and wreath making workshop- to name but a few.

Getting out of our buildings is another way of engaging and serving the community, with stalls at the "Stretton Family Fun Day" and the switching on of the Christmas Lights, which gives us a presence at community events. This Advent we were also able to work with shops and community groups to run the 'Living Advent Calendar, bringing alive the story of Christmas each day through December. Toward the end of the year, we were invited to be part of the national Church of England Digital project- an opportunity to learn some new skills as we engage with social media in reaching out into the wider community. This tied in with the Living Advent Calendar, which enabled us to post the different window each day, as well as let the wider community know about our Advent and Christmas events and services.

And it has been so encouraging to see the way in which these events and many other of our ministries have fed people into the Alpha courses. It's a privilege with these courses to be able to see God move in people's lives in such powerful ways.

As part of the vine, we are connected locally, nationally and internationally as Church. Locally we continue to be involved in Churches Together in the Strettons, and nationally, one of the wider networks that we connect with is New Wine. Each year some of the Ministry Team go along to the

National Leadership Conference and then in the summer a good number of the Parish head to the New Wine summer festival. Both of these New Wine events are ways in which we continue to be encouraged, receive great teaching and be ministered to by the Holy Spirit. Internationally, we are also privileged to be connected with our Mission Partners through CMS, the Williams in Czech Republic and the Hemburys in Hull. These relationships, as they grow, continue to inspire us in our ministries here in the Strettons and we are thankful to God for them.

Elsewhere in this report booklet, you will read of all the amazing work that is happening in the Parish and hear of God's faithfulness and blessing.

As with any ministry, we know that when we are faithful to God's call and we see God doing an amazing new thing, the devil will always try to undermine and destroy- which is sadly true for us as a Parish. We continue to be let down by repeated patterns of behaviours that undermine and seek to destroy God's work in this place. But we do not lose hope, and we pray on. I encourage you to pray for protection over the work of God in this place and the Ministry Team.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry Team and all those involved in so much of our Parish work; so much goes unseen and we are truly thankful for each and everyone.

Thanks also go to the members of the PCC, DCCs and ECC, who have continued to meet and work with diligence, care and compassion, when it comes to keeping the Parish legal with lots of work in the areas of HR, safeguarding and of course finance. As we continue to work on these different areas in this coming year, we are mindful of the impact that the Makin report of 2024 has had and will continue to have in the life of the Church of England, as well as for us here in the Parish- around safeguarding, accountability and due diligence.

So as we follow God into all that He has for us in the coming year, may I encourage you to continue to abide in Him and to pray for the work of the Parish, as we 'Make Jesus Known' here. I am expectant and excited for all that is in store as we follow Him.

Thank you for all your wonderful support, care, love and prayers over the last year.

Steve

#### **CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT, Steve King and Julie Lawton**

Last year was one of consolidating that which we started the previous year using our faith, skills, strengths, and trust in God, and extending those activities to become yet more community focused. And now in 2025 we focus on Discipleship using as our text, 1 Sam 12.24. We thank God for our Rector, Associate Minister, Curate, and the Ministry Team for leading us through this time and we are grateful for the support of our congregations.

Despite all the negativity about the Church of England in the press, both our Diocese and Parish continue to take safeguarding very seriously and strive to ensure that our churches are safe places to be and worship. Safeguarding is discussed at each PCC meeting.

We continue to reach out to our community and to those outside or on the edges of our church family. Not only do our Rector and Curate regularly lead assemblies in the Primary School, but they also work closely with the Secondary School. This brings Christian teaching into the lives of more children, and we are grateful to God for this opportunity. This is enhanced by Messy Church, led by our Family and Children's Worker assisted by a talented team of volunteers from across the Parish. The Parents and Toddlers group continues to make contact with young families and there are many links from there to Messy Church. Further contacts are made through CAMEO, coffee mornings at All Saints', Flower Festivals and Lent Lunches at St. Michael's, Teas to Please and other such activities throughout the year. Alpha and Life Groups give the opportunity to explore our faith

- whether we are new to it or have been immersed in it all our lives - and there is always something new to learn. We thank those who work with these groups and pray for God to bless and help those relationships to flourish.

Our weekly online service, now well and truly established, has continued, with its own regular congregation and is also valued by those who are temporarily unable to get to church services. Livestreaming certain weekly services as well as weddings and funerals continues to be a valuable offering to our worshipping congregation.

At St. Laurence's, the youth have continued playing a vital role in leading the occasional service, which has proved highly successful and a vehicle for their spiritual growth. We hold our Curate, David, and Jane Biggs, our Local Worship Leader, in our prayers, and we pray that God will provide more leaders to assist with this vital work.

We welcomed Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers for our Altogether Service on 28th April to mark St. George's Day and hope that this may become an annual event. From 21st-24th May the 'Experience After Easter' brought children and staff from our primary school into church to learn more about the events between Jesus' resurrection and Pentecost. At another Altogether Service we explored the reasons why we celebrate Communion the way we do. We hosted an activities stall at the Church Stretton Family Fun Day on 6<sup>th</sup> July. The Church Stretton Arts Festival once again made significant use of our buildings this year from July through August. Teas to Please at All Saints' over the August Bank Holiday weekend raised funds for Arthritis Research and for a new ramp for the church. Up to 50 children attended our August Holiday Club with the theme Waste Watchers.

The autumn Alpha course was again a success, those attending coming from across the Parish. This was followed up with an additional course in January/February, running on Saturday mornings at the same time as the Winter Warmer. A prayer workshop entitled 'Ways of Praying' was held at St. Michael's Church in November and was very well received by the 14 people who attended.

St. Laurence's was once again packed to capacity, with overspill into the Parish Centre, for the Remembrance Day service. The fact that so many people were able to participate, either in person or virtually, is thanks to those who contribute their time and expertise in all things technical to enable it to happen.



During Advent and Christmas an excellent Christmas card was produced and distributed to the Stretton community and all three churches had very successful services during this period, despite being ravaged by storms. It was sad that the Carols in Carding Mill Valley did not happen because of bad weather, but two new events were trialled this year: A Living Advent Calendar and Carols in the Kings Arms, both of which were advertised at a stall at the town's Christmas Lights Switch-On event, the latter coinciding with our Messy Christingle, attended by a large number of families. The Christmas wreath making workshop at St. Michael's was well attended, and well done to everyone for carrying on despite the damage from storm Darragh! The much-appreciated Christmas Lunch also provided a wonderful opportunity for fellowship and excellent food.

Supported by a dedicated team of volunteers, the Foodbank continues to serve the needs of the Stretton community, providing not only food, cleaning materials and hygiene products, but also help and advice on a range of issues.

The Annual General Meeting for the Tower and bellringers took place in March, and this year we were fortunate to welcome a representative from the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers to speak about encouraging greater numbers to take up the art.

It was disappointing that the possibility of using the Ring and Ride service to transport people to church on Sundays did not come to fruition because of the lack of offers of help.

At all three churches we are blessed with many dedicated volunteers who look after the buildings and grounds and serve in many and diverse ways in our services. Special thanks must go to those who unlock and lock our buildings daily, making them available for any that wish or need to come to experience the peace of God. Finally, our thanks go to Jo in the Parish Office for her constant support and help.

Work on employing an Operations Manager to help with the organisation of the increased activities is advanced with advertisements placed during March 2025. The work on providing accessible toilet facilities and the means of serving hot drinks at our community services is also continuing, as well as newly identified work to provide accessible parking and entrance ramps at All Saints' Church in Little Stretton.

Work has started on a role description for an Anna Chaplain. This role will be one way in which we will minister to the older members of the congregation, particularly bringing a spiritual element.

As a Parish we are blessed with the amount of good work that is going on. However, we all need to be aware that there is still subtle and insidious undermining of our leaders and the church's direction of travel. Although subtle, the behaviour has very damaging impacts on individuals, on the church as a whole, and on the mission of the church to Make Jesus Known.

### **ST. LAURENCE'S CHURCH, CHURCH STRETTON, James Foster, Deputy Churchwarden**

As I reflect on another busy year in the life of our church community, it strikes me that we have so much to be grateful to God for. We have a beautiful church building and when combined with the Parish Centre, we have facilities that are able to be used in so many different ways as a church but also crucially by our local community. It can be hard to find time to do required maintenance on the Parish Centre in particular as it is used so much, which is a fantastic problem to have! As we look to maintain and improve our facilities, we as a DCC look to what our vision is and make decisions based on this and how we can best serve our community.

The DCC and PCC have recently signed off improvements to the acoustics in the Parish Centre hall, something that I know a lot of people have commented on over the years and especially more recently. Once completed, we hope the new sound proofing will make a significant material impact on the usability of the hall.

Those of you who have been at a service at St Laurence's so far this year, will have seen some further upgrades to our AV equipment, with the aim to help our fantastic worship teams in leading worship more easily. I think they are enjoying being able to hear themselves and the worship leaders better and we hope this helps them as they lead our corporate worship.

As always, I want to thank the members of the St Laurence's DCC for their support and hard work this last year. We have a great 'let's get things done' attitude as a team as we focus on doing the practical things that assist our aim as a parish of Making Jesus Known. We try and make the process a pleasure rather than a chore, so if you feel you can serve by joining us, please do come and chat to me as we could always do with more members. I can promise you will receive a warm welcome, a good cup of tea and biscuits at all our meetings.



Finally (without wanting to pick out individuals but I'm going to anyway) I want to thank the churchyard maintenance team led by Mike Carter, for their fantastic care of our beautiful churchyard. We get so many lovely comments about the balance of wilder and more manicured areas and we are truly grateful for all their work. I also want to personally thank Mark Tocknell for his help in so many areas. Mark has bailed me out when I have chickened out going up scaffolding towers to replace lights and as a team (with me watching from ground level mainly) we have changed or upgraded around 20 different bulbs or light units in the last year, across the church and Parish Centre. Mark also is my go-to person to ask questions about practical items around the church, so I am greatly indebted to him for all his advice, assistance and comradery.

### **ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, ALL STRETTON, Rev Hazel Allen, LEP URC Minister**

We give thanks to God for our times of worship and fellowship and have an experience of His goodness and love to us as a church family. We have continued to benefit from a variety of styles of worship both here in St Michael's and across the Parish. A big thank you to all those who add to the setting for our worship with their flower arrangements, and to Adrian for the music.

The church building is open daily and is frequently used for private prayer, however, the revised time for Friday prayer to 9.00am has not so far encouraged others to join us. A Saturday morning session entitled 'Ways of Praying' led by Sarah Lear was greatly appreciated and it is hoped to arrange another prayer morning in the summer. One member of the congregation took part in the autumn Alpha Course.

Many of the congregation regularly participate in the smooth running of services by acting as welcomers, readers, leading prayers and organising refreshments as well as keeping the church clean and the garden tidy. Our Harvest Celebration and Carol service with Hope Bowdler Hand Bells brought in many visitors and the Christmas wreath-making held in the village hall was a very popular event.

Our ministry continues to extend to Stretton Hall where once a month Gillian leads a Communion Service supported by David and Sheila. This year two members of St Michael's have become residents in the Hall.

We are grateful to Julie for her hard work, knowledge and support as our acting Deputy Warden. Church attendance has become more consistent this year, and the congregation is a very caring and supportive community. Pastoral visits and phone calls also support where needed and occasional home Communion take place. Many people are engaged in service to the local community through Mayfair, various voluntary organisations, and Ring and Ride.

As more properties in the village change hands it is sad to see less people involved in the village and church activities. Here, with the help of the Holy Spirit lies our challenge!

### **ALL SAINTS CHURCH, LITTLE STRETTON, Moira Matthews, Deputy Churchwarden**

This has been another busy year at All Saints' Church, Little Stretton, our activities joyfully accompanied by the musical contributions of our team of faithful organists, the Stretton Parish Choir, the Strummers and the Accordion Band at Teas to Please, and the House Martins in the porch. Mention must also be made of the caring work of Chris Jones whose flower arrangements make our church so beautiful and attract many favourable comments in the visitors' book.

We were delighted to host the Parish Advent service, From Darkness to Light, which was once again a lovely atmospheric and moving act of worship. The Epiphany Service was likewise beautiful but attendance was unfortunately affected by a heavy fall of snow the previous night. Lighter evenings and better weather encouraged a strong congregation at our Choral Evensong in February when we were led in our worship by our fantastic Stretton Parish Choir who really

deserve our thanks. The latest addition to our calendar this year was the successful St David's Day service including Welsh hymns and organ music, some prayers in Welsh, a stirring sermon about St David and a bunch of daffodils for all.



Our post service lunches remain highlights of our year, the Christian Aid week lunch and the Harvest lunch raising healthy sums for charity. This year we also served lunch after our Carol Service, a feel-good event which we are happy to repeat. Liz Bourke, our kitchen mastermind, is to be congratulated on her planning, mastery of logistics and culinary skills. We have also started serving refreshments after every service, coffee and cake, which has provided a very happy opportunity to socialise and warm up during the cold weather.

### **CONDOVER DEANERY SYNOD, Revd Prebendary Christobel Hargraves, Rural Dean**

The Deanery Synod forms part of the governance of the Church of England, meeting as a minimum twice per year.

During 2024 four more individuals joined Andrea Graham as representatives of Stretton Parish on Deanery Synod. These were Michael Edmunds, Gail Dyer, Dan Wallis and Sarah Robinson.

There were three meetings held during the year and at the one in August Andrea Graham was elected as Lay Co-Chair of the Deanery. Andrea's enthusiasm and passion for sharing the Gospel will serve the Deanery well. At the same meeting Wendy Brogden (Shipton Parish) was appointed as Deanery Secretary joining Richard Rhodes as Treasurer (Shipton Parish) and myself to complete the line-up of officers.

Elections to Diocesan Synod were held this year and clergy representatives are myself, Steve Johnson and Lisa Harper (Rector of Apedale). There are three clergy vacancies. Lay representatives are Andrea Graham, Michael Edmunds, Thelma Thompson (Acton Scott), Jan Woodroffe (Wistanstow) and Ann Hone (Leebotwood). There is one lay vacancy.

The meetings held in March and October were used to explore the role of Deanery Synod and how parishes might begin to support one another. This preparatory work laid the foundation for the preparation of a Deanery Action Plan in 2025 which will focus on how our strengths can overcome any weaknesses and how opportunities can combat any potential threats to our existence as churches seeking to make Disciples.

2024 Deanery Parish Offer. Of the offer of £302,501, the Deanery paid £300,301 – 99.27%. The offer for 2025 is £299,519.

### **SAFEGUARDING, Chrissie Pepler, Parish Safeguarding Officer – 01694 771888**

This last year saw the publication of a national safeguarding report that highlighted again the importance of safeguarding our children and vulnerable adults in church settings. The Makin report laid bare the abuse of children and young people by an influential church leader, John Smyth, over several decades in the Anglican church. The devastating impact on his many victims has been lifelong and life changing. The Anglican church was found to have failed to make the changes it needed to make fast enough and failed to put the victim's voice and welfare at the forefront. This report led to the resignation of our Archbishop of Canterbury and several clergy figures facing disciplinary measures. There is still much work to be done to implement the changes that are needed to do all we can to safeguard children and our vulnerable adults, particularly at a national level and within the structures of the church.

At Parish level there is generally a more positive picture, and in Stretton Parish we have continued to implement the changes that are needed and continue to be asked of us. This does mean that things don't stay the same for long, which can feel confusing and, perhaps even frustrating at times. However, we know, and the Makin report confirms that we must take action to do all we can to prevent abuse happening - we cannot go back to times when victims' voices were not heard, and we were not taking action to do all we can to prevent abuse happening. The Makin report has highlighted this.

In the Parish we are embedding Safer Recruitment practice in our recruitment of volunteers and any paid employees. This, as predicted, makes it a longer process, but as we become more familiar with systems and ways of doing things this may improve. Our guidance from the Diocese about which roles qualify for which level of DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check has changed over the last year. This is to ensure we are compliant with the legislation associated with DBS checks. But we are still required to renew DBS checks, where they are required, and our safeguarding training every three years. Jo Aze in the Parish office has been administering the reminders for renewing training or DBS checks. Our thanks go to her for managing this process and for supporting people where needed.

As I said in my report last year, safeguarding is everybody's business. We cannot leave it to just a few, we all have a role to play. Without the support of our Rector, the PCC, our Churchwardens and our parishioners we cannot make the difference that we need to make. So, thank you all for your patience as we implement many changes. Thank you also for joining in as we seek to make Jesus known and include in that the way we care and protect those who are most vulnerable.

### **BETHEL/GREENHOUSE PROGRAMME, Cathy Watson**

The Bethel programme began in 2022 with an initial vision of a 'House of God' (Bethel) serving the Stretton community, based on the vision *to follow Jesus' lead in serving our community in practical, social and spiritual ways*. We carried out an extended period of listening and learning about existing activities within the Parish and the community, and identifying gaps and needs, supported by Biblical reflection and prayer. There are four working groups, each taking the lead on different areas of work within the Bethel programme.



1. Infrastructure
2. Grants and fundraising
3. Communications
4. Projects

At every Bethel meeting we review the progress made by each group and agree the next steps. We have developed a strategic plan which was agreed by the PCC in June 2024. This is available for those who would like to know more about how we work.

#### **Infrastructure**

The Infrastructure group reviewed the Parish buildings as part of our initial learning phase and is now supporting the Churchwardens in their plans to develop a servery and toilet in the church. The acoustics in the Parish Centre were identified by many in the Parish as a key area to be addressed, and an analysis of potential improvements was carried out and a quotation obtained. The Winter Warmer project was able to successfully apply for a grant from the Marches Energy Agency which will provide around 50% of the anticipated cost of adding acoustic panels to the ceiling and walls.

#### **Grants and fundraising**

The Grants and Fundraising group is collating a list of potential sources of funding for different kinds of projects. They have also been working with the Charity Commission to align historical

legacies and grants with current funding needs. This can involve a lengthy legal process and is vital in order to be able to make use of these funds in the future.

### **Communications**

Some of the Bethel team played a key role in the CofE 'Social Media Pilot' that the Parish was asked to be part of in December 2024. This involved creating a new Instagram account to join the current Parish Facebook page, and during December daily posts with information, videos and photographs about Parish activities were scheduled. The evaluation of the pilot project will shape development of the Parish communications on social media over the next year. The Bethel Communications group will continue to explore the use of social media to reach a wider, potentially younger audience.

### **Winter Warmer**

The Winter Warmer drop-in is the first project of the Bethel programme, and grew out of a recognition that there are fewer opportunities for people in the community on Saturday mornings, particularly in the winter. The Winter Warmer is a place where members of the Parish and the wider community can come to enjoy bacon baps, cake and good coffee. It aims to meet a range of needs, including loneliness, cost-free activities for children and adults, food insecurity and a warm space in the winter months. Following the pilot run from January to Easter 2024, we ran sessions from April to June, then September to Advent last year, and again from January this year up to the end of March.

The Winter Warmer has a wonderful team of volunteers and is also supported by members of the Parish who help to provide a welcoming space for all. In line with our vision and values, we have run three training sessions to equip volunteers with the knowledge and understanding they need to carry out their role safely and effectively. So far, training sessions have covered food insecurity, bereavement, dementia, good conversations and energy poverty. It has been encouraging that volunteers from other church groups, Churches Together and the Deanery have joined us at these sessions, providing us with a model for the training volunteers that has impact across the parish. Winter Warmer will close at the end of March and re-open in the Autumn, providing a well-deserved break for the volunteers during the spring and summer months when there are alternative opportunities and activities within both the Parish and the community.

### **Youth Work**

Our second project focuses on listening and learning from youth in the community. We are gathering information about youth activities within the Parish and the community and talking with young people and their leaders about their needs and the gaps. As with all our activities we move forward in prayer, trusting that God will guide our thinking and our steps, to show us what might be our role going forward.

### **Bethel to Greenhouse**

The Bethel programme functions as a 'greenhouse', in which new ideas and possibilities are planted as small seeds and nurtured, some of which grow and turn into full plants. Within the new structure of the Parish, the Bethel programme will accordingly be renamed the Greenhouse.

If you would like to know more about the Bethel programme, get involved in one of the working groups or join the volunteer team for the Warm Welcome, please get in touch: [bethel@strettonparish.org.uk](mailto:bethel@strettonparish.org.uk).

### **CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG FAMILIES WORK, Sally Clilverd**

This area of ministry continues to be a key focus for Stretton Parish as we seek to Make Jesus Known in our community and we were therefore keen to take part in the Town's Community Fun Day in July. Despite the unsummery weather, we managed to connect with familiar and new faces

through activities inspired by 'Encounters with Jesus by the Beach'. It was a great opportunity to advertise church activities to our community and for them to see us out and about!



At our WasteWatchers Holiday Club we welcomed 47 children to join us in Paradise Park and explore the transforming power of Jesus through stories, crafts, games, jokes, the inevitable custard pie and delicious lunches. We started at creation and saw God's transforming power of nothing to something and ended with the resurrection turning sadness into joy.

Our Discoverers group on a Sunday morning has developed into two groups; one being more discussion based and the other being more active and with craft available. We have taken away age-barriers and try to leave it to the young people to choose which group they feel led to join, enabling them to be in control of their learning needs and style. Since Christmas we have chosen to follow a series entitled 'Meals with Jesus' and this has been a fun way to consider the human and Godly sides of Jesus.

At Messy Church we finished our series on Holy Habits and this year we have started looking at some of Jesus' Parables. Families continue to enjoy exploring the theme through the wide variety of activities and are amazed by the delicious meals they are served. It has been a joy to see comments written when we have posed questions about faith and watch as they return each month to continue their journey with Jesus, as well as knowing a few have joined an Alpha course. Parents and Toddlers has recently seen an influx of new babies and it is always wonderful to welcome new and returning families to our group. Being blessed with such a large hall and storage for toys means we can ensure the environment is safe and engaging for all pre-school ages, whilst giving parents and carers the opportunity to build friendships and share concerns. We currently always sing a good-bye song thanking God for our time together and I now want to expand this to include a possible Bible story with a connected craft and possibly a thought for the adults so please do pray for guidance for this work.

Steve and David continue to provide twice-weekly assemblies at St. Lawrence's school, and we have also welcomed the pupils into church for Leavers, Harvest and Christmas services. In July we held a morning's workshop for the year 6 pupils using the Scripture Union 'It's your move' booklets to discuss their feelings about secondary school and present to them our belief that Jesus wants to walk with them on their journey through life. During the past year we have put on two 'Experience' events for all pupils at the school; 'After Easter' and 'Advent'. We were delighted to also welcome pupils from Rushbury, Wistanstow and Longnor schools to our Advent Experience and were able to gift a copy of a nativity-version of 'A night before Christmas' to all classes in each school.

The day after we finished Experience Advent, we welcomed around 150 people to our Messy Christingle which forms part of the Town's Christmas Lights events. We were able to share Jesus' light and love through ten activities and then joined together for a short thought as we made our Christingles and watched the candlelight shine through the church.

It is a huge privilege to lead this area of ministry, but it can only be done due to the generosity of volunteers who bring a wealth of experience and talent with them. My heartfelt thanks to each one of you, including those who do preparation and clearing up work quietly in the background. Most importantly thank you to everyone who prays for our children, families and each event.

#### **YOUTH WORK, David Andrews**

The Youth Life Group has continued to be well attended in 2024 and 2025 with a core group of around eight young people.

The Youth led Altogether services have continued to be successful and well received by the congregation. The growth of their confidence in planning the services is incredible as is their willingness to get involved and try out different ideas. The group expressed a desire to lead Altogether services more regularly, which is encouraging, and we are also looking at ways in which they can be involved and using their gifts in regular weekly services on an individual basis.

This year the group has focused on having social time together with 'Pizza-lite' nights. Once a fortnight the session is centered around food and being together with the option of attending the Deeper service afterwards. We have also continued looking at a range of topics using resources from Energize, which is provided by Urban Saints.

As this will be my final Youth Work report, I would like to say what a privilege it has been to see these young people grow over the last (almost) four years and to offer my thanks for the support of so many who have stood in when I have needed it at short notice and for the support of the worship team in helping plan the Altogether services. Please continue to pray for these young people and their journey with the Lord, particularly as they grow into their mid-teens and the demands of school and other opportunities compete for their time and focus.



**Secondary School – Oasis Group:** Sally and David have continued visiting Church Stretton School on Monday lunch times. The group now has both regular and semi-regular attenders (some are often waiting for us at the entrance when we arrive) and we have built some solid relationships with these young people. Sessions always have hot chocolate, biscuits and a focus on a topic relating to faith. Please pray for the students in the group, that they will hear something that will resonate with them and for the leaders, that they will be able to increasingly bring faith alive for these young people.

### **LIFE GROUPS, Caroline Windley, Life Group Coordinator**

Life Groups do what the name suggests: they are a safe place to share Christian life together. They are places of discipleship, learning, prayer, worship, encouragement, fellowship, friendship, pastoral support and occasionally food. Each group is different.

Groups are free to use whatever resources they consider pertinent to their members. Sometimes the parish makes suggestions as to a particular book or theme that fits a season or sermon series. In 2024, many groups used the book "Planetwise" by Dave Bookless as we were encouraged to consider a theological perspective on the environment and climate change.

Across the Parish there are 11 Life Groups, three of which meet in the day time. I am grateful to all those who host, lead, or coordinate the groups, and to Neil Sanders for his work coordinating the groups over the last three years. We have virtually no capacity for new members at present so we are actively looking to start two new groups, one that would meet in the day time and another in the evening. If you would be interested in joining a group please let me know

### **PASTORAL CARE, Nancy Cleaton, Pastoral Care Coordinator**

What is Pastoral Care? More specifically 'what is Christian Pastoral Care'? One definition puts it like this: 'Christian Pastoral Care is fundamentally relational in nature and practice and offered from the gift of God's love for us which brings healing and reconciliation'. (Guidelines for Good practice in Pastoral Care (ACC)).

Pastoral Care is offered across the parish in a variety of ways. It is offered more formally through the Pastoral Care Team whose members offer Pastoral Care through meetings and visits, which may include listening and conversation, Bible reading and prayer ministry. Such visits can be a

lifeline for those who are no longer able to get to Church and provide a valuable link to the Church community. Members of the clergy are also available to offer Holy Communion. It is important to note that all our Pastoral visitors have undergone appropriate Safeguarding Training.

Currently there are nine Pastoral Visitors and, as well as individual visits, they organise the Christmas Carols and Tea at the beginning of December which last year was attended by over 70 people.

More informally Pastoral Care is offered through the Life Groups and Cameo. The Life Groups are a major source of Pastoral Care for their members and there have been many examples throughout the year of this care being shown both spiritually and practically.

Cameo, which meets monthly, provides an opportunity for fellowship and sharing in a safe and caring space.

**Pastoral Care plays a vital role in our ministry and in our church family, therefore it is extremely important that the Ministry Team is aware of anyone in any kind of need and anyone who might appreciate a visit. So if you would like a visit or know of someone else we might be in touch with then please let me or a member of the clergy know.**

### **MUSIC, Ru Trew and Dan Robinson**

The purpose of our sung worship across the parish is to glorify God, and to create the space for us to meet with Jesus and offer Him our praise and ourselves. We have a range of different services, and we try to incorporate a range of different musical styles. We are blessed to have many gifted musicians who come together to help our church family to worship.

The Parish choir is thriving. There are around twenty of us in the Parish choir. It's a lovely group of people who rehearse every Friday, and lead the sung worship in St Laurence's on the first Sunday of each month and for special occasions. We have worked hard to develop a wide ranging repertoire that includes traditional and modern hymns as well as choral pieces. This year we've sung choral evensong three times in All Saints. Kimee composed a lovely setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for us and we have sung a few other original songs too and new arrangements of worship songs.

For all other Sunday services at St Laurence's, we are led by music groups, with different combinations of: singers, piano, guitar, flute, violin, cello, cornet, clarinet, cajon, and drums.

The aim for all of our services is to worship God, using both the old and new, and to embrace music which is suitable for congregational participation as well as that which enables contemplation.

A few developments over the last year:

- We trialled a contemporary carol service in December, with a mix of traditional and modern carols.
- We continue to bring in more of our young people to join the music groups, particularly at our "Altogether" services.
- We now have access to a brilliant resource – "Song Select" – which has the words and music for almost every hymn/worship song, and allows us to put it into any key at the click of a button – essential for incorporating cornet and clarinet into our music groups.

- We have recently purchased "foldback speakers" for our musicians – you may have noticed the extra kit (and more wires) at the front. This equipment is a game-changer for musicians – it enables us to hear each other, so that we can stay in time and know what each other is doing. We are very grateful to our wonderful sound-desk volunteers who have done a lot of work getting to grips with the new system.
- Our sound team have also re-oriented the speakers at the front of church to try to improve the sound quality and reduce the sound "black spots" – though further work is still needed on this front.

Our areas of development over the coming year are:

- working on trying to ensure that we always have a clear and audible vocal lead, for the congregation to be able to follow; and
- building familiarity with songs within our church family, since feedback is sometimes given that some songs (both modern and traditional) are not known, so we want them to become embedded and familiar to everyone.

We are always keen to hear if there are members of our church family who are interested in singing with the choir or joining the music group - please speak to either of us.

We would like to thank everyone who gives their time, energy and gifts to enhance our sung worship – and for your support to us as we coordinate the music and choir.

#### **ALPHA, Stephen and Mary Carter**

There have been two Alpha courses run over the past year, each over an eleven week period. The first (September to December) was held on a midweek evening and saw seven committed guests completing the course. Each evening commenced with a meal cooked by Dave Gibson; thank you Dave. All attendees are now regularly coming to church, each having deepened their faith journey. The second course started in January, is still ongoing on a Saturday morning alongside the Winter Warmer. We have had five people coming on a semi-regular basis. However, weekly attendance has been rather hit and miss as other commitments have taken priority, and two people had to drop out due to unforeseen circumstances.

Both courses have given opportunities for lively discussion with many questions being asked in a welcoming and safe environment as people explore or delve further into what the Christian faith means for them.

#### **MISSION PARTNERS, Louise Jackson**

What does it mean to reach people at the edges? People at the edges are at the centre of God's story. When we look at the life of Jesus, we see that he spent a lot of time with people at the edges and that's where we want to be when it comes to mission.

We receive regular newsletters from our mission partners via the Church Missionary society (CMS) and members of Stretton Parish are encouraged to register directly on the CMS website so that they can receive news directly. We also include a summary and prayer requests in the Stretton Parish 'Contact' so that everyone can get involved on a personal level.

In the past, a group has managed 'World Mission' on behalf of the congregation, connecting with mission partners and organising mission events. When Stretton Parish set up the partnership with Chris and Anna Hembury in Hull, Lea and Petra Williams in Brno through CMS we talked a lot



about how our partnership with them should not just involve financially supporting their work, but also encourage an exchange of ideas and new learning. Through the past year we have been praying for them, just as they have been praying for us and we have been challenged to think differently about mission.

We learned from their experiences of mission: Anna and Chris Hembury were already connected with local children in a deprived area of Hull through running an after school club when they had an idea: a breakfast club where children could come and eat in a family atmosphere before school. This September marks 25 years of that Breakfast Club. They estimate that between 2,600 and 2,800 different children, parents and teachers have attended the club over the past 25 years.

"Breakfast Club isn't just a place for children and parents to gather and enjoy some family atmosphere and food before school. It has also become a place where people build friendships, find support and can see God at work every day."

Meanwhile, Lea and Anna are working in a university town supporting young students living a long way from home. They converted a disused chapel into a place where young people can build friendships, find support, meet regularly and talk about their faith. When Ukrainian refugees started arriving in the town in huge numbers, they set to work collaborating with others to meet the practical needs for a warm, safe space, clothes and food. They saw a need and responded.

At Stretton Parish, we have reflected on these experiences to shape our own local missional initiatives. We don't have to dig too deep below the surface to see there are many needs within our own local communities and we can all offer practical, social and spiritual support to those we meet – there are so many opportunities to engage in mission and we can all play our part locally and globally.

Lea and Petra write:

"It is both humbling and inspiring to hear how your CMS mission partnership, with us in Brno and with Anna and Chris in Hull, has encouraged fresh thinking and new initiatives in Stretton Parish, creating signs of hope and goodness, fragile yet beautiful reflections of His kingdom breaking into the world."

"We are also very much looking forward to joining you in March, to connecting once again, and reflecting together on what mission is and how we might live missionally in our different contexts. Thank you again for your partnership, it is a real privilege to share in this journey with you all."



### **STRETTON FOODBANK, Richard McCrohan**

- The increasing yearly trend since establishing the Foodbank in 2013 stopped in 2024 with a reduction in the number of people needing support since April.
- February 2024 had a record 168 people being supported in any one month, but the monthly average reduced to 137 per month from 148 per month in 2023
- 329 people were supported by the Foodbank, this included 151 children.
- Expenditure increased to £33,756, with donations increasing to £33,724 (a shortfall of just £32)
- Food donations reduced in 2024, which is a trend being experienced by many foodbanks.
- A number of new volunteers joined the team and one volunteer retired (having being one of the original volunteers in 2013), resulting with an increased team of 32 at year end.
- During 2024 we started working with Christians Against Poverty, as well as a range of other agencies to ensure clients get the assistance they need to resolve their financial issues.
- At the end of 2024, clients were advised that a requirement for referrals was to be reintroduced from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025.

### **CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, Marion Shuttleworth**

The Church of England's fifth mark of mission is TREASURE: *to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*. To treasure our part of God's creation, the Environmental Committee endeavours to find ways to make our buildings as environmentally friendly as possible and to manage our churchyards for the benefit of wildlife whilst also providing a peaceful place for the enjoyment of our communities.

The Committee has developed an Action Plan to help the Parish work towards the C of E's Net Zero 2030 target. All three of our churches and the Parish Centre now have 100% renewable electricity contracts. St Michael's and All Saints, being small churches with low frequency use, are both effectively net zero as they use (renewable) electricity for heating and have LED lights throughout. St Laurence Church is used regularly and is heated by gas; Mike Carter's annual analysis shows that its energy consumption - and hence CO<sub>2</sub> emissions - has slightly reduced in 2024. However, the use of gas for heating St Laurence is the major contributor to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for Stretton Parish. The Environmental Committee is starting to consider future options for heating of St Laurence that would be more environmentally friendly.

In September, the Creation Matters sermon series helped our congregations explore what the bible tells us about whether and how we should care for creation – not to make us feel guilty but to show us there is hope. Also in September, St Laurence hosted a Diocesan Environmental conference led by the Diocesan Mission Enabler for the Environment, Revd Steve Hollinghurst.

All three Churches are registered with the ECO Church scheme of the Christian charity A Rocha; the Environmental Committee is considering its recently revised survey. As a public sign of our care for the environment, Eco Church is a way to engage with our communities; as Bishop Richard has said in a weekly video message, in treasuring Creation, we may be "building a bridge over which the Gospel can travel."

## **MOTHERS' UNION, Jenny Heath**

Our branch continues to meet monthly on the second Tuesday each month in the Parish Centre and during the past year we have had a variety of speakers, including, amongst others, Liz Bryan speaking on "What does it mean to die well?", our Curate David telling us about Chaplaincy for the cadets, and our Diocesan Chaplain Penny Littlewood came and gave a run-down on her life. Our annual service was officiated by Rev Rosamund Seal, and in June and December we held our usual seasonal parties.

In August several members attended the Mary Sumner Day service in Much Wenlock, and this year we hosted the Lady Day Service, officiated by our Diocesan Chaplain when we welcomed members from other local branches for the service and refreshments afterwards.

We continue to collect for and support our local Refuge and its Outreach services by donating Mothering Sunday, Easter eggs and Christmas gifts. We have also been able to provide welcome packs for families joining our primary school, and fund household goods for families in need through our Diocesan Crisis Intervention Fund.

One important project which we now undertake is to provide Blessing Bags for any parishioners who are in need of "cheering up" and encouragement for any number of reasons, so we are always pleased to hear of anyone who would benefit from such.

Our linked partner in Hervey Bay in Australia is regularly in communication, and we are linked with them through our member Sylvia Loader, an ex-member of that branch.

Worldwide, our movement is active in 84 countries and we have a diary for praying for each other, especially those in our linked dioceses.

To find out more, please visit our website [www.themothersunion.org](http://www.themothersunion.org).

## **REPORT ON THE FABRIC OF OUR BUILDINGS, Steve King and Julie Lawton**

### **St Laurence's Church, Church Stretton**

#### **Quinquennial Architect**

A new QI architect, Candida Pino, has been appointed.

#### **St Laurence's Heating**

One of the boilers in the church is failing and the engineers have struggled to get parts required as the boilers are not made any more. This has highlighted the need for a plan for the future, so this is being monitored by the DCC.

#### **AV equipment**

Additional AV equipment has been purchased to assist the music groups.

#### **Electricity Supplier**

St Laurence church and the Parish Centre have moved to a greener electricity contract for both gas and electricity through Octopus Energy which has saved a significant amount of money and improved our environmental performance

#### **Noticeboards**

The notice boards attached to the outside of the church and made and fitted by Robert Rayner, are being replaced because of age and wear and tear. Faculty approval has been received, and the notice boards have been ordered.

#### **General Maintenance**

The fixed electrical wiring test and inspection have been carried out, as has PAT testing of electrical equipment in the church.

The annual gas service and safety inspection for the church heating has been carried out  
The Tower clock has had its annual service by Smiths of Derby.

A team of valued volunteers have undertaken various small maintenance tasks to keep the building in good repair, and regular monthly working parties have been re-established.

### **Churchyard**

A dedicated team of volunteers keep the churchyard well maintained throughout the year, including a good display of wildflowers and informative signboards.  
The work on the Douglas Fir has been completed.

### **Green waste bins**

The PCC has agreed to subscribe to 3 bins and will deal with the high volume times such as late summer as they come across them.

### **Accessible Toilet and Served**

A draft Statement of Need has been written, and a small team of people are working with our new architect on this.

### **All Saints' Church, Little Stretton**

#### **Quinquennial Inspection**

The QI inspection was conducted in May 2024.

#### **Ciborium**

An elegant ciborium has been donated by a member of the congregation.

#### **Card reader**

A contactless card reader has been installed inside the church.

#### **Car parking**

The car parking policy has been clarified as a result of a request from some new neighbours for a car park permit. No more than three permits will be granted and then only in exceptional circumstances. This is to ensure that the needs of our congregation are met and also that those attending for meetings are able to park.

#### **The Cross**

The horizontal cross bar which fell off the church cross is in too poor condition to reattach to the upright. We have been advised against having a new cross made and installed since the bellcote may be itself defective and lead to expensive repairs. Instead, we should wait until we are ready to have work done on the roof.

#### **General Maintenance**

Annual testing and servicing have been carried out.

We are grateful to the volunteers who care for the building and the grounds.

### **St Michael & All Angels Church, All Stretton**

#### **Quinquennial Inspection**

The next inspection is due in November 2027.

#### **Electricity Supplier**

St. Michael's has also moved to a greener contract for gas and electricity through Octopus Energy.

#### **St. Michael's Heating**

Discussions on this area have been suspended until spring 2026.

## **Boundary Wall**

Work on repairing the wall has been delayed by the Diocese requiring significant levels of detail within the faculty application. We hope to get this underway as soon as possible to make the best of the better weather. It will necessitate a traffic management system.

## **Porch**

The Diocese have informed us that, as there are bats in the church, any timber treatment products have to be suitable for use in or near bat roosts, and our chosen product is not acceptable. An alternative treatment needs to be chosen from the list provided and taken to the PCC for approval. It has also been noted that members of the congregation with mobility difficulties find it hard to negotiate the top step without something firm to hold on to. We are currently investigating the feasibility of adding additional support to each side of the porch to improve accessibility. Three local blacksmiths have been asked to provide quotations, as the ECC would prefer this to be in keeping with the handrail already in position.

## **Laburnum Tree**

Pruning of the laburnum tree took place on 23rd July 2024. It is hoped that this will encourage new growth and that the tree will begin to thrive. However, if this is not successful, the PCC has agreed further expenditure for the tree to be removed altogether.

## **Green waste bin**

A larger green bin from amongst the surplus at St. Laurence's was transported to St. Michael's to allow for a greater amount of green waste to be collected.

## **Churchyard**

We are grateful to our small, committed team of volunteers who work hard to keep the churchyard tidy throughout the year.

## **Parish Centre, Church Stretton**

### **Purchases**

A new hot water flask has been purchased to replace the one that "exploded".

### **Parish Centre Acoustics**

The problem of the acoustics in the Parish Centre has been a long-standing issue but has become more focused especially at Winter Warmer / Warm Welcome and on Sunday mornings. The PCC has agreed to have acoustic panels fitted.

### **Heating**

The DCC have reviewed the heating system with an aim to move to a smarter way of controlling the heating. However, the quoted costs are too large to take this forward. We ask everyone to make sure they turn off lights and heaters!

### **General Maintenance**

The fixed electrical wiring test and inspection have been carried out, as has PAT testing of electrical equipment in the Parish Centre. The annual gas service and safety inspection for the water heater and cooker have been carried out.

A team of valued volunteers have undertaken various small maintenance tasks to keep the building in good repair, and regular monthly working parties have been re-established.

## **5 Sandford Avenue, 'The Flat'**

This flat was purchased in 2015 originally to provide housing for a church youth worker. As it is no longer needed for that purpose, it is rented out privately, with the rental income partly funding our youth work.

We pay a maintenance company to look after the external fabric of the flat and are asked from time to time to contribute to this upkeep. There has been no additional expenditure on the external fabric this year.

## FINANCE REPORT, Graham Vince

For full financial statements, see separate document

### Stretton Parish

#### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted Funds					2024 Total £	2023 Total £	
	St Laurence £	All Saints £	St Michael's £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £			
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENT FROM</b>								
<i>Donations and legacies</i>								
<i>Incoming resources from donors</i>	2a	164,573	16,052	18,997	40,325	0	239,946	259,813
<i>Other donations and legacies</i>	2b	0	6,662	1,040	447	0	8,149	14,220
<i>Income from charitable activities</i>	2c	10,340	0	906	0	0	11,246	17,437
<i>Income from investments</i>	2d	13,695	1,491	1,048	26	2,372	18,631	15,481
<b>TOTAL INCOME RESOURCES</b>		<b>188,608</b>	<b>24,204</b>	<b>21,991</b>	<b>40,797</b>	<b>2,372</b>	<b>277,972</b>	<b>306,951</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>								
<i>Charitable activities</i>								
<i>- Grants, Donations &amp; gifts</i>	3a	16,439	4,347	2,030	4,314	0	27,130	37,236
<i>- Activities directly relating to the work of the church</i>	3b	184,579	16,799	18,222	33,062	1,169	253,831	294,558
<i>- Governance costs</i>	3c	1,867	225	225	0	0	2,317	2,209
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		<b>202,884</b>	<b>21,371</b>	<b>20,477</b>	<b>37,377</b>	<b>1,169</b>	<b>283,278</b>	<b>334,004</b>
<b>NET INCOME / EXPENDITURE BEFORE OTHER RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES</b>		<b>-14,276</b>	<b>2,833</b>	<b>1,514</b>	<b>3,421</b>	<b>1,203</b>	<b>-5,306</b>	<b>-27,053</b>
<b>GAINS/LOSSES ON INVESTMENTS</b>	5b	0	0	108	0	1,564	1,672	3,640
<b>TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS</b>		2,400	-1,200	-1,200	0	0	0	0
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>		<b>-11,876</b>	<b>1,633</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>3,421</b>	<b>2,767</b>	<b>-3,634</b>	<b>-23,413</b>
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2024		371,436	28,617	22,981	24,477	73,341	520,851	544,264
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 DECEMBER 2024</b>	8	<b>359,559</b>	<b>30,249</b>	<b>23,403</b>	<b>27,898</b>	<b>76,108</b>	<b>517,217</b>	<b>520,851</b>

**Stretton Parish**

**BALANCE SHEET as at 31 December 2024**

	Note	2024 £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Tangible fixed assets	5a	224,367		229,267
Investment assets	5b	<u>62,723</u>		<u>61,051</u>
		<u>287,090</u>		<u>290,318</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Debtors & prepayments	6	10,067		8,047
Short term deposits		193,646		202,983
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>48,093</u>		<u>44,092</u>
		<u>251,805</u>		<u>255,122</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>				
Amounts falling due within one year				
Accruals & creditors	7	<u>21,678</u>		<u>24,589</u>
		<u>21,678</u>		<u>24,589</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			230,127	230,533
<b>NET ASSETS LESS LIABILITIES</b>			<u>517,217</u>	<u>520,851</u>
<b>Represented by</b>				
<b>ACCUMULATED FUNDS</b>				
Unrestricted	12		327,135	337,571
Designated	9		86,077	85,462
Restricted	10		27,898	24,477
Endowment	11		<u>76,108</u>	<u>73,341</u>
	8		<u>517,217</u>	<u>520,851</u>

Signed on behalf of Stretton Parish

on .....

Julie Lawton  
(Church Warden)

Steve King  
(Church Warden)

The notes on pages 9 - 16 form part of these accounts

## **Stretton Parish**

### **Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Stretton Parish**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on pages 7-17.

#### **Responsibilities and basis of the report**

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

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

#### **Independent examiner's statement**

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

T Lunt BA (Hons) FCCA MTPI

#### **WR Partners**

Chartered Accountants  
Belmont House  
Shrewsbury Business Park  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 6LG



Annual Parochial Church Meeting  
20<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 11.30am

MINUTES

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

1.	<b>Opening Prayers</b> The Rector opened in prayer.
2.	<b>Elections of Churchwardens</b> The nominees were Steve King and Julie Lawton. They were duly elected with everyone in favour. They were both thanked for continuing in the role for another year.

THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The Rector handed the chair to Steve King for this meeting	
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Gillian Taylor, Janet Wilcoxon, Chris Hargraves, Chrissie Pepler, Robin & Ru Trew, Wendy Cooper, Dan & Lucy Wallis, Manney Harrison, Chris King, Julian & Lynne Hargreaves, Alan & Ann Jolley, John & Janet Bennet, Simon & Ginny Baldock, Helen Rayner, Keith Herbert, Pat & Barrie Oxtoby. There were 56 people present.
2.	<b>Minutes of previous APCM held 29<sup>th</sup> April 2023</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Rector.
3.	<b>Matters Arising</b> None
4.	<b>Electoral Roll</b> The numbers on the Electoral roll are: St Laurence's            207 St Michael's             31 All Saints                 38  Total on Roll             276  The number on roll has reduced from 277 in 2023 to 276 in 2024.
5.	<b>Annual report on the proceedings of the PCC</b> Details were recorded in the Annual Report.
6.	<b>Rector's Report</b> Looking back over the last year has felt so huge, especially as eight weeks' bedrest has felt like an eternity! But as we look back through the reports in our APCM booklet, the year has been so encouraging, so much has happened, and we have much to give thanks to God for. Just reading the Churchwardens' report I felt exhausted, but so thankful to God

for his blessings.

And it really does feel that we have turned a corner as a Parish and we are heading in the right direction, for we are seeing God at work in so many places and it is exciting and a joy to see. Of course, things haven't always gone to plan, we could have done some things better, but that is all part of ministry, and it can be messy at times, as well as good fun and a privilege. When looking back we need to be careful that we don't stay there, we learn our lessons from the past and we keep moving forward, pressing in to what God is calling us into. I was reminded of this in our Easter Sunday reading, where we heard 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?' No good looking back to what was- to what is dead, we need to be looking to today and forward to the living.

For the Church can't stop moving, we are not called to be comfortable, complacent or have a consumer attitude, but we are called to move on and remember what the Church is here for. As Stretton Parish, we have a vision & purpose, 'Making Jesus Known'; the Diocese has a new vision with five priorities and the Church of England has a vision... And we as a Parish have our part to play in the bigger picture, whether that is Net Zero, Growing Younger, building new congregations etc... And in moving forward, we acknowledge that we as the Church nationally, are in a very different place. The Pandemic and financial crisis have left their marks, and the Diocese in its new vision strategy talks of a 'critical challenge with mission and ministry':

- Large number of declining churches across the Diocese
- Ageing population
- Acute lack of children, and young people aged 11 to 18 in Church

This is a critical challenge that we face too and we need to respond too... as we grow and respond to God's call on us as a Parish, with eight congregations- there will continue to be change.

Whilst we can all acknowledge that change can hurt sometimes, it can also grow us closer to God and make us keep looking to Jesus, which is always worth it. What we also need is courage, as we step forward and change to be the Church that God wants us to be, we don't have time, space or the resources any longer for playing it safe.

With our eight congregations, each working toward their own identity within the Parish, we have something to celebrate. There could be a tendency to compare or compete, but this diversity of services means that we can offer more variety and be more accessible to the wider community. This means that we need to continue to work together and support each other as a Parish. We cannot change the fact that we are one Parish, but we can choose to celebrate the eight congregations that we have and all that God is doing in them!

And together we can face the challenge of understanding the ever-changing culture of the day, but remaining counter-cultural in the truth of God's word. The Good News we are called to share. Where we reach out in new and different ways, not repeating the same old, same old- expecting different results. Gone are the days of big Billy Graham rallies, for we are now in a time of 'belonging before believing' which is where people belong to a worshipping community, before they have a faith of their own, as we have seen with Warm Welcome.

Our vision and purpose is "to make Jesus known". This is what God has called us to, here in the Strettons at this time, it shapes our ministry and mission, but it is not a statement to beat the ministry team with to get your own way or to quote to justify what you think we should be doing or to justify bad behaviour. It is what we are about.... after all Archbishop

William Temple is quoted as saying: 'The Church exists primarily for the sake of those who are still outside it.' which is so true and is a reminder that the Church isn't here to keep us happy in what we want, there is sacrifice in worshipping together- 'each others needs to prefer, for it is Christ we are serving'.

Our purpose is to reach those outside our doors with the message of the Good News of Jesus. So in our 5 year plan, we are almost in the middle of year 2, our growing year, where we have completed our 'Everyday Witness' series, which hopefully gives us confidence in sharing our faith, the story of God at work in our lives.

Plans are moving on for our holiday club for youngsters in the summer. We are looking forward to a series on Creation Care in September, as well as a new season of Warm Welcome, there is so much more to get involved in with. Which reminds us about our sermon series at the end of last year, where we looked at each one of us being the support acts- we need to take this seriously as we can only do what God is calling us too, if we step up and serve and join in. Each one of us playing our part and we are thankful to so many who give so much across the Parish... and there are a few who need special thanks at this point;

Firstly; I want to thank the Ministry team for all their amazing work, we are blessed that God calls people with so many different skills to serve here. I want to thank those ministers with Permission to Officiate- the retired clergy with permission from the Bishop. Also, this year there are some special thank you's, people who have worked so hard in certain areas: Malcolm Forbes, who has served tirelessly as deputy warden at St Michaels. Thank you! Pat Gregory, who has served on PCC & All Saints DCC for many years, but has decided to hang up the agendas now- Thank you

And finally, Margaret Mercer who has led Cameo for well over 10 years, who has quietly gone about this amazing ministry of organising, pastoral care, encouraging so many- I know there will be another occasion to say Thank you,

And for all of you, I want the APCM to know what an amazing job you have all done.

For Church is not an event we turn up to, but a family with which we grow, serve and join in with. And with family we face the challenges ahead, but we do that working together, pulling in the same direction and encouraging each other along.

### **Julie Lawton, churchwarden**

The last 12 months has been a busy, but fun year where we have had opportunities to come together to share fellowship and each other's company

Julie thanked everyone who has shared their talents to help in any way to support the life and work of the parish. She particularly thanked the three deputy wardens, Moira Matthews, Malcolm Forbes and James Foster and those who serve on the DCCs and the ECC for their dedication and commitment. She encouraged everyone to consider prayerfully how they can support the work and share the load.

She closed by thanking our leadership team, Steve, Chris and David and encouraged us to pray for Steve's continued progress to full health.

## **7. Finance**

The treasurer presented the accounts for the last financial year ending 31 December 2023.

### **General Income & Expenditure for 2023,**

All Saints had a deficit of £2,617.

St Laurence's had a deficit of £7,144.

St Michael's had a deficit of £631

The deficits weren't as large as they might have been due to increased standing-order giving. All deficits have been covered by unrestricted reserves made possible from past gifts.

**Unrestricted reserves at the 3 churches at the end of the year were as follows:**

All Saints £28,617.

St Laurence's – £108,304.

St Michael's £22,981.

These figures are down on the previous year, due to their being deficits during the year. These are our "rainy day monies", which are needed for ongoing General Fund deficits at All Saints and St Laurence's, ongoing maintenance for church building repairs at all three churches, and any unexpected costs.

**General funds budgets for 2024**

All Saints £3,414 surplus – this would increase existing reserves.

St Laurence's £16,532 deficit – enough existing reserves to cover 6 years of deficits, but would be less if there are extra maintenance costs, or unexpected higher costs i.e. for electricity and gas bills.

St Michael's £1,620 deficit – enough existing reserves to cover 11 years of deficits, but likely to be reduced considerably by upcoming extraordinary maintenance costs.

The finance committee has looked very hard at our expenditure and there really isn't any way of making any meaningful cuts that wouldn't severely affect the ministry of the churches.

**How to give**

The treasurer reminded us that there are a variety of ways of giving, which are all detailed on our parish website, and drew particular attention to the Parish Giving Scheme, further details of which will be in future Contacts.

**Published accounts**

The auditors have written that they have no concerns in connection with the examination of the accounts.

Proposal of acceptance of the accounts: Proposed Graham Vince, seconded by Julie Lawton, all in favour.

Proposed reappointment of Whittingham Riddell as the independent examiners. Proposed Graham Vince, seconded Pat Gregory, all in favour.

The treasurer concluded by thanking the treasurers of All Saints and St Michael's, the Money Counters, the Finance Committee and the auditors.

The Chairman thanked Graham Vince, the treasurer, for all his hard work.

**8. Annual Fabric Report**

The full written report is in the annual report booklet.

**9. Deanery Synod Report**

The full written report is in the annual report booklet.

**10. Safeguarding**

In addition to the written safeguarding report in the annual report booklet, the chair read a

statement from Chrissie Pepler, PSO, where she thanked people for working with us as the whole Anglican church in the UK goes through a transition of change around how we do things as volunteers in Church. It isn't always easy to adjust to changes, but these are important changes which help keep children and vulnerable adults in particular safer. Chrissie is always happy to meet with people and support them through these changes, where it is needed. Should anyone wish to contact her, her email address is available through the parish website, under safeguarding and also on the APCM annual report. It was proposed that Chrissie Pepler is formally appointed as Parish Safeguarding Officer. Proposed: Steve King, seconded, Dan Wallis, all in favour.

**11. Elections**

**a) To the Deanery Synod.** Nominations were received from Sarah Robinson, Mike Edmunds, Gail Dyer and Dan Wallis. There were duly elected.

**b) To the Parochial Church Council for Stretton Parish:**

- There were two nominations from St Laurence's, from Ben Roberts and Lorraine McCrohan. They were duly elected.
- There were no nominations from All Saints. Graham Jackson, from St Laurence's was elected for one year (under 3b of the Parish Governance document).
- There were no nominations from St Michael's.

*The election of Deputy Churchwarden at St Michael's and appointments to the PCC and St Michael's ECC will be made at their AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.*

**12 Questions concerning Parochial Church matters or general Church matters**

None.

**13. Closing Prayer**

The meeting closed in prayer.