Great St Mary's
Sawbridgeworth

Passion for Christ - Compassion for all

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Registered Charity 1132562

Report and Financial Statements

Year ended 31 December 2024

Aurora over Great St Mary's, May 2024

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE
ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH
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Annual Report for 2024

Introduction from the Churchwardens

This report is written at the end of an unexpectedly challenging year at Great St Mary's. Father Simon Vivian announced his resignation in the summer and was licensed at All Saints Hockerill, Bishop's Stortford in September 2024, leaving us without a Vicar since the start of the summer holidays. Despite this, we have managed to hold at least one Eucharist each week, with our Lay Reader, Diana Kitson leading a Service of the Word on the three Sundays when a Eucharist was not possible. We continued our monthly Mustard Seed services until autumn, and held well-attended services on St George's Day, the annual Civic service and on Remembrance Sunday. During February and March, Father Simon led a thought-provoking Lent course.

The post of Associate Minister (House for Duty) has been vacant since Revd Debbie Hore left in 2023. We are, therefore, delighted to announce that Revd Canon Robert Riley-Braley will be joining us in the spring of 2025. He is currently Vicar of St Oswald's, Croxley Green. Another successful recruitment story is the appointment of our new Musical Director and Organist, Jonathan Palman, who officially started in the post in January in 2025, but accompanied the choir at rehearsals since November, so is already part of the team.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Jane, Bishop of Hertford, Archdeacon Janet and all the visiting clergy who have supported us since Father Simon's departure and officiated at services, some traveling great distances. We also thank the freelance organists who have played at our services and accompanied choir rehearsals since our previous Musical Director left us in July 2022.

The church calendar during 2024 was extremely busy with various events, including the May Day fair featuring a Teddy Bear Zip Wire from the top of the church tower, a Quiz night and a Murder Mystery night (which, due to its popularity, has already been booked for next year at a larger venue). The Flower Festival at the start of the summer holidays, on the theme of children's books, was well attended. We held our usual Patronal lunch, and we celebrated Diana's 30 years as Lay Reader with a special service presided over by Bishop Jane.

During the vacancy, Diana was a consistent presence at services, supporting the visiting priests and maintaining the midweek and Sunday 8am congregations with a Service of the Word. Simply put, these additional services would not have happened if it were not for Diana's continued commitment and devotion to Great St Mary's, for which everyone is thankful.

The Advent and Christmas period was a busy time, with the Festival of Light attracting around 2,000 visitors. All church services saw increased attendance, particularly the candlelit services of Advent and Christmas Carols. The Advent lunch featured the year's biggest raffle, raising over £700 for The Children's Society. The second annual Christmas Tree Festival was well attended, with almost 40 trees on display. The winners were the Ukrainian Group with their traditional Ukrainian decorated baubles, with the Red Squirrels of the 1st Sawbridgeworth Scouts and Spellbrook School coming second and third.

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Music has always been important at Great St Mary's. Our small choir was led by Rosemary Harrison, who stepped up following Father Simon's resignation, ably assisted by Jane Johnson in sorting out the music for services. We extend a huge thank you to both. We also thank Fred Bone in his first year as Tower Captain and all the bellringers who call us to worship every Sunday and at all major events. And a huge thanks to Angela Kenny, Parish Administrator, who has helped to keep us going during the vacancy.

Special thanks go to Shirley Dodgshon, who stepped down as Head Sacristan at the end of the year after an impressive 43 years of service. We were delighted to receive and bless a new glass cruet that Shirley gave to the church as a parting gift. Sandie Abery is now our Head Sacristan.

Our thanks go to the entire church community for their ongoing support, particularly those who quietly contribute so much time to keep things going: the flower arrangers, cleaners, churchyard working party, oil lamp fillers, hymn number changers, sacristans, helpers at Sunday Club and Mustard Seed, candle preparers, altar cloth changers, and many more. We deeply appreciate your efforts.

A special thanks to those who sit on the PCC and the sub-committees, appointed officials and all who give their time to the church in any way at all. Our work on re-imaging the church building and Church House continues, with discussions with our architect and the Diocese now well-advanced and shared with the congregation in February 2025.

While the vacancy has been challenging, with the Parish profile finalised and the advert going live at the end of 2024, we are praying and looking forward to 2025 with great optimism and hope.

Gilly Squire and Anthony Heard

Aim and purpose

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Sawbridgeworth ("the PCC") is registered as a separate charity, number 1132562. The members of the PCC have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

The primary object of the PCC is to promote the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It fulfils this responsibility through periodic meetings and a range of other activities.

Our church community

As at the end of 2024, there were 114 people entered on the church Electoral Roll, 18 of whom were not resident within the parish. We were pleased to welcome new regular worshippers and visitors. We hold in our prayers those who no longer worship with us regularly or who moved away during 2024.

During 2024 we baptised six children and married one couple. We wish them joy and love on life's journey. We conducted 28 funerals (22 in the church) and seven interments. Our dear friends are remembered with love, and we keep their families in our prayers. They include Mick Steward who, with Kathy, led Tiny Tots for many years, Barry Ings, previously hall caretaker and Roy Ward, chorister.

A big thank you to our Pastoral volunteers and others who support people in times of need.

In May 2024, Angela Alder was given the Freedom of Sawbridgeworth, in recognition of the many ways she has represented the town and church, and over many decades. A fitting way of honouring a diligent and loyal servant.

Mission and giving

It is PCC policy to give a percentage of regular committed stewardship plus tax recoverable (in 2024, unchanged at 10% - see page 6 for future periods) to other charitable causes, of which 60% is allocated to overseas causes and 40% to U.K. causes. Details of the amounts given in 2024 from 2023 stewardship income are detailed in note 10 to the financial statements. Charities supported in this way were Shiksha Rath, Tools with a Mission and the Holy Trinity Night Shelter Bishop's Stortford.

In addition, whenever possible throughout the year, the PCC made collections and undertook fundraising for specific causes. Details of payments made are also detailed in note 10.

Shiksha Rath runs a Christian Outreach project in New Delhi to help children from deprived areas access education as a route out of poverty.

Outreach

As well as our large outreach events, the Friday Email offers thoughts, prayers, information on our week's services, and notices. This, like the Great St Mary's Facebook group, is read both by members within our worshipping community and others who live in Sawbridgeworth and beyond.

Volunteers continued to do a splendid job organising collections of food to support the Harlow Foodbank, whose existing and new customers needed their services more than ever. These collections were enhanced at harvest time with donations from Spellbrook Primary School - our church school - who brought their offerings to their own harvest service.

We held Christmas services for our three primary schools – Mandeville, Reedings and Spellbrook – at which the church was packed.

Spellbrook CofE Primary School

Spellbrook School is our voluntary-controlled Church of England primary school. It is legally owned by the trustees of its Church of England foundation but is controlled by Hertfordshire Local Education Authority which has full financial responsibility for its maintenance. The school's mission is to provide the best education for each child within the context of a caring Christian community.

Great St Mary's Church is represented on its governing body and fosters links between the school, the church and the local community.

The Incumbent is, *ex officio*, a foundation governor and the Diocese, in liaison with the PCC, appoints a second foundation governor. Fay Clark stepped down after 15 years of service, for which we to express our considerable thanks. Becky Burton took on the post from March 2025.

Of equal importance is the regular connection between the church and the school, with the leading of collective worship in school and classes on religious or ethical topics, attending school events, and writing a pause for thought for the school newsletter. In May 2024, the school received an excellent report from the SIAMS inspectors and capped off the year by taking third place at our Christmas Tree festival.

Fundraising

Section 162a of the Charities Act 2011 requires charities to make a statement regarding fundraising activities. We confirm that all solicitations are managed internally, without involvement of commercial participators, professional fundraisers or third parties. The day-to-day management of all income generation is delegated to the Vicar, Churchwardens and appointed officials (see pages 11 and 12). Although the Charity is not required to be bound by any regulatory scheme, the Charity complies with the relevant codes of practice. We have received no complaints in relation to fundraising activities (2023: none).

Additional financial support was received, with thanks, from Sawbridgeworth Ecclesiastical Charity and others.

Plans for future periods

We look forward to a positive outcome to our search for a new Incumbent and to welcoming our new Associate Priest. We shall continue to build all aspects of our activities, seeking to provide for all generations and needs. The Outreach Committee has even more ambitious plans for 2025.

The Re-imagining 2025 Project Group will pursue the proposals for work on and around the church's West door, as phase 1 of the project, and improvements to Church House. We will commission a report on the current state of the church organ and refurbishment options. We will finalise the process of handing over the maintenance of the churchyard to the local authority. In all our activities, we will seek to reduce our carbon emissions and consider other environmental impacts, with reference to the "Eco Church framework".

The marked shift from ad hoc to planned giving (see page 16), while providing welcome certainty of income, gives rise to a 33% increase in the amount of mission giving for 2025. Given continued loss-making (see below), the PCC agreed in February 2025 that the calculation of mission giving in 2026 (from 2025 planned giving) will revert to a previous level of 7.5%. The actual amount given will then be in line with the amount given in 2024.

Financial Review

Rental income from The Lodge net of rental agent and maintenance costs increased our income by over £11,000, and fundraising net of costs yielded over £5,000. Across all four properties, we spent £71,452, £30,000 less than in 2023, of which £7,400 was due to a fall in energy costs.

There was ***a loss of £39,339 on day-to-day income and expenditure*** (excluding investment income) but ***a net inflow of £12,722*** to the restricted fund. The position would have been worse had it not been for the commitment of our church community and generosity of other donors and grant-making bodies.

At the end of the year, our investments with CCLA would have increased in value by £21,704, but £30,000 was redeemed in December to meet the deficit and expected invoices on estate works. Investment income was £24,405, up slightly on the previous year. Overall, therefore, there was ***a small net increase in our total funds of £19,492***.

The investment policy is considered at regular intervals by the Stewardship & Finance Committee and the PCC. Both investment funds are actively managed, allowing CCLA to anticipate or respond to market developments.

Going Concern

Looking forward to 2025, predicted work on the estate is expected to be lower than in recent years (ahead of major works planned as part of the Re-imagining 2025 project – see page 11), there has been a fall in regular hall hirers and there will be a loss of rental income from The Lodge. Therefore, regular income versus expenditure is predicted to result in ***a deficit of about £50,000***. Depending on the findings of the report on the church organ, this figure could be substantially higher. The figure excludes any capital gain or loss on investment, noting that when investments are redeemed to help fund expenditure, not only is capital reduced but also income from those investments.

The PCC believes it is financially viable for the next 12 months, even if there is significant expenditure on the estate. The general unrestricted reserves balance remains above the appropriate level of reserves and is sufficient for activities to be maintained for 12 months.

Reserves policy

The accounting rules under which the financial statements are prepared require funds to be analysed between those that, on the one hand, are restricted to specific purposes and those that, on the other hand, are unrestricted. Restricted funds comprise special collections and other fundraising activity for specific causes, together with fundraising and grants for certain fabric and insurance costs.

Unrestricted funds comprise all other funds, which may be designated for various purposes. The PCC has designated three unrestricted funds:

- a property capital fund, which at all times equals the balance sheet value of the properties
- a legacy capital fund, being the accumulation of legacies received
- a general fund containing the balance

The PCC considers that the amount of reserves necessary to ensure the work of the church continues at present levels is around £192,000 – this amounts to approximately 12 months of recurring expenditure, excluding mission giving and payments to specific causes. As the unrestricted general fund stood at £362,824 at 31 December 2024 (see page 15; £358,966 at the end of 2023), there was an excess of just over £170,000, which is held to finance working capital and capital projects. Restricted funds at 31 December 2024 stood at £12,880 (2022: £158).

Risk Management

The PCC recognises that in areas relating to health and safety, the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, and the security of physical and financial assets, IT systems and data protection, there is always a potential threat. We reviewed all our risk management and related policies during 2024.

Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC met seven times in 2024, all meetings were conducted in person, and average attendance was 72%. In addition to routine business (which included regular Health & Safety, Safeguarding, Estate and Financial reports), major items of business included:

- Agreeing recipients of mission giving from 2023 stewardship
- Receiving the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023
- Holding a section 11 meeting to begin the process of advertising for a new Incumbent, and approving an updated Parish Profile document
- Agreeing a phased approach to the re-imagining of the church building and that phase 1 should focus on accessibility and opening of the West door
- Appointing a new Organist and Director of Music
- Ensuring the PCC's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 and to addressing wider environmental impacts was considered across all its activities and through its committees, on an ongoing basis

Safeguarding

At the end of 2024, Hazel Mead stood down as our Assistant Parish Safeguarding Officer. We are very grateful to Hazel for her many years of service.

The PCC complied with its duty under section 5 of the *Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016* to have due regard to the House of Bishops' Guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. During 2024, we reviewed our Safeguarding Policy, Action Plan, Volunteer Code of Conduct, safeguarding information on the church website and use of social media. We reviewed our training and reporting in line with new Church of England National Safeguarding Standards and issued new materials to volunteers.

Data protection

The PCC complied with the requirements of the *General Data Protection Regulation*. We undertook a full refresh of our consent forms, and reviewed our Data Protection and Records Management Policy and the Data Privacy Notice on the church website.

The PCC's responsibilities

The PCC is responsible for preparing the Annual Report and Financial Statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice. The PCC is required to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the PCC and of the financial activities of the PCC for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the PCC members are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102)
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going-concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the PCC will continue in operation

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The PCC is responsible for keeping proper books and accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the PCC, and that enable it to ensure the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. It is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the PCC and, hence, for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The PCC members confirm that, so far as they are aware, there is no relevant information of which the PCC's independent examiners are unaware. They have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as PCC members to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the PCC's independent examiners are aware of that information.

PCC Committees

The Standing Committee comprises the Vicar, Churchwardens, Associate Priest, main Committee Chairs and the Treasurer. It has the power to act on behalf of the PCC for issues that need urgent attention between PCC meetings. No such matters arose in 2024.

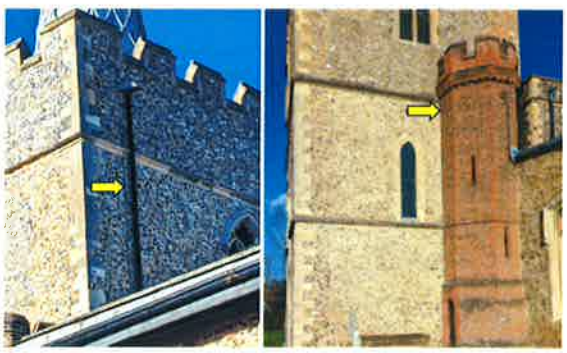
Much of the PCC's business is achieved by delegating certain responsibilities to the following committees, whose terms of reference were reviewed by the PCC in May 2024.

Fabric & Churchyard Committee
Chair: Peter Clark

This Committee, in collaboration with the Vicar and Churchwardens, has oversight of the maintenance, repair and improvement of the church building, St Mary's Lodge, the Parish Hall, Church House, and the other church-owned land and buildings. It oversees the activities of the monthly Churchyard Working Party, which maintains the churchyard and associated grounds. It met three times in 2024, but its members were in regular contact.

Whilst much useful work has been done and the church has been kept in a generally good state of repair, 2024 was characterised by the scarcity of skilled staff at the heritage contractors and shortage of volunteers available. A major achievement at the start of the year was the completion of the conservation of the 1479 Chauncy Brass and its move from the South Aisle to a more appropriate position in the Chancel. This project was supervised by Martin Stuchfield, Hon. President of the Monumental Brass Society and carried out by the UK's top brasses conservator, Simon Nadin of Skillington Lack. Stemming from an initial report in 2023 by Dr David Carrington, specialist conservator, the Friends of Great St Mary's decided to fund a full conservation of the George, Viscount Hewytt d.1689 Monument. Work started in January 2025.

The lightning conductor on the tower was upgraded to include a second down conductor. This was expertly achieved by specialists Rodells, working with Lodge & Sons electrical engineers, to bring us fully up to the latest safety standards. The new conductor had to be installed on the south of the tower but, remarkably, is barely visible.



A winter storm snapped the flagpole at the point where it entered the tower roof. Fortunately, the roof damage seems to be minor, and nobody was hurt. This will be an insurance claim in 2025.

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After the retirement of our long-serving organ tuner, Peter de Ville, a new tuner, Andrew Stevens was found. He identified cracks and twisting in some of the Oboe and Cornopean pipes which he removed, had rebuilt and replaced in time for the Advent Carol Service. However, in January 2025 our new organist reported that the organ is failing fast (see page 6).

The Parish Hall remains in good condition. A structural engineering survey was conducted on the roof beams of Church House and an internal supporting frame built around one of the dormer windows to give added support until such time as the beams are renewed. (See also page 11).

At the Court at Buckingham Palace

THE 2nd DAY OF OCTOBER 2024

PRESENT,

THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY
IN COUNCIL

The major achievement of the year was undoubtedly obtaining an order from the Court of the Privy Council in October for the closure of Great St. Mary's churchyard for burials. This will lead to the Local Authority taking over the maintenance of the churchyard, its lawns and the safety of the gravestones, and its walls, paths, gate, hedges and trees. It is expected that the transfer of maintenance will take place in April 2025. The closure means that new burials are not permitted, but interment of ashes into the Memorial Garden or into an immediate relative's plot will not be affected.

As part of preparing for this, EHDC contracted a gravestone safety check in May by specialists Memsafe. The survey found only seven out of 704 gravestones needed work to stabilise them. Where possible, families of owners were contacted and, where not, the PCC decided to fund making them safe with new bases rather than laying them flat. Some of the work was covered by an insurance claim.

A Robinia tree near the South Door developed a severe lean and the tree surgeons concluded that it was a danger to life and to the headstones under it, so required urgent felling before the next storm. EHDC Planning, which protects trees in the Sawbridgeworth Conservation Area agreed. On this occasion, retrospective permission was given by the Diocesan Registrar via the DAC. The felled tree will be replaced with a young one of the same species.

Another hardwood memorial bench was donated by a family in memory of a loved one and installed in the churchyard during the year.

The work on renovating The Lodge was completed in January 2024 and the house was let out for a short-term tenancy awaiting the appointment of a new Assistant Minister. The long overdue removal of the huge leylandii trees to the west side of the plot followed shortly afterwards and then shrub removal near the carpark, which vastly improved the garden.

With special thanks to the dedicated team of volunteers in the Churchyard Working Party and our hard-working hall caretaker.

Outreach Committee
Chair: Gilly Squire

This Committee promotes the engagement of the church with the community at local, diocesan and national levels. It co-ordinates a program of outreach and social events.

In 2024, the Committee was exceptionally busy, with meetings occurring at least monthly. Highlights included a challenging quiz night hosted by Rev. Simon Vivian, the introduction of a Teddy Bear Zip Wire at the May Day Fair, a Flower Festival, a Murder Mystery Night performed by Quinnessece Theatre Group, and a Festival

of Lights with a mulled wine and hot chocolate stall. We also provided refreshments after the All Souls and Christmas Carol services, held our second Christmas Tree Festival, and organised well-attended Lent and Advent lunches, among many other events. Plans are already underway to build on the successes of 2024 for an even more exciting 2025.

Stewardship & Finance Committee
Chair: Julie Patterson

This Committee has oversight of the PCC's finances and stewardship activities. To fulfil this responsibility, it monitors both incoming and outgoing resources, as well as monitoring the deployment of the net assets, including investment policy and performance. It provides advice and support to the Treasurer, who reports regularly to the PCC on the financial position, financial controls and all matters impacting the PCC's finances. We were delighted to welcome Paul Bard back to the Committee in September 2024.

The Committee met four times via Zoom in 2024. At each meeting, the Committee received a report from the Treasurer on the PCC's financial position. It also reviewed the draft Annual Report & Financial Statements 2023, monitored actual income and expenditure against the 2024 forecast approved by the PCC in December 2023, reviewed income versus expenditure on the halls, and considered whether and when a significant drawdown from investments was needed. At the end of the year, it considered the provisional outcome for 2024 and a draft forecast for 2025, which were presented to the PCC in December 2024.

The Committee reviewed and made recommendations to the PCC on relevant PCC policies, including the Mission Giving Policy, and on discretionary fees and other rates to be applied in 2025. It also finalised a legacy information document.

With considerable thanks to the Treasurer and the Stewardship Recorder.

Re-imagining 2025 Project Group
Co-Chairs: Sarah Vickers & Nick Heslop

The aim of "Re-imagining 2025" is to make Great St Mary's fit for purpose for our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry and mission in the 21st Century, across all worship, nurturing, pastoral, outreach and social activities, ensuring accessibility and inclusion, and providing a Christian strong presence at the heart of the local community.

The Group met six times in 2024; the fourth year of working as a group to 're-imagine' our church and its buildings. During 2024, the Group continued to work with the church architect, Jeremy Lander on further development of plans for two building projects: re-imaging our church building and the potential upgrading of Church House, to ensure they are accessible and provide facilities which are fit for purpose.

A phased approach to the works needed to re-imagine our church building was agreed by the PCC, with work on and around the West door being the starting point. The Diocesan Advisory Council (DAC) was provided with revised draft plans, and some DAC members and others visited the church again and provided feedback, which we discussed with the architect in January 2025.

Work on exploring how to achieve step-free access to Church House and to re-establish an apartment in the upper part of the building continued. A fire consultant was commissioned to work with the Architect on fire safety plans. Consultations are now taking place with the EHDC Planning Authority on this Grade 2 Listed building.

The Group is actively progressing discussions with the relevant bodies, and will commission further reports and provide more detailed plans for DAC approval. The Group is determined that both projects will come to fruition in the short term.

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Administrative information

Address: The PCC oversees the activities of Great St Mary's church, which is situated in Church Street, Sawbridgeworth. It is part of the Diocese of St Albans within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Parish Office, Church House, 1 Vantorts Road, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 9AH.

Website: www.sawbridgeworthchurch.org.uk

Data privacy: Contact the Parish Office. You can also contact the Information Commissioner's Office on 0303 123 1113 or via https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/email/.

Incumbent: No one at present, Rev Simon Vivian having moved parish in September 2024.

Ministry team: Diana Kitson, Reader.

Office staff: Angela Kenny, Parish Administrator and PCC Secretary.

The ***members of the PCC*** who served from 1 January 2024 until the date this report was approved are:

Father Simon Vivian	*Incumbent (Chair) until July 2024*
Gilly Squire	*PCC Chair from September 2024; Outreach Committee Chair; Churchwarden*
Valerie Bright	
Becky Burton	*Until 12 May 2024*
Peter Clark	*Health & Safety Officer; Fabric & Churchyard Committee Chair*
Deborah Cubitt	*First Aid Officer*
Anthony Heard	*Churchwarden*
Jane Johnson	*Appointed 12 May 2024; Parish Safeguarding Officer*
Diana Kitson	*Lay Reader; Deanery Synod Representative*
Kofi Otu	
Julie Patterson	*Treasurer; Stewardship & Finance Committee Chair; Deanery Synod Representative*
Sarah Vickers	*Co-Chair of Re-imagining 2025 Project Group*

Among others that contribute considerable time and resources to the work of Great St Mary's, there are officers who are not members of the PCC:

Fay Clark	*Electoral Roll Officer; Spellbrook CoE School Foundation Governor until December 2024*
Nick Heslop	*Co-Chair of Re-imagining 2025 Project Group*
Huw Lewis	*Stewardship Recorder*
Hazel Mead	*Assistant Parish Safeguarding Officer until December 2024*

Architect/surveyor: Jeremy Lander, 77 North Street, Burwell, Cambridgeshire CB25 0BB

Bankers: TSB Bank plc, 88-89 High Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM21 1DX

Independent Examiner: Price Bailey LLP, Causeway House, 1 Dane Street, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3BT

Signed Gillian Squire **Gillian Squire**
Churchwarden of Great St Mary's, Sawbridgeworth and PCC Chair

Dated 8/4/25.

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE
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Independent Examiner's Report to the members of The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Sawbridgeworth

I report to the members of the PCC on my examination of the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on pages 14 to 23.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the members of the PCC 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 PCC'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:

- accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 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.

M. Cooper-Di

Michael Cooper-Davis FCCA ACA
For and on behalf of Price Bailey LLP
Causeway House
1 Dane Street
Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire CM23 3BT

Date: 11 April 2025

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH
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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total	2023 Total
INCOME					
Voluntary income					
Planned giving		39,703		39,703	30,685
Other donations	2	8,080	3,260	11,340	21,553
Collections for other charities	3		4,850	4,850	5,245
Tax received/claimed	4	11,160	1,883	13,043	12,931
Grants	5		22,783	22,783	24,732
Legacies	6	2,912	-	2,912	-
		61,855	32,776	94,631	95,146
Church activities					
Fees - weddings & funerals	7	12,606		12,606	10,839
Property lettings	8	58,761		58,761	39,727
Fundraising & sponsorship			7,720	7,720	2,162
Other		425		425	200
		71,792	7,720	79,512	52,928
Investment income	9	24,405		24,405	24,113
Total income		**158,052**	**40,496**	**198,548**	**172,187**
EXPENDITURE					
Church activities					
Mission & charitable giving	10	3,982	5,408	9,390	9,703
Ministry	11	72,052		72,052	75,363
Regular church services	12	9,717		9,717	7,988
Fees paid – weddings & funerals	13	7,161		7,161	6,040
Properties	14	51,467	19,985	71,452	101,731
Fundraising costs			2,381	2,381	1,005
Administration	15	21,464		21,464	21,414
Other	16	4,821		4,821	1,507
		170,664	27,774	198,438	224,751
Governance					
Independent examination fee		2,322		2,322	2,154
Total expenditure		**172,986**	**27,774**	**200,760**	**226,905**
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses		**(14,934)**	**12,722**	**(2,212)**	**(54,718)**
Divestment proceeds		**30,000**		**30,000**	**40,000**
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of investments	18	(8,296)		(8,296)	31,752
Fund transfers	14&22	-	-		
Net movement in funds		**6,770**	**12,722**	**19,492**	**17,034**
Funds brought forward		1,391,583	158	1,391,741	1,374,707
Funds carried forward		**1,398,353**	**12,880**	**1,411,233**	**1,391,741**

The notes on pages 16 to 23 form part of these financial statements

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE
ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH
Registered Charity 1132562

BALANCE SHEET
at 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible	17	490,000	490,000
Investments	18	865,070	873,366
		1,355,070	1,363,366
Current assets			
Debtors	19	16,563	15,006
Short term deposits	20	6,161	6,256
Cash at bank and in hand		37,908	12,070
		60,632	33,332
Liabilities			
Creditors payable within one year	21	(4,469)	(4,957)
Net current assets		56,163	28,375
TOTAL NET ASSETS		**1,411,233**	**1,391,741**
Funds	22		
Unrestricted			
Property capital		490,000	490,000
Legacy capital		545,529	542,617
General		362,824	358,966
		1,398,353	1,391,583
Restricted		12,880	158
		1,411,233	**1,391,741**

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 8 April 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

Gillian Squire – Churchwarden

Sarah Vickers – PCC member

The notes on pages 16 to 23 form part of these financial statements

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024

1. Accounting policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and the Church Accounting Regulations 2006.

The PCC constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS102. The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair view'. This departure has involved following the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland issued in October 2019.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, except that properties are included at valuation and investments are included at market value. The financial statements include all transactions, assets and liabilities for which the Parochial Church Council ("PCC") is responsible in law. They do not include the financial statements of church groups that owe their main affiliation to another body nor those that are informal gatherings of church members.

Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis as the PCC members believe that no material uncertainties exist. The PCC members have considered the level of funds held and the expected level of income and expenditure for 12 months from authorising these financial statements. The budgeted income and expenditure deficit is covered with the support of withdrawing funds from the investments, as held within unrestricted general funds, and therefore enables the PCC to continue as a going concern. A detailed commentary on its impact is detailed in the Annual Report on page 7.

Funds

- *Unrestricted designated funds*
  Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside at the discretion of the PCC for specific purposes. The property capital fund is represented by the value of property held. The legacy capital fund is the aggregate of legacies received and is represented by assets held for future major capital projects.
- *Unrestricted general funds*
  Unrestricted funds are those funds which can be used for the ordinary purposes of the PCC.
- *Restricted funds*
  Restricted funds arise where collections are made or fundraising undertaken for specific causes, or where income is subject to specific conditions imposed by donors or grant-making organisations.

Incoming resources

- *Stewardship, service collections and donations*
  Amounts are recognised when received; at which point income tax recoverable is accounted for.
- *Other voluntary income*
  Grants and legacies are recognised once the PCC has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.
- *Church fees*
  Wedding and funeral fees are recognised when the event occurs.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

- *Property lettings*
  Rental income from the letting of premises is recognised when due.
- *Investment income, fundraising and sponsorship*
  Income is recognised when received.

Gifts in kind

Assets donated to the PCC are included in the financial records at valuation at the date of gift.

Resources expended

Amounts are recognised when payable and include irrecoverable VAT. All costs have been directly allocated to the relevant activity and fund.

Tangible fixed assets

- *Consecrated land and buildings and moveable church furnishings*
  Consecrated and benefice property is excluded from the financial statements under the Charities Act 2011. No value is placed on moveable church furnishings that require a faculty for their disposal as they are considered by the PCC as inalienable property.
- *Other real estate*
  Given the unusual nature and features of the freehold properties, the properties are held at residual value based on valuations by Wright & Co, a local estate agent, in November 2010 (17). Thus, no depreciation has been charged.
- *Fixtures and fittings*
  Items costing up to £10,000 are written off in the period in which the assets are acquired.

Investments

Investments are stated at market value at the balance sheet date. Unrealised gains and losses arising from movements in market values during the year are credited or charged to the Statement of Financial Activities based on the market value at the year end.

Stock

Stock is valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement value before any trade discounts due.

Cash at bank

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar accounts.

Creditors

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the Charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at the settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date. All financial instruments of the charity are measured at cost.

Financial assets include the bank balances, trade debtors and other debtors, but exclude prepayments and taxation.

Financial liabilities include trade creditors, other creditors, accruals and deferred income, but exclude social security and other taxes due.

Key Source of Judgement and Estimate Uncertainty

No significant judgements, accounting policies or assumptions have been made by the PCC in applying the Charity's accounting policies.

Transactions involving members of the PCC and connected persons

Members of the PCC are obliged to declare any interest in any proposed transaction that involves them or connected persons, and to withdraw from any discussions and not participate in any vote taken. Any transactions undertaken by or on behalf of the PCC and involving members of the PCC and/or connected persons are detailed in notes 11 and 23.

2. Donations, other than planned giving

	2024	2023
	£	£
Donations under Gift Aid (unrestricted)	2,267	1,710
Other donations (unrestricted)	3,321	2,917
Collections in church services (unrestricted)	2,492	2,354
Donations towards specified expenditure (unrestricted)	-	1,537
Donations towards restricted expenditure	3,260	13,035
	11,340	21,553

There were two large donations towards restricted expenditure, totalling £2,500 including tax recoverable (2023: five large donations totalling £12,750 including tax recoverable). Unrestricted donations totalled £8,080 (2023: £8,518) and restricted £3,260 (2023: £13,035).

3. Collections for other specific causes (restricted)

The figure of £4,850 (2023: £5,245) comprised £1,769 (2023: £736) of giving under Gift Aid and £3,081 (2023: £4,509) of other giving. (See also note 10).

4. Tax received/claimed

Tax recoverable on giving under Gift Aid in 2024 is estimated at £10,941 (2023: £10,279 estimated; £10,318 received). £2,000 was received under the small donations scheme for the tax year 2023/24 (2022/23: £2,000), of which £1,937 was recognised as claimable in 2023, and a further £2,000 has been recognised as claimable in 2024. Of total tax received or claimed, £11,160 was in relation to unrestricted funds (2023: £9,377) and £1,883 restricted (2023: £3,554).

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

5. Grants (restricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
The Sawbridgeworth Ecclesiastical Charity:		
- Church insurance	5,082	4,346
- Church costs	12,390	11,528
Ecclesiastical Insurance	1,010	1,450
The Friends of Great St Mary's	-	2,300
ChurchCare	-	2,500
Francis Coales Charitable Foundation	2,000	-
DCMS Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme (VAT claim)	2,301	2,580
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission	-	28
	22,783	24,732

6. Legacies

A legacy of £2,912 was received in 2024 from Miss Frances Lane for Spellbrook Church & School charity (2023: nil).

7. Fees - weddings and funerals (unrestricted)

In accordance with normal church accounting practice, fees receivable exclude amounts due to the clergy. The fees shown comprise amounts earned by the PCC and amounts payable to the Diocese and to assistants for their participation at weddings and funerals (see also note 13).

8. Property lettings (unrestricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Church House	15,080	18,047
Parish Hall	13,156	11,593
Car park	11,825	10,087
The Lodge	18,700	-
	58,761	39,727

9. Investment income (unrestricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Interest on CCLA Deposit Fund	394	269
Dividends on CCLA Fixed Interest Fund investment	3,130	3,282
Dividends on CCLA Investment Fund investment	20,881	20,562
	24,405	24,113

10. Mission & charitable giving

	2024	2023
	£	£
Mission grants to organisations – unrestricted		
India Touch Trust (Shiksha Rath) – *overseas mission giving*	1,105	1,002
Tools with a Mission – *overseas mission giving*	1,105	1,002
Bishop's Stortford Night Shelter – *UK mission giving*	1,472	668
The Friends of Sawbridgeworth Neurological Centres – *UK mission giving*	-	668
World Vision	300	300
	3,982	3,640

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

10. Mission & charitable giving continued

	2024	2023
	£	£
Distribution of collections for specific causes – restricted		
Women's World Day of Prayer	191	212
Sawbridgeworth Scouts and Girl Guides (St George's Day Service)	115	144
Train-a-Priest Fund (Lent lunches)	98	360
Christian Aid (collection tins and fundraising)	462	523
The Sawbridgeworth Mayor's charities (Annual Town Civic Service)	161	200
The Bishop of St Alban's Harvest Appeal	470	584
The Royal British Legion - Poppy Appeal (Remembrance Day Service)	259	382
The Children's Society (Advent Lunches, Christingle and Crib Service)	1,124	1,627
Crisis UK (Christmas collections)	1,023	991
Hurricane Beryl	158	-
DEC Middle East Appeal	1,164	-
DEC Turkey & Syria Appeal	-	924
Air Ambulance (funeral services)	120	-
Brain Tumour Trust (funeral service)	63	-
Holiday Homes Trust (funeral service)	-	116
	5,408	6,063

11. Ministry (unrestricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Diocesan parish share	69,920	73,035
Clergy expenses	1,596	1,857
Outreach	536	471
	72,052	75,363

The Vicar and non-stipendiary priest are reimbursed for expenses incurred on PCC business.

12. Regular church services (unrestricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Organists	7,085	5,530
Other costs	2,632	2,458
	9,717	7,988

13. Fees paid – weddings and funerals (unrestricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Diocesan fees	5,123	4,580
Fees paid to service assistants	2,038	1,460
	7,161	6,040

The PCC retains the difference between the total of fees received and the total of fees paid.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

14. Properties – maintenance, repair and utilities

	2024	2023
	£	£
Church	12,706	25,802
Churchyard	9,463	8,560
Church House	6,859	12,663
Parish Hall	1,834	5,778
The Lodge	7,304	9,899
Car park	397	-
Utilities	25,208	32,608
Insurances	7,681	6,421
	71,452	101,731

£19,985 was in relation to restricted funds (2023: £40,059) and £51,467 unrestricted (2023: £61,672). Restricted costs comprised £9,119 (2023: £23,810) for the church, £2,892 (2023: £5,980) for the churchyard, £3,162 (2023: £4,982) for Church House, nil for The Lodge (2023: £941), and £4,812 (2023: £4,346) for church insurances.

15. Administration (unrestricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Staff costs	16,189	15,595
Bookkeeping	1,699	2,031
Committee expenses	105	69
Telephone	1,422	1,299
Equipment	48	-
Printing	1,121	1,267
Office supplies	880	1,153
	21,464	21,414

The figure for staff costs in 2024 comprises £15,595 for salaries and wages (2023: £15,068), £569 for payroll administration (2023: £482) and £25 of training costs (2023: £45). The figure for salaries and wages in 2024 included pension costs of £1,057 (2023: £1,013).

The average number of employees during the year was one in 2024 (2023: one). The PCC considers its key management personnel to comprise the Vicar, Churchwardens and appointed officials (see pages 11 and 12). No employees received over £60,000 remuneration during the year (2023: nil). No PCC members or other officers were remunerated for their role (2023: nil).

16. Other expenditure (unrestricted)

The figure for other expenditure in 2024 of £4,821 included £1,500 on website re-design (2023: nil), £432 on IT systems changes (2023: nil), £1,331 on recruitment (2023: nil), gifts totalling £200 (2023: £630) and net bank charges of nil (2023: £88).

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

17. Tangible fixed assets (unrestricted)

	Freehold land & buildings	Fixtures & fittings	Total
	£	£	£
Valuation / Cost – *beginning and end of year*	490,000	7,899	497,899
Depreciation – *beginning and end of year*	-	(7,899)	(7,899)
Net book value - *beginning and end of year*	490,000	-	490,000

The amount of freehold land and buildings comprises valuations of St Mary's Lodge £335,000, the Parish Hall £45,000 and Church House £110,000, provided by local estate agent Wright & Co in November 2010 and reflecting current usage. Fixtures and fittings comprise the sound system

18. Investments (unrestricted)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Market value at beginning of year	873,366	841,614
Additions/(withdrawals) at cost	(30,000)	(40,000)
Gain/(loss) on revaluation	21,704	71,752
Market value at end of year	865,070	873,366
The portfolio consists of investments in:		
CCLA CBF Church of England Fixed Interest Securities Fund	124,779	121,123
CCLA CBF Church of England Investment Fund	740,291	752,243
	865,070	873,366

19. Debtors (receivable within one year)

	2024	2023
	£	£
ChurchCare grant	-	2,500
Francis Coales Charitable Foundation	2,000	-
DCMS Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme	926	-
Tax recoverable (of which £1,820 restricted (2023: £2,853) – see note 4)	12,941	12,216
Hire fees due (unrestricted)	696	73
Undertakers (unrestricted)	-	217
	16,563	**15,006**

20. Short term deposits (unrestricted)

These cash deposits are held with The Central Board of Finance Church of England Deposit Fund, which is managed by CCLA.

21. Creditors (payable within one year)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wedding deposits (unrestricted)	-	100
Distributions of collections to specific causes (restricted)	2,147	2,618
Nest (pension provider)	-	85
Independent examination fee (unrestricted)	2,322	2,154
	4,469	4,957

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

22. Funds

	Balances end-2023 £	Income in 2024 £	Expenditure in 2024 £	Fund transfers £	Balances end-2024 £
Unrestricted					
Property capital	490,000	-	-	-	490,000
Legacy capital	542,617	2,912	-	-	545,529
General	358,966	176,844	(172,986)	-	362,824
	1,391,583	179,756	(172,986)	-	1,398,353
Restricted					
Monies for specific causes	38	5,370	(5,408)	-	-
Specific grants & fundraising	120	35,126	(22,366)	-	12,880
	158	40,496	(27,774)	-	12,880
Total	1,391,741	220,252	(200,760)	-	1,411,233

For an explanation of restricted funds, see page 16.

See notes 3 and 10 second part for restricted funds comprising monies for specific causes and £519 in reclaimable tax (2023: £841). The end-year balance comprises nil for other charities (2023: £38).

See notes 2, 5 and 14 for restricted donations, grants and expenditure. In addition, there was £1,364 in reclaimable tax (2023: £2,713), restricted fundraising of £7,720 (2023: £2,162) and fundraising costs of £2,381 (2023: £1,005).

Prior year funds

	Balances end-2022 £	Income in 2023	Expenditure in 2023 £	Fund transfers £	Balances end-2023 £
Unrestricted					
Property capital	490,000	-	-	-	490,000
Legacy capital	542,617	-	-	-	542,617
General	342,033	195,211	(179,778)	1,500	358,966
	1,374,650	195,211	(179,778)	1,500	1,391,583
Restricted					
Monies for specific causes	15	6,086	(6,063)	-	38
Specific grants & fundraising	42	42,642	(41,064)	(1,500)	120
	57	48,728	(47,127)	(1,500)	158
Total	1,374,707	243,939	(226,905)	-	1,391,741

23. Payments to PCC members and connected persons

PCC members were reimbursed £1,088 (2023: £1,799) for purchases on behalf of the PCC, of which restricted costs were £817 (2023: nil), and paid £1,020 (2023: £660) for verger services (unrestricted in both years). No other payments to PCC members and connected persons were made (2023: nil).