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Team Vicar's Review

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and privilege that I present my fourth report as your Team Vicar. The past year has been one of steady progress, significant achievements, and continued dedication from so many within our church community. It remains a profound honour to serve alongside you all in the vibrant and evolving life of St John's.

Looking back over the past twelve months, I am particularly encouraged by the quiet yet discernible growth we have witnessed within our congregation. Our 9.30 am Sunday service has consistently provided a welcoming space for worship and fellowship, and it has been a joy to see our numbers reach as high as 40 on several 'normal' Sundays. This gradual increase speaks to the warmth and openness of our community, and it has

been particularly heartening to welcome new faces. Each visitor enriches our community, and I pray that they continue to feel the love and acceptance that is so characteristic of St John's.

A significant portion of the past year has been dedicated to strategic planning for the future of our ministry, particularly concerning our vital work with children and families. We were absolutely delighted to receive confirmation of a seven-year grant from the Canterbury Diocese of £135,000 to support and sustain this crucial area of our outreach. This was a truly fantastic result, and I extend my sincere gratitude to the Diocese for their belief in the importance of our work with the younger generations. This grant is a testament to the dedication and vision of Jane Myhill, who leads our Children and Families work with such passion and commitment. Her tireless efforts in nurturing the faith of our children and supporting their families are invaluable to our church community.

Furthermore, this generous Diocesan funding has enabled us to take a significant step forward in our outreach to young people. We were thrilled to be in a position to advertise for and recruit a part-time Youth Minister, and we warmly welcomed Emma Rafferty to our team in January. Even in her relatively short time with us, Emma has already demonstrated a remarkable energy and a genuine passion for engaging with young people. I am confident that her presence and leadership will have an amazing impact on our ability to connect with and support the youth in our parish, fostering their spiritual growth and providing them with a safe and encouraging community.

It is important, however, to acknowledge the structure of this Diocesan grant. It is a tapering grant, which means that the annual sum we receive from the Diocese will gradually decrease with each passing year. This necessitates a proactive and collective effort on our part to gradually increase our own giving and income to ensure the long-term sustainability of our Children and Families ministry and our new Youth Minister role. Your generous donations, however big or small, are therefore more crucial than ever.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for your ongoing financial support, which directly enables us to continue and expand this vital work. Every contribution makes a tangible difference in the lives of children and young people in our community, and your partnership in this ministry is deeply valued.

In addition to the vital support from the Diocese, we were also incredibly grateful to receive a grant of £22,000 from Benefact Trust, at a time when it was most needed. This timely financial assistance has been instrumental in sustaining our youth and children's work through a period of significant transition and development. The generosity of Benefact has provided a much-needed boost and has allowed us to maintain momentum in our outreach to the younger members of our parish. We are deeply thankful for their support and their recognition of the importance of our ministry.

My pastoral responsibilities extend across the diverse tapestry of our church life. I have particularly enjoyed pastoring the Wednesday 10.00 am congregation. While this is a smaller gathering, it is a deeply valued and important part of our church community. The fellowship and spiritual nourishment experienced by those who attend this mid-week service are significant. I cherish the opportunity to share in their journey of faith.

Furthermore, I remain committed to being present in the background for the more personal and often sensitive moments in the lives of our parishioners. Pastoral visits to those who are unwell or housebound, conducting funerals to honour the lives of loved ones, and officiating at baptisms and weddings are all integral aspects of my ministry. It has been noted, however, that the number of baptisms and weddings seems to have declined recently, a trend that is not unique to St John's and is, I believe, indicative of the increasingly secular nature of our society. While this shift presents challenges, it also underscores the importance of our continued presence and witness within the community, offering spaces of welcome, celebration, and solace.

A significant development in the past year was the enthusiastic participation of a group from our church in the 'Leading Your Church Into Growth' course last summer. This course provided valuable insights and practical tools for fostering a thriving and outward-looking church community. I was delighted to hear the positive impact it had on those who attended.

Building on this momentum, we dedicated our 9.30 am services throughout the autumn and early winter to reflecting on the key themes and principles of the 'Leading Your Church Into Growth' course. This period of reflection allowed the wider congregation to engage with these important concepts and consider how we can collectively contribute to the growth and flourishing of St John's. We will be sharing more about the outcomes of this reflection and our vision for the future at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on **Thursday, May 1st**, and I hope that you will be able to attend this important gathering. It will be an opportunity to hear more about our progress, discuss our plans, and contribute your valuable insights and perspectives.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to our Churchwardens, Ann Poole and Jan Bailey. They have served our church admirably and with unwavering dedication over recent years. Their commitment, wisdom, and tireless efforts behind the scenes have been invaluable in ensuring the smooth running of St John's. They have been a constant source of support and wise counsel to me, and I am deeply indebted to them for their service. As their term of office draws to a close, we are now looking for individuals who feel called to take on this important leadership role. Being a Churchwarden is a significant commitment, but it is also a deeply rewarding way to serve our church community. If you are interested in learning more about the responsibilities involved and how you might contribute in this capacity, please do not hesitate to speak to myself, Ann, or Jan. Your willingness to consider this role would be

greatly appreciated as we look to the future leadership of our parish.

The past year has been one of encouragement and progress at St John's. We have celebrated growth in our congregation, secured vital funding for our children and youth work, and embarked on a journey of reflection and renewal. However, we also recognize the ongoing need for your prayers, your time, and your generous financial support as we navigate the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you for your continued commitment to St John's, Swalecliffe. It is a privilege to serve you, and I look forward with hope and anticipation to all that God has in store for us in the year to come.

Yours in Christ, **Simon.**

Team Rector's Review

It has been a delight to hear with my ears and see with my eyes how St John's has gone from strength to strength during 2024. Your persistence in prayer combined with skill in communicating with our Diocesan colleagues has born much fruit in re-opening the Rectory Garden for ministry and Securing SMIIB funding for the Children and Families ministry and new Youth Minister post. Taking the plunge with the 'Leading Your Church Into Growth' programme has clearly been a truly life-giving step for St John's, and I trust you will find ways to generously share your insights and encouragement with the wider parish and further afield. Under Simon's leadership and across the parish in safeguarding, worship leading, food and school uniform distribution, HR administration and leadership in the Diocese, members of St John's are an inspiration and to be celebrated. My thanks to all of you, and especially to Jan and Ann as they prepare to step down as Churchwardens, and who have been so diligent in their attendance at PCC meetings. May God continue to bless you and those amongst whom God has placed you.

Rev Rachel C Webbley
Team Rector, Whitstable Team
Ministry.

Church Fabric

The writing of this report, gives me a great opportunity to thank the numerous people who help to keep this lovely church running so smoothly and keeping it in good order. Too many to name, but include the sidespeople, sacristan, flower arrangers, cleaners, those who deal with the money, refreshments and wash the linens. They are all important and appreciated. My apologies if I leave someone out. More help is always needed and if you have time please come and join us.

Looking back over the year, we have only had to deal with routine and ongoing tasks. Yet again, the buttresses and cracks cause the most concern. Photographs and details of these both inside and outside of the Church have been made for future reference. The surveyor is aware of the problems and we await his advice.

The biggest expense this year was relaying the path to the back door to enable safe disabled access. Some of the guards covering some of the rear windows were painted and repaired.

The regular servicing of the heating system, organ, and fire extinguisher has been done. A PAT test completed, gutters cleaned and tiles checked. Chris McKane continues to cut the grass in the churchyard and with four clear-ups this year, even the rear of the church is under control. Thanks to all our helpers for their time, they are not all church goers so we are very grateful for their help.

I am very pleased to note that there has been no evidence of seagulls since the spikes were installed and no starlings since sealing a possible entry hole.

Two new plaques have been installed in the walkway in memory of Jack & Joan Brent and Bernard & Doris Smith.

A 'Lenten Spring Clean' of the church has been recently completed.

The Explorer Scouts' flag has been installed in the church

Joan Hughes

Children & Families

Doesn't time fly when you are having fun! To be paid to do something you love is rare and to be part of a church family where children and families are cherished and volunteers are so kind and helpful is a huge blessing and I'm very grateful to God for all He is doing here at St John's. Here are some highlights.

St John's Garden Work continued in the garden and as well as several working parties we also had some employees from an Insurance Company come for a volunteering day in the garden which resulted in as much of the garden cut back as we wanted and a number of other jobs completed. We bought a large shed and other additions have included a new trampoline, a couple of boats for playing in and plenty of other children's play equipment. We started a new weekly group called Explorers which met on Tuesday afternoons through the summer months ~ there was a lot of football played, lots of bouncing, twisting and turning on the trampoline, lots of 'food' made in the mud kitchen and huge amounts of marshmallows toasted over the campfire! We finished our season in the garden with an autumnal afternoon of spooky stories, crafts and eats.

Blast, after school club for primary school aged children on Wednesdays has continued, and each week we welcome around 20 children. Blast has its challenges with providing activities for children aged between 5 and 11 who have very different needs, but craft activities and board games remain popular with the younger children while table tennis and a football table are popular with the older children. After school hunger pangs are catered for with endless toast and the tuck shop is always busy! it continues to attract around 20 children per week

Chatterbox, our baby and toddler group on Friday mornings has really blossomed and fills the hall. There are toys, some craft activities, some messy play and something active, such as our small bouncy castle or climbing frame. Add in a healthy snack time, a story and some singing and it seems to work!

We felt that it was time to call a halt to Toast, which met weekly in the Centre on Sunday mornings and to try something new and so we began **Messy Church** in September. This meets on the first Saturday of each month between 3.30 pm and 5.00 pm, a time which seems more accessible for families. This has taken off well and it is a joy to see families who we have made links with at Chatterbox, Blast and from Explorers. It's early days but it is good to see families engaging.

For **Harvest** this year we also enjoyed an All Age service in church with several of our families attending and giving a loud rendition of 'Cauliflowers Fluffy' which we'd been practising at various groups.

As a mum with young children I remember the isolation of regular groups stopping during school holidays so we try and ensure there are some easy and affordable options for families to enjoy during these times. Family Fun mornings have been popular with lots of different themes ranging from Christmas and Easter to a visit from Peppa Pig!

Again this year it has been a privilege to join with the **6th Whitstable Scout Group** for their parade services, we are so very lucky to see our church filled with them and their families on Mothering Sunday, Harvest, Remembrance Sunday and their Carol Service.

Whitstable Community Wardrobe had a bumper sixth year with over 600 children provided with 3000+ items of uniform which is a significant increase from previous years. We were active in supporting this project - washing, ironing and mending literally hundreds of items of uniform and hosting several open sessions, welcoming and helping families find uniform needed for the new school year. **Whitstable Toys** has also had a busy year with just over 10,000 toys, books, puzzles and games rehomed.

I hope this has given you a flavour of what I get up to during the course of a week, no two weeks are ever the same and it is impossible to mention all the varied 'bits' of my role but the love, support and help I receive from so many of you is always appreciated and never taken for granted. Thank you.

Jane Myhill
Children & Families Minister

Finance Report

The DCC made a significant budgetary change in 2024. The historic budget mindset saw the church and centre run different budgets. In 2024, we ran a church and an outreach/project budget. The cost of all we do at the centre and with our outreach was separated from the income and expenditure associated with the church building and its services. We predicted that the church fund needed to contribute £25,000 to the project and outreach work that is a big part of our mission and ministry plan. This was a bold statement and focused our financial objectives.

Due to a generous grant from the Benefact Trust for the development of our work with children and families, we did not in the end need to draw on our reserves as much as we had anticipated. Shown in our project accounts is the remainder of the Benefact grant that will be put towards our outreach costs next year. This was a real answer to prayers, and we would like to thank the Benefact Trust for their support.

The £10,876 surplus in the project fund is the remainder of the Benefact grant unspent in 2024. The church fund made an £5,668 surplus. This is after the contribution of only £10,972 towards project and outreach work, £14,028 less than expected due to the Benefact grant. We made £680 in interest on our savings this year equating to an overall £17,228 surplus.

We have no designated funds at the year end. This is money that the DCC have ring-fenced for a cause. As we are looking at our church finances, the DCC saw no requirement for designating the money.

You will see the St John's Garden fund and compost toilet funds are restricted because money has been given specifically for those projects and cannot be chosen by the DCC to be spent on anything else.

My thanks to Ann Poole for maintaining the petty cash fund for flowers in the church and other small expenses. Mary Fuller and Joan Pilgrim diligently count and bank collection money from our services, together with other donations which is a helpful job that goes unnoticed, thank you both. Chris McKane, Stewart Neame and Amanda Boucherat are our second

approvers on all our church payments and give up their time regularly to perform those duties, thank you.

PROJECT INCOME HIGHLIGHTS

Fundraising efforts were 2.5 times the budget which is brilliant. Centre hiring is almost on budget, an area we need to increase in 2025 with the introduction of Age UK weekly. Coffee Break contributions are 30% higher than budgeted.

PROJECT EXPENDITURE HIGHLIGHTS

£2,000 of 'Project expenditure' was a contingency for spending on outreach/the centre which was not required. We underspent of repairs and maintenance of the Centre by £2,000 which could increase the spend in 2025. We spent £6,215 less than expected over the year.

CHURCH INCOME HIGHLIGHTS

Funerals, weddings and fees income was as expected. We managed to raise 1.3 times more than we budgeted towards other charity initiatives. Regular giving was below budget as well as collections and donations which is something we need to be conscious of in 2025. We received £2,034 from Utility Warehouse by way of a refund and a legacy of £5,000 from Bernard and Doris Smith in the year. Jack Brent's family continue to give generously to the church monthly. Gift aid was £4,000 over budget due to some catch up work completed in 2023. My thanks to Maxine Gambrill who continues to do a great job as gift aid secretary.

CHURCH EXPENDITURE HIGHLIGHTS

Parish share was slightly over budget due to the PCC decision to outsource the payroll which is a cost shared amongst the churches employing people in the team. Thanks to continued work to keep our utilities low and the re-assessment provided by a market comparison company, our utilities were only 30% of what we budgeted. My thanks to Ann Poole for her support in this area. Repairs and maintenance mainly overspent due to the spend on the path up to the back door of the church which was a health and safety risk. Joan Hughes does so well to manage this budget.

PARISH SHARE

This is the contribution that St John's makes to the Diocese of Canterbury towards the cost of the vicar's salary and

other diocese support costs. Including a PCC quota to cover team expenses such as payroll and team vicars' expenses, the cost in 2024 was £32,900, increasing to £40,040 in 2025. The parish share is calculated on average church attendance figures over the previous four years. As a growing church, this is a significant increase that is likely to grow.

YOUR PART VIA REGULAR GIVING

If you value St John's and the work we do to spread the word of God and extend our outreach in to the local community there are ways you can contribute financially:

Regular giving to the church is a way you can contribute financially. Do approach the wardens, anyone on the DCC or myself if you want to sign up to our envelope cash giving scheme or for details to give by standing order.

We request that our 50 odd regular givers review their contributions and consider any affordable increase. Every little helps!

All those giving regularly, please reach out if you are not signed up to gift aid. If you pay tax, you can sign up and the church can claim a further 25% of your giving amount from HMRC.

If you haven't already considered this, perhaps you could write in to your will a legacy to be left to St John's Church. Even a small contribution can go a long way, and we saw a legacy that made a difference in 2024.

Thank you for your time in reading through the finances. I am not sure it's gripping stuff, but its necessary for us all to pay attention and understand what's going on in our buzzing and progressive church.

Jack Dale
Honorary Treasurer

Funds at 31 Dec 2024

CASH IN BANK

Total Funds 1 Jan 24	46,430.34
Church Fund Budget	8,360.12
Project Fund Budget	24,903.98
Interest on Savings	683.89
Total Funds to date	63,658.09
Total Surplus Deficit) as at 31 Dec 24	17,227.75

FUNDS HELD At 31 Dec 24

DESIGNATED FUNDS

Community Outreach	0.00
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DESIGNATED SUB TOTAL	0.00
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RESTRICTED FUNDS

Church Flowers	40.00
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Benefact Grant - C&FM Salary	10,875.66
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Rectory Garden Fund	1,216.96
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Compost Toilet Fund	1,549.00
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Special Appeals	212.00
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RESTRICTED TOTAL	13,893.62
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UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	49,764.47
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TOTAL FUNDS HELD	63,658.09
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Church Petty Cash Flowers	71.13
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Church Accounts

Annual Budget versus Expenditure for the year ended 31st December 2024

	Jan - Dec Actual	Jan - Dec Budget
PROJECT INCOME	£	£
Support from Church	10,972	25,000
Restricted Donations	2,522	2,000
Grants	13,673	8,850
Fundraising	4,576	2,000
Regular Hiring	8,437	8,680
One-off Hiring	800	1,000
Coffee Break	936	600
Project income total	52,791	48,130

	Jan - Dec Actual	Jan - Dec Budget
CHURCH INCOME	£	£
Funerals, Weddings & Fees	3,538	3,500
Restricted Donations	899	500
Charity Appeals	2,303	1,000
Regular Giving	26,979	29,500
Gift Aid	10,414	6,500
Collections & Donations	6,247	7,000
Saturday Market	8,999	8,000
Legacies & Refunds	7,034	-
Church income total	66,413	56,000

PROJECT EXPENDITURE	£	£
C&FM Expenses	561	800
C&FM - Wages, Taxes & Pension	26,773	26,650
Caretaker Wages	6,110	7,500
Project Expenditure	30	2,000
Fundraising Costs	234	100
Rectory Garden	1,726	1,000
Miscellaneous	17	250
Printing & Stationery	782	600
Coffee Break	213	200
Insurances	725	830
Cleaning & Expenses	439	200
Repairs & Maintenance	1,509	3,500
Gas, Electricity & Water	2,512	4,000
Wifi & Technology	285	500
Project Expenditure total	41,915	48,130
Surplus or Deficit vs Budget *	10,876	-

*being grant funding secured for 2025

CHURCH EXPENDITURE	£	£
Funerals, Weddings & Fees	1,742	1,750
Fundraising Costs	-	100
Special Appeals/Donations	2,066	1,000
Canterbury Diocese Parish Share	32,868	32,760
Church & Service Supplies	310	250
Contingency	18	-
Flowers & Churchyard	1,140	900
Gas, Electricity & Water	1,398	5,000
Bank Fees	178	250
Insurance & Licences	2,619	2,400
Miscellaneous	119	450
Organists & Music	2,070	2,000
Printing & Stationery	640	600
Repairs & Maintenance	4,202	3,500
Technology	404	500
Support for Community Outreach	10,972	25,000
Church Expenditure total	60,745	76,460
Surplus or Deficit vs Budget	5,668	-20,460

St John's Centre

We couldn't be more fortunate than to have such a well-used and loved venue, nor could we want for more from those involved in its use and care.

Jack Dale, as usual, has gone far above and beyond in what he does, attending to the finances, negotiating cheaper energy costs, and a substantial refund from our previous supplier, and calculating, and implementing new hiring rates, so that we are, at last, able to cover costs, plus so much more to do with the general running of the Centre.

Chris McKane has been fantastically successful in recruiting outside hirers, managing the practicalities of the times they have asked for, and calculating and negotiating charges.

Our regular outside hirers include Wara, NCT, WI Guild, AA group, Age UK, and our occasional bookings are made up of parties, groups like the Oyster Singers, the Tennis Club, Strokes Association, Elmwood Residents Association, Wreath makers, etc, etc. This involves a huge amount of work for him, and we owe him very grateful thanks. He has also given much time to multiple maintenance tasks, which have saved much money.

The real value of the Centre, however, is the facility it gives us to undertake our many outreach initiatives to the general community, all of which are well documented elsewhere in this report book, and the opportunity it affords us to provide a midweek communion service, and space for quiet reflection at our 'Quiet Time with God' afternoons, as well as running fundraising events for ourselves via the Friends of St. John's.

Jane Myhill, has continued to take on being the Centre manager, and line manager of Suzanne, our caretaker, (on top of the many, many other tasks she has), and we are truly grateful for this Jane. Having mentioned Suzanne, it is very appropriate to thank her also, for all she does. For many of the hirers she is the only face from St. John's they see, and the goodwill she engenders on our behalf is priceless, the groups all love her to bits. What she does is essential to us, and we

do owe you much gratitude Suzanne. (Suzanne also now attends the Centre Committee meetings, which is very helpful)

The Centre committee meets on an ad hoc basis, matters currently under discussion are the ongoing maintenance of the outside of the building, and the road adjacent to it, and how we might solve the ongoing problem of the customers of the chemists, parking on the car park, and in Rectory Gardens, to the detriment of Centre users, and local residents. In this context we are grateful to Ann Poole for her involvement in this aspect of Centre affairs, as Churchwarden, to say nothing of her husband Mike.

There are many members of our church who take a real interest in, and contribute to the running of the Centre, and we are grateful to them all, St John's is a church where all really do work together, and we are blessed because of it.

Stewart Neame

Safeguarding

During the past year I have had zoom meetings with others in our Diocesan Support group and attended by Zoom the joint Diocesan of Canterbury and Rochester annual conference. This year it was concerning Slave Labour and another topic on unusual religious sects and safeguarding concerns.

In October Safeguarding officers in the Whitstable Parish decided we would meet together to discuss ways we could support each other. At the first meeting with Rev Rachel, two of us met. We have now had another meeting and one more person came. This is a very useful time to discuss issues and we have all learnt something.

I am now helping with record keeping for the PCC training and have an overview of the Team Churches Dashboards and Hubs. This is with Rev. Rachel and helpful to the Whitstable Team.

On the training front Jan, Amanda, and I have completed our Leadership

training in the last year. Domestic Abuse is now needed by anyone working with children's groups, the churchwardens and those leading ministry. For DCC members it is now not essential. It is very important that all DCC MEMBERS have the Basic and Foundation Course completed. Churchwardens need to complete the Leadership Course.

Thank you to all who have completed their Training.

Ann Poole, Safeguarding Officer

Friends of St John's

Our 'Friends of St John's' membership continues to grow, bringing together all those in regular contact with St John's. Started in 2022, membership at the end of 2024 was 467 (395 at the end of 2023). Membership is free, and members receive monthly emails highlighting key events in the life of St John's.

In 2024 our 'Friends of St John's' planning team organised three indoor boot fairs, two quiz nights and, building on last year's successful event, and another Christmas Craft Fair. These were all really enjoyable events for those taking part and together raised important funds for the work of St John's.

Thanks to 'Friends of St John's' we were also able to organise a Summer Fete which took place in St John's Garden and was, despite a rain shower mid-day, enjoyed by young and old. We received many appreciative comments from those that attended and raised a fantastic £1,700. Thank you to all those who supported this event.

We plan to repeat a similar programme of events in future years but very much hope that we might get more members joining our planning team in 2025. Could you help?

To join Friends of St John's or to get in touch please contact:
FriendsOfStJohns.Swalecliffe@gmail.com

Karen McKane & Jane Myhill

Saturday Market

I think this is my twelfth Saturday Market Report and how the market has flourished over the years, even the queue on a Saturday morning is longer! Needless to say I am amazed at the amount of Outreach that goes on in those two hours the first Saturday of each month. Many friendships have been made over that cup of tea or coffee, many hands been shaken and many a tear has been shed. "See you next month" are often the words we hear or "Thanks for my cake same again next month please".

This year is our twenty-fifth year - yes we have been meeting up for the market for 25 years this September. Originally we started by meeting up at 8 o'clock on the Saturday morning but as we expanded that was not enough time to prepare so now we now meet on a Friday afternoon about 2 o'clock.

One or two things have changed over the years. We don't sell videos anymore but we do now sell on Ebay and Vinted Thanks to the lovely ladies who organise this for us. We do have to move with the times!! This year has been another good financial year for the market, we made nearly £8,000 on Saturday mornings and we turned this into nearly £9,000 with Ebay and Vinted sales. Absolutely amazing. I can't thank the Saturday Market Team enough for all their hard work and dedication, every month come rain or shine they are there so Thank You. Thank you too, to all of you who provide goods for us to sell - without your donations there would be no Saturday Market. So whatever you do for the market please, please carry on. We very much need your help. Thank you.

We said our final goodbye to Ian Stickels this year as Ian passed away in December. Many of you will remember Ian for his chats on the men's clothes stall.

Mary

Coffee Break

Every Tuesday morning between 10.00 am and mid-day a group of around 20 ladies and gentlemen meet together to share tea, coffee, cake and company in the centre. It is all free though donations are welcome and the cakes are all kindly made by members of St John's Church family and once a month by people attending Swalecliffe Day Centre. All are delicious and there is rarely more than a crumb left! We have had a few special weeks this year, celebrating Shrove Tuesday with pancakes, Christian Aid week, Harvest with a quiz and at our final meeting before Christmas we were delighted to be entertained by Swalecliffe Primary School Choir.

This year it has been lovely to welcome some new people on to the helpers rota as we have seen some people step down after helping for some years. Our thanks go to those who have stepped down and to those who have stepped up and of course all those who keep us fed with cake every week. New members are always welcome.

Jane Myhill

Prayer Shawl Group

The Prayer Shawl Group continues to meet at 11.00 am in St John's Centre on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. We have distributed many shawls and blankets this year and have taken on other projects as well. We have made 'Fish and Chip Jumpers' - these are sent to Sierra Leone, hats and scarves for the homeless and poppies for the 80th anniversary of VE Day to name few.

We would like to thank all those who have made donations of money or yarn. This is much appreciated. Please speak to me or any of the group if you are interested in joining us.

Maureen Denney

MESSAGE FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS

Ann & Jan would like to thank everyone for the help given during their period of office, Without your help they couldn't have done

Charitable Donations

This year we have again supported Christian Aid and sent a total of £382.30. This was from the collection envelope, and a coffee morning arranged and run by coffee break.

We also supported Christians against Poverty, Whitstable branch. I was able to send a donation of £214.00 to help this cause.

In September, for Harvest, we had a wonderful collection of food for the Food Bank. Liam the collection driver came with a friend this year as it was such a big collection. After the service we had our usual harvest lunch which is provided very kindly by a team of volunteers and raised a total of £332.50.

We have also delivered food to the Food Bank throughout the year.

The Children's Society home collection boxes raised a total of £343.97. we then collected £70 at the Christingle and £100 for the Christmas card in Church.

Our final gift was a cheque to Fuel Share for £100.00 from our Carols by Candlelight Service. The collection was shared between the work of St John's and Fuel Share. Fuel Share works in a similar way to the Food Bank and has helped some of the families Jane meets pay their fuel bills.

Thank you so much for your generous gifts to support these charities that are all doing such valuable work.

Ann Poole

6th Whitstable Scout Group

Over the last year I am very pleased to say that we have increased our young people members' numbers on this year's census which shows that our experienced Leaders are "doing something very right"! Well done everyone!

We have welcomed Richard Gaskin as Chairman to the Group taking over from

Mike Poole who stepped down after a magnificent 15 year 'stint' as Chairman, for which we thank him immensely.

We continue to run two Beaver Colonies, two Cub Packs and we have the largest Scout Section we have had for many years. Our Explorer Unit continues to run for our 14-18 year olds too. The Group is extremely fortunate to have longstanding leaders who run their sections sharing with young people aged between 6-18 appropriate skills, activities, knowledge, fun and laughter helping them to achieve badges and experiences with their peers in a safe and organised environment. I thank these Leaders without whom our Group would not exist.

We have been delighted to have three new Leaders this year, one each into Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. This does not happen very often and I had the honour of investing each one of them, saying the Scout Promise and presenting them with their Group scarf in front of the young people and many parents.

The NHS uses our premises every day; we have the Whitstable Stamp Collectors using the Hall quarterly and the Rainbows, Brownies and Guides use the Hall weekly too. We are very fortunate to have such a versatile Hall that is well looked after and maintained to enable ourselves and other Groups to make use of all the facilities.

We still have a very efficient fundraising team running events to help enable us to keep the Hall running and to provide all equipment needed for the Sections. We have Jumble Sales, Wine and Wisdoms, a Christmas Bazaar and a Sponsored Walk. This year's Group Sponsored Walk, that has just taken place, saw all sections walking from various points along the sea front - the Harbour, The Clock Tower in Herne Bay and Reculver Towers - raising money for a defibrillator to be located on the outside of our Hall in suitable casing with monthly maintenance. This will benefit the community as a whole not just our Scout Group.

I would like to thank Jane for all her efforts in making our church parades so 'child friendly'. She provides interactive

'talks' which help the young people to realise that Church does not always need to be a quiet space. At our Harvest Festival we had our previous Explorer Unit Flag dedicated and this is now displayed in Church next to our previous Scout Troop Flag. At our Remembrance church parade we had a total of 169 people in our little Church (I have no idea how we all got in!) which included 64 uniformed young people with 18 other children. Amazing!

During the year the Beavers have been to the cinema, made bird feeders, had a walk in the dark with many head torches (!) and a Christmas Party. They have had a Lego evening, made many different crafts including shamrock people and heart Mother's Day bags and played more games and gained more badges than can be counted!

The Cubs have visited the lifeboat station, had a visit from a police officer, went to the Panto at the Marlowe Theatre (oh yes they did!), took part in the Big Bird Watch and had Parent Challenge evenings when parents do get very rather competitive! They have gained many badges too including the communicator, safety, disability and cook.

The Scouts have had their annual Monopoly Run when 25 young people and 10 adults went up to London on the train to take part in Monopoly games 'for real!' They have made candles, painted canvases for their patrols and had an evening tasting tea and judging which biscuit was best for dunking! I was guest of honour at a Fine Dining experience eating with the Scouts, being served by them and making a speech! A wonderful night. Again many badges are achieved by our older Section.

The Explorer Unit, I am very pleased to say, is running very well with our two Explorer Leaders. This is always a little harder to keep going, as this is for the older age group. They made a Splat Santa side show for our Christmas Bazaar, celebrated Chinese New Year learning origami and joined the Cub and Scout Activity Camp. They join in some activities with the Scouts including air rifle shooting.

I am forever thankful to all the leaders, helpers, parents on rotas, friends and families who support us and of course the young people who continue to thrive in the Group. What a privilege it is to belong to the 6th Whitstable Scout Group.

Tessa Dale – Group Scout Leader

Electoral Roll

A verbal report will be given at the meeting.

DCC

Membership

The following served during 2024/25:

Amanda Boucherat (*as member of Deanery Synod*)
Lorri Currie
Jack Dale
Chris McKane
Karen McKane
Maxine Gambrill
Joan Hughes
Jane Myhill (*as member of Deanery Synod*)
Stewart Neame
Ann Poole (*as Churchwarden*)
Sue Scott
Jeremy St John (*as PCC Rep*)
Nick Widdows

The church is entitled to two members of the Deanery Synod. One of these posts is currently vacant. Our churchwardens and Deanery Synod Reps are 'ex-officio' members of PCC.

Meetings

The DCC held six meetings during the year, all in person. The council discussed:

- Considering the amount that we should offer as our contribution towards the Parish Share paid by Team Churches
- Other Finance matters
- The appointment of a part time Youth Minister with a grant from the Diocese
- The introduction of 'Leading your Church into Growth'
- The Benefact Trust grant
- Leading your Church into Growth
- Issues regarding safeguarding

Nick Widdows, DCC Secretary

Whitstable PCC

The PCC (Parochial Church Council) continued to play a crucial role in the governance of the Whitstable Team Ministry. Key leadership appointments were confirmed, ensuring stability and effective management.

Regular PCC meetings were held, fostering open communication and collaborative decision-making. Electoral Roll Preparations were made for the complete renewal of the Electoral Roll in 2025, emphasizing the importance of accurate membership records.

The Whitstable Team Ministry actively pursued its mission through various initiatives, seeking to serve the spiritual needs of the community and engage with individuals in meaningful ways.

The Ascension Day and Confirmation services were celebrated as joyful occasions, highlighting the strength of shared worship within the team.

The ministry of Rev Dan Ralph and Rev Jayne Edinboro was acknowledged and celebrated as they were ordained deacon, with thanks given for their respective roles.

Plans were put in place to continue with the Community Wardrobe, demonstrating a commitment to addressing practical needs within the community.

The appointment of a new governor at Whitstable Endowed School, Andrew Gore, was supported, further strengthening the team's connection with local education.

Training for Funeral Ministry was completed, enhancing the team's capacity to provide pastoral care during times of bereavement.

The team actively encouraged and supported individuals exploring their calling to ordained ministry.

Churches were encouraged to develop and implement individual Mission Action Plans, tailored to their specific contexts and needs.

Children and young people aged 16 and over were included in the October count, demonstrating a commitment to engaging with younger generations. Messy Church at St John's Swalecliffe proved highly successful, attracting significant numbers. The possibility of employing a part-time

'Ignite' worker to further support youth ministry was considered. A part-time youth worker was appointed at St John's Swalecliffe.

Ministry to the residents of the new care home, Whitstable House, was initiated, extending pastoral care to those in residential care.

Parish share was collected in a timely manner, demonstrating the team's commitment to supporting the wider diocesan mission. The PCC approved the 2025 budget, with careful consideration given to the 5% increase in Parish Share. The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMIB) bid for St John's, Swalecliffe was approved.

The Whitstable Team Ministry maintained a strong commitment to safeguarding, ensuring the safety and well-being of all, particularly children and vulnerable adults. In-person training for the Foundation module was successfully delivered, providing accessible training options. And plans were made to offer further in-person training for DCC and PCC members.

A Social Media policy was agreed upon and disseminated to all churches and a policy regarding church attendees and volunteers with past offences was under development. A procedure was established for each church to confirm its local safeguarding policy annually, ensuring alignment with the Team Ministry's overall policy.

The PCC addressed various human resources matters, ensuring fair employment practices and supporting the staff of the Whitstable Team Ministry. A pay discrepancy arising from the increase in the minimum wage was identified and addressed. Annual reviews were conducted and recorded, promoting staff development and accountability. Funding was secured for a six-month Children and Families Minister post at St Alphege Seasalter.

A small team was formed to assess heating provision across church buildings in the Deanery, promoting Eco Church initiatives.

The Whitstable Team Ministry maintained strong ecumenical relationships, collaborating with other

Christian denominations in Whitstable. Churches Together in Whitstable events, such as the Blessing of the Waters and the Annual Celebration, provided opportunities for shared worship and fellowship.

The retirement of leaders from several Whitstable churches (Baptist, Community Church, and URC) was noted, with prayers offered for those churches in transition.

Street Pastors held a recruitment event at St Alphege Whitstable, encouraging wider participation in this valuable ministry.

The Whitstable Team Ministry demonstrated a growing commitment to environmental stewardship through the Eco Church program. Each church in the team is registered with the Eco Church programme. St Alphege, Whitstable has achieved Silver status, while All Saints and St Alphege Seasalter have achieved Bronze status. St John's and St Peter's are actively working towards Bronze status.

The Whitstable Team Ministry faced several challenges during the year, including financial constraints, the need to adapt to changing demographics, and the ongoing work of maintaining and developing its buildings and ministries. However, these challenges were also seen as opportunities for growth and renewal.

Revd Simon Tillotson

Reculver Deanery

Over 2024 the Deanery has been involved in discussions about pastoral reorganisation for the eastern side of the Deanery. Currently these are taking place at a DMMC level, which is the standing committee of the Deanery Synod. In our February meeting we agreed a proposal to Diocesan Synod that the Deanery Synod and DMMC should be consulted for every clergy incumbent status appointment following problems in 2023. Sadly this was lost at Diocesan Synod.

In the June synod we had an excellent presentation by Rev Lindsay Yates the Diocesan Generous Giving

Adviser about the various ways we can encourage giving in our parish. Then in July we welcomed the arrival of Rev Chris Carnaby-Denyer as the new Priest-in-charge of St Martins, Herne who is settling in very well.

In October, we agreed to set up two new groups, one which would help facilitate inhouse face to face safeguarding training for those who find online training difficult, and one to further knowledge of eco-efficient heat pumps, solar panels and other eco friendly facilities. We are making slow but gradual process with both.

Sadly we heard at the end of the year that Revd Sue Martin would be leaving to take on a new position as a vicar elsewhere in the Diocese, and our focus is now on what form of ministry Reculver parish will be able to afford going forwards. Currently the Parish of Reculver is looking at having to reduce the level of ministry it can afford dramatically from a full time post to a 0.2 post. This is a pressure felt by many within the life of the church.

Revd Simon Tillotson
Area Dean

Minutes - Vestry Meeting & ADCM 2024

MINUTES OF THE VESTRY MEETING

HELD ON SUNDAY 28 APRIL 2024 AT 10.30 AM IN ST JOHN'S CHURCH

1. Welcome and Opening Worship

The Chairman, Rev Simon Tillotson, welcomed 30 church members to this year's Vestry Meeting and ADCM.

2. Apologies for absence.

Michael Domnin, Maxine Gambrill, Nicola Hillier, Joan Hughes, Lesley Moxon, Joan Pilgrim, Ann Poole, Sue St John and Ian Stickles.

3. Chairman's Opening Remarks.

The Chairman said that he would leave his remarks until the end.

4. Minutes of the Vestry Meeting held on 15th May 2023.

The minutes had been agreed by the DCC and were accepted by the meeting.

5. Elections.

(a) Two Churchwardens.

Jan Bailey was proposed by Jeremy St John and seconded by Val Reid.

Ann Poole was proposed by Mary Fuller and seconded by Nicola Hillier.

There being no other nominations, they were declared elected.

(b) Deputy Churchwardens.

There were no nominations.

(c) Assistant Churchwardens.

Lorri Currie and Jeremy St John were proposed by Sue Scott and seconded by Jan Bailey. Their election was agreed unanimously.

Rev Simon Tillotson
Chairman

Nick Widdows
Secretary

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL DISTRICT CHURCH MEETING
HELD ON SUNDAY 28 APRIL 2024 AT 10.40 AM IN ST JOHN'S CHURCH**

1. Apologies for Absence.

As Vestry Meeting.

2. Minutes of the ADCM held on 15th May 2023.

The minutes had been agreed by the DCC and accepted by the meeting.

3. Elections:

(a) Two PCC Representatives.

Stewart Neame and Jeremy St John were proposed by Mary Fuller and seconded by Amanda Boucherat. There being no other nominations they were declared elected.

(c) Representatives for the DCC.

The existing ordinary members of the DCC - Lorri Currie, Jack Dale, Maxine Gambrill, Joan Hughes, Chris McKane, Karen McKane, Sue Scott and Nick Widdows - were proposed by Jane Myhill and seconded by Tessa Dale.

There being no other nominations and the maximum of nine ordinary members not being exceeded they were declared elected and their election was acclaimed by the meeting.

(c) Sidespeople

The following were confirmed as sidespeople: Sally Collins, Lorri Currie, Jane Holness, Joan Hughes, Val Martin, Chris McKane, Sue Scott, Jeremy St John and Grace Williams.

(d) Deanery Synod (extra item).

At last year's ADCM Amanda Boucherat and Nick Widdows were elected to the Deanery Synod for three years. Subsequently Nick Widdows resigned and Jane Myhill was elected by the DCC to fill the vacancy. At the time it was believed that Amanda Boucherat, although a member of Diocesan Synod through her being joint chair of the Diocesan Mission & Ministry Framework, was not ex-officio a member of Deanery Synod and so would continue as one of the two members we were entitled to. However, the situation had now been clarified and it now seemed that she **was** ex-officio a member of Deanery Synod (and therefore of the PCC and our DCC). She had therefore resigned as representative of St John's, leaving a vacancy. The vacancy was not filled at the meeting but people were asked to consider taking on this role.

6. Reports required by law.

- (a) Electoral Roll.** Jane Myhill read a verbal report: The Electoral Roll is the official list of members of St John's who have signed the appropriate paperwork showing their commitment to St John's and as such are eligible to both stand and vote in any elections applicable to us such as DCC, PCC and Deanery Synod. Sadly, during the last year several long standing and faithful members of St John's church family have died although we have also been glad to see new people joining us. Our roll for this year (up to 27.4.24) now stands at 73.

Let us continue to pray not only for spiritual growth but also for numerical growth.

- (b) DCC Report.** The report was noted by the meeting.

- (c) Fabric Report.** The report was received by the meeting.

- (d) PCC Report.** The report was received by the meeting.

- (e) Deanery Synod.** The report was received by the meeting.

(f) Treasurers' Report and Presentation of Accounts for the Church and St John's Centre for year ending 31st December 2023.

The report was noted by the meeting. Jack Dale explained that a deficit of around £30,000 had been incurred but £11,000 of this had been spent on the refurbishment of St John's Centre to top up the £9,500 National Lottery Grant.

In discussion it was stated that showing the transfer of funds from reserves to the profit and loss account as income gave the impression we had broken even. Jack Dale said he would look at this.

It was proposed by Barbara Brenson, seconded by Lorri Currie and carried unanimously that the report be accepted.

Jack went on to say that a number of changes were to be made in 2024. St John's Centre would no longer have its own bank account and we were in the course of moving our accounts to the NatWest Bank where we would not have to pay bank charges. A smaller deficit was expected and we were hopeful of receiving some grant money from the Church Commissioners or the Diocese to cover some of the costs of the Children & Families Ministry, other grant prospects were being investigated and we had increased hire fees for the Centre (which was attracting new hirers). Also no Gift Aid was received in 2023 but would be this year in respect of 2022 and 2023. Nonetheless we would still be in deficit and this could not continue indefinitely. A fairly small increase in giving by all on the Electoral Roll (around (£2.50 per week) would reduce the deficit by £2,000. He also asked people to consider leaving a legacy in their will.

7. Other Reports.

(a) Children & Families Ministry. Jane Myhill said that she had been blown away by how we had progressed. Also the children and their parents were not often seen in St John's building, they were definitely part of St John's Church family. As mentioned by Jack she was hopeful of seeing the external funding. We were glad that we had permission to continue to use the Rectory garden even when there was a tenant in the house. It was noted that pre-Christmas event staged by Jane, which Bishop Rose had attended, played no small part in the decision. The Archdeacon had also been very helpful.

(b) Other Reports in Annual Report book. There were no comments on the other reports.

(c) Safeguarding. There had not been a safeguarding report in the printed book so the following written report was made available to those attending. In future years a report would be printed in the book: 'During the past year I have logged into four support and update safe guarding zoom meetings run by the Canterbury Diocese Safeguarding team. I also linked into Canterbury and Rochester Diocese annual conference. I learned a lot about stalking and a support unit for victims of sexual assault.

Jane and I completed our training to run Basic Safeguarding training in house. We are still looking to arrange this for anyone at St Johns who would prefer this. If anyone wants to do their training on line but is worried about it, I am happy to help you.

As a Parish we are now signed up to a Parish Dashboard. This makes my work easier as I can see where we have gaps and it means all Churches are working to the same standards. We have reached level 2.

As a member of the DCC, it is a requirement that all members complete Basic, Foundation and Domestic Abuse Awareness. We are almost there in this area, so please can I ask that those not yet completed do so as soon as possible. I am available to assist you through the process if it would help.

In March I met with Alex Kubeyinje and others from the Whitstable Safeguarding Team, along with Rev Rachel. This was a fact finding meeting for Alex. He wanted to know of difficulties we were experiencing. Across the team it appears training is the biggest issue along with bell ringing and safeguarding. I have now been elected by the

DCC for another year and am pleased that my training has now been completed. **Ann.'**

8. Any other business.

There was no other business.

9. Chairman's Closing Remarks.

- (a) **Communion Distribution.** Rev Simon Tillotson said that he understood some people were unhappy with receiving the bread from a lay person. He explained that theologically there was no difference between the bread and wine, both of which had been blessed by the priest. It was impractical to have both the intincted (dipped) bread and the bread given separately with the common cup distributed by an ordained person. The alternative was not to offer two ways of distribution but most people liked to have the choice. This was confirmed by a 'straw poll' at the meeting.
- (b) **Additional Eucharists.** Although given the number of stipendiary, non-stipendiary and retired priests available it was impractical to normally have more than two communion services per month (and many people liked the current mixture of eucharistic and non-eucharist services) there were certain festivals where a Eucharist was appropriate even if it did not occur on the first or third Sunday of the month. These were Easter Day, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Birth of St John the Baptist, Christ the King and Christmas. It was noted because in 2025 Easter was late (20th April), there would be Eucharists four weeks in a row in June if the normal pattern plus festivals was followed. It was suggested that the Eucharist on 1st June might be replaced by a non-eucharistic service.
- (c) **Fifth Sunday.** Rev Simon Tillotson said that he intended that 5th Sunday services would in future be Iona style but 'Spring Harvest' style hymns and songs with more upbeat backing tracks (rather than organ accompaniment) would be introduced as part of the second and fourth Sunday non-eucharistic services.
- (d) **Jane Edinboro.** Jane, a member of the All Saints congregation was undergoing ordination training in order to become a non-stipendiary priest in the Team. Once ordained and then priested the following year, she would be able to take on some of the work currently performed by the existing staff and retired clergy. There were, however, no current plans for further curates in training to be allocated to Whitstable.
- (e) **Rectory.** Some concern was expressed about the currently empty Rectory and it was suggested that it could possibly be used for church purposes. Rev Simon Tillotson said we could approach the Diocese but it was understood that the Rectory would be refurbished soon and then leased out. We would of course continue to use the garden even when tenants moved in. Note: work began on the Rectory soon after the meeting so the idea was not pursued.

Simon Tillotson,
Chairman

Nick Widdows,
Secretary

June 2024