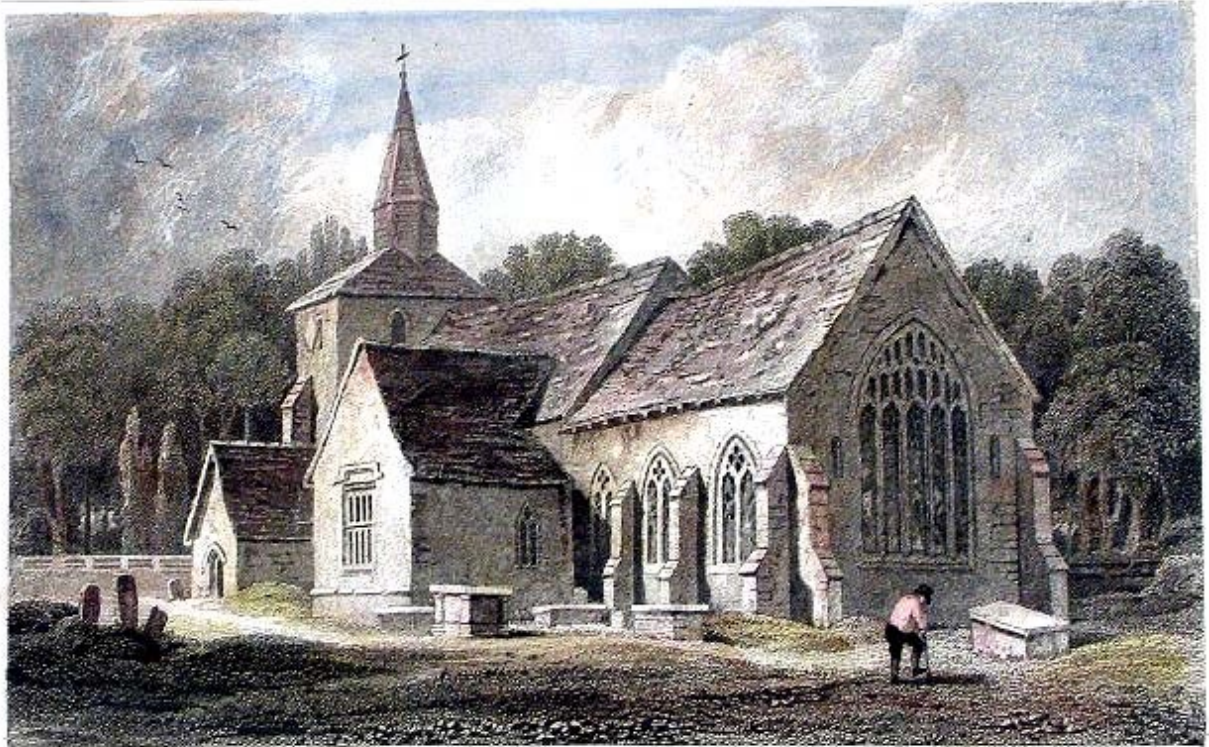




St Stephen's Church Canterbury

**Agenda
and
Reports
for the
Annual Parochial Church Meeting**



SOUTH EAST VIEW OF ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH.

*WICKINGTON NEAR CANTERBURY
1847*

Held in the Church Hall

Sunday 28 April 2024 at 12 noon

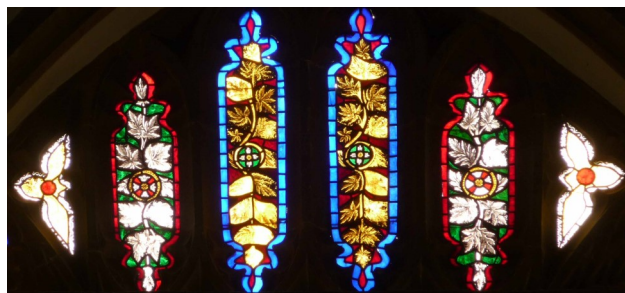
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Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2024

Agenda

- 1 Prayers
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of meeting held on 16 April 2023
- 4 Election of Churchwardens
- 5 Election of PCC
- 6 Approval of Sidespersons and Senior Sidespersons
- 7 Discussion and approval of the following reports:
 - a The Electoral Roll
 - b The Activities of the PCC, its Committees and related Parochial Operations
 - c The Churchwardens' Report
 - d The Activities of the Deanery Synod
- 8 The Financial Statements for 2023
- 9 Appointment of the Independent Examiner of the Accounts
- 10 Questions and Announcements
- 11 Closing Remarks



Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

16 April 2023

The meeting commenced at 11.45 a.m. in the Church after the morning service. The Rev'd Kevin Maddy and 24 parishioners were present in the church and one online.

PRAYERS were led by the Rev'd Kevin Maddy.

APOLOGIES were received from Lorraine Donovan and David Horwood.

THE MINUTES of the meeting on 24 April 2022 had been published online. Miss Shirley Hagger proposed, and Mrs Margaret Horwood seconded, that they be signed as a correct record, and this was agreed unanimously.

MATTERS ARISING. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

VESTRY MEETING. Mr Stephen Barker and Miss Shirley Hagger had been duly proposed and seconded; no other names were put forward, and they were unanimously accepted to continue in their role as the churchwardens.

REPRESENTATIVES ON DEANERY SYNOD. Dr Philip Knight had completed his three years after election in 2020, and was willing to stand for another term of three years. He was proposed by Mrs Sally Waters, seconded by Mrs Libby Nicholls, and accepted unanimously. The post of second representative remained unfilled.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2023–2024:

Sally Waters as our Reader was *ex officio* a member of the PCC, as were the churchwardens, and Dr Philip Knight as Deanery Synod representative. Nine other people had been duly nominated and seconded before the meeting to serve on the council. No other names were put forward, and these nine were unanimously voted into office:

Mrs Jean Baker	Mr Peter Brown	Miss Enid Dixon
Mrs Angela Doe	Mrs Barbara Jackson	Miss Alex Knight
Mr Robert Mathews	Mr James Taylor	Mr David Wood

DUTY WARDENS. Since the Covid pandemic one person had been acting as Duty Warden each Sunday, with some others available to help if need be. This system continued, with regular Duty Wardens being Mr Peter Brown, Mr Brian Kennett, Mr Robert Mathews and Mrs Libby Nicholls. Deputy Wardens were Mr Jeremy Barford, Mrs Angela Doe and Mr David Wood. These were approved unanimously by the meeting.

ELECTORAL ROLL. This was stated by Enid Dixon's report to be 80, and the report was approved unanimously.

REPORTS ON THE WORK OF THE PCC AND OTHER GROUPS.

These had been distributed beforehand and were unanimously approved.

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT.

This had also been distributed beforehand; there were no questions, and it was also unanimously approved.

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT.

This report, by Rosemary Walters, was also received, there were no questions and it was also unanimously approved.

FINANCE. The Treasurer, Miss Alexandra Knight, had also prepared and circulated her report and accounts for the previous year, 2022.

She reported that the church now had a deficit of over £41,000, mainly because of difficulties in paying the Parish Share. Planned giving was down, but with other sources of income total income rose to £71,859. Funds generated from activities rose, largely due to the recovery from Covid restrictions associated with the use of the hall. The use of the church by other groups also brought in income. PCC fees were down, with fewer weddings during the year.

People had been asked to reconsider their regular planned giving to the church in a Stewardship Campaign, and this had resulted in a rise in income. The Parish Giving Scheme meant we could receive tax refunds more quickly.

The Church's expenditure had been mostly on the Share. Although this had reduced we had still been able to pay only half of it. Negotiations continued on the role of the Archbishop's School in contributing to our Share for 2023. Next year would bring an increase of 19%, which would be quite unaffordable. Heating and lighting costs were rising, but we had fixed our contract in March, which proved to be a wise move, and a heating costs grant from the Diocese had helped.

Inflation would impact on us in the coming year, but we have been able to reduce some of our costs.

As for the Restricted Funds, the Quinquennial report on the buildings would necessitate expenditure, but this would be for repairs rather than major works. Possible future expenditure could be entailed in working towards a carbon-neutral church, and mitigating flooding in the church after heavy rain.

The Friends had resumed fund-raising activities in 2022 and this would continue in 2023.

When Kevin retires as Rector it seemed that we should still be asked to pay our full parish share.

It seemed that on the whole the church was managing to stay standing still, but there was some cause for optimism.

QUESTIONS: There were no questions on the accounts, but the Rector voiced everyone's thanks to Alex for the many hours of hard work she put in, and the meeting expressed their gratitude with applause.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER.

The Independent Examiner of the accounts, Peter Barton, FCA, was said to be happy to continue, and he was unanimously reappointed.

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT ON MEETING WITH THE ARCHDEACON.

Steve said that their recent meeting had been productive, and there could be the possibility of joining the post at St Stephen's with a diocesan post, but it was not known what posts would be available then, and applications for parish clergy now seemed to be many fewer than they had been. But there was a new Dean, and the cathedral seemed more outward-looking.

RECTOR'S NOTICES:

Kevin said that he felt things were positive for the parish, though there would inevitably be change, with a drive to move out more into the community. To attract a new applicant for the parish the quality of the Parish Profile would be vital. He expressed his thanks to the many who carried forward the life of the church in many ways, and especially Dr David Vannerley, on whom more duties would inevitably fall during the interregnum.

He appealed for a representative to attend the meeting of Christians Together in Canterbury, and announced that the 8 a.m. Holy Communion service would no longer be held after his retirement, as there were so few people attending.

There were no further questions or comments from the floor, and the Meeting was closed at 12.25 p.m. with the Grace.

THE ELECTORAL ROLL FOR THE YEAR 2023

We have 82 persons listed on the Electoral Roll.

We have said goodbye to the Maddy family (Diane and Christopher) due to Kevin's retirement as our Rector.

Sadly, the following have also departed, this life; may they rest in peace and rise in glory:

John Baker, Jake Davies, Harry Cragg, David Pratt.

But we have welcomed the following to the Electoral Roll:

Julia Tunnicliffe, the Hunter family: Edward, Greg and Helen, the Kemp family: Anthony and Nicola, and the MacLean family: Jamie and Sally

A plea: We are gradually diminishing in numbers and 'boots on the ground' are becoming limited due to age or infirmity. I am not permitted to approach individuals personally and 'tout for business' but should any current members of the Congregation—new or old—wish to consider becoming enrolled onto the Church Electoral Roll and have not already done so, please would they make themselves known to me.

If enrolled on the Church Electoral Roll, members have voting rights at the APCM and if enrolled on the Electoral Roll for 6 months may be voted onto the PCC.

Please think about this for the coming year (during which the Church continues in interregnum or vacancy) and maybe the numbers for the Electoral Roll may increase and new faces appear on the PCC.

Enid Dixon, Electoral Roll Officer.



ANNUAL REPORTS

Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

It has been a busy year for the PCC, and we have met eight times including one extraordinary meeting to vote on confirming Fr David Vannerley as interim priest. Many of our discussions continue to centre on the same themes: how to pay the Parish Share to the Diocese, the maintenance of our buildings in good order—no small task with an ancient church—and the churchyard, including the provision of a new Garden of Remembrance for interment of ashes as the present one fills up. Ecological matters are also increasingly considered, both in how to heat our church and our role in the wider world. There are more details of these below.

The retirement of our Rector, Rev'd Kevin Maddy was of course a major event in the year, and the question of what should happen afterwards is crucial for our church. We have been very blessed to have Fr David living in the parish and already assisting with our services before Kevin retired, and the arrangement to have him as Priest in Charge is of enormous benefit to the church. The future arrangement of the whole Deanery of Canterbury remains uncertain though. We shall not have a Priest to ourselves, but the post will necessarily be linked to some other Deanery function or maybe another church. We have however seen genuine positive signs in our church recently, and as we prepare our Parish Profile to advertise for a new priest we continue to have high hopes for the future.

Robert Mathews, PCC Secretary

Acorn Café

We have enjoyed another year of laughter and chatter on Wednesday mornings. It is great to welcome the company of the residents and carers from the assisted living 'Without Exceptions' most weeks. There are usually 35+ for coffee most mornings.

During the year we've held various charity mornings. On 25 January the sale of unwanted gifts, paperbacks and baked goods raised £190.30. This was shared between the Baptist church food bank and St Stephen's church.

In May there was the sale of plants raised extra money for charity. On 27 September a morning for Macmillan Nurses raised £260.70. Most mornings coffee money and money from the sale of baked goods raises £50–£60, which is for church funds.

But the value of the mornings is the companionship and friendship that it fosters in the community. We thank the committed team of coffee makers for their work each week and look forward to another happy year.

Jenny and Libby

Bellringing

Although we are back to ringing regularly again, we still have to arrange Sunday ringing to ensure we have enough ringers; we rely heavily on the St Dunstan's ringers particularly for Sunday mornings. We did manage to ring for Christmas this year which was wonderful, albeit on only five of our eight bells. However, we did ring on all eight bells for St Stephen's day. After our recruitment drive last year, we taught a total of nine people to ring, but sadly only one of these now rings regularly, so more recruits are still required. May I take this opportunity to thank Paul Davis (our Vice-Captain), Andrew Meyer (University Student) and Len Huckstep (St Dunstan's Captain) for all the hard work they have put in assisting me to teach learners.

During 2023 we rang a total of 106 times, and 49 were for Sunday Service ringing. There were 46 quarter peal attempts of which 42 were successful. This is an excellent result, and many were new methods which we have learnt. We also rang for four weddings, 50 Monday evening practices and three special events which were for the Remembrance Service, Christmas Day and St Stephen's Day.

Monday evening practices have continued to be very popular for ringers from other towers to attend and sometimes we have had 20 ringers present. This is wonderful, but hard work to ensure everyone has an even go at ringing, and a variety of methods from beginners to advanced have been rung. We have also had a Bell Audit to complete this year and I thank Enid Dixon for her hard work in assisting me to complete this in an accurate and timely manner.

We entered two competitions in 2023, the Call Change Competition which we won (and in March this year we have just regained our title by coming first out of eight teams at St Clement's Sandwich). In the second competition, the Six Bell Striking Competition, we came second out of six teams. We will be entering a band for this competition again in May this year.

If you would like to continue to hear the bells, we still need some more ringers. Anyone interested in learning to ring should contact me for more information. Anyone from the age of 10 is able to learn to ring, so you could even make it a family activity!

My thanks go out to all the support I have had and particularly to the St Dunstan's band who regularly help us out.

Jane Huxley, Tower Captain

Children's work

We run St Stephen's Seekers based on when the children are planning to attend church rather than putting it on every Sunday, and we use a WhatsApp group to communicate attendance. On Sundays when we run Seekers we have struggled to have a steady group, so it doesn't always run because of how and when families choose to engage with church nowadays; often there are other demands on their time on Sundays such as sporting groups or birthday parties. When it does run it ranges from 2 children to as many as 15 particularly on festival Sundays, with ages ranging from babies to teens. Activities that take place across in the hall have included Easter eggs, sheep, and calendars, to name a few. They really enjoy sharing what they

have learnt with the rest of the congregation, and their contributions are often thoughtful as well as entertaining. Please think about if there is anyone else you could encourage to join us as newcomers or visitors who might want to explore taking part in Sunday school. Also with me about to go on maternity leave whether anyone might be able to support with our young church attendees, even if it is just supervising or supporting in the Manwood Chapel. We appreciate your continued support and prayers for our children's and young people's work at St Stephen's.

Sophie Barker

Churchyard

The Churchyard Steering Group exists to enhance the churchyard and to improve the experience of those visiting St Stephen's.

Having completed much of the clearing work over the past few years, we are now concentrating on keeping the churchyard tidy and removing excess growth as necessary. We want to ensure that people can walk around the churchyard in safety while encouraging native flora and fauna for us all to enjoy. The Churchyard Working Party meets on the first Monday of each month to carry out general gardening and maintenance tasks. The group comprises a core of stalwart volunteers with others joining us as and when they can; everyone is welcome. The appearance of the churchyard has been greatly enhanced by their work, which has been recognised and much appreciated by visitors.

We now have a Quiet Garden below the East window of the church, where people can sit to enjoy the peace and ecology of the space.

The extension to the New Garden of Remembrance to the south of the church has now been approved. The ashes of parishioners will be interred here, providing a peaceful place for families and friends to visit and remember the departed.

The churchyard is closed for burials and many graves have no family in the area to maintain them. We launched our 'Adopt-a-Grave' scheme before the pandemic and it works well but now needs extending. Participants in the scheme weed their adopted graves and plant native plants, especially those that encourage wildlife. The overall look of the churchyard is thus greatly improved and the enjoyment of visitors is enhanced. We encourage people to get involved and ask anyone who is interested to contact us by emailing churchyard@ststephenscantebury.net.

Angela Doe

Eco Church

First of all, many thanks again for your extraordinary beneficence in response to last year's Lenten collection for Tools with a Mission. I received several substantial donations long after Lent had given way to Easter and am deeply moved by your kindness. I'm also most appreciative of your generous donations to our latest fundraising appeal, the purpose of which is to provide training for eco-friendly farming in Kenya.

I really don't want to push my luck—you've already done a great deal—but if you could also complete two ecological surveys (details provided in Pews News), my Eco Deanery colleagues and I would be most grateful.

Once again, I've attended meetings of the Canterbury Biodiversity Group, which I heartily recommend. There was a particularly fascinating, albeit alarming, talk about eels. Suffice it to say, I'd strongly advise everyone to avoid eating them as they are severely endangered, not least because of an extremely lucrative (albeit highly illegal) global eel trade.

I've also regularly attended the Canterbury Deanery Eco Group, where representatives from churches in the local deanery report on their churches' eco-related activities, as well as supporting and advising one another on eco matters such as, for example, our renewable energy options.

This year, we at the Eco Group have worked tirelessly to make this year's Eco Fayre our best yet. It will take place on Saturday, 11 May from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St Peter's Anglican Church on the High Street. The church will be packed with enjoyable and informative stallholders, pizza will be served, and I'll be playing the piano. It promises to be a wonderful occasion. I very much hope to see you there!

James Taylor

The Friends of St Stephen's.

Several well-attended events were held during 2023 beginning, as usual, with our popular Soup Lunch in January. In the spring, we produced an exhibition of our new King's life to mark his coronation and offered a celebration cream tea on Sunday 7 May. This was followed by a special Evensong service attended by 65 people. People clearly enjoyed both events.

July was a busy month as, firstly, we were delighted to welcome Sarah McTiernan to the church to give a fascinating and informative talk on the history of stained glass, how it is made, how she works as a conservator and how things can go wrong! Two days later, we had a wonderful cello recital given by Theodoor Heyning including works by Bach, Ligeti, Mayuzumi and Cassadó. Both these events were followed by wine and canapés, giving a chance for a relaxed chat with Sarah and Theodoor.

Our ever-popular Nosh and Knowledge Quiz was held in October. We are grateful to Jeremy and Rosie Barford for running the quiz for us again. Everyone enjoyed a fun evening.

The year ended with a moving and thought-provoking one-woman play by Susan Stein about Etty Hillesum. Again this was followed by wine, canapés and conversation.

We have now received quotations for all the work that is needed to repair our stained-glass windows. This amounts to a considerable amount. Indeed, it is more than double the balance we have generated to date, so we shall continue to raise funds in as many enjoyable ways as possible in the coming years. We hope that work on the windows can begin soon.

We look forward to several events during 2024 and hope to see you at as many of them as possible. If you are interested in joining us or would like more information, please contact us via friends@ststephenscanterbury.net

Angela Doe

Hall Bookings

The hall continues to be affected from the fall-out of the cost of living crisis.

The fees have been increased as of January 2024. It was hoped that groups would accept that it was a modest increase as the Hall Committee did not want groups already in situ to feel they would need to close, bearing in mind that fees had not been raised for a few years.

Some groups have a minimal number attending but provide opportunities for the local community to keep fit and to congregate socially, the Residents' Associations and the WI particularly where the latter is concerned.

The increase was, I note from my report to the APCM last year, to have taken place in September 2023, but due to the inefficiency of this Booking Secretary it was overlooked. Hence the rise in January 2024.

We are grateful that all groups have been understanding about the modest increase.

We have also gained during the year a Karate Club and an Aikido Club, and the Zumba class has added an extra session to their Hall portfolio which is pleasing. Also, as I mentioned last year, I play a juggling act to fit groups in and the Singing Mamas should be joining us on Wednesday afternoons as of May 2024 during term time—squeezed in between the Acorn Café and the Rainbows.

The Hall has also acquired a defibrillator for use as and when needed; it has been installed at the request of the local community via the St Stephen's Residents' Association, who have applied for and received grants that have paid for its acquisition and installation. St Stephen's Church and St Stephen's Residents' Association are jointly responsible for its upkeep. It has been registered with the emergency services and when they receive a call that requires its use, they will give the caller a code for the hall door. The caller will punch this code into the hall door keypad and will open the door and see the Defibrillator in its cabinet immediately in front of them. They will be able to open the cabinet containing the Defibrillator without a code and start to use it immediately.

In addition, the Hall also now has a form of hearing loop which requires the use of a microphone to be used by speakers giving a talk. There are two microphones, so that a question-and-answer session can also take place, making sessions inclusive for those who are hard of hearing.

Enid Dixon (Hall Booking Secretary)

Mothers' Union

As usual we have had a mixed programme, starting with the annual lunch in January followed by the Annual Meeting, Lent Reflection, Wave of Prayer and Lady Day Service. On Mothering Sunday we did our usual Gifts in the form of a small MU Mothering Sunday card and a single flower and provided Simnel Cake after the service.

We had several interesting meetings where speakers came, such as Sue and Rachel Thomas who showed us the video of the AFIA holiday and it encouraged us to provide items for the toiletry hampers that are provided for families who holiday in caravans during the year, and we did one in the autumn for the family from our parish who went to Dymchurch for their very first holiday, which helped them refresh themselves following the tragic death of the father. We also had the Rev'd Jo Richards come and talk about her role as the Chaplain for the Homeless and how she had helped a number of homeless people get back on their feet. The other inspiring talk was on human trafficking which opened our eyes to what is happening.

We had a lovely visit to Walmer Castle in the summer as our annual outing, our customary Summer Supper and Compline, and our Fish and Chip Supper at Whitstable.

We had the pleasure of welcoming Julia Tunnicliffe to our branch on her transfer from St Dunstan's and enrolled the Rev'd Dr David Vannerley, but had the sad occasion of saying goodbye to our Rector, Kevin, as he retired at the end of October and moved to Halifax in Yorkshire.

I hope we will continue to flourish and spread the word and works of the Mothers' Union during the coming year and perhaps even encourage some other people to join us.

Margaret Horwood (Branch Leader)

Music

We are fortunate to have a thriving choir as part of our ministry at St Stephen's. They sing two services each Sunday throughout the year (apart from a holiday break in August), supporting the worship of the whole congregation through the leading of hymn singing, anthems carefully chosen to match the readings and theme of services, psalms and canticles for Evensong, and Mass settings for our Eucharist.

Our choir is an inclusive group of musicians of all ages and experiences. As part of this group, we have our younger singers who are working hard on a Wednesday evening and who are joining the adult choir on a greater number of Sundays—you will see some of them beginning to gain their surplices soon, so please do take the opportunity to congratulate them and welcome them to our St Stephen's community. We have also welcomed some new adult members to the choir over the past year to join with our existing singers—people who enjoy the music that we offer and are keen to share their God-given gifts with all of us at St Stephen's to enhance the worship. Our choir and the music here is an important and significant part of our outreach.

As well as our services here, over the past year the choir have sung services in Canterbury, St Albans, Southwark and St Edmundsbury Cathedrals, testimony to the high quality of music that they work so hard to achieve, and an opportunity for alumni members of the choir who have since moved away from Canterbury to join with us again.

I'd like to thank everyone who supports the musical life of our church, and every member of our choir; they really are an amazing group of musicians—and there are not many parish churches that can offer the level of choral music that they achieve week by week at St Stephen's. We all hope that the musical ministry that we offer helps to bring you closer to God.

Stephen Barker, Organist and Choirmaster

Nutkins Toddler Group

We continue to have a good team for this group with one coming in before the session to set up the toys and activities but we lost the one who helped with the general running of the group, however the mothers/guardians of the children help with activities such as colouring and play-dough! I am there as the Leader to oversee everything and provide the refreshments every week but we lost the grandparents who helped with the refreshments because their grandchildren moved to Sheffield for their mother's

work. Our numbers fluctuate but we have a good nucleus of mums and children each week and they all seem to get along well. We also have several nationalities with us who are always welcomed to our group. We have been able to give a donation at the end of each term as rent for the hall which comes out of our weekly fee of only £1.50 per family, which is quite good. We did have a visit from Father Christmas again this year and each child was given a book as a gift. We hope to continue to go from strength to strength and to provide this important service to the young mums. However some children will be leaving at the end of the summer term in 2024 to move up to Pre-School and we will have to see what happens, but in the meantime we continue with our 'fun if tiring for some of us' sessions!

Margaret Horwood (Leader of the Toddler Group)

Pastoral Group

Group Members: Margaret Horwood (convener); Mary Brown, Libby Nichols, Enid Dixon, Sally Waters, Shirley Hagger and the Rev'd Dr Kevin Maddy (until October 2023).

During this last year we have met a number of times when we discussed events over the last year and we all managed to keep in touch with the majority of parishioners who the members felt might be isolated and need help.

We have lost one of our members, Kevin, following his retirement but the Rev'd Dr David Vannerley has offered to stand in for as much as he can and we appreciate this.

'Tea @ 3' has been a great success yet again with around 25+ people attending each month. We have a quiz each month set by Sally Waters, and tea and cake is served at 3.00 p.m. We had an excellent Christmas party again where a Christmas tea was served and we had entertainment from our excellent jazz pianist from the parish, James Taylor, who played a variety of jazz style music and Christmas Carols.

The Prayer Chain has remained the same and continues to provide emergency and much-needed prayers for those in need. Margaret Horwood oversees its work along with Libby Nichols, and anyone who would like prayers offered either for themselves or on behalf of someone else should contact either one. Messages are now sent by email or WhatsApp to ensure the same message is received. If anyone would like to be part of this important ministry, please speak to either Margaret or Libby.

The Community Lunches. We had two lunches in 2023, one in May for the Coronation and a Christmas Lunch at the beginning of December. It is hoped these connections continue and if it is only two lunches a year that is still a valuable connection with the young people of the school.

Anniversary Cards have continued to be sent to those who have been baptised in our church and in the last year 46 Baptism anniversary cards and 11 Sympathy and other cards have been sent, for which we are extremely grateful to a member doing this on behalf of the parish.

Members continue to either visit or telephone parishioners who are unwell or housebound to make sure they are kept in touch with the parish life and the numbers have increased quite a lot over the last year.

Margaret Horwood, Convener

Property

Stained Glass windows

A survey of the stained glass windows was carried out by Easthope Stained Glass Studios in November 2023, a recognised specialist in the repair of stained glass windows based in Folkestone and recommended by the DAC. The extent of the work they identified was considerable, totalling nearly £50k, much more than can be afforded by the Friends, who have been actively raising funds for the work through various events. However, they are prepared to fund the repairs to the east window and it is hoped that this work can be started early autumn this year and finished by the time the new incumbent arrives; hopefully the faculty will be approved before then.

Damage to roof tiles

In September 2023, a bough from a large tree on the north side of the church broke away from the trunk of the tree and some of the branches hit the roof of the north transept, breaking an area of tiles approximately 1 metre square. The tiles were replaced in November following a competitive tender from two roofing contractors.

Pigeons in the Bell Tower

In August 2023, pigeons found their way through a hole in the mesh that is fixed to the inside of the louvres at the top of the Bell Tower, and I will leave it to you to imagine the mess they caused over the bells and supporting framework.

A specialist cleaning contractor was employed to clean the area, repair the louvre, and fit new mesh.

Garden of Remembrance

The new area for the new Garden of Remembrance has been agreed on the west side of the existing site and has been marked out with several small grey slabs. It was planned to include a new path to the area for wheelchair access, but this was not possible because of the cost, however, the church has now received a generous donation for work in the churchyard and so it is hoped the path will be laid soon.

Alterations to the Chancel

This has been progressing very slowly and following an initial negative response from the DAC about the project, it was agreed that a meeting would be arranged for them to visit the church to understand better the extent of the alterations; It was hoped the visit would be planned for the summer vacation 2023 but eventually they arrived on 9 February, 2024.

A revised faculty is being prepared with more detail and photographs of how the chancel will be used.

Manwood Achievements

The Manwood Achievements consist of a helmet, crest, spur, sword and gauntlet, owned by Sir Roger Manwood, which used to be displayed above the Manwood tomb in the Manwood Chapel. The date they were removed from the church and taken to the Canterbury Museum is not known, but they were there until the museum shut last year. They are now stored in a cupboard in Diocesan House. However, the DAC would like them returned to their original place above the tomb of Sir Roger Manwood.

The PCC has agreed to this request, and the faculty is being prepared for this to happen later this year.

Tower clock

The gilding on the clock face has deteriorated, so the Cumbria Clock Co. was asked to provide a quotation for refurbishment, which was £5,750 + VAT with the additional cost of the scaffold. This project has been put on hold so a plan for raising the money can be agreed.

Wall hanging

The quinquennial inspection recommended that the wall hanging on the south wall of the nave should have a more substantial frame to fix to, and a retired carpenter who lives in the parish volunteered to make the frame, attach the tapestry to it and rehang it on the wall.

General maintenance

Both church gas boilers had fans replaced last September, but they were available for the start of the heating season. The normal annual servicing was carried out early September.

The fire extinguishers were serviced.

There have been ongoing problems with the utility supplier, SES, who are still unable to provide a Smart meter for the gas supply, which means that meter readings must be taken and sent to SSE, before the invoice is received, otherwise an estimated reading causes all manner of problems.

Church Hall

During the year the kitchen water heater and the three electric wall heaters in the hall have been replaced and the sound system is now fully operational.

A defibrillator has been installed in the entrance hall.

The F&GP is considering the installation of solar panels on the east-facing roof of the hall and the financial viability of such a scheme is being prepared.

Peter Brown

Safeguarding

THE TRAINING is currently as up to date as possible. Depending on roles within the church, either a basic or enhanced DBS is required. Where possible, these have been completed. Any that are not yet complete are in hand, depending on the training opportunities available via the Diocese.

In April 2021, the Church of England published a new Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework. The focus of this framework is on developing a positive culture of safeguarding within the church, rather than simply focusing on process. It does mean that additional training modules may need to be completed. Thank you to everyone for their willingness to go through this process—your cooperation has been much appreciated.

A group session will take place soon entitled 'Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse'. I am awaiting a response from the Diocese to access the resources required. A suitable date can then be arranged.

SAFEGUARDING DASHBOARD. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team have introduced a new Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. This is an online tool which allows PSOs to complete an audit of safeguarding policy and practice in the parish. Following the audit, an action plan is automatically generated to assist them in maintaining and improving their safeguarding practices. The audit will be completed as soon as possible. The subsequent action plans will be shared with the PCC in due course.

There are some statements on the dashboard which the PCC will need to be aware of. More information can be shared once the dashboard has been accessed.

SAFEGUARDING HUBS. Safeguarding Hubs are making parishes safer by helping them to meet the Church of England's safeguarding requirements. They are fully integrated with Safeguarding Dashboards, which are now being used in almost 6,000 parishes. We are awaiting further information regarding this.

BELLRINGING. The bellringing team is compliant under the terms of KCACR (the County Governing Body for Church bellringers). The diocese is aware of the guidance and there are currently discussions taking place to clarify certain issues.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND INCIDENTS. No significant safeguarding concerns have been raised during the year. However, we need to maintain our vigilance to ensure the protection and well-being of everyone in our communities.

Joanna Heath, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Theology Group

In the last year the Theology Group has continued to flourish with 57 names on the mailing list. Talks have mostly been on Zoom and have been well attended with a typical meeting having present 12–15 participants. However, our in-person meetings have been less well attended. As a result, next year we will begin on Zoom in October. But like 2024, the meetings in May and June in 2025 will still be in person in the church.

This past year 2023–4 we have had a variety of talks with a gender-balanced programme of speakers. The highlights included Sally Musker's talk on 'Eating in harmony with the Eucharist' which was followed by the first of two talks given this year by Rev'd Dr Kevin Maddy. This was on the Challenge of woke thought with his second talk on the theologian Ilia Delio. Kevin was a loyal supporter of theology group during his time as priest of St Stephen's and we wish him well in retirement. However—advance notice—he will be speaking to us on Zoom in October. In October this year, Stephen Barker gave an enjoyable illustrated talk on hymns and their theology. and this was followed by Rev'd Dr Stacey Rand on 'human work' understood from the writings of Edith Stein. In December we had a joint presentation on the issue of same sex marriage with two speakers from the United States (both East and West Coasts) addressing us on Zoom. The year drew to a close with talks by Rev'd Dr David Vannerley and by the Archdeacon of Canterbury, the Venerable Dr William Adam. We concluded with a talk on the Violence of God given by Rev'd Dr Alan le Grys. I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend our next talk and discussion on 7 May which will be in church at 7.30 given by Rabbi Professor Dan Cohn Sherbok on the topic 'What is Anti-Semitism?'.

Dr Philip Knight

Churchwardens' Report

2023 was a year of change at St Stephen's as we said goodbye to Rev'd Kevin Maddy as Rector and wished him well as he moved to Yorkshire to begin his retirement. We have been very fortunate that Fr David Vannerley already had permission to officiate at St Stephen's and was willing not only to lead our services during the vacancy, but to take on the role of Interim Priest-in-Charge for the next year. Alongside Fr David, we also are very grateful to Sally Waters, Lay-Reader and Ordinand; we look forward to Sally's ordination as Deacon in June this year.

We have a wonderful community of people who work behind the scenes at St Stephen's to make our worship and other events run smoothly—many of these events you'll read about in other reports presented here, but special mention to those who read at our services, to those who lead the intercessions, our team of bellringers that call us to worship each week, members of the choir who spend many hours preparing music to enhance our worship, our flower arrangers, Sophie who leads the Seekers, the Holy Dusters who keep our church clean, members of PCC and sub-committees—especially Peter Brown who chairs the Property Committee ensuring that St Stephen's building is kept in good repair. Outside our building, our churchyard provides an oasis of calm within the local community and a haven for wildlife; thank you to Angela and the churchyard working party who work tirelessly weeding and planting each month.

We have continued to live-stream our services, and this has become a much-appreciated offering for those who are unable to get to church, whether because of ill health or being away from Canterbury—and also those who enjoy seeing members of their families taking part. The number of people who have contact with St Stephen's through this outreach is quite staggering—in 2023, there were 17,080 views of our live streams, and whilst a lot of these are people who stumble across our videos and move on fairly quickly, there was a total of 1,600 hours of our services watched, and we gained 87 individual subscribers who have bookmarked our page—we now have over 300 in total. Occasionally people leave feedback about how much they've enjoyed the service, or how moved they were by our offering.

One of the legal responsibilities of the Church Wardens is to ensure that the inventory is checked, and we can confirm that this has taken place.

Despite Fr David's appointment as Interim Priest-in-Charge, we are still moving forward through the Vacancy with a sub-group of the PCC looking at the Parish Profile and regular communication with the Archdeacon. However, we must accept that we will not have another full-time priest at St Stephen's—the final shape of the role will depend on other factors, perhaps an additional role within the Deanery or Diocese, or working more closely with another parish—but this is a decision for the Archdeacon and is largely beyond our control. However, rest assured that we will be pushing to move things on as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your support over the past year.

Stephen Barker and Shirley Hagger, Churchwardens



Sir Roger Manwood's achievements: helm, crest, and sword; gauntlet and spur.

Report of the Priest in Charge

At the end of October, the Rev'd Dr Kevin Maddy retired as our Rector and the parish went into vacancy. After discussion by the PCC, it was agreed that I would help to cover by accepting a short-term licence as Interim Priest in Charge, which I was happy to do. One of the strengths of this parish is its strong lay leadership and I see my role as working along the existing ways of doing things—not usurping them.

Interim Licences are new to the Church of England and they always come with particular targets to be met. My target is to help the PCC and the Deanery reach agreement about what ministry in this parish will look like once the vacancy is ended. There are a range of possible outcomes and nothing can be said firmly until those discussions with the Deanery Mission and Ministry Committee have taken place. It is important to realise that the staffing of parishes is talked about at Deanery level and not by the Diocese although, of course, our Archdeacon will need to be fully involved as it is he who will make any formal recommendation to Bp. Rose.

In the meantime, we have maintained the life of the congregation and seen new people coming to worship with us; sadly, we have suffered losses of familiar faces as well but I suppose that is in the life of a parish at any time. Our 'in church' and on-line attendances have been maintained with Easter morning's combined attendance being over 100. We have sought to support Sally Waters as she trains for ordination and her placement at All Saints' inspired our Lent Appeal to support their Community Larder Project. The number of baptisms and funerals is similar to last year but there are very few wedding bookings.

We continue to reach out beyond our immediate community through the work of the Acorn Café, the Friends of St Stephen's, Nutkins and Tea at Three. We also continue to co-operate with the Residents' Association which now covers about two-thirds of the ecclesiastical parish.

For the future? Let us be faithful in prayer for Sally as she approaches ordination, for growth in our congregation (depth and numbers) and in our discussions about the future of the parish.

Every Blessing.

Fr David

Deanery Synod Report 2023/4

Deanery Synod has met 3 times since our last APCMs.

In June 2023 we met at St Nicholas Thanington and heard from the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, Rev'd Jon Marlow and Vocations Officer, Jackie Town, on support for a variety of vocations, lay and ordained. We also heard about the Ministry Experience Scheme from Rev'd Steve Carter.

In October 2023 at St Stephen's Hackington we had a fascinating talk by Dean David from the Cathedral on relating the Cathedral and the parishes in our Deanery.

In February 2024 at St Cosmos and St Damian in the Blean, David Elliot and Rev'd Dawn Watson gave an inspiring account of the values, culture and life of the Archbishop's School, followed by members of Synod speaking of the links between schools and their parishes.

Synod members were among the diocesan electorate for a recent casual vacancy in the *General Synod House of Laity*. Prof Catherine Richardson was elected.

The **Deanery Eco group** continues to flourish and Deanery Synod has also set up occasional meetings, **Care in a Crisis**, networking local agencies working against poverty and disadvantage.

The Synod has kept a working brief on the **Deanery Mission Plan**. This looks to future co-operation including:

COMMUNICATION: of Good News around our parishes including Facebook.

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES: New Housing, Young People, Schools.

PARTNERSHIPS:/WORKING TOGETHER: The Cathedral, Study and Ministry Courses, Clergy and Lay Ministers, Parish Officials and Groups.

Go to the **Deanery Facebook page** www.facebook.com/CanterburyDeanery/ to see current news of the huge range of activities among our Deanery parishes and Christians Together in Canterbury.

Thanks to Rev'd Jo Richards, our Area Dean, Liz Morrison, Lay Chair, John Morrison, Treasurer, Harry Macdonald our Administrator and Rev'd Nick White for valiant work with the Facebook page.

Rosemary Walters