



Stoke Poges Church

St Giles' and St Andrew's

Annual Report for activities in 2022

This year's Annual Report is in two parts – the Financial Statement, which can be found on the church website [here](#) (including the Vicar's report) and this Activities Report both covering Jan-Dec 2022. Thanks to everyone who contributed.

The meeting will follow the 11am Family Service and lunch at St Andrew's on Sunday 28th May 2023, starting the meeting at approx. 1pm.

Churchwardens – Simon McDowell

We continue to focus our work as Churchwardens on furthering Christ's Gospel in the village and particularly for those who come to our churches, but we are also responsible for the practical side of running the church.

Our role as churchwardens is to assist Natasha to do her ministry in the parish, whilst we try to take care of the day-to-day activities. We both have additional roles as PCC Secretary (Simon) and acting Treasurer (John) and we are particularly helped by Richard, our verger, who is a "can-do" source of knowledge and help on a daily basis.

In 2022, we were delighted to return to normality after the upheaval of the past two years, including having our seasonal events and celebrations of Easter, family BBQ, Harvest Festival and Christmas.

Not everything went our way, as the results of our tenders to build flats above the Coffee Shop, Hastings Room and office at St Andrew's, thereby replacing the old roof at the same time, were that it was not economically viable to continue. We are back at the planning stage, well aware that the roof urgently needs replacing and this is a priority for 2023.

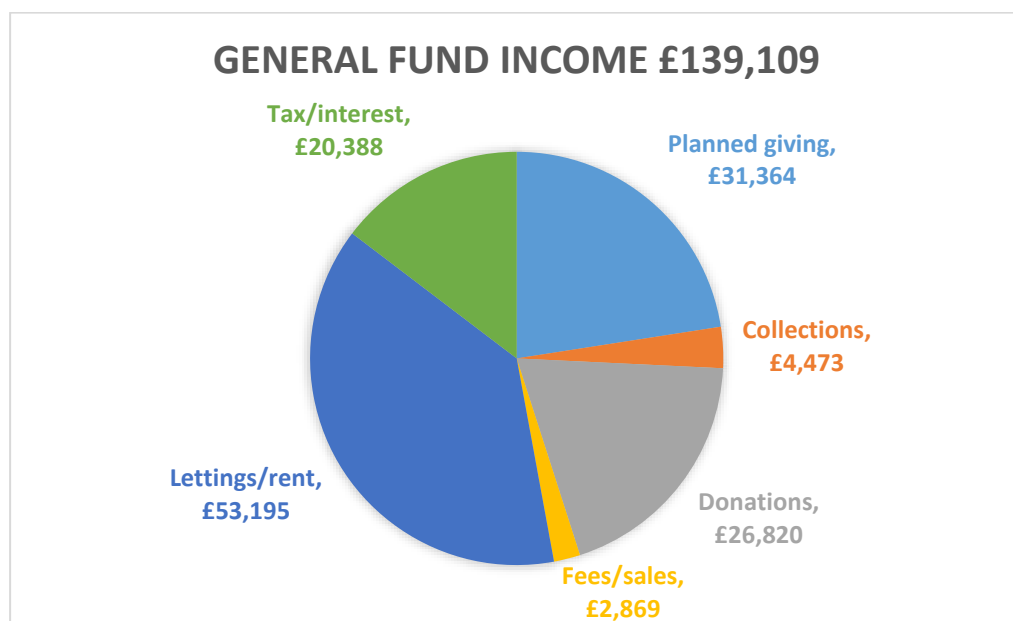
As always, we are grateful to Natasha for her spiritual guidance and ever-strengthening links to other members of our community, as well as the PCC, the church office and other church members to help us do this smoothly.

This is my (Simon's) last report as churchwarden and I would like to thank all who have given me advice, encouragement and the occasional correction of course over the past six years, particularly John and Natasha, as we have grown together as a team to shape the church's direction and activities. I wish my successor, who will be voted for at the APCM, to receive the same blessings that I have had.

Finances – John Wheatley

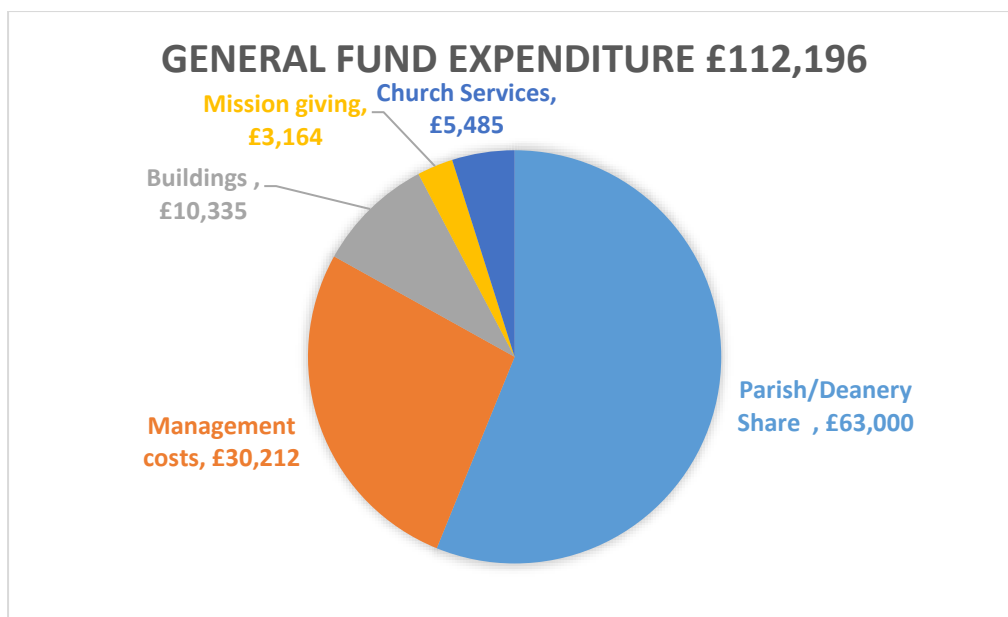
In 2022 our finances recovered to degree from the effects of COVID. This enabled us to maintain the following Key Indicators and also to formulate plans for future growth of our outreach plans.

- **Parish Share** We increased our committed Parish Share.
Our contribution to the Diocese largely covers clergy stipends and pensions and the training of ordinands.
- **Mission Giving** We maintained that a minimum of 10% of all planned giving during the year would be mission giving and we will be donating to SHOC and NLT in line with last year. We once again committed additional funds to outreach for the village.
- **Governance** We maintained a minimum of 3 months operating costs in our bank account, thanks to the generosity of our Church members.



By way of explanation on the income side, "Fees" include charges for weddings and funerals and "Tax" is what we recover from gift aid.

We are partly reliant on our income from rent and lettings, both of which recovered during the year to pre-covid levels, however with the opening up of Lettings and Rental income we always have to factor in certain costs such as additional Heating and maintenance.



On the expenditure side, "Management costs" includes administration, office expenses, IT support, music licences, training and inspection fees, while "Buildings" includes minor maintenance, insurance, caretaking and utilities. "Church services" includes clergy expenses, junior church materials, organists, vergers expenses, costs of candles and Holy Communion wine and wafers.

In addition, each year we write down the initial cost of the St Andrews Church centre, this is shown in our restricted fund operating costs, not on the chart above, but this year the cost was £25,936 and is not a cash cost, but an accounting one.

Our General Fund was £26,913 in surplus, but additional costs in the restricted funds meant that we had an overall deficit or reduction in funds of £17,351.

Whilst the above is a general outline of our financial year, more details can be found in the "Report of the trustees and financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2022" available on our [website here](#).

PCC Secretary – Simon McDowell

Our PCC returned to meeting together in 2022 and we held six meetings in the year, plus a half day together in June to reflect on the missional side of our calling. We welcomed Julie, Ann and Jon to the PCC at the last APCM and they have all contributed positively to our meetings.

The PCC consists of seven elected members, two elected representatives of the Deanery Synod, two churchwardens and our Vicar. Average attendance at PCC meetings was 80%.

Our PCC has two active working committees:

- the Property Committee, which is responsible to the PCC for the upkeep of the fabric of both church buildings. It met twice. It consists of six PCC members and welcomes from time to time other church members who are experts in property matters and whose help is much appreciated; and
- the Standing and Finance committee, comprising the Vicar, Churchwardens and Treasurer with other PCC members attending as needed. It meets as required in between formal PCC meetings to address more urgent needs where a resolution is required. Although the Vicar and Churchwardens meet regularly, the Standing and Finance committee met twice during the year.

As the activities the PCC tends to cover (services, hall hires, and flat rentals) returned to normal in 2022, our meetings focused on the following main areas:

Firstly, on PCC trustee training. As trustees of the parish, we are responsible to ensure that the church is maintained for future generations, as well as in operational matters now. Most PCC meetings in 2022 had a different topic on what we needed to do as trustees. This was as helpful for those who had been members for many years as it was for our recently appointed members.

Secondly, on growing our church numbers. Return to church has been slower than we would have liked and we discussed how to bring people back into engagement, including the opening of the Eco Garden at St Andrew's. Volunteering is a perennial problem and we are blessed with people who do so much for the church, but we would also welcome more help to share the load.

Thirdly, on the maintenance of the buildings and particularly on the St Andrew's flats project. This has been shared between the Property Committee and the PCC. Progress was made to get the drawings completed and tender documents issued in November, but the tenders were all too much to make the project economically worthwhile. It will remain a focus in 2023.

Finally, we discussed the creation of the new role of Community Worker in the parish, a joint project between us and the Free Church. This role, filled by Pat Hegarty in April 2023, is to run the new Coffee Shop and provide a community outreach that Natasha cannot do with her other duties.

The reports of the other activities that took place during the year in our church community can be found elsewhere in this blog. The PCC is very grateful to all the leaders and their helpers who give up their time to make these activities happen.

Also on the website, are a summary the annual accounts, which reflect the financial state of the Stoke Poges Church and there is a separate Treasurer's report to describe what has happened financially.

Deanery Synod – John Wheatley

There were 4 Meetings of Deanery Synod held during the year, the first of which was held at St Andrews

Key activities undertaken at these meetings were

1. **February** Moving forward with Digital Church Where various methods of reaching out to the Larger Church family were discussed, A training course was held across the Deanery in support of new ideas.
2. **June** Plans for a new Community Café and Hub were proposed and a new initiative in reaching out to Schools was given by Wayne Dixon
- 3 **September** Parish Share and Mission outreach were the 2 Key items Discussed
- 4 **November** In November we met and had a presentation from the Reverend Polly Falconer the UK minority and ethnic background Enabler. We also discussed the way forward for CAP (Christians against poverty) in the Deanery.

Whilst these were key items, many other ideas were shared amongst Churches in the Deanery

Safeguarding – Revd Natasha

Natasha continues as the Interim Safeguarding Officer. Anyone requiring a new DBS should continue to contact Margriet Wells, as she deals with this area of Safeguarding.

Our hope is that everyone will feel enabled and safe within our Church and when necessary confident to share any concerns that they have, knowing that we all have ears to hear and the heart of Jesus to act appropriately to all.

Key message from the Oxford Diocese:

- The welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is at all times paramount and takes precedence over all other considerations.
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser must be consulted whenever a safeguarding concern of any kind arises in your parish.
- Safeguarding is part of our core faith and an integral feature of Christian life in our parish churches.

Prayer Ministry – John Wheatley

During 2022 We were able to offer prayer ministry face to face at Sunday Services at St Andrews as well as sharing Prayer requests via Email. Thank you to all who helped in this and we will continue in both format for those in need,

Burnham Lighthouse Children's Club – John Wheatley

Unfortunately Lighthouse Burnham was unable to operate this year due to a lack of available Premises. We are actively looking for a site in 2024 and will advise.

Reapers – Simon McDowell

The Reaping team look after the large churchyard at St Giles' and members also help to maintain parts of St Andrew's as needed. We have a team of 8-12, who help mow, trim and tidy the churchyard every two to three weeks from March to October. Given the very hot weather in the summer, I think we did not actually cut the grass at all June, July or August, but did other jobs, including cutting back ivy from the walls.

Tea, coffee and the all-important doughnuts continued to be served throughout the season and we enjoyed a post-season pub lunch in November.

Our mowing fleet changed slightly with the addition of our first cordless electric mower to replace one of the ageing fleet of donated mowers. This has proved successful and somewhat quieter, but there is still the pre-season worry about whether the mostly petrol fleet will start after the winter.

I am very grateful for help from all reapers, of all ages and abilities and we still welcome more members to join us – please see the website for details on when we meet or ask me to add you to our WhatsApp group. You don't have to mow if that's not your thing – there are the roses and rhododendrons to tend to, the hedge and the ivy on some of the walls too.

Jeff Higgins Life Group

During 2022 and for 2023 to date, we have continued to meet together as a life group on Zoom. We still have 6 regular members, although only 2 now attend our church in Stoke Poges. The Group is now led by Jeff Higgins.

We have all faced challenges during the year, whether it be issues at work, family matters or personal health issues. We are grateful for the Lord's loving kindness and for his Word, always a source of wisdom and encouragement.

We use the opening time at our meetings for a time of share and prayer, giving thanks to the Lord for his blessings received and asking the Lord for wisdom and help with regards to the challenges we have ahead. Knowing that someone else in the group is praying for us has really helped us as individuals, especially when going through tough times. We also have a Group Chat on WhatsApp which we use to share news and urgent prayer requests.

In 2022, we have studied a variety of topics. We started the year looking at the Old Testament book of the prophet Amos using resources from LICC. The dominant theme of the book is

stated in Amos 5:24, which calls for social justice as the indispensable expression of true piety.

During Lent, we studied the book *Embracing Justice* by Isabelle Hamley and used the Home Groups online resources to assist us. We learnt that God's justice brings transformation, healing and hope for us all.

After Easter, we decided to study *Women in the Old Testament*. Natasha introduced us to a friend called Clare Haynes who had been inspired to write a book on this subject during lockdown. We were fortunate enough that Clare joined us on Zoom at the start of our studies and shared her testimony on how she came to write the book. We spent the period from May to October looking at a different woman from the Old Testament each week and what we might learn from them. The book is called *Unveiled* (published by BRF). Each one of us had our eyes opened to new characters in the bible and we were challenged to read our bibles more (especially in the Old Testament).

We finished the year studying 2 Timothy using resources from the Home Groups platform under the section entitled *Age to Age*. We have found these resources very helpful for our life group studies and have used them again in 2023. We were encouraged by the words of the apostle Paul to Timothy to run the race of life strongly, confident of our welcome at the finish line into our father's heavenly kingdom.

During the year we welcomed a St Mellitus ordinand Sydney into the group, whilst he undertook some ministry training at Stoke Poges church. We enjoyed his take on the scriptures and loved listening to his prayers.

At the end of the year, we did manage to meet up in person for a Christmas meal and to celebrate Jeff's 60th birthday. It was great to all be together again and enjoy a time of much laughter and joy.

Knit and Natter – Alison Wheatley

It was a very fruitful year for our Knit and Natter group, we were able to meet on a regular basis every Wednesday and had many new members join us.

We managed to grow our plans to decorate post box toppers in the village (images of which are posted on Facebook) and now are able to include 3 locations.

We ran a stall at the village fete and raised £600 for Alexander Devine Children's Hospice, we were also able to raise funds for charity by knitting chocolate orange covers and we thank all who contributed to these.

We are also grateful for the many donations of wool and materials passed to us during the year.

We always welcome new members no matter what their ability and if you are unable to attend but wish to be involved in our activities please contact office@stokepogeschurch.org



Friday Club - Ann Sibley

The Friday Club is a new club on the first Friday of the month at St Andrews Church Centre. We have been going for 6 months and are gathering new members all the time.

We currently have 57 registered on our books.

It is a club run by volunteers who so kindly give up their time for our lonely, isolated villagers who would not be able to meet old friends and make new ones.

The less mobile are offered lifts through the village run good neighbour scheme free of charge. We have about 8/10 members who use this facility.

Our members arrive between 10.00 - 10.15 am. They register and pay a donation of £3 for their lunch and refreshments. After tea, coffee and biscuits they have a choice of gentle exercise, crafts, painting, making jigsaws, playing board games or just to sit and chat over a hot drink.

A two course home cooked lunch is served at 12 midday with a drink and then we usually finish with a game of Bingo, Quiz, sing a long and a free raffle with 4 prizes.

The members all go home with happy faces and we know we have achieved what we set out to do.

If you think you would like to try us out or to join then please ring the church office on 01753 642331 and leave your name and address and we will send you details on how you can sign up.

