

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for year ended 31st December 2023

Welcome

As a church we launched our new Bible motto verse in January 2023 and intentionally prayed that we would see numerical and spiritual growth in our church. Relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us as a church community we continued to seek opportunities to share the good news of Jesus in our local school, through the various activities in the Ministry Centre and through our personal witness.

God certainly answered our prayers and despite the national headlines of church decline Christ Church has bucked the trend and has seen growth in many areas not least in personal discipleship. As we intentionally and faithfully prayed our prayer for growth we have seen new people joining us at both Sunday gatherings and an increase in people attending our outreach groups, FACT, luncheon club, CAVE, Knit and Natter. Praise God!

In April 2023 God answered our prayer and sent us **Gail Usher** to oversee, manage and develop the Ministry Centre. Gail has proved to be an incredible asset to the team, bringing a huge amount of business experience, energy and passion to the role. She has already generated more room bookings

and has been a wonderful support to the volunteer teams.

In May 2023 we said a very tearful goodbye to **Naomi Munyahu**. Naomi worked so hard and did an excellent job of bridging the gap between Vicky leaving and Gail arriving. We were truly blessed to have Naomi as a volunteer; and we wish her God's speed as she now aims to secure her right to remain in the UK.

We are grateful to **Fiona Collins** and **Carole Rankin** for the cleaning of the Ministry Centre as well as our Busy Bees team who clean the church weekly. A further big thank you to everyone who has made the church so welcoming for weddings, funerals and Festivals days, including **Lesley Birchall** and **Barbara Stevens** for arranging the beautiful flower displays in church and for coordinating the rotas.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Café volunteers Café Vista has now recovered from the pandemic and is busier than ever before. A big thank you to **Lesley Birchall** for her hard work and commitment to Café Vista and Café team leaders **Ann Roberts** and **Lisa Matthews**. The Café has welcomed new volunteers in the last twelve months, and we are grateful to all



"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Romans 15:13

our team of volunteers for giving of their time and making Café Vista a hub of our community.

As you will read in this report the website and ACNY (*A church near you*) continues to be a great asset to the church. Thanks to **Adele Eccleston** and **Nigel Sharpe** who constantly monitor both sites and ensure all the information is current and up to date.

Our online presence has also been maintained thanks to **Jonathan Lock** and **Mark Jones** who have worked hard to move us to YouTube. The YouTube channel offers a more consistent live stream and means that services are easier to find and catch up.

Throughout 2023 we were able to journey with people through their various life events. We had eight infant baptisms, three full immersion baptisms and two people were confirmed. We were delighted to be able to hold weddings again after the pandemic and celebrated with the marriage of three couples. Our work supporting the bereaved continued with 25 funerals.

Sadly, we lost several church members. Their loss is felt across the church as many were long standing members. We thank God for those church members who entered glory – **Alan Boardman, Eric Clayton, Tom Ellis, Doreen Faragher, Howard Huyton, Christine Henderson, Viv Jones, Muriel Nelson** and **Lynn Seddon**. In addition, we held six interment of ashes services and nine more names were added to the memorial.

Sunday Services and Prayer

I am grateful to all those who help us bring joy to our worship:



Eunice Woof, Graeme Scroggie, David Smith, Mark Jones, Debs Raynor, John Raynor, Tookie

Chessher, Jeff Shaw, along with **Adele Spence, Bill Casey, Jenny Capstick, Emily Smith** and **Tess Raynor**. The youth worship band continues to grow under the guidance of **Neil Frackelton** and **Debbie Jones**.

I also want to thank **Pete Chalk, Bill Evans, Wally Coppelov, Jonathan Lock, Bill Casey, Eileen Hughes, Graham Rutter, Cian O'Donoghue**, Wardens and Deputy Wardens for all their technical support in our services.

Our 9.00am service has continued to grow in 2023 with an average Sunday attendance of between 50-60 people. Numbers at 10.45 have been steady and we have seen some new families join us. Interactive prayer stations at both services have been welcomed and there have been opportunities for the congregation to participate in the services, including more people offering intercessions and Bible readings.

Our online praying community has remained steady throughout 2023 with many joining and viewing the services throughout the week. Four days a week there is a helpful discussion of Biblical texts and many people comment on Facebook. A big thank you to the morning prayer team for their consistent online presence.

We have also had consistent numbers at our monthly prayer meeting on the first Monday of the month and our monthly prayer walks. A record is kept at all the prayer meetings of what has been prayed for and it has been good to look back and see answers to prayer this year.

Worship

It is a privilege to be able to serve the congregation in leading worship, as we attempt to enable everyone to be 'lost in wonder, love and praise'. We continue to try to select a variety of styles of song, hopefully allowing everyone to feel able

to express themselves through praise and worship, whilst considering the different musicians and singers available each week.

The difficulty in logistics of finding a time when the whole band can practise means that we have perhaps sung less new songs than some might like, so this is something we are trying to address.

This year has seen the worship band getting used to the new AV system, and we are very grateful to Jonathan Lock who has generously invested a lot of time and money into setting things up. The final step in this process is for the band to transition using in-ear monitors, and having had a couple of practices with them we will soon be able to try them out in a Sunday service. Once this is all set up and running, the aim is that members of the band will be able to hear themselves and each other better, and so better serve the congregation.

John Raynor

Night LYFE

Throughout 2023, Night Lyfe, the Sunday evening monthly service at Christ Church, starting at 7.30pm on the second Sunday of the month, aimed primarily at young people, has continued regularly with generally good attendance. Night Lyfe has involved a good contingent of young people connected to the church, and good attendance from across the wider church membership, to support the service, including regular attendance from Sarah and Jackie.

On occasion, we have also had some involvement from members of other churches in the Parish and wider area. Night Lyfe has, on the whole, followed a standard structure, incorporating a game, Worship time, a testimony from one of the young people, and a talk from various church, and external, people.

There are also usually opportunities

for the young people in particular to be prayed for at the end, if there are any particular concerning issues affecting them, or they just needed some general prayer or spiritual support. Other adults attending have on occasion also utilised this time for their own prayer and spiritual support.

The Night Lyfe Service has been generally led by **Fiona Craig**, until very recently, supported by a range of additional people helping with refreshments, and with the talks, and with support from the young people themselves.

Neil and Debbie have continued to support the development of the (*Night Lyfe*) Youth Band, which, other than Neil and Mick, (*who is one of the young people's dads, who has recently joined the Band*), involves young musicians from the church.

Inevitably, due to young people moving on over time to University or other life changes, the Youth Band, since starting several years ago, has involved various changes in membership, but God has provided a constant flow of young people to support the Band in progressing and providing music and Worship support for Night Lyfe. We are extremely grateful to God for this. We are also very fortunate at present to have a stable group of 4-5 young musicians, (*plus Neil and now Mick*), to provide worship time at Night Lyfe, and supported by Debbie.

The Band practises once a week (*Mondays*) in term time, with gaps around Bank Holidays and School Holidays, and occasional illness related missed weeks, and we usually start with a brief spiritual reflection often provided by Debbie, and a prayer from Mark. The young people involved enjoy practising in order to support a youth-focused service, and Debbie



and I have been encouraged by their talent, enthusiasm and commitment.

Neil Frackelton and Debbie Jones

Mission, Outreach and Evangelism

A further four Hope Explored courses were held in 2023. Taking our total enquirers courses to 7 in two years. Each group is different, but all the courses have been a real encouragement as people have made commitments to Jesus and continued to come to church, some even joining a LYFE group.

In May we held a Coronation party and Eurovision party both of which were well attended and offered an opportunity for us to invite people from our local community along with our Ukrainian friends. Our joint 24/7 prayer weekend, open day in church and Pentecost service with St James Westhead and St Michael's Aughton was well received and acted as a springboard for more events together.

In June we invited all the godparents from our Baptism services to attend a special 'godparent' Sunday. Attendance was poor on this occasion, but it might be worth revisiting in the future. In July we commissioned our Café companions to offer a listening ear to customers who visit Café Vista and to support the Café Vista volunteers. In October the Pearl of Africa choir returned and as always were a big hit with our local schools and community. We also hosted a 'light night party for the local community as an alternative to Halloween.

In October we launched our very first Sanctuary Course to equip churches to support mental health. All those who have attended the course have spoken



highly of the material and of the professional delivery of the course by **Graeme Scroggie** and **Victoria**

Burton. The running of this course is a huge asset to Christ Church, and we are extremely grateful to Graeme and Victoria for their hard work and commitment.

In November our young people hosted our annual Tear Fund Quiz. A big thank you to **Jane Lake** and our young people for their commitment to this annual event.

In 2023 **Louise Kelly** along with **Jane Lake, Annette Harrison, Lisa Matthews, John Raynor, Carmen Jones, Helen Fallows, Janet Roberts** and **Jackie Davies** setup our brand-new Youth 4 U club on Fridays after school.

This group is aimed at Year 5 and 6 pupils from Christ Church school, although other children have joined at various times. The group enjoy games, refreshments and a little reflective time.

Our annual bereavement service in November – 'Embracing Hope', had a record number of people attending and one person joining our Hope Explored course in January.

In December **Jenny Capstick** led a Scratch Christmas choir and we were all treated to several carols and Christmas pieces in Advent. Everyone loved hearing the choir and we very much hope this will be repeated. A big thank you to Jenny for her hard work.

The St Helens Youth Brass Band attracted record numbers at the much-loved Carol Service and Professor Ian Tracey also attracted a crowd. During Advent we saw an increase in attendance for all our services with over 1,000 people attending.

A particular highlight was our very first live nativity on Christmas eve with attendance of 150 people many of whom were connected to our school.

Leadership and development

In September Sarah was able to take a 4-week sabbatical from Christ Church to focus on church growth and prayer. As part of her sabbatical, she spent time with the 24/7 prayer team in Waverley Abbey and with Emanuel Church in Lurgan, Northern Ireland. The sabbatical not only served as welcome refreshment but affirmed Christ's calling for her to lead, grow and serve the people of Christ Church and the community. The sabbatical also gave Jackie a great opportunity to lead the church and grow in her leadership role.

In November 2023 **Rev Jackie Davies** completed her curacy training and we were delighted when she secured her first incumbency post at St John's Ainsdale. Whilst we will be sad to say goodbye to Jackie, we are delighted to have been part of her curacy journey and are thrilled to be sending an extremely competent priest and pastor to the people of Ainsdale.

In 2023 **Rev Sarah O'Donoghue** spoke at her second National LYCIG conference (*Leading Your Church Into Growth*) and along with Rev Neil Short ran LYCIG local for the Diocese of Liverpool. In addition, they both ran two curacy training days on equipping curates in Evangelism.

Leadership teams and Wardens

I personally want to thank all members of the PCC and Ministry team for their commitment and hard work in supporting the practical and spiritual life of Christ Church. Special thanks go to **Graham, Jackie and Janet** and members of the Ministry Team: **Geoff Fallows, Jane Lake, Jonathan Lock, Paul Livesley, Angela Mellor and Jeff Shaw.**

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank **Helen Livesley** and **Karen Roberts** for their roles in

safeguarding our children, young people and vulnerable adults.

I would also like to thank our finance team for their hard work. In particular our PCC treasurer **Mark Patterson** for helping us all to understand the church accounts and ensuring that we save money on operational costs. **Jane Archbold** for her hard work along with **Milly Casey** and **Jenny Ray**. Special thanks also go to **Stephen Marsh** who took over from **Steve Hilton** as our Missions and Charities Officer.

Finally, I want to thank our churchwardens **Patricia Slater** and **John Critchley** and deputy wardens **Carole Rankin** and **Dennis Koogje**. They are a great support to me and work tirelessly to fulfil their roles as wardens and deputy wardens, often at unsociable hours and sacrificing family time. As Tricia and John step down as wardens I want to personally thank them for all their hard work and dedication to faithfully serving the Lord in this role. **Rev Sarah O'Donoghue**

5

Administrative Information

Christ Church Aughton, Long Lane, Aughton, Ormskirk L39 5AS

Official correspondence to The PCC Secretary, Parish Office, at the above address.

Objectives

Christ Church Aughton PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Vicar in promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical in this parish (*PCC {Powers} Measure 1956*). It is responsible for the maintenance of the Church, the Ministry Centre and the curate's house in Peet Avenue. Christ Church Aughton is a broad and welcoming church that seeks to provide a spiritual home



for all who seek God in Jesus Christ.

We proclaim the Gospel of Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England, as part of the worldwide Anglican Communion of churches. We worship the one true God, enjoy and share the fellowship of all our members and friends and aim to share Jesus with everyone beginning in our community.

Appointment to the PCC

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church members are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

Structure, Management and Governance

Christ Aughton PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure 1956. The PCC is registered with the Charity Commission - no. 1129036

The PCC (*Parochial Church Council*) has an important role in the governance and management of the church and its elected members are the representatives of the congregation. PCC meetings are normally chaired by the Vicar. The Wardens, Deputy Wardens and Deanery Synod Representatives are ex-officio members. PCC members are responsible for making decisions on matters of general concern and importance to the church, including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. The



maintenance, repair, insurance of the church buildings and contents and the church grounds, are the responsi-

bility of the PCC. Financial decisions are made jointly by the PCC and the Vicar. The full PCC normally meets every two months, with Standing Committee meetings on alternate months. The PCC receives regular reports from its Committee, Deanery Synod representatives, Ministry Team, Pastoral Care Team. Safeguarding is a standing item on the PCC agenda.

During 2023 the following served as members of the PCC:

Ex Officio members:

Incumbent: **Rev Sarah O'Donoghue**
(*Chair*)

Curate: **Rev Jackie Davies**

Wardens: **Mr John Critchley**
Mrs Patricia Slater

Deputy Wardens: **Mr Dennis Koogje**
Mrs Carole Rankin

Deanery Synod: **Mr David Cobbold**
(2022-2024)

Mr Jonathan Burke (PCC Secretary)
(2022-2023)

Mr Peter Stewart (2022-2025)

Mr Jonathan Lock (Reader) (2022-2025)

Mr John Critchley (2022-2025)

Elected members:

Mr Mark Patterson (Treasurer)
(2019-2022)

Miss Jessica Harrison (2022-2025)

Mr Joe Johnson (co-opted annually)

Mrs Louise Kelly (2021-2024)

Mrs Jodie Taylor (2022-2025)

Bankers: RBS, Drummond House
Branch, 1 Redheughs Ave, Edinburgh,
EH12 9JN

Independent Examiner: Collins and Co
Chartered Accountant and Registered
Auditor, Suite 13, Hattersley House, 1
Hattersley Court, Ormskirk, L39 2AY

Architect: Schafer Associates, 56 Belvedere Rd, Ashton-In-Makerfield, Wigan, WN4 8RU

Day to day management and control of the Church is exercised by the Rector and Wardens: The **Rev Sarah O'Donoghue**, Wardens **Mr John Critchley** and **Mrs Patricia Slater**, contactable via the Ministry Centre office on 01695 424530

Committees

The PCC operates through four sub-committees, which meet as required between full meetings of PCC. Each sub-committee includes one or more co-opted member who serves by invitation of the relevant sub-committee chair (*who must be an elected member of the PCC*), in consultation with the vicar. The principle of three-year memberships also applies to co-opted members. PCC members receive regular instruction and advice on their roles as Trustees, on health and safety issues, risk assessment and management, and on child and vulnerable adult protection procedures, from the relevant PCC officers.

Standing Committee

Required by law, it transacts the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any direction given by the full Council. Membership of the Standing Committee is the Vicar, the Churchwardens, Deputy Church Wardens, the Treasurer, and the Secretary.

Stewardship Committee

To assist the treasurer in all areas involving finance, including compliance with procedures, gift-aid, administration, financial planning, budgeting, charitable giving and special appeals. The stewardship committee are also responsible for the personnel of paid employees and

volunteers. Membership in 2023 was **Mark Patterson** (*Chair*) **Jenny Ray** (*Secretary*), **Dennis Koogje**, **John Appleton** (*co-opted*), **Jane Archbold** (*co-opted*) **Stephen Marsh** (*co-opted*), **Sarah O'Donoghue**

Fabric Committee

The Fabric Committee is responsible for the maintenance of the Church building, Ministry Centre and the Curate's house. Membership for 2023 was **Josh Johnson** (*Chair*), **Liz Mawdsley** (*Secretary*), **John Critchley**, **Jonathan Burke**, **John Shaw**, **Sarah O'Donoghue**

Ministry Team

This committee includes members of the PCC and Ministry team. This committee is responsible for overseeing services, leading, preaching, young people and pastoral care. Membership for 2023 was **Sarah O'Donoghue** (*Chair*), **Angela Mellor**, **Geoff Fallows**, **Graham Rutter**, **Rikki Abernethy**, **Jonathan Lock**, **Fiona Craig**, **Jane Lake**, **Jeff Shaw**, **Paul Livesley**, **Janet Roberts**, **Jackie Davies**.

Ministry Centre Operations Committee

To assist the Ministry Centre Administrator in the management of all the Ministry Centre activities including Café Vista and its maintenance. Membership for 2023 was **John Shaw** (*Chair*) **Gail Usher**, **Lesley Birchall**, **Kath Elliott**, **Carole Rankin**, **Wendy Arthur**, **Sarah O'Donoghue**.

The electoral roll

The roll at the time of writing indicates no significant overall change in total numbers. CCA has not suffered a dramatic loss of membership post Covid 19. It may well have gained a few



people who, for whatever reason, have chosen not to apply to go onto the roll. The worrying, although not particularly new, figures are those for the cohort age group 1920-1950 and 1980-2000. These suggest we have a high proportion of our congregation who are retirement age, the majority of whom are in their 80's and we are failing to attract or retain those in their 20s, 30s, or 40s.

This is not a unique picture across the C of E or indeed other denominations.

The implications of this are already being seen in the difficulties experienced in finding volunteers for some types of tasks and is probably exacerbated by a gender imbalance due to the statistical fact that ladies tend to live longer than gentlemen!

Perhaps even more important, these figures highlight the crucial importance of expanding our ministry, particularly toward the post 1950s generations.

Summary

Date	Total on Roll	Male	Female	Total	Resident	Non-Resident	Total
17 March 2022	255	94	161	255	193	62	255
2023	254	93	161	254	193	61	254
2024	254	91	163	254	189	65	254

	Total	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	Not stated	Total
17 March 2022	255	3	19	61	37	25	31	9	6	7	57	
		1%	7%	24%	15%	10%	12%	4%	2%	3%	22%	100%
2023	254	3	17	63	37	27	31	8	3	7	58	
		1%	7%	24%	15%	11%	12%	3%	1%	3%	23%	100%
2024	254	3	17	61	37	27	31	8	3	7	58	
		1%	7%	24%	15%	11%	12%	3%	1%	3%	23%	100%
Decade age		100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20		

PCC Secretary's Report

This is my second report and I should like to start by saying a big thank you to **Jenny Ray** and **Liz Mawdsley**, my fellow 'scribes' for providing the reports from the Stewardship and Fabric sub committees respectively. The roles of these committees in doing the 'donkey work' behind the scenes and informing PCC decisions should not be underestimated.

The PCC continues to meet alternate months, excluding August and December, with most members sitting on the Stewardship or Fabric sub-committees which meet in the months PCC is not meeting. The work of the Pastoral Committee, headed by **Angela Mellor**, and the Ministry Team also feeds into the PCC in order that it can make its decisions based on a comprehensive view of what is going on in the life of the Church and what the priorities have to be.

Much of the year being reported upon has been spent looking toward the vote on 'Fit for Mission'. It is tempting to describe it as time wasted but this would not be totally accurate because it did force us to look at the future in a way that we probably would not have done otherwise. Suffice to say that we were given four options by the diocese but created our own. The result across the deanery was that 40% opted to join, the remainder opted out.

The threshold for implementation having been originally set at 70% was promptly lowered. Sadly, one of the results of having to spend so much time on FfM was that we were unable to devote as much time to other things as would have been possible otherwise. On the plus side the experience has strengthened our relationship with the other parishes in our 'Cluster'.

At most of our meetings and services

we pray our Prayer for Growth and one of our outstanding aims is to appoint a Youth Worker and/or Families Worker. We have taken further advice on how and where to advertise, the initial attempts having failed to produce any candidates. We are apparently not the only parish with this problem, and we continue to look at how the very real needs we face can be addressed.

There has been much behind the scenes work being done about the area previously identified as a Community Garden but subsequently fenced off by the Scouts. Further plans have been drawn up and discussions with the diocese continue.

Other issues that have been addressed by the PCC include:

The operational staffing of the Ministry Centre. The administrative structure is working well but the caretaking and opening arrangements have proven difficult to overcome. Put simply, we need to be able to let the building more often to bring in the income that keeps it running but we cannot do that unless there is somebody available to be there before during and after events. It is proving difficult to find people to spend such time and will be expensive but we have decided in this instance we have to 'speculate to accumulate'.

Finance is an issue that has concentrated our minds a lot over the year. With the parish overspending at the rate of about £2,600 a month just on running costs. It is a problem that cannot be ignored. Although the maintenance work required because of the quinquennial review is well in hand under the guiding hand of **Josh Johnson**, there are always going to be unexpected repairs and this year has been no exception. Work has been done to the stonework and roof and a



replacement door fitted at the top of the tower. In addition, we are committed to moving toward making the church and Ministry Centre more Eco Friendly with potential savings from solar panels and LED lighting. However, without the money available to invest in measures that will eventually generate savings we are having to look to grant applications for funding.

And finally, a big thank you to the various members of the congregation who have lent their specialist expertise to the PCC when we have needed it. We are greatly blessed by having amongst us talented people who have the professional knowledge we sometimes need. Sadly, we have lost one such person with the passing of the late Tom Ellis who provided much of our legal advice over many years and is greatly missed.

Jonathan Burke (PCC Secretary)

Treasurer's report

Firstly, I'd like to emphasise that I couldn't fulfil the duties of the treasurer role without the help and support of a number of people including **Jane Archbold** (*Finance Officer*), **Jen Ray** (*gift aid and GASDS*), **John** and **Janice Appleton** (*giving envelopes*), **Stephen Marsh** (*Missions and Charities Officer*) and **Gail** (*general admin support*), **Edward McCarthy** (*Grant Specialist*), **Dennis Koogje**, **Chris Mathews** and **Paul** and **Bev Collins** (*Accountants*) for which I am very grateful. As with everyone, the current financial crisis continues to have an impact on the church finances.

The monthly payments on the Ministry Centre loan have increased by £463 during the year and are now costing £2,233.75 a month, whilst our combined energy bills for the Church



and Ministry Centre were £30,937 in 2023. This means our Reserve funds have reduced by £19,241.66 during 2023. If this continues without any intervention, we will go into debt by mid-2024. We have also had to carry out maintenance on the Ministry Centre alarm system and undertake preventative maintenance of the buildings fabric costing £15,648.

Noting the above, it is not all negative for 2023. Our Ministry Centre Hall lettings have almost doubled from 2022 levels to £11,875 but are still well below our pre-covid (2018) income of £18,966. We are hoping to employ a caretaker in the coming year which will help increase our Hall lettings and the associated income.

During the year, the finance team has implemented cost savings including changing our telephone and broadband provider and our energy provider, saving £4,840/year. We have also recouped VAT overpayments on our energy bills amounting to £3,915. We are planning to replace the gas boiler in the church with infrared heating with estimated annual savings of £6,500/year. This should help reduce the outgoings to a manageable level in 2024. Due to ongoing issues with the donation station, we have replaced it with two Collect Tin devices which are linked to our Sumup accounts and have no overheads, thanks to **Jonathan Lock**.

Mark Patterson (Treasurer)

Finance Officer report

2023 saw the usual mix of lots of different groups using the Ministry Centre, including our usual Bumps and Babes, Knit and Natter, Cave, FACT, GNI, Toddlers and Luncheon Club. We also have hosted lots of birthday parties and other celebratory gatherings. We have had regular income from renting out the

Ministry Centre to the Women's Institute, U3A, Spanish for Kids and Move it or Lose it classes to mention just a few. A value of over £17,400 in invoices raised in 2023.

I will leave Mark and the Accountants to deliver the key financial points, but I thought it worthy of note the revenues received from the smaller outreach groups that regularly meet at the Ministry Centre.

Bumps and Babes (Monday) Jan to Dec 2023: £358.50

Cave (Friday) Jan to Dec 2023: £663.60

Toddlers (Tuesday) Jan to Dec 2023: £2196

Luncheon Club (Wednesday) Jan to Dec 2023: £5764.45 (£1901.86 expenses)

I had fantastic support from my usual band of volunteers **Milly Casey** and **Jan Ray. Lesley Smith** decided to retire but thankfully **Rachel Shaw** stepped into the role of counting and recording all receipts including taking the money to the post office. I remain truly grateful for their hard work and support. We also said goodbye to Naomi and a big welcome to Gail who not only took on the role of Business Development for the centre but also took on the management of all the other administrative duties including the generation of the invoices for room hire.

Special note of thanks to **Lesley Birchall** and her team of Café Vista Volunteers who cash up at the end of every day and record all cash taken and payments made by card, again making my job so much easier. It is worth noting that over the year we have seen an increase in the number of people who are using the card payment machine to not only pay for service in Café Vista but are also paying weekly subscription fees and for generously donating to CCA.

In August we successfully implemented a change in how we pay our suppliers from cheques to BAC. Big thanks to Milly for her role in this. We also implemented a purchase request form. It is planned that by careful purchasing we can manage the Ministry Centre and Christ Church funds more efficiently.

Jane Archbold (Finance Officer)

Mission and Charities

For the year ending 31st December 2023, the Missions & Charities account received income from the monthly tithe (£12,144), and also received funds raised by the Knit & Natter group (£600) and 'Girlie Night In' (£227.30). The Knit and Natter group have specifically supported 'We Are Hope Street' and 'Age UK Lancashire'. Girlie Night In have supported 'Skelmersdale Food Bank'.

A total of £8,282.30 was paid out to support charities chosen largely by the LYFE groups. They include Mercy Ships, Safe Families, Leading Your Church into Growth, Prison Fellowship, Churches Together in Ormskirk, Pearl of Africa Choir, Mission Direct, Skelmersdale and Ormskirk Foodbanks, Reach Counselling, The Bible Society, 24/7 Prayer and YKids. For families and individuals in despair and with nowhere else to turn, a total of £450 was given at the Vicar's discretion.

Stephen Marsh

Wardens' Report

This year has passed swiftly in the wardens' calendar. We have kept busy in supporting Sarah and have attended many Fit for Mission meetings. We have prayed a lot too; especially over discernment for FFM and the growth of God's church in this place.

We have begun working



more closely with the churches local to us and formed a 'hub' with the standing committees of St. Michael's, Bickerstaffe, and Westhead.

The Ministry Centre activities have also grown over the year under the experienced and able hands of Gail, our centre administrator. Gail took over from Naomi in the summer of 2023. All these activities demand a high volume of volunteers and Gail oversees all of them. She is adept at showing Christian love and welcome to all who come through our doors. We do, however, need a caretaker(s) to be there when people have hired the hall and to assist with moving furniture for differing events.

As wardens we also have responsibility for the upkeep of the graveyard and garden of rest. We are very thankful for our gardener and for those who put beautiful flowers on the graves. We hope that the care of the graveyard helps those who visit to feel comfort and peace as they visit their loved ones. More names have been added to the memorial stone over the year and the daffodils planted in memory of Gay Wells have given a good show this Easter. We are aware of the headstones which are loose and may fall. So have had contact with the stonemasons to ensure safety in those areas. We have six War Graves that we take care of by giving them an annual inspection, checking that the surrounding ground is kept clear of weeds and making sure the head stones are clean.

We continue to grow as a church and look forward to supporting those who seek and those who grow in faith. The many church groups, including the Hope Explored programme of 3 evenings for the curious/interested to know more, have continued and flourished. We pray for each



13

group and encourage attendance at the monthly prayer gathering for the whole church to be together in prayer.

Learning new skills appears to be a requisite for wardens on the job! We have therefore, continued to acquaint and update ourselves with the AV system. We are very grateful for those who volunteer to use the system at the 10.45 service and to stream this service for those who worship from a distance.

We have also been able to use the system for weddings and funerals. We feel this has been a privilege for us personally and hope that, when families come to say their last farewells or celebrate happy occasions they will feel at peace, from the smooth running of their services.

As John and I finish our time as wardens we will look back and see God's hand in the work we have done and the joy we have received from serving. I'm sure God has the next job waiting for us so that we can continue to do His will through His blessing on both of us.

Send me out from here Lord to serve a world in need. May I know no man by the coat he wears, but the heart that Jesus sees.

And may the light of Your face shine upon me Lord.

You have filled my heart with the greatest joy, and my cup is overflowing.

Tricia Slater and John Critchley

Fabric Report

This report covers all the buildings owned or managed by the church. To include the Church, Ministry Centre, and the Curate's house at 25 Peet Avenue. The remit of the Fabric Committee is centred in two areas.

1) Maintaining the existing fabric of the Church and all church properties both external and internal including

keeping the external grounds in a tidy and safe working order.

2) Improving the buildings, and their facilities to the benefit of the church and the wider community.

Church

The Quinquennial Inspection was undertaken in April 2020 the contents of which were reviewed. Ninety eight percent of jobs which were required for the first 12 months period have now been carried out.

We need to complete the remaining 2 percent by the end of August 2024 which will cost approximately £2,000. Regarding the jobs for the period 12 to 24 months, 97 percent of the jobs have been carried out with the remaining 3 per cent of jobs being completed by March 2025 with a cost of some £5,000.

The jobs that have been carried out over the last 12 months on the Church are as follows:

Boiler existing cooling fan repaired.

Boiler serviced, and Gas Safety Certificate issued.

Roof repairs due to severe winds, replace damaged slates to fix a major leak near the southern church entrance.

Roof repairs as per quinquennial report to soil pipe and roof over toilets. Clean out guttering over all the Church and silicone leaking joints. Repair lead flashing to roof valley between vestry and the church.

Fit new Media screens to the new sound and vision system as part of the 2020 vision.

Replace the existing two-phase electric meters with one three-phase meter in preparation for the new infrared heating, part of the 2020 vision.

Gully cover lifted by the lamp post located at the main entrance to the church off the A59.

Supply and fix new oak door located at the top of the stone staircase, the entrance to the Church Tower roof.

Electricians supply and fix new wiring and sockets to new media centre.

Electricians supply and fix new wiring to connect the new three phase system to the existing control panels and fuse boxes.

Proposed works to be carried out over the course of the next 12 months providing funds are available.

Complete the remaining 2 percent and 3 percent of works for both 12 and 24 months that are required in the quinquennial report.

1) **Complete new Infrared Heating and Lighting system in the Church as part of the 2020 vision**

2) **New Glass doors to Church entrance as part of the 2020 vision**

3) **Construct new disabled toilets as part of the 2020 vision**

4) **Fill and repair tarmac footpath around the church to ensure safe and disabled access.**

5) **Repair lead flashing, clear internal and external vegetation where possible, to the top of the tower.**

6) **Repoint and repair stonework at the top of the Church tower and replace exit door timber frame**

7) **Carry out condition Survey of Church Tower**

8) **Repoint and repair stonework at various locations around the church as per quinquennial report.**

9) **Replace Cracked Hinge stones and replace hinges to external door into the Choir vestry.**

10) **Start the Memorial Garden if possible.**

11) **Carry out roof repairs to ridge tiles and first row of slates on the Chancel roof.**

12) **Commence remaining**



items required in the quinquennial report before April 2025

The grass cutting and grounds maintenance of both the church and ministry centre grounds are under contract to Max Sharp of Maximum Ground Maintenance who mows the grass and general maintenance and Paul Richards of Olive Branch Landscapes who cuts the hedges and trees. Both have continued to do an excellent job again this year.

A special thank you to the Community Pay Back Service workers who also carry out maintenance work to the grounds, tidying up the graveyard and removal of all dead flowers and painting to the Church and Ministry Centre. Also, the great work carried out on a regular basis by our own volunteers keeping the graveyard flower beds to both church and ministry centre gardens so neat and tidy.

A special 'thank you' to the female volunteers who carry out the cleaning to the church on a weekly basis organised by **Jenny Rawcliffe, Carole Rankin** and all the **Busy Bees**.

Ministry Centre

Jobs that have been carried out over the last 12 months are as follows:

Supply and replace leaking water softener filter cylinder to the commercial dishwasher located in the first floor Kitchen under the sink.

Remove, clean and seal backing boards, relay existing tiles to gent's toilet approximately area 8m²

Add dado rail to main hall to protect the paintwork from the stacking of chairs, paint rail and walls.

Service to lift and replace necessary parts.



Numerous call outs to resolve fire alarm and burglar alarm to resolve various issues.

15

Electrician carry out 5 yearly inspection of the electrical system to issue test certificate and rectify minor faults.

Electrician fit replacement LED lights to downstairs office and bottom of staircase

Plumber carry out Gas Safe inspection and issue Gas Safe certificate.

Air Conditioning unit in the café serviced and certificate issued.

Faulty central heating pump to the underfloor heating replaced in the plant room.

Fix and check out Automatic front doors on two occasions.

Re-paint external aluminium guttering, eaves boards, downspouts, and external doors to the Ministry Centre.

Carry out usual general maintenance.

Proposed works to be carried out over the next twelve months providing funds are available.

- 1) Painting to existing external aluminium windows to match guttering and downspouts.
- 2) Replace carpet upstairs in the two meeting rooms to laminate flooring.
- 3) Replace missing slates to roof.
- 4) Fault on disabled pad/button outside the main door to be rectified.
- 5) White lines to be repainted on the car park
- 6) Window to be fixed in the main hall unable to open.

A big thank you to Gail and all the volunteer staff who keep the Ministry Centre office going. A special thank you to Lesley and all café vista gang for doing an excellent job every day and attracting new people to the Ministry Centre.

Also, a big thank you all church members who take part in giving the Church and the Ministry Centre a thorough spring clean every year and our day cleaners who do an outstanding job every week.

Our mission for the coming year will

be to further improve the services and the facilities that the Ministry Centre and café vista has to offer to our local community and beyond.

25 Peet Avenue

Jackie our curate moved in July 2021 and is sadly leaving us in May to be a minister in her own parish. Prior to that date an inspection/survey of the house will be carried out to ascertain what works are necessary for the house to be let or occupied by another Church worker in the future.

Over the last 12 months, the following maintenance work has been carried out:

- 1) Replace rear garden timber gate.
- 2) Carryout Gas Safe inspection and issue Gas Safe certificate.
- 3) Check central heating boiler.

Proposed works to be carried out in the next 12 months prior to survey.

Garage requires a new roof and joists, plus underpinning to corner brickwork and foundation or demolish to create a parking area.

Replace and refurbish upstairs bathroom and toilet.

Replace and refurbish downstairs bathroom and shower.

Check for cavity insulation in the walls if none have the walls cavity injected with insulation to improve thermal heat loss and fit extractor fans to improve ventilation where needed to stop mould and damp developing.

Leaking Gutter to be fixed or replaced.

Carry out survey to ascertain necessary works to be carried out.

Possible replacement of the existing combi boiler.

Vicarage

Nothing to report unless Sarah and Cian have carried out works.

In general, the fabric of the church and all associated properties and grounds

are in reasonable order and continue to be well maintained. The quinquennial report highlights the issues and prioritises the order of works to be carried out over the next year stressing the need for regular maintenance of the Church buildings. **Joe Johnson**

2020 Vision Working Group

Members

Rev Sarah O'Donoghue, David Denison, Joe Johnson, Jonathan Lock, Liz Mawdsley

Purpose of Group

Group approved by PCC February 2020, to make improvements in Church, to enrich both the life of the Church family and be welcoming to everyone in our community.

In November 2022 an Open Forum was held with the congregation, when members of the community were invited to discuss how to take forward the plans to improve accessibility and facilities for the disabled, including the provision of accessible toilets, re-siting/refitting of kitchen, improving the access to church including new doors for the church porch and the re-ordering of the inside the church – to be known as phase 1.

At that meeting, concerns, were raised regarding the underfloor heating, and, so, the group spent some time exploring the options again. This has included visiting other churches to assess the effectiveness, visual acceptability, noise implications and discussions with independent heating engineers including exploring the option of infra-red heating.

Following a visit to several churches, including the Albion United Reformed Church, Ashton under Lyne, the 'halo' infrared heating was deemed to be both aesthetically pleasing and cost effective. The Church of England is



committed to Eco Church sustainability. With this in mind, it was a requirement that all churches were to undertake a 'Carbon Footprint' return, which **Rikki Abernethy** completed on behalf of Christ Church. **Rikki, Joe, and Sarah** also completed a Heating Check list.

Following PCC approval, a faculty was submitted to the DAC, which incorporated a Statement of Need, a Statement of Significance, and a Feasibility Study. Once DAC approval has been received, it is hoped the work will commence in the summer of 2024.

The future

Moving forward, Phase 1 is still on the agenda for this group, but, financially, the heating is both a priority and necessity.

Liz Mawdsley

Christ Church Aughton Website

Since its launch in September 2022, the Christ Church Aughton website

<https://christchurchaughton.org.uk>

has been an important communication resource, attracting the attention of visitors interested in learning more about our church community. This has been most evident through the growing number of requests for baptisms and weddings and through the significant number of visits to the website.

Between January and December 2023, when specifically searching for Christ Church

Aughton on Google, 3,590 people clicked on our website link that appeared in the search results and were taken to the home page. This does not take into consideration those visitors to the website that accessed it directly and

it is estimated that a further 2,028 people did so in this way. 1 Interestingly, 65% of visitors to the website accessed it by mobile phone,



30% by computer and the remaining 5% by tablet. Recent statistics show that, apart from the Home Page, the most viewed pages were: What's On, Worship and Prayer, Ministry Centre, About Us, History, Life Events and Contact Us.

The Christ Church Aughton website is also an important gateway to our micro site on the CofE 'A Church Near You'

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/15222/>

where we post all of our services and events (*and more!*). That site has also seen a significant increase in the number of visits, with a growing average of more than 32,000 page views in 2023, compared to 25,000 in 2022.

The two websites continue to be monitored and maintained by Nigel Sharpe and Adele Eccleston. These two volunteers, who are part of our national and international church community, are committed to ensuring the websites are kept up to date with regular updates and therefore ensuring the content is fresh and topical.

Having a dedicated team looking after both websites negates the risk of the sites becoming stale and irrelevant and ensures that Christ Church continues to be seen as being alive in the present, not buried in the past. We are pleased that our websites are helping to encourage visitors to experience all that the church has to offer, at home, in church and in the community.

1: Figure calculated by extrapolating a 90-day period between December 2023 - March 2024

Nigel Sharpe and Adele Eccleston

Deanery Synod Report

Christ Church Aughton is part of the Ormskirk Deanery. The Ormskirk Deanery Synod met two times in 2023.

In June 2023, at All Saints Parish Hall, Rainford

There were two main items on the agenda.

1. Members of the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee/Deanery Leadership team were elected. The following people were elected.

Lay Chair Mark Taylor

Treasurer Peter Dorling

Lay representative 1 Colin Throp

Clergy representatives Rev David Banbury (Assistant Area Dean)

Rev Janet Heighton

Ex officio clergy chapter clerk Rev Eileen Heaney.

Secretary Bill Casey (*no longer a representative for Christ Church Aughton, but willing to be co-opted*)

2. Fit for Mission information roadshow.

Rt. Rev Beverly Mason, Bishop of Warrington, opened the session with a talk entitled, Why Fit for Mission. Attendees were then able to circulate around various stalls with guest experts present.

In September 2023, at St. Pauls' Skelmersdale.

The meeting was mostly given over to two issues.

1. A detailed exploration of Fit for Mission. A resume of the project was given, followed by a detailed explanation of the voting process for PCCs. There were Four Statements of Position concerning to what extent churches were prepared to engage with the Fit for Mission project, and it was made clear that PCCs should communicate their decisions to the Area Dean by noon on 24th November 2023.

There was a 'question and answer' session during which PCC members were able to seek clarification of issues that were of particular interest to their own church.

2. An update was given of the financial position of the Diocese. There has been

a significant fall in church attendance post Covid, and this, along with the increased cost of utility and other costs has led to a structural deficit of £1 million in the DBF budget. A conversation with the National Church has been initiated about a new financial settlement for the Diocese of Liverpool, taking into account the uniquely low levels of historic assets alongside the challenging demographics in parts of the diocese. The National Church have been asked to carry out an independent review of the diocese. It is hoped that a decision may be made by December.

David Cobbold

Reports from Church Groups and activities

I hope as you read the brief reports from each of the ministries/groups within our church family that you will be encouraged by how we have achieved our mission to share Jesus with everyone and to enable people to 'Come as they are'.

School links and partnerships

This year we have continued to work in partnership with our church school offering pastoral support to teachers and pupils in the school. We visited school weekly for collective worship and supported the Worship Warriors group. We hosted Harvest Festival and Christmas services as well as a year 6 Leavers' service. We have also supported the RE curriculum with lessons on Pentecost, the Bible, Baptism/Belonging, Eucharist, Transition to High School workshops.

Jackie and Sarah were able to host a new interactive Easter Experience for the first time after the pandemic. Sarah visited the Year 6 on their residential to Tower Wood



and offered a reflection next to Lake Windermere. In September Jackie along with **Helen Ridland** and **Helen Fallows** hosted our reception class welcome lunches. A new initiative for 2023 involved our worship warriors visiting the other church schools in our cluster and delivering collective worship. This has been well received and has strengthened all the partnerships with our local schools. Rev Sarah O'Donoghue continues to be a School Governor along with **Mrs Tess Jutla** (*foundation Governor*) and **Mr Neil Heyes** (*Chair of Governors*).

Bumps and Babes

Over the past year Bumps and Babes has had 26 members who have attended weekly for the most part. We continue to meet every Monday apart from bank holidays and some of the summer weeks when older children may be off school. As parents have returned to work or their babies have attained the ripe old age of 1 year some have left the group and others 'graduated' to Toddlers (*8 over the year*). We continue to stay in touch through our WhatsApp group in order to maintain the link with church and with each other.

Bumps and Babes continues to have the aim of sharing Jesus through love and support for the youngest members of our community, and their carers. The WhatsApp group still has 28 members who talk with each other and are offered advice from each other. As group facilitator I let members know of church events and continue to pray for each child and parent, particularly when they have been facing difficulties and illness. We invite parents to bring their children



for baptism or thanksgiving and the Hope Explored course. Some came to the Light Night in October and

others to the Christmas eve live nativity.

We welcome all, following Jesus's directive - *Mark 9 :37 Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me: and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.*

Tricia Slater

Toddlers

It has been a time of change at the Toddler group. In July we said a fond farewell to our leader **Wendy Arthur**. We had a special goodbye lunch and presented her with flowers and a 'his and hers' garden bench. We are delighted that she pops in to see us on special occasions such as our annual Nativity Play, visit of Father Christmas, Easter egg hunt and Teddy Bear's picnic. Toddlers has a happy and friendly atmosphere which means the group is as popular as ever with 52 children on the register an average of 38 children attending each week and 12 families on a list eagerly awaiting a place. Karen Cunningham has joined the team this year and is a great asset as is David Cobbold who helps with the 'setup' on a Monday. Teamwork is essential to the success of the group so a massive thank you to all the volunteers for their hard work and commitment to the group. Of course, we are always looking for more willing volunteers!

Sue Leigh

Diddy Disciples

Diddy Disciples, our group for children aged 0-6 years, is run most weeks by either **Deb Raynor** or **Charlotte Chappell**. About 12 children have attended with their adult this year. Some weeks we have no attendees, some we have two or three children, rarely we have 4 or 5 children. When it's a baptism service, we can have lots of families come and join us and it can get quite busy. We continue to use the Diddy Disciples

program written by **Sharon Moughtin Mumby**. The sessions include storytelling, singing, craft and fun with opportunities to reflect and wonder about God and our place in his world. The aim is for everyone to get involved and engaged - both children and adults.

Debs Raynor

Xplore

Xplore is our primary school Sunday School for children aged 5 to 11. We have a maximum of about 10 children or so per week and it has been wonderful to see the children growing in confidence and becoming very talkative!

We are a group of eight leaders and helpers, and we work on a 3-week rota. We have a What's app group that lets us swap around if people are unavailable. We use the Roots on the Web materials which provide activities and options to help us look at Bible stories and questions such as the meaning of forgiveness and taking responsibility for what God had given us. We mix up news, games, drama and craft.

We had a very enjoyable Nativity in church last year with lots of our church family children reading the Nativity story very well and dressing up in our beautifully made nativity costumes. This year we also combined the Nativity with our Christingle service which seemed to go very well and was followed by a Christmas party in the Ministry Centre.

Sometimes some of our Xplore children help to welcome people into church and give out things before the 10.45 service starts. The children who come to Xplore are different ages, but they get on really well and it's lovely to see them joining in and enjoying being together. We have a wonderful opportunity to teach these children about God's unfathomable grace and how He can save us through the sacrifice of his son Jesus. The opportunity to live

our lives in his strength and power also allows the children the opportunity to exercise their God given superpower to choose to make the right decisions in Him and for Him as they grow on their faith.

Jane Lake

Youth 4 You

Youth 4 u is a club that runs on a Friday during term time from 3.30-4.40. It is for children who are in years 5 and 6 of primary school. We have worked closely with Mr Kennedy and other staff at Christ Church school to enable the club to run smoothly straight from school. We have a fantastic team of volunteers on our rota and are blessed by the different skills they bring to the club. We have a craft table with different crafts available each week, including card making, seed planting and gift bag making.

There is a Lego table, board games, a chill out zone and more recently we have started indoor hockey for our more energetic children!

We provide snacks each week and pause for 5-10 minutes to have a 'thought for the day'. We are currently working through the Bible verse A-Z so our thought centres around this. We average around 25-30 children. We would appreciate prayer each week for the Lord to protect and bless each of our children and the volunteers.

Louise Kelly

Luncheon Club

Our luncheon club is still up and running and we have an attendance of 50-55 regular members. We cook a three-course meal every other week that is enjoyed by everyone. Once a month we have a Holy Communion service before the meal with normally 20 - 25 people attending.

The Christmas dinner was,



as usual, a great success. Including volunteers 77 enjoyed a beautiful meal. We were joined by the team from Home Instead and we all enjoyed hearing choirs from Christ Church C of E and Town Green primary schools, they were very good and everyone enjoyed the carols so much.

Luncheon club continues to be a place of belonging, support and welcome for all. Unfortunately, over the past 12 months seven members have passed away: **Muriel Nelson, Joan Greenall, Doreen Faragher, Howard Huyton, Gazza, Brenda Nixon and Bert Ball.** May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Pauline Welsh

Bell Ringers

We have continued to ring the bells for the vast majority of Sunday mornings (10.00 to 10.45) but have not had a regular practice night due to shortage of ringers. The bells remain ringable but still require major work carrying out as per previous reports submitted. The refreshments in-between services have been great for ringers as we get a drink. It allows more socialising with the rest of church and makes us a bit more visible, so long may that continue.

I might add that the people doing the coffee etc are brilliant and most welcoming to all the ringers so please pass on my thanks for that.

We have done a bit of advertising for ringers and have recruited a new ringer. It is still early days but I remain optimistic. We have welcomed a few visiting bands and have managed to ring for weddings/funerals as requested. We have changed our wedding price from £150 to £200. We have a small fund of money: £200, which I am looking after. It is used for minor repairs, maintenance etc. Well, I think that covers



the basics, let me know if any more information is required.

Sarah, thank you for being very supportive of the ringing team, it is appreciated.

Paul Coggan

Knit and Natter

After a busy return to our twice monthly meetings in 2023, our group has continued to support local charities, as well as supporting one another in sharing patterns, skills and friendship.

In November we held a coffee morning, offering cake, tea and coffee. There were also several Christmas crafts on sale, including chocolate orange with covers resembling Christmas puddings and pixie hats together with Ferrero Roche Christmas pudding novelties. We raised £1,200 in support of local dementia care.

In March we held another fundraising coffee morning, this time in support of Skelmersdale and Ormskirk Foodbanks. We raised just over £700 for this very worthwhile cause. We continue to support one another and have welcomed at least 3 new people to our group. It is a safe space where people feel comfortable and able to share their worries as well as good news. I continue to be grateful to Irene Francis for her continued support and encouragement throughout the year. There is always lots of chatter, banter and laughter.

Irene Critchley

Ministry Centre

We are so thankful to God for the Ministry Centre, for all the opportunities we have to connect with each other and the community and all the wonderful volunteers who help keep it a thriving hub both for the church and the wider Parish.

Café Vista is as busy as always and continues to be a welcoming place for all

who visit it.

We have had a number of new volunteers joining the incredible team of men and women who ensure a professional kitchen and café which always ensures our 5-star rating. We continue to campaign for more volunteers.

Luncheon Club is as popular as ever with continuous inquiries to book a place. There has been a small price increase which was accepted with no complaints which was just lovely. Our volunteer team are fantastic and always ensure a wonderful atmosphere, beautiful presentation, great service and incredible food. Again, 5-star rating from environmental health.

Café Companions have been running for nearly 6 months now with great results. Our wonderful volunteers come in every afternoon for 2 hours to be a gentle presence for anyone in need. Feedback from the volunteers is of great opportunities to chat, befriend or support lots of various people visiting the café.

We had to replace the dessert fridge after it broke. The money was very generously donated by two members of our church family. We also received a large donation specifically for the café which means we have a safety buffer should anything need replacing in the future.

We had a very generous donation of outside picnic benches from Wetherspoons in Maghull. This will enable us to utilise the outside area for drinks and cakes to encourage extra footfall during the day for mums with young children or visitors with dogs as well as a great usable space for our youth and lyfe groups on warm summer evenings.

The lead cafe volunteers coordinate with the office for online food shopping, cakes, meat and crisps all of which are

locally sourced. Gail would like to say a massive thank you to all the café teams but especially the leaders for all their help, patience, love and support while she settled into her role as MC coordinator.

Bookings for the Ministry Centre have been consistently growing with private parties and events like WLCC, Diddykicks and WLPA as well as regular weekly classes such as u3a, WI and Kids Spanish to name a few. We also have some new groups/classes like, Adult Ballet and Tap and Sense Hub.

The Community Social Group is struggling at the minute with attendees, but we are now working with the council in the hope they can get financial help and promotion. We are hopeful this can be turned around as the services they offer, which are free, is incredible.

Girlie Night In continues to draw many women from our local and church community. New volunteers have joined with great ideas and even greater passion. We are beyond blessed with all the volunteers old and new.

All our MC groups are thriving, **Cave, Fact, Bumps and Babies, Knit & Natter** (*Knit & Natter Coffee Mornings are a big success and raise hundreds of pounds in the fight against Dementia*) and **The Sanctuary Course** with every space filled. Feedback is always positive from these groups.

The Ministry Centre is used for ministry purposes for our church community all of which are well attended along with various ministry events put together to bless our local community or to raise funds for local charities (*Macmillan is well supported by the visitors to Café Vista and raise hundreds of pounds for Cancer*). Christ Church school continue to hold all their performances throughout the year in our main hall.



We also enjoyed having **Easy Peasy Workshops** (lead by church members) who ran a well-attended craft session with great success. The leaders will look to do more workshops as there are several church gentlemen showing an interest as well as interest from outside church. The ladies have met with the Community Social Group and plan on helping with future SCG events.

The building itself has been well maintained over the past 12 months with various works undertaken to keep the building in good condition. **Josh Johnson** will give a rundown of all works completed and those that may still need attention. **Derrick** retired in the summer of 23 and we have worked together as a team in regards to opening, locking up, fire marshals on site and general maintenance but we are now hoping to have a part time caretaker in the next couple of months to take up this role.

We wholeheartedly thank Fiona our wonderful cleaner, for her hard work in continuing to keep our building clean and fresh.

Gail Usher

Café Vista Saturday Breakfast

A superb breakfast served by loyal volunteers and cooked by our faithful chefs, Tony Culshaw and Graham Elliott. Our volunteers are a cross section of ages including the younger ones working towards their Duke of Edinburgh's Award. We promote a happy atmosphere amongst all our volunteers starting with prayers before we start.

Saturday Breakfast is a place to meet friends, bring your children and babies to relax. We have had a steady increase in numbers, both from our Christ Church family who bring guests and relatives with them and from passers-by who come again and again.



23

We have a solid core of guests who come every week whatever the weather. In fact, we are so sure of them we reserve a table for them. They are not regular churchgoers but watch this space. There are always two Café Companions available during the breakfast session. Our customers know us by name and all our volunteers are available to talk and chat.

Spanish classes for children are ongoing and we are happy to provide breakfast or coffee while the parents wait for their children and the cartoons in the cinema room are still a draw for the younger children and mums and dads alike.

Menu prices have been rounded up in line with inflation, but breakfast is still a reasonable Saturday treat. Eggs are cooked to order and are worth waiting for.

Special thanks go to our wise old leader **John Shaw**, to our chefs, **Tony Culshaw** and **Graham Elliott**, our kitchen support staff **David Cobbold** and **Bill Evans** and our servery volunteers too numerous to mention, but we love each, and every one of you for your hard work. God Bless you all.

Nell Marshman

GNI (Girlie Night In)

Girlie Night is now in its 7th Year and we are still as excited as the year we began attracting all age ladies, community groups and local businesses to join us. We have had some new members on the team with new ideas this year which has been fantastic. Not only have we had great themed nights we have also shared friendship, fun, food, laughter and highlighted different cultures eg Ukrainian Night, Scottish Night and Greek Night.

We did a questionnaire and asked the ladies what they would like which in turn

has resulted in them being more involved in the planning and running the event. We had a great Quiz, Menopause Awareness, Summer Flower Demo, Rock Choir, Beauty Wellbeing, Art Workshop and our ever so popular Christmas Crafts.

We do not charge, and it never ceases to amaze us how generous the donations are which can be used for provision to continue or our charity of choice. Some of our ladies now volunteer in the cafe and attend church courses and services.

Our vision is to build friendships through trust whilst having fun blessing these ladies, each other and sharing our Love and Faith in God through Jesus. We continue to pray they too will come to know Our Lord Jesus and Saviour.

Lesley Stewart

Aughton Moss Womens' Institute

Aughton Moss W.I. has been meeting in the Ministry Centre since its opening and has a loyal following of members. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month, except January. There are a variety of speakers and members enjoyed trips and lunches out.

**Audrey Laird,
President, Aughton Moss W.I.**

Cave

We have just completed our 2nd year and have seen continued growth in both the numbers (*now reaching 40 members*), and the commitment to fellowship. Friendships continue to flourish and conversations around the chatty table are good humoured. The standard of Table Tennis and Pool is improving from a low base. Sadly, we have said goodbye to our oldest caveman – **Ray** – who passed in March after a short illness. Ray was a faithful



member of the Mexican Train table and will be missed for his wit and patience with others.

We meet every Friday in the main hall of the Ministry Centre from 10.00am to 12 noon.

A big thank you from me to all who help set up and put away.

Peter Stewart

Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union has not been meeting since the time of the lockdowns and Covid illnesses. We lost members, some moved away and sadly others passed away. Starting meetings again was not possible but the Mothers' Union hopes to start again in the near future.

Audrey Laird, Branch Leader

24

FACT (Feeling Alone Come Together)

At FACT we are very aware that many things in life are best shared, both for our enjoyment and our mental health.

Friendship, chatter, laughter together with the highs and lows in our own individual lives. Also important to us are things of a more practical nature. Recommended trades people, help in the home or garden and similar aid.

To this end, we have the occasional speaker throughout the year. In July we welcomed Harriet and Carole from 'Home Instead' who detailed what they can offer to help us stay in our homes for as long as possible. In October a representative of Home Fire Safety gave their talk on Safety in our homes, giving us the opportunity to book a personal home check visit. A number of us took up this offer getting help with smoke alarms etc.

We have always supported the McMillan coffee mornings in September making that particular date our weekly

meeting and will continue to do so. We have equally enjoyed the Knit and Natter coffee mornings. We also recently much enjoyed the annual Rotary Tea Party one Saturday afternoon. We go out together each December for a Christmas meal. We are pleased to say that our numbers have crept back up to pre Covid levels.

We have, over the last two years, welcomed people recommended to us by their GPs. This prompted a talk from Sonya, an NHS nurse in the referral system, as to how exactly this system works. More recently **June Huyton**, **Sylvia Duggan** and **Dorothy Smith** all known to us through Church and Luncheon Club, have joined us. A welcome addition to FACT.

On a sadder note, two of our long-standing members have passed away this year: *Christine Henderson* and **Viv Parkinson**, founder members since July 2018. Our one male member, **Stan**, at nearly 96 years old, has now gone into a care home, as has **Mary Lyn Gill**, another founder member. At the moment Stan is concentrating on settling into his new home and we keep in touch with him and his two daughters. **Audrey Laird** is our contact with Mary Lyn. Lastly, as always, we thank all the staff of Café Vista, who look after us so well every Friday. In need of a bit of company and a friendly chat? Join us any Friday, 11.00am to 12 noon for Friendship and A Cup of Tea. FACT

Bridget Wainwright

Pastoral Support

Pastoral support, at the heart of our service to all at Christ Church, has continued to flourish and develop during the past year. There are now 37 team members supporting many people, both within the church community and further afield in Aughton. Individual support is



provided with regular phone calls and visits, according to need.

We also support several local nursing homes through regular services of Holy Communion and visits to individuals. Within the team, there are five smaller groups, each with a coordinator, and they report to me regularly and through that to the PCC meetings.

This year we have further developed the pastoral support in church itself and through the many groups that meet each day in the Ministry Centre. Through this we aim to support more people and to encourage them in turn, to seek support through the friends they meet and interact within these groups. In church we have a team of welcomers and sides persons and during the week there is

support for all age groups through the following activities: Bumps and Babes, Toddlers, youth activities, Luncheon Club, FACT, Knit and Natter,

Cave and Lyfe groups. It is a measure of their success that we have had several referrals to groups from local doctors, for people going through a difficult period in their lives.

Each of the groups has a leader and we are developing a more formal structure of management and feedback from the groups to myself and Sarah, to identify areas of need and assist further development.

Mental health and wellbeing are so important in life now and we have been most fortunate that Graeme and Victoria, both trained counsellors and church members, have been able to lead two 8 week 'Sanctuary' courses, aimed at equipping people to support others with their own mental health. This work is ongoing, and I will report further on this next year and, in the meantime, to the PCC.

A team of Café Companions began work in Café Vista in July 2023 and have worked very successfully alongside the

café volunteers, supporting any who come to the café and who would welcome a conversation and a listening ear.

At the beginning of December 2023, we held our annual Service of Hope. A record number of 93 people attended and nearly everyone stayed for refreshments afterwards, reflecting on an emotional and supportive service for anyone remembering the life of a loved one.

As I said at the beginning of this report, pastoral care is at the heart of our ministry here at Christ Church. So, I want to say a huge thank you to all the team and to those as well, who work tirelessly in a less formal way to support some of the more vulnerable in our church family and in the local community.

Angela Mellor
(Pastoral Support Coordinator)

LYFE

(Living your faith everyday) groups

Lyfe (Live Your Faith Everyday) Groups are the opportunity at Christ Church to meet regularly with other like-minded people to discuss faith, life and everything in between.

It is an environment where we build trust and are able to be open and honest about issues, whilst learning from each other through the power of the Holy Spirit more about what it means to follow Jesus. All teaching is rooted in Scripture.

LYFE groups are an important support network for members offering prayer and practical support for anyone and everyone in their group.

It is hoped that every church member is given the opportunity to be connected to a LYFE Group, and all LYFE Groups have an open-door policy welcoming new people at all times. It is the model that Jesus himself lived by and it is how

we as a church can disciple each other through Jesus' teaching and example.

LYFE Groups meet on weekday evenings with one meeting during the daytime.

At the Lent Course in 2023 *Lectio Divina* was the course provided by Pete Greig and the 24/7 Prayer Movement in which we have all learnt how to hear God more easily through meditating on Scripture.

It was encouraging to see all the Lyfe Groups and many others join together for this course in the Ministry Centre and as a result some people went on to form new groups and others joined existing groups.

Through the course of the year groups can develop their own style and can use our Sermon series as a guideline for discipling each other. But the ultimate aim is just to provide a framework which enables people to meet together, to pray together, to support each other and to grow in faith.

We also encourage groups to find ways to engage with others outside of church to share their faith and invite others on our Enquirers Courses, to support the local community, and to partner with charities and causes that they feel share the hope and love of Jesus to those around us.

Through the year we run our Enquirers Course 'Hope Explored' for new people and those with questions and we encourage these people to form or join LYFE Groups.

We strongly encourage you to join a LYFE Group at Christ Church. If you would like to know more, please see Sarah or myself. **Geoff Fallows**

Ormskirk Churches Together

Churches together Ormskirk is a group of church leaders and church representatives from each church in

Ormskirk. This is a wonderful ecumenical group to be part of, full of people who truly want to share the good news of Christ in an inspiring and relevant way to all the people of Aughton and Ormskirk.

Everything discussed is done together and collegiately. At these meetings we discuss all that is going on in our churches and around Ormskirk. It is wonderful to hear how God is working through the people and the places in this community.

In December we welcomed **Matt Bentley** the new associate leader at Cottage Lane Mission and a wonderful addition to the team both at CLM and at our CTO meetings.

We have spent a lot of time at these meetings planning joint events, initiatives and services. Including several performances from Christian stage groups, the annual walk of witness and service on Good Friday, the Christmas lights switch on and many more.

One of the highlights from last year was the massive 'Family Fun Day', Park Praise event that we held in June. An amazing event that we all engaged in for the whole community and beyond. We welcomed over 1,000 people in Coronation Park and the sun was shining!

As for 2024/25 the meetings are still going ahead with lots more work taking place 'behind the scenes'.

So, watch this space!

Rev Jackie Davies



Ormskirk and Skelmersdale and District Foodbanks

Christ Church and Christ Church School continue to support the foodbanks in West Lancashire by providing food, toiletries, financial donations and volunteers for Ormskirk and Skelmersdale and District foodbanks.

Over the last year almost 1,500kg of food and toiletries has been donated which is the equivalent of 3,570 meals. There has also been nearly £1,600 donated by the church for which we are most grateful.

The Foodbanks provide about 3-days' worth of food and advice to people who find themselves in circumstances whereby they are unable to afford basics such as food. Recently the foodbanks have been providing financial support to those suffering with payment of fuel bills. Over the last year, Skelmersdale foodbank have provided food to about 7,300 people and Ormskirk to about 1,900 people.

**Pete Chalk and
Peter Stewart**

Cluster

Following the Fit for Mission Vote in November the Standing Committees from St Michael's Aughton, Holy Trinity Bickerstaffe, St James, Westhead and St Mark's Scarisbrick met and agreed to work more closely together as a cluster. The clergy from all the churches meet regularly for prayer and support as well as working on joint ventures.



PRAYER FOR GROWTH

**God of mission,
who alone brings growth to your
Church,
send your Holy Spirit to give
vision to our planning,
joy to our worship,
wisdom to our actions,
and power to our witness.**

**Help Christ Church to grow in
numbers,
in spiritual commitment to You,
and in service to our local
community,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Amen

