



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Bath & Wells

Changing Lives, Changing Churches for Changing Communities

St Andrew's Church, West Hatch

in the

Seven Sowers Benefice

**(United Benefice of Beercrocombe, with Curry Mallet,
Hatch Beauchamp, Orchard Portman, Staple Fitzpaine,
Stoke St Mary (with Thurlbear) and West Hatch)**



Annual Report and Accounts of the Parochial Church Council

For the year ended 31st December 2024

Bank

CAF Bank Ltd
25 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent
ME19 4JR

Incumbent

Revd. Joanna Porter
The Rectory
Ash Road
Stoke St. Mary
Taunton
TA3 5BX

Independent Examiner

Mr John Pugh
Grove House
Ash Road
Stoke St Mary
Taunton
TA3 5BX

Background

St Andrew's Church is located in the centre of the ecclesiastical parish of West Hatch, which includes the hamlets of Meare Green to the north of the Church and Slough Green to the south. West Hatch village has a population of around 300, and stretches either side of the A358 between the villages of Hatch Beauchamp and Stoke St Mary, 5 miles south east of Taunton. There is an RSPCA rescue centre, a Public House/Restaurant (The Farmers Arms), a village hall adjacent to St. Andrew's Church and St. Andrew's Church field in front of the Church. The Huish Woods Scout Camp is also located in West Hatch, and the conversion of the Slough Green Methodist Chapel into the Scouts Outreach Centre was completed in 2023.

St Andrew's Church records date back to 1604, whilst the Church building dates from the 15th Century, but was extensively restored in 1861 when the north aisle and probably the vestry and organ bay were added by Benjamin Ferrey.

The parish is part of the Seven Sowers Benefice, comprising the parishes of Beercrocombe, Curry Mallet, Hatch Beauchamp, Orchard Portman, Staple Fitzpaine, Stoke St Mary (with Thurlbear) and West Hatch. The parish is part of the Somerset South Deanery, which in turn is part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells within the Church of England.

St Andrew's Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity excepted from registration with the Charity Commission.

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Rector in promoting the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical within the ecclesiastical parish of West Hatch. The church is open for all to use.

The PCC is also responsible for the care and maintenance of St Andrew's Church Grade 2 listed building, the internal fabric of St Andrew's and associated property, including the churchyard. In addition, the PCC holds responsibility for the upkeep of St Andrew's field, which was gifted by a parishioner for use by the Church and is held in trust for the PCC by the Diocese of Bath and Wells' Board of Finance.

To fulfill these responsibilities PCC members meet regularly, at least four times per annum, and discussion includes plans for the Parish, its activities and Services, and careful management of its finances.

Bishop Michael, installed as Bishop of Bath and Wells in November 2022, was keen to meet and thank his PCC Treasurers and Secretaries from across the Diocese, so it was with pleasure that Alison Horsey & Margaret Luck attended one of several "Thank you" evenings organized by Bishop Michael at the Bishop's Palace in Wells over the Summer of 2024. They enjoyed Evensong with the choir and meeting the Bishop, his family and over 60 fellow Treasurers and Secretaries.

The proposed plans to dual the A358 continued to give cause for concern to our parishioners, but in the October 2024 budget the scheme was cancelled due to spiraling costs erasing any value for money. The A358 road already splits West Hatch Parish in two and the road widening plans would have meant even longer journeys across the Benefice to attend Services in other local Churches.

Ministry Staffing across the Seven Sowers Benefice

The Revd. Joanna Porter was Rector of the Seven Sowers Benefice throughout the year.

During 2024 the PCC continued to support Joanna and the Ministry Team in promoting the whole mission of the church – pastoral, social, evangelistic and ecumenical – within the ecclesiastical parish.

Sue McKen, a licensed lay reader, served throughout the year. Sue also works very hard behind the scenes in many other voluntary roles in the Benefice including Parish Magazine Editor, Line manager of our Children's Worker, and as Seven Sowers Charitable Trust Secretary.

Revd. Sue Hounsell (retired) led services in church and in nursing homes and home communions, but due to health issues temporarily stood down from leading services at the end of 2024.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, WEST HATCH
ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

Staffing (Cont'd)

Julie Kimber successfully completed her Ordinand training placement with the Benefice, joining the Ministry team as Curate in the Summer of 2024.

Brian Crudge, having retired from a long and fruitful time of licensed lay readership in earlier years, now holds the title of Reader Emeritus.

Former Lay reader Clive Hayward went to be with the Lord in January 2024, and our tribute to him can be found in the Annual Report accompanying the December 2023 Annual Accounts. In February 2024 we were saddened by the news of the death of his wife Marilyn. Marilyn led our children's Sunday Club for over 10 years, our ladies Family Focus Group for over 20 years, and was also the Benefice Safeguarding Officer for many years. She and Clive are both very much missed, but we are sure they are now together again in the presence of our Loving Lord.

Holly Stevens continues to build on her work as our Benefice Children's, Schools and Families (CSF) Worker. She is employed by Stoke St Mary PCC on behalf of the Benefice, funded by the seven PCC's of the benefice, and by donations from individuals across the Benefice and beyond.

During the year 4 church members completed a Lay Worship Assistant course – 3 from St Peters, and Alison from St Andrews. This enables them to lead non communion services, which they are doing about once a month in their respective home churches. A formal commissioning will take place in 2025.

Sarah Hampson continues as our Benefice Administrator, working apx 5 hrs per week on a self-employed basis. She is paid from the Untied Benefice Expense Account, and this is recharged to the 7 churches quarterly along with the Clergy/Readers/Ministers Expenses, in the ratio of the 7 churches' Parish Shares.

David Bidgood continued as the Benefice's principal organist, with Mary and Shirley Ginter playing at St Andrew's when David was unavailable. David continued to practice on our organ throughout the year. Digital music was used for the 2.30pm midweek services and the Morning Worship services.

Sadly, Joanna tendered her resignation in December 2024, meaning her last service in the Benefice will be on Sun March 2nd 2025. Unlike the last interregnum, we now have no House for Duty, no other clergy from the Benefice, and Revd Julie is only a few months into her curacy here. The Churchwardens of all seven churches have met with the Archdeacon to ascertain how, during the interregnum, we can meet our legal requirement to provide 1 communion service in the benefice each week – the Diocese will pay for visiting clergy to lead up to 4 Sunday services each week, although finding clergy for each week is easier said than done, and the details of how we will go about organizing this for all 52 weeks of each year are currently being looked at.

Membership and Officers

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. Members are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM). All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

PCC members who served from 1st January 2024 until the date on which this report was approved were:

<i>Incumbent:</i>	The Revd. Joanna Porter (<i>Chair</i>)
<i>Churchwardens:</i>	Mrs. Marion Kerr Mrs. Alison Horsey (<i>Treasurer</i>)
<i>Deanery Synod Representatives</i>	Mrs. Marion Kerr (<i>Appointed for three years to 2026</i>) Mrs. Alison Horsey (<i>Deputy</i>)
<i>Elected Members</i>	Mr. Gregory Walters Mrs. Vera Cottey-Williams (until retired at APCM 17 th April 2024) Mrs. Jane Wardell (until retired at APCM 17 th April 2024) Mrs. Sheila Read (until retired at APCM 17 th April 2024)
<i>Officers, not PCC Members</i>	Mrs. Margaret Luck (<i>Minute Secretary, Electoral Roll Officer, and Data Protection Controller - all until APCM 2024</i>)

Membership and Officers (Cont'd)

Positions of Secretary, Electoral Roll Officer, Health & safety Officer, and Data Protection Controller vacant since APCM 17th April 2024. These positions are being covered temporarily by the Churchwardens.

Our Churchwardens: Marion Kerr and Alison Horsey worked well together, including setting up for Church Services, ensuring comfy chairs (and blankets) are available for those that need them, offering lifts to the house bound who needed support to attend Services, managing funeral arrangements, (including supporting those who had suffered bereavements), keeping the Terrier up to date and managing the ongoing requirements of heating, lighting and health and safety within the church and its grounds. They both gave exceptional support to Revd. Joanna who, like every parish priest in these times of cutbacks, is reliant on volunteers to meet the requirements of the parish and the benefice as a whole.

The full PCC met 4 times in the year, including the APCM on 17th April 2024, with an average attendance of 4 (90%) including the Chairman, Revd. Joanna.

No Standing Committee was appointed at the APCMs held in 2023 or 2024.

Deanery Synod (Gatherings): This provides the PCC with an important link between the parishes and the structures of the church across England. They met 3 times in 2024, discussing varied topics, including engaging with young people – encouraging an apprentice mindset (Revd Rich Miles) ; spirituality in the second half of life (Revd Canon Prof James Woodward); safeguarding, including Safe Families and Keeping Company bereavement café. These meetings are open to all, and usually have inspiring talks, so the PCC will continue to encourage everyone to attend, not just the Deanery Reps.

Other invaluable support given:

Many other local folk provide essential support to the work and worship at St Andrew's Church by, for example, by flying the appropriate flag at the appropriate time, bell ringing, cleaning, tending the churchyard and field, and making and serving refreshments. We are grateful for their help and support. We also continue to be grateful for the ongoing monthly giving that supports the upkeep of our Parish Church each year.

We continue to benefit from the hard work of the Parish Magazine team, with our share of this year's surplus from advertisers being £624 (2023 was £603). Our Church has been well publicised in the Parish Magazine at no additional cost to us. 730 copies are printed each month, going into 600 homes, as well as pubs, shops, schools, care homes and churches across the benefice, enabling us to keep a vast number of people informed and up to date.

Sarah Hampson has also begun to update each of the Benefice's churches pages on the website "A church near you". St Andrew's page gives details of upcoming services and events and can be found at <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11281/>

The Benefice also has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SevenSowersBenefice> maintained by Sarah and the Ministry Team, which includes reminders and photos of recent events.

The PCC and Church continue to enjoy very good relations with the Village Hall Committee, each supporting the other's events. We are especially grateful for their ongoing support with our use of the Village Hall being free of charge. The village hall committee hosted nibbles and mulled wine/spiced apple juice following the Christingle Service, with parishioners also donating cakes and nibbles for all who came. We very much look forward to continuing working together during 2025.

Church Services and Attendance

At the time of the APCM there were 26 members on the Electoral Roll (21 members in 2023). The six yearly renewal of the Electoral Roll is due in 2025 - current members will be contacted in February 2025 and asked if they wish to be on the new Roll and full details of how to apply will also be found on the church noticeboard.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, WEST HATCH
ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

Church Services and Attendance (Cont'd)

A total of 22 regular services of worship were held at St Andrew's, In addition, the following also took place in West Hatch:

- the Easter Sunrise service at the Scout Field at Slough Green;
- the Benefice's Messy Church's two "on tour" meetings (when they left their usual meeting venue of Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall): taking place in St Andrew's field in May, and Messy Apples in West Hatch Village Hall in October.

The service rota in operation at the start of 2024 provided the following regular services in St Andrew's:

- A short 20 minute midweek Fellowship and Friendship Service of the Word on the 3rd Thursday of the month held in the warmer months – this ceased from July 2024 due to very low attendances.
- A 10.00 am Parish Communion every seventh Sunday, as it rotated around the Benefice.
- Until July 2024 Holly's Worship for All (WFA) service (on the third Sunday of the month) alternated one month at Curry Mallet, the next at St Andrew's.
- From July 2024 Alison led a monthly 10am Morning Worship for All at St Andrews.

The average weekly attendances (including members from the other parishes) at services at St Andrew's in 2024 (2023 in brackets) were:

3 (6) for the 2.30pm and
24 (24) for the 7-weekly Benefice Service
9 (17) Morning Worship for All.

Attendances at the major Festivals were:

42 at 11am Communion Welcome Service on 7th July, welcoming Revd Julie Kimber's as our newly ordained curate, followed by bring and share lunch in the Village Hall.

21 at 10am World Day of Prayer on 1st March (not held at West Hatch in 2023),

28 (17) at the Easter Sunrise service at Slough Green,

Nil (60) at the 11am Easter Day Holy Communion with baptism (no Easter Day service in West Hatch Church in 2024);

29 (28) Harvest Thanksgiving

27 (29) Harvest Soup & 'Pud' lunch

75 (108) Christingle with Carols, and

60 (38) Christmas Day Holy Communion.

On Easter Day the Sunrise Service was again held at Slough Green - this year at 6.30am. This was attended by about 28 people from across the Benefice and was followed by bacon baps and coffee (kindly organized by Pete Bawler and his team of Scout helpers) in the Scout Hall. Numbers were back up to the usual level, 2023 had been lower due to people attending the new 8pm Vigil Service at St Peters on Easter Saturday.

Once again, the weather meant we held our Harvest Festival Lunch in the Hall rather than in the churchyard. The hall was abuzz with chatter. The produce kindly donated by parishioners to decorate the Church for the service, was taken to Lindley House by Douglas and Marion Kerr. The hostel is run by Arc. They were very appreciative and looking forward to an apple crumble or two.

The Christingle with Carols Service raised £148 (2023 £283) for the Children's Society via the retiring collection. Thanks to Joanna and Holly publicising the service at all 3 of our schools (including on social media) and Thurlbear School bringing a choir, another good number of people attended – 75 - not quite up to the 2023 attendance of 108, but still higher than the previous usual number of 50 or 60.

There were 2 funeral services in St Andrew's in 2024: Mrs Patricia Fry in early January, and the Joint Thanksgiving Service & Internment of Ashes for Marilyn and Clive Hayward in March. There were 3 Graveside Internment of Ashes: Clive Sparks, Jean & David Malcolm-Coe, and John Hill. There were no Baptisms or Weddings at St Andrews in 2024.

Church Services and Attendance (Cont'd)

The Benefice World Day of Prayer service was this year held at West Hatch on 1st March with the theme "I beg you, bear with one another in love" - a verse from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It was a thought provoking and encouraging service prepared by Christian women from Palestine, prepared several years before the current Gaza/Israel war broke out and was well attended from across the Benefice.

Other Benefice activities:

During the 6 weeks of Lent, a benefice midweek course on "**When Science Meets Faith**" was held at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall, St Andrew's was represented amongst those taking part and leading, and we took our turn in catering for the soup lunch for one of the 6 weeks.

The Benefice KFC continues – Knitting, Fellowship and Crochet. It stopped for the summer, resuming in November at Staple Fitzpaine every third Tuesday of the month at 2pm, with one member from West Hatch attending.

Homegroups continued at Stoke St Mary and Beercrocombe/Hatch Beauchamp welcoming anyone from across the Benefice to come to study the bible, pray for each other, others and the wider world, and to enjoy encouraging each other along our faith journey.

The **Benefice Men's Group** met monthly at the Greyhound at Staple Fitzpaine, to chat, have a pint and explore life issues in relation to faith and the church.

The **Benefice Prayer Circle** also continues – prayer needs are passed to Joanna, who then passes the information confidentially to the team to pray.

In January 2024 "**With Open Hands**" was set up – a prayer group meeting fortnightly to pray specifically for the benefice.

In October folk from right across the benefice spent an interesting **morning discussing the Purpose of the Benefice**, assisted by Rob Walrond and artist Revd Andy Gray. It became apparent that there were common themes and concerns in all seven of our parishes. Andy illustrated our discussions as the morning progressed and narrowed down the main themes with 3 words: Embrace, Break-through and Grow and created a logo, which will be trialed in early 2025.

Benefice name: Despite the Benefice being known as the Seven Sowers its legal name is still a list of all the names of all seven parishes. By simplifying the Benefice name to Seven Sowers it will help clarify and solidify our identity and is timely with the Benefice Purpose Morning, setting out our Purpose and a new logo.

In October the Churchwardens proposed that Revd Joanna start the process of legally changing the name to The Seven Sowers, which will require formal approval from each PCC to allow the case to be presented to the Deanery Leadership Group, Bishop's Council and Registry. PCC's will be discussing this in their PCC meetings in Jan/Feb 2025.

Activities in 2024

The annual Plant and Produce Sale was held in the open air on May 11th and we all prayed that the weather would be clement – our prayers were answered with good weather and a good turnout. Teas, coffees, cakes, produce, plants and books were on sale. Vera Cottey-Williams obtained free plants locally to make the morning a success. Thanks should be noted to all those who donated the huge array of plants for this fund raising activity, producing the grand sum of £674. As in previous years we were able to set up plant sales after the day on tables in front of the Church, so further purchases were made to make the total.

Efforts to make apple juice and benefit from the sales of bottles continues to support the Church funds. Marion and Douglas Kerr have been instrumental in keeping this going each year and continue to do so. The Autumn Celebration held by the Village Hall although on a very wet day yielded many more bottles of West Hatch Apple Juice for sale over forthcoming months. Some was used after the Christingle Service to create warm spiced apple drinks for all, villagers and those who attended the Service. A huge thank you should be noted for Douglas Kerr who both made juice in the rain and also used spices to make lovely drinks that were much enjoyed by parishioners on 15th December 2024. Sales of Apple juice in 2024 raised £23 for church funds.

Activities in 2024 (Cont'd)

Following on from the success of 2023's workshops, Marion Kerr led two wreath making sessions on 30th November (St Andrew's Day) in the Village Hall with proceeds shared equally between the two organizations. These were well attended with some 40 attending and going away with lovely and varied wreaths. With PCC members and Village Hall committee kindly providing refreshments out of their own pockets, these two sessions yielded a very impressive £205 for St Andrew's Church, and the same sum for the Village Hall.

Christmas Decoration and Christingle Service:

Vera and her family ensured each window was covered in festive greenery, making our Church look beautiful for our Christingle Service and Christmas Day. Three parishioners kindly covered the cost of the Christmas Tree which was sourced locally from the Pope family in Staple Fitzpaine. Local children & adults spent a morning decorating the tree, setting up the crib, and preparing the oranges and Christingle Kits for the Christingle Service. Helena Young generously provided the oranges, sweets and raisins.

Report on Safeguarding in the Seven Sowers Benefice 2024

There were no recorded safeguarding incidents raised across the benefice in 2024.

Each PCC meeting had 'Safeguarding' as an item for consideration – where we received regular reports from Helen Hossell, our Benefice Safeguarding Officer (BSO). At the end of 2024 our Parish Safeguarding Dashboard showed all PCC members were up to date with the required training.

Safeguarding is a serious matter for us all and is an ongoing and continual part of all we do. Relevant contacts are posted on our notice board should anyone have a safeguarding concern.

Helen's Safeguarding Summary Report for 2024 will be attached to this Annual Report.

Children's work

Holly has continued to build on the work with Children, Schools and Families across our Benefice.

Joanna and Holly alternated leading the **fortnightly Collective Worship** in all 3 of our Schools.

Holly led the Open the Book team, which dramatises Bible stories, weekly in all 3 of our schools: Hatch Beauchamp, Curry Mallet & Thurlbear, with help from a number of parishioner volunteers. It is very well received by the children and staff. Most Open the Book teams only go into school fortnightly and some teams just once per half term, so we are extremely blessed to have 3 schools welcoming us in every week, to share the stories of Jesus and tell of His love for them.

A Prayer Spaces day, organized by Holly, assisted by volunteers from the Open the book Team and Joanna, was held in each of the three schools in May. In groups of about 5 or 6, the children focused on 5 types of prayer: Please, Fruits of the Spirit, Thanks, Sorry/forgiveness, and Movement Prayers. This involved each volunteer leading their prayer time 5 times per class, so in our largest school, Thurlbear, that was 35 times in one day! The volunteers were fantastic and despite the repetition were able to tailor their discussion to the needs of each group, and to make the most of this rare opportunity to discuss and experience such important spiritual matters with the children in such small groups.

As in previous years, copies of **Scripture Union's "It's your move"** were given to every year 6 child in each of our 3 Primary Schools. It's a secondary school survival guide packed with advice, real-life testimonies and Bible reflections, to help children take that daunting step from our small village schools to the much bigger Secondaries.

Holly headed up our annual Summer Holiday Club in July, over 2 days, at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall for primary school aged children from across the Benefice, enjoyed by the 20 children attending and also by the crew of volunteers. Looking at the stories of Jesus Calming the Storm and The Huge Catch of Fish, they learnt that we can trust Jesus and Jesus will provide for our needs.

Children's Work (Cont'd)

Holly led Church Mice (formerly Stoke Tots), met weekly in Stoke St Mary Village Hall (or the church when the Hall wasn't available), and from September 2024 they met fortnightly in Stoke St Mary Church. Due to falling attendance Church Mice has now come to an end, giving Holly more time for other activities & events.

Holly led hubbub, a tots group which met Monthly at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall.

Messy Church, under the leadership of Holly, has continued to grow from strength to strength and regularly has over 30 people attending. Held monthly at Hatch Beauchamp village hall, using the beautiful surroundings of St Andrew's Field in May and West Hatch Village Hall for Messy Apples in October (all things Apple - pressing, juicing, apple printing etc.)

A new monthly outdoor service started in November 2024 called "**Light Up the Fire**". Held late afternoon in a church member's field in Hatch Beauchamp, co-organized by Joanna and Holly, it aims to use our wonderful natural surroundings as inspiration for worship, and is for all ages.

At the end of November an expanded Open the Book volunteer team repeated last year's "**Journey to Bethlehem**" at Staple Farm, Staple Fitzpaine with the help of Rob Walrond (Diocese Rural Adviser) and Andy Levett (Diocese Children's Work Adviser). A fantastic team of 36 volunteers from right across the benefice helped with the morning. 120 KS1 children from 4 primary schools from around the area, came a class at a time, and spent 40 minutes at the farm, journeying to Bethlehem with the Shepherds. They had their names taken at the census point, were given money for working hard, only then to have it taken by the Tax Collectors. The Inn keeper emphatically told them there was "no room", but took them to the stable where they found Mary, Joseph and a real baby (Jesus). It was a very blessed event, enjoyed by children, staff and volunteers alike.

Our church buildings in the Benefice have very few children and young people attending regularly, so **this work is as vital** to the future of our Churches, as it is to the future of the children and families who benefit from these activities. John 10:10 "Life in all its fullness" for the children, young people & families; and "life in all its fullness" for the family that is the Church.

Flowers, Cleaning & Coffee

A West Hatch rota of local volunteers covered floral arrangements for Services, the care of the Church and its surroundings, cleaning, and refreshments for those attending Service at our Church. Marion Kerr, Alison Horsey & Louisa Thornhill took on the main work in keeping the Church clean and tidy and offering refreshments to those who attended Benefice Services at St Andrew's Church. Cleaning work included support from Douglas Kerr, Peter and Lynne Baverstock, Jane Wardell, Greg and Kate Walters, Michael Horsey, Margaret Luck, and Mark Thornhill. Brass was polished by Vera Cottey-William. Sadly Shirley Stack who would normally also polish the brass was unable to do so due to her failing health, and went to be with the Lord in December 2024. In her later years she was a faithful supporter of St Andrew's and is sadly missed.

Sheila Read led a group of flower arrangers who made sure floral arrangements were in place for St Andrew's Church Services throughout the year. The group included: Sheila Read, Vera Cottey-Williams, Kate Walters, Jane Wardell, Lynne Baverstock and Marion Kerr. They created beautiful floral decorations that made the church welcoming, and peaceful for reflection and rest. Their time and flowers were given voluntarily and we thank them for their dedication and skill.

Churchyard and Field care

The churchyard was tended by our rota of grass cutters who did a fantastic job and saved us having to pay to have this done regularly. We would like to note our thanks to Douglas Kerr, Steve & Barney Ballantine, Paul Rees, Michael Horsey, Mark Thornhill, Phil Clarke and Peter Baverstock for helping keep the churchyard mowed, strimmed and tidy.

Churchyard and Field care (Cont'd)

A churchyard/field clean-up/tidy-up was held on a sunny Saturday morning in April, with people from the church and community helping out. Drains were cleaned, grass was strimmed, and both the churchyard and St Andrew's Field was much improved as a result. Margaret Luck and Vera Cottey-Williams, supporting the PCC as usual efficiently and without fuss, provided and served excellent tea and bacon baps, which were very much enjoyed by all and sustained the workers very well.

Rewilding of the Churchyard and field continued. We owe much gratitude to the volunteer group who helped keep everywhere tidy including: Douglas Kerr, Marion Kerr, Michael Horsey, Peter Baverstock, Steve and Barney Ballantine, Greg Walters and Paul Rees. In February 2024 all the volunteers met to review the current situation – we toured the churchyard and field and agreed how the field should be monitored and managed going forward. Another meeting of volunteers is due in the Spring of 2025.

Michael and Meg Horsey kept the field and paths accessible by putting down straw on any mud, and Douglas laid some scalps so cars could drive up the slope of the field.

Church Building and Churchyard Maintenance

Churchyard Wall against St Andrew's field awaiting repair:

A section of wall at the top of the field fell into the field in 2023. It is still cordoned off and made clear to all that it is not a safe place to enter. We engaged a professional wall builder to review the wall. He advised that we should wait until the area that is falling has stopped. This would result in one piece of workmanship rather than several patching attempts. A quote of £7,340 + VAT was obtained in April 2024, but the PCC have decided this work is not yet a priority and can wait. The work would come under "List B" meaning it won't need a Faculty, but will need Archdeacon's permission which would be applied for through the online Faculty system.

Church porch ceiling between the laths awaiting repair:

Despite previous work carried out the same piece of plaster fell again in 2022 requiring us to put up a warning notice and change the access route whilst we ensured there was no other loose plaster. There are also signs of damp in the plaster on the porch walls, where it is flaking away in some small patches. Due to bats feeding in the porch at night, any repair work will need to be when the bats are not there, which we are told is likely to be April and October. After obtaining quotes, the PCC have resolved that Woodlouse Conservation should carry out the work – quote £4,695 + £940 VAT (VAT being recoverable under the LPW Scheme). In November we applied for the necessary permissions through the online Faculty system and currently await the outcome.

Tree trimming:

The PCC obtained 2 quotes to lift the crown of several trees in the Churchyard, to enable visitors and coffin bearers to walk beneath them without becoming entangled in branches etc. We obtained Archdeacons permission (list B) in 2024, and Arb Resolutions have carried out the work, very efficiently and effectively, in January 2025, not only making it easier to walk under the trees, but also letting in the light.

Audio System:

The current audio system is an old domestic system and is now beyond economic repair, meaning it is often difficult to hear the spoken word, particularly at community services such as funerals, weddings and baptisms, when those speaking may be unaccustomed to public speaking and can often be emotional. The PCC have therefore resolved to have a new audio system installed. At the time of writing, we await the detailed proposal from the installers, and will then apply for List B permission, with a view to installing the system in the first half of 2025. The PCC are very grateful to a local charitable trust (wishing to remain anonymous) who have awarded a grant of £750 towards the system.

Lamppost near postbox:

The glass of the lamppost has broken and some panes are now missing, others lodged within the lamp itself. This will be repaired in the Spring when there should be less wind and rain to hamper the repair.

Church Building and Churchyard Maintenance (Cont'd)

Quinquennial report

This was undertaken during the 2021 year with a comprehensive report on the state of our Church building. The Church structure has continued in a reasonable condition. However, the requirements of the quinquennial report would, if we did all quickly, remove the totality of our funds completely. The PCC have taken the view that the works will be carried out over a period of five years with the most urgent requirements met first.

Financial Review

Page 13 shows the result for 2024 is a total surplus of £1,791. This is a reduction of £1,453 on the £3,244 surplus of 2023 due to several factors, the main ones being:

A £514 (11.7%) increase in Parish Share, from £4,376 in 2023 to £4,890 in 2024. Parish Share is used to pay for clergy salaries, clergy housing, training, and costs at Diocese headquarters Flourish House. The Diocese have been delaying increasing Parish Share because Covid suppressed church attendances, and they have been drawing on Diocese reserves rather than asking PCC's for increases. They say this could no longer be sustained, hence a hefty Parish Share increase in 2024, which is set to continue to increase at about 6% a year until 2029.

Ministry expenses rose from £28 paid in 2023 to £210 paid in 2024. This was because the recharging process fell behind in 2023, meaning £28 was just the quarter to 31/12/22. West Hatch's share of the whole of 2023 was recharged in Spring 2024 (£141), as well as Qtrs 1-3 being recharged in 2024, hence 2024's payments are much higher than 2023's.

The 5 yearly Electrical Inspection took place in 2024 at a cost of £432. The inspection gave rise to £1,417 of necessary remedial work that was completed in 2024.

Unfortunately Somerset Council withdrew **Burial Ground Grants** in their 2024 cutbacks. Unlike some other local Parish Councils, West Hatch Parish Council have decided not to fund the grant themselves, so the £210 annual Grant that we have received for at least the last 19 years has now ceased.

There were also a number of positive changes in 2024:

The electronic CollectinMore (acquired in November 2023) has raised £172 in 2024, which is a very useful contribution to our income. Most of this income is at services, but we have also left it in church during the week at times and visitors have donated via the CollectinMore midweek.

Fundraising continues to play a significant part in enabling us to meet our costs as well as enabling Parishioners to meet each other – the plant sale generated £674; apple juice sales £23; Marion's Wreath making workshops raised £205. We continue to benefit from the hard work of the parish magazine team, with our share of the surplus from advertisers coming to £624.

In the Spring of 2024 we closed the Skipton account and opened a CCLA CofE CBF Deposit Account, which had apx 5% interest rate. This increased total interest received by £400 : £665 in 2023 rose to £1,068 in 2024.

Electricity costs reduced by around £280 in 2024 due to not holding the 2.30pm services in the winter months in 2024, and a milder autumn/winter in 2024.

Funeral fees received in 2024 totaled £1,598, an increase of £1,309 from the £289 fees received in 2023. In 2023 we had no weddings or funerals in the church, whilst in 2024 we had 2 funerals in church, 4 internment of ashes and 3 ashes tablets installed.

Our assets and liabilities are shown on page 14 and are fairly self-explanatory.

Our forecasts show a possible deficit for 2025 of around £19,000 meaning our reserves would go from £36,000 at 31st December 2024 to £17,000 at 31st December 2025, mainly due to the large repairs coming up in 2025 as mentioned earlier in this report, and fairly static forecast income.

Reserves policy

The PCC has had a policy of maintaining a balance on unrestricted funds, if possible, equating to at least eight months' unrestricted payments. This policy was aimed at covering any unforeseen emergency situations that may arise. At 31st December 2024 the balance held in short term funds was £36,000 as shown in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities on page 14, and this equates to just over 3 years of payments - it should be noted that the payments figure for 2024 is skewed low due to very few major repairs having taken place for several years, giving this skewed high result of 3 years of payments. The PCC has given consideration in the past to the total monetary reserves held by St Andrews and concluded that these are not excessive considering the value of the building that is our responsibility, the fact that it is a Grade II listed ancient building which does currently require repairs as already mentioned, and could require further expensive repairs at any time, and that unlike many other churches we have no Fabric Fund to call on.

Due to the pitifully low investment returns available in recent years, and the fact that funds exceeding our day to day needs (£15,000 to £25,000) are not large enough to warrant investment fees, it has become our strategy to invest in instant access charity savings accounts paying a comparatively good rate. We used the Skipton at the start of the year, which paid 3.3%, and switched to the CCLA CBF C of E Deposit Account in April 2024 which has paid between 4.7% and 5% in 2024. Funds held to meet the day-to-day needs of the church are held in CAF Bank Current & Gold accounts, with an auto-sweep between the two accounts keeping a daily current account balance of £500. Interest was received on CAF Gold Bank account at 2.3% at 31 Dec 2024.

Ongoing Challenge/Opportunities:

Upcoming interregnum/Reduction in number of paid ministers/more roles for lay people

As we approach the interregnum, there is currently far less provision of lay readers and clergy than in any previous interregnum in this benefice. This means it is more important than ever before that the churches in the Benefice continue to work together to make the Benefice welcoming to all, to avoid unnecessary duplication of services and to optimize the use of our Ministry Team's efforts. The Diocese are encouraging more lay people to be involved in ministry, offering training for potential lay assistants and indeed 4 benefice members have already undertaken some Lay Worship Assistant training and are leading services. The PCC would encourage anyone interested in taking on a role on behalf of the Church to talk to Joanna or the Church Wardens about what opportunities are available. Jesus' great commission was for us to "Go and make disciples of all nations" and we can all play our part in this.

We continue to be blessed with a beautiful church building that is an oasis for peace and time with God. Entries in the Visitors Book show how much the church means to many – people come to visit family graves; to visit where they were married or baptized; to research family history, or just to rest in the peace and calm. This is possible thanks to the best efforts of our church members, assisted by many villagers who don't attend services but like to help with church activities (e.g. by cleaning, flower arranging, tidying the church yard).

We ask you to join us in praying that God will bless and equip us all (physically and spiritually) for whatever 2025 has in store for our Church and Parish.

Approved by all members of the PCC at the PCC meeting held on 28th January 2025 and
signed on their behalf by: A Horsey

Chair

Prepared January 2025 by Marion Kerr Church Warden; and Alison Horsey Church Warden and Treasurer.

Report on Safeguarding – Seven Sowers Benefice 2024

There have been no serious matters of safeguarding in the seven parishes across the Benefice that have been referred to other relevant bodies or to the Diocese Safeguarding Team during the year.

Safeguarding remains an item on every PCC meeting agenda to encourage discussion, review policies and raise issues.

Parish Dashboards

Dashboards are now diocesan policy and must be completed by all parishes, although there is no requirement to have completed details to a specified level. However, it is one of the best ways to keep up to date with safeguarding matters and requirements of parishes for reviewing policies and other actions. It also helps you easily evidence the work you are doing as it complies with national guidance, reminds you when reviews of policies are due in your particular parish, and what training is needed and by whom. This helps make safeguarding practice a more locally tailored subject for Parishes to engage with. All parishes in the Benefice now have at least one member of the PCC as an editing member of their Parish Dashboard. Thank you very much to all have volunteered for this.

DBS checks and Safer Recruitment

I continue to carry out DBS checks for new volunteers who require one, and track and initiate DBS renewal checks when they are due. There has been some debate at Diocesan Safeguarding level of the requirements for PCC members to have a DBS check (currently at least 2 for every PCC regardless of any activities held). As yet there has been no clarification so some PCC member renewals are on hold pending the outcome.

Safeguarding Training

Safeguarding training – at the appropriate level – is important for all of us and will help protect all those in our church communities and provides PCC members, activity leaders and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to carry out, uphold and advocate safeguarding practice in the parishes. Bath and Wells is one of the best Diocese nationally for completing online training and we encourage everyone to complete the training they are required to do.

Safeguarding Audit

In preparation for the national safeguarding audit of Bath and Wells in March 2025, an anonymous and confidential survey was launched at the end of the year for all people holding different roles across the diocese, including, clergy, church volunteers, church staff, parish safeguarding officers and diocesan staff, to complete if they wished. The survey closed at the end of January 2025.

Safeguarding is a matter for us all and is an ongoing and continual part of all we do. I would like to thank all those who have completed safeguarding training and DBS applications and renewals over the past year.

Helen Hossell

Parish Safeguarding Officer

4th February 2025

**Independent Examiner's Report
to the PCC of St Andrew's Church, West Hatch
For the Year Ended 31 December 2024**

I report to the PCC on my examination of the accounts of the PCC (the Charity) for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on pages 13 to 16.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the Charity's trustees (i.e. the members of the PCC) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Mr John Pugh
Grove House
Stoke St Mary
Taunton
TA3 5BX

Date: 9th February 2025

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, WEST HATCH
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

	<u>Note</u>	<u>2024</u> £	<u>2023</u> £
<u>RECEIPTS (General Unrestricted Fund)</u>			
<u>Receipts from donors</u>			
Planned giving - via bank (mostly gift aided)		4,956	5,156
Loose collections, envelopes & alms box		1,441	1,275
Income tax recovered	3	1,634	1,890
Donations		197	165
		<u>8,228</u>	<u>8,486</u>
<u>Receipts from activities for generating funds</u>			
<u>Fundraising:</u>			
Plant Sale		674	436
Harvest Lunch		101	-
Apple juice sales		23	124
Concert - Ticket sales and Donations	-	258	170
- organist and refreshments	-	(88)	129
Wreath making		205	14
Card making, Books, car parking, etc		20	
Fundraising total		1,023	873
Parish magazine surplus		624	603
Fees (Weddings, funerals, etc)	4	1,598	289
		<u>3,245</u>	<u>1,765</u>
<u>Receipts from investments - Wayleave</u>			
Bank & deposit account interest		335	354
Building Society interest		43	306
CCLA interest		690	-
Interest on Gift Aid Tax refunds		-	5
		<u>1,068</u>	<u>670</u>
Total General Fund Receipts		12,540	10,921
<u>PAYMENTS (General Unrestricted Fund)</u>			
Outreach & charitable giving	5	990	542
Parish Share		4,890	4,376
Ministers' expenses	6	210	28
Heating & lighting	7	766	1,050
Insurance		992	942
Large repairs	8	1,849	-
Other Church maintenance	9	102	157
Organ tuning		234	-
Organist's fees		250	300
CCLI licence		67	-
Bank charges		60	61
Sum Up & Sim card fees		16	12
Sundry expenses	10	228	49
Total General Fund Payments		(10,653)	(7,517)
<u>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR - General Unrestricted Fund</u>		1,887	3,404
<u>RESTRICTED RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS</u>			
Burial Ground Grant from Parish Council for upkeep of Churchyard		-	210
Churchyard mowing and trimming		(80)	(160)
Grass seed		(16)	-
Repair to Churchyard Wall		-	(210)
Net Restricted (Deficit) in the Year		(96)	(160)
<u>TOTAL SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR - all Funds</u>		1,791	3,244
Bank current & deposit accounts at 1 January		34,276	31,032
Bank current & deposit accounts at 31 December		£36,067	£34,276
RESTRICTED CASH/BANK:			
Churchyard Maintenance Fund (Note 2)		374	470
Diocese Youth Development Fund (Note 2)		123	123
UNRESTRICTED CASH/BANK		35,570	33,683
		£36,067	£34,276

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, WEST HATCH
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
	£	£
Monetary assets		
CAF Bank Current account	680	500
CAF Bank Deposit Account	6,676	22,940
CCLA CBF Deposit Account	28,690	-
Stripe balance	21	-
Skipton Charity Account	-	10,836
	<u>36,067</u>	<u>34,276</u>
Restricted Cash /Bank (Note 2):		
- Churchyard Maintenance	374	471
- Youth Development	123	123
RESTRICTED CASH / BANK	<u>497</u>	<u>594</u>
UNRESTRICTED CASH /BANK	<u>35,570</u>	<u>33,683</u>
Total cash/monetary assets	<u>£36,067</u>	<u>£34,276</u>
Debtors		
Ministers' exps paid in advance (£200 Jan 02 & £50 July 07)	250	250
Tax recoverable on donations 6/4/24 to 31/12/24 (Note 3)	1,165	1,239
VAT on repairs recoverable under LPOW Scheme (Note 8)	358	-
CSF Worker costs to 31/8/25 prepaid (8/12 x £232)	155	153
Wayleave	5	2
Total debtors	<u>£1,933</u>	<u>£1,644</u>
Liabilities		
Ministers' exps qtr to 31st Dec 2024 / whole of 2023 (Note 6)	73	141
Administrator Qtr to 31st Dec 2024 / 4mths to 31st Dec 2023	80	85
Electricity (Note 7)	66	121
Monies owed to Seven Sowers Charitable Trust	-	6
Total liabilities	<u>£219</u>	<u>£353</u>

Other assets

Movable church furnishings as listed in the inventory (held by the Church Wardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal).

The above Statement of Assets and Liabilities and the associated Receipts and Payments Account, including the notes on the following two pages, were approved by the Parochial Church Council on 28th January 2025 and are signed on its behalf by

Maureen Row
Church warden

A Horsey
Mrs Alison Horsey

Treasurer & Church warden

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, WEST HATCH
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

1. Presentation of financial information

The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts and Payments basis.

2. Accounting policies

The financial statements include monetary transactions, assets and liabilities for which the PCC can be held responsible.

The Receipts & Payments Accounts shown on page 13 includes income as received, and payments when irrevocably paid. Debtors and liabilities shown in The Statement of Assets & Liabilities on page 14 are for information only and are not included in the receipts & payments on page 13.

Restricted funds must be used for the purposes for which the money was given or donated.

During 2024 and 2023 there were two Restricted Funds:

Churchyard Maintenance Fund

Up until and including 2019 the annual Burial Ground Grant of £210, received with grateful thanks from West Hatch Parish Council, was used to help pay for professional groundsman to maintain the churchyard, with PCC General Funds topping up the £210 to cover the total annual cost. Since 2020 a band of willing and hard working volunteers have completed most of the churchyard maintenance themselves, kindly donating their time and often their expenses too (mower fuel, strimmer heads, etc). Consequently the balance in this Fund at 31 Dec 2022 was £630 (£210 x 3). In 2023 there was some work by professionals (£210 repair to churchyard wall, and £160 groundsman costs), and the balance remaining at 31 Dec 2023 was £470. In 2024 there was some paid work: £80 tidying shrub growth etc, £16 grass seed, leaving a balance on the fund at 31/12/24 of £374.

This £374 will help to pay for the tree trimming in Jan 2025.

The Diocese Youth Development Fund

The £123 is the unspent part of a grant of £250 received in 2011 to pay for Benefice families to attend New Wine (the Summer Christian Camping Conference) for a day to widen their spiritual experiences, giving them the opportunity to worship with thousands of other families, with the latest Christian music and a huge variety of worship leaders and speakers.

General funds represent unrestricted money that can be used for the PCC's general charitable purposes.

Designated funds represent money that has been earmarked for a specific purpose by the PCC. This money may be undesignated by the PCC at any time. The PCC does not currently have any designated funds.

3. Income tax recovered

Non Gift Aided Donations of £30 or less, of cash or contactless but not by cheque, are eligible for Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme (GASDS) - the PCC can treat them as if Gift Aided and (subject to set limits) can claim the equivalent of 25% tax back from HMRC.

	<u>2024</u>			<u>2023</u>		
	<u>GASDS</u>	<u>Gift Aid</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>GASDS</u>	<u>Gift Aid</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Per Receipts & Payments A/C:</u>						
On donations received 6/4/23-5/4/24	£225	£1,409	£1,634	-	-	-
On donations received 6/4/22-5/4/23	-	-	-	£151	£1,478	£1,629
On donations received 6/4/21-5/4/22	-	-	-	£261	-	£261
	£225	£1,409	£1,634	£412	£1,478	£1,890
<u>Debtor page 14, receivable early 2024</u>						
On donations received 6/4/24-31/12/24	£192	£973	£1,165	-	-	-
On donations received 6/4/23-31/12/23	-	-	-	£187	£1,052	£1,239
	£192	£973	£1,165	£187	£1,052	£1,239

4. Fees paid to PCC

The PCC received £1,598 of statutory fees due to the PCC (2023 £304) as prepared by the Archbishop's Council under the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure 1986.

The PCC also received statutory fees of £597 payable towards the stipend of the incumbent (2023 £243), which were passed on in full to the Bath & Wells Diocesan Board of Finance.

The £597 is not included in the figures shown in the Receipts & Payments Account, as it is not PCC funds.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, WEST HATCH
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

5. Grants - Outreach & charitable giving	2024	2023
Home Mission, Outreach & Church Organisations:	£	£
Children's Society - 100% Christingle Collection	148	283
World Day of Prayer	187	-
Childrens Schools & Families Worker Sep 24-Aug 25 (2023: 23-24)	232	229
Benefice Administrator (Freeing up Clergy for Mission)	298	-
Farming Community Network (50% harvest festival collection)	95	-
Somerset Churches Trust	30	30
	990	542

6. Ministers' expenses

Ministers' expenses for the United Benefice (UB) are reimbursed centrally from a separate UB account. Where an expense clearly relates to a particular PCC then it is recharged wholly to that PCC, otherwise each of the 7 PCCs is recharged a proportion of those expenses in the ratio of the Parish Shares of the 7 parishes - West Hatch's percentage for 2024 was 7.7% (2023: 7.6%). Travel expenses were reimbursed at 45p/mile. It is the policy of the UB PCCs to reimburse all out of pocket expenses in full.

The recharging fell behind in 2023, when no suitable volunteer could be found to be treasurer of the UB account, so at the end of 2023, the PCC's agreed that our Benefice Administrator Sarah should add paid Treasurer of the UB Expense account to her role. All 7 PCC's were invoiced for their share of 2023's expenses in Feb 2024 - the £28 paid in 2023 was for quarter to 31/12/22, and the £210 paid in 2024 includes £141 which is West Hatch's costs for the whole of 2023.

7. Heating & Lighting	2024	2023
	£	£
Paid in year	766	1,050
Opening creditor	(121)	(257)
Closing creditor	66	121
Actual cost of electricity used in year	£711	£914

8. Large repairs

	2024	2023
	£	£
5 year Electrical Inspection	432	-
Remedial Electrical work	1,417	-
	£1,849	-

Listed Places Of Worship Scheme (LPW) : Eligible costs at 31 Dec 2024:

		Net	Vat	Gross
		£	£	£
Test lightn cond	24/2/24	55	11	66
Organ tune	7/7/24	195	39	234
Elec 5yr check	11/8/24	360	72	432
Elec remedial work	28/10/24	1181	236	1417
		1,791	358	2,149

The £358 is included in debtors at 31 Dec 2024.

The minimum LPW claim is on £1,000 net cost, & invoices must be no more than 1 year old at date claim is received by LPW. In addition one claim of a min of £500 net is allowed per 12 month period.

9. Other Church Maintenance	2024	2023
	£	£
Fire extinguisher servicing	33	97
Lightning conductor test	66	60
Batteries for lapel mic	3	-
	£102	£157

10. Sundry Expenses	2024	2023
	£	£
Christmas tree & Christmas candles	60	-
Annual Contribution to Deanery Gatherings	25	-
Bath & Wells Ringers Association	20	15
Gifts (Retiring PCC members & Indep Examiner)	85	-
Postage, stationary & copying (plus some donated)	13	-
Sum up card reader & collectin static cable	25	-
Oasis and flowers (most flowers donated)	-	34
	£228	£49