

# Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The Parochial Church Council of  
The Parish of Stratton St Margaret  
And South Marston

Reports and Accounts  
For the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December  
2023

Contents

St Margaret’s Church Warden’s Report for January to December 2023 .... 3

Churchwarden’s Report for St Mary Magdalene Church, South Marston  
2023..... 7

Safeguarding Report for the APCM April 2024 ..... 13

PCC Secretary's report for the period April 2023 – 2024 ..... 14

Coleview Community Centre Church Report - January to December 2023 -  
APCM on 21st April 2024 ..... 17

Swindon Deanery Synod Report 2023 ..... 19

Thursday Coffee Morning ..... 20

Grange Drive Home Group ..... 21

5th Swindon Boy's Brigade Company..... 21

Bumps and Babes..... 23

Team Choir..... 24

Electoral roll report 2024 for APCM, 23 April 2024. .... 25

St Margaret's Pre-School Annual Report ..... 26

Annual Report from Stratton St Margaret’s Baby & Toddler Group ..... 26

The Parish of Stratton Saint Margaret with South Marston Financial  
statements for the year ended 31 December 2023..... 27

## St Margaret's Church Warden's Report for January to December 2023

In 2023 attendances at regular morning church services remained strong thanks to a very committed core congregation. The numbers averaged around 60 per week and up to 75 for communion services. Attendances over Christmas were up on the previous year, with well over 300 at the special services which were offered.

Our ministry team led by Elveen did a super job to maintain a robust set of services across the benefice throughout the year. The team consisted of Rev. Elveen Mead and licensed lay readers Lisa Lodwick, Alison Burston and of course Dan Read who has been a stalwart preacher across the benefice over many years. During 2023, Dan decided to retire due to ill health and Elveen had arranged for him to receive the honorary title of Emeritus Lay Reader at a service at Coleview on Sunday August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Unfortunately, Dan was unable to join that service, but we were able to express our thanks to him at the next service at St Margaret's. We are forever indebted to Dan for all he has done for our churches, and we thank God for him and Mary and wish them a happy retirement.

Additionally, Elveen was able to complement our local team with several guest clergy who helped when needed, notably Rev. Mark Tubey, Rev. Michael Johnson and Rev. Rachel Cook. We are grateful that they each brought their own special qualities and inspiration to St Margaret's.

Our Community Choir led by Angela and Rob Breakspear did a fantastic job throughout 2023 singing at many services across the benefice as well as weddings and funerals on request. The special production for 2023 was Noah, performed at Easter, and once again it was an incredibly uplifting event for all who attended. A huge thank you to Angela, Rob and all the choir for their dedication and for adding energy and joy to our services.

At the 2023 APCM, Richard Pflieger who has been Church Warden at St Margaret's for six years decided to step down to support his extended family who were facing serious

health challenges. As warden, Richard's dedication and commitment to activities of the church and the St Margaret's Centre have been inspirational and all at St Margaret's were keen to show their appreciation for everything he has done. Thankfully we are blessed that Richard continues to support the church in many ways and remains a brilliant member of the team. At the same meeting, Ian Jones was elected as St Margaret's church warden.

After a lot of hard work by Richard and the building committee over several years, permission was eventually granted to move forward with the bell tower refurbishment, and work will start early in 2024. A huge thank you to Richard and the team for their perseverance.

A notable event in 2023 was the first full immersion baptism in living memory, when Crystal Butler was baptized using a pool borrowed from the Pattern Church. We are proud to be an innovative church! A big thank you to all involved in setting up the pool and supporting the occasion. Several of us also attended Crystal's confirmation service at St Sampson's, Cricklade on October 16<sup>th</sup>. In August, Lisa Lodwick and Roger Smith led a Prosecco and Praise service, with the theme of Daniel and the Lion's Den.

Several fundraising and mission events were held during 2023. Russ Riggs led two quiz nights at the St Margaret's Centre which both attracted around 20 teams with many residents joining members of the congregation. The inaugural Stratton Community Fete was held on Saturday June 24<sup>th</sup>, drawing a very good crowd from across the parish and beyond and offering live music, dance, competitions, a dog show, church heritage talk and a live rock band in the church. We certainly achieved our objective to attract families and residents of all ages to come and enjoy our wonderful church and St Margaret's Centre. Thank you to the planning team (Roger Smith, Georgina and Ian) for organizing the event and to all the volunteers who helped out on the day. Andrew Martin, our church historian, led a pay-to-attend heritage evening in October which was very well supported by residents and congregation. Kate Mitchell, David Horne and Mary Carter ran our ongoing Rags2Riches program and Mary and Pearl Jell also organized a Table Top sale

in October, all helping to raise money for St Margaret's. Thank you to everyone who played a part in fundraising in 2023.

As part of community mission in 2023 we supported the setting up of a Food Collective to help those struggling in the face of a challenging financial environment.

For Remembrance Day on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November, we were joined by the Boys Brigade, Stratton Brownies, 1<sup>st</sup> Stratton St Margaret Scouts, Beavers, Cubs and Squirrels. Thank you to Graham Spackman who played the Last Post and the Reveille and to Ken Kirkman who read the exhortation. Some Junior Boys Brigade members read out the names of those who we remember from this parish. It was a meaningful service, and it was lovely to see a very full church sharing together in our act of remembrance. In the evening of November 12<sup>th</sup>, we held a Taize service.

To make sure that St Margaret's continues to be a vibrant living church we are blessed to have a team of people regularly working behind the scenes and as well as those mentioned above our grateful thanks go to:

Church Administrator – Georgina Martin who maintains communications flowing by email, website and Facebook.

Deputy Wardens – David Horne and Richard Pflieger; Health & Safety Officer – Karl Glover; Treasurers – Mark & Tracey Whitfield; Safeguarding Officers – Mike & Mary Boshier.

Welcoming teams – Pat & Ray England.

Additionally, we are fortunate to have a wide range of people who give up their time to run other activities in St Margaret's church, in the centre and across the Stratton Team Ministry. See below for some of the activities currently offered (in alphabetical order). A list of contact names will be available should you wish to find out more.

Altar Frontals (changing in line with the liturgical calendar); Baptism Verger and supporters; Bell ringers; Boys Brigade; Brass Cleaning; Bumps & Babes; Care Home

Services; Choir; Church Building / re-ordering; Church cleaning; Church refreshments; Coffee morning; Electoral Roll; Flower arrangers; Food collective; Funeral Vergers; House Groups; Knit & Natter; Magazine; Messy Church; Ministry Team; Morning prayer meetings; Mothers Union; Music Group; Operation Christmas Child (shoe box appeal); Organists; Pastoral Visiting; PCC Meetings; PCC Secretary; Prayer Diary; Readers and leaders of intercessions; Recycling; Social events; Sound and Loop system; Standing Committee; Wardens meetings; Wedding vergers / Sound coordinator.

All the teams above would welcome new members even if it is not on a regular basis. Please contact the wardens or the church office if you would like to help in any way. In line with the Diocesan Safeguarding guidance, we include all 'official' roles and 'activities' under the 'safer recruitment' process. This benefits all of us while we are involved in the life of our church.

We would love to include as many of you as possible in our activities and draw on all the talents across our congregation. We welcome suggestions from you all for future fund-raising events, forms of worship or any other ideas you may have.

St Margaret's is committed to ensuring that its church, buildings, worship, congregations and activities are as welcoming and inclusive as possible for all in our local community and further afield.

**With many blessings, June Lewis and Ian Jones – Church Wardens.**

## Churchwarden's Report for St Mary Magdalene Church, South Marston 2023

Here we are almost at our APCM in 2024 so time to let you know what has been happening at St Mary Magdalene between January and December 2023 and a chance to thank everyone who has helped and supported me through another year as Churchwarden.

We began the year on January 1st, 2023, with a Family Team Service, led by Alison Burston, here at South Marston. We did not expect lots of people to turn out on a Bank Holiday in January particularly as some people were still away on holiday for Christmas. Imagine our delight when the church suddenly filled with those who had all come to join in our service and stay for refreshments afterwards. A wonderful start to the year.

During the year we have had many lovely services and shared some with our team churches, St Margaret's at Stratton, St Leonard's at Stanton Fitzwarren and, of course Coleview.

Then suddenly it was Easter. South Marston School came into the church for their Easter Service. The service was led by Mr. Miller, Acting Headteacher and Reverend Elveen. As always it was an excellent service with each class singing an Easter song.

Over Easter our Church Team Services were wonderful and an eight o'clock Holy Communion service was held at St Mary Magdalen. Some of The Team Choir joined us at that service together with members of our loyal congregation and visitors, making it a joyful celebration and a wonderful way to start Easter Day.

Elveen and I have continued through the year to take Home Communion to members of our church community who are unable to get to church, and it is very much appreciated by them. We hosted team services at regular intervals throughout the year and it was wonderful to welcome so many of our team and fill our church.

Our All Age Worship lay-led service continued to take place on the first Sunday of every month at 10.00 am and we have enjoyed some very good services. As always, we begin with refreshments and plenty of chat. Thank you to Will and Tina for helping with refreshments. In August we changed the form slightly and had a service of Songs of Praise and Blessings. The hymns were all chosen by the congregation. I think this a form we might use again next summer. I mentioned last year I had not expected the lay-led service to be quite such a big commitment, but it has now run for two and a half years and continues to be supported by our wonderful congregation.

Thanks go to Mary Crichton for all her help with the All-Age Worship services. Mary and I also took part in a family team service at Stanton delivering the talk and activity. A lot of fun was had by all ages.

Sadly, in October we said 'farewell' to Mary Crichton, as she moved to be nearer her grandchildren. We all wish her the best of everything for her future life in Norwich and hope that she will pop back to see us occasionally. Mary, therefore, had to leave her duties as a Governor at South Marston School where she will be very much missed.

I would like to thank Rob S, Geoff, Alison M and Angela and Rob B and the music group for providing music for us. The Internet has helped us on the occasions when we have not had the luxury of an organist or musicians.

Grateful thanks to our School Governors who quietly work very hard on behalf of the Church to keep the school in touch with the church and to do all manner of other things too. Rachel Jones continues as our Ex-Officio Governor and does an excellent job. We also thank Karl Glover for his work as a School Foundation Governor.

The sixth of May saw the Coronation of King Charles III and was a reason for great celebration. We had a flower festival in the Church and served afternoon teas to the



Village on Sunday, 7th May. It was a beautiful sunny day, much better than the day before when it had rained. We had lots of visitors to the church and those who came for refreshments basked in the sunshine in the churchyard where we set out tables and chairs. Thanks to our supportive congregation for all their help.

Our Community Coffee morning took place every month between 1000 and 1200 on the 3rd Saturday. Thanks to Richard and Pat and Will and Tina for their hard work providing delicious cakes and cooking bacon butties on the day.

In September we celebrated the only wedding we had in the Church in 2023 and it was indeed a wonderful occasion. We also had one Baptism which again was a joyous occasion. There was also one burial of ashes and a Service of Remembrance which was taken by our former Curate, Rev Mark Tidey and it indeed was a wonderful occasion, and the church was full to overflowing.

The school returned to Church in mid-October for their Harvest Service, which was delightful with all classes taking part.

Our Remembrance Service in November was taken by Alison B for which we are very grateful. It was followed by the ceremony at the War Memorial for the naming of the fallen and the laying of our wreath by a former member of the Armed Forces. Thanks to Alison and all who took part.

Preparation for Christmas in the church began again on the 3 December with our Christingle Service at 10.00 am. The church was full of children and their families for a service when the story of the Christingle was told in a poem written by Mrs. Doughty performed by a pupil from South Marston School. There was also an excellent performance by the School Choir and every child in the congregation received a Christingle.

Key Stage 1 from the school came to the church again on the 4th December to rehearse their Nativity Play which they performed twice the following day. They were brilliant and the church was full of parents and grandparents all enjoying the performances. The story of Jesus birth and the visits of the Shepherds and the Kings were interspersed with lively carols, sung beautifully and with great enthusiasm by the children. Key Stage 2 brought their stage performance to the church on the 6 December. This took the form of Christmas songs and poems in true Christmas style. I was privileged to be at all the performances and thoroughly enjoyed them all. The enthusiasm of the children was infectious. The congregation kindly gave towards the heating of the church.

The Team Choir again provided music for our Nine Lessons and Carols Service which took place on 22nd December at 7.00 pm and was very well attended and numbers increased on last year. On Christmas Eve at 5.00 pm we had a Crib service when the church again attracted children and their families. As last year our midnight communion was at 9.00 pm, which was again most successful.

As part of our Christmas celebrations, we went to The Carpenters Arms to sing Carols on the 14 December. Members of the Choir joined us from the other churches, and it was a very successful evening. A very generous collection was made for the church from those gathered for the occasion. I have to say, on that evening, the 'Inn' was packed, barely any more room. Needless to say, we have been invited again in 2024.

During the year I was asked to reserve a further two burial plots in the churchyard for future use which means we still have plenty of space remaining before the churchyard is full. This is quite a lengthy procedure and starts with a visit to the person concerned, with forms to be completed and finishes with the Registrar issuing a faculty about three months later.

Once again, I must report that we did not get our Home Group started again this year. One reason being that folks have moved away and another a shortage of help to run it.

Nothing has happened with the Bells this year and we are still unable to ring them. It is an ambition of mine to hear them ringing one day, so something to aim for.

We have held meetings in person since my last report, for Churchwardens, Standing Committee, and all PCC Meetings.

On behalf of the Church, I still attend the Community News Meetings and make sure that we have a letter from Elveen or equivalent in the magazine together with all the services and functions that are happening over the following two months. At Christmas I was able to get extra space for a report on the church activities.

Thanks go to Colin and Jenny McEwen for keeping the grass in extremely good order on the Glebe throughout the year. The wet winter has stopped us from parking on it, but it does mean that it grows beautifully green.

My thanks to Mary and Dot for all their hard work cleaning our church and keeping it beautifully polished and gleaming and coming in on special occasions to add that extra something. Thanks to our magnificent flower team who do wonders to brighten up our church with their flowers. Thanks particularly to Hayley and her team for making a very special display for our Flower Festival. We could not have had it without you. Thanks too to Richard for our Easter Garden which was beautiful.

Thank you to Georgina in the Church Office for all she does to help me and for all the magnificent posters and service sheets produced throughout the year.

My thanks to Will for his duties as our Treasurer which go far beyond those of a Treasurer and include maintaining our church with particular emphasis on our ancient boiler. Having a warm church in winter is much appreciated. I have said before without Will working quietly behind the scenes, I would not be able to do my job as warden.

Our church organ had a little problem in November, and we had to bring an expert in to rectify the fault. Fortunately, a request to the Harris Trust for help with the repair was granted and they paid for it to be mended. It was back to its full glory in time for Christmas.

The Harris Trust were also kind enough to help us with a repair to our boiler and some electrical work that had to be done. We are extremely fortunate to have them, and our grateful thanks go to them. It would be hard to manage without them.

Thanks to our team who open and close the church daily throughout the year. We are very lucky to be able to have our church open each day and it is appreciated by visitors as so few churches are open these days.

My thanks to Elveen, Allison and Lisa for bringing services to us and to Alex for his support, and thanks to our wonderful congregation who continue to support us in every way. Thanks too for those not mentioned who are prepared to help us to run various other activities.

I do hope I have thought of everyone, but whatever you do for the church, thank you. Let's keep our beautiful church going.

I will finish by saying I have now completed three years as a Churchwarden, something I had not planned as I had hoped to find someone who would continue from me or even join me so that we had two Churchwardens. So please consider it, you would be most welcome. We also have vacancies on the Stratton Team Ministry PCC of which we are a part.

**Diane Whitford**

**St Mary Magdalene Churchwarden**

## Safeguarding Report for the APCM April 2024

Since the last report in April 2023, Mary and Mike Bosher, Joint Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs), have been keeping a close eye on all aspects of safeguarding for the Parishes of St Margaret's Stratton, St Leonards Stanton, St Mary Magdalene South Marston and Coleview. Aply assisting us are the 'eyes and ears' in the parishes, Chris and Anne Pope for Stanton. Mary Crichton who was the 'eyes' for South Marston has now moved away from the Parish. Mike and Mary (Parish Safeguarding Officers) would like to thank Mary for all her input and interest over a number of years in this post. There is now a splendid opportunity to become the new 'eyes and ears' for South Marston. If anyone is interested, please contact Elveen Mead or Mike Bosher (PSO) for more information. It is a very important post but not at all onerous. The 'eyes and ears' are the close personal local contact in the churches who can pass safeguarding concerns onto us. Their contact details can be found in the porchway of each Church. We thank them for their vigilance.

The thrust of our work continues to ensure that all members of all the Churches are safe to worship and go about their church business without risk. To that end, Mike and Mary would ask every member of every Church, both leaders and congregation, to recognise their personal responsibility in making Safeguarding their concern. There is no option to leave a concern to someone else. If there is an identified issue, it must be passed on to the PSOs to be investigated and acted upon as a matter of urgency. "If you see something, say something" should be a point of action for everybody.

Mary and I would ask all of you to observe and exercise an attitude of informed vigilance. In that way, everyone will be as safe as possible. If you have a cause for concern no matter how trivial you think it might be, please talk to the 'eyes and ears' in your church or contact the PSOs Mike or Mary via the parish web site email address or call on 07799835437.

As in previous years, we have been keeping all members of the two PCCs current with their DBS certificates. There are 10 certificates that will need renewal this year as part of the 3 yearly renewal cycle.

A Safeguarding Report continues to be presented to every PCC meeting for both the Stratton and South Marston PCC and the Stanton Fitzwarren PCC to keep all members up to date with safeguarding developments and information. Safeguarding management is also monitored by the Diocese via the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard which is maintained by the PSOs

The Parish Safeguarding Officers have continued to meet every 3 months with the Priest in Charge. This enables both the PSOs and the Church leadership team to keep up to date with the most recent developments in safeguarding in the Diocese.

A very positive training session was held in September on Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse. This session was led by the Diocesan Training Officer and was undertaken by 25 people. More training will take place later this year to keep up the accreditation for those who require specific training to maintain their posts in the parishes.

**Mike and Mary Boshier Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) April 2024**

### [PCC Secretary's report for the period April 2023 – 2024](#)

Our last APCM was held on 25th April 2023. It felt like things had finally returned to normal again after the past couple of Covid years. We held meetings in May, July, September, November, January and March. The first 3 meetings were held in the Church, but later ones in the small hall at the centre, with the proviso that should Covid come back again we would use the Church. It was warmer and more comfortable in the centre during the winter months.

Safeguarding has been carefully followed during the past year, with the PCC discussing and enabling all the requests put in place by Mike and Mary Boshier our Safeguarding representatives.

Charitable giving has not been as high as previous years, mainly due to Covid, but we began to look into this and give more.

A vision day was organised by the Archdeacon, and an "away day" in Hullavington, which included members from all the churches in our Benefice. These were well attended.

The Parish Fete took place and was enjoyed by many people from the surrounding area. It showed that the church is not just there for the people attending every Sunday.

We assisted the Methodist church with the cost of replacement of the Mechanism in their church clock. We have maintained good relations with them, have joined them for services and they have also come to St Margaret's as well.

The choir and others joined in the production of Noah in St Margaret's church. This was well attended, and we hope to continue with other productions. The choir, led by Angela Breakspear and with Geoff Walters accompanying, enjoyed both regular Sunday evening practices and participated during the services with anthems together with other special events during the year. The choir was especially appreciated during the Christmas period.

Care homes have opened again, and visits and services have gone back almost to normal.

The Treasurers have been working hard to keep our finances intact. They have had to look at suspending and even not paying the full parish share as the regular giving has not been as high.

We had a generous bequest from a parishioner for the repair of the bells. A decision to do some repairs and alterations to the Bell tower to include a mezzanine floor and toilets at the same time has taken up most of this year, due to the requirement of various agreements to the plans. Work has now finally started with the bells being removed, and some alterations begun inside the church.

ECO church is being discussed, and we are looking at various ways to encompass this within our church and our home lives. An energy efficiency survey has taken place.

The lifting of the suspension on the benefice now means that Elveen Mead will be Rector at St Margaret's, with the villages, and her induction service in March 2024.

There have been regular Deanery meetings and representatives have been attending them.

Our lay readers, Lisa Lodwick and Alison Burston have been regularly supporting Elveen taking services over the past year. They attended a LLM conference in February 2024, at Stanton House Hotel, which we supported. We have had some assistance from other local clergy, but services have had to be reduced as we only have one Priest now. We have received news that a new curate should be joining us shortly.

Our logo and title "Stratton Team Ministry" is being looked at to see if we can find a better one. This is ongoing.

We welcomed Bishop Neil to our benefice at a service at Christchurch in Swindon.

**Ros Mitchell PCC Secretary.**



## Coleview Community Centre Church Report - January to December 2023 - APCM on 21st April 2024

We are pleased to report that in 2023 a Celtic communion service was held each month at Coleview Community Centre. Because Rev. Elveen Mead is the only member of our clergy team able to officiate at a communion service she has to divide her time between St. Leonard's, St. Margaret's and St. Mary Magdalene. She does this admirably and most times comes straight to Coleview having led a service at one of the other churches first and battling the traffic to arrive on time!

There were 2 occasions when Elveen invited guest clergy to lead the Coleview services, February 26<sup>th</sup> Rev. Trevor Day and July 23<sup>rd</sup> Rev. Canon Michael Johnson. At the Team service on July 30<sup>th</sup> Elveen invited Rev. Victor Howlett to preach the sermon. We thank them all for their support and inspiration. As with the other churches in the team, communion is given by intincting the wafer into the wine.

Sadly, there are a few of our congregation who are unable to get to church now but we keep in contact by telephone and visiting. We usually have at least 22 regular worshippers at the service who find it a crucial part of their Christian life and they enjoy meeting up with their church family.

We are so grateful to our organists Rob South and Geoff Walters who, like Elveen, usually come straight after playing at an earlier service at another church. We also thank the Music group who play on a rota basis and to Angela Breakspear who puts together the hymn list each month and leads the choir, who sing at some of the Team services.

In February 2023, we held 2 services at Coleview and the one on the 19<sup>th</sup> was our turn to host the Team service. It was a real joy to welcome members from St. Leonard's, St. Margaret's and St. Mary Magdalene. In many cases, it's the only opportunity the Coleview congregation get to meet with the other church members, so they really appreciate it and it's always a joyous experience!

Sunday August 20<sup>th</sup> was a special Team service at Coleview to express our gratitude to Dan Read for his many years of service as a licensed lay minister with Stratton Team Ministry. Dan had decided to retire, due to ill health and Elveen had arranged for him to receive the honorary title of Emeritus Lay Reader.

Unfortunately, Dan was unwell on the Sunday so couldn't come to the service. However, we were able to express our thanks to Dan at the next service he attended at St. Margaret's. Dan is a truly inspirational man and has given us many great sermons and beautiful and meaningful poems for our church magazine over the years. We thank God for Dan and Mary and wish them a happy retirement.

As with other churches within Stratton Team Ministry, Coleview are supported by Rev. Elveen Mead and the Ministry Team - Licensed Lay readers, Lisa Lodwick and Alison Burston and Dan Read – Emeritus.

Our grateful thanks go to Georgina Martin for keeping the communications flowing and for printing the necessary orders of service needed for the specific time in the liturgical calendar.

A special thank you to our church team at Coleview, Marion Wighan who opens the room and helps set up the communion table; Doreen Jackson who welcomes people in; José Skittrall who cleans the brass; Sheila White for putting up the numbers and those who read the lessons and lead the intercessions.

During 2023, the Coleview congregation have supported the Swindon Food Collective, Rags2Riches, Operation Christmas Child and recycling at St. Margaret's Centre.

The Coleview team is committed to ensuring that the Coleview Community Centre is a spiritual place of worship on the Sunday morning and all activities are as inclusive as

possible. We have no control over the building itself but we all aim to be as welcoming as we can.

**Yours in Christ June Lewis and Ian Jones – Church Wardens**

## Swindon Deanery Synod Report 2023

2023 was a year when a new Deanery Synod was elected on the 3-yearly cycle. The clergy remain the same since Deanery Synod is part of their role, but all the lay members of Synod were re-elected at the APCMS. 15 members stood down, including John Bishop from New Town after 50 years on Deanery Synod, and 10 new members joined, while 22 continued in role. We are very grateful to everyone who serves on Deanery Synod and helps us to work together as parishes with a shared commitment to seeing God's Kingdom come across the Deanery.

Deanery Synod met 4 times during the year, with the Deanery Leadership team (DLT) meeting between Synods to plan the agenda and work on the Deanery Vision. The Deanery vision was kicked off by the DLT in May with input from the clergy chapter. We hope to begin implementing the plan that flows from it during 2024.

In February we met at St John's Haydon Wick with Archdeacon Christopher to hear the progress on the Diocesan Vision, Transforming Church. Together (TC.T), and to discuss what it might mean for our parish and how we can work together across the Deanery.

In May, at St Philip's Upper Stratton, Chris Dobson came in his role as Adviser for Parish Discipleship and Evangelism to follow up one of the strands from TC.T, developing discipleship and evangelism. He was keen to hear of our experiences of discipleship and evangelism to inform his work.

In July, with the new Synod elected, we had a barbeque as one of the final events at Legge House. This helped us to get to know one another better and we received

feedback on the draft Deanery vision. David Cain was re-elected as Lay-Chair and Helen Watt as Deanery Synod Secretary. We were grateful to Chris Pope for his years as Deanery Treasurer and elected Anthony Slack in his place. The house of laity elected James Greenslade, Abby Scott and Dave Templar as members of DLT and the clergy elected Toby Boutle, Elveen Mead and Lydia Morey.

The final meeting of the year was at St Michael's Highworth in November when the Deanery vision was presented and there was discussion about the way forward under each of the 9 headlines. You can find the Vision document presented to the November Synod [here](https://nschurch.org.uk/swindon-deanery-vision.php) <https://nschurch.org.uk/swindon-deanery-vision.php>

At every meeting we heard updates on local and diocesan priorities, including Racial Justice, eco church and the cost-of-living crisis, as well as worshipping in a variety of styles and enjoying the hospitality of the host church.

We encourage anyone with an interest in the wider deanery and the topic under discussion to come to our meetings. Forthcoming dates in 2024 are 22 May, 9 July and 3 October. Please speak to your Deanery Synod rep (Jules Nolan for St Leonard's) if you would like to know more.

**Sally Robertson**

**Area Dean**

## Thursday Coffee Morning

Has enjoyed another rewarding year. It's not all about the money raised; it's more to do with the opportunity to sit and have a chat. For some the company is a very important part of their lives. However, none of this would be possible without the happy band of volunteers who each donate a cake when they are on duty. Now is the opportunity for me to say "Thank You".

**David Horne**

## Grange Drive Home Group

We've continued to meet every 2-3weeks, and we're very grateful to Pearl Jell for hosting us and providing refreshments, and to Anne-Marie for baking delicious cakes. I've not always been available to lead this, but various members of the group have done a great job of leading instead. We're still studying the words of the prophet Isaiah – it's a big book, with many chapters! At the beginning there are lots of "woe be to you" verses, and dire warnings about the consequences of not following God's commands, which were quite troubling to read. So we're pleased to have been dwelling on some more encouraging verses recently! In August 2023 we led another "Praise and Prosecco" service in the church hall, which was a lovely cheerful evening of worship and fellowship, and seemed to be much appreciated. We looked at the story of Daniel in the den of lions, and sang "Dare to be a Daniel" with great gusto!

**Lisa Lodwick**

## 5th Swindon Boy's Brigade Company.

We meet on Friday evenings, term time, at St. Margaret's Church Centre. In 2024, the Company celebrates its Golden Anniversary, 50 years of giving Boys the opportunity to have fun, make friends, learn new skills and grow in confidence.

We have been busy, apart from our weekly meetings, we have taken part in Gloucestershire Battalion events, football competition, 10 pin bowling, swimming gala and the Junior section chess competition, where Henry came third place overall, well done Henry.

In May 2023, two Junior Boys and two staff went to T.R.A.C in Gloucestershire and we had a great time. We have another Junior camp in May half-term, this time we are going

to Devon. Two Boys and staff will attend the weeklong Company section camp at Tenby, in July.

Each week, Boys do various activities, some of which they can choose. They work towards their badges, which covers six main categories: Get into the Bible, Get Active, Get Adventurous, Get Creative, Get Learning, Get Involved.

The programme is suitable for each age group, with more challenges as they go into the next section, keeping the Boys interested. We also do drill and bugle and drum practice.

Officers and helpers are all volunteers, most are "old Boys", who have been members of the Boys Brigade or are parents of Boys. I would like to thank our dedicated team, who give up a lot of their spare time to plan and prepare the programme, we could not run without you.

We still have vacancies for Boys aged 5 years to 11 years, who can come along and be part of the B.B experience. Please get in touch for further details.

Our thanks go to the clergy and St. Margarets congregation for your prayers and support as the 5th Swindon Boy's Brigade Company enters its 50th year of advancing Christ's Kingdom.

**Teresa DGLISH.**  
**Company Captain.**

## Bumps and Babes

Bumps and Babes is a friendly group for parents and babies (up to a year old) every term time Tuesday in the St Margaret's Centre. We offer a place to chat, have a coffee, and let the babies play while getting to know other parents.

We can have anywhere from four to fourteen parents with babies - usually mums, but we have been joined by some dads and grandparents too.

Guests have joined to speak on relevant subjects like infant first aid, reading with children and leaders of local baby groups.

In the Summer we had a reunion picnic of past and current members, as well as some joining Saturday Scene for Christingle.

Our group wouldn't be possible without the amazing helpers who give their time each week to set up, make drinks, chat to the mums and pack away - they make the group a lovely, welcoming, safe space.

Our session always ends with a bit of singing and our Bumps & Babes blessing. It is such a joy that we are able to put this group on for free for local families, with the kind support of the church.

We love new members and advertise on Facebook to keep numbers up as we have high turnover due to the nature of the group.

You can find out more on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/245839227710435>

**Bekki**

## Team Choir

The choir, in just its second full year in 2023, has continued to impress and is now a firmly established and greatly valued and loved part of the life of the Stratton team. Through the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of its members, the quality of the choral sound that it produces, and its overall musicality goes from strength to strength.

Early in the year we sang a version of the Magnificat for Mothering Sunday, and it was particularly special to sing “Wade in the Water” for Crystal’s baptism. Easter was busy with two services on Good Friday and three on Easter Sunday – it is a privilege to be able to sing anthems in each of our churches to support festival services. After Easter the choir put together a small group to sing Evensong in St Margaret’s in May, which was well received by the congregation.

Most of our time in the summer term was taken up with rehearsals for *Captain Noah and his floating Zoo* which we sang in July in St Margaret’s. Choir, soloists and accompanists did an amazing job, and the service was very much appreciated by the congregation. We then celebrated together at the choir summer barbeque in late July before taking a break over the summer.

We started back in September looking at some new Communion Service music to introduce across the team churches in 2024. We will be introducing the *Stratton Mass*, written by our very own Robert South, in the first half of the new year, and will add David Ogden’s *Mass of New Wine* to this later in the year. This will give us flexibility to utilise two settings over the coming years, which will hopefully keep this part of our sung worship fresh and interesting.

As we moved towards the end of the year, our focus was on rehearsing pieces for Christmas and Advent. In November the choir sang a beautiful Advent Carol service in St Leonard’s including three anthems and followed this with Christmas Carol Services in all four churches – including Coleview for the first time - with anthems including



Cornelius's *The Three Kings*, Berlioz's *The Shepherd's Farewell* and a piece from Handel's *Messiah*. All Christmas services were very well attended, and we had many positive comments from the congregation. We also extended our reach outside the churches, leading carols at Stanton House Hotel, and in The Carpenter's Arms in South Marston.

My thanks go to the choir for their continued commitment and enthusiasm, to Geoff Walters for his support and amazing flexibility, whatever music I throw at him, and to the two Roberts – South and Breakspear for their assistance in running the choir.

We are always looking for new members of *all* ages – no musical knowledge is necessary, and no auditions. We sing everything from Tudor Polyphony through to modern musicals – our plans for 2024 include *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* - so if you like to sing and would like to join in – just come along.

**Angela Breakspear – Director of Music**

[Electoral roll report 2024 for APCM, 23 April 2024.](#)

This is a combined roll for South Marston and Stratton.

Last year we had 101 on the roll.

Since then, one person has moved away and, sadly, two have died.

Five new names have been added during the 2024 notice period, so at present (15 April) we have 103 on the roll.

Next year will require a full revision.

**Andrew Martin, Electoral Roll Officer**

## St Margaret's Pre-School Annual Report

St Margaret's Pre-School continues to offer affordable childcare within the heart of the Stratton community. We are based within the St Margaret's Centre and open Monday to Friday. We have spaces for children aged 3-4 years old and limited spaces for 2-year-olds. We encourage the children to enjoy a range of activities following the Birth to Five Curriculum.

**From All the staff at St Margaret's Pre-School.**

### Annual Report from Stratton St Margaret's Baby & Toddler Group

Stratton St Margaret's Baby and Toddler Group meet in the St Margaret's Centre, on Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10.00am until 11.30am. Providing a small meeting place for local parents and carers to socialise and bring their little ones to play, the group caters for children aged from Birth up to school age. A home corner, cars, tent and tunnel, dolls, books, puzzles and a baby corner are regularly on offer and the children have enjoyed a variety of crafts each week with activities such as play dough, painting, colouring and making cards and models.

The group has been in some form of existence for over 30 years with new parents taking over the running of the group when children start school. The children have the opportunity to socialise, learn to share and make new friendships. The parent/carers benefit too. The group can be a good way to integrate into your community.

Approximately 25 - 30 children attend each session, at the group parents/carers stay with their children and are responsible for them at all times. We charge just £2 per family for the session; this money goes towards the cost of renting the hall, providing refreshments for the adults and, healthy snacks, crafts, and toys for the children.

**Georgina Martin, Volunteer Mum**

The Parish of Stratton Saint Margaret with South Marston  
Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

# The Parish of Stratton Saint Margaret with South Marston

## Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

### General Funds Receipts & Payments Account

	Notes	2023		2022	
		£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>					
Voluntary receipts	1	73,761		74,455	
Receipts from activities for generating funds	2	7,071		3,316	
Receipts from Church activities - fees		5,057		8,678	
Heating grant from Diocese		<u>0</u>		<u>967</u>	
			85,889		87,416
<b>Payments</b>					
Grants	3	3,127		605	
Church activities	4	70,947		74,755	
Church management and administration		<u>12,468</u>		<u>9,357</u>	
			<u>86,542</u>		<u>84,717</u>
<b>Excess of Receipts over Payments</b>			0		2,699
<b>Excess of Payments over Receipts</b>			653		0
<b>Bank current and deposit accounts 1 January</b>			<u>13,332</u>		<u>10,633</u>
<b>Bank current and deposit accounts 31 December</b>			<u><u>12,679</u></u>		<u><u>13,332</u></u>

## The Parish of Stratton Saint Margaret with South Marston

### Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

#### Designated & Restricted Funds

##### St. Margaret's Church

	Designated Funds		Restricted Funds								Totals	
	Rector's Discretion Fund	Building Fund	Sound System	Day Window	Restoration Fund	Flower Fund	Choir Fund	Organ Fund	John Cornwell Legacy	Fete		Media
Interest	0	0	46	14	1,740	32	101	366	9,985	137	137	12,558
Receipts	0	0	1,164	0	19,377	0	0	0	0	2,905	0	23,446
	0	0	1,210	14	21,117	32	101	366	9,985	3,042	137	36,004
Payments	0	0	3,872	0	0	279	0	0	31,421	3,599	0	39,171
	0	0	-2,662	14	21,117	-247	101	366	-21,436	-557	137	-3,167
Balance 1 January 2023	200	5,408	3,391	289	36,766	897	2,191	8,043	226,358	2,557	3,030	289,130
Balance 31 December 2023	200	5,408	729	303	57,883	650	2,292	8,409	204,922	2,000	3,167	285,963

##### St. Mary Magdalene Church

	Restricted Funds			Totals
	Fabric Fund	Bell Fund	Harris Fund	
Interest	25	15	0	40
Receipts	275	50	2,180	2,505
	300	65	2,180	2,545
Payments	0	10	2,030	2,040
	300	55	150	505
Balance 1 January 2023	5,359	3,043	0	8,402
Balance 31 December 2023	5,659	3,098	150	8,907

# The Parish of Stratton Saint Margaret with South Marston

## Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

### Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 December 2023

#### Monetary Assets

	General Funds £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Totals 2023 £	Totals 2022 £
Bank current accounts	12,679	5,456	5,548	23,683	29,633
Bank deposit accounts			2,713	2,713	2,673
Central Board of Finance			281,001	281,001	278,443
Cash in Hand		152		152	115
	<u>12,679</u>	<u>5,608</u>	<u>289,262</u>	<u>307,549</u>	<u>310,864</u>

#### Debtors

Income Tax reclaim	3,509	3,361
Team expenses	300	300
Advertising in magazine	90	90
Fees	449	300
Value Added Tax	4,309	0
Ride & Stride	354	0
Electricity	351	50
Harris Trust grant	0	48
	<u>9,362</u>	<u>4,149</u>

#### Creditors

Door mat hire	244	228
NEST Pension	194	117
HMRC	39	0
Clergy Expenses	0	289
Photocopying	50	294
Hire of village hall	162	110
Gas	786	866
	<u>1,475</u>	<u>1,904</u>

#### Stocks

	<u>425</u>	<u>240</u>
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The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts and Payments basis.

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 12h March 2024 and signed on its behalf by

  
.....  
Rev'd Eileen Mead

  
.....  
Diane Whitford

  
.....  
Ian Jones

# The Parish of Stratton Saint Margaret with South Marston

## Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023

### Notes to the General Fund Receipts & Payments Account

	2023	2022
	£	£
<b>1) Voluntary receipts</b>		
Gift Aid planned giving	40,790	43,684
Non-Gift Aid planned giving	10,666	9,908
Collections & other giving	5,715	5,313
Income Tax recovered	12,636	11,961
Thursday Coffee Mornings	1,414	1,282
Sundry donations	2,540	2,307
	<u>73,761</u>	<u>74,455</u>
<b>2) Receipts from activities for generating funds</b>		
Fund raising activities	6,963	3,002
Sale of magazines	108	314
	<u>7,071</u>	<u>3,316</u>
<b>3) Grants</b>		
Church overseas	0	0
Home missions	1,337	555
Secular charities	1,790	50
	<u>3,127</u>	<u>605</u>
<b>4) Church activities</b>		
Diocesan parish share	46,797	53,125
Church running expenses	5,614	5,192
Church maintenance	1,839	3,134
Insurance	4,689	4,413
Cost of services	1,195	1,387
Young families work	439	392
Team expenses	7,753	5,845
Fund raising & publicity	2,621	1,267
	<u>70,947</u>	<u>74,755</u>

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT  
TO THE TRUSTEES OF STRATTON SAINT MARGARET WITH SOUTH MARSTON  
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Stratton Saint Margaret with South Marston Parochial Church Council (the PCC) for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

**Responsibilities and Basis of Report**

As the charity trustees 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 PCC'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 respect of the PCC as required by section 130 of the Act ; or
- (2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

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



Paul J Crowley FCA  
Derrick Newman Limited  
29 Bath Road  
Swindon  
SN1 4AS

15 March 2024