

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

## St John the Evangelist Hurst Green

### May 2025



Welcome everyone, deepen faith, inspire action and share God's friendship and love

**st John's**  
HURST GREEN

## Looking Back – a Vicar's Viewpoint

Whenever I go for a walk in the countryside, I often stop to look back to see how far I have walked before continuing along the path.

An annual meeting of the church is a bit like that. We pause to take stock and to give thanks to God for his provision and faithfulness, before we continue with the year ahead. Last year in the annual report, I quoted the first verses of Hebrews 12 which followed Anna's quote from Hebrews 11 the previous year. Hebrews 12:2 says:

***...let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.***

Looking back, we can reflect that *the race that is set before us* began with a time of prayerful discernment of our provision for families. This led to the closure of café church, a renewal of our all age services and plans to start Bubble Church.



We have also needed to *persevere* in the face of many challenges during the year. With the need to address a financial deficit, we launched a giving campaign to encourage everyone to review or to begin regular financial support of St John's.

The process to realise a vision to be a *church without walls* has continued to face many challenges and has been a long and slow process; we are still waiting for a decision from the Chancellor about our application to move the font.



The next chapter of Hebrews, chapter 13 verse 1 says:

***Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.***

May we be curious about others and open our hearts to listen and get to know one another more deeply and prayerfully. I'm looking forward to the coming year as we continue to grow together as a diverse and vibrant community of faith in Jesus Christ. *Every blessing, Sue*

**Revd Sue Bosley, Vicar**

## Churchwardens' Report

### Introduction

As we look back on the past year, we thank God for the many blessings He has given us. We are deeply grateful for the guidance of our clergy, who have faithfully led us in worship and pastoral care. Special thanks go to Sue and Mary for their dedicated ministry during this time. We also bid farewell to Wendy this year, and her creativity and contributions to the life of St John's will certainly be missed by all.

Our thanks also extend to the PCC for their ongoing support and for helping to steer the affairs of the church. Additionally, we want to express our heartfelt appreciation to the many volunteers who give of their time and energy. Though their efforts often go unseen, it is their commitment that enables the life of St John's to flourish. From welcoming newcomers and caring for our church building, to leading various groups and committees, their tireless contributions make a real difference.

### Worship and Services

The past year has seen the continuation of our regular worship, which remains at the heart of our parish life. The 8:30am service continues to offer a quiet space for reflection and spiritual renewal, providing peace for those seeking God's presence.

The Parish Eucharist at 9:45am remains central to our Sunday worship, enriched by music and hymns that draw us into deeper communion with God. We are also grateful



for the increasing attendance at our All Age Services, held on the first Sunday of each month, where we gather as one family of God, regardless of age, in worship and prayer. It has been particularly encouraging to see the number of young people attending these services rise again, to levels not seen since the pandemic.

Seasonal services, including those for Advent and Christmas, such as the Christingle Service, Nine Lessons and Carols, and the Crib Services, were particularly meaningful. These services brought many from both within and beyond our community into the joy of celebrating Christ's birth.



We also take Holy Communion into our local residential homes. Sue visits Windmill Manor once a month and a team ensure that David Gresham House is visited every Sunday.

### **Buildings and Fabric**

The fabric of our church remains a key priority, and this year has again seen essential repairs made to our building. While we hesitate to mention individuals by name, we would like to offer special thanks to Chris Johns for his outstanding efforts in ensuring the church remains in good order. Regular inspections and maintenance continue to ensure that our building is safe and welcoming for all who enter.

We are also thankful for the ongoing care of the churchyard and grounds, which provide a peaceful space for reflection and prayer. Our volunteers play an essential role in maintaining the beauty and upkeep of the site, and we are truly grateful for their dedication.

### **Community and Outreach**

St John's continues to play a vital role in the local community. The **Hurst Green Community Fridge**, which operates every Wednesday, has grown in impact, providing surplus food to those in need. This initiative embodies our calling to serve the vulnerable, reduce waste, and care for God's creation.

The **Community Hub**, held every Thursday at St Agatha's Hall, has been an invaluable resource, offering warmth, companionship, and support to those who need it most. This outreach is a clear expression of our desire to reach out with the love of Christ and to offer hospitality to those beyond our church walls.

Our other events, such as coffee mornings, Harvest celebrations, and the annual Fair, have helped us strengthen our connections within the local community. These gatherings offer a place for fellowship and allow us to share the joy of Christ with many who may not yet be part of our church family.



### **Safeguarding and Safety**

Our commitment to safeguarding continues to be a top priority at St John's. We adhere strictly to the safeguarding policies set out by the Diocese, ensuring that all necessary checks and training are in place for those involved in ministry and pastoral care. Special thanks are due to Charlotte and Sam, whose dedication to safeguarding ensures a safe and secure environment for everyone who comes into our care.

### **Thanks and Acknowledgements**

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all who have given their time, energy, and talents to the life of St John's over the past year. We are especially grateful to those who maintain the church, arrange flowers, serve on the altar, assist with worship, and lead our various committees and working groups. Without their hard work and dedication, our church would not be able to function as it does.

### **Looking Ahead**

As we look to the year ahead, we are both excited and mindful of the challenges that lie before us. Financially, we are aware of the declining number of regular givers and the need to generate additional resources to sustain and grow the life of St John's. In response, we have launched the **Belong, Grow, Give** campaign, which seeks to address

the current financial situation and encourage support for both existing and future generations of church members.



At the same time, we are excited about the opportunities ahead. In April 2025, we have launched **Bubble Church**, an initiative designed to engage families and young children in a fun and meaningful way.

This concept offers a more informal, interactive environment where children can freely participate in worship through music, stories, and creative

activities. The idea of a "bubble" space creates a safe, welcoming atmosphere where families can connect, grow in faith, and experience God's love together.

As we move forward, let us continue to support one another in our shared mission to be a Church without walls, reaching out to the community and beyond with the love of Christ. With every blessing.

***Cathy Booth and Henk van den Berg, Churchwardens***

*This marks Cathy's final report as Churchwarden, and it is with both gratitude and sadness that we say farewell to her in this role. I want to take a moment to express my personal thanks. Cathy has been a constant and reliable presence, always ensuring that everything ran smoothly and was done properly. During times when I was away with work, she shouldered an incredible amount of responsibility - often quietly and behind the scenes. Her dedication to St John's over the years has been nothing short of remarkable. Thank you, Cathy, for your unwavering support, wise guidance, and steadfast friendship. We are going to miss you as Church Warden!*

***Henk***

## **Reflections from Cathy**

It's funny how things work out. I have a vivid memory of speaking to Anna Eltringham before a Sunday service and said "I've got something to tell you, I'll catch you after the service" and she replied "That's good because I've got something to ask you". My news was that I had applied to take voluntary redundancy and would be leaving work in six weeks and her question was what did I think about becoming churchwarden! Timing, as they say, is everything.

And so my journey began. In the summer of 2016, I started to become involved in "special projects" the first of which was overseeing the refurbishment of St John's room. We put together a team and selected furnishings, colour schemes, lighting, builders and decorators and created a welcoming, informal space which still looks pretty good today. I was officially appointed Assistant Churchwarden in 2017 and over the course of that year, Barbara Richards, who was due to step down, began to show me the various jobs that fall to the Churchwarden. There are many!

In my workplace, I acquired project management and governance skills and Anna asked me to look at what was in place at St John's with a view to creating processes which were simpler and more robust. This is the sort of boring background stuff which no one sees (but is essential) and it was a challenge aligning my business background with Church of England expectations. However, I was able to introduce an online shared document management system which means we no longer keep mountains of paperwork, put job descriptions and employment contracts in place for the paid workers, implemented a GDPR policy and overhauled the processes for the inventory, key register and log books. Most people will have no idea what this means but believe me, it has simplified things, and it's saved time and I've been asked by the Archdeacon and Area Dean to share what is regarded as "best practice" with other churches in the area.

The bit about being a Churchwarden I really didn't like was the responsibility for fabric related issues. Fortunately, this is something which Chris Johns liked and so when we were both Churchwarden he looked after that side of things and left the paperwork (which he liked less) to me. We're so lucky that since Chris stepped down as

Churchwarden, he has taken on the role of Fabric Officer as that removes a very heavy burden from the shoulders of the Churchwardens.

However, I couldn't shirk all responsibilities for fabric and went on a steep learning curve as we upgraded the sound system, replaced fire panels and alarm systems not to mention dealing with issues with sliding doors, boilers, and lightning conductors. Never a dull moment! Let there be Light was a very successful campaign to raise money to replace the old bulbs in the church with LED lights. This was essential as it was a nightmare replacing bulbs as the access arrangements to the roof are very difficult and costly and, furthermore, it was very hard to find replacement bulbs as they were being phased out. Within six months, we had raised £25k and the improved lighting is enjoyed not just by those attending services but those attending community events in the church.

I mentioned that I'd been lucky enough to have a very thorough handover from the outgoing Churchwarden so thought I knew what I was up against – and then Covid struck! The Church of England issued regular bulletins on what we could / couldn't do - we closed the church

in March 2020, reopened in July 2020, closed again in November 2020 and held the first Communion service in church in May 2021. Each time we opened / closed, the Church of England would issue another edict (we received around 60 in total) which meant more risk assessments, signage and communication. It really was a full-time job and I was so glad when we could put that era behind us.



The other thing that I hadn't been briefed about was the role of Churchwardens in the event the monarch dies – Operation London Bridge landed with a thump detailing the arrangements that needed to be

put in place. We all rose to the occasion and the Union Jack was flying at half-mast within an hour of the announcement.

Fundraising is a necessary part of church life and an opportunity to bring the parish together. I've worked behind the scenes on a number of events including quiz nights at Aggies, a Barn Dance at Holland School, various musical concerts in the church and, of course, three Autumn Fairs. I hope someone else will be able to continue these going forward.

A Churchwarden fervently hopes an interregnum isn't going to happen on their watch. I had some idea what to expect as Anna had been forced to take two extended leaves of absence; the first one because of suffering a cardiac arrest and the second one following heart surgery. They felt like mini-interregna and so we were able to hit the ground running when the "real" one started in 2023 and managed to get through the process and recruit a vicar in what is, for the Church of England, a surprisingly short time – just over eight months in total.

Normally, a churchwarden undertakes two terms of three years, i.e. a total of six years. I agreed to stay on for a seventh as Sue Bosley had only recently joined us when I was due to step down. So it really is time for me to go and I have lots of exciting plans. My husband, Geoff, is also delighted that he no longer must share me with the church and we look forward to having the occasional day out together, which, I understand is what retired couples sometimes do.

I want to thank everyone who has helped and supported me over the last few years; I'm not going to name them for fear of missing someone out, but they know who they are. It's been fun, but it's also been very challenging at times and I must record special thanks to Henk and Sue for their unflinching support, particularly over the last few months which have been difficult for me for various reasons.

At the time of writing, my successor has not been identified but I've written copious handover notes for when that person arrives and wish them well. St John's will be joining the statistic of between 25 - 40% of parishes having only one churchwarden so please look after Henk and offer him as much support as you can. I wish you all well.

**Cathy**

## Vision

*'To be a church without walls in the heart of the community'*

In January, the PCC and members of the mission sub-committee met together for a vision morning. Revd James, Rector of the Oxted Team, led the session and asked us to share joys and challenges before we went on to identify priorities for mission and how to make them happen.

We were excited by plans to reach a younger generation and agreed to start Bubble Church. We have been blessed by a keen team of people who have come together to train and lead this church service for little ones and their families.

We also identified opportunities in the weekly ministries to build links to church and our Christian faith. The motivation to meet was not only missional but also pastoral. We needed to spend time together after a difficult few months.

The Crossing the Threshold (CTT) Committee had been tasked over the last few years to explore ways to make the space at the west end of the church more accessible and flexible. Our application to move the font and create a new baptistry had been agreed by PCC by majority vote but had continued to be debated. The Chancellor of the Diocese received letters of objection to the plan and we await his decision.

The CTT's proposal to repurpose the table in St John's Room to mount the chair plaques on the wall in the lady chapel also met with difficulty and opposition, although we have now submitted an application to the Diocese.

Sara, chair of CTT, resigned during this time and has left St John's. It was a very painful time for Sara and members of the committee. The PCC are conscious of the need to learn from what has happened and has started to explore ways to be more effective at decision making and change management.

I give thanks to God for a committed group of people on the PCC and mission sub-committee who give their many varied gifts and time to the vision and life of St John's.

***Revd Sue Bosley***

## Mission

### St Agatha's Hall

Aggie's has had a successful year with consistent bookings throughout, but would benefit from more advertising and this will be addressed. The fees have kept pace with other local venues and now stand at £18 per hour for regulars and £22 per hour for one-off bookings.

The hall had a face lift in the summer with the repainting of both the hall and the garage and the kitchen was also decorated at Christmas. Our thanks to Blaze for their hard work.

Unfortunately vandals defaced the paintwork and broke several windows during the year. The paintwork has mostly been repaired with many thanks to volunteers and as a result CCTV will now be installed with a welcome grant from Oxted parish Council. This will feed directly into Caterham police station and hopefully deter future vandalism.

The Community Fridge and Hub at Aggies have been boosted by a very generous donation from the now extinct Oxted lunch club and also by council grant funding. Our thanks to them and to the hardworking volunteers who keep these enterprises running.

**Cathy Hyde**

### Community Fridge

The Hurst Green Community Fridge will turn 3 this July, and it feels very much a community staple. We continue to welcome between 40 and 70 people each week, both regulars and new faces (and new-faces-turned-regulars).



It is the community aspect which has become particularly important - people really appreciate the company they find at Aggie's on a Wednesday morning. Friendships have been forged, and there is always someone, or a group of someones, willing to welcome a new

face to join their table for a hot drink and a biscuit. One regular attendee told a volunteer that the Community Fridge is her only regular time where she gets out of the house. The communal atmosphere is hugely appreciated. Our regular attendees have also been happy to lend a hand when we have been short-staffed, or needed an extra pair of hands to get groceries into the hall.

This year we have continued to receive large weekly donations from Morrisons. We were also supported by the Co-op in Oxted until they closed. One Stop, the Hygiene Bank and Track 1 have also been regular and faithful donors. We have also been touched by the number of



individual donors and the continued support of the allotments. We are a project which redistributes food which would otherwise go to waste, so we do experience ebbs and flows when it comes to what we have to offer, including the higher-value items we place on our free raffle table. Given we offer so much more than groceries, this has not presented a huge problem to us, and we have always had enough to share.

Over the summer, we received a small grant from Morrisons to spend on children. Our volunteers came up with the idea of picnic lunches available every week, and made sandwiches and scones; these picnic lunches were topped up with extra donations from Track 1 (crisps and treats) and the Hygiene Bank (suncream). This was a lovely initiative and drew some new families in. This year we also received a grant from Voluntary Action South East and a donation from Titsey Rotary club, to contribute towards our running costs.

Our arrangement with Moor House School continues, and their volunteer students add a great deal to our volunteer team. We have also had members of Oxted School support us as part of their DofE award. Our volunteers come predominantly from the wider community, rather than the church, and pastoral support is very much hands-

off/"DIY." We have, however, referred a handful of individuals to the LINK Porter Trust and forged relationships with people who came to us for an emergency parcel but have gone on to volunteer in some capacity.

The volunteers, whether they are religious or not, feel privileged to offer a lovely space (with a purpose!) to the community every Wednesday, and to work together to our common aims to reduce food insecurity and food waste.



We were delighted to be nominated in the Community Service Provider category at the inaugural Tandridge Business awards.

***Ché Ramsden***

## **Community Hub**

I am pleased to report that the Hub continues to thrive and the number of attendees is ever increasing. On average we have between 16 - 20 persons attending each week. The Hub operates from 1 - 3pm on Thursday afternoons at St Agatha's Hall, Hurst Green. Most of the attendees are widowed or live alone, although everyone is welcome.

Thanks to the generosity of Track 1 (the refreshment kiosk on Hurst Green station) who provide the Hub with cakes, crisps and sweets on a regular basis, we are able to give our users a variety of tasty things to eat.

During the last year Surrey County Council have very kindly provided us with their minibus, plus driver on three occasions. This enabled us to go on a day trip to Eastbourne in August, a visit to Pole Hill Garden Centre in November and a trip to Haskins Garden Centre in February.

In July volunteer drivers took some users of the Hub for a very enjoyable afternoon tea at Titsey Place. Fortunately we went before the wasp season started!

Just before Easter 2024 we organised an Easter tea at St Agatha's, plus a Christmas tea in December. We are planning another Easter tea on 17 April this year. At these teas everyone is given a greetings card signed by Pearl Stephens, Rose Thorn and myself, plus a 'goody bag' to take home.

We were all invited in December to a light lunch, plus Carol singing at Oxted School. This brought back many happy memories to some of our people who had attended the school as pupils. From time to time we have a guest speaker covering such subjects as energy reduction, help with IT etc.

Two students from Moorhouse School and College, plus their Tutor help us every week during term time. Attendance at the Hub not only helps us, additionally they benefit from socialising with people which improves their communication skills. To sum up, my team and I thoroughly enjoy running the Hub.

***Liz Parker***

### **Eco-group**

The Eco-group has continued to explore issues and options, and organised or attended various events, including:

- A technical assessment was conducted by a firm specialising in infra-red heating, for both St John's and St Agatha's Hall. Infra-red heating aims to 'heat the person, not the room' and can be partially used to heat only certain areas. An installer also visited to provide a quotation for the work, and, as expected, the costs are very significant. Installation for St Agatha's Hall is less expensive, but significant funding would still be required.
- Options for providing EV charging have been explored, either at the Church or at St Agatha's, and the required evaluation forms have been completed and submitted. EV charging would provide some income but parking space at St Agatha's could be an issue.

- A safety survey of the trees within the grounds was undertaken and the recommended remedial works were undertaken in March 2025.
- An excellent presentation was given by Friends of the River Eden Ecosystem (FREE) on 24 October 2024, with over 40 people attending, 14 of which signed up to support FREE and FREE received a number of requests to give talks / other presentations.
- A trip to Standon to look round their gardens and see the environmental works they're doing is planned for 2 May 2025.
- Ian Christie, from the Centre for Environment & Sustainability, University of Surrey, is scheduled to give a talk on the Affluent and the Climate Crisis on 21 May 2025.

***Jon Macartney***

### **Fortnightly Coffee Morning**

The much-loved coffee morning has continued to meet in St John's Room on alternate Thursdays, enabling those who live alone to socialise and catch up with local news. During the year Beryl Perry moved away but our other regulars are nearly always there. In September we had a lovely visit to Haskins Garden Centre for a delicious afternoon tea. It would be lovely to see a few more people joining us. Why not give us a go? We could also do with one or two more people to help from time to time with setting up the room, making coffee and clearing up. Please let me know if you are able to help.

***Barbara Richards***

### **Flower arrangers**

There are four teams who look after the floral arrangements, comprising Hilary Dilnot and Sue Farrell; Jane Smith and Marina Blanchard; Jennie Hardingham, Sylvia Russell, and Pauline Ealey; June Reed and Olivia Galloway. Each team prepares or updates arrangements for the altar pedestal, the memorial shelf, and the Paschal candle once a month, except during Lent and Advent, when the church does not have flowers.

There are also three festivals each year, at Easter, Harvest, and Christmas, when all arrangers bring their skills on one day, to fill the church with amazing displays. We have coffee and cake too!!

We are very grateful to those people who donate money for flowers, especially for Easter lilies. We purchase festival flowers from a wholesaler to keep costs down, but most arrangers like to gift the weekly flowers as part of their regular giving, and the church is most grateful for that.

We are always happy to make an arrangement for a special occasion. Please speak to Hilary or Sue if you would like this, or if you would like to join the flower team. Thank you for all the appreciative comments.

***Hilary Dilnot and Sue Farrell***



## **Hurst Green News**

Hurst Green News continues to be a popular newsletter for the local community in Hurst Green. Residents often acknowledge it as 'the green paper that gets posted through the door.' It is a valuable source of information for new residents and people who have always lived in Hurst Green.

The HGN is a great marketing tool for local events, hobby groups and also highlights important updates from the local councils, library, Citizens Advice Bureau and schools. For St John's it is a vital link between the Church and residents as it is a gentle way to remind readers what services and events are happening at the church and to help share messages on Christian values and special religious holidays.

Each month the Hurst Green News receives many stories or information for local events which reminds us of the vibrant and thriving area we live in and means finding content is never a struggle.

In 2024 and 2025 one of the challenges has been securing new advertisers and retaining advertisers on the back page. The HGN

Committee have kept the fee for advertising low but with competition from digital social media and online searches it has been difficult. However, each year the HGN manages to break even and the paper is supplemented with one-off ad hoc ads.

Hurst Green resident, HGN Editor and worshipper at St John's, Lucy Kay, continues to enjoy compiling each issue, and liaising with all the local groups and businesses. One of the most popular articles in the HGN is Neighbour of the Month. The HGN has a waiting list of nominations which goes to show what a friendly, caring and supportive community Hurst Green is.

The HGN News would like to acknowledge all the volunteers who deliver the HGN each month as they are a huge part of the success of the HGN. The Committee hopes that over the coming months it will secure more revenue from advertisers and continue to provide the community with useful updates and good news whilst reaching a wide audience in Hurst Green and surrounding areas.

***Lucy Kay, Hurst Green News Editor and Producer***

### **Youth Group**

We had to re-look at our provision for young people when funding for Mira, as the Oxted Team Youth worker, came to an end. A small group of youth have been attending café church in St Mary's The\_Space, each Sunday and stay for games and a social time afterwards. The group is supported and led by Mira and Clare from St Mary's and Rob O'Neill from St John's.

### **Yo Yos**

Yo Yos is a much needed Mother Baby & Toddler group which has now been going for eight years and is definitely going from strength to strength. We have a volunteer team of nine and we open our doors every Wednesday morning in term time in the York Rooms.



We have about 20 plus children each week age ranging from birth to 4 years old. There are toys, crafts, snacks & singing for the little ones and coffee, tea and cakes for the adults. We are always there for children with additional needs and allergies. The children always have a little present at Christmas and at Easter.

As a group we raised £100 for children in need last year and we always give donations to the church. Hopefully Yo Yos will continue successfully for the foreseeable future.

***Liz Sone***

## Music and Worship

The choir sings at every 9.45am service on a Sunday, as well as at services on other Holy days. Currently, there are up to seven ladies in the choir, but sadly, due to ill-health, we are not able to enjoy the lovely rich voice of David Merritt. He is greatly missed. However, the stalwart ladies do a great job, even when numbers drop as low as three, as they lead the singing of hymns and an anthem every week.

We welcome other singers who join us for special occasions, especially during Easter, and for 9 Lessons and Carols, when we can prepare more challenging pieces with more voice parts. Several of our visitors return every year as they enjoy it so much!

We are always happy to welcome singers on an ad hoc basis. We realise that not everyone is able to commit to attending every week, but as long as you can come to the preceding Thursday night choir practice (7.50 until 9.15pm), you are most welcome to join our friendly choir when time permits. Singing is good for you!

This year saw the All Age service absorb the Café Church band, with guitars, saxophone, clarinet and piano giving a contemporary feel to worship songs and well-known favourite hymns, with the service having a time of reflection for adults, while children can engage in a craft activity. It has become a popular service for all ages!

We look forward to the new venture which is Bubble Church, aimed at younger children, with puppets helping to share the Christian story. No doubt, music will be a part of that service too.

***Hilary Dilnot, Director of Music***

## Pastoralia

This year has seen the passing of a number of treasured church members who have contributed so much to our communal life over the years: Joan Brackpool, Jenifer Ruxton, Maggie Short and Neville Jacobs. We give thanks to God for their unique and special talents, and for the fact that they used them to make his kingdom come in this place. We are so fortunate that we had the opportunity of knowing them and working with them. May they rest in peace.

Several people from the Hurst Green village community passed on too, and we at St John's were privileged to be part of their farewells: Doug Hand, Maureen Bashford, Carol May, Fred Tyler, Pam Mills and Shirley Hazelton. We thank God for the way their lives enriched our community life.

Inevitably as time goes on, some people move away from the area, and this year we said goodbye to Beryl Perry as she moved to Winterborne Clenston to live near her daughter. Also, our beloved and hardworking Reader, Wendy Hewitt, finally left us, after many months of threatening that she would. House selling is fraught with difficulties, and poor Wendy suffered much in her attempts to move on. But she now lives in Littlehampton, just a few doors away from Frank (a former churchwarden) and Janet Hutchings - there must be something attractive in the sea air! We have so much to thank God, and Wendy for, in her long and very active, inspirational and caring ministry with us.

Our oldest former parishioner, Elizabeth Herbert, now resident in Sycamore Court, Oxted, celebrated her 101st birthday in March, and we rejoiced with her. We thank God for her work for us over the years.

***Revd Professor Mary Seller, Assistant Priest***

# Finances

## Headlines for 2024

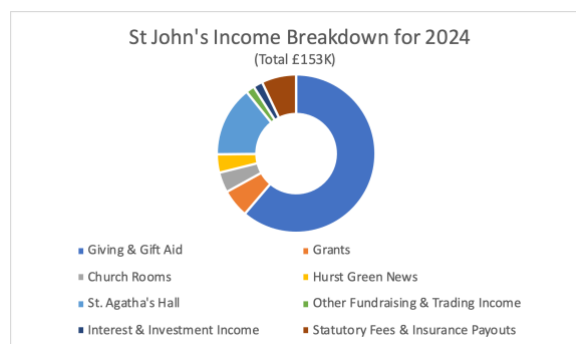
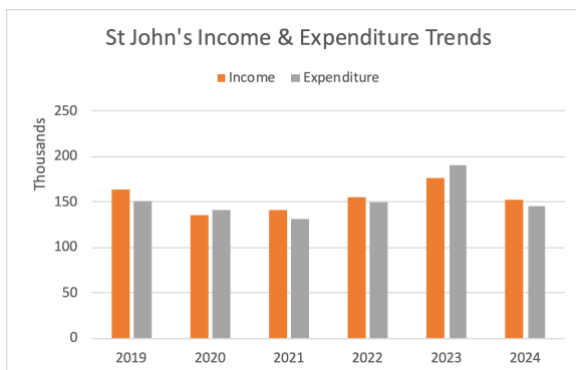
For the full accounts please see the separate document but read on here for a summary of 2024 and what we can expect for 2025...

2024 showed a return to more normal levels of both income, £153K, and expenditure, £146K, after the exceptional high expenditure and associated donations for the new chairs and other equipment in 2023.

Planned Giving continued its downward trend to £64K (2023: £69K), and Other Giving returned to a more normal level of £12K after the exceptional 2023: £39K.

Grants & Legacies were £9K (2023: £8K), with the cessation of the Youth Worker grant offset by £6K of legacies from the wills of former parishioners. The balance was made up by small grants principally for St Agatha's and the community activities that we carry out there.

Activities for Generating Funds showed a welcome improvement at £37K (2023: £32K), with Church Rooms hires up £1K to £6K, St Agatha's up £3K to £22K, and Fundraising income up £1K to £3K. Hurst Green News advertising remained unchanged at £6K.



Statutory Fees Retained increased by £3K to £5K, with more weddings and funerals held and a change in the way that the Diocese now allows us to benefit from non-stipendiary fees.

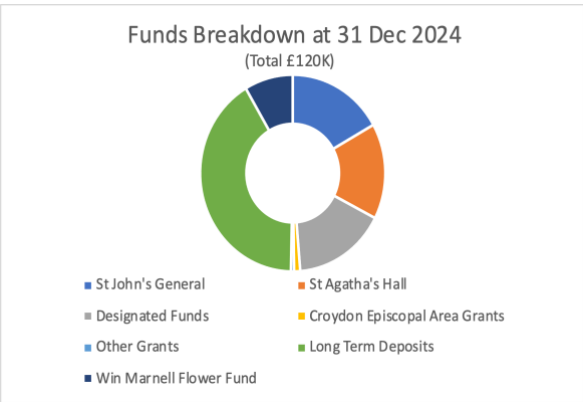
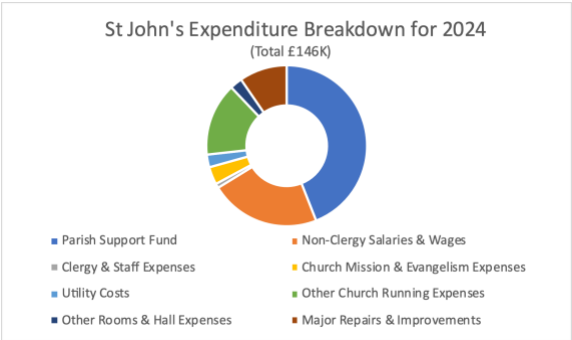
The Parish Support Fund remains our largest item of expenditure, and mindful of declining regular giving, the PCC agreed a 0.6% increase to £65.5K.

With the ending of the Youth Worker commitment in July, Non-Clergy Salaries declined to £33K (2023: £41K). Remaining salaries were all raised in line with inflation / living wage as appropriate.

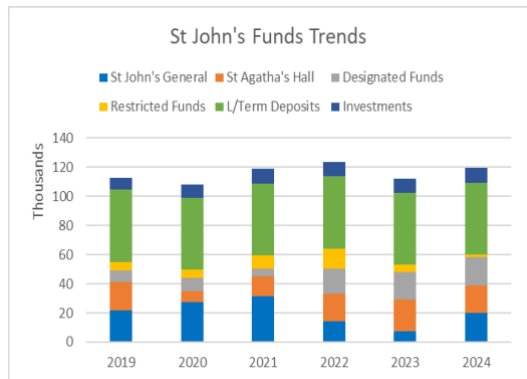
Other PCC running expenses were £34K, back to more modest levels after the exceptionally high 2023 £73K, which included the chairs and other items. Utilities were down £6K to £4K, mainly being the £4K 2021 water leak costs being refunded after a long battle. Electricity and gas prices also showed decreases as prices declined from the prior year.

Major Repairs & Improvements were £14K (2023 £7K), being £3K for repair of the Servers' Vestry floor (covered by insurance), and £11K for the external re-rendering and painting of St Agatha's.

The investments in the Win Marnell Flower Fund showed only a small change this year, up £0.2K (2023: *gain* £1K).



Overall, the PCC showed a surplus of £7K for the year (2023: deficit £(12)K). Net Funds therefore increased from £113K to £120K at end of 2024.



## Looking forward to 2025

Noting the decline in regular giving we decided to implement a regular giving campaign to run in parallel with the 2025 electoral roll renewal, with the intention of bringing in new members and encourage increased giving by existing ones. From the pledges received so far, the results look positive.

Following on from this, we intend to implement new means of giving for visitors and non-regulars. With the recent theft attempt on the cash boxes, we will look to boost card giving and further publicise online methods in as many ways as possible.

However, our 2025 budget had to be set before these initiatives were underway so necessarily had to be prudent. Church Rooms and St Agatha's hires were assumed to be broadly in line with 2024 and, as is usual, we cannot assume receipt of grants, legacies and large donations not already promised so our projected overall income for 2025 is £143K.

This figure results in a deficit for 2025, so the Finance Committee recommended, and PCC agreed, a small 0.5% increase in pledge to Parish Support Fund to £65.8K.

Salaries, our second biggest item of expenditure, are forecast to be £6K lower at £27K with no further Youth Worker (finished in July 2024) but with inflation / living wage uplifts being applied from January 2025.

With committed and likely expenditure on building and grounds, total expenditure for 2025 is forecast at £153K, resulting in a deficit of £(10K) for the coming year, with Net Funds ending at £109K.

During 2024 we managed to turn a budgeted deficit into a £7K surplus, so we must strive during the current year to similarly wipe out the projected 2025 deficit. The regular giving pledges so far received will help with this, and please do support St. John's with fundraising, hiring our facilities and *ad hoc* donations when you are able.

Thanks again to Alison Richardson as St Agatha's Treasurer and running the Hurst Green News finances, Geoff Booth for managing our payroll, Helen Ainsworth for Regular Giving and Gift Aid duties, and Barbara Forrest for examining the accounts. While Geoff will be stepping down, all others have agreed to stand again for the coming year.

***Julian Taylor, Hon. Treasurer***

## Fabric

After the major mains water leak we experienced in 2021/22, SES Business has changed our wastewater status, agreeing and registering that we have a soakaway. They refunded all our wastewater charges going back to April 2017, paying us a sum of £5,404.41.

### Maintenance/repair work

- Servers' vestry floor water damage: new flooring fitted (covered by insurance).
- Noticeboards:
  - Church drive - new board delivered and fitted.
  - Woodhurst Lane junction - new board designed, commissioned and fitted.
  - St Agatha's Hall - new board design agreed, two boards commissioned and fitted (one by main door, the other on the end-wall).



- Installation of curtain rail and curtain inside the East/clergy door; fitted key-safe to lobby entrance of St John's Room. New battery fitted in the fire alarm control panel (old one damaged by power surge). Main lobby bulbs replaced with LED ones.
- Repairs to: York Rooms door lock and key-safe; outside lights; chancel wooden stand; toilet cistern; various pieces of furniture; kitchen unit door in Server's vestry.
- The two donation boxes in the entrance lobby were vandalised; hence a decision made to stop using them and to seal the slots.
- Regular servicing etc: 5-yearly Electrical test (EICR); boiler and heating system; lightning conductors; fire alarm system; gutter/roof clean and check.

***Chris Johns***

## Formalities and Legalities

### **The Parochial Church Council (PCC)**

The PCC is the legal governing body of a parish and, together with the Vicar, makes decisions on every aspect of church life. This includes spiritual and practical oversight, finance and budgeting, care and maintenance of church buildings and grounds, making connections with the local community and wider church and, of course, safeguarding. The twelve current PCC members are also Charity Trustees, as required by the role.

Safeguarding (protecting children and vulnerable adults) is now a major area of focus for the PCC and features on every agenda. This is to ensure that the many serious and shocking failures across the Church of England which have come to light do not continue. We are very fortunate in our Safeguarding Officers, Charlotte and Sam, who are certainly 'on the case'. To raise awareness, in June 2024 the PCC meeting included a safeguarding workshop when members were asked to consider a few potential (fictitious) scenarios, which could occur in a church context.

During the year mission and values have been ongoing themes, with some challenging discussions and robust views expressed. In January 2025, we considered how we work together as a church, the role of the PCC and sub committees and the interaction between them. This followed on from a PCC vision morning held earlier in the month, facilitated by Revd James Ashton.

The Church of England has rules for everything, and although change can be slow, there has been some movement to embrace 'new' technology. It is now permitted to conduct PCC business by e-mail between meetings, which enabled the external decoration of St Agatha's Hall to proceed without delay. Attending PCC meetings by Zoom is now allowed and always offered (and taken) for a variety of reasons. Interestingly, APCMs must still be held in person, not virtually or in mixed mode. Livestreaming is allowed, but for observation only, and those viewing online are not able to vote. It may take a little longer for AI (Artificial Intelligence) to replace the PCC Secretary in minuting meetings!

Do consider standing for one of the PCC vacancies on 11 May. Please speak to any of the current PCC members to find out more; names and photos are on the porch noticeboard. There are five meetings a year on Thursdays at 7.30pm; the next one is on 26 June 2025.

***Janet Harman, PCC Secretary***

## **Tandridge Deanery Synod**

A Deanery is a group of Church of England parishes in a geographical area, which work together supporting each other; it creates a bridge with the Diocese and wider church. Deanery Synods, the formal meetings, focus on mission and ministry, providing a channel to share information. Members form the electorate for both Diocesan and General Synods. Tandridge Deanery Synod is led by Area Dean, Revd Michelle Edmonds, Assistant Area Dean, Revd James Ashton and Lay Chair, Susan Gibbin. There are three meetings a year and the next one is on Wednesday 25 June 2025.

The Deanery Synod met at St John's on 4 July 2024, the date of the General Election. It was decided to keep the date which had been in diaries for some time, but a few members were involved in the election process and unable to attend as a result. Susan Gibbin (St John's, Caterham Valley) was elected as the new Lay Chair, replacing April Alexander who had stepped down after three years. Since then, Susan has also been acting as secretary in the absence of a replacement for Janet Harman, who had stepped down after 20 years.

The October meeting was also at St John's, which is considered a very suitable venue, with good parking and facilities. Discussions in groups of people from the same parish focused on a map of their parish, and considered the different areas: places where you do a lot, others you never go to. Revd Sue was planning to make contact with The Diamond Pub.

On 26 February 2025, the meeting was on Zoom and parishes outlined their current mission statements and future plans. Richard Holroyd has been appointed by the Bishop of Southwark as Tandridge Lay Vocations Champion and parishes are encouraged to contact him to talk to the PCC or at a service: [beachhutbooks@btinternet.com](mailto:beachhutbooks@btinternet.com). A Deanery Picnic is planned for Sunday 22 June in the Glebe Field near St Peter's, Tandridge, to which all church members are invited.

St John's currently has two lay Deanery Synod representatives, Janet Harman and Liz Parker, but is entitled to four, so there are two one-year vacancies for the remainder of the 3-year term. When new members are elected in 2026, St John's entitlement will be reduced to three, based on this year's Electoral Roll figure. Please speak to Janet or Liz if you would like to find out more.

***Janet Harman, Deanery Synod representative***

## **Electoral Roll**

The number of people on the Electoral Roll at the end of 2024/2025 was 135. This year the whole Roll has had to be renewed and by the closing date the new total was 97. Many of those who have not rejoined the Roll have not been regulars at St John's since before the Covid lockdowns. However, I would expect some to rejoin but they just did not submit a form in time.

Those no longer on the Electoral Roll are: Simon Ainsworth, Catriona Aleppo, Michaela Bartholomew, Sara Bartolozzi, Brenda Batchelor, Chris and Amanda Blackburn, Marina Blanchard, Emma Brown, Susie Burnard, Abi Chapman, Michelle Calvert, Jo, Hayley and Ella Clay, David and Delphine Cochran, Hannah, Lisa and Sam Collis, John Paul and Emily Danaee, Dixie Edwards, Lisa England, Michael and Stephanie Foster, Sue Fraser, Rob Gaut, Tim Gregory, Michael Harman, Naomi Harris, Mike and Christine Harwood, Wendy Hewitt, Cathy Johns, Peter Langham, Gillian Lavabre, Roger and Chuck Lugg, Rob and Lydia Merry, Suzanne Milivojevik, Hilary Moore, Ann Moseley, Artur Niemczewski, Vanessa Peet, Trudi Pincombe, Sarah Randall, Katherine Saunders, Inge Sharpe, Amanda Starr, Mark Thompson, Zoë White, Tricia Whyte, Danny Wilkins and Tony and Eve Wiltshire.

New to the roll are: Sarah Bruce, Franciane Conroy, Bob and Carole Evans, Hannah Evernden, Judith Falkner, Danny and Kelly Floyd, Olivia Galloway, Peter Jarvis, Diane Jones, Sheryl Jones, Sarah Long, Bradley Moore, Rob O'Neill, David O'Shea, Colin Porter, Sylvia Russell and Chris Zahner.

***Barbara Richards, Electoral Roll Officer***

## **Safeguarding, for St John's Church and St Agatha's Hall**

Our efforts this year have focussed on raising the profile and understanding of safeguarding across our volunteer community and PCC. Good safeguarding training is designed to equip and support our volunteers to understand safeguarding procedures and know how to raise concerns in each context they work in. It promotes good practice and supports a positive and safe culture for the ministries we offer as a church.

We have continued to support volunteers to access and complete all the appropriate safeguarding training for their role and where required, have an up to date DBS check. We have seen a doubling in the number of volunteers who have completed their training and we are working toward ensuring all volunteers have up to date training by June 2025.

We have also focussed on transferring our safeguarding data processing across to ChurchSuite, which will allow us to work more closely with the rest of the Oxted Team (St Mary's, St Peter's and St George's). This is particularly helpful in sharing good practice and minimising duplication for volunteers who help in more than one church or community setting. It also helps us to continue to meet our data protection requirements.

We worked with Revd Sue to conduct the diocese's safeguarding audit. The outcome of this is a new Parish Safeguarding Action Plan, which will inform our work over the coming year. The action plan focuses on implementing best practice in how we recruit and prepare volunteers for their roles with a lens on ensuring St John's and Aggies are a safe and healthy environment for all.

Cathy Hyde stood down from her role as Parish Safeguarding Officer for Aggies this year. We would like to thank Cathy Hyde for her many years of service in the role. Charlotte Nicholls and Samuel Stolz remain in the role and can always be reached at [safeguardingstjohnshg@gmail.com](mailto:safeguardingstjohnshg@gmail.com) if you need to raise a safeguarding concern. Charlotte will also focus on managing DBS enquiries and Sam will focus on safeguarding training.

***Charlotte Nicholls and Samuel Stolz***  
***Parish Safeguarding Officers***

## **Health and Safety**

No accidents have been formally reported over the course of the last year.

Cathy Booth stepped down as Health and Safety Officer at the November 2024 PCC meeting. The position is currently unfilled. If anyone feels they could take this on, please talk to Rev'd Sue.

***Cathy Booth***

## **Human Resources (HR)**

The following people are on the payroll: Gillian Daniels, Caretaker for St Agatha's Hall and Cleaner in the York Rooms; Hilary Dilnot, Director of Music; Lisa Hall, Church Rooms and St Agatha's Hall Booking Secretary; Janet Harman, Parish Administrator; Lucy Kay, Hurst Green News Editor and Producer; Kelly van den Berg, Communications Officer. The PCC voted to increase pay in line with the cost of living at the January 2025 meeting resulting in an increased cost to St John's of £970.

Valmira Cook's contract as Oxted Team Youth Worker which was grant funded came to an end in July 2024.

Geoff Booth stepped down as Payroll Advisor in April 2025 having held the post since employment contracts were first created in 2019. A special thank you to Geoff for all his hard work, especially during the Covid years when he managed to negotiate the complexities of furlough payments ensuring our employees continued to receive pay during those testing times.

***Cathy Booth***