

The Abbey Church of the Holy Cross Pershore



**Reports for
Annual General Meeting of
St Andrew's Centre Trust
Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens
The Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

Tuesday 7 May 2024

At 1900 at St Andrew's Centre

The Parish of the Abbey Church of the Holy Cross, Pershore

Tuesday 7 May 2024

Opening Prayers

Agenda

Annual General meeting of St Andrew's Trust

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous Meeting of St Andrew's Centre held on 2 May 2023
3. Report for 2023
4. To receive and adopt the Accounts for 2023 and appoint the Independent Examiner

Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens held on 2 May 2023
3. Choosing of Churchwardens
4. AOB

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 2 May 2023
3. Presentation of Electoral Roll
4. Election and appointment of:
 - a) Members for Deanery Synod
 - b) Members for PCC
 - c) Independent Examiner
5. To consider and receive the following:
 - a) A report on what PCC and the parish have done this year
 - b) PCC accounts for year ending 31 December 2023
 - c) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church
 - d) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
6. Statement on Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adult Policies
7. AOB
8. Date of next Annual Parochial Church Meeting

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
HELD at ST ANDREW'S CENTRE on TUESDAY 2 MAY 2023 AT 19.00.**

Present:

Revd. Canon Claire Lording - <i>Chair</i> Suzanne Clarke- <i>Warden</i> Samantha Andrews - <i>Warden</i> Edward Denley – <i>Treasurer</i> Sara Speed - <i>Secretary</i> David Long – <i>Lay Vice- Chair</i> Sandra Long Peter Stansbie Ann Bray David Bray Ven. Chris Liley Susan Denley Sue Gooderham Grahame Gooderham Canon Chris Terry Bill Newman David Oldham Wendy Perks	Michael Hodges Margaret Goodrich Sarah Thomson Jean Andrews Judy Dale Jane Knox Richard Hill Carolyn Harford Richard Williams Olive Hall Canon Richard Etheridge Hilary Fowler Martin Fowler John Bragg Angela Gerrard Michael Doley Jacquie Hughes Revd. Philip Hughes
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Apologies:

Julie Newman Judy Etheridge Robin Hancox Janet Stansbie Duncan Cadbury Catherine Cadbury John Porter Gill Porter Jean Pritchard	Alison Jackson Tony Perks Janet Radford Stephen Knox Alistair Thomson John Andrews Margaret Laudson Martyn Spence Tony Wright-Jones
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Canon Lording opened the meeting in prayer.

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of ST. ANDREW'S TRUST – TUESDAY 2 MAY
2023**

1. Apologies

Apologies were received.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting of St Andrew's Trust held on 5th May 2022

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting were received.

Proposed by Richard Williams, seconded by Richard Hill. Approved.

3. Report for 2022

R. Hancox was unable to attend the meeting. He was thanked for preparing the report included in the Annual Meeting booklet.

There were no questions.

Peter Stansbie proposed, seconded by Carolyn Harford, to receive the Report of the Trustees 2022. Approved.

4. Accounts

David Long proposed, seconded by Edward Denley, that the Accounts for 2022 be received and adopted. Approved.

The Trustees expressed thanks to Eric Wiles for his help in preparing the Accounts.

David Long proposed, seconded by Edward Denley, that Eric Wiles be appointed as Independent Examiner of Accounts. Approved.

Canon Lording thanked Robin Hancox and the other trustees, and invited applicants to become trustees.

ST ANDREW'S PARISH CENTRE TRUST – SECRETARY'S REPORT 2023

The Trust is delighted to see the Centre being so well used by the community. It is much appreciated by the organisations that use it.

During the year we provided the PCC with funds for a replacement dishwasher, further lighting renewal and toilet refurbishment. We additionally made our regular contribution for the maintenance on the building.

It is pleased to acknowledge continuing support from PASA who organised several coffee mornings throughout the year which were run by various church organisations. These mornings are wonderful social occasions and the opportunity to show off what a wonderful asset the Church has in St Andrew's.

Bob Marchant stood down as a Trustee during the year and we thank him for his contribution particularly with the redrafting of our constitution.

The present Trustees are : - Canon Claire Lording (Chair), Robin Hancox (Secretary/Treasurer), Richard Hill and Richard Williams.

Robin Hancox, Secretary to the Trustees

St Andrew's Parish Centre Trust 501353

Receipts and Payments to 31 December 2023

Balance as at 1 January 2023

CAF Bank	£11,838.13	
Cash In Hand	nil	
	£11,838.13	
Reserved Funds		£11,363.23
Unreserved Funds		£474.90
		£11,838.13

Income

Donations – Coffee Mornings	£529.35	
Grants	nil	
Bank Interest	£9.62	
		£538.97

Expenditure

Abbey PCC -	Maintenance	£750.00	
	Toilets	£3,765.97	
	Dishwasher / Lighting	£4,188.21	
Bank Charges		£65.25	
		£8,769.43	

Summary of Funds

Reserved Funds	as at 1/1/23	Income	Transfer	Expenditure	as at 31/12/23
Grant – Lottery Community Fund	£4,218.21	nil	nil	£4,188.21	£30.00
Stonework/Guttering	£2,740.00	nil	nil	nil	£2,740.00
Grant – Turner Trust- Toilets	£4,505.02	nil	nil	£3,765.97	£739.05
	£11,463.23	nil	nil	£7,954.18	£3,509.05

Statement of Funds as at 31 December 2023

Reserved Funds	£3,509.05
Unreserved Funds	£98.62
	£3,607.67

Balance as at 31 December 2023

CAF Bank	£3,314.71
Cash In Transit	£292.86
Cash In Hand	nil
	£3,607.57

Reviewed By Eric Wiles

Signed



Date

26/2/24

MINUTES OF MEETING for the ELECTION of CHURCHWARDENS – TUESDAY 2 MAY 2023

1. Apologies

Apologies were received.

2. Minutes of the previous Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens held on 5 May 2022

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were received and signed by Canon Lording. Proposed by Jean Andrews, seconded by Judy Dale. Approved.

3. Choosing of Churchwardens

There were two nominations for churchwardens, namely Suzanne Clarke (proposed by Judy Dale, seconded by Sandra Long) and Samantha Andrews (proposed by Peter Stansbie, seconded by Bruce Wilson). There being no other candidates, they were duly appointed to serve as churchwardens.

The Wardens were thanked for their support over the past year.

4. Any Other Business

None.

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING– TUESDAY 2 MAY 2023

1. Apologies

Apologies were received.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 5 May, 2022 were received and signed by Canon Lording. Proposed by Angela Gerrard, seconded by Sarah Thomson. Approved.

3. Electoral Roll Officer's Report

William Newman gave the report. There were 180 names on the Electoral Roll, with 151 being resident within the Parish, and 29 non-residents. W. Newman was thanked for his work as Electoral Roll Officer

4a) Election of Deanery Synod Representatives

Judith Dale (proposed by Jean Evans, seconded by David Long) and Martin Fowler (proposed by Peter Stansbie, seconded by Sara Speed) were appointed to serve as Deanery Synod Representatives.

One vacancy remains.

4b) Election of Members of the Parochial Church Council

Sara Speed (proposed by Julie Newman, seconded by Janet Radford), Sandra Long (proposed by Jean Pritchard, seconded by Bill Newman) and Tony Wright-Jones (proposed by Michael Hodges, seconded by Jane Knox) were duly elected to serve for a 3 -year term of office. Jean Andrews, Ann Bray, Edward Denley, Susan Denley, David

Long and Bill Newman would continue to serve. Judith Dale, Martin Fowler and Peter Stansbie serve as ex-officio members. 3 vacancies for lay representatives remain. The PCC was thanked for service given.

4c) Appointment of Independent Examiner

The Treasurer had reported at the previous meeting that following dissatisfaction with the standard of work, it had been necessary to replace Azets as Independent Examiner. The Treasurer had made a recommendation to the PCC, and Clifton-Crick Sharp & Co Ltd. had been appointed.

Bill Newman proposed, seconded by Jane Knox, to appoint Clifton-Crick Sharp & Co. Ltd. as the Independent Examiner for 2023. Approved.

An explanation of the difference between an audit and an independent examination of the Accounts was given.

5 a) PCC and Parish Reports

A comprehensive review of the work and activities of the Abbey had been included in the Annual Meeting's booklet. There were no questions.

Susan Denley proposed, seconded by Sandra Long, that the Annual Reports be received. Approved.

5b) Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Audited accounts for the year ended 31 December, 2022

A full report had been included in the Accounts for the year ended 31/12/22. The Treasurer highlighted three themes from the financial situation. Income had increased following the return of concerts, hirings of St Andrew's Centre and fundraising from Plum Fayre and Carnival activities.

Generous grants had been received from the Friends of Pershore Abbey for the cost of purchasing and installing the new organ, installing new floodlighting and other maintenance projects. Energy costs had increased by 315% year on year.

In reply to questions, the major items of expenditure in the future would be the urgent repairs needed to St Andrew's roof, and general maintenance to the fabric of that building.

Payments to Parish Share had been met in full in 2022.

There were no further questions.

Martin Fowler proposed, seconded by Samantha Andrews, that the Accounts for 2022 be adopted. Approved.

5c) A Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

A copy of the thorough report compiled by David Long, the Wardens and Judy Dale had been included in the APCM booklet. There were no questions.

David Oldham proposed, seconded by Hilary Fowler, that the report be received. Approved.

5d) Deanery Synod Report

A written report giving details of the activities of the Deanery Synod had been included in the APCM booklet. There were no questions.

David Long proposed, seconded by Suzanne Clarke, to receive the report. Approved. The Deanery Synod appoints representatives to the Diocesan Synod but there were no representatives from this Benefice. Canon Lording is a member of the Diocesan Synod.

6. Statement on Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adults Policies

The Safeguarding Report for 2022 had been included in full in the APCM booklet. Suzanne Clarke (Safeguarding Officer) read the Safeguarding Statement.

Safeguarding training and necessary DBS checks had been carried out during 2022. All Parish policies for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, as listed in the report, have been reviewed and adopted by the PCC.

Carolyn Harford asked for clarification regarding the need for duty managers at the Foodbank to have DBS checks. Suzanne Clarke explained that there had been changes to eligibility for DBS checks and the role of a Foodbank manager was no longer included.

Canon Lording thanked Suzanne Clarke for all the help she had given in training and record keeping across the Benefice. After many years of undertaking this role, S. Clarke wished to be replaced as Safeguarding Officer but, thus far, had been unable to find a volunteer to take over.

Any Other Business

Having declared an interest, Michael Hodges enquired about the arrangements for organists following the resignation of John Wilderspin as Director of Music. Canon Lording reported that Matthew Martin (*Organ Adviser*) had offered to provide interim cover over the summer months. He would be assisted by a small team of other organists. The PCC would consider a new musical strategy, to include engagement with children (assisted by Samantha Andrews as Children and Families Worker) and other community groups. Expressions of interest had been received from organists and groups wishing to visit and play the new organ.

Canon Lording was thanked for her service over the past year.

Date of the next APC Meeting

The next APCM will be held on Tuesday 7 May 2024 (to be confirmed).

The Meeting closed in prayer at 7.38 pm.

4. Election and appointment of:

- a) Members for Deanery Synod
- b) Members for PCC
- c) Independent Examiner

5. To consider and receive the following:

- a) A report on what the PCC and the parish have done this year

VICAR'S REPORT

It felt as if 2023 was the year that Abbey life returned properly back to normal after several years of disruption caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The confidence that was returning in 2022 made itself felt even more as services, events and general activity returned to their pre-pandemic levels.

It was most encouraging to see that the number of people attending in person worship has increased and is now back to pre-pandemic figures. The steady increase of people at the main 1030 service is an indication that those who wish to return to church have done so, and that we are also able to celebrate those who have started attending the Abbey in the past year. These are people who have moved into the area or who have just discovered the Abbey. The fact that our average Sunday attendance has gone over 140 is really good news. It was also very encouraging that the congregations which gathered to celebrate Easter and Christmas were significantly up on last year's figures. These are all signs of the confidence that has returned and the benefit of targeted and sustained marketing campaigns via different media, which ensures that the Abbey's activity is communicated across the town and beyond.

We have continued to build up our online worshipping community, with viewing figures ranging from 75 to over 600 per service. Many of those people will have watched the service live, but many catch up on worship when it is convenient to them. This flexibility in our offering is really encouraging. The Iona Worship service continues to be a hybrid service, enabling people to choose whether to worship in person or on Zoom. This has enabled participation from across the country. The Zoom Compline group has welcomed some new people and has consistently good attendance.

Another significant area of growth has been our social media presence. Our followers have grown for the fifth year in a row and our content is highly regarded by the Diocese of Worcester, which is so affirming. We now 445 subscribers to YouTube (compared with 351 in 2022), 1032 followers on Facebook (compared with 862 in 2022) and 821 followers on Instagram (compared to 585 in 2022). These are incredible figures and remind us that we are able to reach many more than those whom we physically see in church.

The number of baptisms, weddings, and funerals we were asked to conduct during the year was very similar to last year. We give thanks that we are invited to join with families at times of great joy and of great sadness, and that even in an increasingly secular world, there is a place for a religious service for many of our families.

Recognising our need to grow the number of children and young people in our congregation, in 2023 the PCC committed itself to a Health and Sustainability Plan which has children and families at its heart. This resulted in a successful bid from the diocese's Healthier Churches Fund for funding for five years for a Children and Families Worker. Sam Andrews was appointed and works on a part time basis, working alongside Babies and Toddlers, Café Church, and other pre-existing children's outreach work, as well as developing new schools' and children's events. This is slowly starting to bear fruit with several families now attending Café Church and some of these families sometimes crossing over to the 1030 service for various services.

There was a full calendar of events throughout the year. The completion of the installation of the new Ruffatti organ was a highlight and the successful Organ Festival will go down as an absolute triumph. The new organ has also resulted in visits from Organists' Associations across the country and an increase in organ related concerts. A full concert programme has been another sign that life has very much returned to normal for the Abbey as a concert venue.

St Andrew's Centre has remained busy, and we are pleased that so many of our hirers continue to share kingdom values in their outreach to others. The building itself remains a concern but we have started the process of taking over ownership of the building from the diocese, which we believe will enable us to access greater funding opportunities.

It has been a year of appointments. To support the work of events and concerts we were pleased to appoint Stevie Quick as our new Events Co-ordinator at the Abbey. We sadly said goodbye to Gail Andrews in the Office, after many years of incredible work, but were very pleased to appoint and welcome Fiona Hoggard to work alongside Elizabeth Barnett in the Office. We also said goodbye and happy retirement to our Director of Music, John Wilderspin. He left the music life of the Abbey in good shape, and we were fortunate to be able to call on several very able organists who were able to work in an interim capacity as we sought a permanent appointment for a new Director of Music in 2024.

We give thanks for the many volunteers who share in the life of the Abbey, without whom none of our mission and ministry could be fulfilled. We have given thanks for many new volunteers giving of their time during the year. It is wonderful to see people grow and flourish in their roles. We have given particular thanks for Jayne Parker

joining the team as Assistant Curate and for Terry Palmer beginning his training for ordination.

2023 has been a good year for us and our renewed energy and vision ensures that we look to 2024 with great faith and hope that we can continue to serve God in our community to the very best of our ability.

Revd Canon Claire Lording

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Well, 2023 was another very busy year in the life of Pershore Abbey. During the year, six formal PCC meetings were held, and we are most grateful for the support given to us from PCC members, sidespeople and all volunteers at services and events, along with help provided at weddings, baptisms, concerts, and funerals. As a way of showing our appreciation to all who help in anyway to the smooth running of the Abbey, we held a 'Volunteers Thank You' coffee morning in February. It was a lovely morning to share fellowship over a cuppa and cake!

The Abbey congregation and the local community were involved in the King's Coronation celebrations during May. We were encouraged to take part in the 'Coronation Big Lunch' held on Abbey Park around the bandstand with entertainment, before attending a special Evensong service held in the Abbey.

In the Summer, we were delighted to welcome our new Events Co-ordinator to the Abbey Team. Stevie Quick settled very quickly into his role, liaising with concert hirers and running the events very smoothly!

We said fond farewells to John Wilderspin our Organist and Musical Director, who moved onto pastures new in Warwickshire. We also said our 'goodbyes' to Gail who had worked in the Benefice Office for 7 years. Thank you both, for your all your hard work and we wish them well in the future.

It was a such pleasure for our congregation and the Benefice Churches to be able to share in Jayne Parker's Ordination as Deacon, at the beginning of July, at Worcester Cathedral. We celebrated afterwards with a buffet lunch at the Abbey. We continue to keep Jayne in our prayers this year, as she serves her curacy.

In September, we were pleased to display in the Abbey a new project from Meadow Arts. This was a LED installation 'Deluge' by Hilary Jack, comprising of coloured bands of light, giving description and information about many aspects of floods, reflecting on climate change and ancient stories of flooding. Hilary gave a presentation about her

work, which prompted many questions. Workshops were held, for families, students from Pershore High School and the Abbey congregation.

After the arrival and successful installation of our new pipe organ, we were able to celebrate this beautiful instrument with a weekend long Organ Festival. A programme of events began with a Schools' Outreach Event led by Nick Freestone, where children from Abbey Park Middle School attended; 2 evening events – Gonville & Caius College Choir Choral concert, led by Matthew Martin and an Organ Recital by Robert Quinney. These were amazing evenings and very well attended. Finally, we were delighted that Bishop John blessed our Ruffatti organ at a special Festival Eucharist on the Sunday.

In October, our PCC 'Away Evening' didn't take us too far, just across the road to St Andrew's Centre! We looked at our updated Health and Sustainability Plan and it was decided to consult with the congregations regarding learning opportunities within the Abbey life. A short survey was issued to link with the theme of 'gifts' and asked for suggestions of types of courses, topics of interest and helping with house groups that the congregation would like to be involved. Succession planning was discussed and different ministries and learning opportunities within the Church and Diocese – including Authorised Lay Ministry, Licenced Lay Ministry and Bishop's certificate.

Many thanks to Elizabeth and Fiona who always give a warm welcome in the Abbey office, for all the hard work and support they have given to the Abbey administration over the past year.

Finally, the Churchwardens would like to thank Canon Claire Lording for her enthusiastic, supportive, and caring leadership. Thanks to Jayne, the Ministry team, all groups, and leaders who enable the Abbey to provide a place of worship and reflection.

Suzanne Clarke and Sam Andrews, Churchwardens

ABBEY LINK MAGAZINE

Abbey Link is keeping up momentum. Page count continues to be determined by the number of advertisers, whose payments cover the cost of production. The magazine is now full colour, with 28 pages, that is 24 internal pages plus the cover. There are still some legacy advertisers paying a lower rate for greyscale adverts while all new advertisers are offered space for colour adverts.

For the year 2023 the magazine has made a profit for the PCC of £2,278.00 - calculated by in-year payments received (£6,675.00) less payments made (£4,640 for printing and £57.00 for office expenses). The profit in 2022 was lower at £537.70. The increase for 2023 is explained by the increase in advertising rates in anticipation of a rise in printing

costs that didn't materialise and filling advertising space efficiently (for which full credit to Bob Doust).

Stuart of Senik Print expects to continue with the same printing charges for 2024 as for 2023 so we are not increasing advertising charges for 2024.

It is pleasing that a number have folk have been coming forward with articles for the magazine and I want to continue encouraging this

Door to door delivery is an ongoing issue with an aging team and the need to find replacements for folk who step down as their health and circumstances change.

Many thanks go to the team – Bob Doust for seeking advertisers, David Paynter for managing invoicing and Roger Piper for the major logistical challenge of delivery and to all our individual deliverers.

Christopher Kimberley, Editor

AFTER SERVICE COFFEE 2023

It has been a busy year, with Abbey life well and truly back to normal. I think 2023 beat the record for the number of cakes served! My heartfelt thanks to the willing team of volunteers for their help and cheerfulness throughout the year, enabling all to enjoy this special time of fellowship each week.

Your generous donations were sent to:

Parkinsons UK (Jan- Apr) - £206.90

I-sing Pop (Lent Appeal) - £144.66

Christian Aid (Apr – Aug) - £321.61

MAGGS (Sept – Dec) - £244

Thank you for your support.

We are keen to welcome more volunteers to our rota either to serve the drinks, or to man the dishwasher in St Andrew's (operating instructions given!). Please contact Sara Speed (710776) for further details.

Sara Speed

BABIES AND TODDLERS

The group continues to have 20 -30 babies and toddlers attending each Friday morning. The youngest was 4 days old!

We welcomed Sam Andrews (Children and Families Worker) as a regular visitor to our sessions – a good way to make contact with local families.

Here are some of the activities enjoyed over the last year:

- making a tree collage, using green leaf shapes with environmental messages for Great Big Green Week
- making a large “Highgrove Garden” collage card to send to the King and Queen for Coronation Day
- making crowns for our Coronation party, with each child receiving a Coronation teddy
- baking gingerbread cookies, raising £50.50 for Children in Need
- a Christmas party, with a visit from Father Christmas (special thanks to David Long!) and a nativity story book and chocolates for each child
- planting pansies in pots and making cards for Mothering Sunday
- making Easter cards and chocolate nests

Revd. Alma helped us to celebrate Palm Sunday with paper palms to wave as she told the story, Harvest Thanksgiving with a short service in the Abbey, and coming to share her own special telling of the Nativity, aided by a set of knitted figures. Thank you, Alma.

I am extremely grateful to the team of helpers for their continued support in making the families feel welcome, keeping everyone fed and watered, and always with a friendly smile.

Sara Speed

BELLS RINGERS

2023 was a busy year, which started by ringing in the New Year. Very sadly, in February, we lost a much-loved ringer, Madeline Reeder, who had a long association with the Abbey ringers. We rang in her memory at the Abbey and St Andrew’s – a quarter peal, some Grandsire Triples, plus rounds and call changes, which ensured ringers of all abilities could take part.

In addition to our regular service ringing, we rang for the Coronation, and for a special Coronation Evensong at the Abbey in June. We rang for ‘Ring Out for Climate Change’ before the COP27 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh. And of course, we rang as usual for the Plum Festival. After ringing on Remembrance Day, we dropped the remembrance petals from the platform rather than the tower walls, and this seems to have been well received.

During the year we rang for 8 weddings and welcomed 7 groups of visiting ringers, some of whom rang at both churches.

At St Andrew's, new opening windows have been installed to improve the ventilation and regular ringing, which stopped at the start of Covid, has resumed there. In the Abbey, new lighting has been installed over the platform and safety netting put in place around the platform railings. On 5th March, a Peal Board was dedicated during Evensong and has now been hung at the top of the stairs leading to the ringing platform.

It is lovely to be able to report that the Pershore Ringers won the 2023 Branch Call-Change Striking competition and came second in the Change Ringing competition. Our learners are coming on well – Lily rang her first Quarter Peal in June and we have now welcomed another new ringer: Kate Burston.

Sally Stewart, Secretary, Pershore Abbey Society of Bell Ringers

BOOKSTALL

Taking on the role of Welcomer coordinator and Bookstall manager from Jean Andrews in August 2023 was a daunting task as they were big shoes to fill, but thanks to her excellent legacy, I am happy to report continued success. Because of the welcomers, visitors to the Abbey receive a friendly smile and information about our beautiful building and its history. As always, as in many areas of Abbey life, the volunteers make the place, and I am grateful to them for their continued enthusiasm and support.

We have had a few volunteers step down, but I am delighted that new faces have come forward. We can't staff the Bookstall all the time the Abbey is open, but the gaps in the rota seem to be slowly filling. However, anyone with a few hours to spare would be extremely useful.

Visits at the beginning of the year were limited by the organ installation, but since then we have had growing numbers of visitors coming in to admire it and enjoy the Abbey. Similarly, sales are picking up and since August we have taken over £4500 which is highly encouraging. I have continued to source and stock the existing popular range of cards and gifts whilst beginning to sell some different styles of products with heartening results.

My thanks to all the welcomers and to everyone who has ever shopped at the bookstall!

Sally Whyte

CAFÉ CHURCH

During 2023 Café Church met once a month except for August. Each month the informal service was based on a theme according to the time of year in the church calendar including Noah's Ark with the Lego Brick Bible used for the reading, Lightening the Load with a Q&A style talk and Preparing the Way at Advent with a really interesting talk about the Jesse Tree. An even smaller team than last year, but just as dedicated nonetheless; consisting of Suzanne Clarke, Susan Williams, Beth Seale, Christine Chambers and Sam Andrews meet regularly to plan each service, with regular helpers on the day, to whom we extend many thanks.

After a visit to Tardebigge Café Church we decided to do away with the printed service sheet and moved to having everything we needed on a PowerPoint presentation, this includes the songs and words on YouTube which we had already moved over to when Hannah Dunton was no longer playing the piano for us. We also moved to a 'self-service' style breakfast where people can make their own toast with a choice of spread, jam and marmalade along with fresh fruit, brioche and crepes.

Suzanne, Susan and Sam continue to lead the service, with Suzanne and Sam taking it in turns to do the talk; unless we've had a much-welcomed guest; many thanks to Peter Stansbie and Angela Gerrard for this. The prayers have been prepared and read by Beth, Christine, Susan, Suzanne and Sam. Regular members of the Café Church congregation have read the reading for us. A very big thank you must go to those who help in the kitchen to provide the food and drinks, including Susan Williams, Beth Seale, Chris Chambers, Ingrid Fox and Sue Gooderham.

Over the year the numbers attending have varied with our highest attendance of 20 adults and 5 under 16s happening in February and our lowest attendance of 7 adults and 2 under 16s happening in October, although this was due to the Harvest All Age Eucharist taking place in the Abbey with some of the Café Church congregation wanting to attend this service instead. We have done our best to make sure this clash doesn't happen again.

Sam Andrews, Children and Families Worker

CHILDREN'S WORK - CHURCH ACTIVITIES

At Easter, over 40 local school children enjoyed our annual Good Friday Activity Day in St. Andrew's. This is a popular day where the morning was spent in the Abbey, acting out the events of Holy week, then after lunch the children enjoyed singing and making various Easter crafts – Easter basket, palm cross card, baking and making their own Easter Garden.

During the summer holidays we held our first Summer Activity Morning in the Abbey for children up to 11 years old. There were several different summer themed crafts and games to take part in, including a cress caterpillar, sand clay and biscuit decorating, with drinks and biscuits available for the children and whoever had accompanied them. This drop in event saw 58 children, plus those with them, come through the Abbey's doors.

Another activity held was the Pumpkin Heroes and Light Party, for children aged 4 to 10 years old, on the first Sunday of the half term holiday in October. This was provided as a positive alternative to Halloween. A pumpkin was carved while the pumpkin prayer was explained, then the children made a paper plate pumpkin with the prayer stuck on the back. They also decorated cup cakes with stars and crescent moons, watched a short, animated video whilst having a hot dog and hot chocolate, and all who attended went home with a copy of the Scripture Union 'Jesus is the Light?' book.

Also in the Autumn, we held our annual Shoe Box Sunday. A team of volunteers including young people packed 100 boxes for Teams 4U, which were then presented in the Abbey for a blessing. The Abbey congregation again were incredibly supportive and contributed items, empty shoeboxes, and money for postage. Many thanks to all who helped make this happen, especially the ladies who knitted the 100 hats, gloves, and scarves!

In December, we held our 3rd 'Edible Nativity'. Over 20 children from the local community came to a fun packed morning, as the Christmas story was told. The children each iced and decorated gingerbread figures to make up the nativity scene. This event was thoroughly enjoyed by the children and parents!! A special thanks again to all the Abbey ladies who baked lots of gingerbread Mary's, Joseph's, Shepherds, Kings and many more!

CHILDREN'S WORK – SCHOOLS

During 2023, many volunteers have gone into our local schools to take assemblies - fortnightly visits to Orchard Primary School, regular visits to Pinvin CE First & St Nicholas CE Middle School, also the Open the Book team have continued to go into Abbey Park First School, once every half term.

It was so lovely to welcome the Year 5 children from Orchard Primary in June and the Year 4 children from Holy Redeemer in November, both to take part in Monks' Days. The children thoroughly enjoyed visiting the Abbey, dressed in mini-Monk's habits and experiencing the life of a monk. They shared a meal together and learned about the Benedictine Monks who once were at Pershore Abbey.

We also had school visits from Abbey Park Middle School Year 5s who were wanting to learn about the features and the architecture of the Abbey; Holy Redeemer Year 1s who were looking at other places of worship in Pershore; Pinvin CE First School and Inkberrow Year 1s who were looking at Christian places of worship, we also included an activity based on the Nativity story as their visit was in December. A small group from Pershore High School also came to the Abbey and took part in a stitch workshop, organised by Meadow Arts, in response to 'Deluge.' Their work, which also included sections stitched by members of the congregation, was hung in the south aisle from the beginning of December.

The Organ Festival school's outreach for Abbey Park Middle School was very successful. 77 children and 4 staff attended, with a few selected children staying on and being able to have a go at playing the organ! Nick Freestone was great with the children and we look forward to holding others in the future.

At Christmas, many of the local schools including Orchard Primary, Abbey Park First & Middle, St Nicholas CE Middle School, Bowbrook and Pershore High School visited the Abbey for their Christmas services.

We are so looking forward in 2024 to welcoming all the schools to Pershore Abbey.

Sam Andrews, Children and Families Worker and Suzanne Clarke, ALM (Children and Youth)

CHRISTIAN AID

The Christian Aid Week collection (including coffee morning and street collection) raised £2250.90. Gift Aid claims of over £400 were added to this.

The Water Music event in July raised £500 for Christian Aid and £250 for M.S.F.

Christian Aid Sunday Breakfast on 24th September raised £125.

Christian Aid donations for the Christmas Card board at the back of the Abbey were £360 to which £55 from Gift Aid claims were added.

2024 Christian Aid Week is 12-18th May.

Sarah Thomson.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Once again we have seen a steady organic increase in our online following on all four platforms. Facebook still remains our most successful form of engagement as we can share links from our YouTube channel too. Instagram has seen the largest increase

though which is surprising as I am only posting grid posts a couple of times a week. However, I am sharing the daily prayers from CofE and the diocese to our stories along with various posts from the diocese, A Rocha, Thy Kingdom Come, Worcester Cathedral, Archbishop Justin etc.

The majority of posts on Facebook are being provided by Claire and are receiving a very good level of community engagement. Obviously if a post is shared by the Diocese or onto other pages/groups then posts can reach up to 5K accounts or more.

Viewing figures on the weekly vlogs vary. However, they are uploaded separately to Instagram as Reels which can also appear on Facebook under reels so it's not easy to tell the accurate figures purely from YouTube. We have a nice balance between Claire, Peter, Jayne and David and it's an important form of direct engagement with the community.

Once again, our videos with the largest viewing figures remain those connected to National events. The services with the largest viewing figures remain the more prominent ones such as Remembrance, All Souls, Carol services, Harvest, Easter etc., along with those with any community aspect. However, this year, the Live-streamed Candlemas Morning Praise Service 2024 clocked up an incredible 641 views back in February and Epiphany Service 2024 416 views in January. Many of the streamed services are being viewed by up to 200 people on average so the Livestream was definitely a worthwhile investment.

In summary, we are continuing to reap the benefits of a solid foundation built up organically over the past 5 years.

	March 2020	March 2021	Feb 2022	March 2023	March 2024
Facebook likes	224	468	628	741	821
Facebook Followers	240	519	683	862	1032
Twitter Followers	58	123	157	187	203
Instagram Followers	73	208	356	585	821
You Tube Subscribers	4	97	278	351	445

Trudy Burge

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & ORGANIST

It has been a great joy and privilege for me to step in as interim DoM at Pershore Abbey for a period of six months or so.

What a lovely group of people I have found in my work with the choir! It is a tall (but necessary) order for them to have to adapt to different approaches, and I must say that they have been stoical, good humoured and willing to put up with what they may well perceive as my foibles. They are a hard working group who take obvious delight in their task, which has to be not so much to enable their own individual worship through their singing as to assist the congregation with their worship. When they achieve success, as they frequently do, their pleasure is positively palpable, and that has proffered much reward. I congratulate them.

The organ is a fine and most unusual instrument. The congregation and, indeed, the community as a whole in Pershore are right to be proud of it. The thinking which has brought about its creation is so very Italian - to the extent that it is actually quite a challenge to play it as well as it deserves. This is especially true because the job requires the facility for the player to give a strong visual lead to the choir from the console whilst accompanying at the same time. This had to be a prime consideration associated with the task of selecting a new and more permanent DoM – in addition to other obvious factors such a personality and the ability to work as part of a team. I take this opportunity to wish James MacDowall-Scott all things good as he begins his time in the hot seat.

Paul Trepte

ECO CHURCH

This year we have been pleased to welcome new members to the committee. The Meadow Project in Abbey Park was helped again by local school children and more visible flowers in 2023. We have continued success with an emphasis on creation in services, Litter Picks, short films and the Give and Take Coffee Mornings have gone well. Plans are in place to continue to be a Fair Trade Church and visit a recycling centre. Thanks to action by the Abbey Fabric Committee, energy use we gather has reduced in 2023.

We are still on our way to Gold but realise it is not to be a short journey

David Oldham

FLOWER GUILD

The Guild continues to arrange flowers in the Abbey on a regular basis and in 2023 extra arrangements were made for the King's Coronation on the 6th May. In addition at Reverend Canon Claire Lording's instigation donations towards Easter Lilies, in memory of loved ones, were collected on Passion Sunday, a tradition much appreciated by the congregation.

In 2024 the Guild celebrates its 70th Anniversary.

Mary Cope, Secretary

PERSHORE FOODBANK

The Pershore Foodbank has continued to serve local communities in both the town and the surrounding villages throughout 2023. Attention is focused on providing immediate care for people in crisis and assisting them in seeking more permanent solutions to their problems. The Trussell Trust provides support and guidance whilst we work under the auspices of Pershore Abbey as part of the Churches Together in Pershore. Pershore Foodbank does not employ any paid staff and we are pleased to have been joined by a number of enthusiastic new volunteers who bring a wealth of valuable skills. They join a hard-working and committed team, many of whom have been with the Foodbank since its inception, nearly ten years ago.

The Pershore Foodbank has been extremely well supported by our community throughout a challenging year. There was an overall increase of nearly 20% in the number of food parcels distributed and we have had to match the donations received from supermarket collection points and other donors with an equal amount of direct purchases. This seems to be comparable to the experiences of neighbouring Foodbanks during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, nevertheless, resilience is never far from our thoughts and regular meetings of a Steering Committee, chaired by Canon Claire Lording, continue to provide a guiding hand.

Financial donations have been as generous as ever, with some donors providing regular sums while others choose to give one-off (often anonymous) amounts. We have been able to continue to fund the weekly attendance of Citizen's Advice at our Friday sessions throughout the whole year, as it provides such an important contribution to our mission of helping people to reclaim control of their lives and access additional support for their families. Wychavon District Council has continued to provide assistance to the Foodbank via the Household Support Fund but it is important to emphasise that this is never a secure source of income but subject to the vagaries of Central government.

2023 saw the formation of the Pershore Community Forum, of which the Foodbank is a regular attendee, sharing concerns and opportunities with other supportive, community organisations such as the Volunteer Centre, Community Cupboard and Wellbeing Hub. Throughout the year, we continued to participate in local events such as the Festival of Volunteering and the Riverside Festival, and distributed over a hundred specially prepared Christmas Hampers, bringing some much-needed cheer to our most vulnerable families.

Foodbank clients: comparative data 2022-2023

	2022	2023	Percentage increase
Number of Vouchers fulfilled	664	800	20%
Number of Unique households	280	331	18%
Total number of individuals	845	980	16%
Number of adults	469	558	19%
Number of children	376	422	12%
Over 65s	45	50	11%
Household size			
Single	71	81	14%
Couple or 1 parent & 1 child	55	68	24%
Small family (3 or 4 people)	98	120	22%
Large family (5 or more people)	55	58	5%
Total number of Households	279	327	

(The difference between the number of vouchers and number of households is accounted for by clients making repeat visits.)

Donations: Comparative data 2022-2023

Stock type	2022 Stock in (kg)	2023 Stock in (kg)	Increase /decrease
Donated by charities	73	121	66%
Donated by churches	2350	1349	-43%
Donated by community groups	831	831	0%
Donated by corporates	70	230	229%
Donated by schools	516	708	37%
Donated by individuals	2167	943	-56%
Donated at supermarkets PCPs	5042	4267	-15%
Other donations		476	
Purchased	2755	7850	185%
Stock adjust	208	92	-90%
Total	14077	16788	19%

(It is important to point out that the donations collected from the supermarket permanent collection points are donated by individuals whilst they shop. Most of the donations made by the supermarkets themselves are fresh produce which is approaching its sell-by date; this goes direct to the Community Cupboard at the Baptist Church as the Foodbank does not distribute fresh food.)

Nicola Ainsworth, Project Leader, Pershore Foodbank

THE FRIENDS OF PERSHORE ABBEY CIO (FOPA)

Trustees: The following were elected as Trustees at the FOPA AGM held on 10th September 2023

Elected Executive Committee

Dr Judith Dale

Margaret Goodrich

Michael Hodges (Chairman of the Executive Committee Meetings)

Sarah Ingles

Jonathan Sington

Martyn Spence

Patricia Steel

Robin Whittaker

Helen Whitwell

Honorary Officers

Peter Dann Hon Treasurer (Chairman of the FOPA Finance and Investment Committee)

Erica Norton Hon Secretary

Ex Officio

President

Duncan Cadbury

Vicar

Canon Claire Lording

Churchwardens of the Abbey

Suzanne Clarke

Samantha Andrews

1. Finances

As reported at the 2023 FOPA AGM, the FOPA accounts for the period ending 5th April 2023 showed a balance of £2,732,950 (previous year £3,260,710). Grants to Pershore Abbey PCC for the year amounted to £369,114 (previous year £33,513).

The FOPA Investment Committee meets regularly to review investment strategy with appointed fund managers LGT. Much gratitude must be expressed for the careful stewardship of the Investment Committee and the guidance provided by LGT who ensure that FOPA's investments are aligned with Church of England advice and UN sustainable development goals.

2. Achievements

Notable achievements for the year to 6th April 2023 included provision of funding for the installation of the new pipe organ; the post installation works (floor cleaning,

removal of Bradford Organ etc.); vaulting repairs; upgrades to lighting & AV facilities; new flagpole & crawl-ladder; processional cross repairs; Peregrine platform.

3. Lecture

Fundraising activities were largely focussed on Robert Lacey's Friends' Memorial Lecture which took place on 19th May 2023. This was a financial success.

4. Legacies

FOPA continues to receive legacies from those who have held the Abbey in high regard during their life and wish to see it remain in good condition after their death. We are grateful for these gifts and are committed to stewarding them with discernment and in accordance with the aims of the Charity.

5. Membership

Membership numbers are steady at 374. The Executive Committee are resolved to execute a membership drive in 2024.

Michael Hodges, Chair

IONA

The monthly Iona service at 5pm on the fourth Sunday (except in August and December) has continued to draw people from Pershore, Bredon, Worcester and further afield. Zoom has allowed those unable to attend, even as far away as Iona, to join in. The Pershore Abbey Iona service is now possibly the only monthly service using Iona Community materials, in England.

The Iona services are ecumenical and informal in style. There is a usual shape to the service, but within this, services have sometimes been quiet and reflective, musical, included poetry and readings, or time for discussions and sharing. We sit in a circle and contributions are welcomed from everyone whether in the Abbey or at home via Zoom. Singers and musicians helped us to learn thought provoking songs and new tunes from the Iona Community.

Themes during 2023 have been linked to topical events such as COP28 and the wars in Ukraine/Russia and the Gaza Strip/Israel. Other themes have been related to our journey and our life as a worshipping community. One special service focussed on El Salvador, inspired by the game changing charity work of Bron Soan, who used to attend the service, but died a few days afterwards.

In June and September we shared, over refreshments, what we valued about the Iona service. Feedback included how special it is as a space for sharing thoughts, and as an inclusive worship community. This helped include more people in decision making about themes and contributing to future services.

Helen Oldham

MISSION GIVING

Giving thanks for all that we receive we have been pleased that we were able to maintain our mission giving policy of allocating £3000 of our income to mission giving. Once again we did not receive any unrestricted legacies so the total amount we were able to allocate this year remains at £3000. This was distributed in the following way:

Berega Hospital, Tanzania £1000

Christians Against Poverty £1000

A Rocha £1000

In addition to this there were also further congregational donations to Christian Aid during the year.

Mission Sunday was held on 19 November. We shared how each charity would be using our mission giving. It was particularly good to hear from Canon Isaac Mgego, at Berega Hospital, about how our giving had enabled a covered walkway and shelter to be built to protect patients from the extremes of Tanzanian weather.

We give thanks for all those committed to regular giving at the Abbey, which in turn enables us to give generously to some incredible charities who try to make a real difference in God's world.

Revd Canon Claire Lording

MOTHERS' UNION

We started the year with a Eucharist conducted by Rev. Canon Claire Lording followed by the AGM.

In February we welcomed Isabelle Meikle from Wick Home Farm Trust. She told us about the vision for an education programme based at the farm for people with various needs. She explained how people were referred and what they achieved at the farm. March saw the members celebrating The Feast of the Annunciation known in Mothers' Union branches around the world as Lady Day. A service involving the members was followed by a discussion.

Dr. Jill Perks visited us in April to inform us about the Wellbeing Hub, in the High Street. She explained how it had come to be established and the services it offers. Jill Cofton, Mothers' Union Worcester Archdeaconry Vice President, came to share some thoughts on how Mothers' Union transforms lives, churches, and communities. She used examples of projects run by Mothers' Union in Madagascar, Manchester and in Worcester Diocese.

Joyce Bush, Mothers' Union Speaker, encouraged us to always look on the bright side of life. She had us singing 'Always look on the bright side of life,' 'Hold on to the affirmative' and finally 'Bring me sunshine'.

Peter Stansbie introduced us to his life as a magician. He led us through his life and demonstrated many of his favourite tricks.

Rev. Leonard Burn joined us in September to talk about the history of Bible Translation. He had examples of Bibles written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin and we learnt a great deal. Elizabeth Kearney gave us an illustrated meditation based on the Creation story in Genesis. Members appreciated a time of quiet reflection. Christine Dodd from the Holy Redeemer Church spoke to us about Advent and she had brought some colourful stars to give out to us. Her talk encouraged us, during the first week in Advent, to consider what had brought us comfort. In the second week we were to recall who or what had enlightened us. During the third week we were to consider something that we might let go of. Finally in the fourth week, what may have given us new life.

At our Christmas Party we had several interesting contributions of poems and readings interspersed with the singing of carols.

Reverend Alma Organ

P.A.S.A – PERSHORE ABBEY AND ST. ANDREW'S SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Chairman: Julie Newman. Secretary: Jane Knox

Committee Members: Ann Bray, Catherine Cadbury, Mary Cope, Susan Denley, Jean Evans, Hilary Fowler, Lynda Jerrom, Barbara Priscott, Sara Speed & Sarah Thomson.

I am going to start our report with the two events that have given us most reward and satisfaction. Firstly the Christmas Midweek Tea, which although it didn't have so many takers was greatly appreciated by those who did join in. Good to see past Abbey worshippers too.

Secondly we tried a new social event, a Pudding Evening with a fun pudding quiz!! Both very successful and thanks again to those who donated the delicious puddings. £409.25, with raffle, was made. We were pleased to support Churches Together making and serving pancakes and soup during Lent. Carnival and Plum Fayre are events when we can sell tea, coffee and cake for Abbey funds and we have quite a regular following!!! Our Harvest Supper, on a recommendation from Claire, served a hot meal and pudding as a change. Easier for PASA meal wise but always a lot of clearing up afterwards!! Finally Christmas Carol Service brings our year to a close with traditional

mince pies and mulled wine, always popular and appreciated. My grateful thanks to all my committee members (and my friends) for their hard work and commitment throughout the past year.

Julie Newman, Chair

PASTORAL GROUP

The Pastoral Group coordinates the church's response to those in need within our congregational community, gathering information so that the church is aware of the needs of both past and current members of the congregation. We share awareness of who may be poorly (in hospital or recuperating at home), isolated and unable to attend church temporarily or permanently, and those who are in need of visiting and/or receiving home communion.

Individual members of the group regularly keep in touch with the people they are already supporting, both in person and by telephone.

Cards are sent when we first learn of someone's illness's or inability to attend church and thanks to the generosity of a member of Pershore Flower Guild, who wishes to remain anonymous, we have sometimes been able to take small flower arrangements to a number of the people we are able to visit, reassuring people that they have not been forgotten by the churches and to inform them they are being prayed for. Sympathy cards are sent whenever we are informed of a bereavement and again upon the anniversary of a bereavement if permission has been given (in compliance with GDPR rules) whilst Easter and Christmas cards are sent to everyone currently known to us.

Our success in maintaining contact with so many people depends upon everyone communicating with us as they become aware of friends' or neighbours' needs so that we can ensure an appropriate response is made. Unfortunately on rare occasions it has been several weeks before we have been made aware of the reason for someone's extended absence, leaving them feeling forgotten and uncared for by the church. Whilst this criticism may be justified we can only be as effective in our pastoral outreach as everyone enables us to be by communicating with us as soon as a friend, neighbour is indisposed.

Members of the Pastoral Team include Rev. Alma Organ, Jacquie Hughes, Sandra Long and Janet Stansbie who would all welcome being given information about people needing support.

Angela Gerrard, Pastoral Group Co-ordinator

PLUM FESTIVAL

Once again Pershore Abbey contributed to Pershore's Plum Festival in 2023, which was held over the Bank holiday weekend. Throughout the year Suzanne Clarke attended festival committee meetings in planning for the festival.

We held our wonderful open-air Teddy Praise service for all ages on the Sunday before the Plum Fayre Monday. This was led by Claire and Jayne in Abbey Park and was so nice to welcome the Plum Princess, her attendants along with members of the Plum Festival Committee and many congregation members supporting this service. The annual presentation of one pound of Pershore Plums also took place, these were gratefully received by Hugh Richards, Chair of the House of Laity from the Diocese.

The Bank Holiday Monday was a huge success, and the town was buzzing with hundreds of people! All our activities were very well attended, and we were able to contribute to the Plum Fun for hundreds of children with teddy zips and parachute drops. Tower tours were a sell out and we could have sold more tours! Thanks to Tony Wright - Jones who took on the role this year of organising the tower tours and it was also great to welcome new tour guides. Again, Pershore Arts along with U3A Arts took part with their art and craft exhibition in the Abbey. We were grateful that the Sea Cadets were willing to help again, transporting the teddies up the tower for their journey down by parachute or zip wire! We had an amazing show of Classic Cars, over 600 plus cars filled the park and many thanks to the volunteers who helped with stewarding the cars into their positions.

St Andrew's supplied much needed refreshment throughout the day (see PASA report).

A huge thanks to all who contributed in any way to the Abbey's part in the Plum Festival – organisers AND volunteers. Together we raised over £8,800 for the Abbey and contributed £400 towards the costs of Pershore's Plum Festival.

A very happy day was had by all!

Suzanne Clarke and Judy Dale, Co-ordinators

SALZWEDEL LINK

Pershore Abbey's links with our brothers and sisters in Salzwedel's Katherinenkirche were burnished in 2023 with the visit to Pershore of Harald, Carola, Angela, Matthias, Asimwe & Johannes. Due to a German rail strike three others (Anke, Thorsten & Dorte) were unable to come. They were missed. Our guests' enthusiasm for cultural highlights such as a visit to Hereford Cathedral's Mappa Mundi and a visit to Malvern Priory, were balanced with Fish & Chips, Skittles and High Tea at the home of Hilary and Martin

Fowler. On their first night, our guests were also able to participate in the Friends of Pershore Abbey's Annual lecture. The subject was the British Royal Family which, of course, they love!

A 2024 visit to Salzwedel is now planned between 6th and 9th June. All members of the Pershore Abbey community would be warmly welcomed in Salzwedel.

Superficially, cultural exchanges can appear somewhat indulgent. But, beneath the surface of our link, ties have been forged that have enabled Salzwedel and Pershore people to communicate as Christians at a deep and caring level with one another. This despite language challenges! Our respective church communities are the spiritual beneficiaries as the link reverberates in many subtle ways. Can this be a glimpse of what Heaven might be like perhaps?

Members of the Pershore Abbey Community wishing to take part, either as host or as a visitor to Germany, are encouraged to contact Michael Hodges on 552417 or by email mh@broadwayplc.com or Rev'd Canon Claire Lording if interested.

Michael Hodges

SIDESPEOPLE, SOUND AND LIVESTREAM

Our sidespeople, sound and live streamers do an amazing job and have had many different things to cope with at our weekly services. All did a fantastic job covering our busy services which are now back to pre-Covid numbers, including the Abbey's first Organ Festival, Remembrance, Advent Carols, Christmas Carols, Christingle, Midnight Mass and Christmas Day as well as our other regular services.

We still have a reduced number of sidespeople, which means those on the rota still have a significantly increased workload. We would be pleased to have additional welcomers and encourage anyone interested to let myself or one of the team know.

List of Sidespeople, Sound and Live streamers on the Rota for January to December 2023:

John Alexander	Robin Hancox	Chris Riley
Jan Ayres	Carolyn Harford	Ruth Smith
John Ayres	Jacqui Hughes	Martyn Spence
Nicky von Benzon	Elizabeth Kearney	Ivan Steele
Barbara Bristow	Jane Knox	Richenda Steele
David Bryden	Stephen Knox	Sarah Thomson
Helen Bryden	Bill Newman	Sally Whyte

Mary Cope
Edward Denley
Susan Denley
Bob Gillmor

Julie Newman
David Oldham
Kevin O'Neill
Barbara Priscott

Bruce Wilson
David Williams-Thomas
Jane Williams-Thomas

Sam Andrews, Churchwarden

THE ABBEY STAGERS

"New Opportunities on offer!"

We are pleased to say that the faithful team of stagers have responded with enthusiasm on all the occasions when they were called upon, preparing the Abbey for concerts and events and erecting staging when needed.

However....! the task is changing. Whereas the erection of staging has been the main function of the team, more recently our energies have been directed to moving chairs etc. for concerts where staging was **not** needed. This gives a great opportunity for those who have held back because of the fear of heavy stage sections, to come forward and volunteer for this simpler and more manageable task.

But, of course, people don't come forward! This is where YOU (reader) come into the picture! Most volunteers attach themselves to a job by invitation of suggestion from a third party! We need **you** to suggest to someone **you know** that "You could do that job!" and "They need help from someone like you!" So with that in mind , we suggest you look around to your friends and see if you can help them fulfil this volunteering opportunity. In the mean time, our thanks to the loyal band of stagers/movers, who make it possible for the Abbey to have the widest possible availability to the community of our town.

Chris Liley

ST ANDREW'S SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

The PCC sub-committee (known as SAEC – St Andrew's Executive Committee) has continued to run the Centre, with the St Andrew's Trust helping to provide funds. The sub-Committee consists of:

The Vicar (Chair and Trustee) – Canon Claire Lording
Churchwardens –Suzanne Clarke & Sam Andrews
Peter Stansbie (Vice-Chairman & Secretary)
Judy Dale

We continue with the PCC aims to:

- minimise the deficit to the PCC of running St Andrews
- improve Parish and community use of the building
- use St Andrews as a visible sign of our mission to the Parish, Benefice and Town

Demand for use of the building continues to be strong with a number of regular bookings as well as ad hoc bookings from all parts of our community. The Foodbank continues to be held twice a week and continues to be in great demand with the cost-of-living issues being felt by so many.

The building is now starting to need some substantial expenditure on its ageing fabric including work on the North roof as a five-year review by our new architect has confirmed. This means that funding will need to be sought from major funders to enable the building to continue to be of use to the Abbey and our community. We simply could not achieve our wider mission without St Andrew's.

During the year we have agreed with the Diocese that we should review the current arrangements for the ownership of the building. We plan to take ownership of the building, instead of the current lease arrangements which can prevent us applying for some grants.

Our grateful thanks go to all our many users as always.

Peter Stansbie

STEWARDSHIP

Thank you for those who have signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme and those remaining in the planned giving scheme. The Parish giving Scheme submits its own gift aid claim.

Gift Aid for St Andrew's Centre and Abbey General Fund that have accrued and been submitted for 2023 totalled £19,317.51

Sarah Thomson

TANZANIAN LINK

We have continued to give thanks for our link with St John's, Kihonda. The emails we receive are a joy and remind us that although we are many thousands of miles apart, we are very much in each other's thoughts. We also remember to pray for one another.

A diocesan visit, led by Bishop John, enabled us to send warm greetings to everyone in the parish, which were enthusiastically returned!

Revd Canon Claire Lording

PERSHORE ABBEY WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Pleased to announce another successful year celebrating our 60th Anniversary, with a Service, celebration cake and drinks. All members were treated to an afternoon tea at St Peter's Garden Centre. Interesting talks each month from speakers: on Fashion over 100 years, Memories of Pershore, Search & Rescue, Shoe Boxes plus donations, and our charity being Evesham Street Pastors.

Linda Layland

b) PCC Accounts for year ending 31st December 2023

Financial Report - Executive Summary

Summary

Summarised Financial Statements are set out below for the purposes of presenting the key financial information to the APCM. The full financial statements, which are 31 pages in length, are available online from the Abbey's website and will appear on the Charity Commission's website later in the year.

The accounts of the Abbey were subject to an independent examination by Clifton-Crick Sharp Co Ltd of High Street, Pershore. There were no issues to report from this examination.

Financial Position

The biggest financial event of the year was the installation of the new organ. The increase in annual income of £139,720 to £644,520 from £504,800 in 2022, was mainly due to the generous grants given by the Friends of Pershore Abbey (FOPACIO) to enable the project to be completed. The Friends donated £325,967 towards not only the costs of the organ but also the upgrading of the lighting for the Abbey. The PCC is also grateful to St Andrew's Parish Centre Trust for grants of £8,704 to the upkeep of St Andrew's including a new dishwasher and improvements to the toilets.

The Organ Festival made a profit of £5,000, and receipts from the Plum Festival, Carnival, concert hires and rental of St Andrew's were £5,357 higher in aggregate than the previous year. Income from regular giving, through standing orders and the Parish Giving Scheme, and from collections taken at services was six per cent higher than in 2022.

One legacy of £1,000 was received during the year.

The increase in annual expenditure of £198,662 to £736,025 from £537,363 in 2022 was again mostly due to the costs of completing the organ project, which were £402,656 for the year. This includes the spending of the total amount collected by the Abbey's organ appeal, which was £72,505. The amount collected was treated as current year income in the accounts for previous years, rather than as deferred income, so the entire sum adds to the deficit (excess of income over expenditure) reported in the current year of £91,505.

Demand for the Food Bank has increased over the year and expenditure increased by £14,600 to £47,783 (2022: £33,183).

The Abbey paid 100% of its Ministry Share commitment, which was £51,950. Ministry Share covers the salary and expenses of clergy. In addition, it paid £43,050 to the Diocese of Worcester's Ministry Support Fund, which assists other parishes which cannot afford their Ministry Share commitment. Equivalent figures for 2022 were Ministry Share payment of £48,350 and Ministry Support Fund contribution of £51,887.

Unrestricted Funds

Total unrestricted income rose to £216k from £186k in 2022, due to the increase in regular giving, hiring fees and fund-raising activities referred to above.

Expenditure has reduced from £236k to £217k, the main causes of this being the lower donation to the Diocese of Worcester's Ministry Support Fund and lower expenditure on maintenance.

The unrestricted reserves level at the end of 2023 had fallen marginally by £677 from the brought forward position of £32k. The reserves are likely to continue at a lower level while energy costs remain so high.

Restricted Funds

The total value of restricted funds reduced to £126k from the balance of £206k at 31 December 2022, mainly because funds held for expenditure on the organ at the year-end were spent as the installation was completed.

Full details of the movements in the numerous restricted funds are included in the detailed statements which form part of the annual accounts.

Investments

The value of investments increased by £32,594 in the year. These investments are held for the long term and their total value at 31 December 2023 was £372,162.

This includes the value of endowment funds (£282,250). We are unable to spend the capital of these funds – only the dividends received from them.

Questions

Anyone who has any questions regarding the accounts is welcome send them to the Abbey Office a minimum of one week before the meeting so that a full answer can be prepared.

Thanks

I have now completed my second year as treasurer. It would be a much harder job without the support of others who lighten my load: Elizabeth Barnett in the Office for dealing with invoices and bank reconciliations, Jean Andrews for banking, Marion Rendall for calculating the payroll and Alistair Thomson for making Gift Aid claims. I am very grateful for their help.

Edward Denley, Treasurer

Summary Financial Information for the year ended 31 December 2023

		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
		Funds	Funds	2023	2022
		£	£	£	£
Income and Endowments					
Voluntary Income - regular giving					
	Stewardship giving	74,108	0	74,108	72,878
	Tax recovery (Gift Aid)	12,921	0	12,921	14,899
	Collections at services	18,895	0	18,895	15,263
		105,924	0	105,924	103,040
Voluntary income - other					
	Grants - Abbey	13,950	378,554	392,504	262,800
	Donations and appeals	14,577	2,388	16,965	21,620
	Food bank donations	0	38,912	38,912	41,755
	St Andrews donations	3,730	0	3,730	1,247
	Legacies	1,000	0	1,000	0
		33,257	419,854	453,111	327,423
Activities for generating funds					
	Abbey hire income (concerts)	12,277	0	12,277	11,829
	Bookstall income	6,636	0	6,636	7,106
	Magazine income	6,675	0	6,675	4,540
	Plum Festival	9,371	0	9,371	8,418
	Carnival	726	0	726	504
	Organ Festival	7,863	0	7,863	0
		43,547	0	43,547	32,397
Income from investments					
	Dividends	-1,833	7,766	5,933	5,900
	St Andrews dividends	1,833	0	1,833	1,824
	Bank interest	181	0	181	0
		181	7,766	7,947	7,724
Income from church activities					
	Abbey service fees	14,442	0	14,442	14,766
	St Andrews hire charges	16,345	0	16,345	12,607
	Other income	2,303	900	3,203	6,845
		33,090	900	33,990	34,218
Total Income		215,999	428,521	644,520	504,800
Expenditure					
Ministry and administration					
	Ministry share	95,000	0	95,000	100,237
	Cultural recovery 2 expense	0	0	0	1,333
	Ministry and worship expenses	7,320	116	7,436	6,972
	Youth work and mission	16,090	556	16,646	3,408

Office and administration	35,304	1	35,305	29,957
Food bank expenditure	0	47,783	47,783	33,183
Depreciation	0	8,869	8,869	2,618
	153,714	57,325	211,039	177,708
Other running costs				
Organ expenditure	0	402,656	402,656	168,513
Abbey development fund	0	0	0	30,378
Heating and lighting	33,399	0	33,399	34,981
Insurance	0	8,236	8,236	7,011
Maintenance and furniture	6,621	51,134	57,755	90,272
Cleaning	7,417	0	7,417	7,069
	47,437	462,026	509,463	338,224
Fundraising expenses				
Bookstall	3,279	0	3,279	11,633
Magazine	4,397	0	4,397	4,002
Plum Festival expenses	793	0	793	520
Organ Festival expenses	2,878	0	2,878	0
Abbey hire costs	3,423	0	3,423	3,122
Other fundraising costs	754	0	754	2,154
	15,525	0	15,525	21,431
Total Expenditure	216,676	519,351	736,027	537,363
Net surplus/(deficit) before gains and losses	-677	-90,830	-91,507	-32,563
on investments				
(Gains) /Losses on investments	0	-32,596	-32,596	47,710
Surplus/(deficit) after investments	-677	-58,233	-58,911	-80,273
Add reserves brought forward	31,672	466,127	497,799	578,072
Total funds carried forward	30,995	407,894	438,888	497,799
Represented by:				
Fixed Assets	0	18,407	18,407	24,011
Investments	0	372,159	372,159	339,565
Stock, sundry debtors and cash	34,619	17,327	51,946	306,778
Deduct: current liabilities	-3,624	0	-3,624	-172,555
	30,995	407,893	438,888	497,799

c) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church

FABRIC

2023 – the Year of the Pipe Organ!

Thanks to the dedication and perseverance of David Long, Pershore Abbey has a magnificent new Pipe Organ. After years of preparation and the skills of the Ruffatti team, the installation was completed in May and the amazing instrument ready to play. David makes his own detailed report, but we must applaud and thank him for this wonderful instrument admired by the organists who have played it and we who have heard it.

Whilst organ building was in progress, regular Abbey maintenance continued as far as possible, the LED lighting installation was completed, and adjusted for the organ pipes. Floodlighting of the tower was upgraded with some difficulty from an ever-changing digital system.

The leaking vestry roof was repaired and cracks in the east wall of the vestry block repointed, however a degree of leak recurs. The flagpole was given an extra bracket at its base and once steadied, the lead collar was repaired preventing rainwater reaching the belfry below. Safety netting was secured to the lower section of the ringing platform to prevent falling objects. Our thanks to Stuart Piper for his expertise.

In the summer months the chequered fossil stone floor in the Abbey was restored - this followed damage from moisture rising beneath the protective covering during organ works.

Throughout the year statistics were collected and meetings held to consider how we could adjust the Abbey's heating system, seeking to reduce our carbon footprint. On the recommendation of our Architect, we met with Nik Chambers from Greenways who began a feasibility study on possible heating systems. His work continues and a strategy is evolving.

Two major structural problems are identified, to be followed up in 2024 after our quinquennial inspection. These are in the west wall of the south transept near the tower and the north-east transept with the north wall of the of the north aisle where there has been lateral movement. There may need to be some underpinning but we await instruction from our architect and structural engineer.

My thanks to Fiona Rice, minutes secretary and all members of the fabric committee, to Canon Claire and the churchwardens for their support, also to the Friends of Pershore Abbey CIO who have funded many of these projects.

Judy Dale, Chair of Fabric Committee

ORGAN

At the beginning of the year our long-awaited new three-manual Fratelli Ruffatti pipe organ made an extraordinary sea voyage from Padua and Venice, via the Adriatic, Ionian and Mediterranean seas, the Atlantic Ocean, the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel, finally arriving in Pershore during early February 2023. The installation was completed just in time for it to accompany our service celebrations for the Coronation of King Charles III in May. Following a period of settling in and refinements to the organ, an Organ Festival celebration was held at the end of September. This included an outreach event for local children led by Nicholas Freestone, a wonderful Festival Choral Concert by the choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, led by Matthew Martin, Precentor & Director of Music, (and Abbey Organ Advisor), an outstanding Festival Organ Recital by Robert Quinney, Tutorial Fellow of Music and Associate Professor, New College Oxford. The festivities concluded on Sunday 1 October with Festival Eucharist and Dedication of the organ with the Rt Revd Dr John Inge, Bishop of Worcester, and Festival Evensong.

The installation of this superb pipe organ was the culmination of some 8-year's research and planning, fundraising, and structural modifications to the Abbey to allow the organ casings to be mounted at the west end of the north triforium and the construction of a blower room in the north aisle roof void. People from all over the country have come to see and hear the organ in this unrivalled historic setting – an instrument built with love, passion, expertise and made from the very best materials.

This project would not have been possible without the most generous financial support provided by the Friends of Pershore Abbey and those individuals who donated organ pipes ('Pipers').

David Long, Project Leader of the Replacement Organ Project

GOODS AND ORNAMENTS

The Churchwardens would like to report that in January 2023, the Peregrine Nesting Platform was installed on a belfry louvered window. This was donated and installed by Jason Marshall (Joiner). Our feathered friends have brought much attention to the

Abbey from visitors far and wide! We are planning on installing a camera looking onto the platform, to be able live stream during the breeding/nesting session.

In March, after many years of planning and lots of hard work, finally our new Ruffatti Pipe Organ was installed.

The Abbey's processional cross given in memory of the Revd Williamson in 1897, has been beautiful restored, although rather heavy, is now in use again. It was so lovely to be able to first use it, at our Christmas Midnight service this year. The Inventory and Logbook have been updated, many thanks to Judy Dale for all her help.

Many thanks to Judy Dale and all the Fabric Committee members for their contribution and tireless efforts during this past year.

Suzanne Clarke and Sam Andrews, Churchwardens

d) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod

There were three meetings of the Deanery Synod in 2023, two by zoom and one in person. Each meeting included an act of worship, presentation or reflection and opportunities for sharing and discussion. Updates were given on both Diocesan and General Synods, with emphasis on our Diocesan Priorities:

- Increasing the numbers of children and young people worshipping in our churches
- Creating new worshipping communities with a range of services to help people find their faith
- Enabling larger churches to support other smaller local churches
- Opportunities for renewal - more training and development for clergy and laity

Our Abbey community moves forward and we share our experiences.

In July the Deanery celebrated our 'Gifts for Mission' with Archdeacon Robert, just before his retirement. As always he was discerning and gently encouraged us all in our tasks, however small. The November meeting concentrated on the possibility of contributing to the rehabilitation of offenders, with welcome to our worship. Rev Nick Scott spoke of his work at HMP Long Lartin. A Welcome Directory exists to let offenders know that they are welcome at a church – Pershore Abbey is included in this directory.

Judy Dale and Martin Fowler, Deanery Synod Representatives

6. Statement on Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adults Policies

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Having due regard to the House of Bishops guidance on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, the PCC wishes to confirm that the guidance has been followed. Suzanne Clarke has continued to act as Safeguarding Officer for Pershore Abbey & the Benefice, assisted by Sara Speed (Safeguarding Coordinator) and Judy Dale (Vulnerable Adults Representative).

We continue to have Safeguarding as a standing agenda item for all PCC meetings and APCM, we review our policies annually. The Safeguarding officer has attended the Diocesan Safeguarding Network meetings throughout the year, and we still continue use the online Parish Dashboard App which helps us monitor and keep track of all safeguarding in our church, it also keeps us up to date with local and national changes in safeguarding requirements.

All leaders and helpers working with Children, Young people & Vulnerable Adults (at Children & Youth Groups, Open the Book, Toddler Group) Churchwardens, PCC members, Tower & Deputy Tower Bellringing Captain and Pastoral Visitors have valid DBS certificates.

Safeguarding training is required every 3 years and has been completed by 11 people during 2023.

Suzanne Clarke, Parish Safeguarding Officer