

The Abbey Church of the Holy Cross Pershore



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

Tuesday 6 May 2025

At 1900 at St Andrew's Centre

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

Tuesday 6 May 2025

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 7 May 2024
3. Report for 2024
4. To receive and adopt the Accounts for 2024 and appoint the Independent Examiner

Meeting of the Parishioners for the Election of Churchwardens

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens held on 7 May 2024
3. Choosing of Churchwardens
4. AOB

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 7 May 2024
3. Presentation of Electoral Roll
4. Election and appointment of:
 - a) Members for PCC
 - b) 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 2024
 - 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, 7 MAY, 2024 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 Janet Stansbie Robin Hancox Jan Ayres John Ayres Ann Bray David Bray Ven. Chris Liley Susan Denley Sue Gooderham Grahame Gooderham Canon Chris Terry Bill Newman Tony Perks Barbara Priscott Catherine Cadbury Duncan Cadbury	Michael Hodges Margaret Goodrich Sarah Thomson Jean Andrews John Andrews Jo Greenaway Judy Dale Jane Knox Richard Williams Olive Hall Hilary Fowler Martin Fowler Michael Doley Jacquie Hughes Revd. Philip Hughes Paul Harris Annie Harris Jason El’Habid Jean Pritchard Fiona Rice Martyn Spence Jayne Parker Stevie Quick Peter Dann
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Apologies:

Julie Newman John Bragg Primrose Upward Carolyn Harford Audrey Finch	Stephen Knox Margaret Lawson Elaine Liley Wendy Perks
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Canon Lording opened the meeting in prayer.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of ST ANDREW'S TRUST
on TUESDAY 7 MAY 2024

1. Apologies

Apologies were received.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting of St Andrew's Trust held on 2 May 2023

The minutes of the previous Meeting were received.

Proposed by Richard Williams, seconded by Michael Hodges. Approved.

3. Report for 2023 R. Hancox was thanked for preparing the report included in the Annual Meeting booklet.

There were no questions.

Judy Dale proposed, seconded by Bill Newman, to receive the Report of the Trustees 2023. Approved.

3. Accounts

PASA was thanked for organising the monthly Parish Coffee Mornings and other fundraising events in aid of St Andrew's Centre.

Sarah Thomson proposed, seconded by Hilary Fowler, that the Accounts for 2023 be received and adopted. Approved.

The Trustees were grateful to Eric Wiles for his help in preparing the Accounts.

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

Canon Lording thanked Robin Hancox and the other trustees.

ST ANDREW'S PARISH CENTRE TRUST – SECRETARY'S REPORT 2024

We thank PASA for organising the monthly Saturday Coffee Mornings and for the various organisations who have run them.

2024 saw a generous grant from Wychavon. This will enable the PCC to make a feature of the paved area to the right of the porch. This will help with a bigger Pershore Place Board scheme to improve St Andrew's Gardens.

My thanks, once more, to Eric Wiles for examining our accounts.

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

St Andrew's Parish Centre Trust 501353

Receipts and Payments to 31 December 2024

Balance as at 1 January 2024

CAF Bank	£3,607.67	
Cash In Hand	nil	
	£3,607.67	
Reserved Funds		£3,409.05
Unreserved Funds		£198.62
		£3,607.67

Income

Donations – Coffee Mornings	£498.29	
Fund Raising	£209.45	
Grants – Benefact Trust	£1,800.00	
Grants – Wychavon	£12,000.00	
Bank Interest	£18.54	
		£14,526.28

Expenditure

Abbey PCC - Maintenance		£500.00	
Abbey PCC - Electrics		£30.00	
Bank Charges		£61.50	
		£591.50	

Summary of Funds

Reserved Funds	as at 1/1/24	Income	Transfer	Expenditure	as at 31/12/24
Grant – Dishwasher/Electrics	£30.00	nil	nil	£30.00	nil
Grant –Outside Improvements	nil	£12,000.00	nil	nil	£12,000.00
Stonework/Guttering	£2,740.00	£1,800.00	nil	nil	£4,540.00
Grant – Turner Trust- Toilets	£639.05	nil	nil	nil	£639.05
	£3,409.05	nil	nil	£30.00	£17,179.05

Statement of Funds as at 31 December 2024

Reserved Funds	£17,179.05
Unreserved Funds	£363.40
	£17,542.45

Balance as at 31 December 2024

CAF Bank	£17,542.45
Cash In Hand	nil
	£17,542.45

Reviewed By Eric Wiles

Signed

Date 19/2/25

MINUTES OF THE MEETING for the ELECTION of CHURCHWARDENS
on TUESDAY 7 MAY 2024

1. Apologies

Apologies were received.

2. Minutes of the previous Meeting for the Election of Churchwardens held on 2 May 2023

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were received and signed by Canon Lording. Proposed by Peter Stansbie, seconded by David Long. Approved.

3. Choosing of Churchwardens

Suzanne Clarke had completed 6 years of service as a churchwarden. She was thanked for giving so much time and effort, particularly during the Covid pandemic. There were two nominations for churchwardens, namely Samantha Andrews (proposed by Brian Clarke, seconded by Jean Pritchard) and Martin Fowler (proposed by Suzanne Clarke, seconded by Wendy Perks). 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 THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
On TUESDAY 7 MAY 2024

1) Apologies

Apologies were received.

2) Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 2nd May, 2023 were received and signed by Canon Lording. Proposed by Susan Denley, seconded by Samantha Andrews. Approved.

3) Electoral Roll Officer's Report

William Newman gave the report. There were 186 names on the Electoral Roll, with 159 being resident within the Parish, and 27 non-resident. W. Newman was thanked for his work as Electoral Roll Officer. The names on the Electoral Roll would be available to view at the Benefice Office or by contacting the Electoral Roll Officer. A full revision of the Roll would take place next year.

4a) Election of Deanery Synod Representatives

Judith Dale and Martin Fowler serve as Deanery Synod Representatives. One vacancy remains.

4b) Election of Members of the Parochial Church Council

After many years of service to the PCC, including as a churchwarden, chair of the Fabric Committee and currently as vice chair of the PCC, David Long had decided not to seek re-election. Canon Lording thanked David for the enormous amount of work he had undertaken, particularly in the project management of the Replacement Organ Project and invited those present to show their appreciation with a round of applause.

Sarah Thomson (proposed by Carolyn Harford, seconded by Jan Ayres), Ann Bray (proposed by William Newman, seconded by Jean Evans), Suzanne Clarke (proposed by Martin Fowler, seconded by Judith Dale) and Jason EL'Habid (proposed by Judith Dale, seconded by Peter Stansbie) were duly elected to serve for a 3 -year term of office. Jean Andrews, Edward Denley, Susan Denley, Sandra Long, Bill Newman and Sara Speed would continue to serve. Judith Dale, Martin Fowler and Peter Stansbie serve as ex-officio members. The PCC was thanked for service given.

4c) Appointment of Independent Examiner

The Treasurer reported his satisfaction with the service provided by Clifton-Crick Sharp & Co Ltd.

Martyn Spence proposed, seconded by Robin Hancox, to appoint Clifton-Crick Sharp & Co. Ltd. as the Independent Examiner for 2024. Approved.

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.

Sandra Long proposed, seconded by Duncan Cadbury, that the Annual Reports be received. Approved.

5b) Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Audited accounts for the year ended 31st December, 2023

A full report had been included in the Accounts for the year ended 31/12/23. The Treasurer noted that weekly income had increased, in particular a 25% increase over the year in income from St Andrew's Centre.

Fundraising income had been good, particularly the £5,000 raised by the Organ Festival.

Routine activities had broken even, and the overall financial position was comfortable.

This had allowed a generous contribution to the Ministry Support Fund.

There were no questions.

Jean Pritchard proposed, seconded by Bill Newman, that the Accounts for 2023 be adopted. Approved.

The Treasurer was thanked for his work.

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

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

Martin Fowler proposed, seconded by John Ayres, 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. Judy Dale and Martin Fowler were thanked for their service as Deanery Synod representatives. There were no questions.

Suzanne Clarke proposed, seconded by Samantha Andrews, to receive the report.

Approved.

6. Statement on Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adults Policies

The Safeguarding Report for 2023 had been included in full in the APCM booklet.

Suzanne Clarke (Safeguarding Officer) read out the Safeguarding Statement.

Safeguarding training and necessary DBS checks had been carried out during 2023.

All Parish policies for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, as listed in the report, have been reviewed and adopted by the PCC.

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 and was still seeking a volunteer to take over.

Any Other Business

In response to a question from Duncan Cadbury, an outline of work to involve children in the musical life of the Abbey was given. Samantha Andrews (*Children and Families Worker*) had begun discussions with James MacDowall Scott (*Director of Music*) on ways of encouraging interaction with schools and other groups. It was hoped to have children singing in the Abbey in the future. Nick Freestone (*Assistant Organist, Worcester Cathedral*) had undertaken a very successful organ workshop for primary school aged children. He and James had discussed plans for future organ workshops.

On behalf of everyone, Suzanne Clarke thanked Canon Lording for her service over the past year.

Date of the next APC Meeting

The next APCM will be held on Tuesday 6th May 2025 (to be confirmed).

The Meeting closed with The Grace at 7.35 pm.

4) Election and appointment of:

- a) Members for PCC
- b) 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

When we look back on 2024 we can confidently say that many aspects of Abbey life flourished and grew. There has been an energy and busyness that has been infectious and a reminder that the Abbey is a place where things can and do happen. It is always inspiring that so many people contribute to the Abbey's mission as we look to 'Worship God, Welcome All and Reach out to the World'.

We are committed to being a growing church and have been pleased to see that the normal Sunday attendance of in person worshippers has increased once again. Our average Sunday attendance is now 155, which is made up of a vibrant number of people who regularly attend the main 1030 service and those who attend and support the smaller services which also take place. It always feels important that we can offer choice to worshippers, as many people who enter the Abbey are not at home with the main choral tradition. It has therefore been particularly pleasing to see the growth and development of Café Church. Sam Andrews and the team have worked incredibly hard to develop a unique Café Church style which has attracted families. The increase in the number of children attending church is largely down to Café Church. It is steady progress as we continue to work to achieve our Health and Sustainability aim of having a minimum of 10 families involved in Abbey life by 2027.

Continuing the trend set last year, as we were still getting back to worshipping as a community after the Covid pandemic, we saw an increase in communicants at Easter and Christmas. Easter attendances showed particular growth, which was very encouraging.

Our online worship provision has also continued to grow. What has been striking this year is that we have become aware of the reach of our online services, and how people who live in different parts of the country and even the world feel as if they belong to the Abbey family. We regularly hear from people far from Pershore who share their appreciation of what we are doing and offer their prayer and support. This has been such a blessing and takes our aim to 'Welcome All' to a whole new level.

Some of our growth in worship attendance will be down to the increased population of Pershore and our effective communication and mission strategy across the local

area, but we also believe that the development of our musical offering by James MacDowall-Scott, appointed this year as our Director of Music, has made a significant impact. The choir has grown in membership and in confidence and its expanding repertoire is appreciated by the regular congregations and visitors alike. James has developed a regular series of organ recitals and has great ideas and energy to expand our musical connection with children and young people, which we hope will bear fruit in 2025.

Although the number of weddings we conducted remained the same as last year, the number of funerals and baptisms which we were involved with reduced significantly. Funerals were at 27 this year compared to 47 last year and perhaps reflects the wider social trend of families choosing a direct cremation or civil celebrant led service for their loved ones instead of a service requiring a minister. Baptisms were down from 27 last year to 17 this year and it remains to be seen whether this is the start of a significant trend. We remain committed to our outreach to children and families and give thanks for the deepening relationships we have with our families, which is often expressed by attendance at events and not always in presentation for baptism.

There has been much focus on our ministry of welcome this year. As members of the Welcome Directory for prison leavers we were prompted to look at the welcome we offer across the board. There has been ongoing encouragement and support for Sally Whyte and the bookstall volunteers who do an incredible job of welcoming visitors during the week. The churchwardens and the sidespeople team have also reflected on the welcome they offer at Sunday services. A ministry that has been supplemented with the addition of Sunday Welcomers, who intentionally connect with new people joining the worshipping community or visitors after the service. One of the highlights of the year was the good quality of our welcome being mentioned by Bishop Graham James in an article for the Church Times after he worshipped with us.

Throughout the year there have been many stand out events, concerts and services at the Abbey. It was a privilege to welcome the Archbishop of Canterbury as part of his diocesan prayer mission in February. The diocesan service to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood, which tied in beautifully with Revd Jayne Parker's ordination as a priest in the Cathedral at Petertide, was very moving. We welcomed back Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge to sing for BBC Radio 3 Evensong. We also delivered the service for All Saints' Day which was shared on the Church of England's digital platforms.

St Andrew's Centre remains a crucial tool in our mission and we feel privileged that we can offer the right sort of space to so many different community groups. This year we said goodbye to Alison Jeynes as our cleaner and welcomed Julie Hurford into that role.

We continue to work towards taking over ownership of the centre but look forward to when the Church Commissioners are able to catch up with our enthusiasm.

As always, the life of the Abbey, its mission and ministry, would not be what it is without the dedication and commitment of so many volunteers, many of whom volunteer in several areas of Abbey life. They are a constant source of encouragement and inspiration and help create a culture where everyone can feel able to give of their time and talents if they wish.

We have continued to go from strength to strength in 2024. We have celebrated and invested in what we know works and goes well but are always adamant that we are confident enough to discover new ways of being church so that we might fulfil God's mission in this place, and to be the Kingdom People God calls us to be.

Revd Canon Claire Lording

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

2024 continued the trend of post-pandemic recovery and of new growth reported in 2023. Numbers attending Sunday 10.30 services and Café Church have continued to increase and our alternative forms of worship (Iona, Wholeness and Healing, mid-week Communion) continue to be supported and appreciated.

In addition to our regular services there were some special occasions in 2024. The visit by the Archbishop of Canterbury in February, the special Diocesan service in June celebrating 30 years since women were first ordained priest, BBC Radio 3's Evening Service in September and in October we recorded an All Saints' Day service for the Church of England National Online Service.

All these services, regular and occasional, as well as the numerous weddings, baptisms and funerals through the year, make for a very busy and sometimes complicated schedule, made possible by the leadership of the Ministry Team, but also, and so importantly, by the dedication and enthusiasm of our many teams of volunteers. Sidespeople and welcomers, readers and intercessors, the refreshments team (PASA), our sound and livestreaming experts, the weddings and funerals stewards, the flower arrangers and brass cleaners. And of course the wonderful music of the choir and our Director of Music James MacDowall-Scott, and our bellringers led by Stuart Piper. Everyone who gives of their time so willingly is very much appreciated. Without them we would not be this lively and joyful community serving God in Pershore. A huge thank you.

As well as services, the Abbey was again in 2024 the venue for a wide range of events, from orchestral concerts to brass bands, rock choirs and Schools' Christmas and Leaving Concerts. Not to mention the noise and bustle of all the activities on Carnival and Plum Festival weekends. All these events really highlight the place the Abbey and St Andrew's hold in the

community life of Pershore as a whole and again, we are grateful to the many volunteers who gave their time and talents to make these events a success and the Abbey a venue of choice for many organisations. Special thanks to Stevie Quick, our Events Coordinator, and to the team of “movers and shiffters” coordinated by Chris Liley who erect and dismantle staging and move furniture before and after concerts, often at very unsociable hours. Another huge thank you.

The Abbey continues to attract visitors throughout the year, many of whom record their appreciation of both the beauty and serenity of the building and the warmth of the welcome they receive. Our thanks to Sally Whyte and her Bookstall team who keep our welcome alive through the week.

All these many activities involve an immense administration workload, which goes largely unseen but is so important. We are hugely appreciative of the work Elizabeth and Fiona carry out in the Benefice Office, not only in respect of the Abbey and St Andrew’s but for the three other churches in the Benefice.

The Churchwardens’ responsibility for the upkeep of the building is largely exercised through the Fabric committee and we are grateful to them, particularly the chair Judy Dale, for their work during 2024. Their activities are reported separately but we are delighted to record our own welcome to our new Architect Joanna Daykin. The annual inspection of the building in 2024 took the form of the Quinquennial Inspection which Joanna carried out with great attention to detail and her report was received in December. The analysis of her recommendations and the planning for work to be undertaken will form a large part of the Fabric Committee’s efforts during 2024, alongside the consideration of the much-needed new heating system, and improvements to the building to enhance our facilities both for ministry and as an event venue. We can confirm that the routine maintenance tasks and records for both the Abbey and St Andrew’s were properly completed during 2024.

Finally, our thanks to Revd Canon Claire for her leadership and friendship during the year and to the Ministry team and the PCC for their support and encouragement.

Sam Andrews and Martin Fowler, Churchwardens

ABBEY LINK MAGAZINE

Abbey Link is rolling on. Its production requires a significant team effort. In no special order, thanks go to: Roger Piper for the logistics around delivery of the magazine, rolling into action as each edition arrives but also working between issues to ensure the delivery system is ready for the task. As previous faithful deliverers move away or become too infirm to continue, he leads the action to give them thanks and to find new volunteers. David Paynter manages the billing of advertisers – an important task and is our lead proofreader, an invisible but much appreciated function (any remaining errors are still mine!). Bob Doust is excellent at finding new advertisers so that the funds keep coming in that pay for printing. He liaises with our advertisers to ensure new

advertising copy arrives in a timely manner. Recently he has also been approaching sports clubs around the town for articles – much appreciated. Many thanks also to all our individual deliverers!

I have been putting requests in the weekly bulletins (thank you Elizabeth and Fiona) for ideas on new articles. There has been a steady flow of material. I am immensely grateful and very much hope it continues. At Roger’s suggestion we have included appeals for volunteer deliverers in recent editions of the magazine and a number of folk have come forward and taken up rounds.

For the year 2024 the magazine has made a profit for the PCC of £2,777.50 - calculated by in-year payments received (£7,314.50) less payments made (£4,537.00 for printing). This is up £499.50 from 2023 with the same advertisement pricing structure as for 2023. There is greater income from one-off adverts and from smaller adverts. We hope everyone finds something of interest to read!

Christopher Kimberley, Editor

AFTER SERVICE COFFEE 2023

Another busy year for the team of helpers serving refreshments after the services. We were pleased to welcome Angela Palmer to the team, and would be extremely happy to extend our welcome to more volunteers. Please do consider joining us, either to serve coffees or to help with the dishwasher, as the rota is somewhat low on numbers.

In addition to the weekly Sunday services, we also served refreshments at the Epiphany Carol Service, the Unity Service, the Archbishop’s visit and All Souls’ Service.

Your generous donations raised the following sums:

Worcestershire Young Carers	(Jan – Apr)	- £231.33
Friends of the Holy Land	(Lent Appeal)	- £ 80.82
Pershore Food Bank	(Apr – Aug)	- £331.40
Onwards & Upwards Ex-offenders		
Work Experience Project	(Sept – Dec)	- £386.80

Thank you for your support

Sara Speed

BABIES AND TODDLERS

The Babies and Toddlers Group continues to thrive, with 20 -30 children attending on Friday mornings at St Andrew’s Centre. We have been able to offer a warm welcome, especially to families moving to the new housing developments in and around

Pershore, providing opportunities for the children to play and parents to meet and chat together.

Highlights from 2024:

- Cards and pots of primulas or violas for Mothering Sunday
- Making palms from coloured paper and cardboard tubes
- Making chocolate nests and foam Easter Bunny shapes
- Finger paint hand prints on cards for Father's Day
- A summer party, each child receiving a picture book
- Harvest Collage pictures
- Baking gingerbread figures, raising £48.70 for Children in Need
- Christmas cards, tree decorations and a party, including a visit from Father Christmas (special thanks to Duncan Cadbury as the man with the beard!) and a nativity story book and chocolates for each child

We were very grateful to Revd. Alma who conducted our Nativity Service (helped by her collection of knitted figures) and our Palm Sunday service. Unfortunately, Alma was unable to be with us to celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving, but Sam Andrews stepped in and led an age-appropriate service of song and prayer in the Abbey. Sam has assisted at the weekly sessions, enabling her to make contact with families and to give information about Café Church and family-friendly special events.

Special thanks go to the team of helpers for their cheerful support as they help to prepare and clear away the play equipment or serve refreshments, always with a friendly welcome.

Sara Speed

BELLS RINGERS

2024 was another busy year, which we started by ringing in the New Year. On February 3rd we rang for the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury and on 10th rang quarter peals of Grandsire Triples, Yorkshire Surprise Major and Madeline Delight Major in memory of Madeline Reeder.

In addition to our regular service ringing, we rang as usual for the Plum Festival and on Remembrance Day, but also for 'Ring out For Peace' in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings; for Jayne Parker following her ordination as a priest at Worcester Cathedral; we rang for Julie Newman as an 80th Birthday compliment and we tolled the Tenor in memory of Michael Amies (a great local personality) on the day of his funeral.

During the year we rang for 8 weddings and welcomed 10 groups of visiting ringers, some of whom rang at both churches. Our visitors memorably included Mike Wigley,

a wheelchair user, who rang at the Abbey after being piggy-backed up the tower and his chair being hauled up to the ringing platform on a rope!

Sadly, in July, we lost a long serving ringer, John Alexander, who last rang at Great Comberton for the Kings Coronation. We rang the Abbey bells in celebration of his life both before and after his funeral on 9th August. We also said goodbye to two ringers – Sarah and Lily, who have moved to South Wales where they will continue ringing.

We hosted our first PASA coffee morning, raising £75.33 for the St Andrew's Trust.

And finally, right at the end of the year our Tower Captain, Stuart, had a very nasty car accident. Thankfully he is recovering, and we are looking forward to welcoming him back once he is fully well.

Sally Stewart, Secretary, Pershore Abbey Society of Bell Ringers

BOOKSTALL

I am happy to report continued success on the bookstall since my last report. Visitors to the Abbey always remark on the friendly smiles and useful information that they receive from our welcomers. We also have the privilege of showing off our beautiful building and its history. It's a privilege to be able to greet people visiting for the first time or on a return visit.

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.

As before 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, and although we would prefer to have less hours when no-one is present, the gaps in the rota seem to be slowly filling and if people are unable to fill their regular commitment, will do an empty slot. However if you would like to become a welcomer you would be very welcome!

Turnover has been consistently good and spread equally across cash and cards- sales for 2024 were nearly £5000

I have continued to source and stock the existing range of cards and gifts whilst trying new stock. So far, the church mice and olive wood crosses, hearts and angel holding items and key rings have been very popular. At Christmas our wooden decorations sold very well. We now have a bespoke tea towel on sale and revamped keyrings and fridge magnets. New card ranges have been selling well too, and I have tried to cover more of the celebrations, annual festivals and daily life events with appropriate cards whilst remaining in tune with the ethos of the Abbey.

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

Sally Whyte

CAFÉ CHURCH

Café Church met once a month except for August. Each month the informal, family friendly service was based on a theme according to the time of year in the church calendar. Highlights were 'Knowing God - Getting Close to God' where we built a wall to represent the barriers we put between us and God and were reminded Jesus died to break down these barriers, so we knocked it down later in the service! 'The Ascension of Christ – Up, Up and Away' where we had balloons and 'God is Our Guide in a Frightening and Unpredictable World' with an obstacle course to complete blindfolded!

The team of Suzanne Clarke, Susan Williams, Beth Seale, Christine Chambers and Sam Andrews meet regularly to plan each service.

Using Powerpoint for the service continues to work well. The 'self-service' style breakfast is a success with adults and children.

The team share the leading of the service, giving the talk, and reading the prayers. Other ministry team members have also been invited to give the talk. Members of the congregation read the reading and the kitchen team ensure that the food and drink is provided. Thanks to everyone!

Over the year the numbers attending have varied with our highest attendance of 20 adults and 8 under 16s in October and our lowest attendance of 12 adults and 2 under 16s in July. We have welcomed a couple of new families and hope that there will be others next year as well.

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, decorated cross, baking and making their own Easter Garden.

After our Outdoor Morning Praise Service and refreshments in July, we held a 'Fun at the Abbey' afternoon. People were invited to join us for the service and stay on or just for the games and a BYO picnic. Giant connect four, skittles, giant Jenga, snakes and ladders, boules to name but a few were on offer and the weather was glorious. Three families joined us for the service and stayed for the games and picnic and a further three joined us for the games and picnic.

For the first time we offered a weekly group for the summer holidays, while our Babies and Toddlers group had a break. Summer's Little Seeds met on Friday mornings from the 26th of July to the 23rd of August. Using the 'Little Seeds' resource from the Diocese of Worcester website, pre-school aged children, their siblings and accompanying adult came to hear a story, listen to a message and prayer, sing a song, make a craft, take part in a free play activity and have a snack – all based around the children's story book used that week e.g. The Rainbow Fish. Most weeks we had 10 children attend with an accompanying adult and hope that this is something that will become a regular provision.

Based on the success of last year, on the 13th of August we held our second drop-in Summer Activity Morning in the Abbey for children up to 11 years old. The summer themed crafts and games this year included, egg box ladybirds, turtles and ice creams, sand clay and biscuit decorating, with drinks and biscuits available for the children and whoever had accompanied them. Everyone who attended went home with a goody bag, funded by Pershore Rotary, many thanks to Rotary for providing this.

We also held the Light Party again, for children aged 5 to 10 years old, on the 27th of October. This event is our positive alternative to Halloween. There were carved pumpkins for decoration where a pumpkin prayer was said, and the children had a copy to take home with them. They decorated cupcakes with stars and crescent moons, made a cardboard tube lighthouse and jam jar lantern. Just before having a hot dog and hot chocolate, we completed the stained-glass prayer they had made as a joint activity. All who attended went home with a goody bag.

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!

1st Crowle Cubs visited the Abbey for an evening in November for a tour and to work towards a badge. They were told about some of the Abbey's history, about the wildlife

in and around the Abbey, had a go at ringing the bell and were told a story about a tiger!

Our 4th 'Edible Nativity', on the first Sunday in December, was attended by 14 children and a baby – most with an accompanying adult. Everyone enjoyed listening to the nativity story and decorating the gingerbread figures at the relevant part of the story. We then joined the congregation in the Abbey to share what we had been doing. This event was thoroughly enjoyed by the children and parents! A special thanks again to all who helped on the day and the Abbey ladies who baked lots of gingerbread Marys, Josephs, Shepherds, Kings, Donkeys, mangers and stars!

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

CHILDREN'S WORK – SCHOOLS

During 2024, volunteers have gone into our local schools to take assemblies and collective worship - fortnightly visits to Orchard Primary School, fortnightly to Pinvin C of E Academy, also the Open the Book team have continued to go into Abbey Park Schools Federation, once a term.

It was so lovely to welcome the Year 4 children from Abbey Park in March and the Year 5 children from Orchard Primary in July, 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 Pershore High School Year 7, Abbey Park Year 1, Pinvin Year 2 and reception class, Holy Redeemer Pre-School, Orchard Primary Year 1 and a return visit from Inkberrow Year 1 who were all, among other things, looking at Christian places of worship. The Abbey hosted St. Barnabas C of E First and Middle School in February for their iSingPOP afternoon and evening concerts, and Bromsgrove School for their afternoon concert and Evensong in April. A group of children from Himbleton C of E Primary School led us in collective worship for the Archbishop of Canterbury's lunchtime stop off at the Abbey in February. A small group from Pershore High School also came to the Abbey in December to look at the Christmas jewellery tree decorations, they had made, hung on the tree in the Wick chapel. Unfortunately, they were unable to join us for the tree decorating morning. During their visit they also completed the children's trail.

In March we welcomed a team from God and the Big Bang who held a day of interactive workshops, providing the opportunity to discover, discuss and debate the compatibility

of science and faith. The day was suitable for all, those of any faith or none. Year 5 pupils and staff from Pinvin, Holy Redeemer, Abbey Park and Orchard Primary (year 6) joined us for this exciting and informative day.

Years 4, 5 and 6 from Holy Redeemer and Orchard Primary took part in an Organ Workshop. Holy Redeemer in March with Nick Freestone and Orchard Primary in October with Nick and James MacDowall-Scott, our new Director of Music. Both schools learnt a lot about the organ, and a few were also able to have a go at playing it. We look forward to holding other workshops next year.

A group of children from Holy Redeemer, who are part of the school's Eco Gardening Team, came in October to help with the preparation of and sowing the seeds in the Wildflower area. It was a great effort, and we are looking forward to seeing the results of all the hard work. Children from Holy Redeemer and Orchard Primary also joined us in December for the Diocese of Worcester Advent Posada. Mary, Joseph and the donkey travelled around to different churches in the diocese from the 1st December until they reached Worcester Cathedral on the 24th December. Whilst at the Abbey Mary and Joseph had a 'hot air balloon' flight from the bellringing platform and then joined the children to sing carols around the organ and listen to a Christmas story!

Many of the local schools including Orchard Primary, Abbey Park Schools Federation, Pinvin C of E Academy, Bowbrook and Pershore High School have visited the Abbey for their various services – Christmas, Easter and Leavers'.

We are so looking forward in 2025 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 house to house collection) raised £2,737.60 to which 37 Gift Aid submissions were added.

In November there was a Middle East Crisis Appeal. £103.50 was raised at a Sunday Breakfast event and £42 at a 10.30 service collection.

The Christmas Card Board Collection raised £490, to which Gift Aid submissions were added.

Many thanks to all who support Christian Aid through their time and donations, both

personally and through the Abbey; in the 80 years of its existence it is as vital now as ever.

Sarah Thomson.

DIGITAL MEDIA

	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	March 2025
Facebook Likes	224	468	628	741	821	894
Facebook Followers	240	519	683	862	1032	1228
Twitter Followers	58	123	157	187	203	199
Tinstagram Followers	73	208	356	585	821	854
You Tube Subscribers	4	97	278	351	445	562

Once again we have seen a steady organic increase in our online following on the main three platforms.

X (Twitter) is a political minefield these days and I only share our weekly vlogs to avoid toxicity and abuse. At present The Church of England and the Diocese are still using the platform daily but if they take the decision to leave X then we will follow suit.

Facebook still remains our most successful form of engagement as we can share links from our YouTube channel too. Popular posts are photos from events in the Abbey/local community. The only problem with Facebook are the algorithms which mean that a post can reach our followers up to 3 weeks after it is uploaded. It's also increasingly full of adverts these days too.

However, the stars of the show are definitely Mr & Mrs P. They have been pure PR gold and responsible for much of our increased following. Although Claire worked hard to get us to the 1000 followers on Facebook, Mr & Mrs P worked even harder - successfully rearing 4 fledged chicks who brought great delight to many and saw us gain over 200 followers on Facebook alone.

I share daily prayer posts from the Diocese and The Church of England daily to our stories on Instagram along with the vlogs and photo content/reels. Following on Instagram fluctuates. Again being owned by Meta priority is given to paid promotional posts and accounts so we have the same difficulty as Facebook reaching our followers.

Viewing figures remain good on YouTube thanks to the Livestream services.

In summary, our online presence is slowly but surely increasing after 5 1/2 years and it continues to help us hold a very good standing within the community.

Trudy Burge, Digital Media Volunteer

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & ORGANIST

Since my appointment in April I have been privileged to serve as Director of music at Pershore Abbey and have seen some really encouraging results from our committed choir, with several new members join us, seen the choir broadcast on the Church of England livestream, enjoyed the choir excelling themselves at our Advent and Christmas Carols Services, and our Epiphany and Candlemas services too. The standard of music has consistently improved week by week, the confidence of the choir is rising and we are developing a very positive reputation in the Diocese and beyond.

The Ruffatti organ is an absolute dream to play both liturgically and as a recital instrument. The series of Sunday promenade concerts have been a great success, attracting 60-70 audience members each time. The first CD of the Ruffatti organ was produced in 2024, which was part of my MA major project. I graduated in February with distinction in organ performance. Many thanks to Canon Claire and the PCC for allowing me to record the organ. The two organ workshops held with Orchard Primary School and Pinvin CE Academy have been really wonderful too, I look forward to many more.

Plans are in motion for a second CD, another recital series and the launch of a junior choir and the inception of an organ scholarship in 2025. The choir goes from strength to strength, and I am so proud of them. I welcome more new members, please do get in touch.

I would like to thank Canon Claire and the PCC for putting their faith in my abilities, the choir for following my leadership, the congregation for accepting my offerings and to Elizabeth and Fiona for supporting my work so wonderfully. This is most definitely a joint effort for the outreach of Pershore Abbey.

James MacDowall-Scott, Director of Music

ECO CHURCH

Litter picking continued to be popular and grew in two ways. Firstly into Weedy picking to keep the weeds down for path maintenance. Secondly through Litter picking videos into interest into our waste. This resulted in organised visits open to all. We went to our local waste sorting centre near Norton where we learnt more about what could and should be recycled. Suzanne put a quiz display to help us explore this. Subsequent

to this we also organised a visit to the EnviRecover plant at Hartlebury, not without its controversy.

Work continues on the Wildlife Area in Abbey Park, now in its third year. Kevin and John along with local schools have worked hard to challenge the previous grass monoculture. Possibly the greatest success has been the increase in insects in the area, as it is not easy to create a self recreating classic wildflower meadow.

We have continued Give and Take Coffee Mornings, Earth Hour, Green Week walks and Special Creation Themed Services.

The next organised visit is to Mucknell Abbey to explore how this religious group endeavour to live more sustainably.

David Oldham

FLOWER GUILD

2024 was the Guild's 70th year and we are very grateful that people are willing to give their support whether in helping to arrange flowers or donating flowers for loved ones to be remembered.

We are no longer able to arrange wedding flowers due to the ill health of some of our more experienced arrangers but we will continue arranging for Sunday Services and the main festivals in the Church's calendar.

The Easter Lily Sunday instigated by the Reverend Canon Claire Lording has become very successful and we hope to continue this tradition.

Mary Cope, Secretary

PERSHORE FOODBANK

During 2024 the Foodbank issued 685 vouchers and fed a total of 1933 people. Some of these were repeat visits and we use the Trussell Trust Data collection system to ensure that Foodbank use should be for short-term crises rather than long-term dependency. That said, we were founded under the auspices of Pershore Abbey and would never turn away anyone in need.

This represented an overall reduction on the previous year, where a cost of living crisis pushed a number of people into sudden difficulties. It is heartening to see this levelling off, due in part to our clients being able to access various sources of help with their fuel bills. We have also continued to build links to other service providers and support

systems in the local community. Regular attendance at the Community Network Forum and liaison with Pershore United Charities means that we are able to offer so much more by way of signposting than simply handing out leaflets. We also continue to host Citizens Advice on a weekly basis, where clients can access confidential help on a more in-depth basis.

Responding to the social climate, we ran two targeted initiatives to support vulnerable groups during 2024. During the school summer holidays we encouraged families who needed our support to attend the Foodbank at fortnightly intervals (in other words, on three consecutive occasions) to assist them to keep their children active and well fed. We secured the cooperation of a local Factory Shop to ensure that we could provide gift cards (£25 or £50) for warm bedding or emergency household goods to older people or those with disabilities. The Fruit Salad greengrocers in the High Street continues to be an invaluable partner in the administration of our fresh fruit and vegetable vouchers (£10 or £20).

It is the Pershore Foodbank that funds these initiatives, thanks mainly to generous financial donations from our community, however, an encouraging number of those donations are now coming from local businesses and organisations as well as from private individuals. Food donations at our regular collection points have remained steady despite the increasing costs of groceries. Our regular, local donors such as churches and schools have been particularly responsive to the “monthly request” circulations ensuring a sound match with our needs. We are still bulk-buying approximately 50% of our foodstuffs, supported by various tranches of the Household Support Fund from Wychavon Council.

The ten year anniversary of the founding of our Foodbank was celebrated with a tea party for volunteers in June and, while we were disappointed not to be able to secure the attendance of our MP, we did have a special visit from the High Sheriff of Worcester to make up for it. The Trussell Trust carried out its biennial “Governance Health Check” during October. This was a full audit of our policies and procedure in respect of: Trusteeship, Accounting, Safeguarding, Data Protection, Health & Safety, Recruitment and Fair Treatment. Although an arduous undertaking, this enabled us to ensure that all our documentation was available and up-to-date.

Annual Report 2024 - Comparative overall data 2023 and 2024

	2023	2024	+/- %
Households	377	320	-15
Vouchers fulfilled	800	685	-14
First time clients	214	175	-18

Parcels distributed by age group (using legacy age group bands)

Adults	2023	2024	+/- %
17-24	179	148	
25-64	1063	883	
65+	130	78	
total	1372	1109	-19
Children			
0-4	205	203	
5-11	474	353	
12-16	350	268	
total	1029	824	-20
TOTAL	2401	1933	-19

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 15th September 2024

Elected Executive Committee

Dr Judith Dale

Margaret Goodrich

Michael Hodges (Chair of the Executive Committee Meetings)

Sarah Ingles

Jonathan Sington

Martyn Spence

Patricia Steel

Robin Whittaker

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

Samantha Andrews

Martin Fowler

1. Finances

As reported at the 2024 FOPA AGM, the FOPA accounts for the period ending 5th April 2024 showed a balance of £2,847,540 (previous year £2,732,950). Grants to Pershore Abbey PCC for the year amounted to £84,631 (previous year £369,114).

The FOPA Finance & 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 2024 included provision of funding for lighting, heating repairs, duckboard repairs, processional cross repairs and noticeboards.

3. Lecture

Fundraising activities were largely focussed on Matthew Martin's Friends' Memorial Lecture which took place on 17th October. This was well attended and a financial success. The 2025 lecture will be given by Sir Nicholas Coleridge on 11th April 2025.

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 357 (previous year 374). The Executive Committee are keen to drive membership up in 2025.

Michael Hodges, Chair

IONA

The Iona service has been held on the fourth Sunday at 5pm with the option to join by Zoom. With the exception of a few technical hiccups, this has given people unable to join because of distance or health, the opportunity to worship with those in the Abbey.

Providing an informal, reflective space and thought provoking social and personal themes, the service is valued by those who attend as different to most services offered in churches. This year, the focus of the services has varied from prayer before the elections and for world peace, to diversity, interfaith and Christian Aid Week. The format is inclusive and informal, with opportunities for people to share their thoughts. Music is led by an able group of singers and musicians, making good use of the Iona Community worship resources.

Those attending the Iona service in September 2023 suggested themes to be explored through the following year, with a greater diversity of service leaders. Likewise in September 2024, suggestions were collected for themes for the next year. Numbers attending, either in person or online, has varied from 10 to 24.

Helen Oldham

MISSION GIVING

Once again the PCC had taken seriously its commitment to be a giving church. Thanks to an unrestricted legacy received during the year we were able to add £100 to our already pledged £3000 for mission giving.

Mindful of the great needs in the world and within our community we chose to distribute our giving to the following organisations:

Berega Hospital, Tanzania £1000
Friends for the Holy Land £1000
Persore Riverside Youth Centre £550
Persore Wellbeing Hub £550

This giving was supplemented during the year with specific collections for the work of Christian Aid and in our support for Friends of the Holy Land during Lent.

Mission Sunday took place on 17 November, where we received updates from our designated charities about their work and the difference our giving makes. We committed to continue to pray for the charities and all those who benefit from their work.

Looking outwards is important and as we give thanks for the generous giving we receive for the work of the Abbey, we give thanks that we can be generous in return and share this to build up God's Kingdom.

Revd Canon Claire Lording

MOTHERS' UNION

Members of Pershore Abbey Mothers' Union meet on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 2.30pm in St. Andrew's. The programme consists of a variety of speakers. We are encouraged to develop our spiritual lives, so we always begin with a time of prayer. Our speakers have included our retired clergy and our Curate Revd. Jayne Parker. Our link with Worcester Diocese was strengthened by the visit of our Diocesan President and our welcome to members from across the diocese to a service in the Abbey. We try to be informed about how we can help our local community, so we invited the Volunteer Coordinator of the Pershore Plus Volunteer Centre. We held a Summer Social when husbands and parish supporters joined us.

Members care for each other by praying for a certain member each month and a card is sent to members who are ill or have experienced a bereavement. We also visit members who are in residential and care homes.

Our Knit and Natter Group knitted scarves, hats, gloves, hand puppets and small teddies to help fill the 100 shoe boxes sent from the Abbey. Other members knitted Prayer Squares which have been placed in the St. John's Chapel Prayer Corner. We collected toiletries to fill Emergency Bags for women needing to stay overnight in Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

Information about the Mothers' Union can be found on a notice board at the back of the Abbey.

Reverend Alma Organ, Branch Leader

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

Well what another busy year for the PASA team!! The usual "calendar events" - Churches Together Lent Pancakes and Soup Lunches, Carnival and Plum Fayre Teas all took place successfully. Summer over we moved on to cater again for an enjoyable Harvest Supper with a hot meal served for the first time. We provided refreshments after the All Souls' Service, kindly sponsored by E. Hill and Son. Christmas followed quickly with Advent Sunday and tea and biscuits. Mulled wine and mince pies were again served after our very popular Carol Service. The "Mid Christmas Week Tea" attracted more people and was very much appreciated.

Finally, our Social Evening this year was a Pudding Event. 8 puddings were generously provided by congregation (a special chef being Henry) and PASA members and enjoyed by all (especially the men!!!).

PASA has also organised monthly Saturday Coffee Mornings. This year other local groups were invited to host one. Many newcomers attended, boosting the funds. £537.82 was raised for the St Andrew's Parish Centre Trust.

Thank you to all my willing, hard working committee members for their support at all events. We make a good team together and I value your friendship and goodwill.

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 when requested.

We send both Easter and Christmas cards to everyone on our current list of people we are supporting. The group also sends 'Thinking of You' and 'Get Well' cards on a regular basis to help people feel they have not been forgotten by the churches when they are unable to attend and to know they are being prayed for. 'Sympathy' cards are sent whenever we have been informed of a bereavement.

Sadly we are no longer able to send occasional posies of flowers as the person who offered this lovely ministry has moved away.

Our success in maintaining contact with so many people depends upon all members of the congregation communicating with us as they become aware of friend's or neighbour's needs so that we can ensure an appropriate response is made.

Angela Gerrard, Pastoral Group Co-ordinator

PLUM FESTIVAL

Once again Pershore Abbey, contributed to Pershore's Plum Festival in 2024, which was held over the Bank Holiday weekend. Throughout the year Suzanne Clarke attended festival committee meetings in planning for the festival.

Unfortunately, due to rain on the Sunday, the Teddy Praise service had to be held in the Abbey. This was led by Claire for all ages, along with all teddies, ready to be blessed! It was lovely to welcome the Plum Possé, Queen Victoria, Prunella, Eggbert and some members of the Plum Festival Committee. The annual presentation of one

pound of Pershore Plums also took place at this service, these were gratefully received by Roger Latham (Director of Mission & Ministry) from the Diocese.

The Bank Holiday Monday was a huge success, the sun shone, 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! 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 675 cars filled the park and many thanks to the volunteers who helped with stewarding the cars into their positions.

Musical entertainment was provided by Shelia Joynes and James MacDowall-Scott on the organ and Pershore Town Choir entertained a packed Abbey.

St Andrew's supplied much needed refreshment throughout the day.

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 £9,700 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 strengthened in 2024 with the visit of a small group from Pershore to Salzwedel between 6th and 9th June 2024. John Ayres' impressions are recorded in a brilliant published article. This is a summary: "Early in the morning of 6th June 2024 five members of the congregation of Pershore Abbey gathered in bright sunshine at Birmingham Airport to pay a visit to our twin church of St Katharine's in Salzwedel, central Germany. Michael Hodges was our leader. The others were Angela Gerrard, Emily Miller and Jan and John Ayres. Michael and Angela had been before but for the rest of us it was our first visit. We arrived in Salzwedel in the early evening and were warmly greeted by their pastor, Matthias Friske, and our hosts at the Lateinschule, their equivalent of our St Andrew's. We all joined in a barbecue dinner in the garden and started to get to know each other better.

On Friday morning Matthias took us on a complete tour of the church, which is even bigger than Pershore Abbey, showing us such treasures as its triptychs and the

surprisingly extensive library. We then made a tour of several of the smaller churches in the surrounding villages, many of which are Matthias's responsibility. The day ended with another al fresco dinner in the garden of the Lateinschule and a slide show of previous Pershore and Salzwedel exchange visits.

On Saturday morning it was our turn to lead the morning service, and we took as our model the Iona service with its simple hymns and readings.

The main event of the day was a trip to Magdeburg for which we caught the train. We visited the Lutheran Cathedral of Saint Mauritius and St Katharina, the oldest Gothic cathedral in Germany. Here we spent the rest of the morning as Matthias explained some of the history and many of the highlights of this imposing building. Then some of us explored the small but superbly well-presented Dom museum. We returned to Salzwedel for a quick supper with our hosts and a cello and organ concert in the Katharinenkirche.

On Sunday morning, we attended church for the morning service, during which we were presented to the congregation and a small presentation was made to us.

Our abiding memories will be of extremely generous people with warm and loving hearts, for whom nothing was too much trouble. Language was no real barrier. Strong friendships have been formed, and we will all be in each other's thoughts and prayers in the coming years."

In 2025, ten members of the Katharinenkirche community will be visiting Pershore between 29th May and 1st June. We can't wait!!

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 or Rev'd Canon Claire Lording if interested.

Michael Hodges

SIDESPEOPLE, SOUND AND LIVESTREAM

Our sidespeople, sound and live streamers continue to do a fantastic job and cope with many different things at our weekly services. Anyone coming to our services are given a warm, friendly welcome and a lovely diary entry was written by Bishop Graham James (former Bishop of Norwich) for the Church Times acknowledging the genuine, warm welcome they had received even though they weren't recognised until after the service! We are still in need of new sidespeople, which would help lighten the load for

those already on the rota. If you are interested or know someone who might be, please let either Churchwarden or one of the team know.

List of Sidespeople, Sound and Live streamers on the Rota for January to December 2024:

Jan Ayres	John Ayres	Nicky von Benzon
Viv Breed	Barbara Bristow	David Bryden
Helen Bryden	Mary Cope	Edward Denley
Susan Denley	Bob Gillmor	Robin Hancox
Carolyn Harford	Jacqui Hughes	Jane Knox
Stephen Knox	Bill Newman	Julie Newman
David Oldham	Kevin O’Neill	Barbara Priscott
Lynne Raymer	Ruth Smith	Martyn Spence
Ivan Steele	Sarah Thomson	Sally Whyte
Jane Williams-Thomas	Bruce Wilson	

With special mention to Peter Stansbie who has helped as a sidesperson and with the sound at some of our big services like Remembrance.

Sam Andrews, Churchwarden

THE ABBEY STAGERS

Our team of 16 have shown continuing commitment throughout the year. We take our name from the primary task of erecting stages in service to people who hire the Abbey for concerts, though not everyone who books the Abbey requires a stage!

We are known as those who erect stages for concerts, yet two thirds of the “call outs” have been to simply move and restore the furniture in the Abbey, before and after various events

We express our grateful thanks for the dedication of the members of the team in being willing to do their work on Friday afternoons, on Saturday mornings or late Saturday evenings.

If you would like to join the team, you would be more than welcome!

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 PCC aims to:

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

Demand for use of the building continues to be strong. The Foodbank continues to be held twice a week. We have several other successful community groups using the building and are keen to further expand community use.

The building continues to need substantial expenditure on its ageing fabric. Given our need to raise funds for this, we are seeking the transfer of St Andrew's to the PCC, replacing the current lease, which can be a block. The diocese are supporting us in this, but it is currently stalled at a national level.

In the summer Joanna Daykin agreed to act as our lead architect for St Andrew's as well as the Abbey.

We have been successful in obtaining a grant of £12,000 through Wychavon Council for improvements to the outside area to the South. We are now in the process of designing the work with our architect.

At the start of the year, we appointed Sam Andrews as our part time co-ordinator, and this has made a substantial improvement to the management of the building.

During the year Alison Jeynes retired as our cleaner and Julie Hurford was appointed in her place.

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

Peter Stansbie

STEWARDSHIP

Thank you to those who have signed up to the Parish Giving Scheme and those remaining in the Planned Giving Scheme

Of the Gift Aid claims submitted for 2024, the refund received was £8,877.25. In addition £5,904.06 had accrued by the year end, to be received in 2025). The total Gift Aid claim of standing orders and cash deposits for 2024 was therefore £14,781.31

The Gift Aid received through the Parish Giving Scheme for 2024 was £6,550.38.

Sarah Thomson

TANZANIAN LINK

We give thanks that we are part of a worldwide church and as such are committed to praying for our link parish of St John's, Kihonda. Canon Reginald Mdugi and his team are never far from our thoughts and we always look forward to the communication we have with them.

We continue to reach out to see if there are specific projects that we can support and work alongside the parish on.

It is hoped that in 2025/26 the new Bishop of Worcester may be able to visit the Diocese of Morogoro and Kihonda. We also hope that some parishioners may feel able to join that visit as links grow best when they are face to face.

Revd Canon Claire Lording

FAIRTRADE

From April 2024 Fair Trade products were once again available to buy at the Abbey on 1st and 3rd Sundays after the morning Eucharist service. This proved to be very popular and is a good representation of the Eco Church policy at the Abbey. There has been a regular flow of sales, however, the supplies are sometimes variable leading to some shortages of more popular items. Adding the facility for customers to pay by card has helped a lot. It is not the intention to make a profit from this venture but rather to increase the awareness of the need to support farmers and producers in the global south.

It would not be possible to run this stall without the support of my great team of Viv, Jane and David and I thank them most sincerely.

As the Advocate for Fair Trade I am available to give short talks on the subject to groups who might be interested to hear more.

Hilary Fowler, Co-ordinator

PERSHORE ABBEY WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Another good year after our 60th year celebrations, we continued with a selection of speakers, from St. John Ambulance, History of Pershore, Spring Gardening, Search & Rescue, and a day trip to Glass Garden in Offenham.

We held our usual Abbey Service taken by Claire, followed by afternoon tea.

We had a Bring & Buy with a Beetle Drive. A donation was made to Pershore Life Guards.

In December we were entertained by Pershore U3A Ukulele Band and our Christmas meal at The White Horse was very entertaining! Enjoyed by all.

Linda Layland, Chair

b) PCC Accounts for year ending 31st December 2024

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 of High Street, Pershore. There were no issues to report from this examination.

Financial Position

The Abbey's finances have, for the past few years, been dominated by the organ project. Now that the project has been completed, and with the absence of any other major building works last year, annual income fell by £325,768 to £318,752 (from £644,520 in 2023) and annual expenditure reduced by £433,808 to £302,217 (from £736,025 in 2023).

These accounts are for the charity which comprises the activities of the PCC plus Pershore Food Bank. The PCC (by which I mean the Abbey together with St Andrew's but excluding the Food Bank) made a surplus of £7,623 for the year.

This was after absorbing an annual increase in staff costs of over £10,000, arising mainly from the appointment of the Director of Music and the co-ordinator for St Andrew's. A reduction in energy costs of 25% helped to offset this. There was a 4% year-on-year increase in regular giving and it was a successful year for fundraising. Receipts from concert hires for the Abbey, rental of St Andrew's, the Pershore Carnival and the Plum Festival were, in total, 22% higher than for 2023. On the other hand, there was no Organ Festival this year.

The balance of the reduction in annual expenditure (after the organ) is mostly accounted for by lower payments to the Diocese of Worcester for Ministry Share and the Ministry Support Fund. The Abbey paid £60,000 for Ministry Share, which is slightly more than 100% of its commitment. Ministry Share covers the stipend and accommodation costs of clergy. In the previous two years the Abbey made an additional donation to the Diocese of Worcester's Ministry Support Fund, which assists other parishes which cannot meet their Ministry Share target. A donation of £45,050 was made in 2023 and of £49,887 in 2022. These donations, together with the sharp increase in energy costs, led to a depletion of the Abbey's cash and savings reserves. This was no longer sustainable and no donation to the Ministry Support Fund was made in 2024.

The Friends of Pershore Abbey donated £30,151 towards the repointing of the north-east walls, repairs to the north aisle roof, partial replacement of the wooden walkways on the tower roof, and lighting for the bell-ringing platform. They also contributed to the maintenance of the new organ. The PCC is also grateful to St Andrew's Parish Centre Trust for grants of £530 for the upkeep of St Andrew's.

Due to continuing generous support from the community, the Food Bank recorded a surplus of £8,577.

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

Changes to endowment funds

There was a major change in the composition of the investments in 2024. The provisions of the Charities Act 2022 allow churches to cash in any endowment fund with a value less than £25,000. The PCC was able to close five funds with a total value of £53,872. The monies raised are still deemed to be restricted funds, which can only be used for the purpose for which the original endowments were made. (This, therefore, created a transfer of £53,872 from endowment funds to restricted funds in the accounts). These restricted funds support the maintenance and repair of the Abbey and St Andrew's and the organ. The PCC has placed the funds raised into a separate savings bank account where they are available in case of urgent need.

Restricted Funds

The total value of restricted funds increased to £184k from the balance of £126k at 31 December 2023, mainly because of the transfer from endowment funds explained above.

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 balance of investments was increased by £9,817 at the year-end revaluation. These investments are held for the long term and their total value at 31 December 2024 was £328,105.

This includes the value of endowment funds (£233,606). We are unable to spend the capital of these funds – only the dividends received from them which become part of the restricted funds.

Thanks

I am very grateful for the support of the people who lighten my load as treasurer by carrying out vital tasks: 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.

Edward Denley, Treasurer

Summary Financial Information for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
<u>Income and Endowments</u>				
Voluntary Income - regular giving				
Stewardship giving	75,118	0	75,118	74,108
Tax recovery (Gift Aid)	17,587	0	17,587	12,921
Collections at services	20,703	0	20,703	18,895
	113,408	0	113,408	105,924
Voluntary income - other				
Grants	13,950	40,421	54,371	392,504
Donations and appeals	17,277	444	17,721	16,965
Food bank donations	0	47,207	47,207	38,912
St Andrews donations	146	0	146	3,730
Legacies	1,000	0	1,000	1,000
	32,373	88,072	120,445	453,111
Activities for generating funds				
Abbey hire income (concerts)	15,854	0	15,854	12,277
Bookstall income	10,369	0	10,369	6,636
Magazine income	7,315	0	7,315	6,675
Plum Festival	9,921	0	9,921	9,371
Carnival	872	0	872	726
Organ Festival	0	0	0	7,863
	44,331	0	44,331	43,547
Income from investments				
Dividends	0	4,847	4,847	5,933
St Andrews dividends	0	1,492	1,492	1,833
Bank interest	0	674	674	181
	0	7,013	7,013	7,947
Income from church activities				
Abbey service fees	11,776	0	11,776	14,442
St Andrews hire charges	18,153	0	18,153	16,345
Other income	3,626	0	3,626	3,203
	33,555	0	33,555	33,990
Total Income	223,667	95,085	318,752	644,520

Expenditure

Ministry and administration

Ministry share	60,000	0	60,000	95,000
Cultural recovery 2 expense	0	0	0	0
Ministry and worship expenses	16,106	0	16,106	7,436
Youth work and mission	17,287	3,334	20,621	16,646
Office and administration	41,427	0	41,427	35,305
Food bank expenditure	0	38,629	38,629	47,783
Depreciation	8,484	0	8,484	8,869
	143,304	41,963	185,267	211,039

Other running costs

Organ expenditure	0	1,649	1,649	402,656
Abbey development fund	0	0	0	0
Heating and lighting	24,720	0	24,720	33,399
Insurance	0	8,550	8,550	8,236
Maintenance and furniture	15,166	42,696	57,862	57,755
Cleaning	8,502	0	8,502	7,417
	48,388	52,895	101,283	509,463

Fundraising expenses

Bookstall	6,348	0	6,348	3,279
Magazine	4,537	0	4,537	4,397
Plum Festival expenses	707	0	707	793
Organ Festival expenses	0	0	0	2,878
Abbey hire costs	2,001	0	2,001	3,423
Other fundraising costs	2,074	0	2,074	754
	15,667	0	15,667	15,525

Total Expenditure

207,359	94,858	302,217	736,027
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Net surplus/(deficit) before gains and losses on investments

16,308	227	16,535	-91,507
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(Gains) /Losses on investments

0	-9,817	-9,817	-32,596
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Surplus/(deficit) after investments

16,308	10,044	26,352	-58,911
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Add reserves brought forward	30,995	407,893	438,888	497,799
Total funds carried forward	47,303	417,937	465,240	438,888
Represented by:				
Fixed Assets	0	9,923	9,923	18,407
Investments	0	328,105	328,105	372,159
Stock, sundry debtors and cash	48,854	79,909	128,763	51,946
Deduct: current liabilities	-1,551	0	-1,551	-3,624
	47,303	417,937	465,240	438,888

Edward Denley, Treasurer

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

FABRIC

At the start of 2024, the Fabric committee began with the knowledge that stonework repair was needed on the north side, also the north-east corner and buttresses. New cracks had been spotted high up by those clearing the gutters. (For decades there has been slow movement in this part of the Abbey building). As we were awaiting our Quinquennial inspection, sadly our architect Robert Kilgour told us that he must reduce his workload and in April resigned from his role at Pershore Abbey and from several cathedrals. We are most grateful to Robert for all his attention and support as our architect for 17 years. After due process, in June three potential Abbey architects were shortlisted and interviewed. All were impressive and Joanna Daykin was appointed as our new architect to begin in August. After a short period to familiarise herself with the building, its history and our needs, she made her full Quinquennial Inspection in October – the same time as the lime-mortar repointing of the stonework was being carried out by Treasure & Son, who enabled her not only to scrutinise, but also to make use of the cherry-picker to take a closer look at the cracks. Her QI report was completed just before Christmas – priorities and projects were discussed in the new year.

The PCC Away-Day in March 2024 concentrated on identifying priorities for development to improve our welcome- these include more toilets, kitchen/hospitality facilities, choir space, storage. We need more space! All this has been passed on to our new architect for her deliberation alongside the needs of the building after the QI

The wooden walkway at the top of the tower was partially replaced with more sections to be done. This is the work of Jason Marshall who, in 2023, generously made and donated our peregrine nesting platform. In 2024 he enabled us to erect a camera to

live stream the activities of our peregrine family, the first chicks successfully being hatched in May 2024.

During 2024 the Churchwardens and members of the Fabric Committee kept up with all routine maintenance and considered further the potential to adapt our heating system. To contribute significantly to Net-zero carbon by 2030 is a great challenge but we are working at this with advice from professionals. The large gas boiler is nearing the end of its life, and we are considering how to introduce more sustainable low carbon energy such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps.

Our thanks to Fiona Rice, minutes secretary and members of the fabric committee, especially Roger Piper who retired after over 20 years, to Canon Claire and the churchwardens for their support, Joanna Daykin for her wisdom, and to the Friends of Pershore Abbey CIO who funded all stonework repairs and the walkway as well as some of our maintenance including for the Ruffatti pipe organ.

Judy Dale, Chair of Fabric Committee

GOODS AND ORNAMENTS

The Churchwardens are pleased to report that the plans to install a camera, with a live feed to YouTube, looking onto the Peregrine Nesting Platform was put in place in January 2024. The camera, cabling and the time to put it all in place was very generously donated by three Abbey volunteers, aided by Jason Marshall. This enabled followers near and far to watch all four eggs hatch and to see the chicks grow and eventually fledge. Thanks also go to the ornithologists, with support from Heritage Stone Access, who came and ringed the chicks in May.

In February, after List B approval was granted, the noticeboard near the Wick door was replaced.

A new organ stool was provided by Ruffatti in October to replace the original one from 2023, due to it being defective.

By June 2024, the recently restored processional cross, despite careful handling, began to show signs of metal fatigue and once again was unable to be used. It was examined in October and a quote was received for its further conservation, which is scheduled for next year.

The antique 18th century clock in the Vicar's Vestry began to fail and is awaiting restoration.

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 continued contribution and tireless efforts during this past year. We are also grateful to the Friends of Pershore Abbey for their financial support for so many of these projects.

Sam Andrews and Martin Fowler, Churchwardens

d) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod

12 June 2024

Jason EL'Habid was appointed as a lay representative for the deanery to the House of Laity of the Diocesan Synod.

23 July 2024

Deanery Synod was an open invitation to all members of the Deanery.

Kim Brown the New Worshipping Communities Enabler for the Diocese gave a presentation encouraging engaging with more people and growing worshipping communities.

A General Synod Report was circulated and highlighted that a long and heartfelt standing ovation was given to Bishop John after his 18 years in post.

12 November 2024

This was an open Deanery Service with Archdeacon Mark Badger at All Saints, Evesham.

November 2024 Diocesan Synod

The Transformation Programme Director introduced an item focusing on the New Worshipping Communities priority of our Diocesan Transformation Strategy, together with an update on other developments.

The Chair of the diocesan Climate Crisis Task Group (CCTG), presented the revised Diocesan Environmental Strategy which can be read on the diocesan website.

The amended diocesan strategy focuses on three areas:

- Eco Church
- Working towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030
- Church's role in public witness

A motion was presented concerning sustainable church flowers.

The Synod, embraced the principles of the Sustainable Church Flowers movement which encourages a living into the Fifth Mark of Mission by promoting the use of local, seasonal and fully biodegradable compostable flowers and foliage without floral foam.

Jason El'Habid, Deanery Synod Representative

6. Statement on Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adults Policies

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Having due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safeguarding of 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 & Vulnerable Adults (at Children events, Open the Book, Toddler Group) Churchwardens, PCC members, Tower & Deputy Tower Bellringing Captain and Pastoral Visitors have valid DBS certificates.

7 DBS have been processed, and safeguarding training has been completed by 5 people during 2024, as both are a requirement every 3 years.

We are planning on using the new safeguarding recruitment hub tracker in 2025.

Suzanne Clarke, Parish Safeguarding Officer