Parochial Church Council of

**ST ANDREW’S CHURCH, COUNTESTHORPE**

**Registered Charity No 1135711**

**TRUSTEES’ ANNUAL REPORT for the year 2024**

***OUR YEAR***

**Through 2024 our congregation numbers remained low and we know that when the new Electoral Roll is completed in 2025 the number will be much smaller. In spite of that we have managed to remain financially solvent, paying the whole of our Parish Contribution to the Diocese and some more instalments of the diocesan loan for the Bridge. We have a huge repair bill waiting in the near future for the tower and the chancel walls, but loyal church members continue to be busy fund-raising.**

**The highlight of 2024 was the arrival in the summer of Assistant Curate in Training, Cameron. He ran a 'Treat Stop' at Halloween in 2024 and in 2025 has facilitated a Sunday Kids Group.**

**Messy Church continues to be successful as does the Little Friends group for mothers or carers with tiny children. The Mothers' Union branch is flourishing as are the Friendship Teas and the Craft Corner. The Rainbow Shop celebrated its 40th Anniversary in September 2024.**

***The Church***

St Andrew’s Church is a Grade II Listed building. The church was rebuilt in 1907, but its 13th/14th century tower was retained and now holds eight bells. In more recent years the church has had a new roof, new electrical wiring and sound and projection equipment. The pews have been replaced with chairs and the old organ has been replaced with an electronic one. The main entrance now has glass inner doors and new steps and railings enhance it even more. The floor was refurbished in 2019.

The church is situated on Main Street, Countesthorpe, LEICESTER LE8 5QX, and is part of the Four Saints Benefice, with Foston, Peatling Magna and Willoughby Waterleys.

There is a church hall called The Cornerstone. The church’s premises at 1 Main Street, next to the church, include a shop and a flat, both let to tenants, and The Bridge building, which has toilets, the church office, the Rainbow Shop and a meeting room. The Rainbow Shop is run by volunteers from St Andrew's, other local churches and the community and it raises funds for the interdenominational charity Christian Aid. Visitors can be sure of a cup of tea and a chat there. The Bridge meeting room is used by a number of organisations as well as the church itself. The PCC is still paying regular instalments of the loan from the Diocese for the Bridge building.

***The Church’s Mission***

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) co-operates with the Minister in promoting in the Parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelical, social and ecumenical.

*Mission Statement*

We wish to be

a transformed people who love God and each other,

a people set on fire by the Gospel of Jesus Christ,

a community that wants to share His Story with everyone we can,

seed-throwers and fire-starters, hope-peddlers and grace-givers, risk-takers and dreamers, young and old.

We aim

to seek the lost, empower the poor, strengthen the weak, embrace the outcast.

We want

to serve together, play together, worship together, pray together, laugh together, cry together, learn together and live life together,

to grow as a church in numbers and in loving service

and to see our village changed by the love God has given to us to share.

***Finance***

The funding needed comes mainly from the donations of individuals and a few fundraising initiatives during the year. Much of the upkeep of the Cornerstone and No 1 Main Street is funded by rent and fees for lettings. A Parish Contribution is paid to the Diocese of Leicester for the salaries of the stipendiary clergy and central services.

***Structure of the PCC***

The PCC is a corporate body established and operating under the Church Representation Rules of the Church of England and is Registered Charity No 1135711.

The PCC normally holds five meetings during the year. The Standing Committee, made up of the Rector, the Curate, the Churchwardens, the Lay Vice-Chair, the Treasurer, the Secretary and two members elected by the PCC, prepares the agendas. Various PCC sub-groups are set up from time to time.

The PCC’s bankers are:

HSBC, Leicester Clock Tower Branch, 2-6 Gallowtree Gate, LEICESTER LE1 1DA

Advanced Payment Solutions Limited, Cashplus Bank, 6th Floor, One London Wall, LONDON EC2Y 5EB

CBF Church of England Funds, CCLA Investment Management Ltd, 80 Cheapside, LONDON EC2V 6DZ (Central Board of Finance)

Santander (for the Rainbow Shop), Customer Service Centre, Bootle, Merseyside L30 4GB.

Its insurers are:

Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, Beaufort House, Brunswick Road, GLOUCESTER GL1 1JZ.

The Independent Examiner is Mrs Susan V Wyllie FCA, 4 Mawby Close, Whetstone, Leicester LE8 6XA.

Apart from the ex-officio members, there are fifteen elected members of the PCC, who serve for a three-year term of office, with five standing down each year.

***PCC Members 2024***

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| *Ex Officio* | |  |
| The Revd Richard Reakes, Rector  The Revd Cameron Wiltshire-Plant, Assistant Curate | |  |
| June Ainge, Reader Minister | |  |
| Sally Bailey, Deanery Synod Representative | |  |
| Stephen Bailey, Deanery Synod Representative and Churchwarden | |  |
| Anne Jelves, Churchwarden and Vice Chair | |  |
| Lindsey Jelves, Reader Minister | |  |
| Gail Mackley, Associate Minister | |  |
| Jacqui McAughey, Associate Minister | |  |
| Helen Stokes, Reader Minister and Deanery Synod Representative | |  |
| *Elected Members* | |  |
| Christine Baxter | Eva Morris (PCC Secretary) | |
| Yvonne Bennett | Rachel Pound (from November 2024) | |
| John Cook | Deborah Perkins | |
| Alison Dale (Treasurer) | Margaret Seville (from May 2024) | |
| Gill Gillespie (until May 2024) | Jacqueline Sturrock (from May 2024) | |
| David McAughey | Edward Thomas | |

***Membership***

There were 100 people on the church Electoral Roll at 31 December 2024. The average Sunday attendance, counted during October 2024, was 45 adults and 5 children. In addition other families attended Messy Church.

***Ministry/People***

The Rector of the Four Saints Benefice is the Revd Richard Reakes. In July 2024 the Revd Cameron Wiltshire-Plant joined us as Assistant Curate in Training. A retired priest with Permission-to-Officiate (the Revd Mick Gillespie) officiates at some of our services. The Benefice has four Reader Ministers (June Ainge, Lindsey Jelves, Michael Oates and Helen Stokes) and two Associate Ministers (Gail Mackley and Jacqui McAughey).

***Worship and Groups***

There is currently one service on a Sunday - alternating between Holy Communion at 9am and Morning Praise at 11am. Mid-week Holy Communion is held at 9.30am on Thursdays. Morning Prayer is said in church at 8am from Monday to Saturday. 'Messy Church' is held on the third Saturday of each month. If there is a fifth Sunday in the month just one service is held at 10am in one church in the Benefice, in turn. This service is well attended and at other times some of St Andrew's members attend services in the other churches of the Benefice.

Home Communion is provided for those who cannot get to church and this includes ministry to the Cherrytree Residential Care Home. There is a Whats App prayer and support group. The church has mid-week groups for Bible study and prayer and there is a Christian film club. In 2024 there was a Lent course called 'Be Still', about spending time with God. There is a regular Craft Group.

The tower team ring the bells on Sunday mornings and for weddings. There is a regular organist at the 9am service and singers and musicians lead the music at 11am. When they are not available the small sound and projection team are able to show pre-recorded song videos.

St Andrew’s has a long-established Mothers’ Union branch, which has a full programme of monthly meetings, including the Rally in October hosted by St Andrew’s and attended by friends from around the Deanery and the other denominations in the village. The church takes part in the annual ecumenical World Day of Prayer service in early March.

New members are welcomed to our groups.

***Outreach to the Community***

Funerals and weddings take place in St Andrew’s Church and the 11.00am service sometimes includes a baptism. On these occasions St Andrew’s endeavours to offer a welcome and ongoing pastoral care.

St Andrew’s hosts the Remembrance Service for the whole village, in the churchyard, where the village War Memorial is situated. It includes the Scouts and Guides groups' parade. The Scouts held their carol service in the church in 2024 and some of their activities take place in St Andrew's Bridge building.

Greenfield Primary School held their carol service in St Andrew's Church in 2024.

St Andrew's carol service was held in December and on Christmas Eve there were Christingle services and a Midnight Communion

The annual Service of Light was held again in 2024. This is a well-attended service when people are enabled to remember their loved ones.

The Cornerstone and The Bridge are used regularly by church and outside groups. There are ‘Friendship Teas’ on a Monday afternoon. On a Thursday afternoon during term time there is a group called *Little Friends*, for mothers or carers with tiny children.

As mentioned, the Rainbow Shop offers a welcome. It sent £15,000 to Christian Aid in 2024. That was the year when the Rainbow Shop celebrated its 40th Anniversary. About £275,000 had been raised for Christian Aid during that time.

The Bridge garden is a quiet space accessible to the community, with a dedicated team to maintain it.

As a founder member of the Countesthorpe Foodbank the church continues to support it.

***Safeguarding and Other Policies***

The church has Safeguarding Policies for both children and vulnerable adults and a benefice Safeguarding Officer, Dave McAughey. The PCC has adopted the House of Bishops' Guidance. It has a Statement on Domestic Abuse and a policy for the recruitment of ex-offenders.

It also has a Health and Safety Policy, an Equality and Diversity Policy and a Data Protection Policy.

***Communication***

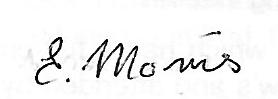
St Andrew's has a benefice website ([www.standrewscountesthorpe.co.uk](http://www.standrewscountesthorpe.co.uk)). There is a St Andrew's Church & The Bridge Facebook page and a St Andrew's Church Facebook group. The church also contributes a section in the local village newspaper, with the Baptist and Methodist churches. The newspaper is delivered free to every home and is available online. There is a weekly news sheet for church members called *What’s On Where (WOW)*, which is also on the benefice website*.*

***Financial Review***

At the beginning of this year, we were facing a deficit budget and unsure how we would meet our obligations. However, thanks to the generosity of church members who have made additional donations and fund-raised, we ended the year in a reasonable position. Our Parish Contribution to the Diocese was fully paid once again in spite of the 10% increase. Our balance sheet was looking healthy at the year end with net current assets of £19,894, having generated a surplus on the General Funds of £4,848. However we were only able to repay £6,000 of the Diocesan Loan capital, rather than the £12,000 which is needed to meet our target of repaying it within ten years.

Towards the end of the year we set up a new fund, the Church Restoration Fund, as a restricted fund for urgent works needed to the church building. This has been enthusiastically supported and raised a balance of £4,792 in the last three months of the year.

Once again we face the challenge of a large deficit in the budget going forward. We have had a further increase of 10% in the Parish Contribution, but we also need to fund-raise for the Restoration Fund. We can only hope and pray that this time next year we will be able to look back and be thankful for God’s provision for us over the year, as we are doing now for 2024.

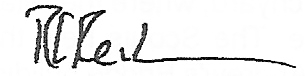


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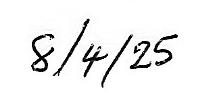


........................................................................................................... ALISON DALE (PCC Treasurer)

Signed on behalf of the PCC



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Date …………...…………………………………………………………………………………………….……