

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF

ST PAUL LEAMINGTON PRIORS

ANNUAL REPORT

and

ACCOUNTS

For the year ended 31 December 2024

ST PAUL'S PCC LEAMINGTON PRIORS 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Aims and Purposes

St Paul's Church Leamington Priors Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent in the ecclesiastical parish, Rev. Jonathan Jee, to further the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the church building, 40 Leicester Street, and 14 Taylor Avenue.

Our purpose is, 'Following Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life'. These words have always been written on the stones of the building and illustrated with three sculptures on our perimeter wall (the cross, the Bible and a dove representing the Holy Spirit). They are part of the founding vicar's vision for this parish and remain just as appropriate now that we are a Mission Hub (Resource Church) for the diocese.

Our vision is (together with others) to give everyone in our area a meaningful opportunity to respond to the Good News of Jesus by Easter 2033. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will try to fulfil this vision by helping each member of St Paul's to become a wholehearted disciple of Jesus, working towards St Paul's becoming a thriving centre for the Kingdom of God, working with other churches to continue the ministry of Jesus, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God, and demonstrating it in practical caring ways.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to providing a vibrant worshipping community into which people in the parish and beyond can be welcomed. Our services and events aim to help people to become disciples of Jesus and to grow in faith through prayer, scripture, worship, serving and fellowship.

When planning our activities each year, we consider the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable people to live out their faith as part of our church community through:

- Worship and prayer, learning about the gospel, and developing knowledge of and trust in Jesus as Lord.
- Provision of pastoral care, and helping people to grow as disciples
- Mission and outreach

To facilitate this work, we ensure that the fabric of the Church and other buildings are well maintained, that we have a suitable staff team, the finances are managed responsibly, and that all we do is underpinned with prayer.

Achievements and Performance

2024 has been a significant year at St Paul's, as we celebrated 150 years since the first service was held here on Ascension Day, 1874. We marked this milestone with an evening event to look back on all that has happened in and from the church across this time, and heard from people who were part of St Paul's many decades ago. There was great joy as we celebrated God's faithfulness over all 150 years so far. We also hosted many extra outreach events throughout the year as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations, including a Ceilidh, an Arts Week, a performance of Mark's gospel, three 'Big Question' evenings, and much more.

We are grateful to have an excellent relationship with the church school, and one of the highlights this year has been the continued work our children's ministers and volunteers have done there. In particular, we ran our first Ventures weekend jointly with the Church Pastoral Aid Society. This is an optional residential trip for Year 4 children from the school, where they have the chance to investigate the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. Forty children attended, and we are now hoping to run this annually.

St Paul's role as a Mission Hub has begun to take a clearer shape this year. Eleanor Jeans started a learning pathway for lay leaders of New Worshipping Communities (NWCs) across the diocese in partnership with

Myriad. They have six teams on board, all starting groups or churches to reach new people in new ways with God's love. It was particularly exciting in December to see the team from St Paul's start 'Hope' – a new church service that meets in the church school and is principally aimed at those connected with or living in the geographical area of the school. They run a relaxed, informal and interactive service that involves worship, prayer and Bible teaching (usually through discussion) followed by enjoying food together.

Another way we give from St Paul's is through Jonathan's various roles in the wider church. He is the Area Dean of Warwick & Leamington, Chair of Coventry Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship, and a member of General Synod (the Church of England's national governance body). This year, he was also a member of the Crown Nominations Commission for Coventry Diocese – involved in choosing the next Bishop of Coventry.



An important part of church life at St Paul's continues to be our weekly services, ministries and small groups where people gather to pray, worship and learn from the Bible together. Across 2024, we saw about 100 people leave the church - some moving to other areas, and some called to serve in other churches locally. At the same time, about 150 people have joined the church. Some of these newcomers have not been to church before, and it has been a privilege to see them growing in faith. Others have moved to the area, and some have joined us from other churches. Overall, our worshipping community has grown to around 550 adults and 250 children and young people. One couple who recently joined us said, 'Your church oozes togetherness and joy and a wonderful sense of the Lord walking amongst his people'. We praise God for his presence among us.



As with every year, a particular highlight has been the baptisms and confirmations. In June, Bishop Ruth (Acting Bishop of Coventry) confirmed a wonderful group of eight people from our church family – Steve and Sally, Mohan and Geetha, Bianca, Desmond and Miu, and Lizzie. We also celebrated fifteen baptisms and one re-enactment of baptism vows this year, each one a wonderful joy and a privilege to celebrate together.

The huge variety and quantity of ministry and outreach at St Paul's requires resourcing, and we are full of awe and gratitude for how the Lord has provided for our financial needs this year. We started 2024 with an expected deficit of around £75k by the end of the year. However, through miraculous provision and the generous giving of church members, we finished the year with a surplus. We praise God,

who generously provides all we need for the work he calls us to do. More details about our finances this year can be found towards the end of this report.

Finally, we are privileged to be a part of a wonderful church family here at St Paul's. None of the groups and events described in the next section could happen without the generous giving of time, care, creativity, leadership, resources and love that so many church members pour into the ministries they are involved in. Thank you for all you do, and we thank God for each one of you.

Activities this year have included:



Services

We have four regular services each week. On a Sunday at 8 am, around 15-20 people gather for a quiet service with Holy Communion. At 10:30 am, our service is attended by around 250 adults and 100 children and young people. Our evening service at 6:30 pm is attended by around 100 adults. Finally, our midweek congregation of around 40 people meets on Wednesdays at 11 am for a service followed by a time of fellowship over coffee and cake.

Over Christmas, we welcomed many hundreds of people through our doors to various special services, including a Service of Light, Christingle, Alternative Carols, and traditional Carols by Candlelight. We also held a Longest Night service, which gave those who have been bereaved a dedicated time to remember their loved ones.

At Easter, we celebrated Good Friday and Easter Sunday with all-age services at church. We also held a sunrise service on Easter Sunday, praising God together on Campion Hill.

Throughout the spring term, we finished our teaching series on Luke, which started last year. Other sermon series included the story of Jonah, Jesus in the Old Testament, St Paul's Church values, and, in the run-up to Christmas, hope. During 2024, we welcomed several guest speakers to our services, including Bishop Saju Muthulaly, Nicky and Pippa Gumbel, Rich Johnson, Paul Harcourt, Bishop Ruth (Acting Bishop of Coventry) and Bishop Ric Thorpe.

Children

Our children's ministry has continued to gain strength this year, with new families joining us both on Sundays and at our midweek groups. On Sundays, we have groups for 0-11 year-olds - Wrigglers (0-2s), Movers (2-4s), Shine Out and Soak Up (4-9s) and Interact (9-11s). We follow the church's values, and we aim to give the children a meaningful relationship with Jesus through crafts, games and Bible study.

Midweek, our Tiddlies Praise toddler group continues to provide a loving welcome for many families in Leamington, most of which have no other interaction with church. We have a wide range of toys for the children to play with, and our end-of-term parties are always a great chance to share God's love with the community. We also run Thursday Club Juniors, giving children in Years 4, 5 and 6 a fun and safe space to explore more about Jesus and about being in a Christian community. This year we have had around 10-15 attending each week.

We had another fantastic Light Party this year, with over 150 children attending. They were treated to crafts, food and a giant inflatable, as well as a talk about the light of Jesus.



Shine Out Soak Up

Another aspect of our children's ministry is our relationship with the church school. This year was an important one, as the school had its long overdue SIAMS visit – the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools. We were particularly thrilled that the report highlighted that 'the exceptionally strong partnership with the local church enriches the work of this school.' This is a partnership that has been built over many years, by many members of church and school staff.

We're pleased to be able to provide Collective Worship sessions at least twice a week to school, as well as having the chance to create special themed weeks. This year, several members of church staff were involved in Bible Week, kicking off the school year with themed sessions for each year group. We also welcomed the whole school and their parents into church for four services – Harvest, Christmas, Easter and a Year 6 Leavers' Service.

Finally, over 100 dads, grandads, and children enjoyed a weekend away camping in the summer. It was a time filled with friendship-building, worship, archery and fun.

Youth

Regular groups

We have three weekly groups for young people at St Paul's. Engage meets on Sundays and gives 11-14 year-olds a chance to catch up on life, read the Bible, play games and discuss a faith-based topic. This year, we have been encouraging everyone at Engage to think and pray for three people they know who do not know Jesus and who they would like to invite to Youth Alpha.

Midweek, Thursday Club (for ages 11-14) and The Hub (for ages 14-18) have continued, with around 15-20 and 20-25 young people coming along to each respectively. Thursday Club have had another great year, which concluded with a Christmas meal together. The evening was a great success and one we will look to repeat going forward.

At The Hub, we've seen young people grow in their faith and develop a desire to share it with their friends. Many who attend The Hub are also involved in their school CUs. They are now exploring ways to reach more students at Myton and North Leamington Schools. We had great fun at the summer Hub BBQ, where 35 young people celebrated the year and prayed for those who were heading off to university or gap years in September.

In October, we took a group of girls to The Orchard conference in Birmingham. It was a great day where young people were inspired to seek God's purpose for their lives.

Residentials

We took a big group to Basecamp in January - a weekend away organised by Thrive Youth Ministries for youth groups from churches



The Orchard women's conference



Hub BBQ in summer



Thursday Club Christmas meal



across Warwickshire. It was a wonderful weekend, where many young people demonstrated a deep hunger to grow in their faith. It was great to see friendships forming across different churches and young people stepping out of their comfort zones during activity time, accomplishing things they never thought they could. Additionally, several young people took on leadership roles throughout the weekend, and it was wonderful to witness them using their gifts to serve and lead.

In the summer, we took seven young people to Satellites - a Christian youth festival in Somerset. It was wonderful to see them worship so freely, engage deeply in the seminars, and build stronger friendships with one another.

One young person from St Paul's reflects on their time at Satellites... *'It was such an incredible experience and I will never forget it. I'd known Jesus existed and that he loved me, but I wanted to feel it for myself, so I prayed to God. While I was worshipping with over 3000 other young people, I was crying and felt the arms of my friends around me. I felt that God knew me, inside and out - he knew I was a people person and that he could show his love to me through other people. I truly believe my friends' arms around me were God's arms of love through my friends, and he was showing me his love. Later on in the camp, I rededicated my life to Jesus with my friends and I'm so thankful for that and all the experiences that Satellites provided. I hope and pray that I will continue to live the way of Jesus for the rest of my life.'*



Celebrating 150 years of St Paul's Leamington

Big Questions Events

As part of St Paul's focus on new ways of doing missional outreach for our 150th anniversary year, we partnered with the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA) to host three evangelistic events, each addressing a 'big question' being asked by non-Christians. Two events were hosted in the church building, and the third was a film event hosted at the Royal Spa Centre (a local independent cinema in the parish). The events were well-attended by church members and guests, and included a talk from one of the OCCA apologists and a Q&A. Several people who came to these events went on to join one of our Alpha courses or began attending our Sunday services.

Arts Week

We organised a week celebrating God through the arts, including an exhibition in church. It was wonderful to see the creativity of many members of St Paul's. The Cake and Craft team decorated the pillars; the children from school drew on the windows in the lounge; we had music written by members of St Paul's, and many paintings, textiles,

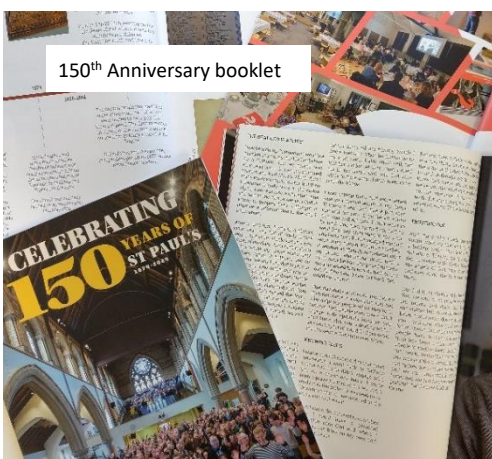




pottery, drawings, photos, flowers, and so much more were displayed. One highlight was reading the stories and testimonies which went alongside these creative items - a testimony to God's faithfulness and grace in many lives.

Telling our story

St Paul's 150th anniversary year seemed a good time to look back on the history of the church, and we spent some time researching this. It was a great privilege to hear from those still in the church family who have been part of the congregation for many decades, as well as from those who led the church in the past. Yvonne Warren, whose husband Norman led the church through a time of rapid growth in the 60s and 70s, and Andrew Dow, who led the church through a faith-filled redevelopment project in the 80s, both shared their memories of St Paul's at our evening celebration on Ascension Day.



We gathered these and many other memories, records and photos to compile a booklet and some videos showcasing highlights from the last 150 years. We also heard from eight individuals in the church about their personal stories of deciding to follow Jesus and living as a Christian. These stories were a great encouragement both to the church here and many others to whom we gave the booklets. You can find the testimonies on our website under 'Our Stories'.

St Paul's Festival

We hosted a festival day on the fields of the St Paul's School in June and had a fun, God-filled day celebrating. Over 600 people joined us throughout the sunny day, many of whom had not been to church before. We enjoyed music from our home-grown musicians, food and drinks from a variety of local businesses, and lots of games and crafts - including flower crown making and the dads beating the kids at football on penalties! It was a day of celebration and joy, thanking the Lord for his love and provision in our local community.



Staycation

The first ever St Paul's Staycation happened in August 2024. We had a wonderful five days together with all ages, from babies to those in their eighties, coming along for a range of activities. Over the week, we saw almost 200 different people come through the doors to join in the fun. Each day, we gathered in the main church space to play a game, sing, listen to testimony and think about our word of the day. There was a range of activities – puzzles, crafts, inflatables, gaming, and even a Silent Disco – and a fantastic café serving a range of food and drink. It was a wonderful week of building church community with many new faces coming along too.



One visitor said, '*The best thing is that the kids have had so much to do without it involving technology. It's so difficult to find anything to do in the holidays that isn't expensive or far away, so this has been perfect*'



Ready for the staycation silent disco!



Study session in small group



Oasis garden party



Cake and Craft floral workshop

and a wonderful week.' Another described staycation as 'the highlight of the holiday!'

Regular events

Small groups

Small groups are at the heart of life at St Paul's. They are smaller gatherings of the church family which provide space to build community, grow spiritually and encourage one another in our day-to-day lives. We have sixteen small groups meeting weekly in homes across Warwick, Leamington and Kenilworth.

One church member describes her small group as 'special friends who are always there. We support each other and go deeper than you can in bigger groups.'

Oasis

Oasis is a community of around 60 women who meet every Thursday morning at church for worship, Bible study and time in smaller groups to talk and pray.

Oasis ran the Alpha Course during the autumn term. This brought those already part of the church closer to Jesus and also provided an exciting missional opportunity to invite others. The number of Alpha guests was small, but it has been deeply encouraging to see that they have all stayed on afterwards, along with other newcomers who have arrived since. A highlight from the year was the Worship and Testimony morning at the end of the Alpha course - a wonderful tribute to God's grace and power.

Clare reflects on being part of Oasis... *'For over eighteen years, Oasis has been a constant, loving space where I can connect with God alongside women of all ages and at different stages in their faith journey. For me, Oasis has become a community – a place where our friendships deepen as we explore life together; we celebrate one another's good times, and we wrestle with what it means to be followers of Christ when life throws us its inevitable challenges. In difficult times, the prayerful, practical support of Oasis women has been a beautiful reflection of God's love and care for me. It is a rich, precious space in my week where I can drink deep and find peace.'*

Cake and Craft

Cake and Craft are a group of women who meet monthly to work on craft projects and chat. They were invited to decorate pillars in the church for the 150th anniversary celebrations around the theme of 'patience'. The group contributed previously-made crafts and set to work making more too.

Other activities in the year included a floral workshop and intensive preparation in November for Create for Christmas. There is always a



MIRTH at Warwickshire Search & Rescue



MIRTH walk



Mustard Seed Fellowship at St Paul's Fest



Chinese Paper Craft workshop



Litter picking

happy and relaxed atmosphere at the monthly meetings, as everyone continues to enjoy creating various crafts together.

MIRTH

The vision of MIRTH remains to create a community of men that welcomes others into it and improves the quality of retired life for all. The last year has seen a steady increase in the number of men attending MIRTH events. The great variety of main meetings has included visits to Oxford, Lillington Bowls Club, Dennis Eagle and Warwickshire Lowland Rescue. Guest speakers at St Paul's have included MIRTH members and a BBC journalist.

The monthly walks that are always followed by a pub lunch have increased in popularity, as have the Bible discussions led by Tim Wagg. Two MIRTH Xtra events were also held - in the spring, David Harkness coached a group in the addictive art of Clay Pigeon shooting, and in the Autumn the group ran an Alpha course.

Mustard Seed Fellowship

Mustard Seed Fellowship is a Cantonese Christian Fellowship who meet on Sunday afternoons after attending the morning service at St Paul's. Over the Spring term, they ran the Alpha Course in Cantonese. This gave existing group members a chance to deepen their faith, and also allowed three new visitors to explore Christianity. One of these guests is now regularly attending the fellowship.

As well as their own events such as a Chinese Paper Craft workshop, members of The Mustard Seed Fellowship have loved participating in main church events like St. Paul's Fest and Carol Singing in Christmas. They enjoy sharing God's love with the community.

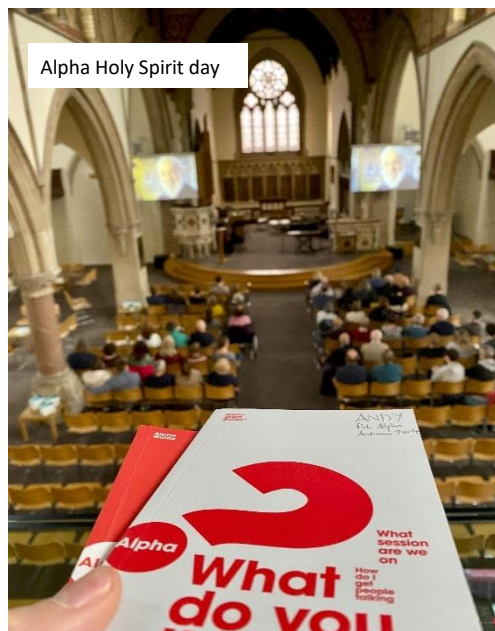
ECO Group

The highlights of 2024 for the Eco Group at St Paul's were achieving the Eco-Church Silver award from A Rocha UK in May and organising the 'Hope for a Broken Planet' week in September. This week included a variety of activities such as themed Sunday services, meat-free Monday, a Climate Vigil, a talk by Sharon Dirckx from OCCA (author of 'Broken Planet'), a clothes swap, a litter pick, and bulb planting in the Church garden. They also organised themed activities in some of the regular children's groups. Funds raised over the week were used to purchase 150 trees for NOTDEC Uganda.

The church's weekly newsletter continues to include tips for living sustainably, as well as prayer requests for global environmental issues such as the Climate COP, and the International Plastics Treaty.

Alpha

2024 was an exciting year for Alpha at St Paul's. In addition to our usual twice-yearly central Alpha course, we ran a number of extra AL-



Alpha Holy Spirit day

Alpha courses in different contexts and settings: a pub Alpha, a women's Alpha run by the Oasis ministry, a men's Alpha run by the MIRTH group, and an Alpha run in someone's home. In total, around 60 guests explored faith on Alpha at St Paul's this year, supported by church members on team (both hosting discussion tables and preparing and serving food).

For the next steps after Alpha, the church ran the Alive Course after Easter and the Romans Course in the summer, which several Alpha guests attended and found helpful in deepening their walk with Jesus. Some guests have also come forward for baptism and become regular worshippers at our Sunday services.

A highlight from 2024 was the combined Alpha Holy Spirit Day in the autumn, which gathered the many Alpha courses being run together, as well as being joined by a group from St Mark's Church in Coventry.

Other Courses

We ran a variety of courses throughout the year, helping to equip church members (and anyone else who signed up) through different stages of life and discipleship: the Marriage Preparation Course for engaged couples; the Inspire course, looking at our identity in Christ; the parenting course; the Alive! course looking at what the resurrection of Jesus means for us now; the Momentum Yes course, equipping Christians for cross-cultural mission; the Romans course, which takes a deep dive into the theology of the book of Romans; and the Marriage Course.

Prayer

Prayer continues to be an important part of St Paul's Church. We gather for our monthly prayer meeting, The Source, to pray for mission in our area and to listen to what God might be guiding us in. Prayer is also woven into all of our regular services, small groups, staff meetings, children's groups and other ministries.

Community

Wellbeing café

The Well-being Café provides a safe space every Monday morning for adults from the local community to come along and have a chat and a hot drink, with various activities on offer, including puzzles, games, crafts, and an optional reflective meditation on a bible verse.

2024 was another wonderful year for the volunteers and visitors. They celebrated the café's 2nd birthday in January and also celebrated several guests' and team's birthdays. They had parties at Easter and Christmas and enjoyed an enthusiastic game of pass-the-parcel at both.



Prayer at The Source



Wellbeing café team



Craft at the wellbeing café



Fun at Super Saturday



Super Saturday activity

One volunteer says they love ‘being able to spend time getting to know people from different backgrounds, a core of whom are now regulars, who enjoy being together and where they feel safe and accepted. It’s a joy to serve them and welcome new guests with delicious home-made cakes and refreshments.’

Foodbank café

Our Foodbank Café runs alongside the Foodbank at St Paul’s, providing hot and cold drinks, a range of snacks, and clothes for young children, for whoever wants to drop in. We get a whole range of people – regulars and others - including Foodbank users, refugees and asylum seekers, and others from the local community who come for a warm welcome and a listening ear.

Hope NWC

We had the first meeting of Hope, our new worshipping community (church service) at St Paul’s School, in December. The team are getting a sense of what this will look like in the future, but it includes a short intergenerational act of worship, with drama, paper tablecloths to write on, singing, prayers and interactive talk and food. Highlights so far have been seeing the team work together (especially the children involved) and seeing visitors join us and get to know new people.

Super Saturday

Super Saturday is a group for families that have a child or children with additional needs. They had their first session in January 2024. Since then, they have grown steadily both in number and depth of relationships between all who come along. They have a wonderful team who bring so much joy to all that they do. Most months, there is an active space in the hall, crafts and quieter games in the lounge, and enough pastry and hot drinks to keep everyone going!

One parent says, ‘I appreciate the understanding and support we have at Super Saturday. To a lot of people around us, our child is just a “naughty child, and our parenting is at fault”. At Super Saturday, we are supported and accepted. The team has been helpful while we are navigating the SEND process. Thanks to all the team who have worked hard to bring a big ray of sunshine to us every month.’

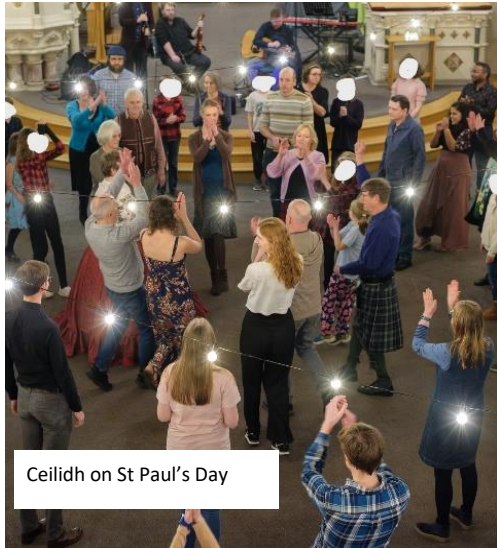
A team member adds, ‘I am a special needs parent, and as my son is now grown up and in supported living, when I found out about Super Saturday, I thought maybe this was an area I could serve in. I love serving at the group, but I don’t feel I’m giving when I’m there - the families are so lovely that I feel I’m receiving every month. I gain, not give. They are brilliant, vibrant, fun-filled mornings.’

Portuguese-speaking Worshipping Community

We were approached early in 2024 by a wonderful group of Christians from Brazil asking if they could hold a monthly worship service in Portuguese as there are lots of Portuguese speakers in this area. We were



Community BBQ



Ceilidh on St Paul's Day



Mission Partner Sunday



Basecamp, run by Thrive

delighted to host them monthly and see their fellowship grow. They eventually wanted to move to meeting weekly. We didn't have the capacity to host that, so we helped them find a new venue at St Nicholas Church Radford Semele, where they now meet every Saturday. This is a new worshipping community in our mission hub area, and we thank God for them.

Other events

2024 was a busy year, and there were many other one-off events we ran in addition to all those detailed already. These included games nights, an information evening on the menopause with various expert speakers, a Tearfund quiz, a seminar from Bishop Ric Thorpe on planting New Worshipping Communities, a Ceilidh on St Paul's Day, carol singing in the community and local pubs, concerts performed by Kings Chamber Orchestra and attended by around 500 people, a community BBQ in the church garden, and a brilliant live performance of the entirety of Mark's gospel by Matt Britton.

Mission Partners

We have continued to support our mission partners through giving money, regular prayer support, or both. In April, we held a Mission Sunday at St Paul's. The hall was buzzing with activity as people explored the 17 tables, which had representatives of (nearly) all our Local and Global Mission Outreach Partners. Before and after each service, we were able to talk with people who knew the context and could transmit their passion for sharing the love of Jesus with the communities around them. This event lit a number of fires!

Highlights from local mission partners

In January, 160 young people from churches around Warwickshire and Coventry took part in Basecamp - the annual weekend away which Thrive Youth Ministries run. It was a weekend filled with joy, worship of Jesus, and learning to live more like him. For some of those young people, it was their first Basecamp - and they have already started attending church youth groups near them, perhaps because they discovered school friends they didn't know were from that church.

In November, Christians Against Poverty launched their new Hope Café at St Mary's Leamington Spa. Their vision is to bring hope, create purpose and transform lives. They run the Café weekly and have ex and current CAP clients attend each week. Volunteers take turns cooking and serving simple meals for those who attend. Already, the team are seeing very positive engagement by people who have experienced the transforming love of Jesus and have managed to get out of debt.



The Bayfords help run a community market in Brazil



One of the weddings this year



Worshipping at New Wine United summer festival



Staff team in summer

Highlights from further afield

In March, we held a retirement celebration for Richard & Catherine Weston. They had been mission partners with us for many years. They took part in the Sunday services, and there was an afternoon tea to celebrate them. They said: *'We want to thank you for around 40 years of prayer and financial support – we couldn't have done it without you and we really appreciate it!'*

All the individually supported partners always express real thankfulness for all that the support from St Paul's means to them - whether that's financial support, prayer support, or just knowing they will be able to touch base with the GO Team. Even recently, there was an email from Stu and Rosie, who work with the marginalised in Brazil, saying, *'Thanks so much for everything, as always. The car continues to be a blessing on a daily basis.'* They bought the car in early 2024 with funds provided from the 2023 Gift Day.

Weddings

One of the joys of church life is the weddings which happen in our building throughout the year. In 2024, we had six couples get married at St Paul's. It was a particular delight to celebrate the weddings of those from our church family who got married here – Jack and Joanna McBettle, Tom and Jenny Stone, and Bill and Nic Evans. Congratulations to the happy couples!

Funerals

It is a privilege to come alongside those who have lost loved ones when we lead funeral services at church. We would especially like to gratefully remember Eileen Crook, Rosalie Holland, Barbara Smith, and Gerald Kirk – all members of our church family who died this year. They will be greatly missed until we see them again in glory.

New Wine

St Paul's is part of the New Wine network of churches, and we often take a group to their United summer festival. This year, a group of around 70 went, and enjoyed the fellowship time and teaching thoroughly.

One member of St Paul's was baptised earlier in 2024 and attended New Wine for the first time this year. He says, *'It felt like a glimpse into the new heaven and earth - thousands of people worshipping and desiring God, with the fruit of the Spirit visible in every interaction.'*

Leadership

Staff and DY Student

2024 saw significant change in our staff team. In April, Priscila Santos joined us as Assistant Houskeeper. Lydia Yelder, one of our Children's Ministers, returned from maternity leave in the Spring term.

James Yelder, who had been covering her during this time, stayed on afterwards as Youth Minister and Safeguarding Administrator. It is a great joy to have a full children and youth team again, and we are so grateful for all they do.

Daniel Houldsworth, who worked with Lars on tech and media, moved to a full-time position at a church in London over the summer. We also said goodbye to our wonderful 2023/24 Discipleship Year (DY) students – Mark, Lucy and Amy - who finished their year with us in August.

The office team has also been a time of transition, as Caroline Castle and Naomi Gaade, who have both been working here for more than 10 years, left. Caroline left in August to train for ordination. We are so grateful for all her work and ministry here over that time, and pray great blessing on her future ministry. Naomi left in December. She has contributed enormously to the communications at church, and we will miss her kind presence greatly.

Lisa Boulby started as the new Office Administrator in September, and Pratima Badde started in January 2025 as the new Communications Officer.

Also this year, John McKellar announced his intention to retire in February 2025. We have recruited Steve Kelly to join us as our Director of Discipleship in February 2025, and we have confirmed that Andy Ruffhead will stay on with us part-time as Associate Minister when his curacy finishes in January 2025.

Finally, in September, we were joined by Daniel Marshall, our 2024/5 DY student. He will have a focus on youth and tech this year. It has been a joy to get to know him so far, and we look forward to what the year ahead will hold for him.

Leadership Community

The leadership Community is for those who are responsible for any groups, team or ministries in our church family. It is a wonderful group of people! We had an excellent Saturday morning with Nick Cuthbert teaching on leading through change, and an evening with Graham Archer on caring for people pastorally in our groups and teams.

More information about our activities during the year is available on our website, www.stpl.org.uk.

Fabric

We have a regular schedule of maintenance and health and safety checks, and these continued throughout the year; our Fabric and Housekeeping teams worked hard to keep the church clean and well-stocked; and our Site Committee met monthly to address any issues.

In the main worship area, we installed a some new lighting which has improved both the lighting facility and our ability to control it. We now have a greater variety of lighting to utilise at our various diverse events. We had wanted to do this when we redeveloped the worship area in 2015, and are delighted with the difference it makes.

The key recommendations from the quinquennial report on the building, carried out in October 2023, were implemented over the summer with only a few less urgent items being delayed until 2025.

We held test Fire Evacuation drill procedures on two Sunday mornings during the year, one when it was an all-age service and one when the children were in their groups.

The church managed to attain the ECO silver award.

Both our properties at 40 Leicester Street and 14 Taylor Avenue had tenants for the majority of the year and are regularly checked for issues.

Looking ahead, we are looking at:

- Improving the foyer area to make it more welcoming and to visibly display our recently agreed vision and values
- Improving the acoustics both in the hall and the lounge by installing panels in the walls
- Improving our energy use within the building. We have had intermittent issues with the heating and the diocese helped us get a free Building Energy Assessment which is helping us start to form a strategy for the future energy plans within the building as we look to go carbon net zero. This is at a very early stage at the moment.

Financial Overview

When we completed the Redevelopment of our church worship space in 2015, we used up most of our reserves of cash but, since then, we have made a modest surplus in most years and have slowly rebuilt our reserves.

We were facing a potential deficit of £75k at the start of 2024, as our expenditure was set to increase by another five percent—mostly due to increased ministry activity and staff costs—and our regular income had remained static for some time. However, we are grateful to God for continuing to provide unexpected sources of income so that, even though our expenditure levels were almost as high as anticipated (one percent below budget), we finished the year showing a £6k surplus (before asset re-evaluation).

The General Fund, which is used for day-to-day activities, is a good example of this provision, because even as late as October 2024 we were forecasting a significant deficit of £37k. However, expenditure was slightly lower than anticipated in the final two months and £24k of one-off/unanticipated donations (plus Gift Aid) was received.

Our cash reserves currently stand at £213k. In 2017, the PCC decided to split our reserves into 3 pots:

- Some is reserved for cash flow and general reserves. It was agreed that the general reserves policy should be 8 weeks of regular expenditure (around £118k).
- Around £65k is in a Properties fund. The PCC owns 40 Leicester Street which was used at various points to house Discipleship Year students (no income), to house a church member (rental income received), and as a location for some of our Sunday morning children's groups. The PCC also owns a local house which was bought in 2017 and is rented out, either on the open market or privately to a church member. Income from both properties goes into the Properties fund and is used to pay for maintenance and repairs.
- The remainder of the reserves is used for a 'Resourcing Ministry' fund which resources new initiatives or staffing posts for mission and ministry.

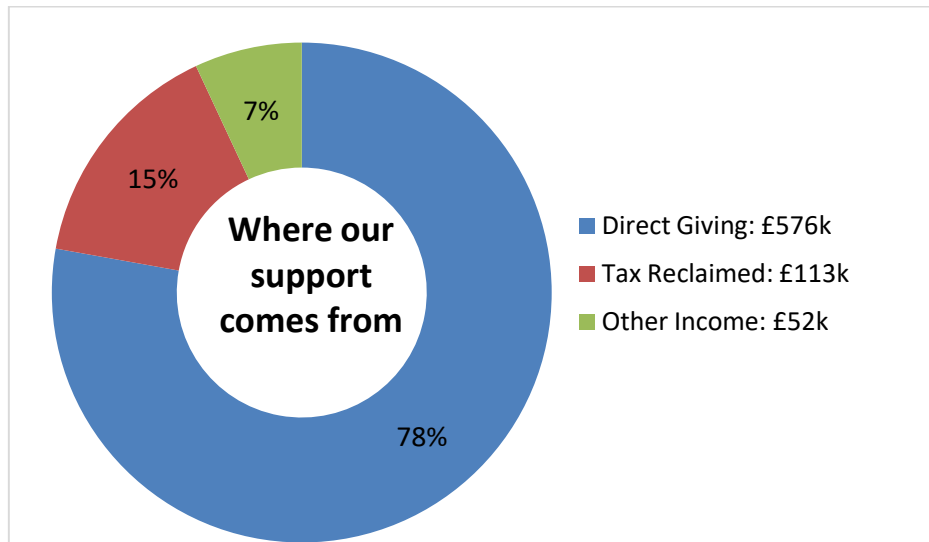
The PCC, Standing Committee, and Finance Committee monitor our financial position throughout the year.

Income

The vast majority of our regular income comes from direct giving from our church members, together with the associated Gift Aid tax reclaimed on this giving, and we are extremely grateful to all those who give so generously.

After a few years with a steady level of donations, 2024 saw a 13% jump in direct giving compared with the same figure in 2023 (£509k in 2023 and £576k in 2024).

Other income is from lettings and rental income, wedding and funeral fees, events, grants, and trips.



Expenditure

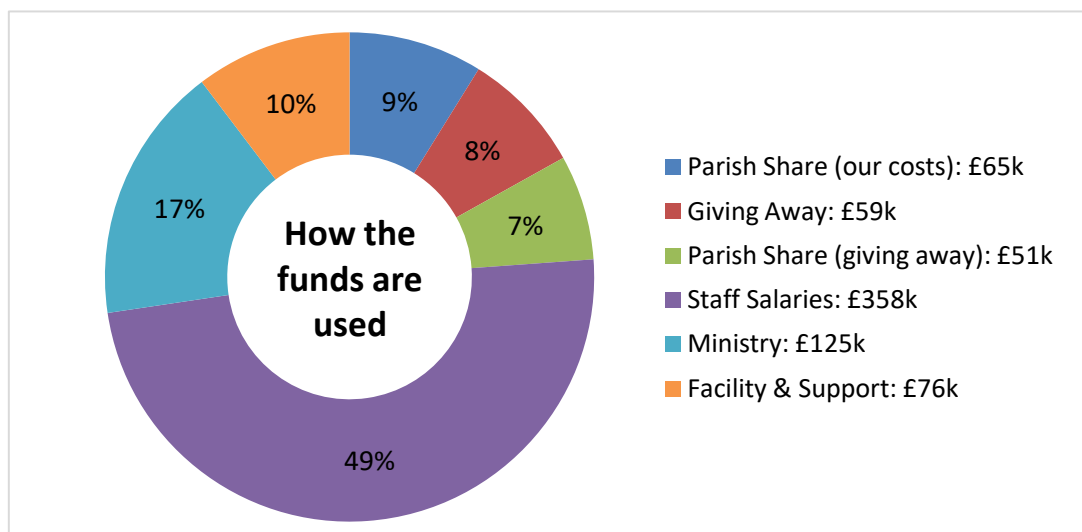
Staff salaries include the staff wages, National Insurance, pension contributions and recruitment costs. Clergy stipends are provided by the diocese via the Parish Share.

The ministry costs include all the costs of our children's and youth work, adult discipleship, outreach, community work, leadership development and training. This year, we also held some additional ministry events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first worship service.

Facility and Governance costs include the costs of keeping our building and equipment in good repair, cleaning, office running costs, heating, lighting and insurance.

Each year we budget to give away at least 10% of the previous year's unrestricted income to our mission partners and to ministries in the town beyond our own church.

The Parish Share is our share of the costs of ministry in the diocese, including training, housing, stipend and associated costs. In addition to the 10% we give away locally and further afield, we also give around 5% of our income to the wider Church of England through making an additional Parish Share contribution on top of our actual costs. So, in all, we give away around 15% of our regular income, in addition to occasional Gift Days for specific purposes. We are very grateful to the Lord for His faithfulness in meeting our needs this year and over many previous years.



Restricted Funds

As well as the unrestricted income and expenditure which make up the day-to-day running of the church and its ministries, we manage a number of restricted funds for the benefit of church members and for those in our sphere of influence.

The Hardship Fund has been generously provided by church members for the benefit of those facing financial hardship. £10k was donated to the fund during 2024 and £21k was distributed in the form of grants and loans—most notably in the form of regular fuel grants given to a number of families during the winter months.

Full details of the independently examined accounts can be found in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Administrative Information

St Paul's Church is located on Leicester Street, Leamington Spa and is part of the Diocese of Coventry within the Church of England. The correspondence address is St Paul's Church, Leicester Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 4TE. The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006) and a charity.

PCC members who served from 1 January 2024 until the date this report was approved are:

Simon Brown	Deanery Synod
Joy Caws	
Charles Crow - Churchwarden	
Carolyn Davey – Churchwarden (to 03/07/2024)	
Zak Dunstone - Treasurer	Deanery Synod
Tim Filby	
Ashleigh Hull (from 24/03/2024)	
Eleanor Jeans - Associate Vicar	Deanery Synod
Jonathan Jee - Vicar and Chair	Deanery Synod, Diocesan Synod, and General Synod
Rani Joshi (to 12/07/2024)	Deanery Synod (to 12/07/2024)
Judith Linnell	
Gillian McKellar (to 24/03/2024)	
Faith Munaawa	
Graeme Pringle - Associate Minister	Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod
Andrew Rolls	Deanery Synod
Daniel Rogers	
Andy Ruffhead - Associate Minister	Deanery Synod
Terry Salter (from 24/03/2024)	
Alicia Sampson	Deanery Synod
Jeremy Sampson - Churchwarden (from 24/03/2024)	
Carolyn Stone	
Timothy Traynar	
James Yelder (to 24/03/2024)	

Charity name

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Paul, Leamington Priors

Registered Charity number

1130329

Charity's principal address

St Paul's Church, Leicester Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 4TE

Bank

CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ

Independent Examiner

M D Spafford of LDP Luckmans, 1110 Elliot Court, Herald Avenue, Coventry Business Park, Coventry, CV5 6UB

Safeguarding

We make Safeguarding a high priority here at St Paul's. Julie Jackson is our Safeguarding Officer and Judith Linnell acts as Deputy Safeguarding Officer. Any concerns should go to the leader of the group or ministry in the first instance or directly to Julie or Judith. We work to ensure that we keep our children, young people and any vulnerable adults as safe as possible.

We work closely with Coventry diocese and have adopted the Church of England's Safeguarding Policy 'Promoting a Safer Church' recommended by the diocese. The PCC has complied with the duty to "have due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding.

We have a Safer Recruitment policy and any new staff and volunteers who are working with children or vulnerable adults are safely recruited, including the appropriate level of DBS check.

We have a Parish Safeguarding Advisory Group who meet approximately every 6 weeks to review safeguarding cases, policies and procedures in the church and also to review the handling of more significant pastoral cases. We use the Safeguarding Dashboard and Hub to manage our ongoing compliance with statutory requirements, training, DBS management and Church of England policies.

The Safeguarding Officer reports to the PCC at every meeting to ensure members are fully informed about progress in this area.

Structure, governance and management

Type of governing document

Parochial Church Council Powers Measure (1956) as amended and church representation rules

How the charity is constituted

A corporate body established by the Church of England.

Trustee selection and induction methods

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the church representation rules. The PCC is also a registered charity. All church attendees are encouraged to register on the electoral roll and are eligible to stand for election to the PCC. New PCC members are briefed on current PCC issues at (or before) the first meeting of the new PCC.

The PCC operates through a number of committees and teams, which meet between full meetings of the PCC: the Standing Committee, the GO (Global Outreach) Team, the Safeguarding Advisory Group, the Finance Committee, and the Site Committee.

The Senior Staff team, which consists of the clergy and Operations Manager, meets regularly and is responsible for the day-to-day decision-making in the church.

Risk

The PCC (often through its committees) has continued to review the risks facing the church, including types of risk, potential impact on the church and means of mitigating these risks. Systems and procedures have been put in place to mitigate identifiable risks. The PCC will continue to review risks on an on-going basis. The PCC is required to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the

affairs of the church as at the balance sheet date and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the financial year. In preparing these financial statements the PCC will select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently and will make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent. The PCC is responsible for maintaining proper accounting records and for safeguarding the assets of the church.

Pay Policy

Clergy are paid through the diocese. The pay of employed staff is reviewed annually by the Standing Committee and increases are agreed by the PCC being mindful of the Church's charitable objectives and increases in average earnings. In 2019, the PCC agreed a new system for setting staff salaries, devised by our HR team, which ensures all staff are paid fairly and in line with (or better than) national averages. In November 2024, the PCC agreed to a new system of staff cost-of-living pay rises, where all employees are given an actual FTE increase equivalent to a percentage rise for the highest earner in line with inflation. The effect of this is that those on lower wages have a higher percentage increase. This is to prevent the wage gap between lower and higher earners increasing each year.

Public Benefit

As a registered charity, we have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. To fulfil our purpose and take steps towards achieving our vision the activities described above have taken place.

This report was approved by the PCC on 17th March 2025
and signed on their behalf by Rev. Jonathan Jee (PCC Chair)