

St Martin's Church, Litchborough

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31st December 2023



Administrative information

The Parish of Litchborough is part of the Lambfold Benefice in the Towcester Deanery and its Rectory is located in Blakesley.

The PCC is a charity exempted from registration with the Charity Commission. PCC members who have served from May 2023 are:

Rector:	The Revd. Sue Stanley from September 2021
Wardens:	Mrs Elizabeth Robinson Mrs Patricia Sykes
Elected Member	Mr David Aked-Walker Mrs Sandy Aked-Walker Mr Matthew Rodhouse (Treasurer) Mr Ian Lowery
ExOfficioMember	
Independent Examiner	Mr Peter Godfrey FCA
Fabric Trustees	Mr Ian Lowery Mr Gareth Luger-Mawson Mr David Aked-Walker Mr John Robinson

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Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and to stand for election to the PCC.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC has a responsibility to co-operate with the Rector in promoting the whole mission of the Church in the ecclesiastical parish. It also has maintenance responsibilities (delivered through the Fabric Trust) for the Church and Churchyard.

Electoral Roll

There were 24 people on the Church Electoral Roll, of which two were non-resident within the parish.

St Martin's Fabric Trust

St Martin's Fabric Trust was established in 1995 as a registered Charity for the restoration, preservation, maintenance, beautification and reconstruction of the church, its stained glass, its fixtures and fittings and its churchyard.

There is a minimum of 3 Trustees required, one trustee is appointed by the PCC from amongst its members; the second by the PCC from outside and the third by the Parish Council.

Church Attendance

On **Easter Day** we had a service of Holy Communion attended by 21 (2022:29)

There was a **Harvest Festival** service on 15th October attended by 27 (2021:57) followed by sherry and a variety of eats, the collection from this service was donated to The Farming Community Network.

As **Remembrance day** fell on Saturday it was decided that there should be an Act of Remembrance on the day at the War Memorial followed by service of Remembrance led by the Rector attended by 53 (18 in 2022). The collection from this service was donated to The Royal British Legion.

On 13th December there was a benefice service of readings music and meditation for **Advent** led by the Rector attended by 38 people

The Carol Service was held on 10th December attended by 43 people which was followed by mulled wine mince pies and Christmas cake.

the **Christmas Day** Communion service was attended by 22 people (2022 -31 .



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There was a service to celebrate the coronation on 7th May attended by 16 people and a pet service held in the churchyard on 11th June attended by 18 people and assorted dogs

There was 1 baptism (2021:2), 1 funeral (2021: 2) and no weddings (2021: 2) during the year and one interment of ashes.

Review of the Year

Proceedings of St Martin's Parochial Church Council for 2023

Ordinary meetings were held on 13th March 5th June 3rd September and 23rd November 2023.

Pastoral Matters

Christine Rodhouse and Carol Hakin ran the Family services, and where there was no Benefice Service on the fourth Sunday Christine Liz and Tisha led a short service of Celtic worship.

Music

Members of the congregation sing in the Benefice Choir which adds so much to Benefice events and special services.

Fundraising

The 28th Art Festival was held in April 2023. The event was well attended and raised £1,366 which included the craft fair and food in the Village Hall. Our thanks to all those who worked so hard to help Christine to run this important event.

The Lottery continued, with a contribution of £384 (2022: £637).

The Newsletter was founded as a joint venture with Litchborough Baptist Chapel and all receipts, including advertising revenue, were directed to the restricted Newsletter Fund. Unfortunately, the Baptist Chapel was forced to close in 2018 so the newsletter has been run by the PCC from that date with the PCC now solely responsible for any shortfall. Many thanks are due to David and Sandy Aked-Walker for their production and printing of the newsletter. Looking at the Church of England accounting rules, grants from Litchborough Parish Council should continue to be debited to the restricted Newsletter Fund but income from advertising in the newsletter should be added to Fundraising Income in the General Fund. To adjust the position to take account of this an amount of £404 has been transferred from the Newsletter Fund to the General fund – this represents advertising income received since the PCC became solely responsible for it.

People from St Martin's once again took part in the Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride and raised £134 (2022: £279) which was banked by the PCC and paid to the Fabric Trust. Money raised by those taking part goes towards the maintenance of the church building and the churchyard.

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Report from the Bell Tower



The bells were rung early in the morning for the Coronation on May 6th

The ringers have been able to practice on some Saturdays and there was a ringers service in the church on 21st October.

We rang or chimed for most Sunday services held in the church.

The Passing Bell was rung for Judith Barthorpe Gerald Lovejoy
Alec Dow Dot Furniss Hywel Davies and Audrey Cox

Fabric and Fittings

Fabric Trust Report 2023

In 2023, the Trust's gross income was £1,740 (2022: £12,905 - a bequest of £10,000 was received in 2022), the major receipts being donations in connection with the Ride and Stride event organized by Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust of £134 (2022: £280), no donations this year (2022: £100 other than the bequest mentioned earlier), a grant for mowing from the Parish Council of £1,100 (2022: £1,100); a grant regarding a report on Sir John Needham's memorial £300; bank interest of £206 (2022: £20); no fees related to the bells (2021: £200) and no fees related to the churchyard (2022: £1,075).

Total expenditure was £14,505 (2022: £3,006). The mowing cost £2,071 (2022: £2,256); Green Bin fee £55 (2022: £42); work on the trees in the churchyard cost of £6,060 (2022: £nil); repair to churchyard wall £4,452 (2022: £nil), architect's fee £300 (2022: £350), electrical testing cost £222 (2022: £40), fire extinguisher maintenance £129 (2022: £41), sundry maintenance £1,153 (2022: £93) and bank charges £63 (2022: £nil). It should be noted that the Townlands Trust has now refunded the cost of the repair to the wall

At 31 December 2023, the Trust's monetary assets total £9,772 (2022: £22,537) with £200 (2022: £200) in the Restricted Bell Fund and £9,572 (2022: £22,337) in the General Fund.

Terrier and Inventory

The Churchwardens will carry out their annual check on Goods and Ornaments of the Church from Terrier and Inventory and update this accordingly.

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Churchyard



The Parish Council granted £1,100 (2022: £1,100) to the Fabric Trust towards the mowing in the churchyard, enabling the PCC to continue to keep it neat and tidy. The Council has also indicated that they will take on the cost of the mowing and pay for this which will mean that VAT can be reclaimed.

The PCC and Trustees are very grateful to the Parish Council for their support.

Safeguarding

The church has a Safeguarding Policy in line with the requirements of the Peterborough Diocese. The policy covers every aspect of the church's work with children and those adults who are deemed vulnerable.

The policy is reviewed annually and the incumbent and Safeguarding officer have attended relevant courses as Safeguarding is a high priority in the work of the church. All PCC members are aware of their responsibilities and the training they are required to undertake.

The PCC believe they have fulfilled their duty as set out in section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 and comply with the House of Bishop's guidance

Financial Review

Total receipts during the year credited to the General Fund were £16,485 (2022: £18,328) including giving to the church and associated gift aid tax recovered (see below) and fundraising (see above).

The main outgoings were the Parish Share of £11,000 (2022: £7,003) It should be noted that, in 2023 as in 2022, the parish's share of the Benefice charge remained at £13,020. The PCC decided that, having regard to level of attendance which has not recovered fully from the effect of the COVID 19 pandemic which has resulted in lower collections, the whole amount due could not be paid without risk of overspending our income – indeed this year there is a deficit as at 31st December

The upkeep of the church and services including insurance, heating, lighting and water plus administration increased by £1700 in the year to £6,782 (2022: £5,072).

After giving by the church (see below), fundraising expenses of £64 (2022: £154) and St Martin's share of clergy and choir costs of £556 (2022: £339), there was a deficit of £2,112 (2022: surplus £3,388).

At 31 December 2022, the General Fund amounts to £10,923 (2022: £13,036). The Lottery Fund stands at £1,033 (2022: £635). The PCC also holds some Restricted Funds including a fund for outreach in the parish of £561 (2022: £561). The Newsletter Fund (after transfer of advertising income to the General Fund in 2023 stands at £540 (2022: £956).

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Giving to the Church

The amount received through Gift Aid was £10,187 (2022: £10,735) with a tax rebate of £3,089 (2022: £2666).. The PCC would like to record its thanks to all those who have contributed in this way.

Donations of £134 were received (2022: £1,066), regular giving not under gift aid of £100 (2021: £100) and collections not converted to Gift Aid amounted to £727 (2022: £942)..

Giving by the Church

The Parochial Church Council endeavours to give to outside charities each year. As set out above, attendance is still down and our income reduced whilst expenses have increased. It was therefore decided to restrict grants to those shown below - none were made in 2020.

Grants	2023 £	2022 £
Royal British Legion (2023 and 2022: Remembrance Service)	41	143
The Farming Community Network (2022 and 2023: money raised at Harvest service and supper)	217	235
Crisis at Christmas	177	0
TOTAL	£435	£378

Deanery Synod

Deanery Synod met three times during 2023 in February, June and October The meeting on 7th February took place in Deanshanger church and Revd Paul McLeod gave a talk and showed a short film on the life and work of the Taize Community in France which is visited by between 4000 and 7000 young people from across the world every week in summer.

The meeting on 13th June was held in Litchborough church and Bishop John spoke about Evangelism and shared simple ideas of how we can all share our faith in our everyday lives, much in the same way as we talk to others about our pets or grandchildren.

On October 10th the meeting was held in Paulerspury church. The C of E's target for Carbon Net Zero by 2030 is to be kept in mind, not worrying about the big things but making small changes such as replacing light bulbs with a more eco friendly equivalent. Chad from Gen 2 gave a talk about the importance of engaging with young people; 94% of Christians have made the decision to follow Jesus before they are 18 years old.

Deanery Synod meetings are usually open to anyone and everyone is encouraged to attend.

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General

The report is an opportunity to thank everyone who has helped in any way at any time during the year. They are too many to name individually but without their support our church community would be a poorer place and the services and activities in the church would not be possible. A big thank you to everyone.

It is also an opportunity to remember the centuries during which the church has endured and survived as represented by the medieval glass windows pictured below

