



ANNUAL REPORT

FINANCIAL YEAR 2023

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF
ST PAUL'S SCOTFORTH

CHARITY NUMBER 1134789

St Paul's Church
24 Scotforth Road
Lancaster
LA1 4ST

The parish office is in St Paul's Parish Hall [facing the church across the A6]

Structure, Governance and Management

The Parochial Church Council [PCC] is a “body corporate”.

The Trustees of this charity are the members of the PCC.

The Annual Parish Meeting [APM] held before 31 May each year elects two Churchwardens and members of the PCC.

Deanery Synod representatives are appointed for a 3-year term of office. Currently our parish has 3 representatives on the Deanery Synod.

Rule 14 of the Church Representation Rules states that the Clergy licensed to the parish, the Churchwardens, and the Deanery Synod representatives are ex-officio members of the PCC.

At St Paul's the Minister of the Parish is the Chair of the PCC and a lay member of the PCC is to be elected as Vice Chair. St Paul's PCC has decided that the Vice Chair of the PCC shall be the Churchwarden with the longer service.

The PCC has decided that the PCC should include the following as ex-officio members: one Reader representing all the Readers, the Treasurer, the Secretary, the Safeguarding Officer and the Vision Champion.

The APM in 2012 decided that from 2013 the elected members of the PCC should be elected to serve a term of three consecutive years and can serve two consecutive three year terms, after which they are expected to stand down for a minimum of one year before offering themselves for re-election. This policy is intended to create a balance between retaining experience while introducing fresh insight into the PCC.

The PCC aims to have a minimum of three members elected from those who regularly worship at St Paul's Hala Centre.

By law the PCC must meet at least 4 times per year. At St Paul's our practice is for the PCC to meet on the first Tuesday of most months. The PCC does not meet in January, April and August.

PCC Membership during 2023

		Office ends
Vicar	Rebecca Aechtner	On leaving the parish
Associate Priest	Catherine Haydon	On leaving the parish
Churchwardens	Jayne Weatherill Vacancy	Note 1
Deanery Synod members	[elected in June 2020 for a 3-year period, re-elected in June 2023] Grace Illidge Margaret Ives Phillip Simpson	1 st June 2026 1 st June 2026 1 st June 2026
Elected members of laity		
	Katherine Froggatt	APCM 2024
	Rebecca Long	APCM 2024
	Vacancy	APCM 2024
	Vacancy	APCM 2024
	Samuel Dawkins	APCM 2025
	Vacancy	APCM 2025
	Vacancy	APCM 2025
	Vacancy	APCM 2025
	Sue Croft	APCM 2026 – resigned Jan 24
	Jen Couchman	APCM 2026
	Vacancy	APCM 2026
	Vacancy	APCM 2026
Members Ex-Officio		
Safeguarding Officer	Jayne Weatherill	Note 2
Secretary	John Gedge	Note 2
Treasurer	Brian Threlfall	Note 2
Vision Champion	Jim Currin	Indefinite

Paul Ducklin and Tom Grimwood were co-opted to the PCC at the July meeting.

Note 1: The Church Wardens elected at the APCM in April/May are confirmed in office at the Visitation in June. In 2023 the elections and APCM took place in April with the Warden being confirmed in office at the Archdeacon's Visitation on 28th June at Morecambe Parish Church.

Note 2: These three appointments are made by the PCC at the first meeting after the APCM.

The duties of the PCC

The Synodical Government Measure 1969 contains what might be described as the official “job description” of the PCC. It states:

1. It shall be the duty of the incumbent and the Parochial Church Council to consult together on matter of general concern and importance in the parish.
2. The functions of the Parochial Church Council shall include:
 - (a) co-operation with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
 - (b) the consideration and discussions of matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest, but not the declaration of the doctrine of the church on any question;
 - (c) making known and putting into effect any provision made by the Diocesan Synod or the Deanery Synod, but without prejudice to the powers of the Council on any particular matter;
 - (d) giving advice to the Diocesan Synod and the Deanery Synod on any matter referred to the Council;
 - (e) raising such matters as the Council considers appropriate with the Diocesan Synod or Deanery Synod.
3. In the exercise of its functions the Parochial Church Council shall take into consideration any expression of opinion by any parochial church meeting.

When the PCC of St Paul’s registered as a Charity we said we would provide “public benefit” by:

- Regular public worship
- Providing sacred space for prayer
- Pastoral work including visiting sick and housebound
- Taking regular assembly in schools
- Provision of Young ‘Fun’ Church
- Promotion of Christianity through sermons, events and meetings
- Promoting the mission of the church
- Supporting other charities in the UK and overseas

How does the PCC seek to fulfil its duties?

Regular public services are held in the parish church and the Hala Centre.

Parish Church

Sunday	8.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
	9.45 am	Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	BCP Evening Prayer (on second Sunday of month)
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – by telephone conferencing
Thursday	9.15 am	Holy Communion

Hala Centre

Sunday	11.15 am	Service of the Word or Holy Communion
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The parish undertakes occasional services [baptisms, marriages, funerals], seasonal services and commemorations as required.

The parish is part of the Diocese of Blackburn within the Church of England.

The Diocese calculated our “Parish Share” which includes a contribution to the cost of running the Diocese and a contribution to subsidise the mission of the church in areas of the Diocese with financial difficulties.

The clergy and authorised lay people take communion to those unable to attend public services including people in local care or retirement homes.

The parish has a Lay Pastoral Team which visits members of the congregation, and others, in their own homes and in hospital as requested.

The parish has statutory links with Scotforth (St Paul’s) Primary School including the appointment of 4 of the school’s Foundation Governors. There are members of the PCC who are also Governors.

The parish organises a Young ‘Fun’ Church led by appropriately cleared leaders at the 9.45am service.

The parish sponsors several uniformed groups [Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts]. Parade services are held involving the members of the uniformed groups in the regular worship of the church.

The parish holds the Diocesan “Child Friendly Church” award.

Candidates are prepared for “Confirmation” [admission to membership of the church] through a course run bi-annually, a service was held in 2022 which was led by Bishop Julian.

House groups are available to help members of the congregation develop and explore their faith in an informal setting. Over 2023 this has taken the form of a mix of in-person house groups and one group remaining online.

The parish has several social groups including a Walking Group, a Women’s Fellowship and a Tea@2 group. The Walking Group held its last gathering at the end of 2023.

The parish has received the Bronze Eco Church award and our work in this area continues.

The parish is involved in ecumenical work locally as a member of Churches Together in Lancaster and also of South Lancaster Churches Together.

The parish has an annual prayer rota which covers all the streets in the parish and these appear in our weekly Parish News.

The Parish Hall and St Paul’s Hala Centre are used for a number of social events each year, and are available for hire.

The PCC has complied with the duty to have “due regard” to the House of Bishops guidance in relation to safeguarding. The parish has a Safeguarding Officer who monitors our activities to ensure we comply with the relevant legal obligations and Diocesan policies. Safeguarding is a standing item on the PCC agenda.

The parish has a Health and Safety Officer who monitors our activities to ensure we comply with the relevant legal obligations and Diocesan policies. Health and Safety is a standing item on the PCC agenda.

Photographs of the members of the PCC are displayed in the parish church, St Paul’s Hala Centre and on our website so that members of the congregation can identify them.

The parish has links with mission partners serving overseas.

The parish has a long-standing tradition of supporting other charities which is covered in more detail in the financial section of this report.

The parish maintains a Terrier / Inventory of moveable church property.

There were 154 on the Electoral Roll at the 2023 APCM.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St.Paul's Scotforth Financial Review 2023

The Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 should be read as part of this review.

All parishes within the Church of England pay the Parish Share which is calculated by, and paid to, the Diocese. It supports the mission of the wider church, including payment of the clergy stipends, housing and pensions in our own parish. We have paid our amended Parish Share, reduced to £65,000 for 2023, in full and have also agreed, with the Diocese, the amount to be paid in 2024, again showing a significant reduction on the Parish Request figure, derived from the standard formula used to calculate it. In 2023, expenditure has been rigorously controlled and the Parish accounts show a deficit of just £14.92 in our unrestricted funds which account for our day to day income and the running costs.

In 2023, we have paid over £19,000 to maintain the Church building and to run the services. Ignoring expenditure on anything else at all, coupled with the Parish Share payment, this means that the running costs of the Church are well over £7,000 a month and will be even more next year!

It is important to remember that we do not receive funds directly from the Government or from the Church of England. We, the parishioners, have to provide all the money to run the parish ourselves – all £7,000 plus of it every single month.

The adoption of a Reserves Policy continues to clarify the PCC's thinking about the use of Reserves, particularly with respect to any that may be used for the replacement of the roof in due course and are defined as being restricted for that purpose. The cost of the work on the roof will exceed a full year's normal income many times over and much of this will have to come from grants from lottery funding (which are invariably time limited) – but these cannot be applied for until the roof is "officially" at risk as defined by the experts and it is not there yet. So the parish has to maintain its reserves, and to undertake fundraising to increase them, until the work has been carried out.

We have used about £17,000 of our restricted funds (obtained through grants) and look to spending a similar sum on completely rewiring the Church building, for safety reasons.

On paper, our long term restricted/endowment Investment Fund increased in value by over £16,000 this year (5b) reversing much of the paper loss experienced last year. The restricted fund for a new roof (completely ring-fenced for this purpose) continues to grow slowly to £162,770 with investment interest being added together with further donations from parishioners.

To properly understand the accounts, it is vital to remember that the Diocesan reduction in our Parish Share is crucial and without it we would be £20,000 in the red – so we must find ways to increase our regular income for the future.

Funds Held as Custodian Trustees

None.

Parish Safeguarding Report – 2023

All the new safeguarding policies and procedures were ratified by the PCC in May 2023 and a Safeguarding Audit was carried out. All training and DBS clearances, where required, are up to date with the exception of those still going through the appointment process. Refresher training has taken place when required.

There were no reportable safeguarding incidents in the parish during 2023.

Last year I reported that there was a new Parish Safeguarding Dashboard online tool and we are fully compliant with Stage 1 of this hub, we have now moved onto Stage 2 which holds additional information, such as role descriptions and person specifications for each role the PCC have authorised. We have 64 cleared volunteers.

The Parish Safeguarding Dashboard is a wonderful platform and easy to use – which you can't say about every new initiative. It will also mean that there would be a clean handover for any new Parish Safeguarding Officer taking on the role in the future as all information is held centrally on the Dashboard and Hub.

Stage 3, which includes Safer Recruitment records, should become available to Blackburn Diocese users by the end of 2024. There is also going to be, hopefully, integration with the National Training website – so some really good news for 2024.

The role of Parish Safeguarding Officer is definitely not for the faint-hearted and you have to develop a thick skin on occasions. However, it wouldn't be the demanding role it is without the numbers of volunteers we usually have at work in the parish – without your help and co-operation there are activities and groups that wouldn't take place – so thank you.

I have undertaken this role since 2008; if anyone feels 'called' or has experience in this field and would like to contribute to church life in this way I am very happy to talk to you. Perhaps in a role of Deputy Parish Safeguarding Officer – learning the ropes – in the hope that one day you would be happy to take on the role. The Dashboard and Hub have made the task of keeping track of training/DBS much easier and it is hoped that future developments, after the initial input of data, will similarly be the same for all the Safer Recruitment tasks.

Jayne Weatherill (tel: 843135)
Parish Safeguarding Officer

Buildings/Churchwarden's Report for 2023

The annual audit of the Terrier took place during February and March and these documents are available to view on request if anyone wishes to see them. It includes not only the Church but the Parish Hall and Hala Centre. Thank you to Sarah and Kate for their assistance in the Hall and to Jim for his assistance at Hala. The Warden's Log is also up to date.

With regards to our buildings during the year – a log is kept for most incidences that occur either in church, the parish hall or the Hala Centre.

Parish Hall:

2023 saw the main hall ceiling being replaced and redecoration afterwards – wow, what a difference. There are a number of people to thank for their help with this project, in many different ways. However, one big thank you to Bill and Jean Harrison – the decorating work has made such a massive difference to the hall.

We have a number of plans for 2024 but these are all grant funding dependent.

Hala Centre:

This building is unique as we are not responsible for all areas of the building fabric. Here too, as we hire out the building, all maintenance schedules that are our responsibility and risk assessments are in place.

Church:

A relatively quiet year in church – however, the roof remains the main item of concern. Meetings are still held with the Architect, a report on the environment took place which at least reassured us that the discolouration on the ceiling wouldn't harm anyone even though it looks unsightly. We continue to monitor the roof on opening the church for services all the time. The roof replacement is still a priority and all funds raised already are 'ringfenced' for this project. However, as yet, our roof does not meet the criteria for putting the church on the heritage 'at risk' register which would make us eligible for Heritage funding.

The one big inspection was on the electrical systems. This takes place every 5 years. Unfortunately, our systems were deemed unsatisfactory and about 6 months of quote chasing took place. The failures were not a surprise as there is a mis-match of circuit boards and switches all over and some of the older light fittings can regularly fuse the circuit boards, plugs can be temperamental too. I am pleased to say that the work will commence on 11th March 2024, lasting 10 weeks, to rectify all the faults highlighted on this inspection.

Jayne Weatherill
Churchwarden

Deanery Synod report for 2023

The first meeting of the new Triennium of the Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery Synod was held on 27th June 2023. The Deanery currently comprises 18 parishes. As there were several newly-appointed members at this meeting, both in the House of Clergy and the House of Laity, the current Lay Chair, Jaqueline Stamper, explained that the word "Synod", which is used for an assembly of the church, is derived from Greek words meaning "walking together". At a Synod meeting members from different parishes across the Deanery come together to discuss how we can best "walk together" in the way of Christ. Any important policy decisions taken by the General Synod or the Diocesan Synod are passed down to Deanery level to be forwarded to parishes for discussion and/or implementation and the Deanery Synod itself can initiate policy discussions by making proposals to the Diocese.

There is a Standing Committee which usually meets three times a year to determine the agenda for each meeting. It can also act on behalf of the Synod between meetings. It has five clergy and five lay members: Revd. Craig Abbott (Area Dean), Revd. Lorraine Moffat (Chapter Clerk), Fr. Damian Porter, Revd. Carol Backhouse, Jaqueline Stamper (Lay Chair), Barbara Gardner (Treasurer), Richard Carter (Secretary, Awena Carter, with one clergy and one lay vacancy). The Standing Committee also acts as the Mission and Pastoral Committee of the Deanery to discuss and comment on proposals for changes affecting parishes in the Deanery.

Clergy who are currently in post in churches and parishes in the Deanery are ex officio members of the Deanery Synod. Lay members are elected by their parishes to serve for a three-year period and as such are also members of their PCC. The current lay members representing St. Paul's Scotforth are Grace Illidge, Margaret Ives and Phillip Simpson.

During the past year 2023-2024 Grace, Phillip and I have regularly attended the Synod meetings and reported back to the PCC on the issues raised. In June 2023 Susan Shearsby, a member of St. Thomas' Church, Lancaster, spoke about the work of Christians against Poverty, an organisation which has 300 Debt Centres in the UK and also operates internationally. A Debt Centre offers free advice to people in debt in a manner similar to the Citizens Advice Bureau. It works in partnership with local churches and has a Christian emphasis. The Lancaster and Morecambe Debt Centre was created six years ago and has two accredited advisers who each meet about four clients each month. At each meeting the Adviser is accompanied by a Befriender who will aim to offer continuing support to the client, once the debt issues have been resolved. Susan spoke very movingly about the privilege of standing alongside people in their hour of need and of seeing God at work in peoples' lives. All the work is underpinned by prayer and the power of prayer is found to be huge. There are opportunities for volunteers to assist the work of the Debt Centre through prayer support, befriending, help with occasional events, donations and fundraising. In October, Bishop Philip addressed the Synod about the diocesan M-Power course, which forms leaders from urban backgrounds to work towards establishing a Christian community "on every significant social housing estate" in our towns and cities, and more recently we have heard about Lancaster as a City of Sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers. The Synod agreed to use the Deanery networks to build up a list of people in our churches who would be willing to provide short-term accommodation for those being evicted from Home Office accommodation at very short notice after being granted refugee status and leave to remain in the UK. In all these ways the Deanery Synod reminds us of our ongoing responsibility as Christians to engage with issues of the day in whatever ways we can to help those in need.

Margaret Ives

South Lancaster Churches Together report for 2023

Clergy and 2 lay members from each of the four churches (St. Paul's, St. Bernadette's, Lancaster Methodist Church and Trinity URC at Bowerham) have continued to meet regularly to discuss ways of working together and to plan events. In July 2023 people from all four churches took part in a Prayer Walk with prayer stations at St. Paul's, Scotforth School, the Barton Road Community Centre, St. Bernadette's, the Cranwell Avenue recreation area, the Cork Road allotments and the Trinity United Reform Church and Methodist churches. There was also a good attendance at a special "Songs of Praise" service, held at St. Bernadette's on 17th September, to mark 25 years of the churches working together. Our local MP Cat Smith attended this service and spoke about an Early Day Motion which she had recently presented in Parliament in recognition of the work of SLCT among the South Lancaster communities.

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 2024 there were prayers in each of the churches for God's continuing blessing on our outreach and community projects in the service of Christ.

Margaret Ives