

2024 Reports and Accounts

Parochial Church Council of St John the Evangelist Church, Oulton with Woodlesford

Aims and Purposes

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St John the Evangelist is responsible for working in partnership with the clergy—in 2024, the Revd Sarah Hancox (until February) and the Revd Lisa Senior (from March 24th)—to promote the whole mission of the Church in the parish: pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical. The PCC also oversees the maintenance of All Saints' Parish Hall, Woodlesford.

Objectives and Activities

The PCC aims to enable as many people as possible to worship and become part of the community at St John's. We regularly review our worship offerings and strive to include the diverse groups within our parish. Our worship expresses our faith through prayer, Scripture, music, and sacrament.

In planning our year, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, especially regarding the advancement of religion.

We aim to help people live out their faith in everyday life through:

- Worship and prayer
- Learning about the Gospels
- Growing in knowledge and trust in Jesus
- Providing pastoral care
- Engaging in mission and outreach

Maintaining the fabric of All Saints' Parish Hall is essential to this mission. In addition, we continue to explore the future of St John the Evangelist Church, especially the potential for restoration and reordering to serve as a community hub with a focus on mental health support. However, due to rising costs and reduced funding opportunities, achieving full restoration remains uncertain.

Following dialogue with the Church of England Buildings Council, a site visit was held in January 2024, attended by Revd Sarah, and Churchwardens Paul Ellis and Stuart Ward. A report was received in March and shared with the Archdeacon, the Revd Canon Mark Umpleby.

Throughout 2024, churchwardens explored funding options. Many grant schemes have been reduced or require match funding and detailed proposals, which we do not currently have. The PCC affirms that no final decisions have been made. We are still discerning possible paths, though we acknowledge the long and challenging road ahead. We deeply appreciate the efforts of those who have dedicated their time and energy to this project over the past nine years.

With guidance from the Mission and Pastoral Secretary at the Diocese of Leeds, conversations have begun regarding the possibility of closure and the implications for the parish.

Please continue to hold the PCC and Churchwardens in your prayers and do feel free to approach us with any questions.

Achievements and Performance

In November 2014, the church suffered significant lead theft and vandalism, causing severe water ingress. Since then, all services have been held in All Saints' Parish Hall, which is licensed for worship. Regular services continue on Sundays at 9:30am and Thursdays at 10:00am.

In February 2024, we said farewell to our Team Vicar, Revd Sarah Hancox, who left to begin a new role in Bristol. The PCC, congregation, and wider parish are incredibly grateful for her leadership and care during her time with us. We pray God's blessings on her new ministry.

Following Revd Sarah's departure, we were informed that the post would not be replaced, reducing clergy numbers from three to two in our benefice. With Revd Canon Mark Umpleby recently installed as Team Rector, this reduction was considered unwise. We were therefore blessed when Revd Lisa Senior agreed to take on Revd Sarah's responsibilities on an interim basis. She was licensed on Palm Sunday 2024. The PCC thanks her sincerely for her support and dedication.

Weekly attendance throughout 2024 remained steady, with approximately 12 attending on Thursdays and 24 on Sundays.

Our social events, such as coffee mornings and fish & chip lunches, were well attended and boosted parish funds. Our sincere thanks to everyone who helps behind the scenes and on the day.

We give thanks to God for our dedicated Churchwardens, Treasurer, Secretary, and PCC members, whose commitment sustains our mission through these challenging times.

Report from the Churchwardens (Stuart Ward & Paul Ellis)

Morning and Evening Prayer continue regularly, as does the ringing of the church bell, reminding the community that the Church is still present. During warmer months, the church has been opened for private prayer.

The Easter Dawn Service and Remembrance Sunday services were both well attended. Remembrance services were held at the Oulton Institute and the War Memorial, followed by refreshments at the Institute—a lovely moment of community togetherness. Our thanks to the Institute for their hospitality.

We are pleased to report no further damage to St John's. The church continues to dry out. Only the main pews are in use, as the side pews remain cordoned off due to potential risks. Quarterly risk assessments are in place.

Our gratitude extends to Oulton Hall's greenkeeping team for their consistent help in maintaining the graveyard.

Community involvement was strong over summer, particularly with the regular work of Fiona, whose weekly contributions of grass cutting and strimming have been invaluable. Our thanks also go to the community payback team for their spring work in clearing brambles and tidying, despite their scheme currently being suspended due to logistical challenges.

We must also thank our dedicated bin rota team: Liz, Irene, Ann, and Janet—for faithfully managing the churchyard bins.

Worship and Prayer

The PCC remains committed to offering services that spiritually nourish and engage our community. We have resumed the use of the shared chalice during Communion, while still offering the option of receiving in one kind or receiving a blessing.

Service Pattern:

- Sundays: 9.30am
- Thursdays: 10.00am
Holy Communion is celebrated at both.

As of April 2024, there are 64 people on the Electoral Roll.

In 2024 we celebrated 2 baptisms and conducted 7 funerals at the Parish Hall or graveside, and 5 at local crematoria. Additional services for parishioners were conducted at Holy Trinity Rothwell by Revd Sarah or Revd Lisa.

Deanery Synod

Stuart Ward, currently Lay Chair of the South Leeds Deanery, represented us at Deanery Synod. We thank our two Synod representatives and hope to appoint a third in 2025.

Deanery Synod Report:

South Leeds Deanery Synod Report 2024 for APCMs in 2025

The Deanery Synod met on 25th January 2024 at St Peter's Church, Gildersome. Stuart Ward, Lay Chair, thanked Rev Phil Harris for serving as Area Dean, and also thanked Sarah Hancox for serving as Assistant Area Dean. Bishop Nick licensed Rev Phil Arnold as Area Dean and

Rev Sharon Wilkinson as Assistant Area Dean. Bishop Nick reflected on Jeremiah 29:4-14 and gave an overview of where we are as a Church and nation. He also referred to Psalm 137 and that we should be 'singing the Lord's song in a strange land' as he talked about us living in a time of fragmentation and danger. As we entered a year of General Elections for half of the world's population, the bishops would be identifying political issues and calling people to look at them through the lens of the Lord's Prayer, particularly seeking the Kingdom of God. Bishop Nick talked about the Diocese being a community of people with a diversity of views, and the need for us to keep our focus on the Kingdom of God together.

The Area Forum at St George's Church on Tuesday 12th March 2024 focussed on Church Growth.

The next meeting of the Deanery Synod was on Tuesday 14th May 2024 at Christ Church, Upper Armley. There were updates on the Deanery Synod elections, the practicalities of finding cover during a vacancy and an update on Parish Share. Rev Emily Tidball had been appointed as Priest-in-Charge of the parishes of Gomersal and Birkenshaw and as she had been serving as Deanery Secretary there was a need to appoint someone new for this role. There was a presentation by Janet Edmonds and Alena Rose-Douglas from the Diocese on using church buildings for mission and grants to support mission in our churches.

The third meeting of the Deanery Synod was on Thursday 12th September 2025 at St Wilfrid's, Calverley. Elections to Mission & Pastoral Committee – Rev Phil Arnold volunteered as Clergy Member and Stuart Ward led the election of Ian Waterhouse, previous Lay Chair, who was happy to continue. Brenda Pickard from Calverley agreed to take on the role of Deanery Secretary. Phil mentioned the Selection Panel for Ordinands and asked for any names, clergy or lay to be forwarded to him. DDV Advisors were also mentioned and Rev Rob Denton, who is an Advisor, gave a brief explanation of how it works. Rev Graham Blackwell was unavailable to speak about Artificial Intelligence so Rev Chris Balding shared a few tips on how it can be used practically. Rev Mark Watson spoke about his experiences of 3-year Interim Ministry at St Michael's.

The Area Forum at St George's Church on Tuesday 12th November 2024 focussed on Lay Training with Stuart Ward speaking to the group.

We are thankful for all those who serve on Deanery Synod and, in particular, the work of Rev Phil Arnold, Area Dean, Rev Sharon Wilkinson, Assistant Area Dean and Stuart Ward, South Leeds Deanery Lay Chair and Brenda Pickard, Deanery Secretary.

All Saints' Parish Hall

2024 was a stable year with no groups cancelling bookings. Due to significant increases in utility costs, our lettings fees were raised—an understandable yet challenging adjustment for some groups. We remain just slightly above average local rates and cannot increase further at this time.

Income from polling station hire was especially helpful. Thanks go to Sue Whiteley for her early-morning assistance.

Weekly Thursday worship in the lounge continues to grow, as does Sunday attendance. Our seasonal and special services—especially baptisms and Christingle—were also well supported.

All statutory requirements for the Hall were met in 2024. Thanks to Sarah Oxley for managing bookings, and to all who make the Hall a thriving part of our parish life.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral visiting resumed in 2024, with Revd Lisa and Stuart Ward making home and care home visits. Our Home Communion team is also back in action, offering spiritual support to those unable to attend services.

Mission and Evangelism

The PCC remains focused on rebuilding confidence and re-establishing connections within our community. Our most effective outreach continues to be through baptisms and funerals.

Stuart Ward was commissioned in early 2024 as a Lay Pastoral Minister and Occasional Preacher, and he is now completing a Lay Worship Leader course (to conclude May 2025).

We offered both a Lent Group and an Advent Course in 2024.

Ecumenical and Team Relationships

We maintain strong links with Rothwell Churches Together, even in the absence of a formal committee. Our partnership with the Methodist Church continues, including joint Lent and study courses with both Methley Methodists and St Oswald's, Methley.

Volunteers

We are deeply thankful for our many volunteers: church members, PCC officers, hall caretakers, gardeners, event organisers, and many more. Special thanks to:

- Grounds staff at Oulton Hall
- Fiona, for her regular gardening work
- Treasurer: Susan Whiteley
- PCC Secretary: Susan Wild
- Church Hall Caretaker: Sarah Oxley
- Churchwardens: Stuart Ward and Paul Ellis

Your time, gifts, and commitment make this ministry possible. Thank you.

Structure, Governance and Management

The PCC is a corporate body under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. It includes the incumbent, churchwardens, and members elected from the church's Electoral Roll. PCC members are responsible for decision-making and managing parish funds. New members receive appropriate training and guidance.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains a priority. It is a standing item on every PCC agenda. All PCC members hold current DBS checks, have completed appropriate training (C0/C1), and submit annual Confidential Declaration Forms. The PCC complies fully with the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016.

Our thanks to Janet Charlton, our dedicated Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Administrative Information

St John the Evangelist Church is located in Oulton, Leeds, and is part of the Diocese of Leeds within the Church of England.

Correspondence address:

Susan Wild, 10 Eastfield Drive, Woodlesford, Leeds, LS26 8SQ

The PCC is a corporate body, and a charity exempt from registration with the Charity Commission.

Closing Reflection

Despite the challenges, the people of St John's continuing to serve faithfully—worshipping, praying, caring, and growing. We may be a small parish, but we are rich in love, hope, and commitment to the Gospel.

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.” — 1 Corinthians 15:58