

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS 19th MAY 2024 at 11.30am following the Holy Communion Service

1) WELCOME

The Vicar, the Revd Canon Richard Carew, welcomed back those people who had attended the service and welcomed those people watching online. There are two meetings, the first is the annual meeting of parishioners to elect our Churchwardens.

2) ELECTION OF TWO CHURCHWARDENS TO SERVE FROM 2024-2025

There were two nominations: Helen Wren, proposed by Wendy Hewitt and Louise Robinson; Michael Trew, proposed by Jean Wright and Beryl Johnson. There were no other nominations, so Helen and Michael are our Churchwardens for another year.

The annual meeting of parishioners is now closed. A round of applause was given to the Churchwardens.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

(Copies of all reports had been displayed on the website with paper copies available where required)

Richard opened this meeting saying it is open to anyone on the Electoral Roll and those people can vote during the proceedings.

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Max Burgess, Peter and Bridget Burgess, Letitia Chester, Rob Dobson, Mike and Wendy Hewitt, Angela Morrison, Janet Owen, Graeme and Ann Robertson, Louise Robinson, Anne Russell-Smith, Peter Wheatcroft, Pat and Bob Wilson.

There were 48 people in Church. The meeting was also live streamed on YouTube.

Richard advised that papers had been prepared and been on the website, although there were a couple of printed copies available on the table. He suggested that if the author of any of the Reports wished to give a summary, they could and then answer any questions.

As an aside Richard said that during the previous week, the House of Bishops had met in St Edward's, and everyone had all their papers on-line on their mobile phones!

2) MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 21st MAY 2023

The Minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record and were signed by the Vicar.

3) MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4) ELECTION OF PCC REPRESENTATIVES TO SERVE FROM 2024– 2027 – 5 vacancies, FROM 2024 – 2026 - 4 vacancies AND FROM 2024 – 2025 – 2 vacancies.

Richard announced that two nominations had been received: Alec Cartwright, nominated by Michael Trew and Debbie Paterson and Jim Cooper, nominated by Wendy Hewitt and Beryl Johnson. These two people will serve for three years. There was applause. Richard thanked Jim and Alec for being willing to serve.

Richard also wished to thank those people who had 'stepped down' after completing their first term of office: Cai Mallett and Julie Shepard. They had both given wisdom and insight. He also wished to particularly thank Christine Hanby, who had served two terms not only on the PCC but had been

a member of the Standing Committee, for her wisdom and knowledge of the history of this church. He really appreciated that, which had been especially helpful in navigating the way ahead in these strange times.

5) ELECTION OF SIDES-PERSONS

Richard said that we have a report from Louise Robinson, which basically says ‘Thank you’ to all of you. He endorsed the report by thanking the Sides persons for carrying out this important ministry of welcome. You help people get the door open, which is really important, as well as all the other ‘unsung’ stuff. So much before the service and stay on afterwards. Thank you to all those people who have come forward during this last year. Richard read the names of people who already serve. Thanking them, they were approved unanimously:

8.30 service

Anne Brabbs
Ann Robinson
Stephen Kirkman
David Tooley

10.00 Holy communion

Anne Russell-Smith	Elaine Lambert
Anne Fry	Colin Paterson
Alec Cartwright	Kay Cartwright
Louise Robinson	Rob Dobson
Elliot Hammond	Joan Thackray
Max Burgess	Faith Lewis
Vaunda Powell	Helen Dobson

Thursday 10.00

Anne Russell-Smith
Sarah Henshaw
Beryl Johnson

6.30 Healing Service

Vaunda Powell
Helena Biddle

Richard gave a reminder that there will be a training session of Sides persons on Sunday 9th June, following the 10.00am service.

6) ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

The Electoral Roll Officer, Nigel Pells, had provided the following Report:

At the last APCM the roll stood at 218.

Following this year’s roll revision, the roll stands at 219.

The difference in numbers is due to 7 deaths and 8 people joining the roll.

Of the 219 people on the roll, 120 people live within the parish and 99 live outside the parish.

Richard thanked Nigel for keeping this up to date.

7) SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Richard advised that Pat Wilson, the Parish Safeguarding Representative, had sent her apologies. He offered a huge ‘Thank you’ to Pat for all she has done. Richard read out Pat’s Report:

Policies - A new Policy Statement regarding the Recruitment of Ex-offenders was adopted by the PCC in July 2023. Our Parish Safeguarding Policy and Domestic Abuse Policy are due for review. All three policies can be viewed on the Safeguarding section of our website and hard copies are posted on church notice boards. Our policies meet current Church of England guidance, so I am not recommending any changes this year.

Safer Recruitment - We continue to carry out the required safeguarding checks on everyone who leads or helps with activities for children and young people, and also on all PCC members because they are trustees of St Edward’s, which is a charity that works with children and vulnerable adults. 13 DBS checks have been completed in the past twelve months, a mixture of renewals and “new recruits”. The PCC has identified what safeguarding checks and training will need to be undertaken by those who become part of the planned Visitor Group.

Training - We have made good progress with safeguarding training this year and are now very close to meeting national guidance fully. All those who lead or help with activities for children and young people are up to date with required training modules. Almost all PCC members have also completed safeguarding training. I would like to thank everyone for their time and commitment in completing the training modules online, some demonstrating considerable perseverance in the face of wayward technology. An in-person safeguarding presentation/question and answer session for volunteer leaders, young leaders and helpers for Holiday Club was held in July 2023 and was well-attended. Training is a key way of raising awareness of safeguarding issues, giving people clear guidelines to ensure their own behaviour is appropriate, and helping them to be confident in challenging others or reporting any concerns they may have.

Conclusion – It has been a difficult year for us all at St Edward's so far as safeguarding is concerned. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser has taken a key role in one matter and has given advice and guidance on another. The PCC has complied with their duty to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding and, to this end, is ensuring that all the formal policies, training and actions identified in the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Dashboard are put in place and then regularly reviewed. However, formalities are just the baseline, and I am heartened by the thoughtful and in-depth discussions about safeguarding that have taken place at recent PCC meetings I have attended.

I am willing to continue as Parish Safeguarding Representative for another year if that is the wish of the PCC.

Pat Wilson,
Parish Safeguarding Representative

Richard wished to take this opportunity, in her absence, to say a huge thank you to Pat. She is a very wise and level-headed source of advice, counsel and support. An excellent antenna to help us as a PCC, as we continue to review our policies and procedures. The Safeguarding Dashboard that Pat talks about is a tool that we are using to ensure that we know what we are doing so far as the Church of England Safeguarding Policies. Pat is a helpful guide as we go through that, so Pat, you are wonderful, thank you for all you have done and will do.

8) **PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2023**

Helen Dobson, the Treasurer, read the following report and showed slides simultaneously:

Like last year let's start this year's report with the thank you's. When I opened my report from May 2023 I had a sense of déjà vu.

Huge personal thanks to members of the Finance Committee for their work and dedication throughout the year. Special mention to Debbie Paterson for chairing the meetings and for her ongoing knowledge and experience with all things financial at St Edward's; Keith Wells for his support and extraordinary eye for detail and knowledge of the accounting system; Kate Lamb for paying everyone on time and Jim Cooper for meticulously recording all transactions in our accounting system and Dave Tooley our minute secretary.

There is an army of other volunteers in the background doing the banking, collecting Porch magazine money and advertising revenues - thank you all.

Thanks to Andrew Smith, the Stewardship Recorder for his timely submission of gift aid claims to help our cashflow and to Richard Smith our Independent Examiner for this year. Here's hoping and praying that the Treasury team are keen to continue in 2024.

I think this is almost verbatim from last year. We are very lucky with our team; however we do need new people to get involved. I have indicated to Richard that I will do one more year as Treasurer but

will be stepping down at the APCM 2025. Please do get in touch if you think you have skills, enthusiasm and expertise to join us.

Just a few points to highlight:

1. We made a loss on our general fund of £40,711 in the year leaving a deficit balance on this fund of (£3,800). This deficit was budgeted and has been covered by the legacy.
2. We paid our Freewill Offer of £105,000 in full and on time and made contributions totalling over £12,000 to our partner charities representing 10% of our prior year regular giving. Our freewill offer in 2024 is £90,000.
3. We received a significant legacy of £175,000 from the late Joan Rowland in 2022— this has given us some financial cushion to allow us to operate a deficit budget carrying out ‘business as usual’. The PCC are reviewing all sources of income and expenditure to redress the current structural operating deficit.
4. Some pie charts to share so you can visualise our general fund income and expenditure.

I am happy to answer any questions now or any time after the meeting. If I can’t answer right away, I promise to get back to you.

Thank you very much.

Helen Dobson, Treasurer

Helen continued by explaining the various charts being screened: The total income in the General Fund last year was £204,874, 65% of which was ‘Giving’ and the tax refund on that. Helen explained all the other smaller amounts of income received in the General Fund.

In Expenditure the largest amount is our Freewill Offer, being 44% of the total General Fund expenditure. Other smaller amounts included our Charitable Giving of 5% and Premises 36%.

Debbie Paterson had prepared charts showing everything which had happened financially over the last five years. With a view to re-shaping our budget for next year, increasing our income and reducing our expenditure.

All charts will be uploaded to the website.

Rachel Bailes asked if there had been any difference in the giving after we had the series on ‘Giving’? Helen said that giving had been quite static over the last five years, which is good, given that we have had a cost-of-living crisis and a large campaign. The giving in this financial year has been positive although we have not analysed the figures yet. Richard confirmed that at the recent finance meeting, income looked to have increased, but it is not evenly distributed throughout the year. By the end of June, six months into the year, we should have a better idea.

Richard thanked Helen and the whole of the Finance Committee and said it is good to have people who can understand spread sheets, something which many of us only have a vague idea about. As you have seen, the big hit we took was in Covid, it decimated our income, with the loss of the hall bookings. We are still struggling to gain a break-even budget, we have made progress, but we will have some quite difficult decisions to make over the next few years. Although, it does feel that there is a positive turnaround this year which gives us hope that things have changed. Thank you to Helen. Applause and a round of applause for the Finance Team.

9) **FABRIC REPORT**

Michael Trew had presented the following Report:

Looking back at the past year

External Lighting

Issues at the front of church have now been dealt with, where water was getting into defective junction boxes and tripping the circuit. New junction boxes are in place at each light, filled with waterproof gel to prevent water ingress and further issues.

Fire Fighting Equipment & Fire Alarm Servicing

Brian Mackenzie-Hanson, our new Health & Safety Officer, identified a need to improve our fire-fighting provision, with five new fire extinguishers purchased and put in place across the site in summer 2023.

Routine annual inspection of fire extinguishers and fire blankets took place in summer 2023.

The fire alarm system on the Community Hall side is up to date, being tested every six months now.

Fixed Wiring Tests

Five-year fixed wiring tests were carried out in the summer of 2023, with a small amount of remedial work needed to bring things up to scratch. This was the first inspection for the Community Hall & Scouts, deferred due to the pandemic. All now good until 2028.

Gutters and Atriums Windows

Gutters are inspected and cleaned at least twice a year, with the high-level atrium glass cleaned at the same time. Last done in October 2023 and May 2024.

Health & Safety

Routine inspections are generally satisfactory, some occasional untidiness in places but otherwise OK.

We do need to address the ongoing issue of fire doors being wedged open – this is in hand.

Internal Church Lighting

Huge progress has been made here, with tenders received and a faculty application started. PCC will be asked to discuss and approve the preferred bidder on 20/05/24, with work planned to be done during August 2024. This project will see the replacement of our obsolete metal-halide lighting with LED, which responds instantly when turned on/off and will hugely decrease our running costs.

Loft Clear Out

The loft was cleared of disused/life-expired items, cleaned and reordered during the summer of 2023.

Porch

The porch received a deep clean just after Easter 2024 and the anti-bird netting panels, which had previously been cleaned, were then refitted.

Repointing of Chancel Arch

This was the last major item from the previous Quinquennial Inspection and was completed in August 2023. For one Sunday, services were held in the extension, which worked well, with lower numbers.

Solar Inverter

The finance team had identified the feed-in value had plummeted. Investigations found that the old inverter had failed and was not repairable. A new inverter was fitted in November 2023, and we are once again generating electricity.

Vestry & Parish Office

The vestry and parish office were reordered and redecorated in 2023, to improve the working conditions for our staff and provide more much-needed storage space.

Vestry Kitchen

Generous donations have allowed the replacement of the flooring here and in the corridor to the office in March 2024, and more recently the replacement of the water-damaged worktop.

We offer our thanks to our generous donors for enabling this work.

Looking ahead

Church Spire & Tower

As reported in previous years, the spire & tower will require some substantial work in the years ahead; everything is currently safe and nothing is needed immediately.

Our architect Louise Priestman has costed things up and the next stage of the investigation will cost between £7K and £8K.

External Stonework Repairs

External stonework repairs identified as needed at the previous Quinquennial Inspection are still to be carried out, as they were deferred when the major roof work was done, due to costs. These remaining works are all closer to ground level, including work on the porch, some low-level repointing and repairs to the string course, and have been estimated at £31K.

Fire Doors

We are aware that fire doors are wedged open, when they should not be.

We are currently investigating cost options of fitting door guard equipment, which releases open fire doors when the fire alarm sounds.

Quinquennial Inspection

This is due in September 2024 and will be conducted by our architect, Louise Priestman.

The DAC fee was revised in 2023 to be £1K + VAT.

South Side Windows

A small item from the last Quinquennial Inspection; the protective plastic is very opaque and yellowed now and will be reducing the amount of natural light coming in, so something we may need to look at.

Our People

Brian Mackenzie-Hanson joined Premises Committee as Health & Safety Officer in Spring 2023.

Mike Hewitt joined church staff as caretaker in early 2024 and sits on Premises Committee.

George Jardine remains on Premises Committee, having stepped back as Health & Safety Officer in Spring 2023.

Michael said that just to add to the financial waves with the things coming up, there are still outstanding items from the last Quinquennial Report and the next Inspection is due in September, there may need to be some fund-raising after that.

Richard said that the Architect is very happy with the way our church is looked after. Thank you to the Premises Committee for helping with that and making sure the 'day to day' stuff is done. The Architect says we are one of the best kept churches in the Diocese.

Richard referred to the Quinquennial Inspection due later this year and said that we are aware of work which will need to be done, and some will be very costly. He suggested we wait and see what the total work required is and then decide how we are to approach the financing of it, rather than come to you with various smaller projects requiring funding.

On the premises side, Richard wished to say a huge 'Welcome and Thank You' to Mike Hewitt, our new Caretaker. He is making a real difference to the way we are able to operate in welcoming people, and this is freeing-up Wendy to concentrate on her admin role. Everything looks so much tidier, and cleaner and this is an on-going project.

Richard thanked Michael Trew and the Premises Team for their work.

10) DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Deanery Synod Representatives had prepared the following report:

Representatives: Linda Sykes and Helen Wren

Revd. Canon Richard Carew is a member of the Deanery Leadership Team.

The principal topics this year have been growing a healthy church, the climate crisis and the response of the church and Living Christ's Story.

Growing a Healthy Church

Ven John Day, the Diocesan Growing Healthy Churches Advisor outlined the life of the early church, and the lessons that can be drawn from their example. He outlined the work of Robert Warren who had suggested seven marks of a healthy church are:

Mark 1: Energized by faith

Mark 2: Outward looking focus

Mark 3: Seeks to find out what God wants

Mark 4: Faces the cost of change and growth

Mark 5: Operates as a loving community

Mark 6: Makes room for all

Mark 7: Does a few things and does them well

Discussions focussed on a question posed by Bishop Graham Cray. "Can you imagine a form of church different from that of your own upbringing or recent experience? The dying words of a church may well be: 'We never did it that way before'."

Climate Crisis

Professor Colin Beake who is a Trustee of A Rocha UK and a Professor in Ecology at York University and worked with A Rocha in Portugal, Lebanon and UK, gave a presentation on climate change. The opening presentation looked at the seriousness of the crisis e.g. the rise in global surface temperature, the growing number of plant and animal species that are moving into the critically endangered plus those which are now extinct in the wild.

The second half explored how the future could be different and talked about the work of A Rocha and Eco Church. A Rocha was set up 20 years ago by Peter Harris as a Field Centre for people to learn about God through Creation. Some 6,000 Churches have signed up for Eco Church and A Rocha and they are inundated with requests for help and advice. The challenges are around: use of buildings, land, lifestyles, community and worship (i.e.: making environment a focus of some services). St Edward's currently has the Bronze Eco Award and is working towards the Silver.

Living Christ's Story

Sam Nicol, Diocesan Director for Strategic Transformation outlined the main vision of Living Christ's Story had set goals: To become more Christ Like; To become younger and more diverse; To Transform structures and Finances. She led discussion groups based on the question: "Where are you (parish/benefice) at the start of this year and where would you like to be by the end of the year?"

Groups were formed based very loosely on the areas of the Churches represented, i.e. City Centre Churches, Churches to the North and East of the River and those to the South and West of the River. The points to discuss under the initial heading were:

- What is Working?
- What is Stuck?
- What is Missing?
- What remains Unclear?

The discussions were constructive; each group gave some feedback from their discussion and completed a chart for Sam to consider and put before the Diocese.

Area Dean

The Reverend Luke Tillett has stepped down as Area Dean after 5 difficult years which have taken us through COVID and crisis in cost of living. Grateful thanks were given for his hard work and leadership.

Richard advised the Deanery is in a state of 'evolution' at the moment. The Diocese continues to prepare its strategy as a whole and so the Deanery is waiting to see where it fits into that strategy. We are trying to work together better with our neighbouring parishes.

He thanked Linda and Helen for serving on the Deanery Synod.

11) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

i) Altar Rails – Richard said that at the last PCC meeting there had been a suggestion to put the altar rails back and it was decided to ask you at this meeting. He asked for a show of hands: for those people requesting them to be back – four; those not bothered and there was a goodly showing. Richard will take back to the PCC the following evening.

ii) Doris Bell had indicated during the meeting that she wished to ask about having the Cenotaph cleaned. Richard took the microphone to Doris for her to put in her request. Doris said that the Cenotaph is a disgrace, and she would like to get some money together to have it cleaned. It is black with the fumes from the traffic and Doris considers we should ask the City of York Council to help with the cost. Doris said the last time it was cleaned was 23 years ago when her husband (Alderman Bernard Bell) arranged for it to be cleaned. She would like it to be cleaned again in memory of her husband.

Brian Mackenzie-Hanson made the point that there is a slope up to the Cenotaph and this should be levelled off. Revd Mark Russell-Smith said there are plans to have steps up to the Cenotaph.

Richard agreed that both the above items will be taken back to the PCC.

12) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Richard advised the next PCC Meeting will be on the following evening, Monday 20th May 2024 at 7.30pm, commencing with Holy Communion. This will be followed by the PCC meeting.

13) CLERGY REPORT

Richard had a visual presentation throughout his report and firstly reminded everyone of the Mission Statement: 'Following Jesus we are Called to be Caring, Committed and Courageous'. The Caring is the idea of looking after one another, the Committed, I have called 'apprenticeship', another word for discipleship, following in the way of Jesus and committed to carry out that apprenticeship. Courageous is that call to 'Go' for those who are to make a difference.

What has this looked like over the last year and what will it be in the coming year? The Video of 2023, 'A Year of Sunlight and Shadows' was shown. Richard thanked Helen Wren for preparing the video. There was applause.

Richard continued by saying we are all too aware of where the shadows have been, and he is not going to dwell too much on them but to try to look for those places, amidst the shadows, where we have seen the sunlight breaking in. Seen the goodness and grace of God being helpful at the most difficult of times.

Richard quoted Nicky Gumble, from the Alpha Course, 'Mountains tops inspire us – valleys mature us'. We have been walking through the valley of the shadow of death together and it is learning how to tread gently with one another, but it does feel like the sunlight is beginning to break in again and I do pray that as we look back at last year and forward to this year, we can see where the sunlight has penetrated the valleys and also see where God has been at work maturing us as well as inspiring us.

How do we live that out? Firstly, a huge thank you to those who continue to be part of the Pastoral Telephone Tree which those people receiving the phone calls, very much appreciate. That is continuing into this new year. We are looking to supplement it with a Pastoral Visiting Team. Training schedules after half-term, because we have a few people willing to visit, authorised by the PCC, to give in person contact rather than just on the telephone.

We have to acknowledge, as a community, that there have been 'shadows' and 'valleys' so thank you to Revd Dr Susan Collier for arranging another 'Quiet Day' with Geraldine Casswell and Margaret Castro. Again, an opportunity to take stock and to invite God to be that light in the darkness. To bring to God all the hurts to begin the healing. This is a place where, we as a family, are incredibly well cared for, because caring is at the heart of what we do as a community. We can build on those foundations and to enable that care to be experienced by more people.

We are apprentices in the Jesus way, apprentices in what it is to live well with God and others. We do this by taking short Courses together. In our services we read the book 'Chasing David'. David's was a very ordinary life, in many respects, a very human life, and yet a life commended by God, in spite of all the stuff that went wrong, with all that went well. We had the opportunity to enjoy reading and to discuss together. Similarly, our Lent Course 'Surprising Generosity' where we have been looking at 'Generosity' in our services and actually 'God is Good'.

How do we pay that forward into a world that needs to know that God is good. Sometimes you have to acknowledge that it is the ordinary stuff that makes the difference. I have been hugely grateful this last year for the amazing team that we have here. This is the Preaching Team. There are not many churches in the country, let alone in this Diocese, that can boast 12 people as part of the preaching team. We have a wonderfully varied diet in our services. A huge thank you, not just when I was away looking after Rachael and grieving for her, which enabled us to keep going and growing in faith and in hope. A particular thanks to Revd Angela Morrison, for all that she did as our Curate, to step in and to enable the church to keep going. Angela, if you are watching on line, our love and prayers are very much with you, as you continue to recuperate, out of hospital, but with those many rounds of tests and appointments in the coming months. Thank you for all you have done, for all you continue to do.

There is a Team which makes things 'happen'. So much just 'happens' that we do not appreciate the work that goes into that. Thinking of Angela Anelay and the Music Team, the Choir just does not 'happen' or the Music Group does not 'just happen'. All of that comes through in our services and we appreciate it, but we recognise all that goes on behind the scenes and in the Office, with Wendy Hewitt, Louise Walton and Mike Hewitt.

Just 'happening', I thank you Helen Wren and Michael Trew, the Churchwardens, for all you have done to keep your hand on the tiller in what has been a 'really tough year'. We are so grateful for all your care and commitment, your time and your energy. Thank you for your wisdom and thank you again, for being willing to do it all again as we come into this new year.

One of the joyous bits of work here is our Children's and Youth work, a huge amount going on behind the scenes. Lots of volunteers helping with Holiday Club. Holiday Club is my favourite time of the year. The church family all coming together, all ages, all skills and abilities, to enable 40 or 50 children and young people to have a brilliant week together and to learn more about what this God looks like. To be invited to be those apprentices of Jesus in their lives as well. So, to Helen Cross and Sally Gatus, thank you and thank you to all the team of volunteers who make possible the stuff that just seems to happen, whether it is Creche, Promise, Little Teds, Youth Group, Holiday Club and School Services, School Events, it has been noticed and thank you for all that you do.

Our Hospitality, again that ability to welcome people in. Food is a huge thing, the Kingdom of God is often pictured as a banquet. We have a pretty good foretaste of that here at St Edward's. Thank you to all who make that possible, whether it is Louise Robinson and the Team at lunches, or the cafe team who make possible our hospitality during the week, not least the Happy Hour. Thank you to those who make teas and coffees after the services, which means we can come back quickly to an

APCM. All these unsung things kind of 'just happen' but to enable it to happen, is due to you all, for your time and your talents.

Outward looking; we have Happy Hour Café and surplus food distribution which happens on a Wednesday evening. We have a little community who come, not just for the food, but for the company and for that 'being together'. Thank you to those who make a difference for Food Bank and Carecent. The everyday life shining as we follow Jesus, as I used in my sermon earlier. The ordinary stuff of the everyday, makes Jesus visible. It does not have to be the big stuff; it is often the little stuff unsung and unseen that is the everyday life and soul of the church. To everyone who makes that possible, thank you.

There is one person, in particular, whom I meant to mention, and that is Geoff Stamp. He is an unsung, behind the scenes, person. Chairs and tables miraculously appear and disappear, to enable other stuff to happen. So, Geoff, if you are watching on-line, thank you for all you do. Thank you to Alec Cartwright for coming in to be part of that. The everyday is just great, to all those who make it possible.

We have our financial challenges. A while back I used the image of the jaws of a crocodile and, as Helen Dobson said, our finances are remarkably stable, thank you so much. To those who have been able to increase their giving in response to our Lent Course, thank you for doing that too. It has been a real issue, inflation has been rampant, energy costs have been rampant, and that has made the jaws of the crocodile of finance just to open up that gap between our income and expenditure

We have been really fortunate in that we have the legacy from Joan Rowland, to enable to bridge that gap. One of the real heartaches this year is that we have had to 'ditch' our plan from last year, which was a Parish Worker, someone to be part of the Parish ministry. I am hoping that one day we will be able to make that happen, but for now, Joan is enabling us just to keep going. We continue to try and make sure that over the next couple of years we make wise decisions so that we have a break-even budget. We can then start to have extra funds to do something extra. If you think you can be part of that with your regular income, please do continue to pray as to what that might look like for you.

We continue to have one-off bits of generosity. We have been fortunate to have been able to refurbish: the vestry kitchen and to have new cupboards in the meeting room, for much needed storage space. So, thank you for continuing to make those things happen. The challenge continues to make the everyday sustainable so thank you to those of you who are working with us on that.

A year of sunlight and shadows. Actually, the valleys do mature us. I am longing now for that sunlight to be breaking. So, thank you to all those for making this last year possible, it has been hard.

Rachel Steel is the preacher who said, 'Life is hard, and God is good'. Life is hard and God is good, and we have lived that experience during this last year. The spirit and the generosity and goodness of God, even though life is hard. I do pray that you will continue to know that God is good, in all that lies ahead of us next year. Thank you to those who made it possible, thank you for your prayers and support, especially to me and the family, we really do appreciate it. This time last year Rachael had just had a stem cell transplant, and we were praying that would be the transforming moment, it sadly was not to be. You have made a difficult journey possible. It does feel as though the sunshine is beginning to shine again for us.

Thank you to those who I have not mentioned. Thank you to the PCC. Thank you to those at the back of church who make the screens shine every Sunday. Thank you to those who make our building shine with flowers. Thank you to the Garden Gang for making the outside an inviting place, and for those who make them teas and coffees. Thank you most of all to you, thank you for your prayers, love and support, you have made that love of God and that light of God, visible to me and our family this year.

So, what is this next year going to look like? How are we going to look at decisions to be Caring, Committed and Courageous. We are going to be looking particularly at what it is to be courageous. To looking at that invitation of Jesus in our Pentecost service to 'Go'. The image we are going to be looking at is in Ezekiel 47, where Ezekiel has an image of a temple with an altar, which is the meeting

with God, and beneath the altar there is a spring starting to bubble up. It starts to seep out of the temple, and as it does so, the spring becomes deeper and wider until it becomes a river where you can paddle. It then becomes a river where you can stand up to your waist, and then a river where you can swim. At the side of the river there are trees starting to grow and leaves burst forth, which are healing of the nations. It feels like the river is just starting to bubble up in the altar here at St Edward's. It feels like the spring is just beginning to flow. Notice as we go out from the temple that we actually feel that spring most fully. As we go out into our communities, suddenly we see God more fully at work. It is not just the spring in the temple that is filling up and making a swimming pool, but it is out in the communities that God is most fully at work. If we dare to go with Him into that place of life and healing.

I am praying this year that we will see a renewal in our church, we will see that spring bubbling up, and we will see a revival in our communities. We will see the spring bubbling up in our church, refreshing us and reviving us, but actually we might be those who are part of God's revival and that river flowing through our communities. We will see life in full which is for the healing of the nations. We will be starting to see what that will look like at our church weekend away at Wydale. What it is to be revived by God, to live well again, and to look after one another and make a difference. There are still places available, there is plenty of space available. So, please do come and join us as we begin to ponder what it is to be those who go out and live courageously. To be those who live in that river of God.

Jesus is with us. Jesus invites us to come and see, to follow me, and then to go. Those apprentices of the God way of life, in a world that so desperately needs them. This God thing is real. This God is giving us life, transforming us. This is an amazing place to be. The valleys mature us; the mountains tops inspire us. Though we take what we have learnt in the valleys in these last two years, and still have the energy again to climb the mountains. To be inspired by what is possible with God, and then to see that further horizon. That you might see that river of God being deeper and wider and to know that Jesus is Lord.

To the Glory of God the Father. Thank you.

Helen Wren and Michael Trew, the Churchwardens, came to the front. Helen spoke saying that Richard had said all those Thank you's to us, but she is certain that we, all, collectively, would want to say thank you to him. Much of those shadows have been yours and we know that, but we are just so grateful for your strength, your dignity, your faith and your understanding of what has happened. It is our turn now to give you the most enormous round of applause. Applause.

Richard responded by saying there was a lot of pain but a lot of healing. I do pray that each of us will continue to know the presence of God with us. Rachael and I had a 'rubbish' few years, but were so grateful to have been here and that we continue to be here, in this particular community. I pray that as we look to the mountain tops from the depths of the valleys, we will know that light of God.

14) CLOSING PRAYERS

Richard invited those people who are the 'People to Go' to stand for the final prayers.

Richard then said could he say a huge 'Thank you' to Isobel Goforth, the PCC Secretary. There was a round of applause.

The meeting closed at 12.35pm.

Signed..... **Date**.....