

## **A message from your Treasurer.**

The financial health of our churches allows us to function, to serve, to meet need, to do all that we do: not of course in our own strength but by the generous grace of our God. So, even though I suspect that when 'Thanksgiving Sunday' comes around again and you receive your pack there is the temptation to put the letters to one side and roll your eyes, please read on!

2023 continues to produce significant economic challenges personally for all of us in the cost of living rises, mortgage costs and energy prices. Our churches are not immune to these financial challenges, and we have seen rising costs of our Parish Share, all commodities, but in particular our energy costs have increased markedly due to the annual increase in Parish Buying electricity contracts for St Thomas Church and Hall, and the end of the fixed term contract for gas for St Thomas' Church in May. In October the fixed term contract for gas for St Mary Magdalene also ends. We were fortunate to be able to negotiate new contracts early last year in anticipation, before the major price hikes, but we have still seen significant rises.

In January your PCC took the decision to proceed with the major replacement of St Mary Magdalene's Car Park at a final cost of over £117,000 plus the £5,000 third party funding towards grants, in addition to the £6,000 spend in 2021 on investigative works: £128,000 total spend. This was mitigated by the award of grants to a value of £72,000 secured by Julie. Although the PCC allocated £35,000 of General Fund resources to this project a significant shortfall has largely been met by fundraising (£894) and generous donations from members of the congregations of both churches, currently totaling £9,375 with Gift Aid still to be fully claimed. This has been a major achievement, and the new car park will be an asset to our churches and the community for many years to come.

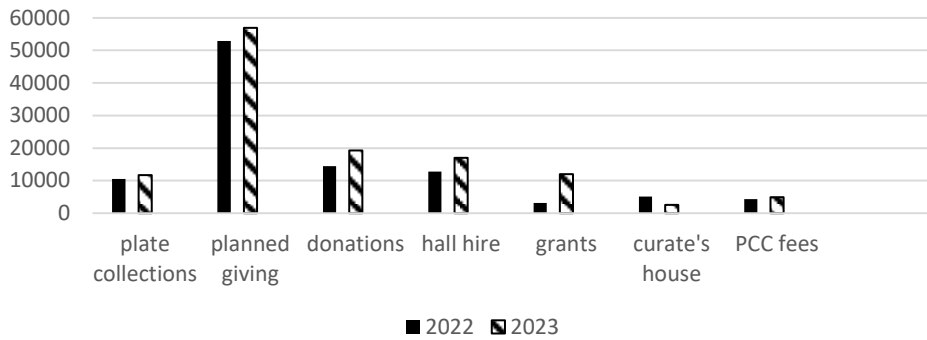
Love and generosity are at the heart of all that you are and all that we do. God gives to us generously and loves us unconditionally, and we are told to 'carry each other's burdens'. Through such selfless giving of time, talents, and money we continue to be able to support our own congregations through Prayer Ministry, pastorally through Home Communion lunches, Pastoral Care Team visits and the Church Kindness group delivering cakes, meals, and flowers, and with Social and Fundraising activities. Work with young people is expanding through Story Church, Praise and Play, Sunday School, Social Activities, games nights, Museum of Policing visit, and Confirmation classes. A Youth Action Group has come together this year to take this work forward.

**And** we look and love outwardly providing a 'warm space' during the coldest months, free fun lunches in school holidays, Christmas and Easter Bags of food and treats, daily Open Church providing a place of welcome, warmth and peace, a satellite distribution centre for Foodbank, a community garden, achieving the Silver ECO award, in collaboration with Wild About Stockton Heath our graveyard is a place of peace and beauty. Your PCC recently approved the annual Outward Giving policy, and I am in the process of distributing £10,969 to charities at home and abroad including USPG, Church Mission Society, Broomfield's Youth Project, St Rocco's, St Joseph's, Street Pastors, St David's Nigeria, Visranthi Trust, National Churches Trust, St Thomas' School, and Warrington Youth for Christ. We supported Christian Aid door to door collections, were volunteers at the Creamfields Festival, and on your behalf, I am sending £470 to Macmillan from our coffee morning – to mention a few.

***So, from a personal perspective and on behalf of the PCC a sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributes to the life of the church, the Kingdom in Stockton Heath and Appleton, financially or through giving of their time or talents.***

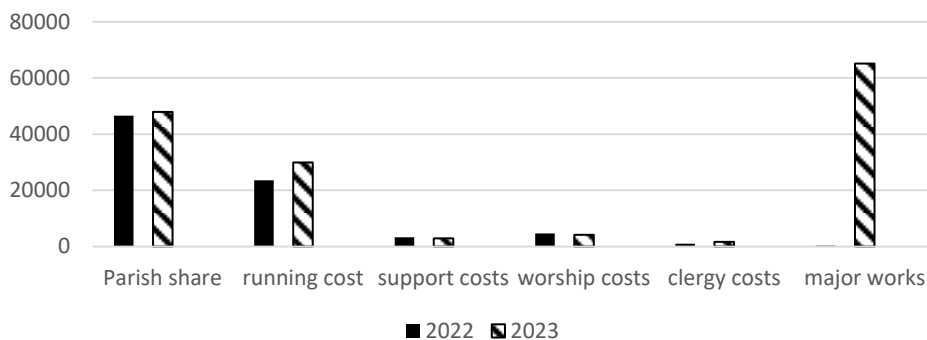
There will be new challenges this year. It is lovely to welcome Ruth as our new curate and she is making a huge difference already, however there will be no income from the Curate's house in 2024, a loss of £7,800 per annum. In 2024 we will have a full year of all the increased energy prices within the new contracts. We need to pursue the final two stages of repair and renovation to St Thomas' Church, and although grants will be applied for, we will need to contribute about 10% of the total costs, likely to be around £500,000. We must: develop our youth and children 'offer' - they are the future of our church; show the love of God in our congregations and community; continue with and extend our Mission work with Christmas bags of food for vulnerable families, Christmas Cheer bags for lonely or isolated people, fun lunches; be part of the 'Warm Welcome' scheme and keep our churches warm and welcoming to all.

## Comparisons 1st Jan to 31st Aug 2022/2023 Income



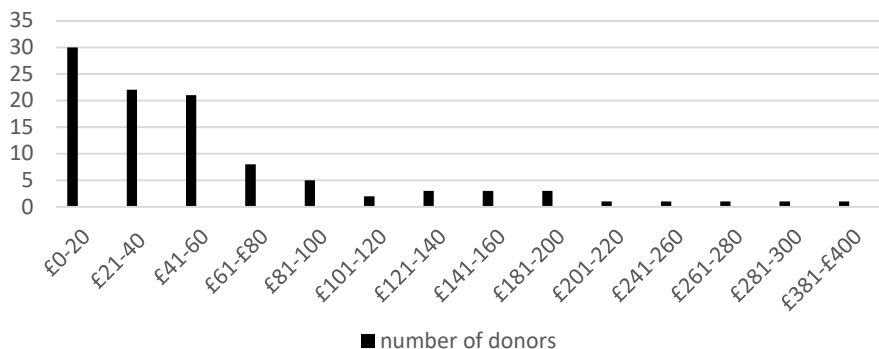
In detail from 1/1/23 to 31/8/23 our income has increased by £23,367 compared to the same period in 2022 with £11,800 in grants and £8,875 in donations to the car park fund largely explaining this increase. Despite the cost-of-living crisis, giving to our churches has been steadfast and all the pledges made last year at Thanksgiving have been fulfilled.

## Comparisons 1st Jan to 31st Aug 2022/2023 Expenditure



However, expenditure has increased by £80,151 with around £70,000 relating to the car park and we have a current overall deficit of £26,901. I predict an overall deficit for 2023, although this was anticipated because of the Car Park work. Church and Hall running costs have increased by over £6,000 in 8 months, reflecting the increased energy costs.

## Planned Giving Distribution number of people and amounts given per month



Our Thanksgiving pledges in 2022 for 2023 promised an additional £6000 in Planned Giving and we are on track to achieve this by the end of the year. Giving varies considerably but we are most grateful for every pound or penny we receive.

- Please pray about the work of the church, your ministry: do you have time and skills the church could use? Contact Michael, Churchwardens, or me [stsmmtreasurer@outlook.com](mailto:stsmmtreasurer@outlook.com)
- Please return your pledge form to help me budget and inform PCC decisions on spending
- Please consider setting up a regular Standing Order through your bank: it maintains our income, assists budgeting, and helps us with banking.
- Please review your regular giving and if possible, make an increase with which you are comfortable
- Please complete the Gift Aid section on the pledge form if you are a taxpayer, to give us 25% more
- Please register for the 'easy fundraising App' for all your online shopping - 13 supporters have raised £68.27p to date. Imagine if we had a hundred supporters.... and there is no cost to you!
- Please support as many fundraising events as possible.
- **If you are in personal financial hardship, please do not worry about your giving to church**