THE PARISH OF WINCHELSEA

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022**

# OUR MISSION STATEMENT

“We are an open welcoming church, which exists for the community as a whole and where everyone is valued and respected. We are called to serve Christ in the world, sharing the joy of God’s unconditional love in faith and action. We commit ourselves to praying and working for a world where love, reconciliation, equality and peace can prevail.”

##

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Within the Diocese of Chichester, the Parish of Winchelsea and Winchelsea Beach is served by two Churches, St Thomas of Canterbury in the Town of Winchelsea and St Richard of Chichester at Winchelsea Beach. There is a single Parochial Church Council (PCC). Together with the Parish of Icklesham (the Church of St Nicolas with All Saints) these three churches comprise a Joint Benefice. Icklesham has its own Parochial Church Council. The Rector became Priest in charge of Pett in March.

### P.C.C. WINCHELSEA – MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

2. Members of the PCC are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. Churchwardens are elected at the annual Vestry meeting, which precedes the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, for a one year term. Deanery Synod representatives are elected for a three-year term.

3. The following served on the PCC during 2022:

*Incumbent and Chairman* The Reverend Jonathan Meyer

*Churchwardens*

Mrs Charlotte Beecroft

Mrs Celia King

*Deanery Synod* Mrs Angela Hill

*Representatives* Mrs Marion Lovell

 Mrs Deborah Rodley

*Elected Office Holders* Mrs Angela Hill (Hon. Secretary*)*

Eric Rowe (Hon. Treasurer – from September*)*

*Elected Members* Mrs Sara Baker

Mrs Alice Bolton

Mr David Jefferies

Mrs Sue Taberer

Mrs Pamela Jefferies

Mr Jeremy Naylor

Mrs Mary Parker

Mr Nigel Ashton

**CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES and the PUBLIC BENEFIT**

**Registered charity number:** 1132555 The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Thomas Winchelsea

**Principle address:** St Thomas’ Church

 Winchelsea

 East Sussex

 TN36 4EB

**Website:** www.winchelsea-icklesham-churches.org.uk

### 4. The PCC Members are all Trustees of the above charity and have complied with their duty in Part 9 of the 2011 Charities Act to have due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission. They have also been guided by the following charitable aims this year:

* To maintain a building appropriate for collective or private worship, prayer and reflection.
* To support selected local and national charities throughout the year, including making regular monthly cash and food collections.
* To ensure that church buildings are open daily and are available for use by the community as a whole.

5. In seeking to meet these objects, the PCC has had due regard to carrying out its purpose for the public benefit. Following restrictions caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, services have now returned to normal. We reinstated our early morning BCP service on the first Sunday of each month from July. We have also resumed with servers and a shared chalice for our regular Parish Eucharist.

We have held a Church Market on each first Saturday of the month apart from August and January. Bishop Nicholas Reade preached and celebrated at our Patronal Festival in July and the Occasional Consort performed a Mass by Salieri during the service. Fellowship Lunches have taken place regularly again at Winchelsea Beach.

The PCC has sought to maintain the Churchyard, with community support, as a de facto ‘village green’. The PCC runs a Churchyard Sub-Committee to reflect and advise on matters relating to the churchyard and following a generous donation we have continued to establish three wild flower areas, which produced a good variety of native flowering plants and colour during the summer. These areas have attracted good positive feedback and have improved insect life within the churchyard. We organised a Churchyard Working Party in August, which was well attended and refreshments were enjoyed afterwards. Our service of Nine Lessons and Carols took place and celebrated the whole community as usual. Following the lighting of the church in 2021 the Advent Windows Committee lit the exterior of the church during Advent and projected a dove of peace in colours of yellow and blue to show support for Ukraine and made generous donation to our lighting appeal.

6 Following the pandemic we have been able to support charities as usual through a special monthly collection. The charities supported by the Parish were Shelter, Demelza House Children’s Hospice, Family Support Work, Rye, Winchelsea and District Memorial Hospital, Snowflake, Pett Level Rescue Boat, Rye Food Bank, You Raise me Up, the Salvation Army and the Royal British Legion. A special collection was also made for the Fellowship of St Nicholas following our Crib Service. We also provided a box for the Rye Food Bank and donated Harvest offerings to the Food Bank.

**RISK MANAGEMENT and SAFEGUARDING**

7. During the year, the PCC has continued to monitor the various risks applicable to the Church and has reviewed its published Health and Safety policy. A new health and safety officer has been appointed. No accidents were reported this year.

8. The PCC has also reviewed and reissued its Safeguarding policy. The PCC is a member of the Church’s Child Protection Advisory Service. Appropriate clearances are held and updated and cleared people are present in a supervisory capacity whenever children attend Church.

**DELIVERING THE PUBLIC BENEFIT**

9. The Church of St Thomas is open during normal daylight hours with some very minor exceptions relating to meetings or at the request of contractors. Under the circumstances this has been appreciated and it is clear that people need the Church for many different reasons and the fact that it is available for their use, for public and private worship and for meditation is regularly reflected in the visitors’ book.

10. A full complement of services has resumed. Following the pandemic our Dawn Eucharist at Winchelsea Beach took place for the first time for three years at 5:45am. It was attended by about 45 people and we were blessed with a perfect sunrise. We held a special service for the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on June 5th, which was attended by the Mayor and Corporation. There were further services to mark the death of Her Majesty beginning with Evening Prayer on 9th September. The Church remained open during the period of public mourning and there was a special service on Sunday 18th September following the funeral of the Queen. The Rector visits St Thomas the Martyr Primary School each week for a school service and the whole school attended services in Church for Easter, Harvest Festival and Christingle as well as having a leavers service in the summer.

11. Music. In March we were privileged that Misha Galant, a finalist at the Hastings Piano Festival played an impromptu concert in aid of the Ukraine. It was given without fee and donations amounted to £5.845. There was a concert of Words and Music on Sunday 2nd October 2022, Ukraine Reborn, featuring Raphael Wallfish cello, with John York piano and Emilia and Freddie Fox as narrators organised by Ann Rachlin. It was in aid of a Children’s hospital in Lviv and raised over £20,000. Winchelsea Arts have held six concerts in church and there was a concert in September as part of the Rye Festival.

12. Finance; The Statement of Financial Affairs attached to this report shows the existing investments and reserves. We were without a treasurer in the middle part of the year. However a new system has enabled us to dispense with the services of a paid accountant and we saved in the region of £3,000 to £3,500 because of this. Eric Rowe was elected Treasurer in September we continue to be aided by Pamela and David Jefferies who pay proceeds into the bank and organize our Gift Aid claims. Charlotte Beecroft is paying invoices online by BACS and where necessary by cheque. Towards the end of the year we adopted a system of accounting supplied by Data Management, which is specially designed for use by Charities and Churches. Jeremy Naylor has agreed to input data into this system.

The Friends of St Thomas’ have given generous support to the PCC for many years in the form of a regular payment of £1,400. They notified us that this would cease at the end of 2022 but after a meeting in November it was agreed to continue to pay £1,000 for a further six months. This will leave a major shortfall in our annual income which we will need to address in the future.

A system for Digital Giving supplied by Collectin and run by Sumup was installed in February and it is on target to have taken £8,000 for church funds and £1,600 for a special appeal in aid of the Ukraine.

13. The PCC’s Reserves Policy is to invest all its surplus funds with funds managed by the CCLA.  The Diocese reports performance annually, which is reflected in the PCC’s Annual Accounts.  All reserves are used in support of the Church’s charitable objects in delivering public benefit in the Parish.  Reserves will not normally be higher than 50% of estimated annual expenditure and will not normally be lower than that required to maintain a positive cash flow over the year.  Reserves will be increased from time to time when required to support the delivery of a major capital project falling out of periodic structure reports.  This policy is reviewed by the PCC annually.

Fabric

14. In the summer we carried out a full report on the state of the ruined transepts undertaken by John Bailey of Thomas Ford and Partners. Three quotations for work were supplied, the cheapest of which came in at £71,942. The work is still pending and although we could remove weeds for a much lower cost, we were advised that major work of this nature would be needed in the next 18 months to 2 years and it is hoped that this can be undertaken in the near future.

St Richard’s

15. Following the decision to close and sell St Richard’s church, there has been a large of amount of work liaising with the Registrar with regard to managing the closure, obtaining permission for the exhumation and removal of ashes and appointing a solicitor and selling agent. The rector was advised by Darren Oliver of the steps needed to be taken.

Because the church of Saint Richards is dedicated and not consecrated it is classed as a Chapel of Ease and in law has the same status as a Church Hall. This means that any funds accruing will be the property of the PCC. (The impact on our accounts has been noted in the annual Financial Report). Although the Bishop needs to make a formal closure of the church to which he has agreed, there is no requirement in law for the DMPC to approve the decision. The decision has now been accepted by our suffragan Bishop, the Arch-Deacon of Hastings and the Bishop of Chichester. Formal Closure has not yet taken place. The East Sussex Registrar’s Office will be informed that it will be no longer licensed for marriages. It was necessary to acquire a Charities Act report on the feasibility of the sale and this was carried out by Messrs Dyer and Hobbis as instructed by the PCC.

A faculty for the exhumation and re-interment of ashes at Saint Thomas’ church was applied for and granted on the 29th of December 2022. It has been necessary to trace as many next of kin as possible and inform them of our decision; all have agreed. It was also necessary to advertise the decision so that anyone we were unable to trace could come forward. There were no further contacts or responses.

Local agents Phillips and Stubbs and Tim Wells of John D Clarke (our architects for St Richard’s) who also manage sales of land for development were approached but on the advice of the Diocesan Land Agent, Dyer and Hobbis were appointed to sell the building. They have experience in carrying out Charities Act reports and a particular experience in selling church buildings. It was agreed that offers would be sought. The recommended guide price was £450,000. It had been hoped that marketing could commence in early October but due to a delay in the appointment of the solicitors this was held back until the early part of 2023. Although there are a number of solicitors who specialize in Ecclesiastical Law it was felt on the advice of the diocese and agreed by the PCC that we should appoint Winckworth Sherwood.

It has been agreed and approved by the DAC that all contents can be disposed of with the exception of the stained glass window to the east side of the chancel which may be offered to the diocese for the arts workshop. The organ will be advertised but we are not very optimistic that it will be easy to sell.

The Electoral Roll

16. There were 98 on the electoral roll for the Parish of Winchelsea, 82 residents and 16 non-residents, at year end.

Looking Ahead

17. It has taken some time for us to resume normal activities and start to plan for the future once again. As has been noted we are continuing to put in place plans to restore the ruined transepts. We have continued with the development of the wildflower circles in the churchyard. Following an extensive presentation by Graham Large to the PCC in June on the feasibility of a new lighting system for the church a lighting sub-committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Nigel Ashton.. The committee is also dealing with proposals for the installation of a new sound system as new wiring will be necessary for both developments and in many ways they are complementary. We are also looking into a simple system for streaming services.

Following the Pandemic we have reinstated our plans for Open the Book and a small group attended training in the summer. We are currently waiting for the CRB reports so that we start presenting Bible Stories in School.

18. We are pleased to acknowledge and thank all those who have voluntarily given so much time to maintaining the life of the Church and it’s service to the whole community throughout the year. This includes so many people and we could not manage without you all.

19. Lastly, we would also wish to acknowledge the help of the Diocese, Archdeaconry and Deanery in so many ways that often go unnoticed, but upon which we sometimes depend. We are also grateful to Icklesham Parish Council for its support and particular assistance in maintaining the Churchyard; to the Friends of Winchelsea Church for their regular financial assistance and to all the organisations and individuals who have supported Church projects over the last year.

Jonathan Meyer

Rector

For and on behalf of the PCC







