

# St Laurence Church, Foxton



Annual Report and Financial Statements of  
The Parochial Church Council  
For the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

Incumbent

The Revd David Lee

Independent Examiner

Chris Neild

## Contents

Rector's Introduction	3
1 Aim and Purposes	5
2 Objectives and Activities	5
3 Achievements and Performance	6
4 Church Buildings	7
5 Financial Review	8
6 Reserves Policy	9
7 Risk Management	9
8 Structure Government and Management	10
9 Administrative Information	12
Independent Examiner's report	Appendix 1
Financial Statements 2024	Appendix 2–7

### Rector's Introduction

"2024 will almost certainly be another eventful and transitory year." That was a line I included in what was my Associate Priest's introduction to the 2023 Annual Report, and gosh, wasn't it just! As we went through our transition period after Angela's retirement at the end of 2023, what was vital, and the Archdeacon certainly made sure we did this, was that we went through a thorough and proper process in deciding who the next Rector should be. This led to us reviewing our Benefice profile, asking the bishop permission to consider me as a single candidate for the post, and then a full interview which, believe you me, was anything but a formality! All this led to my service of Induction and Institution on 5<sup>th</sup> August which was one of the most memorable and uplifting evenings of my life. All I can say is another thank you to everyone involved in the arrangements for my appointment and that evening, and for giving me the opportunity to serve you as your Rector.

And then we got moving! One of the advantages of having served here as curate, and then associate priest, is that as I started as Rector, I already had ideas about how we could work together to grow our church – and I deliberately say 'our church' because that is the most significant change that we have made. Whilst the 4 churches still exist legally as 4 separate parishes, and so there are 4 PCCs (even though they now often meet together) and 4 Annual Reports, we are more and more working together as one church serving 4 villages with 4 church buildings. And much of the second half of 2024 was spent working out what first steps we should take to achieve that set up.

And what better place to start was there than with the activity which is the centre of our very existence as a church – and that is our Sunday Morning Worship. That is why we exist: to worship the God who created us, and so it is vital that we make that worship as good as we can. When looking at the options we had we considered what we currently did, and that was to hold either 2 or 3 services each Sunday in different churches meaning we had 2 or 3 small congregations. But then when we did meet to worship together, in January and over the summer holidays, everyone seemed to enjoy it more. So, we took the decision that from the start of 2025, we would worship together every Sunday, whilst giving ourselves the option to hold some separate services on feast days. That looks like a good decision as early in 2025, we have more people gathering to worship God in a single place each Sunday than we had in total worshipping in separate churches.

At the same time, we now have the ability to offer children's church each Sunday, wherever the service is held, and the St Mary's Fowlmere choir has now become the Benefice choir as it helps lead our music wherever the service is held. So, thank you to our children's team, all our musicians, and to you for being willing to accept change and travel to a different church from, 'your' church on a Sunday morning.

The other major thing we did in 2024 was to hold a stewardship campaign, or a Giving campaign as we called it. We contacted everyone on our electoral rolls, and others in our church family who were not then on the electoral rolls and asked them to consider how they could give to the 4 Churches, both financially and in terms of time and talents. The results financially were very encouraging, but I have to say the offers of help in terms of time and talents were disappointing. And that very much leads me on to the biggest challenge we face as a church in 2025.

When I talk about growing our church to the churchwardens and to the PCCs we seem to have lots of really good ideas, but somehow very few of them get put into action. We seem to be running at capacity in terms of what we can introduce, and somehow, we have to increase that capacity. Yes, we are hoping to open a public facing 4 church office at St Mary's Fowlmere run

by an employed administrator, initially two mornings a week, which will help, but there are many other things that we could introduce if only we had people who would put up their hands and say – yes, I could lead that, or I could help with that. Could one of those people be you? Perhaps as you read this you are thinking, “But what could I do?”. Believe you me, if you have some time, and the desire to help, it is simply a question of finding which is the most appropriate project for you to help with. Have a think. Pray about it. And if you then think, even maybe, you could help more then let me know and we can have a chat.

2024 was a great year for our church, but also a year of challenges. 2025, I believe, could be a really exciting year. So, as I conclude the introduction to this report, I say a huge thank you to everyone who already contributes in any way to the life of our church, the 4 Church Benefice. When we count up, we are always surprised by the number of people who are involved in some way in operating our church, so for whatever it is that you do, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, for what you did in 2024, and what you are continuing to do in 2025.

Every blessing,

Revd David Lee, Rector, the 4 Churches, April 2025.

The members of St Laurence's Parochial Church Council as trustees are pleased to present their report for the year which ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

### **1 Aim and Purposes**

St Laurence's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend David Lee, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. We aim to promote the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England.

### **2 Objectives and Activities**

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our church community. In association with the 4 Church Benefice, the PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus Christ.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of St Laurence's Church.

Regular activities during 2024 included:

- 2 services per month, we encouraged the congregation to use the 4 churches and join the other services when there was no service at Foxton.
- Each week one church service from the Benefice streamed online.
- Morning Prayer available on Zoom every week.
- The website providing communication of all our activities.
- Opening the church on a daily basis to enable private prayer.

Specific Objectives this year:

- To progress ongoing work with the church building, particularly the roof and the plaster work and to engage the architect for a Quinquennial review.
- To continue to develop our Sunday morning services across the benefice to make them more attractive to families.
- To create an area in the church suitable for a Children's Church group on a Sunday morning.
- To improve the physical welcome given to visitors to the church by improved noticeboards and information for those new to the parish.

### 3 Achievements and Performance

#### Worship and prayer

The PCC aims to offer a range of services during the month and over the course of the year that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. During 2024, in St Laurence's, we held a service of Morning Worship led by the lay team in conjunction with the Rector on the second Sunday, and a Holy Communion Service on the fourth Sunday.

Parishioners are encouraged to attend a service at the other churches in the Benefice when there is no service at St Laurence's. On the fifth Sunday a Four Church Communion, with provision for children, was held rotating around the Benefice.

In January and during the school summer holidays we joined together in 4 Church services which rotated round the Benefice.

All are welcome to attend our regular services. The regular average attendance during 2024 was 24. One service in the Benefice each week was recorded and made available online; the average number of views was 42. In December our carol service was especially well attended by 124 adults and 11 children. Our Christingle service was attended by 30 adults and 28 children. Midnight communion was held in St Laurence's on Christmas Eve and attended by 51 adults. This year we held two marriage services, seven funeral services, one burial of ashes and one baptism.

There was a Benefice Service of Hope and Remembrance at All Souls tide.

We also hosted the Foxton School Easter service and their Nativity and Carol services (see below).

#### Electoral Roll

The Electoral Roll is to be renewed in 2025. At the latest revision in April 2024, the number of persons on the Electoral Roll of St Laurence, Foxton was 38, one of whom resides outside the parish.

#### Children's Work

We continued to be accessible to children with our informal service of Morning Worship once a month. The Christingle Service on the Sunday before Christmas was well attended. The proceeds of the collection from the Christingle were given to the Children's Society. In the Benefice two very successful children's activity mornings were held in St Mary's Fowlmere on Good Friday and in early December for Christmas. The Rector continued to visit Foxton School for assemblies and worked with their Head Teacher, Janet Muir, to build and extend our relationship with the school. The school came into Church for their Easter service at the end of March, and their Nativity Service in December.

#### Deanery Synod

The Shingay Deanery Synod has been through a difficult period of relative inactivity owing largely to health issues and problems of accessing the Deanery bank account with Santander. The new Rural Dean and chairman Revd Andrew Birks has chaired two meetings of the Synod and is effectively addressing long-standing issues. A new committee has been elected to support him. A temporary bank account has been established while problems with Santander are being sorted out. Much of the preliminary work on Synod planning has been set aside and simplified. Questionnaires completed by the parishes are being examined to see what lessons can be drawn

from them for the purpose of planning the way forward in the context of 'Living Ely 2025'. The Revd Andrew Birks is on the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel and is working closely with PCC safeguarding officers to support and encourage training.

### **Pastoral care**

The Benefice Team of Pastoral Visitors continue to visit the elderly in the village every week and we are most grateful to Sheila Andren who has offered her support and company.

The Rector and Pastoral Visiting Team have supported those who were bereaved by visits, telephone calls and our annual Service of Hope and Remembrance.

### **Social awareness**

The Benefice Men's Breakfast meets monthly offering a cooked breakfast and a chat and then a guest speaker. The Pancake Day event in the Sports Pavilion on Shrove Tuesday was enjoyed by a very good attendance, with the proceeds going to church funds. The Laurentian magazine continued to be delivered regularly to nearly 400 houses in Foxton, and to every household in the village in December. This continues to be an important channel of communication.

The biennial Christmas Windows event was held in December. It was very well attended and much enjoyed, raising a good sum for the Church, the School and Preschool.

### **Mission and evangelism**

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. We continue to support a child in Guatemala. Barbara Coates of St Mary's Church, Fowlmere coordinated the annual Shoebox Appeal in November and support for Christian Aid was given in May by holding a coffee morning and collecting envelopes.

### **Community and Ecumenical relationships**

Members of the Methodist church continue to be welcomed to worship with us at St Laurence's. Remembrance Sunday was well attended.

## **4 Church Buildings**

### **Clerestory Windows**

The 2023 accounts included a payment for repairs to half of the Clerestory Windows; it was hoped that the second half of this work would be completed in 2024, but the contractor has indicated that he plans to complete the work in 2025.

**Defective plaster** - north and south aisles and elsewhere.

The plaster still needs to be removed. A faculty will be sought next year.

### **Electrical checks**

Our insurers required a five-year electrical inspection, and this was completed in November by Eyres Electrical. In order to issue the certificate, a number of minor issues need to be addressed. Eyres Electrical have been appointed to do this.

### **Lighting**

The lighting in the Chancel has been improved by the installation of two LED lights.

### **Bells and bell loft**

The death watch beetle still needs treating.

A faculty for a bell rope guide has been granted. The Cambridge District Bell Advisor, Tom Ridgman, is hoping to source a rope guide as soon as possible.

### **Graveyard extension**

The PCC has been approached by a neighbour who is interested in renting the Graveyard Extension area. We are currently discussing details.

### **Other**

A new carpet has been laid in the bell tower, donated by Melbourn Flooring.

## **5 Financial Review**

The financial outcome for 2024 was an overall deficit of £2,186 (2023: surplus of £8,227). Arguably, a fairer view of this deficit is £623 (as £1,563 of the deficit was covered by a planned transfer from the Special Fund to the General Fund, allowing expenditure of one tranche of a multi-year donation). Further, while the 2024 Christmas Windows event donated £926 to the General Fund, this does not appear in the Financial Statement as it was only received in 2025, so optimists might suggest we logically had a small surplus of £303.

There are two problems with this. Firstly, we underpaid our 2024 Parish Share by £3,075 and there is no obvious route to fully paying it in future years. Secondly, our income and (particularly our one-off) expenditure is large and variable. For example, our Insurer required the Fixed Electrical Installation to be inspected in 2024 at a cost of £1,440 (unfortunately the contractor invoiced too late for this reporting period). One-off expenditure in 2024 included £1,750 for organ asbestos removal and £1,920 for tree removal; recurrent expenditure included £1,409 for utilities, £2,145 for insurance and £1,788 for grass cutting. Income from Church Activities seems similarly hard-to-predict: Wedding and Funeral Fees almost doubled to £4,186, and the Laurentian magazine profit recovered to £688 following an uptick in advertising revenue. (Further improvement is likely in 2025 given the increase in subscription from £5 to £7.)

With this background, the 2024 summary outcome can only be “approximately in balance”.

Church attendance seems to have increased in 2024. In October (the Diocese benchmark) the two services in Foxton attracted: [13 October, Harvest Festival] 24 adults and seven children, and [27 October] 31 adults and one child. This compares well with the pre-Covid figure, “Attendance ... on a typical Sunday in October [was] 18 in 2019”.



However, regular giving is a little worrying: on 1 January 2024 we had 17 regular givers; by 31 December 2024 this number had fallen to 13. While total 2024 Voluntary Giving (excluding grants and Gift-Aid recovered) to the General Fund of £13,032 broadly matched that of 2023 (£13,503), it remains less than that of 2019 (£17,884).

Dwarfing all the above figures is the February 2023 tender of £129,555 for lead replacement on the South Aisle Roof and for South Clerestory repairs (we have paid £2,222 for half of the latter work). The roof repair (£125,111) awaits our ability to fund it.

The PCC held restricted reserves of £80,852 as of 31 December 2024 (2023 £76,960). These funds are held in our bank balance (Fabric and Special Funds), and equity investments (Yeoman Bequest). The Gifford Grave Trust is in the process of being formally closed; its remaining assets (£488) were transferred to the Fabric Fund. The PCC arguably has a continuing moral obligation to maintain the impressive Gifford Grave.

## 6 Reserves Policy

In 2021 the PCC approved a formal reserves policy on unrestricted funds (General Funds). The policy is to hold a minimum of free cash reserves of £1,700, equivalent to just under one month's (2021) expenditure.

## 7 Risk Management

The PCC recognises its responsibilities for managing risk and regularly reviews its policies. The principal risks facing the PCC fall into the areas outlined here.

### Asbestos

An Asbestos survey was undertaken in 2022. A small quantity of asbestos in the lining of the organ blower box, was removed in 2024.

### Governance

Loss of records - registers and historic records are stored in a fireproof safe.

### Operations

Much of our ministry is centred around our church building, so it is important that our building is safe and fit for purpose.

New heaters have been installed which make the Church warmer although we are still hoping to make improvements. We are working towards better lighting and improving disabled access as well as undertaking the necessary works outlined elsewhere in this report.

We carry out routine safety checks including 5-yearly electrical inspections, annual fire appliance maintenance, and portable appliance testing. The electrical inspection took place in 2024, and we are in the course of correcting the minor faults found. The lightning conductor is checked every year. We have a plan for evacuating the premises in the event of fire and fire notices are displayed at both exits. We have an active roof alarm system to prevent theft of lead. The churchwarden takes the lead on Health and Safety.

Risk assessments continue to be carried out where needed and national church and government guidance is carefully followed.

### **Finance Risks**

A large portion of the PCC's income is the result of voluntary giving. The PCC recognises that income can fluctuate. Income can be lost if a giver dies or moves away from the parish. The Rector led a Giving Campaign at the end of 2024, the first for quite a while, which will be repeated annually. It is hoped that this will address some of the financial concerns raised in the Financial Review section of this report.

There is always a risk that a major structural problem might be discovered at the quinquennial inspection (due in 2025), which would need addressing.

The handling of cash is subject, where possible, to dual control procedures to minimise the risk of loss or fraud. The PCC uses online banking, which allows for more timely information, as well as speed, efficiency and security of online payments.

### **External Risks**

The church sits in the centre of the village and the churchyard is used as a thoroughfare to the recreation ground. This open situation and our policy of having the church open for private worship makes it vulnerable to theft and vandalism. Valuable items are all marked with Smart-water and a record is kept.

We have signs warning of uneven ground in the churchyard.

### **Regulatory Risks**

The health, safety and protection of all those who use our building and attend our services is regarded as being of paramount importance. The PCC has complied with the duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding. The PCC operates a formal policy for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, in line with Diocesan guidelines. Review of Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice is ongoing and overseen by the PCC under the guidance of the Benefice Safeguarding Administrator, Rebecca Glazier and Safeguarding Officer, Lisa Turner.

Data Protection: We have Data Protection procedures and a Data Protection Policy. The PCC has an approved Personal Data Breach and Management Procedure. The PCC periodically audits its data processing activities to ensure compliance with the GDPR.

## **8 Structure, Governance and Management**

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC has charitable status.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules 2022. At St Laurence's the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our Rector), the Churchwarden, a Deanery Synod representative and PCC members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. All those who attend our services and are members of the regular congregation are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. In addition to the APCM, the PCC had four full meetings during the year and two extra meetings in the summer to deal with specific issues. The average level of attendance was over 90%. The

standing committee or the whole PCC sometimes approve actions by email when there are time constraints on meeting.

The PCC reviewed the Benefice Safeguarding Policy and confirmed it complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

The church building continues to be insured by Ecclesiastical Insurance.

### PCC Membership 2024

Name	Role	Basis of Appointment
Revd David Lee	Rector	Ex-Officio
Karen Butler-Clark	Churchwarden	Ex-Officio
Hilary Mycroft	Secretary	Elected 2021
Jon Cairns	PCC Member	Elected 2022
Jill Bugey	PCC Member	Elected 2022
Alan Fosbeary	PCC Member	Elected 2024

Electoral Roll Officer    André Neves

Treasurer                 Alan Mycroft

Sidesmen

David Boreham  
Barbara Boreham  
Deborah Mason  
Karen Butler-Clark  
Jean Fosbeary  
Alan Fosbeary  
Mary Matthews  
Philip Fawcett  
Barbara Boreham  
Jean McCombie

Chalice Assistants

Karen Butler-Clark  
Jon Cairns  
Dianne Sinnatamby

### Volunteers

We would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community it is. In particular we want to thank Jean Fosbeary who organises the flower rota and her team of volunteers who ensure that we have beautiful fresh flowers in our church during regular services and at festivals. We thank Angela Eyre and her team of volunteers who clean the church and also all those who open and close the Church each day and Philip Fawcett for organising this.

We also wish to thank the members of our congregation who kindly take turns to help with the service rota, being sidespersons, doing a reading or intercessions, preparing the church with the altar cloths and helping prepare communion and providing tea, coffee and biscuits after every

service. We thank the Lay Team who do so much work for our Informal Worship service which is accessible to younger families.

The maintenance of the churchyard continued throughout the year. Due to the efforts of Jon Cairns and his supporters and the grass cutting contractor the churchyard continues to be an attractive and welcoming space.

We thank the individuals and STREAM who continue to financially support the PCC in maintaining the church building. Their support is greatly appreciated and invaluable to the PCC.

We enjoyed a successful 'Thank You Tea' in the summer to which the volunteers were all invited.

### **9 Administrative information**

St Laurence's Church is situated on the High Street in Foxton. It is part of the Diocese of Ely within the Church of England.

The correspondence address is Dove Cottage, 37 Church Street, Harston, Cambridgeshire, CB22 7NP

The Church Website is [www.thefourchurchbenefice.org](http://www.thefourchurchbenefice.org)