

St Michael's Parish, Huntingdon.

Financial Statement, 2023

We have presented our accounts to the Diocese for the year ending 31st December 2023 and anyone who wishes to view the full accounts is welcome to request a copy from Fr Philip. The following reflects the accounts accurately but is given in more accessible form to enable you all to see the financial picture of St Michael's Parish. Many thanks to Julie who prepared the parish accounts for us. The beginning of 2023 our parish local bank account showed a credit of **£8,358** and our account with the Diocese stood at **£209,400**, giving us a total credit of **£217,758**. Our closing balance in our parish account was **£8,907** and at the Diocese was **£239,397**, giving us a total credit of **£248,304** at the end of the year.

Income

Collections	46,918
Gift Aid payment	5,375
Donations	6,299
Rents	1,410
Interest	10,100
Christmas & Easter Offering	837
Fundraising	0
Pilgrimages & Outings	4,790
Repository & Votive candles	1,815
Mass Stipends	2,407
Stole Fees	5,333
Other	325

Total **£85,609**

(Last year £75,350)

We missed some Second Collections, instead I sent donations similar to the amount of the previous year; including CAFOD and all other retiring collections it came to a total of £5,246; all of these have been paid through our account to the relevant charity.

Our expenses

Church maintenance	2,911
Household maintenance	256
New Buildings & Fees	3,291
Council Tax	1,526
Utilities	3,819
Insurance	1,074
Other	543

Total **£13,420**

(Last year this total was £24,788)

Priest's salary	5627
Christmas & Easter Offering	1173
Housekeeping	1912
Car expenses	2164

Total **£10,876**

(Last year this total was £12,187)

Diocesan Levies **16,168**

Office, paper, postage & Phone	1,837
Repository & books	705
Votive candles & flowers	194
Catechists	518
Fundraising	142
Donations	490
Liturgical expenses	2,107
Equipment	283
Pilgrimages & Outings	5,685
Other	2,038

Total **£13,999**

(Last year this total was £6,803) The large sum both income & expenditure for Pilgrimage was for handling the Parish Lourdes Pilgrimage.

This makes a grand total for our expenses of **£54,463**.

(Total expenditure last year was £58,354)

This shows a surplus of **£31,146** over the year. Our surplus last year was £17,000. These are very positive figures, even without any fundraising efforts and show that we can do some remedial work on our property and some improvements.

Overall, our situation is very healthy, thanks to your very generous support. Please think about Gift Aid, and a standing order; maybe time to increase your standing order, this is the easiest way to support our parish. Thank you.

Parish Report 2023

At the beginning of 2023 we were full of hope about our building project for enlarging the church to create enough space for you to attend Mass more comfortably and to have improved facilities for community and family gatherings. The tenders for the work were with two builders and were due back at the end of January, we just had to wait patiently for the costing for our work.

In the meantime, parish life had got back to normal after the pandemic of the last three years; the church was full on Sunday mornings, the Saturday night Mass was growing in popularity, usually between 40 – 50 people; we had our Pancake Supper which was enjoyed by all who came and marked the beginning of Lent. We were able to celebrate Lent with a full programme of events, meeting in Church for Adoration, Stations of the Cross and in the GS Room for soup lunches and Lent programme. Our First Holy Communion programme was well under way with 30 children, we do not have room for any more in the three rooms in the house which we have to use for the classes. We also had a confirmation class running, preparing 14 young people for the sacrament which would be given at the end of June.

The tenders for the building work came back, with the lowest price being £813,000, including VAT. We had a serious think about whether to go ahead or not with the work, recognising that it would take about 15 years to pay off the debt. On the other hand, we would have good facilities for our community and a church that would be fit for purpose for our community into the future. We had a parish ballot about whether to go forward or not, the vote for going ahead was 82% in favour, with 18% against, 276 people voted. The main shadow on the whole project now became the issue of accommodation for the priest, the development scheme included demolishing the current house; this would add a possible £250k to the overall cost for a house for the priest to live in. The tenders were sent to the Diocesan Office to await their decision on whether to loan us the money; we had gone this far with the project on the understanding that they would loan the money.

Easter came and went; we joined the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham; we celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III with a Mass and a shared lunch in the garden; we trained new ministers for Holy Communion to help serve our community. At the end of May we got the devastating news that the Diocese could not lend us the money for our project; all the planning, development, and cost of the project so far, £30,000, had come to nothing. The project could not go ahead. I wrote lots of letters to wealthy individuals trusts and companies asking for a loan which I am confident we could pay back over several years, but mostly got no answer at all. Bishop Peter finally came to visit our parish finance committee in July to see the plans for the first time and begin to understand our difficulties, although to date, he has not been here on a Sunday to see first hand our situation. He liked our plans, said they would be a good improvement, he also said “the house is not fit for purpose”, but that now is not the time for us to be able to go ahead; the result is the same, he likes our plans, but we cannot go ahead. This was a great disappointment to you all and to me and has been a shadow on our parish life ever since. Bishop Peter promised another meeting in October when he would bring some of the Trustees of the Diocese, but sadly that never materialised.

The year continued, we had our parish BBQ and Cream Tea Party in the garden, both much appreciated by those who attended. In September we had an historic walk round Huntingdon led by one of our parishioners, it started in the Marketplace just as the heaviest storm in years broke over the town, very heavy rain and hail fell for about 15 minutes and flooded the town centre briefly and then cleared and we were able to go ahead with our Town Walk and very enjoyable it was too. At the end of September, we celebrated our parish feastday with Sunday Mass and an international lunch with food from many different parts of the world; it was a lovely celebration, and the weather was the best we had had for our feast day for many years, warm and sunny, we were all able to sit in the garden and enjoy the food and good company. At the beginning of December, we had a Quiz and Pizza evening led by one of our parishioners, it was well attended and a very enjoyable evening. The year drew its end with our celebration of Advent and Christmas.

Although we have not been able to go forward with our development project for our community, we are planning to do some work in 2024 to improve our facilities and to some remedial work on our buildings which we have not done because of the development plans. First in line will be new lighting and an improved sound system and some screens upstairs and, in the GS Room, so that people there can see the altar for the first time as they take part in the Mass.

My thanks to all of you for your support during the year, for continuing to attend Mass and the events of our parish community, and for your generous financial support of our church.

May God continue to bless you and your families now and forever. *Fr Philip*