

St Mary Magdalene Church
Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council
for the Year Ended 31 December, 2024

Rector's Report 2024

A new calendar year in our Church life always starts with some of the key Christian festivals that fill our Church calendar. This year saw us, as usual, make the most of Epiphany and Candlemas and I think it would be safe to say that Candlemas has now become a firm favourite as our beautiful church is decked out with candlelight and the liturgy is beautifully enhanced with our new organ and an ever-increasing church choir.

I consider our liturgical life to be a unique selling point in what we have to offer when it comes to displaying the Kingdom of God to all those who cross our threshold. As my time as Rector has evolved it feels as though we now have a very settled calendar that makes the most of the warp and weft of our worship throughout the Christian year.

2024 also saw the new church café have a full calendar year of business. It was undoubtedly a great success financially but the whole concept of the café was never aimed at mere money. The development of Café Magdalene now means that the church building is open every day except Tuesday which has made a huge difference to the accessibility of the building. Whilst many people who use the café simply want a scone or a cake and a very lovely cup of coffee there have clearly been opportunities for conversations to develop and for networks to be initiated. It has also been extremely gratifying to see some of those café regulars becoming occasional church goers. I feel certain that the café has even more potential in the way we develop its outreach and force for missional good in the parish. Of course, the café doesn't simply happen, and it relies on a relatively small pool of fabulous volunteers to keep it going. I wish to offer a huge thank you to Ros Carling and Jean Hodgkinson who are the two baking mainstays of our church café – without their combined commitment and enthusiasm we simply would not be able to run the café as we do. When Jean first stuck her head above the baking parapet she was asked to bake once a month – safe to say her tally of bakes is far exceeded on an all too regular basis! My thanks also go to all the scone bakers (Caroline Mannion, Avril Monck & Beryl Nadin) plus the occasional bakers who step up to help out on a regular basis. And of course, to all the fabulous volunteers who make the café what it is. Their welcome, cheerful smile, good humour and good grace mean that even when things go awry there is always a positive outcome. As the year drew to a close it was good to realise that the interest free loan of £10,000 would be repaid within barely 15 months of trading – which is also very positive news.

Musically our church also had an extremely productive year on a whole number of levels. Our worship was enhanced through a choir whose numbers have grown encouragingly. Janine Busbridge, our Director of Music has worked extremely hard at encouraging new members and younger members and it does feel as though 2024 was the year which saw some momentum growing regarding the direction of our choir. My thanks to Janine for all her hard work and it was so pleasing to see her reap a few rewards for the hard graft she has put in. I am sure I have quoted Pevsner or Wardle or some other notable writer before when it comes to describing our Parish Church as a Georgian Concert Hall but in any event, it has been good to open up our doors and encourage other musical styles to use our space. We have entitled the broadening out of our musical network: 'Magda Music' and under that title a number of musical offerings were made throughout the year. Some of these events were ticketed whilst others encouraged a retiring collection or donation. Certainly, it was a very positive experience being able to host such a wide variety of talent in our church. The one more sombre note on the musical front was that our outstanding Organ Scholar, Patrick Ward, decided to bring his organ tuition to a close at the end of the year in order to quite laudably concentrate on his GCSE

examinations. We said a final farewell to Patrick at the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols and he leaves us very much with our good wishes and blessings for the future.

This year has seen us consider, as we so often do, the ways and means by which we engage with the younger people within our parish. Little Sparks has continued to flourish and whilst we lost Noah, the absolute single stalwart of Little Sparks for so long, we do now have regular faces of children, parents, grandparents and cares who pop along on a Monday morning, but we can always accommodate more! Our relationship with all the schools within the parish has remained positive and it is always heartening to get helpful and proactive replies back from the email that I end to every headteacher of every school in September. Clearly, we have particularly strong links with our secondary schools, both Conyers and Yarm School but it has been good to see a continuation of some of the links forged in the previous year, especially with Levendale School who returned for their school carol service in 2024. Links with Yarm Primary remain strong and I pay a few visits to various year groups throughout the academic year. The visits from Layfield School who traipse down on foot in all and any weather are also a great highlight.

2024 saw Yarm Parish Church host the 'World Day of Prayer' event thanks largely it must be said to Kath McCarthy who did a cracking job of taking initiative and getting all the various 'ducks in a row'. The theme this year was Palestine, which had clearly been in our thoughts and prayers even before the WDP event. It was a very moving and prayerful time as we invited our ecumenical friends and partners together for worship and fellowship. As ever with these things lots of the really positive stuff happened after the event and it certainly produced some very fruitful conversations for how World Day of Prayer is taken forward into 2025 and beyond.

I guess the highlight of June was the ordination to the diaconate of our curate, The Revd Emma Cain. Ordinations at York Minster are always very special occasions, and it was lovely for a handful of the congregation to be present at the Minster for Emma's special day. She was of course supported by her husband Jeremy and their children Joshua, Elena and Sarah. Following her ordination Emma was a dynamic presence at various church events and we also had the blessing of hearing her preach before heading off at the end of August for a family holiday. Sadly a few days later we received the news that Emma and her family had been involved in a road traffic accident and that her youngest daughter, Sarah had been killed. This news was met with unanimous shock and disbelief throughout the benefice, the deanery and the diocese and Emma and her family remained in our thoughts and prayers throughout the remainder of the year. A book of condolence was opened in the Lady Chapel and many from the parish offered their thoughts and best wishes at a terribly sad time.

Whilst the year from a Christian perspective assumes a fairly standard routine in so many ways there are always those moments for some innovation and for something different to take place. Our August Pet Service is possibly becoming a standard tradition, but it was certainly good to welcome well-behaved pets into church in August and their equally well-behaved owners. September saw a group from Yarm head down to north Norfolk on a parish pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. In total ten pilgrims spent the week at the Shrine and my thanks to Beryl Nadin and David Local for being so helpful in supplying additional transport. It was an extremely reflective week as we engaged with the various Shrine liturgies, and it was also lovely to share in some fellowship that saw us widen our number as we welcomed others from other parts of the country into our group. A number also made the short journey to the RC Shrine where we were able to submit prayer requests for Emma and Jeremy and the congregation of St Jospeh's, Hartlepool.

2024 also saw the departure of our beloved Bishop, The Right Revd Paul Ferguson. Bishop Paul finally stood down in July but not before a number of opportunities to say our farewells. His final service in the Archdeaconry was at Evensong at Northallerton, a service which was well attended by a number from the parish including several Mothers' Union members. Later in the summer we were greeted with the news that

The Right Revd Barry Hill was to be our new suffragan bishop. He was consecrated by the Archbishop in October. As a parish we were rather blessed to have an episcopal visit fairly on in the bishop's diary as he came to celebrate and preach on the Third Sunday in Advent (Gaudete Sunday) where we also persuaded him to stay for the Christmas Cheer and pick the winning ticket of the Prize Draw.

I suspect most years are years of high points and low points. The news of Emma's accident clearly tarnished 2024 in such an unexpected way that no-one remained entirely untouched by such a significant low point in the life of the parish. And yet the reliance on the Holy Spirit that runs through our parish did allow us all to re-group and do our utmost to live out the Gospel message in a spirit of fellowship and friendship and love and my thanks to everyone for all your combined efforts. My annual report, as ever, needs to conclude with my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported my ministry throughout 2024. A huge thank you to the Officers of the PCC not least of course our Churchwardens Peter Monck and Beryl Nadin. Thanks also to our Secretary, David Yates, our Treasurer, Martin Huggins and our Vice Chair, John Rhodes. And then of course my thanks to all those who work tirelessly in so many other ways that don't always draw a great deal of notoriety or attention. Many thanks to Lynn Allison who works with such careful precision when it comes to keeping us on the straight and narrow with our Gift Aid. Lynn has also assumed responsibility for maintaining the café accounts and I know the Café Committee are extremely thankful for her diligence! And finally, Lynn has also played a role, in combination with Beryl Nadin, for taking the Minutes at PCC meetings which has been greatly appreciated by myself and all of the PCC. Thanks too to Jay Yates on the church governance front for not only supporting David in his role as secretary but for also being prepared to continue as Electoral Roll Officer, a task which may be a little more onerous in 2025 with the complete overhaul of the Roll! Thanks to Jean Hodgkinson for her fantastic role of pastoral organisation as we strive to care for our congregation. Thanks to Tanya Brackenbury for her commitment to serving in the sanctuary. Thanks to all of you who volunteer for coffee rotas and reading rotas and intercession rotas and welcomer rotas – please know that your efforts never go un-noticed, and I really do appreciate your contributions. Thanks to all of you involved in our charitable work, not least of course Avril Rhodes and her utterly tireless commitment to the cause of Christian Aid. Thank you to Avril Monck for having the ability to be everywhere all of the time and providing rock-like support as verger. Finally, finally I must pay a huge debt of gratitude to my ministerial colleagues Emma Cain, David Local and Kate Brown – my work here would be virtually impossible without their keen commitment and enthusiasm for the Gospel, their good grace and their good humour.

The Revd Darren Moore – Rector
May 2025

PCC Membership, following APCM May 2024

St Mary Magdalene Church is part of the Deanery of Stokesley in the Diocese of York within the Church of England and is situated in West Street, Yarm TS15 9BU. The parish is in the Benefice of Yarm with Kirklevington with Picton and Worsall. The PCC of St Mary Magdalene, Yarm remains the governing body for the Parish of Yarm.

PCC members who have served as Trustees between May 2024 and 31st December 2024:

		Dates
Incumbent:	Revd Darren Moore (Chair) Revd Kate Brown (Assistant Priest)	
Wardens:	Mr Peter Monck Mrs Beryl Nadin	(2023-2027) (2022-2025)
Elected Members:	Mr Martin Huggins (Treasurer) Mr David Yates (Secretary/Diocesan Rep)	(2022-2025) (2023-2026)
	Mrs Angela Beckwith Mrs Elaine Huggins	(2022-2025) (2022-2025)
	Mrs Lynn Allison Mrs Tanya Brackenbury Mrs Ros Carling Mrs Sue Ellis (Safeguarding Officer) Mrs Jean Finlay Mrs Marion Johnston	(2023-2026) (2023-2026) (2023-2026) (2023-2026) (2023-2026) (2023-2026)
	Mrs Wendy Gaitskell Mrs Jayne Gregory Mrs Valerie Meeking Mrs Margaret Nicholls Mrs Pam Parker	(2024-2027) (2024-2027) (2024-2027) (2024-2027) (2024-2027)
Representatives on Deanery Synod:	Mr David Local Mrs Avril Rhodes Dr John Rhodes (Vice chair)	(2023-2026) (2023-2026) (2023-2026)

Churchwardens' Report on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for 2024

Introduction

Throughout 2024 we endeavoured to support Father Darren our Rector, Emma our Curate who arrived in June, and David our Reader, in their ministries. Our aim as an Inclusive Church was to welcome everyone who visited St Mary Magdalene. We also endeavoured to maintain the church building as advised by the Fabric Team and care for the church yard with the help of the Wild Care Team.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC)

St. Mary Magdalene Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Darren Moore, in promoting the whole mission of the Church. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Church.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of the parish community.

During 2024 the PCC met seven times, including the short meeting following the APCM on 26th May. A total number of 22 people sat on the PCC which included clergy, a reader, wardens, Deanery Synod and Diocesan representatives and elected members from the laity.

Structure, Management and Governance

The PCC is a charity registered with the Charity Commission.

St Mary Magdalene Yarm PCC is a body corporate and operates under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 and the Church Representation Rules 2025 where the method of appointment of PCC members is set out. All church members are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

On 31 December 2024 there were 120 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, 55 of whom were not resident within the parish. Jay Yates is the electoral roll officer for the parish. Many thanks to Jay for maintaining the role.

Worship and Prayer

During 2024, St Mary Magdalene, as the Parish Church, continued to be the focal point for Anglican worship in Yarm. A regular pattern of services was continued, to co-ordinate with the other churches in the benefice.

The 8.00am Sunday Holy Communion from BCP (Book of Common Prayer) along with the 10.30am Sung Eucharist using Common Worship continued during 2024; the first Sunday of the month being a Family Service whenever possible at 10.30am. The 9.30am Wednesday Holy Eucharist and the 7.30am Friday Holy Eucharist, both using Common Worship, also continued during 2024.

Booklets continued to be used to reflect the different times and seasons of the year.

During the year, the Ecumenical Prayer Group met on the first Wednesday of the month following the 9.30am Wednesday service and the Mothers' Union Prayer Group met on the second Wednesday of the month followed by The Bible reading fellowship.

Patrick Ward took up the position of Organ Scholar in January 2024.

We are indebted to Janine Busbridge, our organist, for her continued commitment and enthusiasm, particularly in relation to the increase in Junior Choir members, and of course for the music provided during worship. A huge thank you is expressed to all choir members for their tireless commitment.

Flowers

Flower arrangements were beautifully created by Avril Monck for special occasions during 2024; notably at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. We express our gratitude to Avril for her time and expertise.

Stokesley Deanery Synod

Four members of the PCC sit on the Deanery Synod, David Yates being a member of York Diocesan Synod. This provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church.

Pastoral Care

Home communion continued in 2024 with David Local and Carole Wilson visiting those who had requested it either in private or residential homes.

The wellbeing of the congregation remained a priority for the PCC, and the care for the congregation network has continued to be very active through the co-ordination of Jean Hodgkinson. Much appreciation goes to Jean and her team for their care and diligence.

Safeguarding

The PCC is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in the Church's activities. The PCC takes safeguarding very seriously and does its utmost to promote sound safeguarding procedures, supporting the Rector and the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), Sue Ellis. Much appreciation goes to Sue for her diligent hard work throughout the year.

Mission

During 2024 we endeavoured to welcome everyone in the spirit of love and friendship who came to St Mary Magdalene, whether it be to attend a service, to arrange an occasional office, to take part in a group activity, to visit Café Magdalene, for a tourist's look round our beautiful church or to spend a few minutes in quiet thought and prayer. Helped by Café Magdalene, our mission and outreach continued to develop, bringing many people through our doors who we would not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet. Our benefice magazine, Trident, continued to be published keeping parishioners informed of the important matters affecting our Church and articles that help develop our knowledge and trust in Christ.

The Harvest and weekly food contributions went to Sprouts in Thornaby and we also supported 'Love in a Box' gifts for Romania, and Christian Aid. We are grateful to Debbie Gravestock for her coordinating role with Sprouts and to Avril Rhodes for her commitment to both 'Love in a Box' and Christian Aid.

The PCC is committed to being generous to other charities and organisations and encourages the congregation to decide which local, national, and international charities we should support in any given year. For 2024 the chosen charities were Teesside Hospice (local), Macmillan Cancer Support (national) and Medicine San Frontiers (international). In Addition, we supported two local animal charities through our Pet service, Middlesbrough Cat Rescue and GRACE a charity for retired greyhounds. Our Christingle on 1st December raised in excess of £400 for The Church of England Children's Society.

With the proceeds from our Christmas Card Board we supported Solar Aid, which helps give solar power to people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Fabric - The Church Building and Churchyard

The church building was kept in good repair during 2024.

The responsibility of the maintenance of the churchyard rests with the Town Council. Thanks to Mark, the grass cutting was maintained to a high standard and some hedge trimming was also carried out.

During 2024 the PCC was granted an Archdeacon's Temporary Licence for six months to remove the South Aisle Pews. During this time a photographic record was kept to show the uses for the South Aisle. Uses were numerous and varied; Meetings, Autumn and Christmas Lunches, Summer and Christmas Fairs, a Craft Fair, charity events, craft activities for LSX, and last but not least a Christmas Tree Display.

A Faculty was submitted for the Bee Enclosure in the hope that it wouldn't be too long before Father Darren could introduce his bees to the community.

The dangerously invasive bee hive was removed, with some sadness, from the north wall/roof above the servery. This operation was coordinate with Neil Sweeting's (contractor) work on the guttering on the north and west sides of the building.

Flickering lights were renewed and minor repairs were carried out. All electrical equipment was PAT tested.

The church was kept clean by Val from Andrea's Angels who kindly adjusted his rota when funerals, school concerts and other activities impinged on cleaning times. We would like to thank both Andrea and Val for their support during the year.

SUMMARY

Without the support of our congregation our weekly worship and fellowship here at St Mary Magdalene would have been greatly hindered during 2024. A sincere thank you goes to all those people who helped in a multitude of ways: the welcomers, the readers and intercessors, the eucharistic ministers, the refreshment providers, the charity co-ordinators, the café bakers and servers, those who washed and ironed linen, the tidy-uppers and all those who quietly helped and supported with a kind word.

The Churchwardens would also like to thank all those people who graciously provided reports for this APCM and everyone who gave their time, enthusiasm and expertise to be part of one or more of our groups.

Thank you all for your generous support, your advice and your friendship, and for making it such a privilege to be part of the mission and outreach of our church.

Peter Monck and Beryl Nadin (Churchwardens)

Safeguarding Report 2024

The Diocese of York safeguarding statement.

- "It is important to recognise that safeguarding is important for the needs of any age be it children, young people, vulnerable adults including the elderly and a commitment to equal worth for all".

The Diocese of York complies with the House of Bishops and St. Mary Magdalene follows their guidelines as follows:

- We promote the diocesan safeguarding policy by safely recruiting and training church officials, trustees and welcomers. The basic awareness, foundation courses issued by the diocese are mandatory and must be completed and renewed every three years. In not doing so it will prevent them from becoming, or continuing as trustee members or welcomers.
- In so doing we are aiming to create an environment within which safeguarding concerns can be raised respectfully and with confidence and sensitivity.
- The PSO, churchwardens and Rector will work together if there are any safeguarding issue brought to their attention before reporting to any other agencies for example the Archdeacon, the Diocesan Safeguarding adviser, or social services, Any issue is totally confidential and any written information is kept locked in a safe.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) forms for trustees are renewed as a requirement every three years and these applications have been successfully managed and collated online by John Rhodes using a dashboard website (31.8). Reminders of DBS renewal will be notified online.
- The Diocesan policy is displayed on the church noticeboard and there are copies of the " Parish Safeguarding Handbook" and of a "safer Church" available in church.

- Safeguarding is on the agenda of every PCC meeting to which the PSO will report.

- The PSO attends quarterly Diocesan Safeguarding discussion meetings (by zoom) and also via zoom topics and discussions during their safeguarding week held annually in November. These have included topics on domestic abuse, stalking and harassment. The York Diocesan team issues a monthly bulletin on safeguarding issues, policy and upcoming events. As well as the PSO and churchwardens receiving this online bulletin it can also be distributed to trustee members.

Sue Ellis (PSO)

St Mary Magdalene's Church, Yarm - Annual Financial Report of the Parochial Church Council for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

Financial Review

General Unrestricted Funds

2024 has been a very active year and we have come out of it with a healthy balance of £32,128 (2023 – 31,919), and thanks are due to everyone who has supported us in many and various ways.

The specific detail is as follows.

Total unrestricted income was £99,487 (£93,756 in 2023) and is detailed in the financial statements. Of this, £67,163 (was £63,371) was pledged giving and includes associated tax relief, and represents a significant 67.5% (was 67.6%) of the total income. This is the fourth full year of the Parish Giving Scheme and this scheme helps to benefit our cash flow. We still have about two thirds of our supporters signed up to the scheme, with a few new users signing up during the year. It would be good if other contributors were able to join them.

Other parts of the accounts are continuing to recover. The Easter, Summer and Christmas Fairs, again held in Church, raised a very welcome £5,376 (£4,081 – Summer and Christmas only) and the Christmas Raffle yielded a further £417 (£595). This year, Choral Concerts have brought in over £700 and the bee project has raised a further £797 (was £1,707) which will allow the project to proceed in 2025. Total net fundraising (including the above) was £10,881 (£8,938), a very significant and welcome increase.

The remaining income came largely from collections, donations and fees, and is now at £16,751 (£18,377). Collections have recovered with the help of electronic donations to £5,894 (£3,390) in 2024 whilst yellow envelope Gift Aided donations have dropped again to 2022 levels at £1,518 (£2,500), as have fee earnings, now at £3,191 (£5,218). This shows a change in the way people are giving and we need to keep an eye on this.

Also, we have received £2,127 (£2,356) from the rest of the Benefice as their contribution to the expenses of the Rector, the Curate and the Rectory. There have been no legacies this year. (£1,000 in 2023). We would hope that more people in the future will give in this way. Café Magdalene has contributed to the cost of utilities consumed in running the Café with a sum of £1,200.

Total unrestricted expenditure was £99,279 (was £94,052). We have maintained our contribution to the Freewill Offer to support the Mission in the Diocese at £61,800, the same as last year. This Freewill Offer was paid in full, and is a very significant 62.1% (65.9% last year) of our total income from all sources. In addition, Diocesan fees for weddings and funerals in our Church have added £2,665 (£5,689) to our total giving from the Parish to the Mission in the Diocese, which now totals £64,465 (£67,489).

The cost of running the Church building was £13,233 (£11,908), with Gas and Electricity now costing £5,589 (was £4,019). The cost of replacement lightbulbs at £1,238 (£828) continues to be an issue. The upkeep of services cost a further £9,822 (£8,510), which includes £1,536 to fell trees in the Churchyard.

Expenses for clergy amount to £4,515 (£4,606). This is offset by the sharing of these expenses with Kirklevington and Worsall who paid £2,127 (£2,356) of this amount.

Other expenditure was £5,216 (£4,606), with main items being removal of the pews in the South Aisle and expenditure on Architects Fees.

Net result for the year was an excess of income over expenditure of £208, compared to an excess of expenditure over income of £296 in 2023.

The total balance of unrestricted funds at 31st December 2023 was £32,128 (£31,919). This balance however includes funds designated for the Bee Project (£2,290) and for Magda Music (£712). This leaves a balance for non-designated work at £29,126, some £2,793 down on the end of 2023.

Café Magdalene

Café Magdalene has traded successfully throughout 2024 with a superb income through the year of £19,088. Expenses for the activity have been just over £10,000 and have resulted in a surplus of £9,040 for the year's trading. Half of the loan has been repaid in 2024, leaving a balance of £8,323 at the end of the year, with an outstanding liability of £5,000 from the loan. The main equipment purchased for the café is being depreciated over 5 years.

Restricted Funds

Organ Fund

The work on the organ has been completed in 2024 with a small expenditure of £2,400 and has been very successful.

Restoration Fund

Activity has continued at a much lower level than last year, with the only work being the repairs to the roof of the Chancel and North Aisle. This work has cost £13,668 which has been part funded by a Grant of £5,456 from Historic Churches Fund. We have also had income of £5,985 from the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, which was refunded VAT from previous works.

The Cash only Club has contributed £612 to the Fund and this, together with interest earned from investments, has meant only a small reduction in Funds of £1,372 to a total balance carried forward of £10,364 (was £11,737 in 2023).

Charities

Restricted funds were again collected and paid out to individual charities, coming from collections at funerals as specified by families concerned, and from special events arranged by the Church for nominated charities. The total amount was £6,636 (£6,567).

Reserves Policy

It is PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds, which equates to three months' unrestricted income, to cover emergency situations which may arise from time to time. The balance of £29,126 in unrestricted funds at the year-end exceeds this target (currently £25,750).

Additionally, we recognise that the maintenance of a historic building requires periodically significant sums of money to carry out important restoration and maintenance work. Although we had a significant legacy in 2011, we have spent considerable sums on successful restoration and renovation projects, leaving our reserves for this aspect of our work at just over £10,364. The use of this money needs to be carefully regulated and monitored, and it would be good if it could be augmented by individual efforts and some new legacies in due course.

M J Huggins - Hon Treasurer

2024 Deanery Synod Annual Report

St Mary Magdalene PCC Deanery Synod Representatives are John and Avril Rhodes and David Local. David Yates is also an ex-officio full voting member because he is Stokesley Deanery representative on Diocesan Synod. Members of Deanery Clergy Chapter are also Synod members.

In 2024 Deanery Synod met on 2 occasions: 7th February and 4th June. A third meeting planned for 23rd October unfortunately was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. St Mary Magdalene PCC was represented at each Synod.

Essentially the role of Deanery Synod is to link the Diocese with parishes and vice versa. A regular Agenda item of Synod is for Parishes to keep the Deanery as whole informed of events of particular interest taking place across the Deanery.

The Deanery Leadership Team (DLT) set the agendas and ensure the day-to-day business of Synod is undertaken satisfactorily.

The main Agenda item for each Synod is the Carousel “round table” discussions where it is possible for individual members to attend and be advised on and discuss 3 or 4 topics that are current and relevant.

At the 2024 Synods the following topics were available:-

- Technology for Churches – Led by John Dickinson, Lay Dean. Jonny Hedges, Diocesan Digital Transformation Leader addressed the June Synod and the aim was to gather ideas to brief him and to share experiences. Topics covered included the continuation of zoom on-line worship following the end of the Covid pandemic, IT licensing, difficulties with signal in some rural locations, live streaming of services (aimed at those unable to attend) and the installation of equipment such as sound systems and screens.
- Let’s talk about food – Led by Revd Geoff Jacques. “Let’s talk about food” is the title of a course being developed by the Diocesan Rural Life and Faith Group. A booklet was tabled comprising the questions to be discussed in 7 sessions on growing food, food sources, food and the environment, consumer buying habits, food and waste, food and health and food and spirituality.
- Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) – Led by Nick Land. Nick described the position General Synod has reached in terms of approval of prayers for the blessing of same sex relationships (where the partners have entered into a civil partnership or marriage), and the potential different legal and liturgical paths that this topic may take as it continues to be discussed nationally and advice refined.
- Messy Church – Led by our own Revd Kate Brown. She described arrangements in Kirklevington, where Messy Church sessions are held on a Saturday afternoon.
- Developments at St Francis – led by the parish priest, Brenda Forrester who explained how internal parish consultations had led to a Friendship café (to respond in particular to mental health needs), a school-based community garden, earning the bronze Eco church award, and starting the planning processes leading towards a “Potters Shed” (aimed at men socialising and pursuing hobbies/repair work), a prayer labyrinth and outdoor seating.
- Music for Mission – led by our Director of Music, Janine Busbridge talking about the development of the choir (and especially children’s involvement) and expansion of the musical offering at St Mary Magdalene.

At the February Synod Information was shared about the Festival Teesside 2024 (major outdoor mission event at Stewart’s Park on 8/9th June which churches and how parishes could become involved). Also

Synod was informed about our own Café Magdalene and the planned Walsingham Pilgrimage and planned Lent courses.

David Local, John Rhodes, Avril Rhodes and Fr Darren Moore.

14th April 2024.

Additional Groups within St Mary Magdalene Church, 2024

Benefice Magazine

Bible Reading Fellowship

Café Magdalene

Care for the Congregation

Cash only Club

Choir and Music

Craft Group

Deanery Synod

Ecumenical Prayer Group

Events

Fabric

GOLD

Health and Safety

Little Sparks and Little Sparks Xtra

Mothers' Union

Wild Care

Benefice Magazine: Trident

The editorial team comprises Revd Kate Brown, Ros Carling, Debbie Gravestock, Revd Darren Moore, John Rhodes and Jay Yates and 10 editions of Trident were published. During the year the editorial team met to finalise the layout and content and we are grateful to Avril Rhodes for her proof reading. We continue to hand deliver most copies of the magazine to ensure they were received just before the start of the month. Many thanks to Beryl and her dog for a proportion of deliveries. Some copies are posted or sent as an E-mail.

Thank you to all who have continued to provide contributions. The editors have never had a month without a varied and full copy. The strict cut off, introduced last year, has worked well because there were no serious errors reported. All source material was referenced in all articles submitted. We continued to prevent infringement of any copyright by following the UK Copyright Service advice for news reporting.

The editors are aware of safeguarding and did not publish unnecessary names and contact details. We also checked to ensure permission was granted for photographs to be included, especially of children. We continue to be delighted to receive contributions especially from young budding journalists.

We are indebted to our advertisers who allowed us to keep the cost at £6.00 per annum and provide four colour pages. Without colour many photographs will be dull and not be clear. We maximised the value for money by minimising text on these pages. With the improvement in smart phone cameras, we get a lot more digital photographs submitted and try our best to provide as many in colour as possible without

turning the magazine into a picture book. However, some phones reduce the quality of images when sent and the editors have had to ask for some to be resent using a different method.

Gill Waller continued to collect the advertising renewals. Without her hard work the magazine would be restricted to 28 pages with no colour. It is important that our advertisers know that you support Trident by thanking them for advertising in our magazine when you see them. We must remember that they do not do it solely to support the church, but to attract customers like us. Our printers, TopPrint, have continued to provide an excellent service.

Trident is your magazine and an important tool in our outreach. Please share your copy with your friends and encourage them to purchase a copy for themselves. We try to provide news and articles about events and activities taking place within the parishes, and to include articles about aspects of faith. We have many regular contributors and without you the magazine would not be enriched by such diversity. The lay members of the group would not be able to provide the breadth and detail of church activities without the dedicated contribution and enthusiastic support of Darren and Kate.

We are grateful for all who subscribed for the year as it does help us to minimise the number of unsold copies at the end of the month. Please do ask a friend to consider taking out a subscription so more people can learn about our church. Thank you one and all for your support.

Report provided by Trident Editorial Team

Bible Reading Fellowship Report

Bible Reading using the BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship) publications continues to thrive within the congregation at St Mary Magdalene, and numbers have continued to grow. Our short monthly informal 'lay led' reading and discussion group meetings on a Wednesday morning for our BRF users and anyone else interested have continued, with some most interesting discussions on all sorts of topical and biblical subjects ensuing. We had a section on AI for the first time considering issues such as The Truth. These have been well supported and generated much enthusiasm, and have proved to be a valuable support and also another welcome chance for informal social contact by those joining in. Our Reader David has also supported and prepared material for these, and many thanks are due to him, and also to our Rector Darren's continuing support and lead whenever his other commitments allow. And now Darren and David have been supplemented by welcome help from our Curate Emma Cain.

There were 22 subscriptions (+ the Rector & Curate) to the church order for BRF bible reading notes booklets, and this implies 25-30 members of the congregation using daily readings and prayers, several being couples. 2 members are no longer with the group because of long term illness. A decrease of 2 in 2025

- All 22 read 'New Daylight', daily readings.
- None now read 'Guidelines', weekly reading and topic(s) for study.

We continue to meet monthly around the table in church with cake and coffee and this is much enjoyed by those attending, permitting increased social involvement.

Our church members who are using these the BRF publications find them valuable, often enjoyable, sometimes challenging, and always useful; and those of us who use the booklets highly recommend them to all.

Report provided by David Yates

Café Magdalene Annual Report 2024

2024 was the first full year of trading for Café Magdalene and was deemed to be a great success. It is managed by a small sub group of the PCC comprising six enthusiastic members; Ros Carling, Avril Monck, Revd Darren Moore (chair), Beryl Nadin, John Rhodes (note taker), Angela Beckwith and Elizabeth Rigg. The operation relied solely on volunteers from the congregation, and we are pleased to report that 17 members contributed as bakers and/or servers. In addition, 2 non-congregation members came to help serve.

The café contributed to the running cost of the church and provided unsold cakes for sale by donation after the Sunday service. We also held two charity days where all the takings were donated to Macmillan at a Big Brew and Children in Need. It was good to see the north aisle decked in green for Macmillans and visited by a large Pudsey bear for Children in Need.

The Archdeacon's temporary licence to remove the south aisle pews has allowed the café to support church activities and outreach such as a craft fair and the sale of shoes for MSF.

The trade is steady and there was no need to advertise as the turnover was good and within 80% of the maximum permitted by HMRC before greater fiscal controls are required. The management group are aware that the café trading has to be accounted for in a different way to the church income and so maintained tight controls on sales to secure the integrity of the church reputation. The accounts are included within the annual report and not here. We must thank Lynn Allison for her hard work in maintaining the accounts and overseeing the café activity.

We continue to sell Rountons Coffee as the roasting house is based locally. Fairtrade tea is purchased in individually sealed packets for hygiene reasons. The quality of food is a priority for the catering team. Freshly baked scones and cakes are served daily. Customer satisfaction and repeat business is critical to the success of this mission activity. One Facebook reader commented "The best scones in the North East". Finally our biggest success has been to encourage three café visitors to become regular members of the congregation.

Café Magdalene sub-group

Care for the Congregation (C for C) Report

As any business conducted by C for C is confidential there never will be a detailed report per se; suffice to say a very efficient watching brief continues.

Care for the congregation was inaugurated in 2016 the aim published in 'Comet now Trident' the same year. Since then, the congregation has changed, people leaving balanced by newcomers, so there will always be some who may be unaware of C for C and how it works.

Care for the congregation a brief resume:

As a caring congregation it is usually easy to identify a missing regular attender not so easy with an intermittent attender. To overcome this problem C for C was established.

It is a simple system where a group of regular worshippers have agreed to keep a non-intrusive watching brief on various groups of parishioners. If they identify a missing worshipper, they will try to ascertain a reason why through simple enquiry or a discrete phone call, to check all is well and if necessary to offer assistance.

If requested, they will inform the Rector of the situation, or he can be informed directly.

C for C does not prevent anyone from watching for an empty seat and raising concerns. We are all responsible for ensuring that no one in need of aid goes unnoticed.

Most of you know, who has you on their care list, and have been reminded from information handed out. New attenders have been/or will be individually contacted with details of C for C. If is identified they are not on the Electoral Roll, this may also be mentioned.

In addition to the Annual Review, lists are updated as and when changes occur.

Jean Hodgkinson on behalf of FR Darren and Church Wardens

Cash only Club Report 2024

The 'Cash-only-Club' runs from October to September each year.

Membership costs £20 per year.

There are cash prizes of £20 and £10 each month, apart from December when prizes are £100 and £50.

55 members joined in October (or subsequent months) 2024, compared to 52 in 2023 and 53 in 2022.

Anyone can join part way through the year and pay pro-rata.

Jean Finlay.

Choir Report

The choir has had another excellent year, growing not just the front rows but the back rows. We have added a chorister parent to our ranks as well as 4 young lads from local schools, three of whom are occupying our newly founded choral scholarship roles. They are making some excellent contributions already, and we are going from strength to strength. Here's to another excellent year!

Janine Busbridge

Craft Group Report: January – December 2024

There are 18 members in the craft group who meet regularly in the Fellowship Hall every other Tuesday from 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm.

Some members with health and mobility issues continue to attend for social fellowship. They are always ready to advise and share their expertise with others. We have members who do not attend St Mary Magdalene church but who contribute to and support the group. There are also members who support us from home.

At the meetings we all do our own crafting, some towards church events and some to support charitable causes in various ways.

During 2024 we contributed to Yarm church events including the Spring, Summer and Christmas fairs as well as, once again, joining Kirklevington church for their September fair when our stall proceeds were shared.

Over 2024 our income for church funds was about £700 and we continue to cover the rent of the Fellowship Hall through members' payments.

We ended the year with a very pleasant Christmas meal at Eaglescliffe Golf Club.

Report provided by Carole Wilson

Ecumenical Prayer Group Report for 2024

The Ecumenical Prayer Group has a long history. It was originally started by Pauline Hislop approximately 27 years ago with the intention of bringing together Christians from different denominations in order to pray as intercessors on a daily basis. Although over the years membership has changed, there remains a core group who meet in St Mary Magdalene on the first Wednesday of the month following the 9.30am Eucharist. The group update the prayer list and spend time in quiet meditative prayer.

During 2024 the group met on 10 occasions in the Lady Chapel. A total of 11 people attended from three different churches; St John's, Egglecliffe, Yarm Methodist Church and St Mary Magdalene, a new member from Yarm Methodist church having joined us towards the end of the year. A further 10 people received the intercessory list by e-mail.

The Prayer List is confidential and its content is not shared with the wider congregations of any of the churches. A person requests to be prayed for, and no names are added to the list without consent unless circumstances are such that prayers are needed in an emergency situation. Only first names are used with a very brief explanation of the reason for prayer.

Beryl Nadin (on behalf of the Prayer Group)

Events Group Report for 2024

Events Group Members: Father Darren, Angela Beckwith, Marion Johnston, Avril Monck, Peter Monck, Beryl Nadin, Maggie Nicholls, John Rhodes, Carole Wilson and Jay Yates.

The Events Group met a total of 6 times during 2024.

A number of fundraising and social events were organised during the year with the proceeds going towards Church Funds and our three chosen charities, Teesside Hospice, Macmillan Nurses and Medicine San Frontiers. Donations were also made to the choir fund and other charities, including GRACE and Middlesbrough Cat Rescue.

Our events were:

- Lent Lunch, Sunday 18th February. £333.50 raised from donations and raffle, shared between Teesside Hospice and Macmillan Nurses
- Smartie Tubes raised £500+ for charity
- Spring Fair, Saturday 23rd March – proceeds towards church funds
- Summer Fair, Saturday 27th July - £3,00+ raised for church funds
- MU & Friends Outing to Ampleforth, Monday 29th July
- Parish Outing to Ormesby Hall, Monday 7th August (including Little Sparks Xtra)
- Strawberry Tea in the Rectory Garden, 24th August – raised £300 towards church funds
- Pet Service, Sunday 1st September was well attended by 15 dogs and their proud owners – £233.60 along with donations of pet food and toys were shared between local pet charities GRACE and Middlesbrough Cat Rescue
- Harvest Festival, Sunday 6th October – donations to charity
- Autumn Quiz, Saturday 26th October – donation of £200+ to church funds

- Christmas Fair, Saturday 30th November – raised approx. £3,000 plus a further £557 from the ‘Big Raffle’ towards church funds
- Christingle, Sunday 1st December (First Sunday of Advent) during the 10.30am service – raised £400+ for the Church of England Children’s Society
- Winter Craft Fair, Saturday 7th December – a first venture inviting outside stall holders to use our church as a venue
- Christmas Cheer, Sunday 15th December attended by Bishop Barry who drew the ‘Big Raffle’
- Parish Panto, Snow White at the PPA, Sunday 15th December – attended by 10 children and 21 adults
- Tree Festival, from 18th till 30th December – 12 beautiful trees displayed around church, both real and artificial. It was decided to leave the trees in place for visitors to enjoy over the Christmas period
- Christmas Card Board – donations to charity
- The ‘Cash only Club’, organised by Jean Finlay, raised £500 towards Church Funds.

Other events which took place in church were a Macmillan Coffee Morning on 27th September and a Children in Need fundraiser in November, both hosted by Café Magdalene. ‘Soles for Souls’, selling shoes and accessories and inspired and managed by Elaine Huggins, was held on 27th/28th September during Café opening times in aid of Medicine San Frontiers.

The Events Group would like to thank everyone who contributed in making our activities a success during 2024. They would also like to thank all those people, either parishioners or members of the wider community, who came along to support one or more of our events.

Beryl Nadin (on behalf of The Events Team)

Fabric sub-committee Report

The fabric sub-committee consists of, Eric Heaviside, Martin Huggins, Beryl Nadin, Peter Monck, Darren Moore, John Rhodes and David Yates and has met 5 times in 2024.

The group is set up to assist the churchwardens in the maintenance of the building and their oversight of the maintenance of the churchyard and to consider restoration, fabric proposals and developments in the building and reports to the PCC.

Action points were recorded and presented for each meeting to the following PCC meeting for approval. 6 items from 2022 were discussed and 2 items of business were closed as follows:

- Flashing light in church
- Pruning of churchyard trees.

6 items from 2023 were discussed and 3 items of business were closed as follows:

- Lady chapel outer door lock.
- Window frame condition.
- Grant for the roof gutter levelling and repair project.

10 items of new business were discussed in the meetings in 2024 and the following were closed.

- Drainage from the servery sink.

- Woodworm in church treated

Many of the items discussed by the committee have a degree of complexity that requires extensive discussion and resolution. Funding also must be considered before moving ahead. Application for grants takes time and must be undertaken at the correct point in a project to be accepted. We received a grant from the National Churches Trust of £5,456 for the work carried out on the roof. This was the maximum they could offer (50% of the total cost) and just above their normal ceiling of £5,000. This was successful because we open the building to visitors at Café Magdalene, so the fabric committee is grateful for all their hard work.

Details of fabric activities will be presented in the churchwardens' report.

Fabric committee members

Generosity of Loving Disciples (GOLD) 2024 Annual Report

The GOLD team is made up of the following members: David Local (Chair), Beryl Nadin, Peter Monck, Maggie Nicholls, Marion Johnston, Martin Huggins, John Rhodes, Lynn Allison, Fr Darren. As necessary we invite the Diocesan Generous Giving Advisers Jan Grey and Phil McBride and the Deanery Financial Adviser Ken Taylor to advise our considerations.

Our focus very much remains to encourage the worshipping community of St Mary Magdalene Church to become generous loving disciples of Jesus Christ in supporting our church to fulfil God's mission of which we are all partners.

As part of the PCC deliberations in late 2023 to approve the 2024 Budget they encouraged GOLD to consider the following issues:

- Different ways of raising regular income and where to focus our efforts;
- Possibility of creating a dedicated Giving Station;
- On-going encouragement for more use of PGS, particularly the automatic increase of gifts in line with inflation;
- How to display appropriate publicity and Information to generally promote a Generous Giving culture within our Church.

Meanwhile the Fabric Group had considered the vision of the PCC that the overall organisation of the Nave to effectively enhance the Mission of the Church, and recommended that the pews in the south aisle be removed. This was agreed by the PCC and following the approval by the Diocese of a temporary faculty the pews were removed.

As a result a dedicated Giving Station was installed and appropriate display boards were acquired to more adequately display relevant information.

In July the PCC had requested GOLD to make a proposal to the PCC of an amount for our Free Will Offer (FWO) to the Diocesan General Fund for 2025. Following an in-depth discussion by GOLD having considered what we could afford balanced against how we could be generous, it was agreed to recommend an increase of the FWO equating to at least the level of inflation: at that time it was 2% and to recommend an increase of £2,400 pa (£200 per month), making a total amount of £64,200. This was subsequently agreed by the PCC.

In August we were advised by the Diocesan Generous Giving Advisers of a free online learning tool 'Cornerstone' that was being rolled-out by the national Generous Giving Team to support churches to better understand and improve their giving practice and generous culture.

The benefit of Cornerstone is that the platform helps to breakdown the required tasks into clear, simple steps called 'Pathways' that distribute the workload to help the team focus their limited resources to get the best sustainable results and show a positive impact.

The team agreed for St Mary Magdalene to be part of a pilot group in York Diocese to develop this tool. As a result in September 2024 a few of our team attended a workshop at Diocesan House.

This proved very useful and gave St Mary Magdalene Church an inside track for the Cornerstone launch that was to be early in 2025.

We have, therefore, been able to undertake an early analysis of Cornerstone to begin developing a future strategy of a generous giving pathway. In this connection we will be taking appropriate recommendations for the approval of the PCC in 2025.

David Local (on behalf of the GOLD Team).

Health & Safety Report

The Health and Safety Committee has 5 members: John Rhodes (Chair), John Bancroft, David Beeton, Avril Monck and a Churchwarden.

There were four accidents reported in the accident book (kept on the noticeboard near the entrance to the large store/photocopier cupboard) and all investigated by the Health and Safety group. Reports were written and presented to the PCC.

In February and March there were two falls reported on the path outside the church. The Town Council were informed, and four paving slabs were levelled in quick time. Many thanks to the Council.

In October a hand was cut on a cupboard closer. Closers were replaced with a non-sharp design in the four cupboards at the back of church.

In November a filter coffee machine overflowed and scalded a hand. A notice has been placed on the coffee machines to check the filters are correctly located and the hole at the bottom of the filter holder is unimpaired.

The committee has prepared or commented upon four risk assessments for the PCC as listed below.

June	Café Magdalene Churchyard Wildlife count
August	Use of South Aisle following removal of pews
December	Little Sparks and Little Sparks Xtra
December	Junior Choir

Health and Safety (H&S) is an important (and much maligned) subject. If near misses are reported it can often prevent a serious accident from occurring. We all have a responsibility to look after each other and therefore informing a member of the group is important if anything untoward is observed. We are pleased that more activity has been reported this year compared with 2023.

H&S Group

Little Sparks & Little Sparks Xtra Report for 2024

Little Sparks is a group for pre-school children and their parents/carers. The group meets in church at 10.00am on a Monday morning (excluding Bank Holidays) for about an hour and a half. Activities begin in the Lady Chapel with prayer in the form of lighting candles. We then have an age-appropriate Bible story before moving to the chancel for a rousing sing, always ending with 'The Wise Man'.

Refreshments are then served giving the adults time for an informal chat while the children play with the toys in the children's area, suitably supervised.

At the beginning of 2024 we had two children with their grandparents attending on a regular basis and two further families attending occasionally. Towards the end of the year a third child and his mum joined our group on a regular basis. Although our numbers were still few during 2024, we felt there was still sufficient involvement and enjoyment for all involved to justify our continuation.

Particular thanks go to John Bancroft and Debbie Gravestock who provided the music.

Father Darren, Angela Beckwith and Beryl Nadin led Little Sparks during 2024.

Little Sparks Xtra is a group for pre-school children and primary school age children which met in church during 2024 on chosen Monday mornings during the school holidays.

These sessions occurred on the Mondays of two of the Half Terms, the first Monday of the Easter Holiday and on three Mondays during the Summer break, one of them being the Parish Trip to Ormesby Hall. A total of 9 children attended these sessions.

The format of **Little Sparks Xtra** mainly followed that of **Little Sparks** with the addition of craft activities.

John Bancroft and Debbie Gravestock provided the music for Little Sparks Xtra. We are very grateful to them for their hard work, their commitment and their enthusiasm.

Father Darren, Angela Beckwith and Beryl Nadin led the sessions with support from Anne Stainer and Avril Monck.

Beryl Nadin (on behalf of the Little Sparks Team)

Yarm Mothers' Union Report for 2024

The Yarm Branch of the Mothers' Union in the Church of St Mary Magdalene began and finished 2024 with 26 members on roll.

During the year we contributed to three Mothers' Union charitable appeals:- Make a Mother's Day, Summer of Hope, and One More Step.

Over 2024 there were nine meetings and events held on Monday afternoons. At five of these meetings we had speakers - Maureen Rigg (Fair Trade), Fr Darren (Bees), Helen Vaughan (My Guide Dog Story), Sharon Moore (Safeguarding), and Debbie Gravestock (Horse Racing).

Other meetings included a successful fundraising Strawberry Tea, an outing to Ampleforth Abbey organised by Peter Monck, and a Members' Afternoon.

The final afternoon meeting of the year was an Advent Service with members of the congregation of our church and other local churches as well as nearby Mothers' Union Branches attending.

Through the year we were able to hold some Monday evening discussion groups led by Jayne Gregory.

The Prayer Services on the second Wednesday of each month, led by the Mothers' Union, continued throughout the year.

The Branch also led the Meditations on the Stations of the Cross during Holy Week and organised the giving of flowers to those present at the Mothering Sunday Service.

A group of members enjoyed the Spring and Autumn Retreats at Wydale Hall as well as attending the newly re-named Spring and Autumn Gatherings (formerly known as Diocesan Council Meetings).

A small group went to visit the Mothers' Union caravan on the Away From It All (AFIA) Open Day.

Marion Johnston
Branch Secretary

Wild Care Report for 2024

In 2024, the Wild Care Group, which was formed back in 2022, continued to make good progress in relation to looking after the ecology, flora and fauna of our churchyard.

During the year, areas of the churchyard designated for leaving to nature have increased with two more log piles created. Also the mowing regime has continued to leave wild areas free from mowing all year round. This helps to create a natural safe environment for all kinds of wildlife, bugs beetles, butterflies, moths and much more. Not to mention how this provides natural food and resources for birds. As well as these natural resources the birds are fed with sunflower seeds (and occasionally the squirrels receive some peanuts). The birds also have nest boxes available for use around the church yard.

Arrangements for the construction of the bee enclosure were put in place.

We saw the lovely daffodils, bluebells and other flowers which had been eagerly planted in September 2023 showing through during the springtime, which was fantastic.

Wider ranging planting was carried out but unfortunately some was lost to slugs so will be rethought for 2025.

Work continued to clear out unwanted self-seeded growth around the established trees with two of the large yew trees significantly - primarily to accommodate overhead cables. More clearing out will be required in 2025. The small team have also contributed to managing the wild areas (cutting back brambles and suckers, providing shelter for insects and birds etc).

The group very much looks forward to continuing their work in 2025 and will continue to provide updates on activities via the Trident magazine and PCC updates.

Report provided by Lynn Allison and Peter Ellis on behalf of David Yates and all the Wildcare team.

