

## **Appendix 2 to Virtual PCC meeting April 2025: Agenda item 1**

### **Summary of Beacon Parish Annual Report and Accounts 2024**

The Beacon Parish of Ditchling, Streat, and Westmeston continued its core mission in 2024 of promoting the Gospel through pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical engagement. Under the leadership of Reverend David Wallis, the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and dedicated volunteers oversaw a year of spiritual, community, and financial progress, despite some structural and financial challenges.

Support for the Church grew slightly, with 195 parishioners on the electoral roll. St Margaret's Church hosted regular Sunday and Wednesday Communion services, while Streat Church and St Martin's Westmeston hosted Sunday services throughout the year. St George's Park, a large retirement village, remained a vital part of the Parish's outreach, with increasing attendance at its fortnightly services.

Special services for Christmas, Easter, Remembrance Day, and school events were well-attended. Summer events like outdoor services with refreshments, themed gatherings, and church-based discussion groups fostered deeper community involvement. Despite having to make the youth worker role redundant due to financial constraints, youth engagement remained strong through Sunday school, school services, and special events, thanks to volunteers and the Reverend Wallis.

The Parish also made strides in digital outreach, with live-streamed services at St Margaret's reaching an estimated online congregation of 112. Baptisms, weddings, funerals, and memorials continued at a regular pace, and popular community events such as Apple Day, Souper Saturday, and a Christmas Tree Festival enhanced visibility and outreach.

The Emmanuel Centre in Ditchling remained a valued community resource, producing a small operating surplus. However, the co-tenant, The Point Church, ceased its use of the space during the year.

Financially, the Parish is in a stable condition. Incoming resources rose c. 20% from 2023, aided by a successful fundraising appeal that boosted Planned and Unplanned Giving. A legacy gift and grant support from foundations and local councils also contributed. The Friends of St Margaret's played a key role in funding church repairs and committing to future improvements.

Expenses decreased by 9% despite increased maintenance costs. Major expenditures included essential repairs to St Martin's floor and ongoing churchyard maintenance. The Parish Share to the Diocese - the PCC's largest expense - was reduced in 2024 for sustainability, with a commitment to restore it over time (this has in fact been increased for 2025). Donations were made to charities including the Red Cross, Royal British Legion, and the Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity.

Investment income dipped slightly due to asset liquidations, but net assets grew 1%. Restricted funds for church maintenance remained stable, and unrestricted funds saw a modest rise. A shift to multi-asset investments is planned to mitigate risks tied to market volatility and geopolitical uncertainty.

Governance remained strong, with frequent PCC and committee meetings ensuring transparency and accountability. Key retirements, including the Treasurer and Bookkeeper, were managed smoothly, and a professional Bookkeeper was hired to streamline operations.

Safeguarding remained a top priority, with policies updated and training current. The Parish joined a Diocesan pilot program to improve safeguarding practices.

Looking ahead, the departure of Reverend Wallis in March 2025 presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The PCC remains focused on sustaining giving, enhancing engagement, and maintaining its vibrant ministry during the vacancy.