

**Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Bexhill-on-Sea**  
**St Mary Magdalene & St Martha's - Income v Expenditure 2023**

**1. Operational**

<b>Income:</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Collection</b>			
Offertory	51,662	57,100	↑
Offertory GASDS	27,456	41,519	↑
Christmas & Easter	12,571	14,687	↑
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>91,689</i>	<i>113,306</i>	↑
<b>Parish 2<sup>nd</sup> Collection</b>			
Second Collection	2,573	6,681	↑
Second GASDS	2,595	3,682	↑
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>5,168</i>	<i>10,363</i>	↑
<b>Other Income</b>			
Mass / Stole Offerings	9,744	10,396	↑
Legacies & Donations	42,754	17,506	↓
Gift Aid	16,454	17,009	↑
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>68,952</i>	<i>44,911</i>	↓
<b>Commercial Income</b>			
Repository	481	1,207	↑
Votive Candles	2,296	1,750	↓
Rents*	12,938	13,569	↑
Investments	31	41	↑
Insurance	15,887	0	↓
Sundry	1,327	2,541	↑
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>32,960</i>	<i>19,108</i>	↓
<b>Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b><u>198,769</u></b>	<b><u>187,688</u></b>

\*includes Nursery rent from School

<b>Expenditure:</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	
<b>Faith Advancement</b>			
Liturgy & Pastoral	6,273	8,658	↑
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>6,273</i>	<i>8,658</i>	↑

**Personnel**

Staff	25,877	35,864	↑
Clergy	31,315	19,796	↓
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>57,192</i>	<i>55,660</i>	↓

**Establishment**

Professional Fees	9,905	225	↓
Domestic	11,638	7,955	↓
Office	4,011	4,434	↑
Energy & Water	14,018	23,724	↑
Council Tax	1,862	1,543	↓
Insurance & License	7,228	7,897	↑
Maintenance & Equipment	21,579	37,650	↑
Cleaning (not domestic)	3,573	3,128	↓
Travel	1,625	2,028	↑
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>75,439</i>	<i>88,584</i>	↑

**Transfers**

Bank Charges	53	14	↓
Charitable Grants	533	240	↓
From Restricted	0	5,762	↑
Transfer to Diocese	22,716	27,265	↑
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>23,302</i>	<i>33,281</i>	↑
<b>Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b><u>162,206</u></b>	<b><u>186,183</u></b>
<b>Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>+36,598</b>	<b>+1,505</b>

**2. Capital / Major Works**

*Capital Works Budget Carried forward:* £36,598

Capital Works Actual, 5 Year Electrical: £31,029

<b>Total Expenditure 2024</b>	<b>£217,212</b>
<b>Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>-29,524</b>
<b>[Surplus / Deficit Forecast</b>	<b>-36,000]</b>
<b>Variance</b>	<b>+6,476 better than forecast</b>

### **Parish Priest Statement:**

In 2023, the Catholic Parish of Bexhill celebrated the 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its foundation. The parish of 2023 would be unrecognizable to those present at its foundation in 1893, seeing significant periods of change, from the departure of the Rosminians in 2000, the opening of the Church of Sidley in 1954 and its closure in 2019, to the reduction of pastoral provision to one priest towards the end of 2022. From a financial perspective, we have come a long way in recent years, starting to see the benefit of the bold decisions to restructure the parish in 2019, that despite the understandable bereavement that this caused, we have (*with a delay because of the COVID years*) begun to see a restoration to the financial health of the parish with the balancing of our '*operational*' budget for the third year in a row.

My thanks to the Parish Finance Committee for their oversight in ensuring Bexhill remains financially viable. However, we do know that in the past eight years or so we have not been able to make much progress on our capital works. It is important that all parishioners once again review their offertory giving, ensuring it is gift-aided and where possible given as a standing order, which guarantees income to the parish. For those who like to give weekly in the plate, we have also installed a '*contactless card reader*' as many have commented that they do not always have cash on them. With regards fundraising, we ask parish groups and individuals to reflect that the parish already supports many and varied third parties through the weekly second collections; as such we ask that they prioritise their fundraising for the parish and not give it away.

From 2023, we have begun to make capital repairs a priority. The Accounts and Financial Statement from last year (*approved by the Bishop, Trustees and Diocesan Finance*) made it clear, however, that maintaining our estate in its current form was beyond our financial ability. As you will recall, Bishop Richard reiterated that St Mary Magdalene Church remained a significant part of the '*Diocesan Pastoral Plan – The Word who is Life*' in this area of the Diocese, but that the ancillary buildings of the monastery style presbytery and the aged Hall at St Mary Magdalene had completed their pastoral usefulness and should be sold, with any monies realised from the sale being put to new and more pastorally appropriate office and meeting space.

Fr Simon Dray, Parish Priest.

## **Parish Income:**

On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022 (Pentecost) the Bishops Conference said that the obligation to attend Mass in-person could again be fulfilled; but it would take time for people to regain their confidence in attending large gatherings. Throughout 2023, we saw our Sunday Mass attendance recover to 66% of our pre-COVID numbers, although at the beginning of the year we were hampered by the loss of Church heating at St Mary Magdalene resulting in the Church being closed from late January to early March as temperatures plummeted to unsafe levels. We also had difficulty sourcing parts for the 'Weismann' boilers, because of COVID and Brexit delays, and the War in Ukraine meaning companies did not have spare parts in stock and had to be made to order in Germany.

We did, however, see an increase in First Offertory giving, up by £19,501:

<b>Income:</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	
Offertory	51,662	57,100	↑
Offertory GASDS	27,456	41,519	↑
	79,118	98,619	

In addition, we saw the amount given by individuals increase from £3.15 to £4.01 per person. It would be a laudable target if we could increase this average to £5.00 per person which would stand us in better shape to deal with the increasing financial challenges the parish faces. Despite the uptake in Mass attendance increasing the offertory, the Gift Aid amount remained relatively static, which is a shame. If a parishioner pays any kind of tax, there is no good reason not to Gift Aid their offertory.

## **Here in the newsletter section of the Parish Office we posted:**

Reasons to move away from cash to a Standing Order:

<https://stmmrbexhill.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/weekly-offertory-standing-orders-a-move-away-from-cash-on-the-day.pdf>

The Gift Aid Poster:

<https://stmmrbexhill.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/gift-aid-make-your-offertory-go-further.pdf>

Top five Gift Aid Myths:

<https://stmmrbexhill.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/gift-aid-myths.pdf>

Legacies and Donations were down this year. And while it is right that we should not be reliant on them to balance our operational budget, they are still valuable income, helping us pay for special projects and capital repairs. When writing and / or reviewing your Will, perhaps, you would consider leaving a gift to the Parish using these words:

### **Bequest for a parish/special purpose:**

I give to the Trustees of the Arundel and Brighton Diocesan Trust of Bishop's House The Upper Drive Hove East Sussex BN3 6NB being registered charity Number 252878 [the sum of £..... free of tax] [..... of my residuary estate] on trust for such charitable purposes in connection with the Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Bexhill in the said Diocese as the Trustees shall in their absolute discretion think fit and the receipt of the Financial Secretary or other officer of the Trust shall be a full discharge to my executors in respect of the same.

### **Operational Expenditure:**

We managed a small surplus this year of £1,505. The most significant increase in our expenditure was Personnel. While we only have one staff member, we reviewed our Administrator's pay, awarding a significant pay award to recognize her willingness to go full time, to retain and reward her 15 years of experience of parish life, and, in justice, to reflect the real cost of living increases faced by people across the country.

The parish was not immune to the '*cost of living crisis*' with contractors passing on these costs to their customers. Like everyone, we experienced the effects of the raised '*energy price cap*' that Ofgem brought in from April. To heat our Churches (*to a comfortable level at St Martha's and to a tolerable level at St Mary Magdalene*) uses a considerable amount of gas. To this end, we did not use the central heating in the presbytery. Thank you to the groups and our administrator who survived on portable radiators, so that we only heated the rooms we needed, at the times we needed.

Leaving aside '*capital works*' for the moment, the parish attended to some general '*wear and tear*' items, including a new photocopier for the parish at a cost of over £4,000, as the existing Toshiba machine had reached the end of its operational life. At the beginning of the year, we finally took the decision to take back control of the parish car park at St Martha's paying out £2,000 to install gates, but the pastoral benefits to the parish have far outweighed the financial outlay.

## **Capital Works Completed:**

Although we balanced the operational spending, the need to make progress with our capital repairs did mean that overall, we saw an account deficit in 2023, which we expected and budgeted for. At the end of 2022, we ring-fenced the £36,000 surplus, allocating it to capital or major works, intending to use this money to complete the urgent and recommended repairs and upgrades to the electrics identified by the mandatory five-year electrical report. Without completing these works (*at a cost of £31,029*), we would not have been legally compliant and may have been forced to close both Churches. The five-year electrical report will need to be carried out again in 2027, but hopefully by reacting robustly in 2023, this will reduce the need for any significant outlay – unfortunately, regulations are constantly changed and updated.

## **The Sale of Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Sidley:**

Having completed the '*loss of community*' assessment, the buyer was allowed to submit a planning application to Rother Council in January 2024. If they approve his plans, we may complete the sale this year (2024), nearly five years after the final Mass and closure of the Church. Rother Planning state a decision is due by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024. We hope to realise £587,000 but as 35% of a property sale is taken as a Levy by the Diocese, we will need to make an application to the Trustees to pay it back to the parish as a '*grant*'. Hopefully, the Trustees will look favourably on our application, aware of the bishop's directive to repair St Mary Magdalene Church. As a '*grant*', they will tell us where they expect those funds to be spent. There are already expenses associated with the sale of Sidley, including the survey reports and fencing protecting the site following an attempted Arson attack. The Diocese has authorised the surveys and cost of fencing be placed on a Bexhill Parish '*TAB*' held at the Diocese, to be repaid upon the sale of Sidley. If Rother Planning do not grant planning permission, there will be a delay and a further conversation with Diocesan Finance will be needed.

## **Planned Capital Works**

Aware of the bishop's directive to repair St Mary Magdalene Church, the Diocesan Finance Committee authorised us to start said repairs at a projected cost of £450k, and to place any costs associated with the repairs on the Bexhill '*TAB*' held at the Diocese, so the costs are not paid out of our operational budget.

In November 2023, with the approval of the Diocesan and Parish Finance Committees I appointed '*Harding Bond Limited*' as the managing surveyor for the repairs, instructing them to draw up a '*schedule of works*', which was approved by the Parish Finance Committee in June and submitted to Historic Churches who have begun the process of approving works to a Listed Church. Once they give permission, we will be able to '*go out to tender*'; as such, we may not see any physical works before Sept. 2024 or even spring 2025 depending on the autumn weather.

We have received the Maintenance Report for St Martha's Church and Hall. We will take forward three separate projects in the Hall, especially in regards damp proofing, the emergency exit and redecoration of the entrance hall (cost: £12K), which will come out of our operational budget, as such the expenditure is the responsibility of the whole parish, not just the community at St Martha's. The Church is in relatively good condition and requires routine maintenance. However, because we have not financially been able to complete these, the costs are now approx. £90K. Fundraising will be needed as the monies from the sale of assets Sidley and the Presbytery / Hall at St Mary Magdalene are already provisionally allocated to repairs at St Mary Magdalene and a new office and pastoral space at St Mary Magdalene once the Presbytery and Hall are sold. Fr Simon discussed these works with the Diocesan Finance Committee who have granted approval for them to begin, using Harding Bond Surveyors to manage the works. We will appoint them at some convenient time after the summer holidays.

### **Sale of St Mary Magdalene Presbytery & Hall:**

As announced in last year's Accounts, the bishop, the trustees and the Diocesan Finance Committee did not give the Parish Finance Committee permission to continue with the necessary repairs to both the Presbytery (c.£500,000) and Hall (c.£250,000) at St Mary Magdalene stating that they were beyond our financial capabilities and, therefore, no longer part of the pastoral priorities of the parish or diocese. As such, they are on the market, valued at £450,000. We have had one viable cash-offer of £422,000 which we are looking to accept – as anyone who has sold property knows, there is no guarantees at this stage. While the sale is in the hands of the Diocesan Solicitor, we should prepare ourselves for the loss of the Parish Office and Pastoral rooms. Even though pastorally and administratively there are changes ahead with the

start of the Moderated Parish in November, new pastoral / administrative space at St Mary Magdalene is still needed.

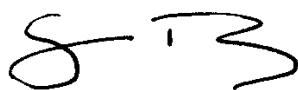
Thus, acting on the advice of the Diocesan Property Officer and with the approval of the Parish Finance Committee, I have appointed '*Harding Bond Limited*' to carry out a '*feasibility study*' to see whether the Crypt can be readopted as a multi-purpose pastoral room and to find a place for a small office. The three major challenges are 1) disability access 2) if this is possible, obtaining Historic Churches permission, and 3) that it can be done within budget, namely the sale of the presbytery / hall.

## **Fundraising Target for 2025, 2026 & 2027**

We need to get serious about fundraising, setting ourselves a **£30K** uplift to our income each year for the next three years. As I wrote in the introduction, '*with regards fundraising, we ask parish groups and individuals to reflect that the parish already supports many and varied third parties through the weekly second collections; as such we ask that they prioritise their fundraising for the parish and not give it away*'. Fundraising activity has a significant pastoral and social dimension, bringing parishioners under a common cause, the mission of the Catholic Parish of Bexhill. On Trinity Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2024, I wrote in the newsletter of the need to appoint people to co-ordinate various areas of parish life. Included is the need to appoint a Fundraising Co-ordinator as the sale of assets is not sufficient to maintain the fabric of the estate.

## **Finance Committee**

We are always interested in hearing from parishioners who have the relevant skills, temperament, and enthusiasm to serve on the finance committee, which advises the parish priest who retains legal responsibility for the parish estate. With the approval of the parish finance committee, I can now present the 2023 Accounts to the parish. These accounts are subject to local audit.



Fr Simon Dray, Parish Priest

19<sup>th</sup> July 2024