



**Pathway  
Church**

**The Church of England in  
Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates**

**MINISTRY, MISSION  
and  
FINANCE REPORTS  
2023**

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# **MISSION AND MINISTRY**

**Year ending December 2023**

This was my first full year as Incumbent in the Benefice of Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates and in August of this year I was installed as Rector at a service at Holy Trinity, Coates.

This past year has seen a lot of change within the Team as we have looked to bring more diversity within our worship across the Benefice. Like much of the rest of the Church in this present age, we recognise that different people like to worship and connect with God in different ways and that in a changing world, the Church will need to adapt as we seek to proclaim the Gospel afresh to each generation.

I am acutely aware that whilst some have welcomed and thrived within this period of change, a number of others have found this past year incredibly difficult. Change is never easy. I don't think the Church has ever found change easy, when you look back at its history. However, as disciples of Jesus, we recognise that we are always being called on - to follow Jesus in an ever-changing world and to proclaim the same Gospel within our own time and culture.

I think one of the greatest wonders of the Church of England is that it is a broad church - it encompasses a great diversity of tradition and worship and we continue on our own journey of discovery as we seek to figure out what something of that diversity and breadth might look like within our own gathered church community across Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates.

## **Team Worship**

January (2023) included two Team Services - one on New Years Day at St Thomas' and a Café-style service at St Andrew's Hall on the last Sunday of the month. The Café-style service, whilst a little different, was particularly enjoyed by all who came and we are hoping to organise a similar joint act of worship and fellowship in the year to come.

On the fifth Sunday of the month, we have traditionally gathered from across the team for a Team Service. This was continued for much of 2023, but tensions which developed around different styles of worship led to the decision from October to offer a choice of joint worship - a more traditional service and a more informal service. On the two occasions these have been held (October and December), this has been a success as both acts of worship have been just as well attended with a congregation drawn from across multiple parishes.

## **Worship and Attendance**

Each of our parish churches continue to have a service every Sunday and I am grateful to our Ministry Team who voluntarily give so much to enable this pattern of worship to continue.

## Average Sunday Attendance across the Benefice:

	2023	2022	% Difference
St Andrew's	23 (22+1)	18	+ 28%
St Mary's	28 (25+3)	31 (27+4)	- 10%
Holy Trinity	12	15	- 20%
St Thomas	12 (11+1)	12 (11+1)	(no difference)
<b>Total (Benefice)</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>- 1%</b>

I am aware that some of the changes occurring within the Benefice over the past year has had a significant impact on our worshipping communities and Sunday attendance.

At St Mary's a number of our congregation, including many in the Choir, decided to leave and we were very sorry as a worshipping community to see them go. Some from St Mary's Choir initially decided to stay within the Benefice, and a couple of these have now joined the choir at St Andrew's.

Whilst some decided to leave St Mary's in 2023, we also welcomed a number of new people into our worshipping community. I recognise that our current worshipping community at St Mary's is a real blend of those who have stayed with us through a period of change, and those who have joined us on the journey of faith and community within the past year.

Whilst St Andrew's seemed to take longer in 2022 to recover their Sunday attendance post-Covid (with an average attendance of 28 in 2019), their Sunday attendance has seen some growth in the past year.

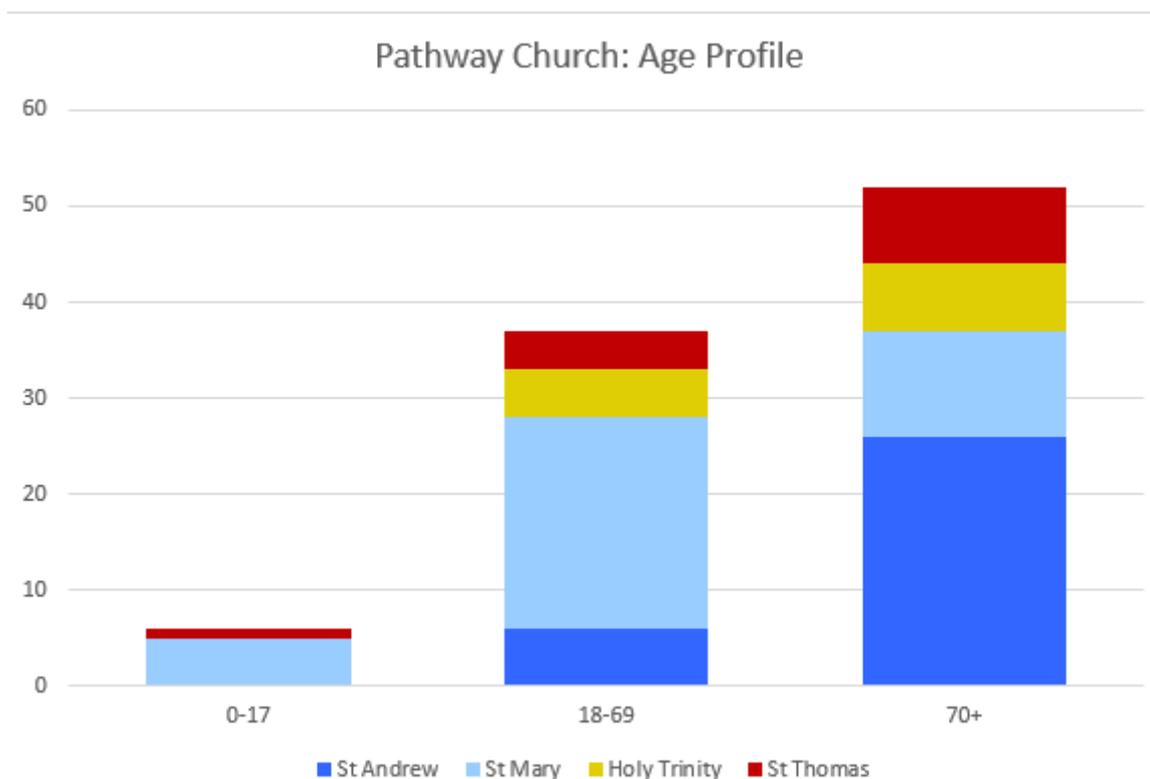
Our congregation at Holy Trinity has become a little smaller over this past year; this is largely due to ageing and the declining health of some within our worshipping community at Coates which has meant that they are no longer able to worship with us so regularly, if at all.

Our congregation at St Thomas' has seen no change. What these figures won't show is the wonderful ministry St Thomas' has continued to develop with some of the families in the village. Last Easter we experimented with an interactive Easter service for all ages, this was then followed by another service in the summer and a successful Christingle service last Christmas.

Overall, whilst there has been significant change within our worshipping communities this past year, it seems there has been little difference in the size of our Sunday congregation across the Benefice. Our congregations are still somewhat smaller than they were pre-pandemic; with a current combined congregation of 75, compared to 94 in 2019 and 106 in 2014.

## Pathway Church: Age Profile of our Worshipping Community \*

Every year the Church of England asks to know the general age profile of our worshipping communities. A snapshot of this for our Benefice can be found here:



As we look to cultivate a more “mixed ecology” of worship within the Benefice, we hope and pray that we might develop more of a balance of ages within our worshipping community across the Team. Looking ahead to 2024, we hope to see our ministry at Trinity Tots evolve into a little something more of a worshipping community at Holy Trinity. Aside from this snapshot of our worshipping community, we also celebrate the ongoing families ministry that continues to be developed in Pondersbridge.

*\* The Worshipping Community is defined by the Church of England as those people who attend worship regularly, once a month or more (whether in-person or “at home”).*

### **Easter and Christmas Worship**

Last Holy Week and Easter, we celebrated the Easter Story with a variety of services across the Team. It was lovely to welcome a number of children with their families to the Exploring Easter service at St Thomas’ and the Journey to the Cross Service at St Mary’s. On the evening of Holy Saturday, a number of us from across the Team gathered for an Easter Vigil service at St Andrew’s. Whilst I know not everyone was so keen on the incense (!) it was wonderful to join together for this act of worship. On Easter Sunday, we welcomed a combined congregation of 134 adults and 11 children at our Easter services.

At Christmas, whilst a very busy season with numerous Carol Services, Nativity Services and Christmas celebrations, it was a joy to once again celebrate the Good News of the incarnation - God with us - with our local community. In the weekend before Christmas, we welcomed 210 adults and 33 children to our various services. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we welcomed a combined congregation of 297 adults and 64 children to join together in our Christmas worship.

## Discipleship

In the Spring of 2023 we ran our first Alpha Course. Ten participants joined our team of helpers for this, some of whom were already members of our worshipping communities and some who were not.

In the Summer, some of us gathered in the pub to read and discuss a book together. As a church community, we read and reflected on 'Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers' by Dane Ortlund.

In the Autumn/Winter, some of us joined together - in a different pub - to read through the first half of John's Gospel together.

One of the greatest joys of the Christian walk of faith is that we get to do it together! We are currently part way through our second Alpha Course and we are beginning to plan another Church Book Club for the summer; all are very welcome to join us as we continue to gather as church to explore and discuss faith and life together.

## Occasional Offices

A number of occasional offices were held across the Benefice in 2023:

	<b>Baptisms</b>	<b>Weddings</b>	<b>Funerals</b>
<b>St Andrew's</b>	3	1	12
<b>St Mary's</b>	20	4	24
<b>Holy Trinity</b>	2	2	5
<b>St Thomas</b>	2	0	0
<b>Total (Benefice)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>41</b>
2022 Total	35	20	49

In 2023 we began to request that families wishing to bring their child(ren) to baptism join us for an Explore Christening (Baptism Preparation) session. This session runs over an hour and a half on a late Saturday morning. We also re-introduced Baptisms into our main Sunday Service, in recognition that Baptism is about joining the community of faith that we call the church and that gathers together for this joint act of worship every Sunday. This has evidently had some impact on the number of baptisms we officiated at in 2023, although it has also meant that we have been able to get to know the families we do welcome for baptism a little better.

In 2022 we officiated at a larger number of weddings, a number of which were delayed through the Covid pandemic. We had less weddings in 2023, compared to 2022 and the pre-pandemic figures (15 weddings in 2019), but we have a more typical number of weddings booked for 2024.

Rev'd Emily Davis  
Team Rector

# **SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

*(encompassing volunteer safer recruitment, DBS checks, training and networking)*

The essential and legal safeguarding work of the church remains with the trustees (PCCs) and is carried out by the Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) who generously give their time to make sure that the individual parishes are compliant. They are supported in this work by the team at the Diocese of Ely, and we try to make space for a team networking meeting during the year for all of the PSOs as well as those who support them through Pathway: The *Safer Recruitment Officer* (Lloyd Davis), the *DBS Officer* (Sue Iles-Palmer) and the *Safer Recruitment and Training Administrator* (Eve Dolling).

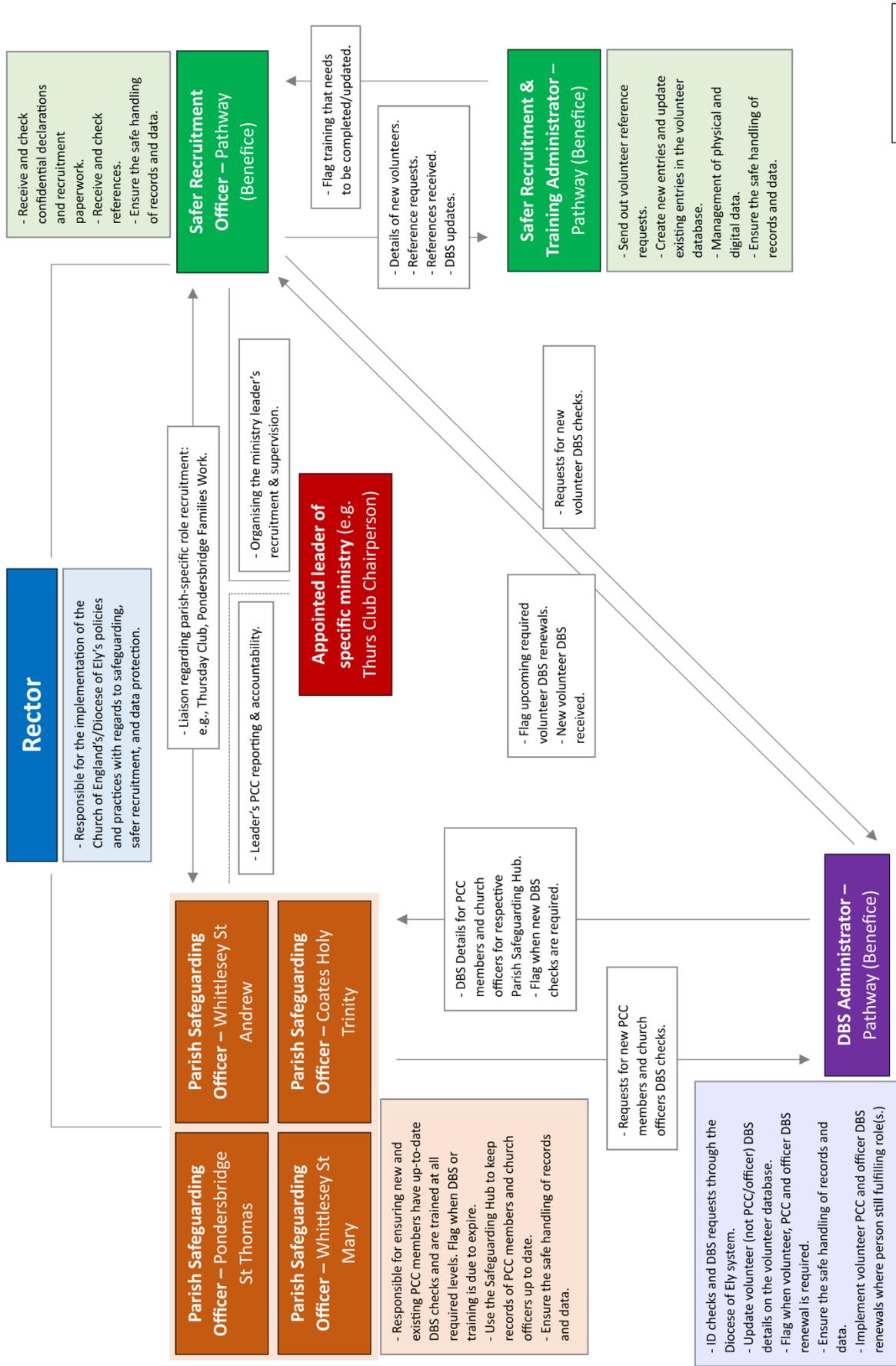
It has been good to welcome Eve on to the team in the last 12 months, I am thankful to her for keeping the recruitment and training database up to date for volunteers, and for requesting and filing references for volunteers.

My thanks to Sue for her continued work on the DBS checks; especially for her time in helping me to provide one-to-one sessions with the people to do their online applications at the vicarage.

I am certain that the rector will take the opportunity in her APCM reports to thank individual PSOs, but my thanks to them for their good communication and seamless adaptation to changes and new processes. The PSOs are a credit to our PCCs.

During the past year I hosted two series of in-person safeguarding training for those who couldn't or didn't want to complete it on their own computers at home. If there is need for these again in 2024 after the APCMs then this can be arranged.

The division of safeguarding roles and responsibilities in a multi-parish benefice can be confusing, especially as here we have a centralised volunteer recruitment structure. This flow chart (below) may be of some assistance to you in understanding the workflow and some of the expectations of our officers.



7<sup>th</sup> June 23

# TEAM COUNCIL ACCOUNTS

January - December 2023

(Unexamined)

## Financial Statement

	£	£
<b><u>CURRENT YEAR TRANSACTIONS</u></b>		
<b>Income:</b>		
Share -		
St Marys	7,200.00	
St Andrews	8,300.00	
Holy Trinity	7,000.00	
St Thomas	<u>4,300.00</u>	
		26,800.00
Team expenses -		
St Marys	2,000.00	
St Andrews		
Holy Trinity	1,350.00	
St Thomas	<u>300.00</u>	
		3,650.00
Direct Giving	3,050.00	
Tax recovered	<u>762.50</u>	
		3,812.50
Funeral Fees		24,757.00
Easy Fund Raising/misc		44.45
Coronation prayer sheets		70.00
Camb's bHistoric Churches		200.00
Wedding fees less £900 deposits for 2024		<u>495.00</u>
	<b><u>Total Income</u></b>	<b>59,828.95</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>		
Payments to EDBF -		
Team Share paid by DD	(39,908.11)	
Funeral Fees	(3,830.00)	
Team Share paid by cheque	<u>                    </u>	
		(43,738.11)
Funeral/wedding fees to PCCs - St Marys	(4,085.00)	
St Andrews	(2,016.00)	
Holy Trinity	(2,021.00)	
St Thomas	<u>(173.00)</u>	
		(8,295.00)
Incumbent mileage	(92.40)	
Incumbent telephone & postage	(459.16)	
Incumbent travel fares	<u>                    </u>	(551.56)
Other Clergy, Verger & Organist fees		(5,755.00)
Mileage - others		(401.40)
Stationery, printing & copier		(3,463.92)
P'boro Christian Books(books&candles,certs)		(1,238.35)
Subscriptions and office admin		(912.74)

Refreshments at courses	(48.19)	
Donation Embrace Middle East	(100.00)	
Chairs	(89.50)	
2 delegates LyCIG conference	(80.00)	
Explore Christianity	(265.99)	
Ethos (duplicatye payment to be recovered)	(44.92)	
Miscellaneous	(206.38)	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>		<b>(65,191.06)</b>
<b>Net transactions current year</b>		<b>(5,362.11)</b>
<b><u>PRIOR YEAR TRANSACTIONS</u></b>		
General Account balance B/F	11,361.77	
<b>Net transactions prior year</b>		<b>11,361.77</b>
<b>General Account balance at 31 Dec 23</b>		<b>5,999.66</b>
<b><u>Net Worth</u></b>		
Balance at bank		8,358.66
Creditor: W'sey Coop unknown receipt	(1,153.00)	
Creditor: W'sey Coop balance of overpayment	(306.00)	
Creditor: 2024 wedding deposits	(900.00)	
<b>Net Worth at 31 Dec 23</b>		<b>5,999.66</b>

## TEAM FINANCES

### Notes from the Rector

**Ministry Share:** For the year 2023, our Benefice paid a total of **£39,908.11**\* towards our Ministry Share, out of a total requested figure of £63,810.94\*\* (62.5%). This was contribution came from the following sources:

	Amount Paid	Amount Requested	% of requested figure
St Andrew	8,300	15,113	55%
St Mary	13,200	26,028	51%
Holy Trinity	7,000	12,594	56%
St Thomas	4,300	10,075	43%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>32,800</b>		

The remaining **£7,108.11** was paid from Team Council funds.

\* this includes a payment made directly by one PCC to the Diocesan Board of Finance

\*\* this includes the discount that is applied for paying by direct debit.

**Ministry Expenses:** Three of our parishes contributed towards our Benefice's ministry expenses in 2023.

**Note of Thanks:** I am very grateful to our retired ministers who continue to very generously contribute to the Team Council Account through the donation of their minister fees for weddings and funerals.

I am also incredibly grateful to Russell Jackson who has acted as Team Council Treasurer for the past ten years. Russell has decided that he would like to step down from this role in 2024 and I am sure many in the Benefice will share my appreciation for all of Russell's hard work behind the scenes which have ensured that our ministers receive their expenses and our parishes receive their parochial fees.

## JOINT COUNCIL PROPOSAL

Over the past year, we have had a number of conversations in the Benefice about how we might make better and more effective use of our Team/Joint Council structure. In the process of this, we have discovered that there is a lack of clarity around membership of Team Council and what its purpose really is. Following these conversations, this proposal for a Joint Council has been discussed, agreed and is now put forward by the Rector, Churchwardens and the Ministry Team.

In putting forward this proposal our aim is to:

**Clarify membership of the Team/Joint Council** - the constitution that I have inherited as Rector excludes Ministry Team from the Team Council and we would like to see them included as we seek to re-define membership of this Joint Council.

It is also felt that, in order to be more effective, this Joint Council has to be of a more manageable size to have meaningful discussion and oversight of the wider mission and ministry across the Benefice. This new Joint Council would be of a smaller, but more effective, size than the current Team Council membership (see Point 1).

**Clarify the aims and purpose of the Team/Joint Council** - I feel it is important to have some structure within the Benefice, besides the Ministry Team, which seeks to look at the bigger picture of our ministry and our mission across Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates. This is not to detract from the role and responsibilities of PCCs. (See Point 4). In practice this means that Joint Council will continue to decide upon matters such as:

Ministry Share contributions from each Parish

Mission Action Planning at a Benefice-wide level

Diary/Event Co-ordination across the Benefice

Planning of Service Rotas/Service Patterns across the Benefice, including Christmas and Easter services

This Joint Council Proposal is not to displace the role of PCCs (Parochial Church Councils). PCCs will continue to hold responsibility for the finances, building maintenance, mission and ministry of individual parishes.

If you have any questions about this, please contact either the Rector, a member of the Ministry Team or your Churchwarden(s). Please contact them in advance of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, when we are planning to vote on this proposal.

Rev'd Emily Davis  
Team Rector

### **Scheme for Partial Joint Council of Parishes Whittlesey Team: Pathway Church Joint Council**

The Annual Parochial Church Meetings of the Parishes of Whittlesey St Andrew & Whittlesey St Mary, Pondersbridge St Thomas, and Coates Holy Trinity, in the County of Cambridgeshire and the Diocese of Ely (the "Parishes"), in exercise of the powers conferred by Rules M37–42 of the Church Representation Rules and in accordance with the Pastoral Scheme made on 26 July 1995, make the following agreement that constitutes **Pathway Church Joint Council** (replacing Whittlesey Team Council):

#### **1 Membership of Joint Council**

There shall be a Joint Council for the Parishes (the "Joint Council") with the following membership:

- 1.1 every clerk in Holy Orders who is beneficed in or licensed to a Parish;
- 1.2 one churchwarden of the Church of each Parish;
- 1.3 each deaconess, lay worker and reader licensed to a Parish,
- 1.4 any priest resident in the benefice with permission to officiate may be co-opted with 75% support of elected members, so long as at any meeting lay members outnumber clergy,
- 1.5 one lay person from each Parish elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the relevant Parish.
- 1.6 at any meeting, each parish shall be represented by 2 lay members, so if members elected to fill posts 1.2 & 1.4 are unavailable, they shall be represented by another lay person from the PCC of the parish, who may exercise their vote.

#### **2 Officers of the Joint Council**

- 2.1 The Chair of the Joint Council shall be taken by one of the following persons in the following order:
  - 2.1.1 the Minister of that Parish if they are present;
  - 2.1.2 the Vice-Chair of the Joint Council, if they are present;
  - 2.1.3 a member of the Joint Council chosen by all members present at the meeting from amongst their number.
- 2.2 The Joint Council shall elect one of its lay members to act as Vice-Chair.

2.3 The Joint Council may appoint one of its members as secretary, but if it does not, it must appoint some other fit person. The Secretary is to have charge of all the documents relating to the current business of the Joint Council, to keep the minutes, to record all resolutions passed and to notify the Secretary's name and address to the Secretary of the Deanery Synod and the Secretary of the Diocesan Synod.

2.4 The Joint Council may appoint one of its members as treasurer or two or more of its members as joint treasurers, but if it does not, it must arrange for the office of treasurer to be discharged by some other fit person or persons.

2.5 At the first meeting following 1 June in each year, the Joint Council shall appoint some fit person holding the qualifications required by the Church Representation Rules and not being a member of the Joint Council to be an independent examiner or auditor to the Joint Council. The term of office of the Independent Examiner or Auditor ends at the conclusion of the first meeting following 1 June in the year after appointment, but may be renewed (for any number of times) annually. The Joint Council shall meet the remuneration of such a person.

2.6 The Joint Council may appoint such other officers on such terms and with or without remuneration as it sees fit.

### **3 Meetings**

The provisions of the Model Rules for a Parochial Church Council contained in Part 9 Section B of the Church Representation Rules shall apply to meetings of the Joint Council and transacting business by correspondence so far as consistent with the provisions of this Scheme, substituting 'parishes' for 'parish' and 'Joint Council' for 'PCC' as appropriate.

3.1 The Joint Council shall meet at least 4 times per year.

3.2 The meetings of the Joint Council shall be open to any member of a PCC within the benefice. However, additional members of a PCC (above 2 elected) may not vote.

3.3 Voting shall be by show of hands, unless a secret ballot is requested by 2 members. Decisions will require a majority of 2/3rds, and must include at least one member from each PCC voting in favour.

3.4 Any business item may be delayed until the next meeting by 2 members of the Joint Council asking for an adjournment in order to consult their PCC.

### **4 Functions and powers of the Joint Council**

4.1 The following functions of each Parochial Church Council are delegated to the Joint Council:

4.1.1 co-operation with the Minister in promoting in the Parishes the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. This shall particularly include: Mission Action Planning, Co-ordination of diaries across the parishes; Co-ordination of major projects; planning of service rotas; working towards Net Zero carbon; liaising with local and Civic authorities (The PCCs reserve to themselves responsibility for those pastoral, evangelistic, and social ministries that solely impact upon their geographical parish or church building);

4.1.2 the consideration and discussions of matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest, but not the declaration of the doctrine of the Church of England on any question;

4.1.3 making known and putting into effect any provision made by the Diocesan Synod or the Deanery Synod, but without prejudice to the powers of the Joint Council on any particular matter;

4.1.4 giving advice to the Diocesan Synod and the Deanery Synod on any matter referred to the Joint Council;

4.1.5 raising such matters as the Joint Council considers appropriate with the Diocesan Synod or Deanery Synod;

4.1.6 the co-ordination of safeguarding across the benefice (but not ultimate responsibility for safeguarding which remains with the PCC).

4.2 The Joint Council shall have some of the powers of each Parochial Church Council, including power to:

4.2.1 agree on behalf of all of the Parishes the amount(s) to be offered to the Diocesan Board of Finance as a contribution to the costs of the Diocese;

4.2.2 organise, operate, manage, maintain, discontinue, alter, promote, fund and establish any missionary activity in the Parishes of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, which would have been an activity of a Parochial Church Council;

4.2.3 establish a standing committee of the Joint Council to transact the business of the Joint Council between meetings of the Joint Council, subject to any directions as to the exercise of its power made by the Joint Council, but the standing committee:

(a) may not discharge a duty of the Joint Council, and

(b) may not exercise a power of the Joint Council which is subject to the passing of a resolution by the Joint Council or to compliance with the Joint Council with some other requirement;

4.2.4 establish such other committees (which may include persons who are not members of the Joint Council) for the various branches of church work in the Parishes, of which the Minister is entitled to be an ex officio member;

4.2.5 open and operate a bank account (or accounts) for the purposes of mission and ministry in the benefice, including for the purposes of payment of expenses of clergy and lay ministers;

4.2.6 when the Joint Council makes decisions that expose the PCCs to risk, including public liability, the PCC of the place in which the risk was incurred will assume liability for the activity, decision or impact. The action of the Joint Council will be deemed to be the action of the PCC in question.

## **5 Transfer of assets**

5.1 The following assets of the Parochial Church Council (or former Team Council) shall be transferred to and vest in the Joint Council on the date when this Scheme comes into operation, including:

5.1.1 the bank accounts and investments set out in Schedule 1.

5.2 The PCCs will transfer to the Joint Council such other monies as the Joint Council shall, by vote, agree on 1 June and 1 January each year.

## **6 Operation**

6.1 This Joint Council shall come into operation on such date as the Bishop of Ely may determine, being a date not later than [*specify date*].

6.2 If the Parishes cease to be within the area of a united benefice the Bishop of Ely may exercise the powers contained in the Church Representation Rules to:

6.2.1 provide for the Joint Council to cease to apply to the Parish which has ceased to be connected to the other Parishes or has been dissolved; or

6.2.2 provide for the Joint Council to be revoked, but it is recorded here that it is the intention of the Annual Parochial Church Meetings that the Bishop should provide for the following: redistribution of any assets owed to the Parishes which ceases to belong to the scheme.

APPROVED by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at the Annual Parochial Church Meetings of the Parishes of Whittlesey St Andrew & Whittlesey St Mary, Pondersbridge St Thomas, and Coates Holy Trinity held on the following dates:

Name of Parish	Date approved	Numbers voting		
		For	Against	Abstained

## SCHEDULE 1

### Part 1

Bank accounts and investments to be held by the Joint Council for its general purposes:  
Bank Account held in the name of 'Benefice of Whittlesey Pondersbridge And Coates Team Council'.

Approved by the Bishop of Ely:

Signed:

Date:

This proposal will be made and voted on at the four Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs) within our Benefice on the following dates:

Holy Trinity 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

St Andrew's 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024

St Mary's 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024

St Thomas 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024