



Introducing St John's Church and Parish

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Photos by members of St John's family

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WELCOME TO ST JOHN'S!

Welcome to St John's Meads and thank you for taking the first step in considering the opportunity to be our next vicar. We hope that this parish profile will give you a good insight into our church, our mission and ministry and our aspirations for the future. Our prayer is that the Lord will guide and encourage you as you seek His will concerning the role we have to offer.

Why we like St John's

We are excited by what God is doing in His church in Meads, Eastbourne, and by the opportunity to welcome a new incumbent. Here are ten reasons why people like St John's:

- The warmth and friendliness of the welcome that everyone receives
- The variety of services on offer, both contemporary and traditional
- Our openness to the Holy Spirit
- The centrality of scripture
- The emphasis on prayer embedded in everything we do
- A high standard of teaching and preaching from a diverse group of people
- The variety, depth and sincerity of worship
- The opportunities for everyone to play an active role - every member ministry
- Effective outreach programmes, modelling Jesus' love in our actions
- The investment in children and youth ministry

OUR NEW INCUMBENT

We are praying for a new vicar who will give fresh inspiration to our ministry in our parish and town, helping us to make the love of Jesus known to more people of all ages. They will be:

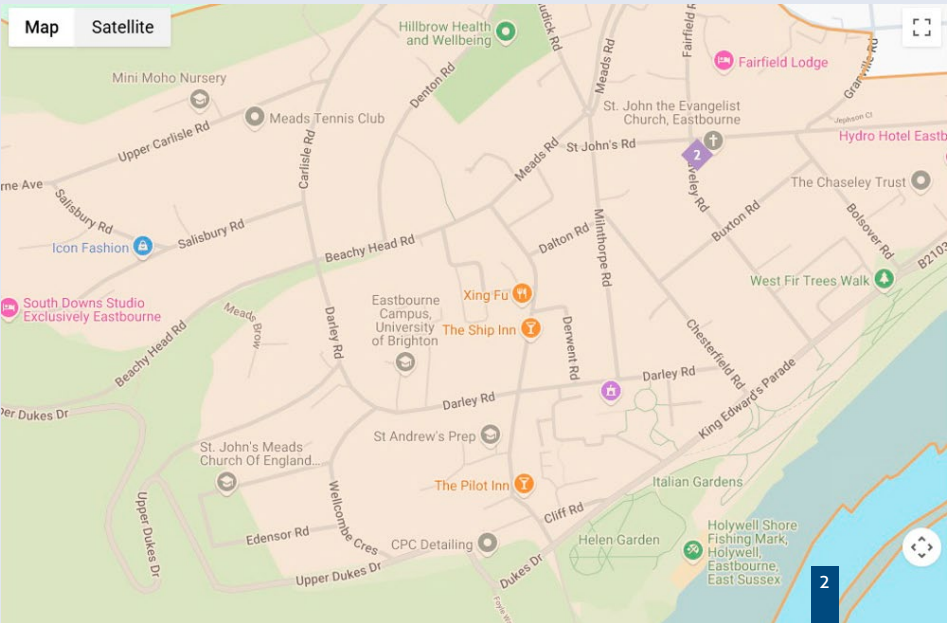
- A person of deep spirituality, who walks closely with the Lord and who has a passion to draw people to Jesus Christ
- Someone who is open to and guided by the Holy Spirit, gently charismatic while able to embrace traditional worship styles
- An effective communicator with a deep knowledge of and intimacy with the Bible, and the ability to apply it to daily life
- Humble, kind, able to listen well and with a pastoral heart
- A person who prioritises and champions prayer
- A servant-hearted, enabling leader, comfortable with allowing both men and women to minister
- Outgoing and welcoming of all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and ability
- Willing to try new things, open to fresh expressions of church
- Willing to embrace all-age ministry and to continue the efforts to grow the church younger
- Someone with a strong vision for the role of a community church in the modern age

THE PARISH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST MEADS

Meads is situated on the far western edge of Eastbourne at the meeting point of the South Downs National Park and the coast. Despite lying on the suburban edge of Eastbourne (1.5 miles from the town centre) Meads is referred to as a village, with its own distinct character and village centre. St John's is the only worshipping community in Meads. The parish includes Beachy Head, renowned for its beauty but, sadly, also as a suicide destination.

Meads Ward, in which the parish is situated, has a total population of 10,939 living in 5,700 households (2021 census). The Parish of St John the Evangelist covers roughly half of the Ward. The population of the Ward is split 47% male and 53% female; 38% of the population is over 65 and a high proportion of residents live alone. The local population is affluent on the whole, with many who have or have had a professional occupation, but there are pockets of deprivation and there is a small number of rough sleepers within the parish.

Despite its demographic being older than the national average, Meads has a church primary school and two independent prep schools together educating more than 800 pupils. Like the rest of Eastbourne, there has been a distinct change in nationality over the last 10 years, with over 21% of residents in the Ward now originating from outside the UK. There are also plans for over 300 new family homes to be built on the former Brighton University campus in Meads.



OUR PEOPLE AND ETHOS

St John's is a single parish benefice, whose ecclesiastical ethos is open evangelical. We work hard however to ensure that there are services to cater for different preferences in worship style. There are traditional BCP services on Sunday and midweek alongside the contemporary family service on Sundays. There is also Choral Evensong once a month.

Church membership and attendance

There are 226 people on the Electoral Roll at St John's (currently in the process of a full review). 66% of these are women and 34% men. Since our last incumbent arrived in 2014 more than 100 of our church family have died, but new members have continued to come to St John's. This has maintained healthy attendance figures, with a reduction in the average age of the congregation.

There has been an almost total transformation (90%) in the people attending the 10am contemporary worship service and around a two thirds change in other services. There has also been a marked increase in diversity, with over a dozen different nationalities represented; 43% of people on the Electoral Roll are from outside the Parish (36% in 2014).

In 2020, St John's supported an Apostolic Partnership with St Michael's and All Angels in a neighbouring parish, with our incumbent becoming Priest in Charge for a year before the curate in training at St John's took over. A number of the St John's congregation moved across to support this partnership and since this time St Michael's has flourished and is now completely independent, with the Living restored, while St John's is showing steady regrowth and renewal.

Year	Average Weekly Attendance			Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
	Adults	Children	Total			
2015	262	36	298	7	2	19
2018	234	21	255	4	0	35
2021	144	13	157	1	3	24
2022	154	23	177	15	2	19
2023	166	19	185	7	2	20
2024	178	17	195	2	0	7

Ministry Team

Our new vicar will be supported by a leading and preaching team that includes six retired clergy, including two women. There are additionally three Readers, two of them women. Together this team is involved in helping to plan the sermon series as well as preaching and presiding on Sundays and midweek. There is a strong collegiate culture so that duties are shared out for normal services and special celebrations such as Easter and Christmas.

Staff and volunteers

- Paid staff: two part-time Administrators (covering 40 hours per week); a Children and Families Leader (24 hours per week); a Project Worker for children and families (16 hours per week, to be recruited); a Cleaner/Caretaker (13 hours per week).
- PCC: two Churchwardens, four Deputy Churchwardens, a Treasurer, three Readers and 10 elected members.
- Authorised Lay Ministry: eight current members of the congregation are licensed ALMs and play an active role in the life of St John's. Each year there are usually new people coming forward to pursue this ministry.
- Volunteer ministry teams for Prayer, Worship, Welcoming, Hospitality, Children and Youth, Communications, Pastoral and Bereavement Support, Open the Book, Gardening, Church flowers, Life Groups, Ukraine Hub, Coffee Pot Plus and Evangelism/ Mission. Around 70% of regular attenders are serving in one or more ministry areas.



"The mission, worship and preaching are all led and guided by the Holy Spirit"



CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday

- 8am** Holy Communion BCP
Average attendance in 2024 – 24
 - 10am** Contemporary Worship
Liturgy combined with contemporary worship and time to wait on the Holy Spirit
Holy Communion on the second and fourth Sundays
Junior Church is available for children up to 11 and the Lodgers for ages 12-16
Children and young people join in the beginning of the main service
Average attendance in 2024 - 125
 - 6pm** Choral Evensong
BCP service with hymns and organ on the fourth Sunday in the month
Average attendance in 2024 – 38
- Sunday services are live streamed and recorded, with on average, over 100 views each week.

Wednesday

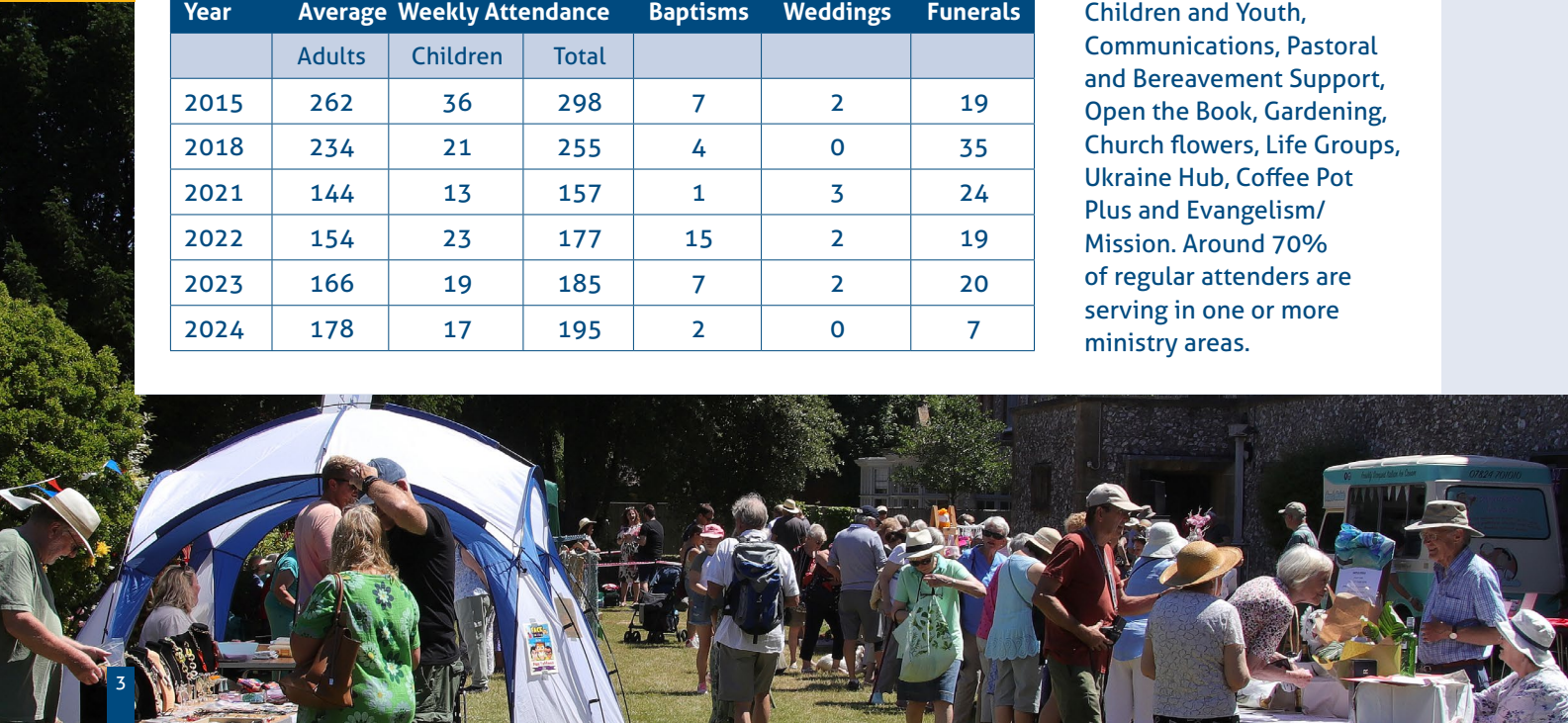
- 11am** Midweek Communion
BCP service with hymns and time for quiet reflection and prayer
Average attendance in 2024 – 41

Monday-Friday

- 9am** Online Morning Prayer
Bible reading followed by a short reflection and time to pray together
Average attendance 10-15

Saturday

- 8.30am** Prayer Focus
Third Saturday of the month
Breakfast followed by prayer focussing on church mission and activities
Average attendance 15-20





PURPOSE, VALUES AND MISSION ACTION PLAN

St John's mission statement is **Loving God, Building His Church, Serving Others**. We are guided in everything we do by our '5G' Values:

- **Greeting** everyone with the love of our Father who longs to be reunited with us whoever we are and wherever we've been
- **Gathering** around the cross that shapes us into a caring, compassionate community online and in person
- **Growing** in our love for God through the Word, prayer and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit
- **Giving** in response to a generous God who calls us to be channels of His blessing
- **Going** in the power of the Holy Spirit to be and make disciples of Jesus

St John's 5-year Mission Action Plan is due for renewal in 2025. A new framework has been drafted for the coming period under the 5G headings on the next page.



Greeting (Romans 12:13)

Extending our welcome to become invitational, growing an all-age congregation, where people of all ages can find a home.



Gathering (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Creating regular opportunities to meet together in addition to Sundays, so each member is part of a Life Group, Prayer Triplet, working party and/or social group such as Coffee Pot Plus.



Growing (Matthew 28:19)

Developing our discipleship programme for everyone, old and young, with opportunities to follow Jesus more closely at every stage of the Christian journey.



Giving (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Building a resilient, sustainable church that is financially stable and eco-friendly, with 75% of the congregation giving regularly through the Parish Giving Scheme or Standing Order.



Going (John 17:20-21)

Equipping each member of the congregation to show and speak about the love of Jesus naturally and confidently with the people they meet.

This framework will guide our thinking and planning during 2025, pending the arrival of our new incumbent and the opportunity to review and shape it further with them once they have had time to get to know the parish.



PARISH LIFE

Prayer

Prayer is a fundamental and vital part of everything that we are and that we do at St John's. There is a strong Prayer Ministry team available to pray for people during services and a Prayer Warriors team that responds to prayer needs identified to them. Prayer Focus is a monthly breakfast meeting to pray for church activities. Over 40 people are now part of a Prayer Triplet, with each triplet meeting regularly to pray for one another's needs and concerns, and for anything else that the Lord lays on their hearts.

Music

The musical worship life at St John's is rich and varied. We moved away from having a paid Worship Leader four years ago. Since then we have been blessed with a talented group of volunteer musicians and vocalists from within our church family. This worship team leads our 10am Sunday service in contemporary worship plus supporting special services (eg funerals) as needed. The worship team is ably supported by a dedicated volunteer AV team and services are live streamed and recorded. Traditional hymns are sung at the midweek communion and our monthly Evensong service, as well as at special services. These often feature the organ and the St John's Choir.

Children and Families Ministry

Attendance at St John's by children, young people and their families has ebbed and flowed over the years and it remains a key area of focus and investment to build the involvement of young families. There is a well-structured programme on Sundays for Junior Church (up to 11) and the Lodgers (12-16), as well as creche facilities. Messy Church has grown in importance, with events run every couple of months and attracting up to 100 guests. Our 'Thrilling Thursdays' summer activity club is well attended. Every Thursday morning in term time our Meads Munchkins group of toddlers with their parents, grandparents and/or carers, meets in the church hall.

The challenge remains that of encouraging those who attend periodic events to make St John's their spiritual home. In January 2025 we launched the Kitchen Table Project, a Saturday morning session aimed specifically at families. This will meet initially once a month but with the aim to increase in regularity and to build this as a fresh expression of church for families for whom attendance on a Sunday morning is difficult. We also have aspirations to run a weekly after school club for years 5 and 6, and we have received 3-year grant funding from the diocese to recruit a project worker for children and families specifically focussing on fresh expressions of church.

A team of volunteers from St John's performs Open the Book in St John's CofE primary school and Bede's Preparatory School, telling dramatised stories from the Bible. St John's is also the base for a vibrant group of Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, which meets twice a week in our Jubilee Hall, with church members providing some practical and leadership support.



"I value the balance between contemporary and traditional worship, the active life groups, effective outreach and pastoral support"



Pastoral and Bereavement Support

Given the demography of Meads, pastoral and bereavement support is a vital ministry area for St John's. A voluntary pastoral care team under the guidance of the vicar and one of the retired clergy members keeps in touch with those in need, offering home visits and communion where requested. Once a month St John's Bereavement Café offers hospitality, warmth and conversation for those who have been bereaved and this is always well attended. Additionally, several times a year we run the Bereavement Journey, a seven-session programme enabling small groups to explore together the bereavement process and to provide mutual support. This uses materials from the charity At A Loss, which has accredited St John's as a bereavement-friendly church. An area for potential development is to provide more pastoral support in the many care homes in the parish, although there is a local charity (Parche) which offers this.

Life Groups and Discipleship

There is strong encouragement to everyone attending St John's regularly to become part of one of our Life Groups, which are at the heart of our life together as a church family. They are where we can effectively care for one another, make friends, exercise our gifts and grow in faith. They are a key part of helping us to be disciples and make disciples, get to grips with the Bible and develop our prayer life. Our aim is that they will be groups that are life-giving, fun and a place of belonging and acceptance. Around 60% of regular attenders are in a group and there are currently 10 groups which meet together. There are no prescribed resources for the groups to study together. Some follow the current sermon series while others look at a particular book from the Bible or choose from one of the many resources we have available for them. Groups meet either weekly or fortnightly and there are opportunities both in the daytime and evenings. There is also an online group for those who find it difficult to travel and a daily WhatsApp group following the Lectio 365 programme.

For a number of years St John's has run Alpha courses up to three times a year. This has been a great catalyst for people to come to know Jesus. A number have gone on to serve at St John's in many capacities. We have also run Going Deeper programmes for those who are more mature in their faith. During 2025 we are running a series of Quiet Mornings to allow for reflection and contemplation and another new development this year is Hot Potato evenings, where people come together for a simple meal before a talk and discussion applying faith to contemporary issues and modern culture.

We also run a group using the Bible Society's Bible Course at least once a year offering members an overview of the whole Bible. This is often used as a follow-up to an Alpha course.

Community Outreach

One of the key strands of our previous Mission Action Plan has been 'More channels to bless our community'. This is a strand that will be continued in our new plan as we seek to engage with our community, showing and speaking about the love of Jesus. There are many ways in which we put this into action.

We have been running Coffee Pot Plus weekly on Friday mornings for many years, based in Meads Hall in the village. Coffee Pot Plus offers a range of social and welfare activities as well as a paperback library and lunch for people who, in the main, are living on their own; 40-50 people attend each week, many of whom are not regular church attenders.

With the arrival of over 200 Ukrainians to Eastbourne in the past three years, St John's determined to do something to extend a welcome to this group. Some St John's families have hosted Ukrainian visitors and we run our Ukraine Hub weekly on Tuesday afternoons for both adults and children. Here they can take English lessons, get support from the local council, play games, enjoy craft activities, eat and spend time together.

In addition to these direct outreach ministries, we offer a range of activities across the week, such as movement to music, photography and a craft group, at which all are welcome.

St John's supports a range of local, national and international mission partners financially, as well as through volunteers. These include Beachy Head Chaplaincy, Eastbourne Foodbank, Matthew 25 Mission, Release International and Linking Lives Eastbourne. St John's was the founding church for Linking Lives Eastbourne, which matches volunteer befrienders with people living on their own, often with ill health. We maintain an ongoing commitment and trustee responsibility for this charity, which has provided support to over 200 individuals since inception.

St John's CofE Primary School

There is a strong link to St John's CofE Primary School, which became part of the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (DCAT) in 2020. Church members have been active on the Board of Governors, although the school has been governed directly by DCAT since May 2024. A number of church members are also in school on a weekly basis supporting teaching staff by reading with the children. Our Children and Families Leader previously split her time between St John's and the school until budget constraints brought this to an end. She still provides a weekly presence at assemblies and the school uses the church space several times a year for special services. The school remains a focus for our church family to support.

Links with other churches

St John's is an active partner in initiatives such as Churches Together for Eastbourne and Thy Kingdom Come. We also play a leadership role with the Eastbourne Deanery Synod and one of our church members is on the General Synod.



"I love the relaxed environment and sense of sincere spiritual worship"



The Parish Church

The Parish Church of St John the Evangelist is in a prominent location in Meads, a quarter of a mile from the village centre. The church was first consecrated in 1869 but was almost completely destroyed by bombing in 1942, with only the church tower surviving. Services were held in the Parish Hall in the village until the church was rebuilt in 1957. Meads is a Conservation Area but the church is not listed and there is no graveyard.

There have been various changes to the church building over the years. The main addition has been the Jubilee Hall, linked by a corridor to the main church, which was built in 2011/12. This has provided a large hall with fully-equipped kitchen and toilets to accommodate both our own and other community activities.

St John's undertook a major re-ordering in 2018, which involved the pews being removed to provide more flexible seating, along with new audio visual facilities and major repairs to the tower stonework. A baldachin curtain, which hung above the communion table, has been replaced by a striking copper cross, which actually fell off the church roof during a storm and is now an amazing focal point for the church. Within the tower there is a fine memorial plaque commemorating the lives of Meads residents who lost their lives in the First World War and, with the help of grant funding, a permanent exhibition – Eastbourne Through the Wars – has been mounted in the tower, which is open to visitors over the summer months.

More recent work has seen the addition of acoustic panelling throughout the Nave and automation of the main entrance and internal doors, thus improving significantly access for those with mobility and hearing problems. The church is now a very fine, warm, welcoming space that has great versatility. Music and drama events as well as exhibitions and large social gatherings have all taken place in our building, and St John's has become increasingly a community hub as well as a place of worship. It is a favoured location for diocesan events.

THE CHURCH BUILDINGS



THE CHURCH BUILDINGS CONTINUED...

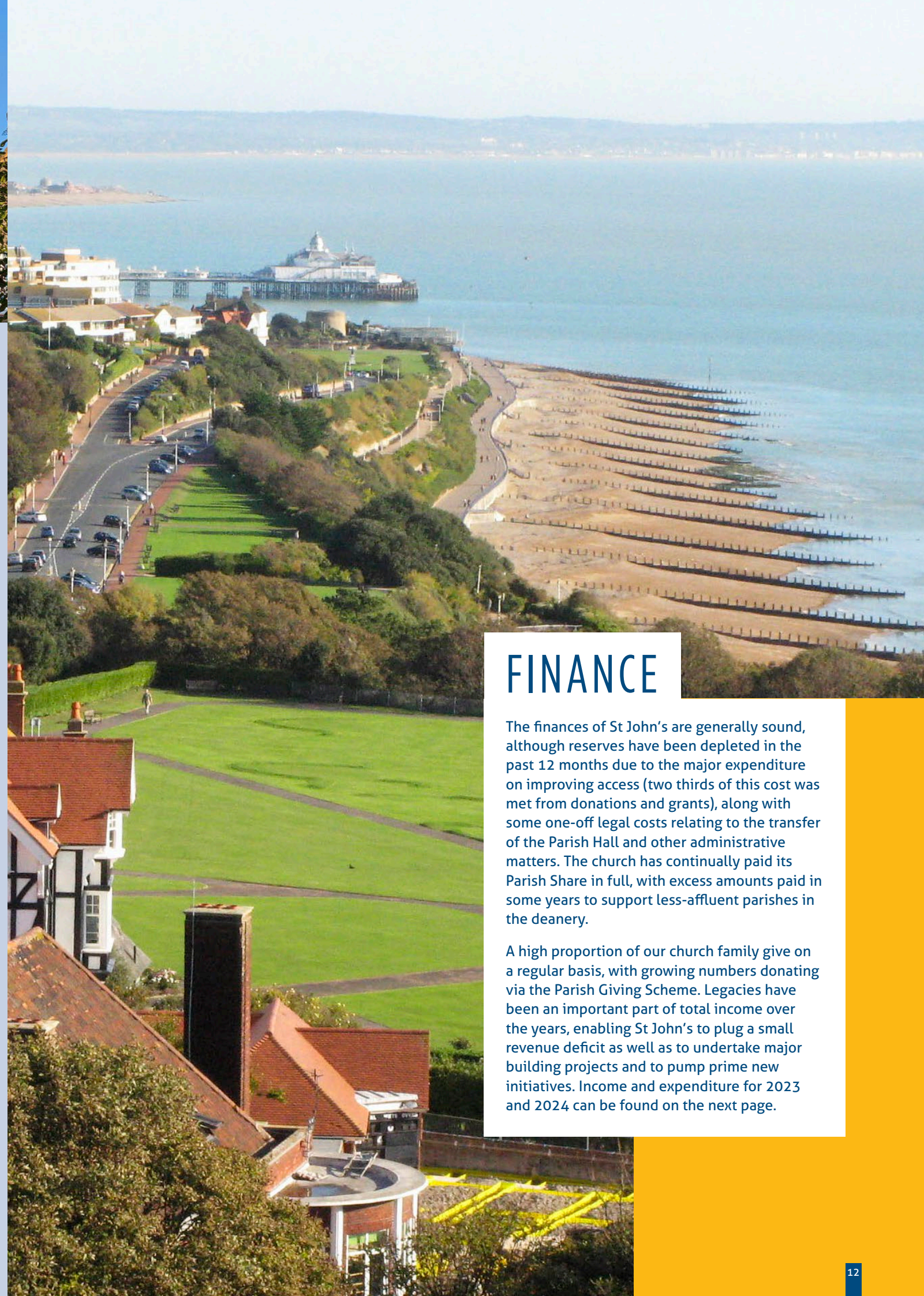
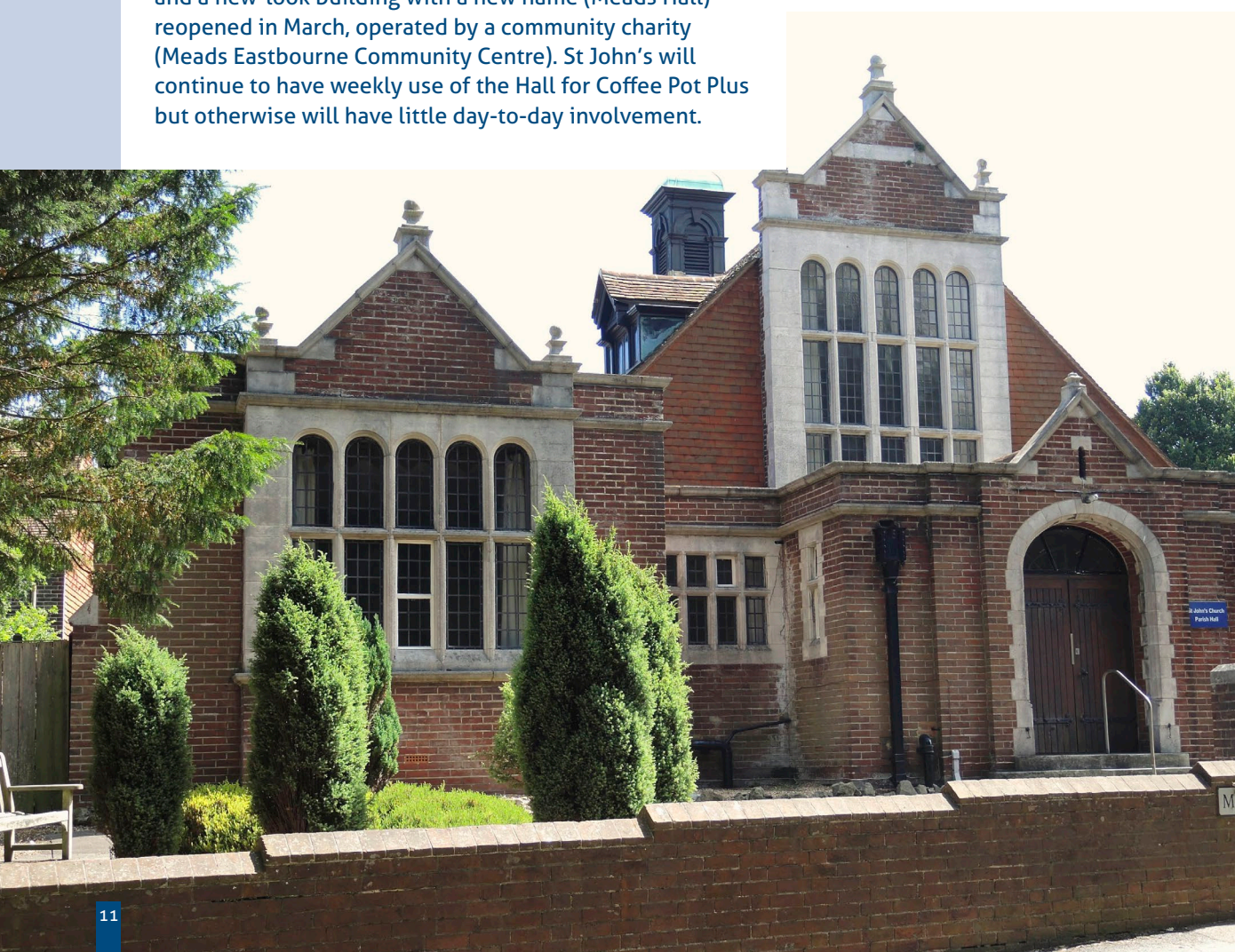
Vicarage

The vicarage is on the south side of the church on Buxton Road with access to the church through a garden gate. It is a comfortable, modern family home with four bedrooms and two spacious sitting rooms as well as a kitchen and dining room. The garage has been converted into a purpose-built study for the incumbent. The large garden is mainly laid to lawn and surrounded by mature trees. There is ample off-street parking.

Parish Hall

For over 100 years St John's has been responsible for the Parish Hall in Meads Village, a quarter of a mile away from the church. Since the addition of the Jubilee Hall, the church has used the Parish Hall less and less for its own purposes, but until recently continued to manage the operation of the Hall for other community purposes. With an increasing need to spend significant money to repair the fabric of the building, the PCC took the decision in 2024 to lease the Hall at a peppercorn rent for 99 years to a local community partner, which secured grant funding for its refurbishment. This has just been completed and a new-look building with a new name (Meads Hall) reopened in March, operated by a community charity (Meads Eastbourne Community Centre). St John's will continue to have weekly use of the Hall for Coffee Pot Plus but otherwise will have little day-to-day involvement.

"St John's is a very welcoming church and encourages you to get involved as much as you want without pressure"



FINANCE

The finances of St John's are generally sound, although reserves have been depleted in the past 12 months due to the major expenditure on improving access (two thirds of this cost was met from donations and grants), along with some one-off legal costs relating to the transfer of the Parish Hall and other administrative matters. The church has continually paid its Parish Share in full, with excess amounts paid in some years to support less-affluent parishes in the deanery.

A high proportion of our church family give on a regular basis, with growing numbers donating via the Parish Giving Scheme. Legacies have been an important part of total income over the years, enabling St John's to plug a small revenue deficit as well as to undertake major building projects and to pump prime new initiatives. Income and expenditure for 2023 and 2024 can be found on the next page.

St John's Church, Meads
Financial results for 2023 and 2024

	Year to December 2024				Year to December 2023
	Unrestricted (£)	Restricted (£)	Investments (£)	Total (£)	Total (£)
Incoming Resources					
Income from Charitable Activities	1,047	0	0	1,047	2,294
Income from Donations and Legacies	186,605	77,943	0	264,548	220,498
Income from Other Trading Activities	33,131	240	0	33,371	33,317
Investment Income	4,057	1,914	0	5,971	4,870
Other Incoming Resources	12,062	0	0	12,062	16,176
	236,902	80,097	0	316,999	277,155
Resources Expended					
Expenditure on Raising Funds	49	0	0	49	0
Charitable Activities	25,440	1,583	0	27,023	37,735
Charity Management & Administration	98,882	50	0	98,932	85,288
Charity Running Costs	21,450	1,234	0	22,684	17,865
Church Running Costs	25,201	147,318	0	172,519	22,197
Cost of Services	3,789	400	0	4,189	2,531
Clergy Expenses	5,524	0	0	5,524	7,375
Payroll Costs	75,444	0	0	75,444	67,720
Parish Hall Running Costs	33,505	0	0	33,505	25,697
Total Expenditure	289,284	150,585	0	439,869	266,408
Transfer between funds	-41,378	41,378	0	0	0
Revaluation of investments	0	0	2,406	2,406	9,039
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period	(93,760)	(29,110)	2,406	(120,464)	19,786
Fund Total @ 01 January 2024	149,915	39,293	105,108	294,316	274,530
Fund Total @ 31 December 2024	56,155	10,183	107,514	173,852	294,316

WHAT NEXT FOR ST JOHN'S?

The survey that we have conducted among our church family shows that there are many things about St John's ethos and operation that are greatly valued – the way that we seek to be welcoming; the ability to blend traditional with contemporary evangelical worship; allowing time and space for the Holy Spirit to speak through spiritual gifts in the contemporary services; the rich mix of teaching and preaching from a diverse group of men and women; the connectedness to our local community through outreach activities. These are our DNA and they are things that we wish to maintain, while seeking fresh vision and inspiration to realise God's plan for our parish.

In particular we feel called to continue reaching out to younger families to build an intergenerational church, though we recognise that will not necessarily be through Sunday attendance. We think that there is more scope to develop our discipleship programmes so that there are opportunities for everyone to grow closer to Jesus regardless of where they are in their faith journey. We want to encourage and empower people to talk more openly about their faith. We want to continue to build a culture of generosity, to support our community better and also to have the resources to develop effective ministries. There is also much that we could and should be doing to make St John's an eco-friendly church.

When the national church began discussions on same-sex blessings we invited Eva John, who compiled many of the Living in Love and Faith resources, to lead a discussion day at St John's. We have not discussed this further as a PCC or congregation and there are many different views in the congregation, from those with orthodox views of marriage who would struggle to accept prayers of blessing being offered to same-sex couples, to those who would want to affirm same-sex relationships with a service of blessing – and those who have never given it any thought. At our communion services we welcome all to come forward to receive God's blessing, without exception. The new incumbent will need sensitivity and grace to lead St John's in unity as the national church moves to expect all churches to decide whether or not to offer these prayers of blessing.

These are just a few of the areas for development over the coming years and we pray for an incumbent with the vision to challenge us afresh as God intends.

We are not looking for Superman or Superwoman. We want someone with a deep spirituality and relationship with God, who is willing to open themselves up to share their journey of faith and thus to draw others along that path. We recognise the importance of clergy wellbeing and we will want to ensure that our new vicar has regular rest breaks and time to go on retreat periodically.



Conclusion

We hope that you have enjoyed getting a flavour of St John's from reading this profile. Our church community is blessed with people of many gifts and with a heart to serve God faithfully in this sunny corner of the south coast, but there are also many things we want to do better. Our new vicar will be given a special St John's welcome and they will be very well supported as they take up their ministry. We can't wait to meet you!

