

Trustees' Annual Report

The Friends of St James the Great, Thorley *Registered Charity No: 288678*

Year ending 31 December 2024

Legal and Administrative Information

This report is for the financial year beginning on 1 January 2024 and ending on 31 December 2024.

The Principal Address of the charity is:

60 The Paddock
Bishop's Stortford
Herts
CM23 4JW

E-mail: friends.stjames@btinternet.com

Website: www.friends-stjames.org

The object of the charity is to help and support the Rector and Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. James the Great, Thorley (subject to any necessary faculties being obtained) to:

- maintain and embellish the fabric, furnishing and fittings of St. James the Great, Thorley
- maintain, protect and beautify the Churchyard of the Church.

The Governing Document of the charity is the Constitution as adopted on 21 February 1983 and amended on 18 March 1984 and 1 October 2021. This calls for the management of the charity to be in the hands of a Committee of Trustees consisting of two members appointed by the Parochial Church Council of St. James the Great and six members elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association. The Committee may co-opt additional members as necessary and invite the Incumbent of St James the Great to be an ex-officio member. The Officers of the charity are a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary who are appointed by the Committee. The Constitution calls for an Annual Meeting to take place in the month of March and the Accounts to be made up to 31st December every year.

In fulfilling the object of the charity, the Trustees have had due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

At a meeting of the Committee held on 15 January 2007 it was agreed that it would be prudent to maintain reserves at a level of £2,500.

The following table details the Trustees as of October 2025 and those who acted during the period covered by this report.

Name	Office (if any)	Dates Acted Since 1 January 2024	Mode of Appointment
Mrs Emma Collins		24 June 2024 - 28 September 2025	Parochial Church Council Appointee
Mr Desmond Conridge	Treasurer	1 January 2024-Present	Elected
Mr Daniel Daniells-Smith		1 January 2024 - Present	Parochial Church Council Appointee
Mr Bill Hardy		1 January 2024-Present	Elected
Dr Philip Hargrave	Chairman & Secretary	1 January 2024 - present	Elected
Mr Clive Hayball		1 January 2024 - 7 March 2025	Co-opted from 1 January 2024 – 8 March 2024 Elected from 8 March 2024 – 7 March 2025
Mr Simon Knight		7 March 2025 – present	Elected
Mrs Lina Loadman		1 January 2024 - 8 March 2024	Elected from 1 January 2024 – 8 March 2024
Mrs Margaret Morley	Vice Chairman	1 January 2024 - present	Elected
Mr Graham Rundle		1 January 2024 - 8 March 2024 15 April 2024 – 7 March 2025 7 April 2025 - present	Co-opted from 1 January 2024 – 8 March 2024 Co-opted from 15 April 2024 – 7 March 2025 Co-opted from 7 April 2025 – present
Mrs Sue Russell		1 January 2024 - Present	Elected
The Revd Gareth Tracey		1 January 2024 – present	Ex-Officio
Mr Clive Weir		1 January 2024 - 24 June 2024	Parochial Church Council Appointee

Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 7th March 2025

Good evening and thank you for coming to the 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Friends of St James the Great, Thorley.

Since our 2024 AGM, we have been saddened to learn of the deaths of two of the then current members of the Friends, husband and wife John and Margaret Clark and a longstanding former member, the Revd Clive Slaughter, who was Rector of St James the Great from 1987 until 2001. John and Clive also both served as members of the Friends' Committee. John was elected to the Committee at the 1998 AGM and served until that held the following year, when he stood down because of his then mounting PCC and other outreach commitments. Clive served as an ex officio member of the Committee during the entirety of his 14 years as Rector of St James. He made numerous contributions to the work of the Association and it was at his behest that the Friends began offering Sunday afternoon Teas from the Church Room during the summer months in 1990, something that has continued for 35 years and has become not only an important fund-raising activity but also a valued form of outreach to the local community.

This year's Friends' fundraising programme started with the joint St James Church / Friends of St James Family Quiz Evening that was held here, in the Barnabas Centre, last Saturday evening. Our Rector, Gaz, ably took on the role of Quiz Master and Chris Collins prepared a fantastic selection of meals for the interval. It was a most enjoyable evening. Our thanks go out to Gaz and Chris together with the other Church volunteers who made possible this repeat of the similarly successful joint Family Quiz Evenings held at the start of 2023 and 2024.

The Friends other activities during 2024 were a Sale of Nursery Plants in May, the provision of Sunday Afternoon Teas from the Church Room during the summer months, and an Autumn Craft Fair in November. Following the success of seeking donations rather than have a definitive price list for the Sunday Afternoon Teas during the 2023 season, the Committee had, by the time of last year's AGM, decided to continue with that approach going forward. After the AGM, the Committee also decided to adopt this approach in respect of the refreshments offered during the 2024 Plant Sale and Autumn Craft Fair. Although I will leave it to our Treasurer, Des, to cover the financial aspects of all our activities last year, I am pleased to say that this change also worked well for all these activities.

As you will have seen from the letter inviting you to this year's AGM, the Committee's plans for the remainder of this year once again include a Sale of Nursery Plants in May and an Autumn Craft Fair in November. We would also like to be able to offer Sunday Afternoon Teas from the Church Room for a 36th consecutive season. As I noted last year, it has become increasing difficulty in recent years to find volunteers willing to sign-up for the weekly slots to host such Teas. Last year proved particularly difficult in this respect and the Committee gave serious consideration to delaying the start for this year's season by one month to reduce the requirement for volunteers. In the end it was decided that the Friends would once again seek to offer Sunday Afternoon Teas from the first Sunday in May until the last Sunday in September, in the hope that sufficient volunteers will be forthcoming to make this possible.

The Friends Churchyard Team continued its important work throughout last year's March to December growing season. Conscious that one of the trimmers used in the maintenance of the Churchyard was reaching the end of its life, the Friends purchased a new one prior to the commencement of the 2024 season. We were very grateful to our small band of regular volunteers who worked throughout the season, and to those others who helped whenever they were able to do so. As in previous years, the powered machinery used in the maintenance of the Churchyard has been serviced in preparation for this year's season.

At the start of 2024 the Friends fulfilled two of its then outstanding funding commitments, that of covering the cost of repairs to the Church lighting that had then just been completed, and making a grant to enable the purchase of new bell ropes.

During my report to last year's AGM, I noted that the 2019 Quinquennial Church inspection had ascertained that the stained-glass window in the tower needed some restoration. The PCC had therefore commissioned a report on its condition by Andrew Taylor, the Wiltshire based ecclesiastical stained-glass designer and conservator who undertook a major restoration of that window in 1993, and of those in the north and south walls of the chancel in 1995, both of which were funded by the Friends. Andrew's report had concluded that the current need for further work was because the restored glass had eroded back to its condition before its 1993 restoration and previously unaffected areas of the window had succumbed to similar deterioration in the intervening 30 years. Although Andrew had advised that the ideal remedy would be to repaint the eroded areas and to seek to prevent future paint loss by installing isothermal glazing, he had concluded that simply repainting the affected areas would be a far more cost-effective solution that would likely last for many years even without the installation of further protection. The PCC had naturally decided to proceed with this latter approach and the Friends had agreed to cover the cost involved. Unfortunately, by the time of last year's AGM the PCC had learnt that its application for a faculty to undertake this work had been turned down by the diocese as it no longer recognised Andrew Taylor as being qualified to specify and undertake such window restoration work. The PCC had instead been asked to seek a further report on the window in the tower and was fortunate to be able to obtain grant funding to cover the cost of obtaining this. This not only recommended undertaking some repairs and cleaning but also the installation of costly isothermal glazing for future environmental protection. The magnitude of the cost involved led the Church Architect, Jeremy Lander, to advising the PCC to seek a further opinion on the window when he undertook the most recent Quinquennial inspection of the Church in May of last year. At his suggestion, this was provided by David Sears of Lincolnshire Stained Glass who advised that, although in an ideal world isothermal glazing would be good, the costs would be prohibitive. In his view a far more cost-effective approach to help prevent further deterioration would be to install a heater and dehumidifier. Regarding the loss of colour, his advice was simply to use the latter to seek to maintain what colour is there now. As the cost of the purchase and installation of a heater and humidifier should be well within the amount the Friends had already committed to the PCC to cover the cost of the work originally recommended by Andrew, the Committee agreed that the PCC could divert this sum for that purpose.

The other funding commitment that the Friends had made to the PCC that is still outstanding from the time of last year's AGM is in respect of the purchase and installation of permanent equipment to enable the more straightforward and flexible streaming of services in the Church, along with display screens for the presentation of video material. This work is currently awaiting the progression of plans to install a fixed broadband radio link from the Church to the St Barnabas Centre. Such a link should overcome the problem of the poor performance of the mobile broadband data link currently used to connect the portable equipment used for streaming to the Internet that is resulting in an erratic quality of service.

Subsequent to last year's AGM the Committee agreed that the Friends would cover the cost of the Church architect, Jeremy Lander, formulating specifications to enable the PCC to seek tenders for the repair and redecoration of the walls of the ringing chamber and stairs in the Church Tower together with some minor work at ground level, all of which had been identified as being required during his previously mentioned Quinquennial inspection of the Church that he undertook in May of last year.

It was agreed at our 2021 AGM that it would be appropriate for the Friends to contribute to the significant cost that would be incurred if the PCC was to proceed with an enlargement of the Churchyard. The matter was given further consideration at the meeting of the Friends' Committee held in January of last year, when it was thought prudent to seek guidance from the PCC as to when a decision in this respect was likely to be taken. The response was that the closure of the churchyard for new burials is not imminent as the existing space is being carefully managed and that, although there is active PCC interest in enlarging the churchyard, it is something that would be beyond its financial means without significant support from statutory bodies and local landowners. It was therefore agreed at the Friends' Committee meeting last June that some of the Friends' funds should be earmarked as a potential contribution towards the cost of enlarging the Churchyard until such time as the PCC is able to decide on the way forward.

Towards the end of last year the Committee agreed that the Friends would also cover the full cost of the tender that the PCC received from Lodge and Soms Ltd in November for the work that had been specified by Jeremy Lander, together with some work on the trees in the Churchyard to protect the buildings, remove rotten parts of some of the trees and to facilitate the operation of the previously mentioned broadband fixed radio link from the Church to the St Barnabas Centre. The work by Lodge is currently nearing completion and that in respect of the trees was recently completed by the Little Hadham based Tree Surgeons, Atkins and Candler Arb Ltd. I will leave it to Des to address the total of the Friends commitments to the PCC at the close of our 2024 financial year in his Treasurer's report, but it was one of the highest amounts on record.

Once the necessary business of this AGM has been completed, Bill Hardy will give a short presentation entitled 'A Ramble Down Thorley Lanes using early 20th Century postcards to tell the story of notable Thorley Characters'. Our evening will then conclude with a 'bring and share buffet' with drinks provided.

I cannot end my report without saying a special thank you to one of the members of the Friends' Committee who has decided not to seek re-election, or co-option to the incoming Committee. Clive Hayball took over from Helen Turner as one of the two Parochial Church Council Representatives on the Friends' Committee in September 2017 and served in that capacity until reaching the end of his term on the PCC at the time of the 2023 Annual Parochial Church Meeting. He immediately rejoined the Committee as a co-opted member, transitioning to becoming an elected member at last year's AGM. Clive, thank you for everything that you have done for the Friends during your time as a member of the Committee and please accept this small token of our thanks for your service.

I will now draw my report to a close by thanking Margaret Morley, our Vice Chairman and Des Conridge, our Treasurer, and indeed all the members of the Committee, for their help and support since our last AGM. On behalf of the Committee, I would also like to thank you for the support you have given us.

Unless there are any questions or observations at this stage, I will now pass over to Des for him to deliver his Treasurer's Report.

Thank you very much.

Treasurer's Report to the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 7th March 2025

The formal annual accounts for 2024 (Annex A) show how income was received and expenditure incurred in the year ended 31st December 2024, with comparative figures for 2023.

The Friends' income in 2024 was as follows:

- £775.00 in membership subscriptions,
- £808.55 from ticket sales for the March Quiz Night and £220.00 from the associated raffle,
- £100.00 in donations,
- £1,211.03 in interest on reserves held in the Church of England Deposit Fund,
- £840.00 from the sale of plants and £100.00 from donations for refreshments during the Plant Sale in May,
- £1,577.00 in donations for Sunday Afternoon Teas,
- £581.85 in the form of a tax refund from HMRC in respect of Gift Aided donations and other cash donations individually no greater than £30,
- £1,717.24 from the Autumn Craft Fair in November,
- £115.49 in Gifts in Kind and
- a Bequest of £5,048.09.

The Friends' total income in 2024 was £13,094.25.

Our expenditure in 2024 was as follows:

- Fund-raising costs of £1,071.74 consisting of
 - £615.00 to Matthews Plants for the Plant Sale,
 - £422.50 to Matthews Plants for the Craft Fair and
 - £34.24 for refreshments for the Craft Fair.
- Other expenditure amounting to £3,088.05 consisting of:
 - £558.98 for the service & repair of Churchyard Equipment,
 - £115.49 for Mower fuel,
 - £275.00 for the purchase of a new Strimmer.
 - £566.00 for repairs to the Church Lighting,
 - £33.64 for AGM expenses,
 - £1,000.00 for the purchase of new Bell Ropes,
 - £295.94 for insurance and
 - £240.00 for the Bell Tower Specification work undertaken by Jeremy Lander.

The Friends' total expenditure in 2024 was £4,159.79.

The Friends started 2024 with total reserves of £26,387.70, which by the end of the year had increased by £8,934.46 to £35,322.16. Of the latter, £2,500.00 was in the Friends' current account with Barclays Bank on 31 December 2024 and £32,822.16 with the Church of England Deposit Fund.

Looking forward, the Friends have made the following spending commitments:

- Up to £5,000 for the installation of permanent equipment to enable the flexible streaming of services in the Church, together with display screens for the presentation of video material,
- £7,237 for work in the Bell Tower by Lodge & Sons Ltd,
- Up to £3,500 for work on trees in the Churchyard and
- Up to £15,000 as a contribution towards the enlargement of the Churchyard.

The Friends' total spending commitment therefore amounted to £30,737.

There have been no issues in making cash deposits to the Friends' current account with Barclays through local Post Offices following the closure of the bank's Bishop's Stortford Branch.

Authorisation

This Annual Report is issued on behalf of the Trustees and was approved by them at a Committee Meeting held on 6 October 2025.

Philip Hargrave
Chairman and Secretary

Margaret Morley
Vice Chairman

Desmond Conridge
Treasurer

October 2025

Annex A

**FRIENDS OF ST JAMES THE GREAT,
THORLEY**

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31st DECEMBER

2024		2023
£		£
NET ASSETS		
2,500.00	Barclays Community Account Bank Balance	2,387.30
32,822.16	CBF Church of England Deposit Fund Bank Balance	24,000.40
35,322.16	TOTAL NET ASSETS	26,387.70
REPRESENTED BY:		
26,387.70	Surplus Brought Forward from Previous Year	21,809.98
8,934.46	Year Surplus / (Deficit)	4,577.72
35,322.16	TOTAL RESERVES	26,387.70

FRIENDS OF ST JAMES THE GREAT, THORLEY

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER

2024		2023
£	INCOME	£
775.00	Subscriptions	805.00
100.00	Donations	00.00
115.49	Gifts in kind	79.17
5,048.09	Bequest	00.00
1,028.55	Quiz	672.33
940.00	Plant Sale	1,001.10
1,717.24	Craft Fair	1,536.40
1,577.00	Refreshments	1,555.00
1,211.03	Bank Interest	643.32
581.85	Tax Rebate (Gift Aid)	238.26
13,094.25	TOTAL INCOME	6,530.58
	EXPENDITURE	
1,000.00	New bell ropes	00.00
566.00	Church lighting	00.00
615.00	Plant sale	650.00
456.74	Craft Fair	314.10
36.64	Annual General Meeting	31.58
275.00	Strimmer	00.00
295.94	Insurance	268.48
674.47	Mower service, repairs & fuel	568.70
240.00	Bell-tower specification work	00.00
00.00	Tea signs	120.00
4,159.79	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,952.86
8,934.46	TOTAL SURPLUS / DEFICIT	4,577.72

Desmond Conridge Treasurer
March 2025