

Annual Report

Name of Charity:	The Parish of Saint Melangell
Operating name:	Saint Melangell's Orthodox Church
Charity Number:	1195091
Trustees:	Cyprian Astley (<i>Chair</i>) Joseph Smith (<i>Secretary</i>) John Hopkins (<i>Treasurer</i>)
Reporting Period:	12th November 2023 – 11th November 2024

From the Rector

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and friends of our parish,

I commend to you the below report from the trustees, and would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you for the contributions you make to our life together.

When we moved to Wythenshawe towards the end of 2022, with various circumstances meaning that there were significant changes to the future we had expected for our mission, it was unclear if this would bear fruit.

Two years later, I look at the community that is forming, with shared food after our worship, the fun some of you have playing games together, as well as the friendships that are being formed over hiking and other activities, and I am grateful for all of you and the support and encouragement that your presence gives me.

Yet, at the heart of all that we do together is our life in Jesus Christ, and this report gives us the opportunity to reflect on how we have sought to live that life over this past year. So let us draw encouragement from all that God has worked in and through us, and allow ourselves to be open to his will in the coming year.

With love in Christ,

Cyprian +

Hieromonk Cyprian
Rector
Chair of Trustees

From the Trustees

Dear members and friends of The Parish of Saint Melangell,

Each year we must submit a report to the Charity Commission for England and Wales to demonstrate the ways in which we have met the charitable aims that we set for ourselves, and for which we were granted status as a registered charity. This serves as a useful opportunity for us, as a church community, to reflect on the fulfilment of our calling as an Orthodox Christian Church in our circumstances, to live the life in Jesus Christ and to be a visible presence to give the people of Greater Manchester and beyond the opportunity to see something of, and participate in, this life.

Here is a reminder of those charitable aims as they were outlined in our Constitution during the past year:

The advancement of the Orthodox Christian religion in its Western European liturgical, musical, and spiritual expression (known as the "Western Rite"), for the public benefit in the United Kingdom, by conducting public acts of worship and other religious devotional acts, and providing instruction in Orthodox Christianity by means in particular but not limited to public teaching and the dissemination of online and printed materials.

The advancement of such charitable purposes (according to the law of England and Wales) for the public benefit in the United Kingdom as the trustees see fit from time to time, in keeping with Orthodox Christian principles, in particular but not limited to defending human rights and the relief of those in hardship, by means including but not limited to the making of financial donations to individuals, as well as to charities promoting such purposes.

For the purpose of this clause, "Orthodox Christian" means the faith subscribed to by those churches commonly designated "Eastern Orthodox", "Oriental Orthodox", and "Western Orthodox".

Regular Worship

We have continued our regular pattern of worship, taking part in the weekly celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord with the Divine Liturgy most weekends, with Sunday Vespers celebrated at least once a month, and sometimes more frequently. This is in addition to the various feasts of the Lord, the Mother of God, and the saints, which we have celebrated throughout the year on weekdays and Saturdays.

Our worship has also been enhanced in a number of ways, with Melangell Turner and Subdeacon Joseph Smith working hard each week on the ever-improving quality of the chant offered to God in our worship, which has resulted positively in more active participation from within the congregation in our Western Orthodox chant tradition which we have worked to make available to Orthodox Christians in the English-speaking world.

Our team of altar servers has grown with the addition of Paisios Povah, who now serves at the altar regularly under the guardianship of Acolyte Aristobulus Kordemir. This has added to the dignity of our worship and helps the priest to focus on the prayers and sacrifice without having to worry about practical matters.

Thanks to the labours and organisational skills of Joanna Maudlin, we have been able to introduce the diptychs into the Divine Liturgy week by week, which has enabled us to celebrate a fuller form of our Western Orthodox Liturgy.

The labours of Holy Week, especially the communal activity of making palm crosses, as well as the beautiful offering of Edwin Turner in painting the paschal candle, served to aid the participation of our people in the tangible elements of our worship of God.

Occasional Services

There was one request for memorial prayers for the departed during the past year. There were no requests for the blessing of a home, and no weddings or funerals in the parish.

The Blessing of the Waters

After a hiatus in January 2022 due to Father Cyprian's health at the time, we resumed our practice of blessing an open body of water to commemorate the Baptism of the Lord in the River Jordan on the feast of Theophany. In January 2023 a group of us gathered in Northenden Riverside Park to bless the River Mersey, in concert with Orthodox Christians around the world. On a weekday a few days prior to this event, a reconnaissance mission to the park to identify a suitable gathering spot and access point to the water showed the park to be used by nobody save for a handful of dog walkers. This meant that we were unprepared for the crowds of people using the park on the day of the blessing, who saw and might have been curious about what we were doing but perhaps felt unable to join us. We hope to be better prepared with explanatory material and an invitation to join us next time we do this.

Catechesis

Regular instruction and reflection on the way of life in Christ in the Orthodox Christian Faith continues to be provided in the parish in the form of homilies on most Sundays. These are live-streamed via the parish Facebook page for the benefit of those unable to attend in person.

Two copies of *An Introduction to God* were given to enquirers who were seeking a better understanding of the Orthodox Christian Faith, and a number of Bibles were given to catechumens and enquirers.

Additionally, this past year saw the trial of our new catechism course, which took the form of a series of weekly online sessions, each lasting 1-1.5 hours. Each session explored an element of the Orthodox Faith through Bible readings and a presentation by Father Cyprian, supported by pertinent YouTube videos and interactive activities, and with the opportunity for questions, answers, and discussion. Helpful feedback from participants has allowed this to be refined further into a 12-week, structured course for use with future groups of catechumens in preparation for baptism.

Pilgrimages & Retreats

The spiritual life of the parish has continued to blossom this past year as a number of members and friends of our parish went on pilgrimage on 27th April to the shrine of St Melangell in Powys, Wales. Despite a significant last-minute setback with regard to

travel arrangements, we were able to find an alternative solution and continue with our plans.

At the end of October, five members of our parish went on a spiritual retreat to the Bethany Centre attached to our sister parish of Our Lady & St Thiebault in Gorze, in the Lorraine region of France, where we spent time in a well-established Western Orthodox community, taking part in the worship and communal life, and enjoying the company and spiritual fatherhood of Bishop Gregory.

On 12th November, a number of us visited the Russian Orthodox parish of St Elisabeth the New-Martyr in Wallasey for a number of services and devotions before the miraculous, myrrh-streaming Iveron icon of the Mother of God, from Hawaii.

Mission and Outreach

The parish TikTok account, previously retired, has been revived as we learnt that two people who started worshipping with us discovered our parish through this medium. Both it and our Instagram account have been updated regularly with content to engage potential enquirers.

Additionally, we have continued to maintain a robust presence on Facebook, sharing the videos of our services, information about feasts and saints' days, and other information about the Orthodox Christian Faith in various groups where these items are likely to pique interest.

Publications

In January 2024, our parish published *The Saint Melangell Prayer Book*, as a devotional aid to the daily prayer and spiritual lives of Orthodox Christians in the Western liturgical and spiritual tradition. By the end of our reporting period in November 2024, 97 copies had been purchased.

We also published this year a personal *Diptych*, for use in private prayer or at the Divine Liturgy for the commemoration of the living and departed. Although this was intended simply to provide a need within our parish, 20 copies have been purchased to date.

Growth

This has been a year of considerable numerical growth for our parish. At the beginning of 2023, our average attendance at most services was between 4 and 6 people. On some Sundays, only the priest and altar servers were in attendance. By the end of this reporting period in 2024, our worshipping numbers were seldom in the single figures, with between 14-17 people at most Sunday Liturgies.

Five new Orthodox Christians were baptised and chrismated at our parish on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14th September) 2024, and a new catechumen was made on the same day.

A number of enquirers have reached out to us over this last year, some of whom are in regular or semi-regular attendance, and two of whom have asked to be baptised.

To aid our growing liturgical life together, on the feast of All Saints (1st November) 2024, Bishop Gregory ordained Reader Joseph Smith as a subdeacon, and Mr Aristobulus Kordemir as an acolyte,

Charitable Giving

In April, the parish made a charitable donation to an individual in financial hardship. In the same month, we made a donation to the Shrine of our heavenly patroness, St Melangell, shortly after our pilgrimage there.

Christmas Dinner Volunteering

On Christmas Day 2023, then Reader Joseph and Father Cyprian, as well as two supporters of our parish, spent much of the day volunteering at St John's Catholic Club in Benchill, to help with the effort of providing free Christmas dinner to individuals and families from the local area. This was our second year taking part and we hope that this will become an annual event for our parish.

Marathon Fundraiser

For some years a group of members and external supporters of our mission would take part as volunteers in the Manchester Marathon and latterly the Half-Marathon in order to raise money to aid parish funds. This did not take place this year due to lack of interest. However, after some private conversations, we are hopeful that we might be able to send a group next year.

Office Holders

The trustees of our parish for the reporting year were:

- Father Cyprian (Astley) – *Ex Officio* Chair of trustees as Rector of the parish.
- Subdeacon Joseph Smith – Secretary, appointed as trustee for an initial period of 3 years, now having completed his initial term.
- Mr John Hopkins – Treasurer, appointed as trustee for an initial period of 3 years, with 2 years remaining to be served.

Subdeacon Joseph was invited to continue as secretary to the board of trustees for another year, which invitation he generously accepted.

This Annual Report was approved by the undersigned Trustees of the Parish of Saint Melangell at the Annual General Meeting on 30th December, 2024.

Cyprian +

Hieromonk Cyprian
Rector
Chair of Trustees

Joseph Alexander Smith

Subdeacon Joseph Smith
Secretary

John Hopkins

Mr John Hopkins
Treasurer

From the Treasurer

Dear friends,

The accounts for the financial year 12/11/2023 to 11/11/2024 are attached for your interest.

We thank God that we have been able successfully to meet the costs associated with our parish, as well as making some charitable donations. We are extremely grateful to all who supported the church financially in this time.

However, there are some factors that are important to note:

This year, we received no income from donations from the Manchester Marathon, which we have received in previous years. This has historically made up a relatively large proportion of our budget. As the parish now has more attendees, perhaps this is something we can look to undertake in the coming year as an additional source of income.

In addition, although we received considerably more in private donations than previous years, a large proportion of this was met via a single donation to pay for expenses for a baptismal font, the expenses of which are not included in this report, as the costs were incurred after this financial year has ended. If we do not include this single donation, then our expenses are significantly higher than our income. However, our income would still be significantly higher than in previous years due to other private donations.

In part, the increase in donations has been due to the parish having implemented the possibility to purchase diptychs, as well as a homily from Father Cyprian on the topic of finances as part of our Christian life, which has encouraged donations to support the life of the church.

Special mention should be made of the coffee morning organised by Ms Photini Brennan at her place of work, which raised a significant amount in donations. This sort of imaginative fundraising is the sort of thing that we need to be thinking about.

Though our income has been higher than previously, so have our expenses—we have been fortunate to have been able to undertake a parish pilgrimage, as well as organise the baptisms of several new Christians, and invest in a street sign. Generally, our growing numbers have meant that costs have increased for items such as candles, printer ink, etc. It is only to be expected that our costs will increase as we continue to grow and serve our parish well, though we should consider how our income will increase to support the growing numbers.

John Hopkins

Mr John Hopkins
Treasurer

Summary of Accounts for the Financial Year 12/11/2023 to 11/11/2024

	Amount (£)
Opening Balance 12/11/2023	603.90
Income	6004.51
Expenditure	5223.22
Closing Balance 11/11/2024	1386.78

Breakdown of Income

Source	Amount (£)	Comment
Private Donations (Inclusive of Gift Aid)	5987.17	Inc. Net Gift Aid £665.94
Easyfundraising	17.34	
Bank Account Interest	1.59	
Total	6004.51	

Breakdown of Expenditure

Expense	Amount (£)	Comment
Regular Building Hire Fees	2796.00	
Regular Bank Account Fees	60.00	
Insurance	356.97	
Parish Website	244.20	
Altar Wine	30.00	
Candles	134.50	
Water & wine flasks	17.80	Cruets for pilgrimages
Paschal Candle	22.20	
Charcoal	13.00	
Cincture	18.65	New altar server
Bibles	146.84	Catechumens & enquirers
Catechetical books	25.98	Gifts for enquirers
Printer Ink	256.77	
Printer Paper	44.96	
Google One	23.97	Online sessions
Font hire	140.00	September baptisms
Street sign	99.48	
Pilgrimage donation	100.00	St Melangell's Shrine
Charitable donation	100.00	
Clergy & visitor travel expenses	115.30	
Clergy travel loan	400.00	
DBS certificate	77.00	New trustee
Total	5223.22	