



When Paul Stokes 'ran for the loo' earlier this month his whole congregation was cheering him on. He was taking part in the Matlock half marathon, fundraising for a toilet and a wash basin and sink for his village church.



children's activities and community events alongside regular services, with the village hall and water supplies brought in by the congregation.

A semi-retired company director, he joined the church around a decade ago with his family and became churchwarden six years ago.

He describes the “very strong community atmosphere” in the village, with the church, a Grade 1 listed building, “very much at the centre of this, both geographically as well as spiritually.”

“St Stephen's church is being very richly blessed, we are growing numerically and spiritually and seeing people in our community touched by God's love is wonderful,” he said.

“Our church is thriving and not just surviving due to the great willingness of the PCC (Parochial Church Council) and wider congregation to work together, sharing ideas, dreams and responsibilities.

“A very large percentage of the congregation actively serve in all areas of church life. Without this sacrificial service, our church would not grow.”

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**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/stories-and-features/volunteers-week-churchwardens-story>