



ANNUAL REPORT

For year ending 31st December 2024

(As required by Church Accounting Regulations 2006)

Registered Charity Number 1129833

Website: <https://www.abingdonparish.org.uk/>

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
ANNUAL REPORT
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024**

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is a registered charity, Charity Registration Number 1129833.

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is situated in the town of Abingdon, Oxfordshire. It is part of the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is:

The Hon Secretary, Abingdon-on-Thames PCC
c/o The Parish Centre, St Helen's Court, Abingdon OX14 5BS

The Parish comprises the churches and congregations of St Helen, St Michael & All Angels and St Nicolas.

PCC members

PCC members are the Trustees of the Charity. PCC members who have served from 1st January 2024 until the date that this report and the financial statements were approved are:

Stipendiary Team clergy:

The Revd Dr E C Miller (to 30 November)
The Revd P A Smith

Non-stipendiary clergy:

The Revd Dr J Brown
The Revd A K M Adam (from 1 Feb 2024)

Licensed Lay Minister Representative

Mrs G Bevington

Churchwardens:

Mrs E Hallas
Mrs L Heffernan
Mrs L Hobbs (to April 2024)
Miss M Horton (from July 2024)
Miss J Kelly
Mr D Pope
Mr P Rast-Lindsell

Ex-Officio

– representatives on Diocesan Synod:

Miss A Scott
Mrs S Scott (Bishop's Council Member)

Officers (from April 2024):

Chairman	The Revd Dr E C Miller (to October 2024)
Vice Chairman	Mrs S Scott Acting Chair from Oct 2024
Secretary	Mrs E Hallas
Treasurer	Mrs S Read (to June 2024)

– representatives on Deanery Synod:

The Revd R Rutherford

Elected representatives - Deanery Synod:

Miss A E Green
Mrs E Hallas
Miss A Scott
Mrs S Scott
Dr H Glennie

Elected PCC members:

Mrs M Anderson (from April 2024)
Mrs K Burland
Mrs H Clare (from April 2024)
Mr J Clare
Dr H Glennie
Mrs J Fishpool
Dr G Lewis
Mrs J Smith
Mrs S E M Read (to June 2024)

Auditors

Mercer Lewin Chartered Accountants
41 Cornmarket Street,
Oxford,
OX1 3HA

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AIMS AND PURPOSES

Under the PCC (Powers) Measure 1956, the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Dr Charles Miller, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Each DCC is similarly required to co-operate with the minister in charge of the district church. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Parish Centre (in St Helen's Court) and Enock House (2 Musson Close).

1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

1a Team Clergy Report

As the parish is currently in vacancy, there is no Rector's report. At the request of the church wardens, this brief report from the team clergy has been prepared to summarise notable events and accomplishments across the parish in 2024.

Sunday services

Regular provision of Sunday services has continued across all three churches. St Helen's and St Nic's continue to live-stream services on Zoom for those who are unable to attend in person. In September and October, the Rector presided in each of the three churches across the parish as a farewell in preparation for his retirement in November. A corporate Eucharist at 3pm on All Saints' Sunday marked the Revd Dr Charles Miller's last Sunday and was a joyful celebration of both the feast of All Saints and of Charles' ministry in and service to the parish during his time as Rector.

The licensed team clergy, the Revd Paul Smith, the Revd Dr A.K.M. Adam (AKMA), and the Revd Dr Jen Brown, continue to lead services regularly, supported by the honorary assistant clergy. We are grateful to the honorary assistant clergy for all that they do, and for their willingness to take on additional services during the vacancy period.

We are particularly grateful to the honorary assistant clergy for their commitment to the 8am BCP Holy Communion service, held in St Helen's and St Nic's in alternate months. We would also like to express thanks to the Revd Richard Pyke for taking the lead on Taizé services in St Helen's. These have been very successful and at the end of the year, one of these services took place on the eve of Advent at St Michael's. This was well attended and it was considered that they may be room for it to be developed in that venue occasionally – a project for 2025! A decision was taken at St Helen's to reinvigorate the First Sunday Eucharist, with its aim of being more accessible to children and those who attend church infrequently. This was begun with the Epiphany service in January. Revd Jen has taken the lead on this, and it is hoped that this service will be attractive to families with young children.

Ministry team

As noted above, Charles Miller retired as Rector in November. Charles was thanked for his ministry in the parish at a parish lunch in September. There have been no other changes in personnel among the licensed clergy (Team Vicar, Fr Paul Smith, and Associate Priests, Fr AKMA and Revd Jen). We were delighted that Linda Hobbs began training for Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM).

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Outreach

Outreach to the wider parish continued in various forms in 2024.

St Helen's Easter Garden in the west porch provided an opportunity to engage with passers-by, particularly families with children. The parish centre hosted Agnostics Anonymous, a talk followed by Q&A and discussion on a range of topics, which is open to all. The Christingle service at St Helen's again attracted a large number of families, as did the Epiphany carol service and Tea.

St Michael's continued to see encouraging attendance both at its Good Friday Children's Liturgy and Christmas Crib Service for children and young families. Although, the project has not made the progress it would have like to have achieved during 2024, a small group of people have been meeting to set up a Children's Church which shall meet during the Mass on the first Sunday of the month. At the time of writing this report Children's Church has met twice since February and is moving on apace. Welcoming people into church during the Spring and Summer for Cream Teas has been a wonderful way of meeting new people from near and far as well as making a good contribution to the very significant sum of money which was brought in by the hard work of volunteers from within the congregation during the year.

St Nic's is open regularly on a Monday morning by the kindness of a few volunteers and receives visitors who enjoy the space for prayer and stillness. We have also had opportunities to welcome children from different schools giving them an insight into the treasure of St Nic's as an historic place of worship. Our South Porch featured its usual Nativity tableau, but new this year was a Lent display based on the Cross, updated week by week with key reminders of Holy Week.

As we go forward into 2025, we are grateful to the wardens at each of the churches for their support and hard work, and to the congregations of St Helen's, St Michael's, and St Nic's for their prayers and faithful witness in this place.

Paul Smith, Team Vicar

Jen Brown, Associate Priest

A.K.M. Adam, Associate Priest

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Annual Report (continued)

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1b Church Electoral Roll [Richard Kirby]

There is a Parish Electoral Roll Officer for Abingdon-on-Thames, but each of the three churches in the parish maintains a section of the Roll.

Richard Kirby, Parish Electoral Roll Officer, April 2024.

Richard Kirby retired as ERO during 2024.

Electoral Roll Numbers 2022 to 2023

	2022	2023				
	roll	deletions	additions	change	roll	% change
St Helen	214	17	17	0	214	0%
St Michael	68	3	4	1	69	1%
St Nicolas	64	5	4	-1	63	-2%
Abingdon on Thames	346	25	25	0	346	0%

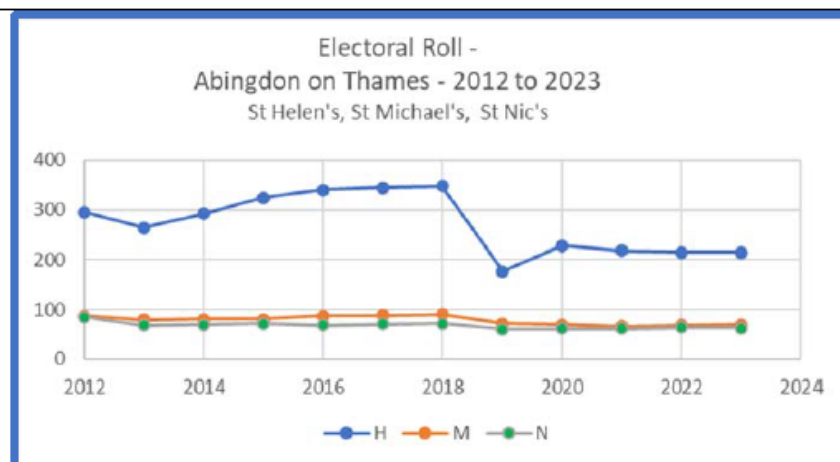
History

	St Helen's	St Michael	St Nic's	Total	% change
2012	295	87	85	467	
2013 new roll	264	79	68	411	-12%
2014	292	81	69	442	8%
2015	324	81	71	476	8%
2016	340	87	68	495	4%
2017	344	88	70	502	1%
2018	348	91	71	510	2%
2019 new roll	177	71	60	308	-40%
2020 (Oct)	228	69	62	359	17%
2021	218	66	62	346	-4%
2022	214	68	64	346	0%
2023	214	69	63	346	0%

It is the nature of my character to speak with data, rather than emotion or subjective views. Hence there is nothing I can say for either the optimists who would like to read improvement nor the pessimists who would like to read deterioration.

In statistical terms, looking at the past few years there is stability in the numbers.

Returning further, to 2019 we understood the influences that caused the change in St Helen's. Try not look at the numbers as a competition between the churches; the influences are many and complex and largely beyond the control of an individual church (death, illness, moving, transfers, ...)



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1c PCC [Eluned Hallas, PCC Secretary]

The business of the PCC concerns those issues best approached on a Parish, rather than Church, basis. It is also a useful forum for communications throughout the Parish, including details of Parish and Church sponsored events, staff updates and feedback on Deanery and Diocesan issues.

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met in person seven times during 2023, with the Standing Committee / Clergy & Wardens Group meeting regularly during the year.

In January we welcomed the Revd Dr Andrew Adam to the Parish and the PCC.

A joint meeting of PCC, DCC and invited congregation members in June launched the Parish's Eco-Church initiative – with nominated representatives in each church tasked with taking this forward, and the Revd Dr Jen Brown taking the lead at PCC.

PCC discussions during the year focussed on

- Safeguarding with the appointment of a new Parish Safeguarding Officer driving the introduction of new policies and procedures across the Parish. Work is now starting on role descriptions and risk assessments for the many activities carried out across the Parish.
- Finance including regular monitoring and budget setting. Susan Read stepped down as Parish Treasurer during the year, and we thank her for all her work. Susan remains Treasurer of St Helen's, sits on the Finance Working Group, and continues to produce the end of year consolidated accounts. The St Nicolas' and St Michael's Treasurer is a member of PCC, as is a member of the St Helen's finance team, allowing informed discussion of finance across the three churches. The PCC continues to scrutinise quarterly reports and budget proposals. That these are submitted as one per church (rather than consolidated) makes understanding each church's position easier to understand.
- Eco-Church – including the adoption of a Parish Eco Policy, and procedures to improve best practice across the parish.
- Children, Young People and Family (CYPF) work across the Parish.
- Clergy welfare.
- Health & Safety Governance – beginning a new initiative to establish, consolidate and standardise H&S practices across the Parish. There is much work still to be done on this.
- Publicity for Christmas & Easter Services, and other church organised events, aiming to reduce date conflict and improve awareness within the community.
- Opportunities for education and discipleship.

The PCC continues to review and approve faculty applications and other fabric matters across the Parish, and GDPR and Parish Policies remain regular items on the PCC agendas

From the retirement of the Rector in November, and continuing into 2025, much effort has been given to the process of recruiting a new Rector for the Parish, and Team Vicar for St Helen's. This has involved consultation within the PCC and DCCs, an Open Parish Meeting (January 2025), and discussions with stakeholders both within and without the Parish. Individuals were encouraged to submit their views to Church Wardens (in writing or orally) and all submissions were shared with the relevant parties. A Working Group drawn from all three churches was tasked with drawing up a profile of the Parish for refinement and approval by the PCC. Wardens worked together to combine the various contributions into a Person Profile, also for approval by PCC.

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PCC members were asked to approve the composition of the Selection Panel, based on recommendations from the Diocese, which has been supporting us through the process. We hope an advertisement will be placed in early May 2025.

1d Safeguarding [Patricia Hudson, PSO]

There are no known current concerns in the parish which is good, some more pastoral issues have been addressed.

The positive attitude towards Safeguarding across the parish is very encouraging and productive

Since becoming PSO last Summer, with much help from too many people to name, my initial priority has been to establish an accurate and complete list of everyone in a role which needs DBS and/or some level of training. Thank you all for your patience as I'm learning to match faces to names and clarify roles

I'm very grateful that Catherine Kimber is DBS verifier. A discrete Safeguarding email account has also been set up. I'm looking forward to working with Kate Burland on the overlaps with Health and Safety.

I have led F2F Basic Awareness and Foundation training sessions for anyone who prefers that to doing e-learning and they went well. I'm very willing to hold anymore required and/or to support anyone on an individual basis to access e-learning

Safeguarding Posters – giving contact details - are now going up in all church buildings

I have drafted both role descriptions and risk assessments for the following – coffee, flowers, vergers, childrens' workers, toddler group, stewards/sidespeople, cleaning, wardens, bell ringing, pastoral team. Choir to follow. The aim is to have one simple document that works for both team leaders and team members as a common baseline for the whole parish but with capacity for specifics to each church to either be inserted or added as an attachment for detailed instructions that are site specific. It is important that the distinct individual character of each church is celebrated. These documents are out for consultation at the time of writing and final agreed drafts will follow soon.

We need these documents not to tick boxes but because of our respect, care and love for each other as a Christian community, to facilitate effective safe working practice and as a foundation for growth so newcomers can take on roles.

The parish dashboard which is a useful tool for checking progress and structuring next steps stands at 63 % now, progress from 41% a few months ago

To progress further we need to

- Complete the list of church activities, and those involved in leadership / support roles in each
- Record all volunteers' Basic Awareness and Foundation Training, and DBS

To my knowledge, we have 63 officers across the parish (wardens, PCC members, vergers and children/vulnerable adults workers - not counting coffee, flowers and cleaning vitally important as they are.) Most are trained for the role but not everyone has yet completed Foundation level Safeguarding training

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Our main area for improvement (as in many parishes) is recruitment and people management. We will start from where we are, no retrospective action. We may need to look at the paid parish roles especially in this time of vacancy.

My thanks to Jenny Fishpool for all her work at St Nicolas and to Immanuel Chekura for support at St Helens. It would be good to recruit a DSCO for St Michael's

1e Abingdon Deanery Synod [Sue Scott]

Abingdon Deanery Synod is part of the Diocese of Oxford and is one of 11 deaneries within the Archdeaconry of Dorchester whose membership represents 26 churches in 10 benefices.

The Synod is a vehicle to discuss key issues and to look at the church's ministry and mission in a geographical area. The Deanery Synod sits between the Parishes with their PCCs and the Diocese with the Diocesan Synod. It is a key channel of communication.

The Synod is a place to support each other in difficult times and a place to celebrate the good things happening in our churches. It is also a place where the views of the Parishes can be brought together. Proposals can be made to Diocesan Synod for discussion if the Deanery feels this is necessary/appropriate. Clergy and Laity have equal status in the Synod.

The Parish currently has 5 elected members from the House of Laity:-

Alexandra Green (St Helen's)

Hazel Glennie (St Helen's)

Alexandra Scott (St Michael and All Angels) ex officio Diocesan Synod

Sue Scott (St Michael and All Angels) Lay Chair and ex officio Diocesan Synod

Eluned Hallas (St Nicolas)

This has been a challenging year for many of our churches and things continue to be difficult for many. The aim has been to create a balance between providing information, giving time for discussion and also responding to common concerns. The Synod met 4 times in 2024 (February, May, October and November). In response to feedback some of the meetings now take place on zoom and some in person. Some of the business covered has included: -

- Finance issues including the Budget, Parish Share, The Deanery Parish Support Fund and Mission Grants
- Opportunities to share good practice and expertise to develop Parish Mission Action Plans – with a particular focus on work with Children, Young people and Families which is part of a 5 year focus for all parishes and deaneries in the Diocese.
- Outside speakers – including a report back from the General Synod and finding out about the work of Parish Development Officers.
- Raising awareness of Diocese resources and how to access services eg Churchwarden Training, use of Safeguarding Dashboards and Church Energy Audits
- New Congregations/New initiatives/ Eco church/Children and families/LLF updates

A key role of the Deanery Synod is to represent the views of the Parishes and to seek ways to support the work of the Church in this place. Please speak to your Parish representatives so that they can raise issues questions or concerns on your behalf. Churchwardens are also very welcome to attend.

Minutes of all Synod meetings and Standing Committee meetings can be found on the website at abingdondeanery.org.uk together with other news and information about the work of the Deanery Synod.

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Please could you pray for the work of the Deanery Synod as it strives to seek God's guidance to support the work of the Church in this place.

Sue Scott, St Michael and All Angels representative and Lay Chair Abingdon Deanery Synod

1f Abingdon Diocesan Synod [Sue Scott]

The Diocesan Synod is the governing body of the Church of England in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. The bishop has a duty to consult the Diocesan Synod on matters of general importance and concern to the diocese and in turn, Diocesan Synod provides a connection to Deanery Synods and PCCs.

We currently have full representation for the House of Laity (3) and only 1 representative from the House of Clergy in the Dorchester Archdeaconry. Two of the House of Laity representatives are from within our Parish. An election took place in 2024 and so the current membership will cover the period 2024 to 2027. Members of Diocesan Synod are ex Officio members of Deanery Synod and PCC for the duration of the term of office to Diocesan Synod.

The Synod meets 3 times a year usually on a Saturday to consider issues facing the church in the Diocese - to share experience from across the diocese and to consider issues which face the national church. Members can also be elected to boards and committees including Bishop's Council which is the executive committee of the Diocesan Synod. The Parish currently has representation at this level.

Synod met in March, June and November 2024. Two of these meetings were online and one in person.

The Church is facing a time of great challenge. Some of the issues which have been discussed are: -

- Living in Love and Faith
- Eco church
- Common Vision
- Environmental issues and steps needed to achieve net zero by 2035
- Finance, Parish Share, SSM/LLM fees
- Ukrainian Crisis
- How parishes can more easily access diocesan resources – what is out there?

Further information about the work of the Synod can be found at www.oxford.anglican.org

The pathway to follow is – homepage>who we are>How we are governed>Diocesan Synod>documents

The Synod does not always speak as one voice. But the aim is that together we can work towards being a more Compassionate, Courageous and Contemplative Church.

Sue Scott, Diocesan Synod Representative

1g St Nicolas School and Education Trust Abingdon [Eluned Hallas]

The St Nicolas School and Education Trust Abingdon is a CIO incorporated, in 2022, to take over the assets and activities of an existing exempt charity: Abingdon St Nicholas Church of England Primary School charity.

The four ex-officio Trustees are: the Team Rector of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames, and the Team Vicar and Churchwardens of St Nicolas Church, Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames. The charity trustees may appoint up to two trustees provided that such appointment(s) are approved by the

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Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames in the County and Diocese of Oxford. The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) may appoint one charity trustee. Following the retirement of the Team Rector, the Diocese approved the appointment of Mr Robert Bough as interim Trustee.

During 2024 discussions mostly covered negotiations with the Charity Commission over the legal transfer of assets from the old to the new charitable organisation. At the same time discussions were opened over the formal transfer of investments and cash to the investment managers appointed by the Trustees.

The objects of the CIO are for the public benefit within the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames in the County and Diocese of Oxford:

- To advance education in such ways as the trustees shall from time to time think fit, in particular through:
- To advance the Christian faith in accordance with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England, in particular through:
- To further the objects and work of the Church of England in the said Parish in such ways as the trustees shall from time to time think fit.

The retirement of the Team Rector, who had the lead in many of the discussion, temporarily slowed progress, but it is hoped that transfer of funds will be complete in 2025-26, freeing the Trustees to begin to determine how best to meet the Trust's objectives.

In 2024 the Trust (though the Diocesan Trustees) supported St Nicolas CE School, Abingdon through the provision of Bibles for new entrants, and class bibles to assist with class based worship.

2 *STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP*

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is served by a Team Rector, based at St Helen's (currently in vacancy), and a Team Vicar shared between St Nicolas' and St Michael's.

The Parochial Church Council of Abingdon-on-Thames is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure, and was formally registered with the Charity Commission on 27 May 2009.

Lay members of the PCC are appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Church Representation Rules, as originally authorized as Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 and subsequently amended by the General Synod. All eligible church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

In addition to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames, there are three District Church Councils (DCCs). The PCC has delegated to the DCCs responsibility for detailed implementation of most of its functions, in a continuation of a Scheme approved by the Bishop. The PCC is therefore able to concentrate on those matters which cannot be delegated, or are of common concern. It has two committees:

The *Standing Committee* (comprising the Team Rector & Team Vicar, church wardens, the secretary, the treasurer, and the vice-chairman) has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC.

The *Finance Working Group* (comprising the Parish Treasurer, the Treasurers of the DCCs and a limited number of co-opted members) oversees the financial activities of the parish, including the

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annual budget and financial statements. It meets as required. The budget and financial statements are approved by the PCC after individual church finances have been considered by individual DCCs. In addition to meeting the statutory requirements of the Charities Commission, the immediate aims of the Group are, firstly, to provide a forum at which the Treasurers can discuss common problems and learn from each other. Secondly, the Group is attempting to develop key performance indicators that provide early warnings of potential difficulties. Third, the Group expects to undertake risk analysis which will include longer term projections of our financial status.

PCC members (and DCC members) are encouraged to attend training sessions as appropriate. Most often these are courses organised by the Diocese of Oxford.

The PCC is exposed to risks associated with buildings, finances and availability of volunteer effort. Buildings are insured and regularly inspected, finances are overseen by the PCC, and DCCs, and volunteers are constantly sought to carry the administrative burden of the PCC and DCCs. The maintenance of ancient buildings is a heavy responsibility for the PCC, but this is not unusual in the Church of England. Health and Safety, Child Protection and other pertinent legislation is adhered to, and there are policies in place to this effect. DCCs operate within a budget and financial envelope determined by their annual income and reserves and approved by the PCC. Special appeals are launched for special projects (typically capital projects) as appropriate. To say 'The Lord will provide' may not be an acceptable approach to financial risk management in the secular world; but seeking the Will of God through constant prayer and responding to His Will moment by moment are key instruments by which the PCC manages risk in labour and financial matters.

3 *PROPERTY*

3a *The Rectory [Linda Hobbs]*

The Rectory is a 4 bedroom house, linked to the Parish Centre. The property offers flexible, spacious family accommodation, with a large rear garden which should be attractive to us attracting a new Rector, whom we anticipate will join us in 2025.

The Rectory became vacant in October 2024. The Diocese had planned to carry out extensive property improvements and repairs prior to it again being used as a residence. The opportunity unexpectedly arose for a short term let resulting in all planned work being delayed until the current tenancy has terminated. All required works will be completed prior to any new tenancy commencing.

3b *Enock House, Musson Close [Linda Hobbs]*

2 Musson Close

Musson Close is a 4 bedroomed Town house situated close by the river Thames, within easy walking distance of Abingdon town centre, St Helens Church and the other 2 churches, St Nicolas and St Michaels and all Angels.

The Parish purchased the property in 2015. The property is currently used as a main residence by the Associate Priest, Rev AKMA Adams and his wife Margaret.

AKMA and Margaret have been resident since November 2023, a short while before commencing his position as House for Duty Priest. At termination of the License, the property will be returned to the use of the Church.

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Currently it is anticipated that the property will continue to be used as residence for the House for Duty position, however if the position were vacant, consideration could be made to the house being rented on the open market, which would generate a considerable return each month.

Under the terms of the License, (agreed by the Diocese) the Associate Priest has no liability to pay rent, water rates, Council Tax or Insurance. All costs associated with the upkeep and of the property being met by Church funds. All costs incurred by the Associate Priest in fulfilling his post, are also met by Church funds.

Since Akma and Margaret took up residence there has been minimal requirement for repairs to the property. Since the writing of the last report the annual Gas Certificate, (required by law for all properties under license or tenancy) has been carried out, having passed all safety requirements there was no requirement for additional repair costs.

Late summer 2024, a need arose to replace the faulty shower, this work was out by a private plumber at a cost of £360.

The property continues to be managed by Linda Hobbs

3c Fairacres Road [Rob Bough]

Pursuant to a bequest from Mr Derek Enock in 2009, each church in the parish has an interest in a residential property in Fairacres Road, Oxford, which is held on a trust. The current occupant of the property has the right to reside there for as long as she wishes. If the property is sold, she will be entitled to the income from the invested sale proceeds. Upon her death the property or proceeds from the sale will pass to the five beneficiaries of Mr Enock's estate. The trust is administered for the beneficiaries by Freeths Solicitors. The position remains the same as last year, with the occupant continuing to reside at the premises.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The following Vision Statement was agreed by the PCC on 22nd November 2000 and continues to apply to the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames:

“A single unified parish with a Team Ministry in which clergy and laity work together to serve interdependent congregations, within an active ecumenical organisation where:

- The Gospel of Christ is celebrated through worship and fellowship, with individual congregations providing a spectrum of traditions
- The life of the Church is built up through teaching, preaching, evangelism, pastoral care and ecumenical co-operation
- God's love is made known in mission and service to the community and society as a whole.”

The activities undertaken to enable the PCC to achieve these objectives are described in the Achievements & Performance section, and in the reports from the constituent churches.

The PCC is heavily dependent upon the contribution of volunteers to drive forward the mission of the church and the Kingdom of God.

Public Benefit

The PCC is aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in "The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit" and have regard to it in their administration of the Parish. The PCC believes that, by fulfilling its responsibility to work together with the incumbent in the Parish and

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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co-operate in all matters of concern and importance for the promotion of the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, it provides a benefit to the public by:

- providing resources and facilities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual, moral and intellectual development, both for its members and for anyone who wishes to benefit from what the Church offers;
- promoting Christian values, and service by members of the churches in the Parish to their communities, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

Reports from individual churches are attached as Appendices to this report.

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

TREASURER'S REPORT ON
THE YEAR ENDED 31 DEC 2024

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames consists of three churches (St Helen's, St Michael's and St Nicolas') which have separate treasurers and accounts. The Parish accounts are produced by consolidating the accounts of the three churches.

Income and Expenditure

The "bottom line" for the Parish in the year 2024 was a surplus of £48k (2023: deficit £41k). This was an excellent outcome, and considerably better than the £90k loss set as the budget for 2024. Considerable efforts at fundraising contributed to the outcome, particularly at St Helen's and St Michael's Churches.

It is pleasing to see that the voluntary income received was significantly more than the budget we set for the year. The unrestricted funds (encompassing the day-to-day income and costs of our churches) had a surplus of £16.5k before transfers.

Church fabric costs in 2024 included £18k building insurance costs, £3k of repairs to the Blacknall Tomb in St Nicolas and £2k in organ repairs for St Helen's.

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows fund and investments held at the end of the year, i.e.£1,318k (£1,252 in 2023).

The largest component of this is investments valued as at 31 December 2024: £541k, (2023: £553k). The reduction in value is partly due to the sale of £28k worth of St Michael's property investments and their conversion into short term deposits. But this was partially offset by gains in value of the other investments.

The Parish owns two freehold properties, the Parish Centre and the House for Duty property purchased in 2015. Legal title of both is held by the Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd as custodian trustees on behalf of the Parish. Both are held for the mission of the church. The two properties appear in the balance sheet as Tangible Fixed Assets.

In 2024 we purchased a printer/photocopier for office use. It is proving much cheaper to run without the expensive lease costs we paid on previous printers.

Short term deposits increased during the year, partly at St Michael's from the sale of investments and partly by St Nicolas' taking advantage of the higher interest rates available to open a bank deposit account for cash holdings.

PCC policy is that unused fund balances should be invested with CBF Church of England funds.

Restricted Funds

Restricted funds are often for long term projects, so may be built up over several years and spent over a short period of time. Surpluses and deficits on these funds are not necessarily unexpected or worrying.

In 2024 St Nicolas received a legacy of £39k toward the work needed on the Blacknall Aisle.

Grants received included £3.5k of VAT refunded on church repairs under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme.

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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St Nicolas' Church is the beneficiary of the Blacknall Trust, administered by Christ's Hospital. Every year the church receives a proportion of the dividends received from the substantial investments of the Trust. The income may only be spent on the fabric of St Nicolas' Church. In 2024 St Nicolas received £11.5k from the Blacknall Trust.

Going Concern

The PCC is required to operate on a going concern basis. The Parish has a policy to hold at least two months of average expenditure in liquid form. All three churches had sufficient liquidity at the year end

The Parish also aims to have reserves, appropriate to each church, to cover the future demands of building maintenance. This is less easy to evaluate and needs further consideration. I do not consider there to be risk of any of the churches being unable to pay for their building maintenance in the next three years, but we need to keep this under review.

Susan Read,
Treasurer, St Helen's Church, Abingdon

24 March 2025

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

Appendix 1
St Helen's Church
Church Wardens' & Fabric Reports

2024 was a year of two halves - with a Rector and without one. As I took up the post of warden in June I can report only on the latter half of the year, much of which was spent preparing for Charles' retirement and then adjusting to a new regime. We gave Charles a protracted farewell season including the fine parish lunch at the Garden Hilton hotel in September, a last 10.30am service at St. Helen's and then the splendid final service in November with a church packed to the rafters.

By December we had settled down into the new regime of a vacancy, largely thanks to the ministry of our two part time Associate Priests, Akma and Jen and the work of our retired clergy with PtO. They have been most generous with their time and efforts. It is a measure of how blessed we are with clergy that Low Sunday will be the first time we will have needed to call on a priest from outside our team of clergy to take the 10.30 Eucharist at St. Helen's.

Everyone has pulled together; the DCC has been most supportive throughout this period and we are grateful to Geoff Meen for taking on the role of Chair. No matters have been allowed to slip during the vacancy and with the clear and helpful support of Pat Hudson we have managed to make a bit of progress in improving our attention to safeguarding and to Health and Safety. Norman Gee has done sterling work in installing new office computers and a small group has been looking into the office phone system. This will need renewing in the near future. The Events team have continued to work very hard in putting on a series of concerts last year and the barn dance in Feb, helping to raise money for the church but also to bring us together as a congregation.

Do, please, look at our Church Report for the ADCM to find out about all the activities which have been taking place in 2024, but to highlight a few: it was good to be able to continue the initiative of having a 'presentation' in the west porch of the church over Easter and Christmas. Sue Pemberton produced a lovely Easter garden which was on display and stewards handed out sheets giving details of Easter services, and mini eggs to passersby. At Christmas we had our usual nativity scene and again greeted those walking past with good wishes.

We have been able to continue with some more newcomers' lunches, giving those comparatively new to the church the chance to meet and get to know others who have been around a while.

Thanks to Jen who arranged further series of Faith Forum last year at the later time of 12.30, with a light lunch beforehand. The later time enables our friends at St Michael's to attend as their Sunday service clashed with the earlier time of 9.15am.

I personally was delighted to pass the management of the Christmas market to Jeanette Thomas and Pat Hudson last year. They did a tremendous job and well over £3,000 was raised in total for church funds. It is also an occasion when we can welcome townsfolk into our building.

The Choir has continued to grow in size and skill under the masterful leadership of Peter Foster, ably assisted by Andrew Shouler. The quality of the singing and music over the Christmas period was some of the best I have heard at St. Helen's; thank you, Peter.

Like so many churches, our congregation is aging which means that active volunteers are thinner on the ground. Our Junior Church, Quest and Senior Quest have reduced in numbers but we still have quite a few children and young people in our congregation, some of whom it is lovely to welcome back in university vacations.

It is good to report that our finances are sound with a welcome net income of a few thousand over expenditure in the General Fund at the end of 2024. As we move into 2025, we are gearing up for a

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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big fundraising campaign to pay for new lighting and wiring throughout the church and the redecoration of some of the walls. Much of the groundwork has now been done and we are awaiting the approval of the DAC before entering a formal Faculty application. A substantial amount has already been pledged to the campaign.

Finally, a large thank you to all those who help to keep the church up and running whether it's behind the scenes in preparing for services, stewarding the church, pastoral care and visiting the housebound, the Friends of St Helen's etc.; we are all parts of the one body which maintains a spiritual presence and a beautiful building for the people of Abingdon and beyond.

Margaret Horton & David Pope, Churchwardens

FABRIC REPORT

One of the priorities for 2024 has been the investigation and repair of roof leaks, both for the Church and the Parish Centre. There had been a problem for some time with damp in a corner of the Parish Office near where the Office roof adjoins the wall of the Rectory. The damp had caused damage to plaster and paint in the corner. The contractor discovered that there was a fault in the construction of the lead step flashing on the roof. The lower layer of waterproofing (lead soakers) had been omitted when the Centre was built. The contractor lifted the tiles and the existing flashing, and fitted new soakers underneath. This appears to have fixed the leak, however it will take some time for the wall to dry out completely before it is redecorated.

There was a second leak in the Centre, near the top of the dormer. The location made it difficult to reach, because of the corrugated PVC roofing in the area, blocking access from ground level. The contractor put a crawling board on top of the PVC and was able to inspect the lead flashing, finding a small crack in the lead. This has been filled with a sealant.

For the Church, there had been a persistent roof leak near the organ. Despite repeated visual inspections, there was no obvious sign of cracks in the lead in that area or nearby. The leak was located by squirting water onto the roof from a hosepipe, working upwards until water started leaking into the Church. There had been a failure underneath the edge of a lead repair patch, which made the crack very difficult to see.

The Tower notice board had been suffering from rotting of the wood in some areas, along with unsightly discolouration of the back board. Our thanks go to the Church Caretaker Robin Day for undertaking extensive woodwork repairs. The refurbished board is now mounted on spacers, slightly offset from the church wall, to reduce the risk of water getting trapped behind the board.

There has been progress with the monitoring of the Archives Room, as reported last year. There had been concern from a professional archivist about the risk of damp in the unheated room. The measurements now cover a full year and show that Relative Humidity is within or close to the recommended range in all weather conditions. There has been no risk of condensation or mould growth on the archives during this extended period.

There has been a problem for some time with the mechanism for opening and closing the high clerestory windows in the Nave. The window cords have frayed over the years and no longer run smoothly over the pulleys. It is possible for the cord to come off the pulley wheel and get stuck at the side of the wheel, so the window becomes jammed, open or closed. It would be possible to replace the cords, but it has been decided to leave the windows permanently closed. There have been problems with pigeons entering the Church by these windows, if they are left open for any length of time.

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
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Other fabric work has included the replacement of a leaking water heater in the Church Served, also a continuation of the regular roof maintenance, clearing gutters and downpipes.

Stephen Thomas, Fabric Officer

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

Appendix 2
St Michael and All Angels' Church
Church Wardens' & Fabric Reports

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Worship and Services:

During 2024 we held our regular pattern of services with a Sung Mass on Sunday at 09.30 and a Said Mass on Thursday (although during the winter months we changed this to a Tuesday for reasons of energy economy). In addition, we celebrated certain Holy Days, such as Ash Wednesday, Dedication Festival, All Souls Day. The average attendance on Sundays is 39 and the average attendance for the midweek Mass is 8.

Lent and Easter: During Lent each Tuesday evening there was an opportunity to walk the Stations of the Cross. In Holy Week, Mass was celebrated on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday led by the Revd Canon Richard Pyke. On Maundy Thursday we observed the Mass of the Lord's Supper with the Washing of the Feet. On Good Friday morning Carol Bowman led a short interactive children's service which was attended by 38 adults and 18 children, and which was followed by a variety of craft activities whilst refreshments were served.

Christmas: Our Christmas celebrations commenced with our popular Crib Service led by Maggie Davis and Carol Bowman and was attended by 54 adults and 39 children. The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols took place on Christmas Eve with an attendance of 135. Many thanks to Glynne Butt and the choir for their superb contribution to this beautiful service. Christmas Morning Mass was attended by 38 people.

We had 3 baptisms and 2 services of Thanksgiving in 2024. Two weddings were celebrated. Additionally, there were 7 funerals which included one held at the Crematorium. One interment of ashes was held for our dear friend Adrienne Compton-James.

We are very grateful to our honorary clergy and to our clergy for their continued dedication and commitment to service which enables us to worship at St Michael's.

Community:

Abingdon School held 3 services during 2024. A Leavers' service, in June, with 272 in attendance; and Lower School and Parents and Boarders' Carol Services in December with a total of 560 in attendance. St Nicolas School held their Easter Service with an attendance of 187.

In April we were fortunate enough to enjoy a Service in which Cothill Boys Choir led the singing. Many thanks to Graham Howell for arranging this lovely service.

The Oxford Diocese Ride and Stride was held as usual. We opened the church to meet and greet the cyclists and offered refreshments as part of our cream teas series. Two keen cyclists rode to and from Oxford to support the causes of Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust and St Michael's.

The Albert Park Singers continue to use the church for their rehearsals and held two concerts during the year; both were splendid, joyful occasions.

During the year, the church was hired out to various organisations to hold concerts: Abingdon Music Festival, The Abingdon Chorale Choir, Bella's Family Choir.

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The church room is used by one group on a regular basis. It has also been hired on an ad hoc basis during the year.

We have continued to support various charities throughout the year: TAB, Tariro, Flexicare, Be Free Young Carers, Abingdon Foodbank, The Porch, Homeless Oxfordshire.

Volunteers:

One of the strong characteristics of St Michael's is the way that members of the congregation come together to help in so many ways. We should like to thank all our volunteers who contribute to keep things running smoothly. We could not manage without those who clean the church and church room; those who arrange the flowers; those who do vital odd jobs – small repairs, cleaning and repairing the linen or sorting out the heating or sound; those who make the coffee; the vergers at weddings and funerals; our sidepersons; those who manage publicity on the website. Nor should we forget to express our gratitude to our fund-raising team whose efforts have improved our financial situation and brought more music and people into the church. And we shouldn't forget our DCC whose members meet regularly for the benefit of St Michael's. We thank them for their commitment. We thank you all.

We would like to thank those who help in our worship: those who serve at the altar, our sacristans, our organists, readers and intercessors, our dedicated choir members, our bell ringers. Much work goes on behind the scenes; we must thank David Duce who prepares our service booklets for all our worship, and faithfully creates the pew leaflet each week so keeping us all informed. We are also blessed to have members of the congregation who are happy to lead worship, for instance in Silent Reflections, walking the Stations of the Cross, Advent walks.

Finally, a big thank you to Fr Paul for his leadership, support, kindness and love. Let us continue to pray for the Lord's blessing on him.

Louise Heffernan and Joyce Kelly, March 2025

FABRIC & ENERGY REPORT 2024

Routine Maintenance was conducted as usual in 2024. The boilers were serviced, PAT testing carried out, the organ tuned, fire extinguishers and alarms maintained.

In the heavy storms of the autumn and winter we had a major leak in the South Aisle. We have had 2 companies out to give us advice and quotes for any work which would need to be undertaken. The matter is ongoing and we hope to get it rectified before any damage occurs.

The DCC is keen for us to get a security light above the North Door and we have got 2 quotes for this work and hope to get DAC approval for this to be done.

The Fabric and Energy Committee are actively looking at ways in which we can heat St Michael's Church both effectively and efficiently. This is, obviously, an ongoing project.

Louise Heffernan and Joyce Kelly March 2025

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

Appendix 3
St Nicolas' Church
Church Wardens' & Fabric Reports

Services:

Our Sunday Services followed the normal pattern in 2024, with the 8.00am Parish Holy Communion (1662), alternating monthly with St Helen's, and our main morning service at 11.15am.

St Nicolas also hosted the Parish Ascension Day evening Communion and St Nicolas Evensong – both with the support of musicians from our sister churches and wider afield. At our St Nicolas Evensong we welcomed our Bowles Lecturer and Chaplain of Trinity College, the Reverend Joshua Brocklesby as Preacher. It was good to be able to make this connection which we hope will continue. We aim to zoom all 11:15 (and celebration) services, and also to make the sermons available on line.

In June it was good to be able to host a short Service for pilgrims at the start of their second day of the St Frideswide's Way walk. This new pilgrim route between Christ Church Cathedral and Reading Abbey follows the Thames for much of its route, and a booklet of the route and prayers / mediations for use by pilgrims features many of the churches passed – including St Nicolas' & St Helen's.

Our monthly Services of Communion by Extension at Bridge House and Old Station House continued, and during good weather it was good to welcome residents and carers from Old Station House to St Nic's for a short service followed by a time of fellowship.

We again provided the venue for the Church in Abingdon week of lunch time prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year the theme was Caring for the Planet with each session focussing on an aspect of ecological concern – plastic pollution; transport, effects on climate change on biodiversity etc. The after service refreshments offered further time to explore the topics. Many thanks to all who helped by stewarding and providing lunch.

It was a privilege to host the funerals of two long standing members of the congregation – David Howard and Andrew Birks. Both of whom had given many years of service on the DCC and as Warden (David) and Treasurer (Andrew).

Activities:

During the year a small group (headed by Roger Cox and Patrick Holligan) focussed on our environmental footprint – looking at how we use the building, energy consumption, travel to church, the consumables we use in cleaning, printing etc, how the garden is looked after, and the impact of environmental concerns in our prayers and services etc. You may have noticed some changes – the use where possible of locally grown flowers (many from congregation members' gardens); less use of (non-recyclable) oasis in flower arranging; turning unnecessary lights off etc; the 'blister pack' recycling point at the back of church. The Annexe refurbishment last year included improved insulation, double glazing, efficient heating and hot water etc.

At the end of the exercise we were delighted to be awarded the Silver A Roche Eco Award. But this is an ongoing process as we continue to seek to minimise our environmental impact.

For many years we have displayed a Nativity Scene in the south porch in the run up to Christmas which has caught the eye of many passers-by. In 2024 we arranged a Lent Display, consisting of a stark wooden cross with symbols of Holy Week being added week by week during Lent. This too

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seemed to attract attention, and will be repeated in 2025, we are thinking of other innovative ways in which we could use the porch as outreach even when we are closed.

Throughout the year the church was open Church to visitors – primarily on Monday mornings, but also for the OHCT Ride & Stride Day, Heritage Open Days, and to coincide with Saturday events in the Market Place. We often have other visits from various groups, both local and from further afield. Thank you to all who have assisted in Stewarding at these events. During Heritage Open Days we were also the venue for a ‘Picture in a Day’ art exhibition which we hope will be repeated in 2025.

The after-service coffee on Third Sundays offers the opportunity for the congregation to talk and get to know each other more. This was extended in September when our Harvest Festival service was followed by a Bring & Share lunch in Church. The traditional St Nicolas Day Lunch at Coseners House in December was attended by members from all three churches in the Parish.

There have been a few fundraising concerts for St Nic’s plus other Sunday afternoon concerts by Abbey Chamber Concerts. We also hosted two art sales by Abbey Artists and a couple of evening events by Mostly Books. In the run up to Christmas we welcomed back Cards for Good causes – selling charity cards and goods. Cards for Good Causes very kindly ‘shuffled up’ to enable us to be open for the Abingdon Extravaganza – with a sale of donated knitted goods, a tombola and a raffle featuring as star prize another of Julia’s magnificent Christmas Cakes.

Many thanks to all who organised and supported these events.

Thanks:

On behalf of the congregation, I’d like to give thanks to all those (ordained and lay) who have led services at St Nic’s over the year. Also, to Jenny for all her work as Treasurer. Thank you too, to those who have led our prayers and our music, and to the people who provide flowers.

Especially, I would like to thank everyone who has supported St Nicolas throughout the year. Whether through prayer, donations, or practical work week by week - doing those small tasks which we would only notice if they were not done.

FABRIC REPORT 2024

Twenty twenty-four has mainly been a year of preparation fabric wise. We reported last year we had started consultations on the refurbishment of the Blacknall Memorial / Blacknall Aisle. In 2024 we invited specialist conservators to look at and quote for work to both the Memorial & Aisle, and started discussions with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (essentially the Diocesan Planning Authority). It is good to be able to report that we have now received permission to move ahead with restoration of the Monument. We have also received permission to undertake some external drainage and guttering works which we hope will make the Aisle less susceptible to damp.

We commissioned a full report on the wall paintings, which concluded that they are Victorian, and suggested how they might be preserved into the future. We are now awaiting permission to conserve the walls of the Blacknall Aisle, after which we will need to decide on future conservation / preservation.

As a first step the wiring running along the edge of the painted wall was rerouted and placed in trunking.

We are very honoured that the family of Dr Andrew Birks, longtime Treasurer for St Nicolas and the parish, has decided to make a substantial donation in his memory towards the tri-partite project. Donations made at his funeral have also been designated for the work.

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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With conservation work on the monument planned to take place in early summer, we are now planning on a commemorative Service on 21 August 2025 - the 400th Anniversary of John & Jane's death.

During the year we also commissioned a Diocesan Sponsored Energy Audit to identify ways of lowering our energy usage. The main short term project suggested was to fit lower energy lights, and install motion detectors in areas where lights can sometimes be left on unnecessarily. Approval for this has now been achieved, and work should take place in spring 2025.

The final part of our Annexe project was completed with a number of badly eroded grave markers being moved into the old boiler room under the organ chamber. This required some repointing to the retaining wall by the steps down.

Routine testing of the lightening conductor, central heating, automatic doors and fire extinguishers was carried out during the year. The organ and piano were retuned regularly.

Eluned Hallas

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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Appendix 4
Faith Forum

Faith Forum is part of the parish's adult education provision, and gives an opportunity for members of the congregations and others in the parish to hear talks on aspects of the Christian faith and how Christian faith relates to other areas of life and culture. Beginning with the Spring 2024 series, the timing of Faith Forum meetings was moved from before to after the St Helen's 10.30 service, to make it more accessible to members of all three congregations. A buffet lunch is provided from 12.30pm, and the talks run from 12.45pm to 1.30pm (including Q&A time). The change of time, while not without some drawbacks, most notably the gap between the end of the St Helen's service and the start of Faith Forum, has proved popular, with 30 to 40 attendees at each talk. Thanks to Linda Hobbs, Hazel Glennie, and Elizabeth Simpson for their work in providing hospitality for Faith Forum.

The Faith Forum planning group continues to meet at the end of each Faith Forum 'season', to review the most recent programme and plan for future talks.

Faith Forum talks continue to be streamed on Zoom and recorded. Recordings are then made available on the parish website.

Topics covered in 2024 were the Sacraments (Spring 2024) and Ways to Engage with the Bible (Autumn 2024). Topics being covered in 2025 are 'Big Topics' in Theology (Spring 2025) and Personal Spirituality (Autumn 2025). Other topics being considered for future series include Environmental Theology, the Language of Liturgy, and Denominational Identities.

The planning group is next due to meet following the conclusion of the spring 2025 series, to agree speakers for the autumn series and to agree topics for 2026.

I would like to express my thanks to the members of the planning group: Norman Gee, Eluned Hallas, Linda Hobbs, Margaret Hoskins, David Pope, Rob Rutherford and Roderick Smith. I would also like to thank Nick Hallas for Zoom hosting, and Steve Thomas for ensuring recordings of Faith Forum make it onto the parish website. Thanks are also due to the speakers who provided talks in 2024.

Revd Dr Jennifer Brown
Associate Priest, Faith Forum Lead

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

Appendix 4
A Candle in the Window

You will remember that this online version of the Parish Magazine was started in April 2020 as one means by which members of the Parish could keep in touch during the pandemic. We are still going.

Our guiding principles for the Parish magazine remain the same:

- To represent the whole Parish by encouraging as many as possible to contribute
- To encourage a wide readership
- To inform, educate and entertain.

Is it fulfilling those purposes? It is hard to answer that – what would you say? We don't get much feedback! The only statistic we have is to look at the number of downloads. It is about 100 and printed copies are also available at St Nicolas and at the Parish Office for those who need them. Thanks to those who organise that. However, this raw statistic doesn't tell us if the magazine is being enjoyed or even read! A survey might help but I think someone else should take that on!

Thank you to all contributors and to you the readers. Please continue to contribute and to read! We think that the magazine provides a rich mixture. Please tell us how to improve it! Email candle@abingdonparish.org.uk

Rob Rutherford, Louise Heffernan and Eluned Hallas

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2024

Appendix 5
Abingdon Society of Bellringers

Tower Bell Ringers

The bells are rung every Sunday morning at St Helen's and St Nicolas', while Tuesday evening practices alternate at the two towers. On Friday afternoons we welcome boys from Abingdon School for their practice. This is followed by a lively session for our own youngsters, who are making excellent progress. Some are able to qualify for the Oxford Diocesan team in the annual National Youth Contest.

As part of the Oxon Ringing School (along with Dorchester-on-Thames, Witney and Kirtlington), adults are taught basic bell handing on Saturday mornings. This is possible with the generous help of volunteer experienced teachers from a wide area of Oxfordshire.

In 2024 we organised two Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) day courses to train new teachers of bell ringing. Quite a few new teachers attend the Ringing School to be mentored and gain experience in order to achieve accreditation.

Last year we rang for the occasional wedding and tolled for a number of funerals.

Visitors are very welcome to come up the tower to see the bells and ringing. We are happy to teach girls and boys (from age 10) who may be interested in learning to handle a bell and join in.

Brian Read, Tower Captain

March 2025

Handbell Ringers

In 2024 our team had eleven members, enough for all the events at which we were asked to perform.

We held ten weekly practices starting on 13th October. We again met in the Parish Centre each Sunday evening.

We provided background music at three church Christmas fairs this year (St Michael's, St Helen's and Dorchester Abbey). We entertained at three clubs, two church carol services and one care home. I also gave a talk on handbells to the Trefoil Guild.

I'd like to thank all the handbell ringers again this year for their helpfulness and for the fun we have had.

Susan Read, Handbell Group Leader

March 2025

www.abingdonbells.org.uk

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
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Appendix 6
Report on the activities of the Church in Abingdon

Parish Representatives:

St H: Alexandra Green

St M: John Clare

St N: Sue Holligan

Staff Changes:

There have been a few changes in the clergy over the past year: Revd David Masters was appointed as the new minister for the Peachcroft Christian Centre; Revd Ian Griffiths left Trinity and All Saints and Revd Georgina Bondzi-Simpson was appointed; Revd James Whymark was appointed Associate Vicar at Christ Church; Revd Dr A K M Adam (AKMA) joined the staff at St Helen's as the new House-for-Duty minister, and Revd Dr Charles Miller retired as Team Rector and Team Vicar for St Helens in November; Michael Ivey left Abingdon Community Church - Assistant Pastor Robin Howard and Duncan Graham will cover until a new minister is appointed.

Task groups and associated projects:

The CiA has continued to support a number of community projects and working groups that concentrate on specific areas of cooperation. These include:

Task groups

- The Christian Aid group held the Christian Aid Week.
- The Christian Forum column continues to appear in the Abingdon Round & About monthly magazine under the direction of the CiA Administrator Debra Mcknight.
- Several exchange visits of the Church Twinning group have taken place – one to Abingdon, one to Sint Niklaus and one to Argentan.
- The work of Desire continues.
- An Alpha launch night took place at Christ Church and St Edmund as a prelude to their Alpha courses.
- The work of Prayer Spaces continues in Abingdon schools with Ellie Ball in charge of schools in south Abingdon and Heather Hughes leading those in schools in north Abingdon.

Associated projects

- 35 Ock Street, a hospitality centre for the community offering a café and a listening ear, and meeting rooms for local groups and agencies.
- The Abingdon Bridge, which has continued to reach out to the youth of Abingdon, providing support, advice and guidance to an increasing number of vulnerable young people in the community.
- Abingdon Street Pastors who are out on the streets of Abingdon on Saturday nights
- Experience Easter, which now offers both live and online versions at Trinity Church.

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United activities 2024

January

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, theme: Caring for the Planet

Midday prayers at St Nic's Church.

The Inter-church quiz, at Christ Church, was won by Abingdon Baptist Church, and raised £104.37 for the charity SeeSaw.

The United Service at Our Lady and St Edmund's Church raised £90 for the John Ray Initiative.

February

CiA AGM

Connect youth weekend at Youlbury.

March

The World Day of Prayer service at All Saints Church organised by the CiA Administrator and volunteers from the previous WDP committee. The service for 2024 was prepared by the women of Palestine with the theme 'I beg you, bear with one another in love'. Revd Ian Griffiths led the service.

TrinityLearning's Easter Experience at Trinity Church offering both live and online workshops to KS2 school children to access the Easter story.

The procession of witness on Good Friday stopping in the Market Place for a short outdoor service led by Pastor Ellie Bal and joined by the fellowship group singers from Christ Church and musicians from the Abingdon Baptist Church. Mini Easter eggs and an Easter Tract were given out.

April

A Connect event at Christ Church.

Church Twinning Group arranged a visit to Abingdon for a group of women from Schongau.

May

Christian Aid week market place sale and a street collection raised £1024

June

The 4th Abingdon Passion Play in the Abbey Gardens.

Church Twinning invited visitors from Sint Niklaas to attend the Abingdon Passion Play.

Pre-election hustings for the General Election in July at Abingdon Baptist Church.

July

The South Abingdon Play & Activity Day event in Southern Town Park with Abingdon Community Church taking place. AVC and ABC had to pull out at late notice.

September

Christ Church and St Edmund both held Alpha launch nights, prior to the start of their Alpha courses.

A Connect event at Christ Church.

October

The Michaelmas fair service with Deacon Selina Nisbett leading.

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December

People from all the churches gathered in the Market Place to sing carols and give out leaflets detailing all the Christmas services taking place across Abingdon. Children's crafts, festive nibbles were also on offer.

The Peachcroft Christian Centre hosted a Christmas Day lunch for about 60 people from around Abingdon.

Finance

The grants paid in 2024 were:

- The Abingdon Bridge £2000 for their work with disadvantaged young people
- DESIRE youth network £1500 to help run schools weeks and larger events
- Abingdon Street Pastors £1000 to fund their ongoing help for people out at night
- Experience Easter £750 to help school children and their teachers explore the Easter story
- Archway £750 for their work with the lonely in and around Abingdon

Debra McKnight CiA Administrator

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Appendix 7
Report on St Nicolas School

St Nicolas CE Primary continues to flourish and serve the children and families of the parish and beyond. The connection with the Parish is very much valued, not least through Father Paul's ongoing commitment to take regular assemblies in school and the whole school church services at Christmas (Trinity Church), Easter (St Michael's) and at the end of the school year (St Helen's). This connection helps to enhance the school's commitment to its Christian ethos and values which are celebrated in the whole school assemblies on Mondays and in class collective worship during the week.

In accordance with the government's requirement for all Governing Bodies, the three core strategic functions of the school's Governing Body are: to ensure the clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school; to hold the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and to oversee the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent. During the 2023/24 school year, Staff and Governors spent time looking improving children's outcomes in writing, embedding the vision and values into school life, and improving school attendance across all year groups. The budget continues to be challenging as funding for education across the country is squeezed and so support from charities, like Christ's Hospital and from the St Nicolas School Association has been invaluable. The full Governors' report can be read [here](#) which provides further information.

At the end of the year, Governors and staff expressed their sincere thanks to Eluned Hallas who stepped down as Foundation Governor after 18 years. Although it was hoped that Father Paul Smith would take on this role, the demands of the Parish's interregnum have not made this possible. As a result there is a current vacancy and the Chair of Governors would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in learning more about this opportunity to serve the children of the Parish and wider community in this way.

Finally, it is with great pleasure that we also share the news of the very positive SIAMS inspection (for Church of England schools, in addition to OFSTED) that took place at the start of this academic year. The inspection was an opportunity to highlight the impact that the school's Christian vision has on the flourishing of the whole school community. The findings reflected the school's positive values, inclusive ethos, and high expectations where everyone is valued as an individual. The full report can be found [here](#)

Katrina Hancock, Chair of Governors

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Appendix 8
Report on the Abingdon Foodbank

Abingdon Food Bank continues to be an important lifeline for many families in need within our community. In the last year a new Manager has been appointed, he is initiating additional staff training to ensure Foodbank users have access to assistance with Benefit advice. The food bank is under Trussel Trust management.

Abingdon has two food banks, the Christchurch hub opens Tuesday and Friday mornings, South Abingdon Foodbank at Preston Road food opens Wednesday afternoon. There is an ever increasing demand for support with an increasing need from refugee families, these families and individuals have no recourse to public funds, therefore until employment is found there is a need for short term food support. The Christ Church hub also offers a regular language café aimed to integrate families and improve language skills.

The Parish of Abingdon continues to actively support the work of the Food banks. Regular donations of tinned foods as well as monetary donations help to support this important work and ministry.

We would like to offer thanks to all who have contributed in any way to the work of Food Banks locally and nationally. Without the work of paid employees, volunteers and those who donate, clients would be facing even more difficult situations.

Linda Hobbs
Food Bank volunteer (St H)