



St MICHAEL & ALL
ANGELS CHURCH
ABINGDON-ON-THAMES

ANNUAL REPORT
YEAR ENDING
31ST DECEMBER 2023

PERSONNEL 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2023

Clergy

The Revd Dr Charles Miller (Rector)

The Revd Paul Smith (Vicar)

Canon Charles Mashedor (Associate Priest until September 2023)

The Revd Dr Jen Brown (Associate Priest)

Authorised Preacher

Beryl Clements

Churchwardens

Joyce Kelly (elected 2019)

Louise Heffernan (elected 2021)

Deanery Synod Representatives

Sue Scott (from 2017 re-elected 2020) (from 2021 also on **Diocesan Synod** and **Bishops' Council**)

Alex Scott (from 2020 also on **Diocesan Synod**)

PCC Members

John Clare (until 2024), vacancy x2

DCC Officers

Vice-Chairman John Clare

Treasurer Susan Read

Secretary Glynne Butt (from September 2022)

DCC Members

Keith Bowman (until 2025)

Beryl Clements (until 2024)

Frank Debney (until 2023)

Sau Ming Ng (until 2026)

Nicola Ng (until 2024)

Hilary Clare (until 2025)

Laurie King (until 2025)

Peter Sumner (until 2026)

Maggie Davies (until 2026)

The **Standing Committee** is composed of the Vicar, Churchwardens.

The **Fabric Committee** is composed of the Vicar, Churchwardens, Keith Bowman, and Frank Debney.

Other Officers

Stewardship Officer	Susan Read
Electoral Roll Officer	Keith Bowman
Pew Leaflet	David Duce
Registers	Hilary Clare
Church Safeguarding Officer	Carol Bowman (until May 2023)
Church-in Abingdon Representative	John Clare

VICAR'S REPORT

Introduction:

I am most grateful to all who have made contributions to this report and to Joyce Kelly who has collated it for us. As we look back on another year, I want to outline some challenges and achievements which should be celebrated. At the end of this report are some matters pertaining to ministry and my concluding remarks.

Challenges:

Finance:

Our financial situation in St Michael's continues to be an area of great concern as was noted last year. You will see from the Accounts and from the presentation that will be given at the ADCM from our Hon. Treasurer, Susan Read, that we are running at a significant deficit.

The District Church Council (DCC) has been exercised by this matter throughout 2023 and in the Autumn, we had to suspend our Parish Share payments – which we did pay fully by the end of the year – in order to keep ourselves afloat for three months. I am grateful that the person who collects our monthly parish share payments in the diocese was generous enough to allow us to do this recognising that we had serious cash –flow problems. She was at pains to point out that this happens in churches from time to time. This problem has been increasing for churches in the diocese following the effects of the pandemic and also with the added burden of the cost-of-living crisis and increased energy costs.

Additionally, you will recall that the DCC wrote to members of the congregation to ask your views on us selling some of our investments. The majority of came back to the DCC saying that, as regrettable as this was, we should move forward with this. The DCC delegated this task to our treasurer. At the ADCM Susan will report the status of this to us.

The greatest pull and strain on our finances was the cost of energy. I am deeply grateful to David Duce for the meticulous way in which he has regularly reported to us in our weekly pew leaflet how much energy we have used. The amount of time David has spent in doing this is considerable and we owe him a great debt of gratitude for this information.

As part of the recommendation of the Energy Committee the DCC took the decision to introduce a winter policy for heating so that we could see whether, by having the heating on for less time in the week, and over a concentrated period when the church was most in use, would make a helpful difference to our large bills. Again, we shall see from the accounts whether that was achieved and to what effect. This should enable us to make a decision for next winter in terms of heating our building. We also joined the Parish Energy Basket which helps reduce our costs which was taken forward by Louise Heffernan, to whom I would like to extend thanks on behalf of us all.

I am pleased that some investigation from the diocesan heating contractor UNIHEAT did identify an issue with our boilers which was quite easily repaired and has made a positive difference to the warmth in the building.

Moving between St Michael's and St Nicolas for worship on Sundays

Many of you will be aware that getting from St Michael's after a Sung Mass to St Nicolas for their service has been challenging over the years. My predecessors testified to the challenge, so it is not new. A few years after my arrival, the service time at St Nic's changed from 11:00 to 11:15. Nevertheless, a prompt finish here and turnaround is necessary to arrive on time and with sufficient space before the service begins. This is why I have been insistent that I cannot engage in anything by way of conversation or other distractions before leaving. And I want to emphasise how much I appreciate people's understanding and adherence to this request.

At the end of 2023 there was one occasion when, for a set of exceptional reasons, I arrived later than I would wish, and the service started late. This caused a member of the congregation to write a letter of complaint to our wardens. Following receipt of that letter I arranged a meeting between all the wardens of both churches. This was an open and honest discussion which was beneficial to us all and transpired in making some small, but significant, changes to the course of the liturgy to aim to create more time between the 9:30 and 11:15 when I am rota-ed in both churches on a Sunday.

These changes include:

- i) Giving the welcome at 09.25 so that the first hymn can begin promptly at 09:30;
- ii) Returning to an assistant priest (if there is one present) and/or the Eucharistic Minister and Servers clearing the altar after Holy Communion and doing the ablutions. This enables me to pray the Post Communion Prayer and lead the Prayer after Communion sooner and move straight into the Notices;
- iii) For the altar party to leave soon after the final hymn begins and be dismissed in the vestry;
- iv) I then begin preparations to change robes if necessary and leave;
- v) On the occasions I go straight to St Nic's regardless of whether we may have finished extra promptly with the above regime I will not be able to stay for refreshments; (anything I need I endeavour to bring with me);

I hope by outlining these changes in detail it will communicate to those who are not aware of them that they have been implemented. Notwithstanding the increased traffic in town on Sundays, I think things have become easier.

Please note these changes i) to iv) will apply every Sunday regardless of who is presiding and whether or not I have to set off to St Nic's.

Pastoral Care

I am always grateful when I am told that someone is in particular need or has been taken unwell so that I can offer appropriate contact and support. As I have said many times before, I would rather be told ten times than not at all. So thank you to those of you who so helpfully communicate such information to me.

I do need to point out, however, that there are some occasions when this is not happening. I am not always kept informed of who may have significant news about someone in the congregation past or present, through contact by visiting or some other means, which would be important and helpful for me to know. So I simply add a renewed plea for people to be watchful and mindful of this so that as your pastor I can be in touch with those who need spiritual and pastoral care. I would appreciate your support very much in this respect.

Achievements and Things to Celebrate:

Liturgy and Music

I want to offer my thanks to those who contribute to our worship by reading, leading intercessions, and in acting as sidespeople, as well as those who provide and serve refreshments on a regular basis, Sunday by Sunday.

We have a small but very able team of servers headed up by David Duce. I want to extend my gratitude to them and to those who administer the chalice, as Eucharistic Ministers at the altar. I believe the time is coming when we shall need to seek to increase the number of Eucharistic Ministers which I shall seek to do during the period of Eastertide 2024.

Glynne Butt has provided us with a report of music and the activities of the choir. We have an outstanding choir which offer a richness and beauty to the worship of Almighty God in this place. Thanks to Glynne who coordinates the repertoire, singers, and leads the choir; to Hilary Clare who chooses the hymnody; and to Graham Howell at the organ and to those who cover for him.

Special Liturgical Occasions

Dedication Festival: 25 January 2023

It was a pleasure to welcome Fr Benji Tyler, Curate of Wantage as our preacher on this occasion assisted by Canon Toby Wright, Team Rector of Witney, who was an unexpected guest. It was a particular joy to have two additional priests at the altar on this occasion.

Holy Week and Easter

We welcomed Fr Nicholas Cheeseman, Diocesan Director of Ordinands for Berkshire, and Oxford, already well-known to us, as our preacher for Holy Week and the Triduum.

Fr Nicholas gave six addresses on 'The Lord's Prayer: The Lord's Passion' giving us a rich and challenging set of themes to lead us through this solemn time of year. He also celebrated the Said Mass beautifully on Wednesday evening.

Patronal Festival: Friday 29 September

We celebrated our Patronal Festival with a Sung Mass on the day of Michaelmas and welcomed the Revd Katherine Price, Vicar of Wantage, as our preacher. I was very sorry to miss this important day in our year at very short notice and I am grateful to Canon Richard Pyke, Honorary Assistant Priest in the parish, who stepped in and presided on that occasion.

Christmas

I want to record a brief word on Christmas. On Christmas Eve afternoon we welcome a good number of families to the crib service (as we had done to the Good Friday service in Holy Week). It is very pleasing that this service attracts so many people due to the hard work in preparation and on the day itself of Carol and Keith Bowman and those who assist them at the service.

Our annual Christmas Carol Service took place at 18:00hrs which included an impressive selection of carols sung by the choir and congregational carols. It was a great delight that this service which has been known over very many years as one of the highlights of our liturgical year brought over 170 people into church last Christmas Eve. This is more than double the previous year and so we are almost back to the numbers of congregants from before the pandemic. Thank you to the choir and readers and Laus Deo!

Fundraising

Thank you to Nicola Ng who has authored a report on Fundraising. In the midst of our financial challenges Nicola leads a group of people in fundraising, a great deal of which is initiated and supported by Helen Owen who works on our behalf from entirely from her home. We are hugely grateful to Helen for what she does for us.

The report gives us the wonderful news of how much was raised during the entire year: an extraordinary sum of money. In addition to Nicola and all the fundraising team as well as those of you who contribute to making events happen, I do wish to single out the enormous success of our Christmas Fair which raised the magnificent sum of almost £2.5K which was very significant increase on the previous year.

Fundraising is always hard work. It takes imagination to think of new and different events and attractions. We have managed to achieve that in 2023. My deepest thanks to everyone.

Ministry:

Canon Charles Mashedor

We were aware that at some point during the year we would be bidding farewell to Canon Charles Mashedor, our House for Duty Associate Priest, and his wife, Felicity. Their farewell service took place at St Helen's on Sunday 3 September during the Sung Eucharist. It was a special occasion when we gave thanks for Charles' significant contribution to the life of the parish. He was a pastor and friend to many including those of us at St Michael's.

Charles' farewell Sunday was also an emotional occasion as we bid him farewell into retirement in Blockley, Gloucestershire. Charles was originally licensed for three years, and he couldn't have been called to serve among us at a more critical time when he did so much during the pandemic.

We were blessed to have him for a further year, the bishop agreeing to extend his licence. We shall remember his time here with happy memories and much affection. As the Team Rector said in presenting Charles and Felicity with the parish's farewell gift: 'Things will never be the same again.'

Honorary Assistant Clergy

I want to offer my thanks to all our Honorary Assistant Clergy who give so much of their time and energy by presiding and/or preaching as part of the Sunday rota. We are also fortunate to have Gwen Bevington visiting us to preach in her capacity as Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) and Beryl Clements, from our own congregation, as an Authorized Preacher. All these people bring a breadth to our worshipping life and a blessing to both our own congregation and the life of the whole parish. We thank God for each of them and continue to pray for them as they continue to serve us in their ministries.

Associate (House for Duty) Priest – The Revd Dr Andrew Adam (AKMA)

Following interviews on Monday 2 October we were fortunate to appoint Fr AKMA as our new Associate (House for Duty) Priest. Fr AKMA and his wife Margaret moved into Enock House in November and Fr AKMA was licensed by Bishop Gavin on 30 January.

Fr AKMA, as part of his role throughout the parish, will give up to six hours a week across both my two congregations: here and at St Nic's. This will include ministering in both churches as part of the Sunday liturgies. Also, I had identified, what I described as 'the pressure points' for me, and where extra priestly ministry would be valuable: including Mass cover in the week and home communion visits here. At St Nic's, when needed, Fr AKMA will help support and cover the monthly services we have for the two Care Homes of Old Station House and Bridge House.

There will be other areas of ministry which will be done centrally on our behalf including Marriage Preparation for wedding couples as well as Baptism Preparation. Additionally, given Fr AKMA's gifts as a New Testament scholar and teacher, there could be occasions when he may be able offer a talk, or even a series of talks. This is something that Fr AKMA has expressed as a possibility in the future once he has settled into his role.

I believe we shall be blessed by his experience, teaching gifts, pastoral heart, and deep sense of humour. Please keep Fr AKMA and Margaret in your prayers as they settle into life and ministry in the parish.

In Memoriam - Adrienne Compton-James

It was with great sadness that we bid farewell in the Lord to Adrienne who had been a faithful servant in St Michael's for so many years. Adrienne died on 25 October, after an illness courageously borne, managing to come to Mass almost up to the end of her life among us.

She had worked as sacristan meticulously bringing her own particular organisation and style to the role, sung in the choir and took a keen interest in our musical life and coordinated the organists Sunday by Sunday and on Holy Days and Festivals.

We were able to celebrate Adrienne's life well at her Funeral Service in November attended by many from across the churches in Abingdon and other town organisations. We give thanks for a life well-lived and pray that she may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Concluding Remarks:

Finally, I conclude by expressing my gratitude to every one of you for the part you play in the life of our congregation. My special thanks go to Joyce and Louise, as our wardens, for the ways in which they support me as Vicar, as for all they do on our behalf. I want also to express my gratitude to David Duce for his tireless work in preparing the Sunday liturgies with me and for Holy Days and weekday

celebrations. Not least I thank him on behalf of us all for the Sunday pew leaflet which is an exceptional publication on a weekly basis and not only appreciated by the congregation and those who read it across the parish but by the number of subscribers on the e-list.

This comes with every blessing, in the knowledge that in the midst of the challenges God is with us and that joys always lay ahead, together with the assurance of my prayers for you all.

Father Paul Smith, Vicar March 2024

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Worship and Services:

During 2023 we held our regular pattern of services with a Sung Mass on Sunday at 09.30 and a Said Mass on Thursday at 12.30 (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 44 and the average attendance for the midweek mass is 10.

Easter: in Holy Week, Mass was celebrated on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

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 inter-active children's service which was attended by 27 adults and 18 children, and which was followed by a variety of craft activities whilst refreshments were served. This was followed by the Liturgy of the Passion in the afternoon.

The Lighting of the New Fire and Easter Vigil was celebrated on Holy Saturday, and this was followed on Easter Day by The Sung Mass of the Resurrection.

Christmas: our Christmas celebrations commenced with our popular Crib Service, led by Carol Bowman, and was attended by 62 adults and 40 children.

The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols took place on Christmas Eve with an attendance of 178. Many thanks to Glynne Butt and the choir for their very significant contribution to a beautiful service.

Christmas Morning Mass was held at 10.00 and attended by 40 people.

We had 4 Baptisms, 3 Weddings, and 5 Funerals in 2023

We are incredibly grateful to our honorary clergy and our clergy for enabling us to worship at St Michael's.

Outreach:

Abingdon School held 4 services during the 2023. A Leavers' Service in June, with 200 in attendance; and Lower School and Parents and Boarders' Carol Services in December with a total of 440 in attendance. A Choral Evensong Service was also held with an attendance of 45 people.

St Nicolas School held their Easter Service for the first time in several years.

The Oxford Diocese Ride and Stride was held as usual. We opened the church to meet and greet the cyclists and offered refreshments.

The Albert Park Singers continue to use the church for their rehearsals and held 2 concerts during the year; both were splendid occasions.

Abingdon Passion Play held a Come and Sing of *Handel's Messiah Part 2* in aid of fundraising for the 2024 Passion Play.

During the year, the church was hired out to various organisations to hold concerts: The East Oxford Community Choir, Abingdon Music Festival, The Abingdon Chorale Choir.

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

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

Volunteers

As usual, we would like to thank all our volunteers who help keep things running smoothly: those that come in and do the cleaning, the flower arrangers, the safeguarding officer, those who do the odd vital jobs – fixing things or sorting out the heating or sound, those who make the coffee, the vergers at weddings and funerals, the faithful creator of the pew leaflet and contributors to the website. We thank you all.

Many thanks

To all who help in our worship – those who serve at the altar, our sacristans, our organists, readers and intercessors, our dedicated choir members, our bellringers, to the DCC members, and all our sidepersons.

On a sadder note, we would like to thank Adrienne for her faithful and loyal service as sacristan and choir member.

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.

Joyce Kelly and Louise Heffernan February 2024

CUP OF LIFE: ECUMENICAL RETREAT 2023

This retreat was held in January using Joyce Rupp's book: *the Cup of Our Life: a guide to spiritual growth*. A small group of us met for a two-hour session once a week for six weeks and committed to fifteen minutes of personal reflective prayer each day and to sharing something of the experience of our prayer with the group. Thanks go to Glenys Enticott for her kind hospitality each week; her front room was far more comfortable than meeting in the church room would have been.

Sue Sheppy February 2023

ELECTORAL ROLL 2023

In March 2023 the roll underwent a simple revision to consolidate the amendments which had been made since the previous year's revision.

At the conclusion of the 2023 revision the roll contained 71 names, three more than at the same the previous year. During the year there had been one name removed and four new names added, one of which was a transfer from another church in the parish. There was one change of address notified but no changes of name.

Keith Bowman January 2024

FABRIC AND ENERGY REPORT 2023

Routine maintenance was conducted as usual during 2023. The organ was tuned, the PAT testing carried out, the fire alarms and extinguishers maintained, the heating system serviced.

As a result of the Quinquennial Inspection 2021 the urgent work was carried out in early 2023.

In early November, the boilers failed, and initial inspection suggested that there was a problem that could not be repaired. However, a second opinion was sought from Uniheat with a positive outcome. The boilers were fixed and the Uniheat engineer, at Ming's request, also investigated and sorted out a problem with the underfloor heating which has been much more efficient since then. The Fabric and Energy committees (combined) will research options to replace the boilers in due course, so that we can be more prepared to deal with future issues.

Since September, our electricity contract has been brokered for us by the Parish Energy Basket. In December we were able to join the Parish Energy Basket for gas. This gives us some security against fluctuating prices and also lower unit prices though higher standing charges. Our gas and electricity usage has been faithfully monitored each week by David Duce, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. The change in service times over the winter has resulted in a reduction in usage and the monthly cost is lower than the equivalent period last year, though admittedly it has been a mild winter so far.

Louise Heffernan and Joyce Kelly February 2024

FUNDRAISING REPORT 2023

The total income raised for St Michael's Church in 2023 was in excess of £6,000, up more than £2,000 from 2022. This outstanding achievement was made possible by the efforts of our fundraising committee working tirelessly behind the scenes, and by everyone else for their help, engagement, and participation in the fundraising events. They would not have been made possible without you!

In March, Guy Davis's Piano Recital 'A Celebration of Spring', sponsored by Sydenhams Timber and Builders Merchants, brought in an audience of at least 70 people and raised £816.47 for church funds. We felt truly privileged to have been given a wonderful performance of music by Beethoven, Brahms, and Rachmaninov, by our very own Maggie and Allan's son!

Our annual Lent Appeal supported Tariro, Homeless Oxfordshire and Be Free Young Carers and the sum of £1,144.75 was shared equally between them.

In April Anna Steven, Chelsea Gold Medallist and NAFAS judge came back to St Michael's to create stunning flower arrangements in celebration of the Coronation of King Charles. Chancellors sponsored the event by giving us £10 for every Chancellors board erected in private gardens. The event was also generously sponsored by Abingdon Bathrooms and Kitchens. A sum in excess of £700 was raised from the event. Huge thanks to our team of cake bakers who generously supported the event with their delicious creations!

Our series of Cream Teas, in May, June and July were extremely popular, the first was to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles, and in July Fr Paul delighted us with a presentation of a selection of some of his beautiful paintings. Glynne was present at each Cream Tea and added to the ambience of each event with her beautiful playing. Huge thanks to our hardworking team of helpers who were behind the scenes moving furniture, setting up tables, preparing posies, serving teas, coffees, and cakes, selling raffle tickets, and washing up and clearing away afterwards! And not to forget our wonderful cake bakers who supported these events with their lovely scones and cream cakes! The sum of £1,044.49 was raised in total for these events.

The Wantage Brass Band and Youth Brass Concert in July was a huge success, with proceeds of £1,247.23 split equally between St Michael's Church, TAB and Tariro.

Louise and I were cyclists for the annual Ride 'n' Stride in support of the Oxford Historic Churches Trust and raised £325 which was shared equally between St Michael's and the OHCT. Thank you to everyone who generously sponsored us.

The Christmas Fair was by far the most successful one ever held at St Michaels, due to extensive publicity, and the rigorous planning and hard work of the organisers, together with the support of a strong and dedicated team of helpers. The sum of £2,342.69 was raised, an increase of 34% from last year. Glynne was present to play a seasonal miscellany of favourite music on the piano and Susan Read brought her handbell ringers which also added a festive touch to the vibrant atmosphere. The event was generously sponsored by Abingdon Eco Clean, and, as has been the tradition for previous Autumn/Christmas Fairs 10% of the proceeds were donated to a charity, Archway being chosen for 2023.

St Michael's church is very grateful to Albert Park Singers who generously donated £1,209.00 to St Michael's Church from the proceeds of their very successful Summer and Christmas Concerts.

The church calendar is buzzing with fundraising events for 2024, so this year should prove to be another busy year!

LABYRINTH INSPIRED ACTIVITIES IN 2023:

Silent Reflections

2023 marked the 12th year of our monthly *Silent Reflections*. In the normal way these are held on the last Tuesday evening of the month from 7.30 – 8.30 pm. This year, as people arrived, they sat around the outer edge of the labyrinth while the theme was introduced. After which, they either remained where they were or moved round the church for shared silence and personal reflection, with the opportunity to walk the labyrinth. Themes were produced this year by Fr Paul, Rosalind Rutherford, Sue Scott and Sue Sheppy and the material, as well as being available in church, was circulated to those on our Silent Reflections List, some 45 people. It was also put on St Michael's website by David Duce. At 8.30 pm, we gathered for the final prayers, after which refreshments were offered in the south transept. From the eleven sessions, 70 visits were made overall by 14 individuals from various churches in Abingdon.

Circle Dancing/Moving into Stillness

Weekly *Circle dancing*, led by Mary Williams, returned to church in January with strong and sustained support. Our monthly *Moving into Stillness* sessions also resumed at the beginning of the year. Elizabeth Mitchell led us once again into a beautiful combination of dancing to Taizé chants interspersed with two periods of silence, for which we were seated round the edge of the labyrinth. There were twelve sessions in all with 96 visits made by 12 individuals. A central display for both sessions always include lit candles, and, at the end, the light is sent out to those in most need of it.

Advent Labyrinth Walks

The church was open on Tuesday the 5, 12 and 19 December between 11am and 12 noon. Material for reflection and simple activities were available for the different stages of the walk. The Advent themes this year were *the season of right doubt*, *a hand on my shoulder* and *the one who astounded Mary*. These were based on three poems drawn from Janet Morley's anthology of poems for Advent to Epiphany *Haphazard by Starlight*. Advent candles were lit in the centre of the labyrinth. Prayers were read at the different sessions by Carol Bowman, Fr Paul, and Sue Sheppy. 26 visits were made overall from 13 individuals.

One or two requests came in this year to Carol Bowman for individual labyrinth visits. In addition, a women's prayer group from Newbury came to explore walking the labyrinth as a new prayer experience for them, having read Sharon Garlough Brown's book *Sensible Shoes: A story about the spiritual journey*.

Sue Sheppy February 2024

MUSIC REPORT

St. Michael's has hosted a number of concerts in 2023 ranging from our regular Albert Park Singers and Abingdon School events to visiting choirs and orchestras and a 'Come and Sing' Messiah in support of Abingdon Passion Play. Our beautiful piano is a great draw and has been shown off to good effect in the Rachmaninov 2nd piano concerto with the East Oxford Community Choir. We have also received

requests to make it available for practice sessions, one of which resulted in an extremely generous donation to the church.

When at full strength, our own choir regularly produces music of a high standard. We now aim to sing an anthem whenever enough voices are available and have held some sociable 'singing teas' to learn new repertoire. Graham Howell's input and expertise has been invaluable, and we would like to say a big thank you to him.

The Christmas Eve carol service is perhaps our annual highlight. This year, even with only a single rehearsal, the standard was as high as ever, and was much appreciated by the large congregation who packed the church - leaving us short of both chairs and service sheets!

Glynne Butt February 2024

SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2023

The DCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults) and has worked in line with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

Our congregation has not been able to fill the role of District Safeguarding Officer (the person responsible for all Safeguarding matters in our congregation) since Carol Bowman's resignation. Carol had ably carried out this role with commitment and dedication for many years for which we are deeply grateful. I wrote to express my own thanks to Carol, and on behalf of the DCC, and presented Carol with a gift of a painting in recognition of her service.

At the time of writing a successor for this important role is being sought by Fr Paul. With Safeguarding being paramount both for children and young people, all vulnerable adults, (and indeed all of us), the role of District Safeguarding Officer in each congregation in the parish is vital.

St Helen's has now managed to fill the vacancy that had arisen in their congregation, but the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer is yet to be filled.

I am pleased to report that there were no Safeguarding concerns or referrals made during 2023.

The DCC and congregation need to be reminded that until the vacancy of District Safeguarding Officer is filled, the role falls to me exclusively as is publicised on the website. This is far from ideal. However, I should emphasise that until someone is able to fill the role it is essential that people note that should there be any Safeguarding concerns at any time then they should be reported to me immediately. Should I be absent then please ensure that one of the Churchwardens is contacted who will be in touch with me as soon as possible.

Please do commit to your prayers that someone shall come forward to fulfil the role.

With many thanks

Fr Paul March 2024