



*St* MICHAEL & ALL  
ANGELS CHURCH  
ABINGDON-ON-THAMES

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

**YEAR ENDING**

**DECEMBER 2024**

**(REVISED VERSION 3)**

## **PERSONNEL 1 JANUARY-31 DECEMBER 2024**

### **Clergy**

The Revd Dr Charles Miller (Rector) (Retired November 2024)  
The Revd Paul Smith (Vicar)  
The Revd Dr Andrew K M Adam (House for Duty Associate Priest)  
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 (re-elected 2024) also on **Diocesan Synod** and **Bishops' Council**  
Alex Scott (re-elected 2024) also on **Diocesan Synod**

### **PCC Members**

John Clare  
Hilary Clare  
Vacancy x1

### **DCC Officers**

Vice Chairman	John Clare
Treasurer	Jenny Metcalfe
Secretary	Glynne Butt

### **DCC Members**

Keith Bowman (resigned July 2024)  
Beryl Clements (until 2027)  
Maggie Davis (until 2026)  
Laurence King (until 2025)  
Nicola Ng (resigned February 2025)  
Sau Ming Ng (until 2026)  
Peter Sumner (until 2026)

The **Standing Committee** is composed of the Vicar and Churchwardens.  
The **Fabric and Energy Committee** is composed of the Churchwardens, Beryl Clements, Frank Debney, Nicola Ng and Sau Ming Ng.

## **Other Officers**

Stewardship Officer	Nick Hallas
Electoral Roll Officer	Keith Bowman
Pew Leaflet	David Duce
Registers	Hilary Clare
Church Safeguarding Officer	Fr Paul Smith
Church in Abingdon Representative	John Clare

## **VICAR'S REPORT 2024**

### **Introduction:**

Thank you to those who have contributed to this annual report and to Joyce Kelly who has once again collated it for us. As we look back on another year, we must be thankful for the faithfulness of God amidst both our times of celebration as well as challenge.

### **Finance:**

Why begin with Finance? I suspect I begin with it because I know that it has been a matter of acute concern for us, as it is for many churches, not just in our own diocese, but throughout the Church of England, not least in the poorer parts of the country. While that should not shy us away from facing up to our own challenge in this respect, it does remind us that we are fortunate while others are not, and we are not alone in facing financial difficulties.

Susan Read resigned as our Treasurer at our last Annual District Church Meeting (ADCM). She had worked hard in recent years on our behalf and the work was burdensome in that she was already treasurer for St Helen's and Parish Treasurer. We owe a debt of gratitude to Susan for all she did for us. Her resignation left a significant gap to fill.

In conversation with Jenny Metcalfe, treasurer at St Nicolas', it seemed that there was some scope for her to assist with our finances. After discussion with the wardens and with Jenny herself, I was delighted that Jenny very generously offered to be our treasurer.

Jenny has worked exceptionally hard since then in familiarising herself with our accounts. In attending DCC meetings she has presented in advance a financial report in such a timely way that DCC members are able to understand the position in advance of each meeting. Her presentations have been clear, accessible and helpful and I should like to offer her our grateful thanks for all her conscientiousness and time.

In our Stewardship Renewal which invited us to consider our annual giving and make a Thanksgiving Offering on the Feast of Christ the King, we were blessed in receiving an increase in giving. Jenny's Financial Report at the year end, and the presentation of the accounts for that period, will show us that we are in a better position. Thank you for all you contribute week by week by way of pledged giving.

### **Liturgy and Music:**

The worship of Almighty God is what we are made for and this is what we express when we come to the Eucharist, Sunday by Sunday. We are blessed in having a wide range of clergy, both on our team, and among our Honorary Assistant Clergy (those retired with Permission to Officiate from the bishop) who both preside and preach on our Sunday rota.

We are gifted with the preaching of both Beryl Clements from our own congregation, and Gwen Bevington, Licensed Lay Minister (PTO). Preaching is of a high standard and something which we should both cherish and be aware of how fortunate we are in this respect. Our worship would be incomplete without the contributions of our readers, those who lead intercessions, act as sidespeople, and our fellowship diminished without those who provide and serve refreshments each week.

We owe our gratitude to our very able team of servers led by David Duce. I want to extend my gratitude to them and to those who administer the chalice, as Eucharistic Ministers at the altar.

Glynne Butt has provided us with a report of music and the activities of the choir, but I want to conclude this section by adding a very big thank you to her, and our choir, for the very significant gift they add to our worship. St Augustine said: “those who sing, pray twice”. It is a favourite saying of mine, as it points us to the truth that singing (and I would include all offering of music) cannot be separated from our offering of prayer. Thanks to Glynne who shares the direction of the choir with Graham – and for the glorious organ music, including the sometimes unexpected Gospel fanfares and final voluntaries he expertly plays! I want also to thank Hilary Clare for the way in which she diligently and devotedly chooses our hymnody week by week.

### **Pastoral Care:**

You will have heard me say, and read from my reports on countless occasions, how I am always grateful when I am told that someone is in particular need. As I have said many times before, I would rather be told ten times than not at all – for without being told directly I cannot know.

Thank you to those of you who ensure that I am kept informed in this way – it is a real help to my pastoral ministry which I make a priority – and to the person who is in particular need. There are still occasions when people slip through the net which is regrettable. So if I can respectfully make a plea for vigilance in this area I would be grateful.

### **Children’s Church:**

During the year a group of seven people met with me to discuss the possibility of us running a Children’s Church on the first Sunday of the month during the Mass. There had been interest from a small number of families, but it was very much felt that we should respond.

When people volunteer in most areas of church life there is a statutory requirement for Safeguarding Training at particular levels depending on the roles, and also DBS Criminal Record Checks. These can take time to process and in some cases this applied in this situation.

It is regrettable that we failed to get this initiative off the ground before the end of the year. I am sorry for that. Most of those volunteering are involved in a number of other church initiatives and meeting together proved challenging and we failed to achieve what we had hoped. At the time of writing, however, Children’s Church has met twice (Candlemas, 2 February, was the first occasion) and plans are under way for April in addition to the Good Friday Children’s Service.

### **Special Liturgical Occasions:**

#### *Holy Week and Easter*

I was pleased to welcome the Revd Canon Richard Pyke, Honorary Assistant Priest in the parish, to lead us in the first three days of Holy Week. Richard opened our imagination to consider what it was like for Jesus to be taken prisoner. Alongside this he gave us both informative and helpful insight

into the current crisis in the Prison Service in our country, talking about forgiveness and the rehabilitation of prisoners, helping us to reflect on these themes as Holy Week began.

I was joined by our Associate Priest, the Revd Dr Jen Brown, for the Triduum when we continued the theme Richard had set for us.

### *Christmas*

I want to add a brief word on Christmas and start by saying how sorry I was not to be with you having completely lost my voice the morning after St Nicolas' Carol Service – there was no connection! – and developing sinusitis.

I am deeply grateful to those who stepped in to cover my absence and to the Revd Dr Jen Brown for leading our annual Christmas Carol Service which was a huge success. Before the Christmas Carol Service, families and children gathered for the crib service which attracted a good number and wide interest led by Carol and Keith Bowman, Maggie Davis, and others, to whom we offer our thanks as well as to those who provided refreshments.

### **Fundraising:**

I want to thank Nicola Ng for her hard work in leading the Fundraising Team who arrange events during the year and to all those who support her, especially Helen Owen, who has done a lot of work from home gaining sponsorship for events and raffle prizes for our Christmas Fair. This year's annual event made a huge sum which exceeded any other year. Many people work very hard in making this annual event possible, from start to finish. I extend a heartfelt thank you for an event that the local community look forward to supporting each year.

Many other fundraising events took place throughout the year and are mentioned elsewhere in this report including our now popular Saturday afternoon cream teas and a variety of concerts, all of which I am most grateful for.

### **Ministry:**

#### *The Team Rector's Retirement*

At the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in April, the Team Rector, the Revd Dr Charles Miller announced that he would be retiring later in the year, in November, after eighteen years of faithful ministry in the parish. His final Eucharist would take place in St Helen's, on All Saints' Sunday, 3 November. This would be primarily a time of thanksgiving and prayer as we worshipped together. A separate occasion for farewells, speeches and presentations, took place on Sunday 22 September, at the Hilton Hotel, where members of the parish dined together at lunchtime.

Approximately four hundred people gathered in St Helen's on the afternoon of All Saints Sunday to worship together and to give thanks for Charles' long ministry among us. Friends and colleagues joined members of our congregations, people from the local community, civic representatives and colleagues from the deanery, to bid Charles farewell, and a long and rich retirement and Godspeed.

It wasn't long after that date that the PCC began to learn about the process of the appointment of a new Team Rector. Since then things have been moving apace and at the time of writing this report the Parish Profile is being finalised, following a very helpful Open Meeting for the parish on Sunday 26 January 2024.

## **The Team:**

Since Charles' retirement, as we began in the late Autumn to navigate how we wanted to work together, I have been very well supported by my colleagues Fr AKMA and the Revd Dr Jen Brown. I have been encouraged by the way we have been able to work together both during times when things are going reasonably smoothly and when the demands of ministry are more challenging for us. I am most grateful for all their work – both of them are working more time than they would typically do in accordance with their working agreements. We seek to be accountable to each other as to how hard we are working and the reciprocity between us in sharing duties has been generous.

We continue the well-established pattern of meeting each week on Wednesdays after the 10:30 Eucharist at St Helen's to pray together, plan the rota under my direction, discuss any matters ranging to other planning including weddings, baptisms and funerals. This also includes the time-tabling of meeting with wedding couples for consultations: the first point of contact in making an application for marriage in the parish. A further priority of each meeting is confidential sharing concerning any pastoral concerns which affect any members of all three congregations.

One of the things we have introduced is to invite Jackie, our Parish Administrator, to come in at the beginning of each meeting to bring to our attention any matters which she needs us to action. This has opened up communication between the Parish Office and the clergy team and I see this as essential and an improvement in communication especially during this time of vacancy.

Our honorary clergy and LLMs were very helpful (and continue to be) when the first Sunday rota of the vacancy was allocated. I want to emphasise again just how fortunate we are to have so many gifted and experienced retired clergy in our parish and to thank them for their dedication in supporting us with their time, gifts and energy.

## **Concluding Remarks:**

In conclusion, thank you to each and every one of you for your ongoing support and contributions to our common life here at St Michael's in this part of the parish. I want to record my particular thanks to each DCC member and to Joyce Kelly and Louise Heffernan, our wardens. I am indebted to them for their support and care for me as Vicar and for all they do on our behalf.

I want to thank David Duce for the considerable amount of work he does to support the liturgical life of our congregation: in working with me on every Sunday liturgy, Holy Day, and weekday Mass celebration and for thinking ahead. He has continued to provide us with a weekly Sunday pew leaflet of an exemplary standard, not just full of news, but with a range of reflections of great depth which most congregations and parishes do not receive with such regularity. We are not the only beneficiaries of the pew leaflet; you may be aware that it goes to a large number of subscribers to our e-list.

Finally, I wish you all every blessing, and the assurance of my prayers, as we continue as faithful pilgrims together into another year.

*Father Paul Smith, Vicar, March 2025*

## CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2024

### **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 Parks 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.

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*

### **ELECTORAL ROLL 2024**

In March 2024 the roll underwent a simple revision to consolidate the amendments which had been made since the previous year. At the conclusion of that exercise the roll contained 67 names. During the year there have been three names removed and one new name added. There were no changes of names or addresses notified.

In 2025 we will be required to compile a new roll so everyone who wishes to be on the roll will have to complete a new application.

*Keith Bowman, March 2025*

### **FABRIC AND ENERGY REPORT**

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*

## **FUNDRAISING REPORT 2024**

The total income raised for St Michael's Church in 2024 was almost £9,500, almost £3,000 more than the income for 2023. This magnificent achievement would not have been made possible without the commitment and dedication of a wonderful team of helpers/volunteers.

In January, we welcomed Wantage-based Crown Singers for their first concert at St Michael's, 'Here is the Little Door', a concert of music and readings for Epiphany and Candlemas including music by Poulenc, Byrd and Howell. Despite the cold weather, there was a sizeable audience, and the concert was a great success.

The total raised from our summer series of Cream Teas was £2,720.47. This sum would not have been made possible without our team of volunteers and our 'home-grown' pianists Glynne Butt, Catherine Ng and Guy-Bernard Davis who delighted everyone with their wonderful playing. Abingdon School covered the cost of printed publicity and Helen Owen sourced excellent prizes for each of our raffles. Our bakers tirelessly slaved at the stove to provide us with a fabulous mouth-watering array of delights. All-in-all the success of this series was measured by the efforts of a fantastic team and the loyal support of our neighbours, friends and parishioners.

In April, Harmony InSpires, a ladies' a cappella choir, came to St Michael's for their second concert, 'Harmony in Springtime', a medley of 4-part harmony in a wide variety of styles from musicals, pop classics and beautiful ballads. We were delighted by their beautiful singing and the guest appearance of Wantage-based Caritas Children's Choir, whose focus is to raise funds for Christian Aid projects.

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

In September, Louise and Nicola were cyclists for the annual Ride 'n' Stride in support of the Oxford Historic Churches Trust (OHCT) and raised £361 which was shared equally between St Michael's and OHCT. Thank you to everyone who supported us.

In early October, after a long absence Huw Rhys-James returned to delight us with a piano recital in the first of our Autumn Series of concerts, with a repertoire by Haydn, Chopin and Brahms. Several weeks later Pavlova Winds returned to St Michael's, also after a long absence, to delight us with a wonderful variety of stylish and sensitive playing of quintet music by Holst and Hindemith. Thank you to Glynne for organising these concerts.

The Christmas Fair was by far the most successful one held at St Michaels, due in part to extensive publicity, the rigorous planning and hard work of the organisers together with the support of a strong and dedicated team of helpers. Proceeds were up by 22% from last year. The Abingdon Handbell Ringers were present again and added a festive touch to the vibrant atmosphere. The event was generously sponsored by Breckon and Breckon, and, as has been the tradition for previous Autumn/Christmas Fairs 10% of the proceeds were donated to a local charity, the chosen charity for 2024 being Flexicare (Oxford and Abingdon), a sitting service for children with disabilities.

St Michael's Church is very grateful to Albert Park Singers who donated to us 50% of the proceeds of their Summer and Christmas Concerts.

Our annual Lent Appeal supported TARIRO, Homeless Oxfordshire, Be Free Young Carers and the sum of £370.00 was shared equally between them.

St Michael's annual charitable donation of £1,078 was shared equally between the chosen charities Tariro and Homeless Oxfordshire.

The church calendar is buzzing with fundraising events for 2025, so this year should prove to be another exciting year! Watch this space!

*Nicola Ng, March 2025*

## **LABYRINTH INSPIRED ACTIVITIES**

### **Silent Reflections:**

Our monthly *Silent Reflections* continue to be held on the last Tuesday evening of the month from 7.30-8.30pm. This year the sessions began in the church room where the theme was introduced. After this people were free to stay where they were or move into the church for shared silence and personal reflection, with the opportunity to walk the labyrinth. Themes this year were produced by Fr Paul, Rosalind Rutherford, Sue Scott, Sue Sheppy and Lottie and Peter Sumner. The material, as well as being in church, was circulated to those on our *Silent Reflections* list, some 48 people. It was also put on our website by David Duce for wider distribution. At 8.30pm, we gathered for final prayers in the church room, after which refreshments were offered. From the eleven sessions, 80 visits were made overall by 21 individuals from various churches in Abingdon and others who saw the invitation on our noticeboard and came to join us.

### **Circle Dancing/Moving into Stillness:**

At the beginning of the year, Mary Williams, our teacher since 2008/2009 was forced to give up as she was in a good deal of pain awaiting a hip operation. We are very grateful that Elizabeth Mitchell, who leads our monthly *Moving into Stillness* sessions (a beautiful combination of dancing to Taize chants interspersed with two periods of silence) volunteered, in addition, to take on the regular sessions on the first and third Thursdays of the month. In winter months, we used the church room, as it was less expensive to heat and we did not want to change our day of the week. There were ten *Moving into Stillness* sessions in all with 102 visits made by 17 individuals. A central display for both sessions always includes lit candles and, at the end, the light is sent out to those who most need it.

### **Advent Labyrinth Walks:**

The church was open on Tuesday 3rd, 10th and 17th December between 11 and 12 noon. Material for reflection and simple activities were available for the different stages of the walk. The Advent themes this year were *Waiting*, *Accepting* and *Journeying*. Advent candles were lit in the centre of the labyrinth. Prayers were led at different sessions by Sue Sheppy, Sue Scott and Carol Bowman. 23 visits were made overall by 14 individuals from Abingdon and beyond.

Requests continue to come into Carol Bowman for individual labyrinth visits. Most notably this year a repeat, anniversary, visit from Cerian Townsend and a first time visit by Jim Bailey, a member of the Northumbria Community, who has agreed to lead a labyrinth retreat for us in 2025.

A third was from Cici Jensen-Edwards, secretary of the Australian Labyrinth Network, who has subsequently written a two-page article reflecting on her visit to our labyrinth, outlining its history and including pictures. We hope to make a folder of this newsletter for all to see.

*Sue Sheppy, March 2025*

## **MUSIC REPORT**

Music plays an important part in our worship. Although small in numbers, at full strength, some exceptional voices mean that our choir is able to offer singing of a high order. We are fortunate, in addition, to have an organist of the calibre of Graham Howell, whose inventive arrangements and improvisations enliven our services. Graham shares the direction of the choir with Glynne Butt.

Our musical highlight was, once again, the Christmas Eve Carol Service. This is an occasion when we invite other musicians to swell our ranks and apparently an invitation to sing is much sought-after! Christmas Eve 2024, with Graham's arrangement of 'O Holy Night' as one of the highlights was said to be the best ever. (But actually members of the kind and generous congregation tell us that most years....!)

Having a fine piano has enabled us to host a number of concerts this year and we have enjoyed piano recitals by Huw Rhys-James as well as concerts by visiting choirs. Piano music has enhanced both the Cream Teas and Christmas Fair. Other visitors have included Cothill School and Abingdon School. Albert Park Singers rehearse weekly in the church and it is the venue for their twice yearly sell-out performances. Their generous donation of 50% of concert proceeds is always a welcome boost to our finances.

*Glynne Butt, March 2025*

## **SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2024**

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

This year it falls to me to write this report since the role of Safeguarding Officer for our congregation remains vacant. This continues to be a cause of concern and worry to me, not least because I cannot continue indefinitely to fill this gap. Furthermore, I believe there are questions as to how appropriate it is for me as Vicar, to be Safeguarding Officer.

We are very fortunate in that the Parish has an experienced Safeguarding Officer in Pat Hudson. Worshipping at St Helen's, (but not their congregational Safeguarding Officer which did fall to her predecessor), Pat's experience goes back to her work in scouting and now extends towards being much involved in part of the training team in the diocese.

During last year Pat worked hard to make herself known to each congregation. I continue to work with Pat to see how the vacancy for Safeguarding Officer here can be filled.

The good news is that there were no referrals from this congregation that were reported during the year.

*Father Paul, March 2025*