

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2023

Tuesday 18 April 2023, at 7pm in Church

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2022 ADCM (*attached*) p 3
3. Matters arising from those Minutes
4. Team Vicar's Report p 13
5. Presentation of the Electoral Roll for Saint Nicolas Church
6. Financial Report p 18
7. Other Reports (*attached*)
 - 7.1 Statistics p 22
 - 7.2 Church Warden p 22
 - 7.3 Fabric p 23
 - 7.4 Safeguarding p 24
 - 7.5 Ministry of Welcome p 24
 - 7.6 Donations p 25
 - 7.7 Bell ringing p 26
 - 7.8 House Group p 26
 - 7.9 St Nicolas DCC p 26
 - 7.10 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC p 28
 - 7.11 Proceedings of the Abingdon Deanery Synod p 28
 - 7.12 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon p 29
8. Nominations, Elections and Appointments
 - 8.1 Nomination of TWO church wardens
 - 8.2 Election of TWO DCC members to serve until 2024
Election of THREE DCC members to serve until 2026
 - 8.3 Nomination of TWO Deanery Synod Representatives to serve until 2026
 - 8.4 Nomination of a PCC representative to serve 2026
 - 8.5 Appointment of Church-in-Abingdon representative(s)
 - 8.6 Approve the nominations of stewards p32
9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest (Chairman's discretion)
10. Team Vicar's Address

E Hallas. Acting Hon. Sec.

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2022
Saint Nicolas Church
Minutes of the Annual District Church Meeting held
on Wednesday 30 March, 7pm in Church & via Zoom

Present: Revd P A Smith (Chairman), Mrs J Bishop, Dr H Bishop,
Mrs C Cannon Brookes, Dr A Colborne, Mrs S Cox, Dr R Cox, Mr D Dawswell, Mrs
E Currey, Mr T G Currey, Mrs J Fishpool, Mrs E. Hallas, Mr N Hallas,
Mrs S Holligan, Dr P Holligan, Mrs J Lawrence, Dr G Lewis, Mrs H Mafabi,
Miss P Randles, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond, Mr J A Richmond,
Dr J Smith, Mr R Smith

The Team Vicar welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.

1. **Apologies for absence** The Team Rector
2. The **Minutes of the 2021** Meeting, circulated in advance, were Proposed: GC, Seconded GL and approved nem con.
Subject to correcting:
Item 6 – Financial Report – the unrestricted deficit was £5k (*not £5*)
And to noting Dr Andrew Birk’s withdrawal from the DCC due to ill health
3. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere.
4. The **Team Vicar’s Report**, previously circulated, was noted.
5. **The St Nicolas School Education Trust** (See also Appendix 1)
The Team Vicar read out a statement¹ from the Team Rector concerning the creation of The St Nicolas School Education Trust, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the broad aims of education in service of the Church of England, and a continuation of links between the Parish, the Diocese and St Nicolas C E School. The ex-Officio Trustees are the Team Rector of PAoT, the Team Vicar of St Nicolas, and the Church Wardens representing St Nicolas.

PAS reiterated that the Trust was at the very beginning of an exciting journey and commended it to the prayers of the congregation. The key next steps would be

- the appointment of additional Trustees to bring a range of skills to the Board
- consideration of the best investment vehicles for the Trust’s portfolio
- determination of the Trusts project focus, within the broad area of ‘Christian education’

There was considerable interest from the congregation. It was recognised that external specialist support would be advisable.

6. **Electoral Roll.** The St Nicolas’ section of the Parish Roll as presented contained 64 names. This was an increase of 2; comprising 2 additions and no losses.

¹ See extract Appendix 1 p

7. Financial Report. The Hon. Treasurer, Dr J Metcalfe, presented the accounts for the year ending December 2021 – with reference to a report distributed in advance (Appendix 2).

Regular income and expenditure had been roughly balanced during the year, with no large swings in either. Overall, funds were £5k better at the end of 2021 than at the start.

She highlighted a few key areas of interest:

- General fund income was greater than expenditure in 2021 due to a utility cost refund after overpayment on estimated bills throughout 2020/21 (when there was less church use due to Covid closures).
- Some debtor / creditor balances carried forwards had also been written off after detailed investigation – benefitting the balance sheet.
- There had also been a realised gain in investment value as the church's investment portfolios were realigned to better reflect the underlying funds.
- At the start of the year, designated (ie assigned by the DCC for specific purposes) funds included £12k of donations allocated but not yet passed on. This was all paid out – to the designated charitable purposes - during the year, contributing a one off £12k expenditure.
- Blacknall income (restricted to expenditure on the historic fabric of the church) was down in 2021.

The fund had been used to pay for the work to the tower – which had also benefitted from external grant funding.

The DCC had agreed a deficit budget for 2022, including expenditure for Administrative support for the Team Vicar. However steps were being taken to increase income eg from fundraising and use of the church building. Letters encouraging Gift Aiding donations would be sent out shortly.

The Team Vicar thanked JM for her work, including moving the St Nicolas accounting processes online. The three churches now all use the same systems which should allow for greater compatibility and possibly reduced costs going forward.

8 Other Reports.

8.1 Statistics 2021

Baptisms: 1

Funerals: 1

Memorial Services: 0

Weddings: 1

Wedding Blessing: 0

8.2 The Church Wardens' Report was noted

8.3 The Fabric Report was noted.

8.4 The Safeguarding Report was noted, and thanks expressed to JF for her work as Church Safeguarding Officer.

8.5 The Donations Committee Report was noted.

8.6 The Bell Ringing Report was noted, and thanks expressed to HB and all the ringers.

8.7 The Church Garden Report was noted, and thanks expressed to HB for all his work over the years, and to Sue Cox for offering to look after the garden going forward.

8.8 The House Group Report was noted

8.9 The Report on the proceedings of the DCC was noted.

8.10 The report on the proceedings of the **Abingdon-on-Thames Parochial Church Council** was noted.

Archdeacons Report : in answer to a question on the Archdeacon's Parish Review PAS explained that although the report had not been made generally available, there was, as far as he knew, no reason why interested congregation members could not request a copy from the Parish Office or Secretary to the PCC.

The Report had made a number of recommendations some of which had already been implemented and others which were under consideration.

8.11 The report of the proceedings of **Abingdon Deanery Synod** was noted.

8.12 The Report of the **Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon** was noted.

The Chairman thanked all contributors for their reports, and their work throughout the year.

9 Nominations, Elections and Appointments.

9.1 Church Wardens:

Eluned Hallas Proposed J Smith, Seconded A Richmond

The nomination would go forward to the Annual Parochial Meeting.

The Vicar reminded members present that further nominations could be accepted between the ADCM and the APCM.

9.2 DCC Members:

H Bishop,
H Mafabi
and J Fishpool

were all retiring by rotation but had expressed a willingness to restand.

Dr A Colborne also expressed a willingness to stand

All four were Proposed Roger Cox, seconded EH and elected by acclamation

Three elected vacancies remain.

9.3 PCC Representatives:

J Fishpool

9.4 Church-in-Abingdon Representative.

Julia Bishop wished to stand down as CiA Representative, and was thanked for all her work over the years.

Subsequent to the meeting Sue Holligan agreed to represent St Nic's on the CiA

9.5 Stewards

8.00am: Mrs J Lawrence, Mr B Tonks

11.15am: Dr A Colborne, Mr D Dawswell, Mrs J Fishpool, Miss A Hallas, Mrs E Hallas, Mr I Hallas, Mr N Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs S Holligan, Mr P Holligan, Mrs H Mafabi, Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond, Mrs C Scriven

Proposed GC, seconded PRL, elected by acclamation

10 Other matters of parochial or general church interest

SH queried whether there was a Parish response to Net Zero?

There are no formal policies, but the Parish and all three churches were aware of the issues. All churches were monitoring their carbon footprints and were seeking initiatives to reduce energy consumption.

Were there any Parish initiatives to support Ukrainian Refugees?

Not as a Parish, the CiA and PNA were taking the initiative and would seek support from the town.

11 Team Vicars Address

The Team Vicar reflected on the new (post covid) life of the church, on bonds of discipleship and being open to change.

Going forward he encouraged members to consider their relationship with God, and in particular making things new through prayer.

He thanked all those keeping the church open on Mondays, and suggested we should consider how to set aside a place for silent, private prayer.

A recent legacy to St Nic's offered the possibility of commissioning a votive candle stand, which would be a priority for the new DCC.

His Sabbatical, originally planned for 2020, would now take place in August-November 2022. Regrettably a proposed trip abroad would not now be possible, but it would be good to have some time set aside for personal rest, refreshment and renewal. He was confident worship and pastoral considerations at St Nic's would be well supported during his absence – by members of the Parish Team, and visitors from further afield.

He finished by re-iterating his thanks to all, present in person and on zoom, for their support during the year, and thanking colleagues, in the Abingdon Clergy Team and Honorary Assistants for their shared ministry,

The meeting closed with prayer at 8:25pm

Appendix 1

The Team Rectors Report on 'The St Nicolas School and Education Trust, Abingdon'

At the end of 2021 the Charity Commissions approved the establishment of 'The St Nicolas School and Education Trust, Abingdon'. So I want to explain the establishment of this Trust and why it is a significant for our common life and witness: I will do that in precis form with

- a. History
- b. Steps since 2019
- c. Key aspects of the Trust
- d. Where we are today

A. HISTORY

My predecessor as Vicar of Abingdon in the 1920s took the important step of establishing St Nicolas Primary School under the aegis of what was first called 'Abingdon St Nicolas – School and Land Trust'. The trust's purposes were chiefly to establish the school, to provide teachers and to use the school for religious purposes congruent with the doctrine and aims of the CoE. Over the decades the status of church schools changed, but the first trust has remained the legal owners of the land on which both St Nicolas School and the St Nicolas Pre-School stand.

A substantial sum of capital was added to the trust by the sale of land within the benefice of the Vicar of St Helen's and the Wardens of St Nicolas and that 'nest-egg' was the basis of a portfolio of investments of which the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance were the custodial trustees for the managing trustees, *viz.*, the then Vicar and the successive church wardens of St Nicolas.

The accruing portfolio was sizable enough so that in the first decade of this millennium the trust borrowed from itself to help underwrite a major capital development of the school premises. (Since then a 'recouplement' scheme has been in place by which the trust paid itself back each year so that over a fixed term the sum paid-out is retrieved for the investment portfolio.)

Since the last such pay-out to the school shortly before I came as Team Rector (May 2006) there have been no significant draw-downs on available income or principal so that the portfolio has continued to grow. Occasional small yearly disbursements have been made to the school in the form of Bibles for the leavers. The trustees still manage the rental of land and space for the St Nicolas Pre-School who rent the facility for a small annual sum.

B. 2019 ONWARD – BRINGING THE TRUST'S ASSETS INTO THE PARISH

Previous warden Andrew Coker foresightfully recognized that there was wider scope for the trust as first established both in terms of a more productive approach to managing its investments and of applicability of the trust's resources. In 2019 began a period of discussion between the then St Nicolas wardens and me as trustees, and the Team Vicar, about bringing the trust into complete control within the parish. On legal advice from the firm of the Diocesan Registrar (Winckworth Sherwood) it was agreed

to establish a **Charitable Incorporated Organization** (CIO) with trustees who would exercise complete control over the received assets and property of the original trust and oversee the trust's charitable purposes. That decision was then approved both by the Diocesan Board of Education and, on their advice, the Oxford Diocesan Trustees in 2021. They worked from a draft constitution for the CIO which then (with their in-put) achieved final form in the same year. Key changes to the original trust document include:

- A somewhat wider definition of 'education' which extends such work beyond St Nicolas School into the parish and town;
- Enlargement of the number of trustees to a maximum of 7: 4 *ex officio* trustees, 2 *appointed* trustees, and 1 *nominated* trustee.
- Full responsibility for care and use of the investments and property of the CIO to the local trustees.
- Trustee links with the PCC and the ODBE through the appointed and nominated trustees.

The aims of the CIO are consistent, though somewhat broader, than those of the original trust. The basic theme of the new purposes is, like those of the original trust, *educational in service of the Church of England* (as anchored in the Apostles Creed); and while St Nicolas School remains of key interest to the trust, that is complemented by wider interests that can serve the spiritual formational and educative interests of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames in its ministry and mission.

C. WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The CIO is now registered with the Charity Commissioners, and the three *ex officio* trustees are beginning to take forward 'internal' issue related to how the trust will function. That includes 'by-laws' or operational protocols and decision about how the investment portfolio will be handled for maximum yield in the service of the CIO's charitable purposes. Once the trustees have a provisional formulation of protocols, which will include guide-lines for auctioning its charitable work then the trustees will seek to build the wider trustee membership.

D. KEY ASPECTS OF THE TRUST

The Trust will begin its new life with an investment portfolio which at the end of January 2022 was valued at £ 2,024,330.61. So the trustees will not wish to bury that talent but make it work for them in the service of education in and to our parish, town and wider area.

The origin of the first trust and its subsequent history is unquestionable linked to St Nicolas Church. The fact that St Nicolas' wardens are *ex officio* trustees witnesses to that; and, as many know, there is an established link of school governorship and pastoral care with St Nicolas and its Vicar. The new trust underlines that by bringing the Team Vicar of St Nicolas on as an *ex officio* trustee in his own right. That is important since it is imagined that the Team Vicar will of course have a key part in formulating initiative in with and around St Nicolas Church which might receive material support from the new trust.

Appendix 2

Financial Report to the Annual Church Meeting 2022

The accounts for 2021 show a deficit on the unrestricted funds of £6,573 (before transfers between funds and a gain of £4,516 on investments) and on all funds of £8,442 (before a gain of £13,573 on investments).

Nevertheless the General Unrestricted Funds showed a surplus of £6,019 before fund transfers and a gain on investments. But there are a lot of reasons underlying these figures.

General Unrestricted Funds

There are several reasons for the surplus in these funds. The gas and electricity meters were not read in 2020 or the first half of 2021. We were therefore running on estimated readings. In late summer we received refunds from SSE of £4,500 for an overspend on gas and electricity. Also there were figures in the creditors list at the beginning of 2021 but their provenance was unknown. After much work on the lists of creditors and debtors just over £2,000 has been written off the money we owed. Without the utility refund and the deletion of creditors our surplus before investment income turns into a deficit.

Designated Funds

It will be noted that our designated funds have fallen by about £12,500. Three designated funds were reduced to two funds in the late summer and to one in autumn. The continuing fund is the re-ordering fund that holds the money that has been ear-marked for the toilet block renovation. So far £673 has been spent on this project.

The other designated fund contained money that had been pledged for charitable donations. This pledged money had not been put as a creditor in the accounts and therefore paying the pledges resulted in a reduction of £11,922 in church funds.

Restricted Funds

The Restricted Blacknall Maintenance Fund received a reduced payment of £11,886 in 2021 due to the Blacknall charity receiving less income in 2020 because of Covid. The accounts only show £7,386 coming in during 2021 as £4,500 of 2021's income was put in as an income in 2020. I will be stopping the practice of putting £4,500 of the next year's income into the previous year. The 2021 accounts therefore have 2 reasons for a lower Blacknall income in 2021- a lower profit made by the charity in 2020 and £4,500 of the income being put into the previous year.

Investments

At the start of the year the only investments were held in the two endowment funds, the general fund and a small inherited investment in the re-ordering fund that has since been sold. The amount in the general fund investment was greater than the total amount of money in the general fund and therefore this investment has been moved to the Restricted Blacknall Fund and a smaller investment bought for the General Fund. The Blacknall Fund has had its investment added to. The reason for putting money into investments is to benefit from a better income on savings but has the risk that capital can drop. Fortunately in 2021 the capital has increased and moving the General Fund investment to the Blacknall fund resulted in the General Fund having a realised gain of £3,822.

Work on the West Tower

The cost of the work on the west tower was spread over 2020 and 2021. The majority of the expense occurred and the grants were received in 2021. We were fortunate to receive a grant of £2,000 from the town council and £25,000 from Historic England. The overall cost of the project was just over £49,000. We also received money from the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme which resulted in the final cost to St Nicolas Church being £14,559.50, £7,277 being in 2021. This was therefore covered by the Blacknall money received in 2021

Donations 2022

I would refer you to the donations committee report but in summary just over £548 was sent to charities in 2021 from collections together with Gift Aid.

Parish Share

Our Parish Share in 2021 was £33,839 and we have subsequently received a refund of 2% i.e. £684. In 2022 our Parish share is £34,304.

Utility Costs

As everyone is all too well aware gas and electricity prices are rising rapidly. These rises are even greater for the church as there is no price cap on fuel prices for businesses and we are on a business and not a residential tariff. For example our gas costs during these winter months is estimated at about £600 per month. Electricity costs are on top of this.

Income and Expenditure

Our income in 2021 was higher than in 2020 because of increase in regular donations and in loose plate collections and was higher than pre-pandemic income. This may partly be due to some income for 2020 arriving late and some donations being received from people previously unable to donate because of their inability or reluctance to return to church until Covid cases had reduced or they were immunised.

Our expenses were reduced because of lockdowns and reduced activity. This certainly reduced heating costs as well as incumbent's expenses, administration costs and consumables (candles, communion wafers and wine, batteries etc.) and also we no longer had the cost of a vergier.

Summary

The overall figures look good but there are many variables that make interpretation of these accounts difficult. The bottom line is that we are covering our costs but with the massive rise in gas and electricity, the increase in use of the church and a strong desire for us to do more than just tick over we all need to see how income can be increased.

I wish to thank Nick Hallas for managing the gift aid recording and promptly claiming all that we are entitled to every three months.

Jenny Metcalfe

ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, ABINGDON
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES 2021

	General Funds £	Designated Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2020 £
INCOMING RESOURCES							
From Donors	46,120		46,120	30		46,150	40,458
Other Voluntary Incoming resources			0	80		80	565
Income from Investments	1,423		1,423	1,267		2,690	2,936
Fees	736		736			736	583
Other Income	659		659	40,532		41,191	23,459
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	48,938		48,938	41,909		90,847	68,001
RESOURCES USED							
Diocesan Parish Share	33,839		33,839			33,839	34,009
Church Activities	6,955		6,955	4,971		11,926	27,069
Expenditure on building work		673	673	38,807		39,480	
Charitable Donations	1,225	11,919	13,144			13,144	
Governance Costs	900		900			900	1,200
TOTAL RESOURCES USED	42,919	12,592	55,511	43,778		99,289	62,378
NET INCOMING RESOURCES	6,019	-12,592	-6,573	-1,869		-8,442	4,523
Transfer between funds	359	523	882	900		1,782	
	-900	-359	-1,259	-523		-1,782	
REALISED GAIN ON AN INVESTMENT	3,822	61	3,884			3,884	
UNREALISED GAINS ON INVESTMENTS	632		632	3,010	6,047	9,689	5,724
	3,913	225	4,139	3,387	6,047	13,573	5,724
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	9,932	-12,367	-2,434	1,518	6,047	5,131	10,247
Balances Brought Forward 1.1.2021	31,334	28,739	60,073	101,614	43,084	204,771	194,423
Balances Carried Forward 31.12.2021	41,266	16,373	57,639	103,132	49,131	209,901	204,670

ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, ABINGDON
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES 2021

	General Funds	Designated Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
BALANCE SHEET							
Fixed Assets and Investments	33,402	6,997	40,400	84,092	49,131	173,623	101,509
Current Assets:							
Debtors	5,573		5,573			5,573	15,385
Short term deposits	10,250	8,000	18,250	4,310		22,560	73,722
Cash at bank	-5,100	1,375	-3,725	14,729		11,004	29,241
	<u>44,125</u>	<u>16,373</u>	<u>60,497</u>	<u>103,132</u>	<u>49,131</u>	<u>212,760</u>	<u>219,856</u>
LIABILITIES	<u>2,858</u>		<u>2,858</u>			<u>2,858</u>	<u>15,085</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u><u>41,266</u></u>	<u><u>16,373</u></u>	<u><u>57,639</u></u>	<u><u>103,132</u></u>	<u><u>49,131</u></u>	<u><u>209,901</u></u>	<u><u>204,771</u></u>

Reports to the 2023 Annual Meeting of St Nicolas Church

4 Team Vicar's Report

Introduction:

It was a relief and joy during 2022 to find that much of our common life has been restored following the restrictions of the pandemic which was a time of weariness. While the Covid virus is still very much around and care needs to be taken it is no longer an interruption in the way it was.

Following this introduction, I want to share some of what I have observed as challenges within the year, but also those things which have been achieved and are cause for celebration. The first part of my report will outline those challenges and the second part those things which have been achieved.

Before moving onto that, readers will be aware that between mid-August 2022 and mid-November 2022 I took my sabbatical leave which I had postponed twice due to the pandemic. Quite a lot of time during the preceding months were taken up with planning this and I want to express here, both to my Team clergy colleagues, and to our honorary clergy, my gratitude for their hard work and support in my absence. I know that there was need for further cover at one point due to some colleagues being unwell at the same time and so I am enormously grateful for everything that was done during that challenging period.

At the end of this report I shall have some reflections on the sabbatical itself and how I would like to effect some changes in 2023 and beyond as a result of those significant months for me.

Challenges:

1. *Volunteers*

I want to express my gratitude to everyone who plays their part in our church community and especially for those who work in hidden ways and are not always 'seen'. There is certainly a warm, healthy, atmosphere and spirit among us and in that I rejoice and say more under achievements.

There is a tendency in many congregations throughout the church today, especially following the pandemic, that so much of what needs doing falls to the same, few people. The number of tasks exceed that of the people available. And this is being experienced in both of our other churches across the parish, so we are not alone. Some churches in our deanery are suffering in very similar ways.

This is not easy to resolve but I shall be thinking of how we spread our net further in this regard. Furthermore, as I shall reiterate later, I think it is important that we prioritise what we can do and realise that 'to do less is sometimes to achieve more', as unfashionable as that aspiration may be. Because it goes against the grain in the church and the world it takes courage. It also means that we have to share resources and that can mean, where appropriate, to be brave enough to work with others in the parish and

not on our own. It is good that this is already a noticeable and developing feature in our parish life.

2. *The St Nicolas School Education Trust*

You will recall that this was mentioned at last year's ADCM. The re-working of the trust had begun and both looking at the investments and the trusteeship was a matter that the Team Rector was taking forward with Eluned Hallas and myself.

That piece of work is considerable and, I emphasise, is necessary before any process of thinking about the missional aspect of using the funds within the Trust as important and vital as that is. Unfortunately, for different reasons progress in looking at the investments and the appointment of new trustees has remained dormant during 2022.

Following the Team Rector's Sabbatical from January to post-Easter 2023 work on this will resume urgently.

3. *Administration for the Vicar and Appointment of Personal Administrator*

During the year, it was disappointing not to appoint a PA for me, after a second attempt. At the first attempt there were no applicants that the panel felt suitable to interview at that point. In May a second attempt was made and someone was interviewed, with suitable experience and qualities, but did not accept the post.

At present much of my time, as Vicar, is spent administratively – by that I mean at my desk. I believe this is having a serious, detrimental impact on my ministry. Alongside the many number of meetings, it is reducing both the amount of time I can spend with people, and my visibility in the town which has been an important part of my ministry and which I understand people value. The matter does need to be addressed during 2023 to see if a different solution is possible as the current situation is not sustainable.

Achievements and Things to Celebrate

1. *Finance*

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our former treasurer, Dr Andrew Birks, for many years of dedicated service to the office of treasurer in our church. As you will be aware, he has been succeeded by Dr Jenny Metcalfe to whom I want to pay tribute here.

Jenny has done an extraordinary amount of work which has borne much fruit for us. She did not have the benefit of any hand-over from Andrew, due to his increasing ill-health, and the way she has meticulously worked things through has not only taken her hours, but is simply second-to-none. Our income (as her report will indicate) could be better, but there is no doubt that we are in a healthier position than in recent years. Given the fact that this achievement has also coincided with a global pandemic, makes it even more remarkable.

2. *Toilet and Kitchen Block*

So many of you will be aware that for several years we have sought a solution to the challenges of the Toilet and Kitchen Block: its need for vital refurbishment and to make it equally accessible for all.

During 2022, under the leadership of Dr Gwyneth Lewis, Colin Sanderson, and a very dedicated team of others in our congregation, further plans were drawn up. The DCC worked alongside the team to ratify plans in order for a builder to be found. Due care was taken to keep costs as modest as possible. With generous donations from individuals, fund-raising, grant applications – and a pledge from me in my sermon at our Patronal Festival to initiate two fund-raising events in 2023, - we have done very well

After some hitches along the way, and inevitable frustrations, this project has certainly moved apace during the year. Excitingly, it now has an achievable outcome. During the first part of 2023 it is envisaged that we shall see the building refurbished with a kitchen, storage including flower arranging facilities, and a fully accessible lavatory.

There will be other opportunities to do so but I want to record here my personal and huge debt of gratitude to Gwyneth, Colin and all the team!

3. *Our Health and Well-being*

The above phrase is now in ‘common parlance’. Like any other phrase which is often used, it can lose its importance. In this context I use it to describe our spiritual health and well-being and the ways in which we are both living together and functioning as a community of believers in this house of prayer.

Notwithstanding what I said at the beginning about our resources of volunteers being stretched, I have noticed that we are in very good heart and, I believe, of one mind and purpose: which is to worship God and build one another up. When we do that, other things naturally spring from it in due-time: our ever-deeper commitment to those we welcome and support, as well as finding ways to reach out to our community.

Concluding Remarks

2022 was a memorable year for me in that I was finally able to take my sabbatical leave which had been postponed. There was disappointment in that I could not go overseas as was my original hope and plan and being at home in the Vicarage for much of the time was not how I would have wished it to be. I had to accept the practicalities around that and, in the end, it proved a real blessing to be in my own surroundings, comfortable and using my time and space quite differently.

Moreover, I do want to thank people who were aware that I had to spend much of time here for respecting my privacy, even during the time of the death of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II! (Most of you will know what an effect that huge change in our national life would have meant to me!)

For those of you who have not had the opportunity to read about the details of my sabbatical a report is available in the February 2023 edition of *A Candle in the Window*, the parish magazine. It was an enriching time and very good to make my first visit to Mucknell Abbey in Worcestershire to complete the retreat for the sabbatical.

Furthermore, it was very exciting to embark upon what has become a new journey into learning to paint; to work with the challenges and joys of watercolours and to discover a latent talent wishing to grow and develop. Inevitably, a sabbatical provides the opportunity to reflect over a period of time and to consolidate one’s thinking. I realised

again just how much I seem to do which is not part of what is listed in the ordinal. The ordained life has changed since 2000, when I was ordained, as has the face of the church. But my time caused me - among other things – to reflect on how I might re-ignite some of my gifts and develop better ways of working. This may well include the discipline of committing space in an already committed diary for more time for training, study, and retreat all of which are strongly encouraged by the bishop and for which we, as clergy, are expected to give account at our annual Ministerial Development Review (MDR).

I have concluded that better ways of working include the hard work of consolidation and how and what could be done jointly with my two churches, not least in reducing the doubling-up of meetings. I am delighted that on my return I was able to meet with the wardens of both churches who agreed that meeting with me together is something they are happy to do: a significant step which shall make a difference. The wardens of all our churches have met together for some time, on a social basis to get to know each other and develop their working relationship. This has proved to be what it set out to achieve which is laudable. I see this as an extension of that.

I do not see the meeting of wardens with me to benefit me alone, but to enable us to work collaboratively and for them know – within the essential boundaries of confidentiality – what is going on in each of the two churches. So much of what each church is doing is assumed to be known and this is not the case. Given the length of time I have been here, I believe that addressing the kind of ‘separation’ that continues in the way business is done and information is shared, is change that I should expedite now. I regret that I have not encouraged it more before this time.

It is vital that I make some remarks about Ministry here, as I conclude:

Firstly, I want to draw your attention to the fact that during 2023 we shall at some point bid farewell to Canon Charles Masheder, whose ministry we have not only enjoyed, but which has enriched us deeply since November 2019. Charles has brought a depth of experience, wisdom and care which has been a huge blessing to us all. There is no doubt to me that the Spirit was at work in sending Charles to us at the right time, very soon before we were plunged into the extraordinary and difficult experience of the Covid pandemic. Charles’ support during that time, in countless ways, cannot be underestimated. We shall miss both Charles and Felicity but always be grateful to them for their significant contribution during the last four years.

Secondly, I am deeply grateful that we have in Sue Holligan, an experienced and able Licensed Lay Minister. Bishop Gavin agreed in the summer for Sue’s License of Permission to Officiate to be transferred from the Winchester diocese. This is very good news for us here at St Nic’s. Sue is very experienced at leading worship to a wide range of people and ages and made her own helpful contributions during my sabbatical. I am looking forward to working more closely with her during 2023.

Thirdly, Jenny Smith, as our Pastoral Visitor, who at my request as Vicar, and on behalf of our church, makes contact with, and visits where necessary, those from our congregation who are unwell or in other kinds of need. I am aware that I need to work

more closely with Jenny during 2023 and I want to express my thanks to her for her care and work in this important area of our common life.

There will be opportunity to offer other thanks at our Annual District Church Meeting itself. But I do want to thank Eluned Hallas, our warden, for the significant amount of work she does on our behalf and across the parish too! Her experience and skills are much valued by us all and I am deeply grateful for all she does.

This report is submitted with my deepest gratitude for all you do, for your support, for all that has been achieved, together with my prayers for God's blessing on what we continue to do together in the service of Christ's name and to his glory.

The Revd Paul Smith
Team Vicar – April, 2023

St Nicolas' Church, Abingdon

Financial Report to the Annual Church Meeting 2023

The total assets of St Nicolas' Church were £9,500 higher at the end of 2022 compared to the end of 2021 but this figure alone is not adequate to fully understand the accounts. The unrestricted general fund showed a surplus of £4,727 (before transfers between funds and a loss of £5,820 on investments) and there was a surplus on all funds of £31,213 (before a loss of £21,649 on investments). There are a lot of reasons underlying these figures.

General Unrestricted Funds

There are several reasons for the surplus in these funds. Firstly we were fortunate to receive a legacy of £2,000 into our general funds. £1,000 of this was moved to the Toilet Block Fund and the other £1,000 was spent on a votive stand and "dollies" for the piano. These are castors supporting each leg of the piano aiding moving the piano without damaging the piano or the floor. Another reason for a surplus was a grant of £918 from the diocese towards heating costs. Otherwise there has been an increase in most areas of income matched with an increase in expenses.

Designated Funds

Our only designated fund is the re-ordering fund that holds the money that has been earmarked for the toilet block renovation. This has risen by £8,844 and includes money transferred from the general fund, gift aid on donations into the fund, interest on the money on deposit and any donations for the toilet block that the donor has specified that the donation is unrestricted i.e. can be used for other purposes if too much is received.

Restricted Funds

A new restricted fund has been created, the toilet block fund. This is receiving all donations specifically for the toilet block and any Gift Aid from those donations. By the end of 2022 £9,100 was in this fund.

The Restricted Blacknall Maintenance Fund received a payment of £14,605 in 2022. There was also investment income of £2,444. As we have not done a lot of maintenance work on the church in 2022 the Fund has increased by £3,000 despite a loss on investments of £9,855.

Investments

Investments are held in the two endowment funds, the general fund and the restricted Blacknall Maintenance Fund. These investments are ethical funds managed by CCLA, a firm that manages investment funds for churches and charities. Money held on deposit is also held by CCLA in deposit accounts with very favourable interest rates.

Donations 2022

I would refer you to the donations committee report but in summary just over £1,148 was sent to charities in 2022 from collections together with gift aid. This figure represents just over 28% of our loose plate collections with gift aid.

Parish Share

Our Parish Share in 2022 was £34,651 but we only had to pay £34,304 as we have a 1% discount for paying by direct debit. We have subsequently received a refund of 2.5% i.e. £866. In 2023 our Parish share will be £32,892 and this will not only have the 1% reduction but also a refund that we are due of £729 will be taken incrementally from our monthly payments resulting in an annual payment of £31,841.

Utility Costs

As everyone is all too well aware gas and electricity prices are rising rapidly. In 2022 we paid £1,000 more for gas than during a pre-covid year. Last year's gas bill was £3,456. In January and February 2023 we have already spent £1,500 on gas so these costs are not going to ease any time soon. Electricity costs are also rising.

Summary

Overall last year's accounts look good because they contain the funds we are collecting for the toilet block, funds that we need to spend on the fabric of the church and a surplus on general funds. In view of this surplus in the general fund, money has been moved from the general fund to the designated fund for the refurbishment of the toilet block.

Despite the figures looking good we must not be complacent. The toilet block refurbishment, although much needed, is part of a long term programme to make St Nicolas more inviting for use in outreach. We are covering costs at present but it does not take much to alter that fine balance and the strong desire for us to do more over time will require us to increase our income.

Jenny Metcalfe

March 2022

ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, ABINGDON
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES 2022

	General Funds £	Designated Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2021 £
INCOMING RESOURCES							
From Donors	47,546	4,528	52,074	7,724		59,798	46,150
Other Voluntary Incoming resources	2,000		2,000			2,000	80
Income from Investments	952	549	1,501	3,741		5,242	2,690
Income from church activities	2,082		2,082	281		2,363	736
Other Income incl. Grants	3,329		3,329	15,549		18,878	41,191
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	55,909	5,077	60,986	27,295		88,281	90,847
RESOURCES USED							
Diocesan Parish Share	34,304		34,304			34,304	33,839
Church Activities	14,940		14,940	4,809		19,749	11,926
Expenditure on building work				1,077		1,077	39,480
Charitable Donations	1,148		1,148			1,148	13,144
Governance Costs	790		790			790	900
TOTAL RESOURCES USED	51,182		51,182	5,886		57,068	99,289
NET INCOMING RESOURCES	4,727	5,077	9,804	21,409		31,213	-8,442
Transfer between funds	2,000	4,267	6,267	1,552		7,819	1,782
	-5,319	-500	-5,819	-2,000		-7,819	-1,782
GAINS/LOSSES ON INVESTMENTS	-6,077		-6,077	-9,855	-5,717	-21,649	13,573
	-9,396	3,767	-5,629	-10,303	-5,717	-21,649	13,573
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	-4,669	8,844	4,175	11,106	-5,717	9,564	5,131
Balances Brought Forward 1.1.2022	41,266	16,373	57,639	103,132	49,131	209,902	204,771
Balances Carried Forward 31.12.2022	36,597	25,217	61,814	114,238	43,414	219,466	209,902

ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, ABINGDON
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES 2022

	General Funds £	Designated Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2021 £
BALANCE SHEET							
Fixed Assets and Investments	26,979		26,979	74,237	43,414	144,630	173,623
Current Assets:							
Debtors	3,223	875	4,098	1,523		5,621	5,573
Short term deposits	10,250	18,500	28,750	27,045		55,795	22,560
Cash at bank	159	5,842	6,001	14,466		20,467	11,004
	40,611	25,217	65,828	117,271	43,414	226,513	212,760
LIABILITIES	4,014		4,014	3,033		7,047	2,858
TOTAL ASSETS	36,597	25,217	61,814	114,238	43,414	219,466	209,902

Other Reports

7.1 Statistics 2022

Baptisms: 3
Funerals: 1
Memorial Services: 0
Weddings: 1
Wedding Blessing: 0

7.2 Church Wardens' Report

Eluned Hallas

Services:

During 2022 life began to return to normal post-covid, but echoes still remain. At Communion, both bread and wine are now offered – although many congregation members still prefer to receive in one kind only. Mask wearing has declined, though some Officiants / Servers still mask for the giving of Communion involving contact with large numbers. The Peace is still more generally exchanged without contact offered.

One positive is the production of Orders of Service for each Service, which although this is an extra demand on resources (both time and consumables) allows service planners to take advantage of the wealth of liturgical material provided by the CofE to enhance our worship. Officiants have been happy to look at the opportunities this approach offers.

We were pleased to be able to hold our usual range of 8am and 11:15am Services, and to offer an Ascension Day evening Communion and St Nicolas Evensong to the Parish (with the support of musicians from our sister churches and wider afield). Our Carol Service and Crib Service were also well attended. In addition it was a pleasure to be able to host a Memorial Service for former councillor Jeanette Stone, and the annual Mothers' Union Service highlighting gender based violence. We continue to 'zoom' both our 11:15am and other Services, for those who are unable, for whatever reason, to join the congregation in person.

Other Sundays allowed us to receive the Church Recorders' Record of St Nicolas (compiled pre-Covid, and giving a wonderful snapshot of the church, its fixtures and fittings) and to bless the new Votive Stand and acknowledge the generous legacy which allowed its purchase.

Activities:

It was good to be able to open Church to visitors – on Monday mornings, for the OHCT Ride & Stride Day, for Heritage Open Days, and for visits from local groups. My thanks to all who have assisted in Stewarding these events.

On a sadder note we were also able to be open for private prayer following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The St Nicolas bells were rung to mark phases of the mourning, but also the celebration of the accession of King Charles III, as they had marked the Jubilee earlier in the year.

A bring and share lunch at St Ethelwolds in July was well attended, and after-service coffee on Third Sundays also offers opportunities for getting to know each other more. The St Nicolas Day Lunch at Coseners House in December was also well attended by members from all three churches in the Parish.

We were delighted when two congregation members offered to organise fundraising concerts for St Nic's – resulting in delightful afternoon concerts by Arco Strings and Claudia Martin. We thank all involved.

We also organised a book sale (August) and a booksale plus (in November – as part of the Abingdon Extravaganza), both of which offered good opportunities for socialising as well as raising funds. Thanks to all who organised and supported these events.

The use of the Church by Abbey Chamber Concerts, Mostly Books and by the Abbey Arts Group gave opportunities for the church to be open to visitors and generated income for the church.

Thanks

On behalf of the congregation I would like to thank all those (ordained and lay) who have led Services at St Nic's over the year. Also to those who have led our prayers, led our music, or provided flowers to beautify the church. My thanks also to Jenny for all her work as Treasurer, and to Paul for arranging the rotas month by month.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your support of St Nicolas throughout the year – through practical work week by week, at Services, in opening the church for visitors, by doing all those small tasks which we would only notice if they were not done, and for your continued support through donations and prayers. In particular this year, especial thanks to the small group whose work has got us so far with the Toilet Block refurbishment.

7.3 Fabric

Eluned Hallas

2022 was a quiet year, we obtained permission for the various high level works identified in our 2021 Quinquennial (five-yearly) inspection – some retiling, work to the tower roof and repairs and repainting of rain goods – but delays at our contractors, compounded by poor weather in December has delayed the work to 2023.

We were surprised, and delighted to receive a legacy from a former congregation member – Graham Gingell. The DCC agreed to use some of the funds for a votive candle stand. This was designed by a congregation member, to fit into the space available in the crossing, and made by a local craft forge. A further tranche of the legacy was spent on some 'dollies' which make moving the piano easier, and reduce damage to the tiles in the crossing.

The main work during the year was on the Kitchen / Toilet Block. A small team drew up plans to strip out the existing fittings and create one uni-sex equal access toilet cubicle, with baby change facilities, and a refitted kitchenette with cupboards, white goods and separate sinks for food and flowers. There will be hot water to all sinks, and space heaters. To allow for this the doorway will be moved to the east, and the old doorway blocked in to form a window. The building will be accessed via a freestanding ramp, bridging the existing in-situ gravemarkers.

Once plans were agreed we sought approval from the Diocese, identified a contractor, obtained quotes and started fundraising. The response was so positive that the DCC felt able to include re-roofing, and replacement windows in the scheme.

With a start date in early spring, we hope the new facilities will be complete by Easter 2023.

Our old block had served us for over 60 years, but was showing its age. During the winter 2022/23 pipework froze twice – but luckily with no serious consequential damage. The lack of facilities, including no running hot water to the toilet sinks, was a serious drawback to inviting people to St Nic's. We look forward to having a fit for purpose facility which will enable us to use our church more fully. Grateful thanks to all those who have worked so hard to get us to this stage, and to all who have donated time, money or resources.

We remain in contact with the developers of 1 Stert Street, as we await works to complete their development project.

Routine tuning of piano and organ was carried out, along with essential safety checks to the boilers, fire extinguishers and lightning conductor. The fixed electrical systems and portable equipment are due to be tested in 2023.

In 2023 we hope to start work on the west wall and on the restoration of the Blacknall memorial / Blacknall Aisle.

7.4 Safeguarding

Jenny Fishpool

This year, those holding positions of responsibility (the Incumbent, churchwarden, stewards, DCC members, house group leader, pastoral visitor, and safeguarding officer) have completed online safeguarding training courses as required by the diocese. For most this has been the Basic Awareness course, though others have completed the Foundations, Domestic Abuse, and Leadership courses, too. The safeguarding officer is very grateful to everyone for their cooperation in completing these so promptly.

The safeguarding officer has had regular meetings with her counterparts at St Helen's and St Michael's. In addition, the PCC has agreed that we should see the PCC Minutes, and be invited to at least one PCC Meeting a year, when Safeguarding issues can be one of the topics for discussion. The St Nicolas SO is also a member of the PCC.

7.5 Ministry of Welcome

Paul Rast-Lindsell

We currently have fifteen members of the congregation who provide our Ministry of Welcome. Their primary role is to organise the service sheets and hymnbooks and give these to people as they come through the door. Coupled with this, they offer a cheery "Good Morning" to both our regular congregation and any visitors. They also offer assistance to anyone unfamiliar with the service of just needing some help around the church.

However, there are several other roles of lay ministry in the church. That of Steward, Reader, Sacristan, Chalice Assistant, and Intercessor. These jobs are all different and several of our congregation take on more than one. From setting up microphones and

reading the lessons, to counting money, offering the wine and leading the prayers, without the lay ministry our church would not run.

In all twenty-two members take on these roles; with several others available at times such as Christmas or special events.

Our lay ministers are an integral part of our fellowship at St. Nicolas and I thank them for their continuing, unfailing support.

7.6 Donations

Jenny Smith

In 2022 St Nicolas Church has continued to support the Church in Abingdon. CiA usually supports The Abingdon Bridge, Desire Youth Network, Abingdon Street Pastors, Trinity Learning/ Experience Easter, Thrive, and the Salvation Army Drop-in centre.

We also gave pupils in year 6 at St Nicolas' School "It's Your Move" books to aid transition to secondary school.

Members of the Congregation may have noticed that special collections on a Sunday are no longer for a specific charity. Instead at our Harvest Festival we had a collection “to help alleviate hunger in the world and at home” and the Christmas collections were for “Children’s Charities”. This is in order to allow us to collect Gift Aid on the donations.

- At our Harvest Festival the loose plate collection together with Gift Aid was divided between a charity that helps alleviate hunger in the UK and a charity helping the hungry abroad. We sent £127.44 to the Trussell Trust and £127.44 to Christian Aid for their East Africa Hunger Appeal. Gifts of produce were given to the Food Bank.
- Our Christmas 2022 collections resulted in a total after Gift Aid of £460 which was divided equally between Save the Children and the Childrens Society.
- After the shock of the war in Ukraine, collections were made in March for the refugees. Just over £215 was sent to the Disasters Emergency Committee – Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal.
- In early March a collection for the homeless together with Gift Aid allowed us to send £105.40 to the Gatehouse in Oxford. This is a charity that helps the homeless and is based in the St Giles Church Hall.
- Foodbank support has continued. Items for the Foodbank have been collected in church and a list of items needed has been regularly advertised in the church pewslip.
- We had a poppy collection box for the Royal British Legion in the run up to Remembrance Sunday and £16.35 was collected.

Special collections bring in much larger donations than normal Sunday services and whereas in 2021 the special collections were almost 15.2% of all the loose plate collections, in 2022 special collections rose to almost 25% of loose plate collections going to outside charities.

In May we hosted a fundraising concert for the charity Mind and in July we were able to offer the Kennington Memory Club the use of the church for a very successful sale.

If any other member of the congregation wishes to help with donations and charities please speak to Jenny Smith or Eluned Hallas. Further input is always helpful with

suggestions of poster displays in church, details of other local or overseas charities or suggestions for special collections during the year.

7.7 Bell ringing

Josh Ball

Over 2022 we have rung the bells every Sunday morning before the service and have returned to our normal practice time. During the year we have also rung for event such as the Platinum Jubilee and bun throwing on 3rd June, the Proclamation of the accension of the new monarch on 11th September, tolling for the queen's funeral 19th September and for services at Christmas on 24th & 25th December. There have been a consistent number of regular ringers, new ringers and young ringers, who have taken part in ringing for all events rung in the year.

7.8 House Group

Roderick Smith

The house group based at St Nicolas continued to meet approximately fortnightly throughout 2022. Our usual practice is to start with a short opening prayer and then read and discuss one or more biblical passages. We then finish by saying Compline including a time for open or silent prayers. We generally make our way through a particular biblical book or follow a chosen theme for several months.

In the first half of the year we continued our study of the parables of Jesus using the book 'The Parables' by Paula Gooder as our guide. These studies stimulated much interest and discussion and we learnt how varied the parables are. We also came to the conclusion that some of the parables are best not explained but are intended to keep the reader or listener thinking.

The theme of St Nicolas' Third Sunday Service in June was the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. We decided that this topic deserved a more lengthy study in the group. We used the book 'Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament' by Christopher Wright to guide our discussions. We learnt about the many ways the Spirit of the God of Israel was active in creation, in empowerment, in prophecy, in anointing for service and mission, and in new creation.

Towards the end of the year we looked at the letter to the Colossians which addresses a serious threat from false teaching. We saw how this is countered by stressing the supremacy of Christ and his all-sufficiency. We need nothing more than the gospel, for Christ is Lord of all creation and the redeemer of his people. In him we have all that God has to offer.

Roderick Smith

7.9 St Nicolas DCC

Membership:

Church Wardens

Eluned Hallas

Representatives on the Abingdon Deanery Synod

Eluned Hallas

Elected 2020 to serve until 2023

Representatives on the Abingdon Parochial Church Council

Andrew Birks	Elected 2020 to serve until 2023
Gwyneth Lewis	Elected 2021 to serve until 2024
Jenny Fishpool	Elected 2022 to serve until 2025

Members of St. Nicolas' Church Council

Hildegard Hyde	Elected 2020 to serve until 2023
Hilda Mafabi	Elected 2022 to serve until 2025
Hugh Bishop	Elected 2022 to serve until 2025
Jenny Fishpool	Elected 2022 to serve until 2025
Andrew Colbourne	Elected 2022 to serve until 2025

Co-Opted 2022

Jenny Metcalfe
Paul Rast-Lindsell

Ex-Officio (LLM)

Sue Holligan

Church in Abingdon Representatives: Sue Holligan

Appointments made by DCC:

Treasurer: Jenny Metcalfe
Secretary: Circulating
Safeguarding: Jenny Fishpool
Health & Safety: Paul Rast-Lindsell

The DCC met in person five times during the year, with the Standing Committee meeting as needed.

Discussions covered:

- Re-ordering of Kitchen block – practical considerations, finance, fundraising etc
- Other Fabric concerns
- Finance
- Events – services, fundraising and special events
- Welcome and retention at St Nic's

Dr Andrew Birks fell ill in January, and has been unable to attend either church or meetings - his presence is much missed.

Unfortunately despite two rounds of advertising we were unable to appoint a Secretarial Assistant for the Vicar (split between St N & St M). We propose to readvertise in 2023.

The elected and ex-Officio (Vicar, Churchwardens) members continued to attend Parochial Church Council (PCC), and Deanery Synod meetings to represent St Nicolas' views on wider matters.

7.10 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC

Secretary to the PCC

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 or on zoom seven times during 2022, with the Standing Committee / Clergy & Wardens Group meeting regularly during the year. A successful Away Day – looking at Challenges and Opportunities post-Covid – was held in June.

Discussions during the year focussed on:

- Governance - including the preparation and issue of a Trustees Pack, and discussions on the role and responsibilities of Church Wardens as seen in the Parish and individual churches;
- Outreach, Welcome & Retention – in the Parish and individual churches, and including Warm Spaces.
- Communication and Education, including Services
- Finance – including regular monitoring, budget setting and a review of fees
- Staffing

The PCC continues to review and approve faculty applications and other fabric matters across the Parish, and GDPR, Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Parish Policies remain regular items on the PCC agendas. Individual DCC minutes are circulated to PCC members to improve communication within the parish.

7.11 Proceedings of the 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 25 churches in 9 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.

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 2022 (January, May, September and November) and once so far in 2023 (February). 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

Address followed by Q and A session with Andrew Anderson Gear Diocesan Head of Mission and Ministry

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

In addition to the usual business meeting format of Synod we are planning other opportunities for representatives to meet to share - an example of this is the Prayer and Party meeting scheduled for May in Milton.

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.

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.

St Michael and All Angels representative and Lay Chair Abingdon Deanery Synod

7.12 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon **CiA Administrator**

Much of the life and work of the CiA, and the individual churches, has resumed slowly in 2022 following the COVID-19 pandemic dating back to March 2020, with some people still reticent to attend church and activities in person.

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:

- 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
- The Christian Aid group in Abingdon held several fundraising activities as well as 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 and one to Schongau.
- The work of Desire continues in a slightly different format having been limited by a lack of youth workers.

- A ‘virtual’ Experience Easter was again organised by Trinity Learning.
- The Alpha launch-type event could not take place but various online Alpha courses took place.
- The work of Prayer Spaces in Abingdon schools is slowly starting up now the pandemic is largely over.

United activities 2022

January

Christian Aid annual New Year’s Day walk.

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, no in-person events took place but a prayer leaflet was prepared by the CiA Administrator for use during the week instead of the usual midday prayers.

February

CiA AGM

March

The CiA Lent Lectures did not take place in person due high risk aversion among congregations but the CiA Administrator prepared a list of various online courses and other resources for people to follow at home as people so wished singly or in groups.

The World Day of Prayer service took place at the Salvation Army

April

The procession of witness took place on Good Friday stopping in the Market Place to sing a hymn before proceeding to St Nic’s for a united service led by Deacon Selina Nisbett. Trinity Learning again ran a ‘virtual’ Easter Experience which allowed children to take part from their classrooms supported by resource packs and teacher packs.

May

The Christian Aid week activities took place with adaptations, raising just over £4000. Christians across Abingdon were encouraged to join in ‘prayer walking’ as part of the Thy Kingdom Come initiative.

June

Abingdon’s Fun in the Park event was replaced by the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Rye Meadow in which various churches came together as normally done for Fun in the Park.

July

The South Abingdon Play & Activity Day event took place in Southern Town Park with Abingdon Vineyard and Abingdon Community churches taking part.

October

The Michaelmas fair service took place with Revd Kath Cooke leading.

Church Twinning ran their ‘eco’ event in Abingdon for visitors from twinned towns.

November

The Annual Bereavement Service took place at Christ Church in collaboration with the Footprints Bereavement group.

Several churches started offering warm spaces as part of the Warm Welcome campaign.

December

People from all the churches gathered in the Market Square to sing carols and give out leaflets detailing all the Christmas services taking place across Abingdon.

Grants paid in 2022 were:

- The Abingdon Bridge £2500 for their work with disadvantaged young people
- DESIRE youth network £1000 to help run schools weeks and larger events
- DESIRE prayer spaces £150 to provide prayer spaces in schools
- 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
- Salvation Army £100 to provide drop-in centre for the homeless and needy

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments

8.6 Stewards

8.00am: Mrs J Lawrence, Mr B Tonks

11.15am: Dr A Colborne, Mrs S Cox, Mr D Dawswell, Mrs J Fishpool, Mrs E Hallas, Mr I Hallas, Mr N Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs S Holligan, Mr P Holligan, Dr G Lewis, Mrs H Mafabi, Mr C Mafabi, Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond, Mrs A Buckland-Smith