

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2024

Thursday 11 April 2024, at 7pm in Church

AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2023 ADCM (*attached*) p2
3. Matters arising from those Minutes
4. Team Vicar's Report (*see separate paper*)
5. Presentation of the Electoral Roll for Saint Nicolas Church
6. Financial Report p6
7. Other Reports (*attached*)
 - 7.1 Statistics p10
 - 7.2 Church Wardens p10
 - 7.3 Fabric p11
 - 7.4 Safeguarding p12
 - 7.5 Ministry of Welcome p12
 - 7.6 Donations p13
 - 7.7 Bell ringing p14
 - 7.8 House Group p14
 - 7.9 St Nicolas DCC p14
 - 7.10 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC p15
 - 7.11 Proceedings of the Abingdon Deanery Synod p16
 - 7.12 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon p27
8. Nominations, Elections and Appointments
 - 8.1 Nomination of TWO church wardens
 - 8.2 Election of DCC members to serve until 2027
 - 8.3 Nomination of a PCC representative to serve 2027
 - 8.4 Nomination of a Deanery Synod representative to serve to 2026
 - 8.5 Appointment of Church-in-Abingdon representative(s)
 - 8.6 Approve the nominations of stewards p20
9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest (Chairman's discretion)
10. Team Vicar's Address

E Hallas. Acting Hon. Sec.

March 2024

Saint Nicolas Church
Minutes of the Annual District Church Meeting held
on Tuesday 18 April 2023, 7pm in Church

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

Apologies: Dr A Colborne; Dr G Lewis; Dr C Sanderson

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

1. The **Minutes of the 2023** Meeting, circulated in advance, were proposed R Smith, seconded H Bishop and approved nem con.
2. **Matters Arising** – St Nicolas School and Education Trust, Abingdon
In response to questions from the floor the Team Vicar explained that, due in part to Trustees' illness and sabbaticals, there had not been as much progress as was hoped on this. The Trustees were working in discussion with the Charity Commission over the recoupment schemes; and with the Diocese re transferring the Trust's assets from Diocesan custodianship. Next steps would include the appointment of Investment Managers, consideration of the scope of the charity's activities and filling the additional Trustee posts.
He re-iterated that the charity's activities would be centred on St Nicolas' and invited ideas from the congregation.
3. **The Team Vicar's Report** (presented in advance) was noted
4. **Electoral Roll.** The St Nicolas' section of the Parish Roll as presented contained 63 names. This was a decrease of 1; comprising 5 losses, and 4 additions plus two intra-Parish transfers – one in and one out.
5. **Financial Report.** The Hon. Treasurer, Dr J Metcalfe, presented the accounts for the year ending December 2022 – with reference to a report distributed in advance.

The total assets of St Nicolas' were £9,500 higher at the end of 2023 than at the start – despite an unrealised loss of £21.5k in the value of investments.

Much of this increase was due to fundraising / donations towards the refurbishment of the toilet block (Annexe) planned for 2023. In addition St N had received a generous legacy of £2k (of which £1k was set aside for the Annexe, and the remainder used to purchase the Votive stand and dollies for the piano). There had also been a Diocesan grant (£900) towards heating costs.

The Blacknall Grant (towards work on the fabric and fittings of the church) had been received as usual, but there had been relatively low fabric expenditure during the year although there were projects in the pipeline. Interest received on our deposits had also increased during the year.

The largest single item of expenditure was the Parish Share, although this was less than in 2022. The second largest single item was utility costs though these were being closely monitored.

The various Church funds had been re-organised so there was now one designated fund (for Annexe refurbishment – comprising money so designated by the DCC and funds donated which the donors were happy to be used on other projects if not needed for the Annexe) and nine restricted funds – the two largest being the Blacknall Fund and funds for the Annexe.

It was good that general income was covering general expenditure, but costs are always rising, especially as there is a desire for more outreach / activities. The loss of one or two donors could also make a significant impact on church finances.

That the accounts be accepted was proposed J Fishpool, seconded A Richmond and passed nem con.

Dr Metcalfe was thanked for all her work, on the accounts and throughout the year.

8 Other Reports.

8.1 Statistics 2022

Baptisms: 3

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 and with other Parish Officers.

8.5 The Ministry of Welcome Report was noted.

8.6 The Donations Committee Report was noted.

8.7 The Bell Ringing Report was noted. It was good that the St N bells had been able to ring for some many royal occasions – both happy and sad.

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 PCC was noted.

8.11 The Report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod was noted.

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 and S Holligan thanked for representing St N.

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

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments.

8.1 Church Wardens:

Eluned Hallas, proposed J Fishpool, seconded J Smith

The nomination would go forward to the Annual Parochial Meeting.

Following the meeting Mr Paul Rast-Lindsell (a former Warden) accepted an invitation to be the second Warden proposed by and for St Nicolas. His nomination was affirmed by email, and duly proposed and seconded.

8.2 DCC Members:

H Nagel Hyde was retiring by rotation but had expressed a willingness to restand. She was proposed by E Hallas, and elected by acclamation.

Three elected vacancies remain, and the Team Vicar reminded members present that the DCC could co-opt members during the year.

8.3 PCC Representatives:

J Metcalfe (Smith)

Proposed E Hallas, seconded J Lawrence.

The nomination would go forward to the Annual Parochial Meeting.

8.4 Church-in-Abingdon Representative.

S Holligan, proposed J Bishop, seconded H Nagel Hyde and elected by acclamation.

8.5 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

There being no changes proposed the names presented will be taken to the PCC for election.

9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest – *none offered*

10. Team Vicars Address

The Team Vicar began with some reflections from his sabbatical – a time of rest and reflection for which he was deeply grateful. It was a time to step back from Parish duties, during which he had identified a need to change his working practices.

The burden of administration is high – especially with no administrative support. He hoped going forward to convene more joint meetings of the wardens of both St M & St N to cut down on the number of meetings, and improve communications.

He was grateful for the opportunities to be visible (as Vicar of St N) in the community – in the town centre, St Nicolas School and Bridge House – and would be looking for opportunities to streamline desk-based routine to give greater time for this work.

A major opportunity for 2023 was the refurbishment of the Annexe, to give equal access, improved kitchen, toilet and flower arranging facilities and better storage, showing that perseverance bears fruit in the end. He thanked all involved practically (particularly Gwyneth, Colin, Hildegard, Jenny, Ian and Roger), and the wider congregation for their donations and prayerful support. He was sure that outreach, hospitality and further opportunities would flow. The Archdeacon of Dorchester (who lives in the Parish made an Archdeacon's discretionary grant towards the costs) will be invited to formally bless the Annex.

Finally, Fr Paul thanked all those who helped with the worship (clergy & lay) and activities of the church, and commended Mother Julian's recommendations to congregations:

Worship God

Share the fellowship of the Gospel

Learn to be disciples in an everchanging world

The meeting closed with prayer at 8pm.

Reports to the 2024 Annual Meeting of St Nicolas Church

Financial Report to the Annual Church Meeting 2024

The total assets of St Nicolas' Church were £3,500 higher at the end of 2023 compared to the end of 2022 despite spending just over £45,500 on the church annexe. The reasons for these good figures are explained below.

General Unrestricted Funds

There was a surplus of £5,664 on the general unrestricted funds. This was partly due to a decrease in Diocesan Parish Share of £2,463 and an increase in weddings and funerals which gave a nett gain of £1,187. Otherwise there has been an increase in most areas of income matched with an increase in expenses. One income source that dropped in 2023 was income from fund raising – £700 compared with £1,440 in 2022.

Designated Funds

Our only designated fund was the re-ordering fund that held money that had been earmarked for the toilet block renovation. The only income to this fund during the year was £300 in interest, as the money held in the fund had been put on deposit until required for the building works. When all the work on the church annexe was completed and paid for £2,285 was moved back to the General Fund as a figure higher than this had been transferred from General Funds the previous year to enable the project to proceed.

Restricted Funds

The restricted toilet block fund reached a total of £22,313 before being spent on the church annexe. That fund has now been closed.

The Restricted Blacknall Maintenance Fund received a payment of £12,825 in 2023. There was investment income of £2,900 and a refund of VAT on expenditure on the church building of £1,491. The money held within an investment increased in value by £7,045. Therefore, despite spending £9,964 from this fund on the church building and its insurance, the fund was valued at £112,200 at the end of 2023, putting us in a good position for much needed work on the church.

The Blacknall Tomb repair Fund that had stood at £743 for some years has been boosted by a legacy of £10,000.

£1,873 in the Restricted Fabric Fund was spent on the church fabric and that fund now stands at zero.

There are five other small restricted funds.

Investments

The two endowment funds are held in investments, and the general fund and the restricted Blacknall Maintenance Fund each have some money in investments. These four 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.

Church Annexe

Funds were raised to improve the facilities for the church by creating an equal access toilet and much improved kitchen facilities and an area for flower arranging. As the

money came in the specification for the work was increased – new double glazed windows throughout, new fascia boards and guttering and a new roof with better insulation. £18,813 was raised and put in the restricted toilet block fund, two grants were received amounting to £3,500 and some money that was donated was added to the designated re-ordering fund giving us a total available to spend of £47,835. Our total cost was £45,550 leaving us £2,285 to transfer back to the General Fund. The cause of the surplus was the discovery that some of the work could be zero-rated for VAT saving us £2,119.

Donations 2023

I would refer you to the donations committee report but in summary just over £1,623 was sent to charities in 2023 from collections together with gift aid. This figure represents just over 30% of our loose plate collections with gift aid.

Parish Share

Our Parish Share in 2023 was £32,892 but we only had to pay £31,841 as we have a 1% discount for paying by direct debit and also had a refund of £729 Parochial Fees that we paid in 2021. We have subsequently received a further refund of 2.5% i.e. £804. In 2024 our Parish share will be £33,268 and this will not only have the 1% reduction but also a refund that we are due of £330 will be taken incrementally from our monthly payments resulting in an annual payment of £32,609.

Summary

Overall last year's accounts look good despite our big spend on the refurbishment of the annexe. The increase in the value of investments by £13,758 and a £10,000 legacy resulted in the final balance for the church being £3,535 higher than the previous year. Despite the figures looking good we must not be complacent. We are looking at increasing costs next year – Parish share, utilities, and service costs – at the same time as a known drop of £1,700 from regular donors. We are covering costs at present but it would 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

Statement of Financial Activities 2023

	General Funds	Designated Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES							
From Donors	49,341		49,341	9,913		59,254	59,798
Other Voluntary Incoming resources	3,318		3,318			3,318	2,000
Income from Investments	1,367	305	1,672	4,327		5,999	5,242
Income from church activities	2,419		2,419	37		2,456	2,363
Other Income incl. Grants				28,317		28,317	18,878
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	56,445	305	56,750	42,594		99,344	88,281
RESOURCES USED							
Diocesan Parish Share	31,841		31,841			31,841	34,304
Church Activities	17,154		17,154	11,623		28,777	19,749
Expenditure on building work		23,237	23,237	23,926		47,163	1,077
Charitable Donations	1,216		1,216			1,216	1,148
Governance Costs	570		570			570	790
TOTAL RESOURCES USED	50,781	23,237	74,018	35,549		109,567	57,068
NET INCOMING RESOURCES	5,664	-22,932	-17,268	7,045		-10,223	31,213
Transfer between funds	2,285	-2,285					
GAINS/LOSSES ON INVESTMENTS	2,650		2,650	7,045	4,063	13,758	-21,649
	4,935	-2,285	2,650	7,045	4,063	13,758	-21,649
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	10,599	-25,217	-14,618	14,090	4,063	3,535	9,564
Balances Brought Forward 1.1.2023	36,597	25,217	61,814	114,238	43,414	219,466	209,902
Balances Carried Forward 31.12.2023	47,196	0	47,196	128,328	47,477	223,001	219,466

Balance Sheet 2023

	General Funds	Designated Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
BALANCE SHEET							
Fixed Assets and Investments	29,283		29,283	81,282	47,477	158,042	144,630
Current Assets:							
Debtors	3,472		3,472	6		3,478	5,621
Short term deposits	21,000		21,000	40,000		62,000	55,795
Cash at bank	-2,632		-2,632	7,081		4,449	20,467
	51,123	0	51,123	128,369	47,477	226,969	226,513
LIABILITIES	3,927		3,927	41		3,968	7,047
TOTAL ASSETS	47,196		47,196	128,328	47,477	223,001	219,466

Other Reports

7.1 Statistics 2023

Baptisms: 0
Funerals: 4
Memorial Services: 0
Weddings: 2
Wedding Blessing: 0

7.2 Church Wardens' Report

Paul Rast-Lindsell

This has been the first year of my second stint as St Nicolas Churchwarden. My thanks go to Rev. Paul Smith; my fellow warden, Eluned Hallas; the St Nicolas DCC and the church congregation for their support.

Services:

Our Sunday Service conforms to the normal pattern, with the 8.00a.m. Parish Holy Communion (1662 rite), alternating monthly with St Helen's, and our main morning service at 11.15a.m.

Despite Covid no longer being at the forefront of our minds, some echoes remain. At Communion, both bread and wine are offered, but some communicants still prefer to receive in one kind only. It is rare to see a mask being worn, though the Peace is still more generally exchanged without contact. We also still offer the opportunity to join our services via the Zoom video system.

As well as our usual range of 8.00a.m. and 11:15a.m. Services, St Nicolas provided 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 October, it was a delight to welcome the Diocesan Deputy Warden of Readers who licensed congregation member Sue Holligan as a Lay Reader with Permission to Officiate in the Parish.

At our St Nicolas Evensong we welcomed the Archdeacon of Dorchester, the Venerable David Tyler, who both preached and blessed the Annexe. Towards the end of the Service the Archdeacon welcomed congregation members Gwyneth Lewis and Colin Sanderson into the Fellowship of St Birinus, in recognition of their work towards the refurbishment of the Annexe. The post service refreshments appeared to be enjoyed by all.

It has also been good to be able to restart our monthly Services of Communion by Extension in Bridge House, and to be able to welcome residents of Old Station House to a monthly Service in Church, followed by a time of fellowship.

We again provided the venue for the Church in Abingdon week of lunch time prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – each session focussing on the activities of one or two of the CiA Task Groups.

Activities:

Throughout the year the church was open Church to visitors – primarily on Monday mornings, but also for the OHCT Ride & Stride Day, Heritage Open Days, and to coincide with Saturday events in the Market Place. We often have other visits from various groups, both local and from further afield. Thank you to all who have assisted in Stewarding at these events.

The after-service coffee on Third Sundays offers the opportunity for the congregation to talk and get to know each other more. A lunch social was held at Pizza Express, and the usual St Nicolas Day Lunch at Coseners House in December was attended by members from all three churches in the Parish.

There have been a few fundraising concerts for St Nic's plus other Sunday afternoon concerts by Abbey Chamber Concerts. We also organised a book-sale which gave folks good opportunities for socialising as well as raising funds. The church has been open to visitors for other events such as those organised by Mostly Books and Abbey Artists. Thanks to all who organised and supported these events.

Fabric:

In general, the church building is in good repair though a few floor tiles are loose. However, we also have a problem with water ingress in the wall at the West end. It has been looked at but requires further investigation. The Lightning conductor was tested and passed.

Thank you to the team who, during the year, worked so hard to complete the Toilet Block refurbishment.

Thanks:

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

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

7.3 Fabric

Eluned Hallas

Twenty twenty-three saw the fulfilment of plans to refurbish the Annexe (toilet / kitchen block) to give St Nicolas facilities fit for the 21st Century. Thanks to the hard work of a small team, and the generous financial support of the whole congregation, we now have a welcoming space comprising a 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 is hot water to all sinks, and space heaters. Funds raised also permitted the building to be reroofed and all doors / windows to be replaced with double glazed units. The building is accessed via a freestanding ramp, bridging the existing in-situ gravemarkers.

We are already enjoying the benefits of the new facilities and thank all those whose hardwork, generosity and prayers made it all possible.

In the spring we were also able to complete 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.

Routine testing of the lightening conductor, central heating, automatic doors, fire extinguishers and portable and electric installations was carried out during the year, the latter requiring some small upgrades. The organ and piano were retuned regularly.

As reported last year we have started consultations on the refurbishment of the Blacknall Memorial / Blacknall Aisle. To this end the stalls have been moved to the Sanctuary to enable access to the aisle walls. We were delighted to receive a legacy from the will of Mrs Doreen Barnes, with the stipulation that it be put towards the restoration of the memorial.

7.4 Safeguarding

Jenny Fishpool

Those holding positions of responsibility at St Nicolas – that is to say, the Incumbent, the LLM, churchwardens, DCC members, house group leader, pastoral visitor, and safeguarding officer – are apprised of their safeguarding responsibilities, having completed the various online training relevant to their particular roles. They are not due for renewal until 2025.

The St Michael's and St Helen's safeguarding officers (the latter being also the Parish SO and Verifier) resigned during the course of the last year, and there was some difficulty in finding replacements, though one has now been appointed for St Helen's. For this reason, there have been no more meetings between the safeguarding reps for the three churches of the parish, which is regrettable. It is to be hoped that appointments will soon be made, and the collaboration resumed.

Safeguarding is a regular item on the agendas of both DCC and PCC.

7.5 Ministry of Welcome

Paul Rast-Lindsell

Twelve members of the congregation, known as Stewards, currently provide our Ministry of Welcome. Their primary role is to organise service sheets and hymnbooks – giving these to those who come to our services. They offer a “Good Morning” to our regular congregation and any visitors; and are also there to help to anyone unfamiliar with the with the service, or just needing some help around the church. Theirs is also the role of lighting candles, setting up microphones and counting money.

In addition, there are several other roles of lay ministry in our church. That of Reader, Sacristan, Chalice Assistant, and Intercessor. Many of our congregation take on more than one of these jobs as well as being a Steward.

In all, twenty people take on these various roles, with several others available at peak times such as Christmas, Easter, or special events.

It is, however, difficult to find enough people to fill all the positions every week. Most notably, we need one or two more Stewards. If you feel that you would like to take on this role, please talk to Fr. Paul or one of the Churchwardens.

Without this lay ministry our church would not run, and I am extremely grateful for all the time and effort put in.

7.6 Donations

Jenny Smith

In 2023 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.

During 2023 we had four special collections for specific causes.

- On 12th March we had a collection for dementia care. With Gift Aid we raised £140 which was sent to Kennington Memory Club.
- 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 £100 to the Abingdon Community Fridge and £190 to Christian Aid for the World Food Programme. Gifts of produce were given to the Food Bank.
- At the end of November a collection for the homeless together with Gift Aid allowed us to send £50 to Emmaus, a charity in Oxford that helps the homeless with their housing and future employment, and £183.20 to Homeless Oxfordshire which works with and helps support people with no home.
- Our Christmas 2023 collections resulted in a total after Gift Aid of £600, £200 of which was sent to the Childrens Society and £400 was sent to Save the Children for their work on aid to children overseas.

Special collections bring in much larger donations than normal Sunday services. 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 and in 2023 rose again to about 31% of loose plate collections going to outside charities.

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 £34.65 was collected.

In March and October we were able to offer the Kennington Memory Club the use of the church for two very successful sales.

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 2023 we have rung the bells every Sunday morning before the service and have also rung for events, including ringing for the King's coronation, Christmas services and the new year. Throughout the year there have been a good number of regular ringers, including some new ringers and young ringers, who have taken part in ringing for the morning service and for events.

7.8 House Group

Roderick Smith

The house group based at St Nicolas' continued to meet approximately fortnightly throughout 2023. 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.

At the beginning of the year we had one final session on the letter to the Colossians which we had begun studying in the autumn of 2022. We then started looking at the book of Exodus, the sequel to the book of Genesis which we studied a few years ago. In the early chapters we were introduced to Moses: his rescue as a baby from a basket on the Nile, how he became aware of the oppression of his people as he grew up, his meeting with God in the burning bush and his calling to lead the Israelites out of slavery into the promised land. We followed the Israelites as they were formed (with difficulty!) as the people of God, learning to put their trust in God and being given the Ten Commandments and many more detailed laws for conducting their life and worship.

From September to the end of the year we studied St Paul's letter to the Galatians. We found that this is a very angry letter ('I am astonished that . . .'; 'You foolish Galatians!'; 'Listen!'). Paul emphasises that their identity as the people of God, redeemed through faith in Christ, is compromised by an insistence on keeping laws which divide people along ethnic lines (dietary laws, circumcision, etc.). Clearly there have been conflicts and disagreements in the history of Christianity from as far back as we can go. But Paul ends this letter on positive notes including his listing of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

7.9 St Nicolas DCC

Membership:

Church Wardens

Eluned Hallas

Paul Rast Lindsell

Representatives on the Abingdon Deanery Synod

Eluned Hallas

Elected 2023 to serve until 2026

Representatives on the Abingdon Parochial Church Council

Gwyneth Lewis	Elected 2021 to serve until 2024
Jenny Fishpool	Elected 2022 to serve until 2025
Jennifer Metcalfe (Smith)	Elected 2023 to serve until 2026

Members of St. Nicolas' Church Council

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
Hildegard Hyde	Elected 2023 to serve until 2026

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 three times during the year, with the Standing Committee meeting as needed.

Discussions covered:

- Re-ordering of Kitchen block;
- Other Fabric concerns;
- Finance – regular monitoring, budget setting etc;
- Aspects of the House for Duty provision in the Parish, including the allocation of costs and contributions (feeding into PCC);
- Charitable donations / special collections;
- Events – services, fundraising and special events;
- Mission and Welcome;
- Consideration of eco-considerations at St Nic's.

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

The business of the PCC concerns those issues best approached on a Parish, rather than Church, basis. It is also a useful forum for communications throughout the Parish, including

details of Parish and Church sponsored events, staff updates and feedback on Deanery and Diocesan issues.

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met in person seven times during 2023, with the Standing Committee / Clergy & Wardens Group meeting regularly during the year. A successful Away Day – looking at Welcome and Initiation – was held in June.

Discussions during the year focussed on

- The appointment of a new House-for-Duty Priest, including the appointment process, and the allocation of costs and time between the three Churches in the Parish;
- Safeguarding in the Parish, especially in light of personnel changes during the year;
- Finance – including regular monitoring and budget setting;
- Clergy availability for out of hours emergency cover;
- Opportunities for education and discipleship;
- The A-Rocha Eco-church awards scheme;
- The Deanery Action plan – looking at post-covid changes, opportunities and challenges in the parish.

The September meeting started with a presentation from Joshua Townson, Diocesan Generous Giving Adviser on Congregational Giving and Fundraising to which all DCC members (and others with a particular interest) were invited. Suggestions made are being followed up by the Parish and individual churches.

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, and PCC members receive regular updates on the work of the Deanery & Diocesan Synods and the Church in Abingdon.

We were also delighted this year to endorse the candidacy of Linda Hobbs (St H Churchwarden) for Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) training. We wish her well.

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.

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

Alexandra Green (St Helen's)

Hazel Glennie (St Helen's)

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

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

This has been a challenging year for many of our churches and things continue to be difficult for many. The aim has been to create a balance between providing information, giving time for discussion and also responding to common concerns. The Synod met 4 times in 2023 (February, May, October and November). In response to feedback some of the meetings now take place on zoom and some in person. Some of the business covered has included:

- Finance issues including the Budget, Parish Share, The Deanery Parish Support Fund and Mission Grants
- Opportunities to share good practice and expertise to develop Parish Mission Action Plans
- Prayer and Party meeting – an opportunity to pray about the Mission initiatives of each of our churches/Parishes and to share some social time.
- Raising awareness of Diocese resources and how to access services eg Churchwarden Training, use of Safeguarding Dashboards and Church Energy Audits
- New Congregations/New initiatives/ Eco church/Children and families/LLF updates

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

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

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

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

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

Task groups and associated projects:

Task groups

- 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, one to Sint Niklaus and one to Argentan.
- The work of Desire continues in a slightly different format having been limited by a lack of youth workers and leader.
- An Alpha launch night took place at Christ Church to which other churches were invited and several churches ran both in-person and online Alpha courses.
- The work of Prayer Spaces in Abingdon schools is recovering after Covid.

Associated projects

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

United activities 2023

January

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the usual events took place: the Inter-church quiz, which took place at Peachcroft Christian Centre, was won by the Long Furlong team, and raised £177.40 for Tearfund's Hunger Crisis appeal.

February

The CiA AGM took place, at which the need for a debt advice centre in Abingdon hosted by the CiA was carefully explored. However, it was later concluded we didn't have the resources in place at this point in time.

March

The World Day of Prayer service took place at St Michael's organised by the CiA Administrator and volunteers from the previous WDP committee. The service for 2023 was prepared by the women of Taiwan with the theme 'I have heard about your faith'. Revd Charles Masheder led the service. £315 was raised for WDP.

TrinityLearning's Easter Experience returned live to Trinity Church; the popular online version was also available.

Many churches ceased their 'warm spaces' scheme, except St Edmund's, which continues to run as 'Open Door'.

April

The procession of witness took place on Good Friday stopping in the Market Place for a short outdoor service led by Revd Paul Smith.

Church Twinning arranged a visit to Sint Niklaus in Belgium.

A CONNECT event took place at Christ Church.

May

The Christian Aid week activities took place with adaptations.

June

July

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

August

September

A CONNECT event took place at Christ Church.

Christ Church held an Alpha launch night, which was open to other churches. Several churches ran Alpha courses both in person and online.

October

The Michaelmas fair service took place with Deacon Selina Nisbett leading.

To celebrate 20 years of Church Twinning, Argentan, our Normandy twin town, invited 15 people from Abingdon to commemorate this link.

November

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

Church Twinning ran a local long weekend event in Abingdon with people invited from all its twin towns.

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. Children's crafts, festive nibbles and a nativity scene were also on offer this year.

Finance

The grants paid in 2023 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 Drop-in Centre	£100	to provide drop-in centre for the homeless and needy
Passion Play 2024	£1000	

Debra McKnight CiA Administrator

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