

# **Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2025**

**Tuesday 8 April 2025, at 7pm in Church**

## **AGENDA**

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2024 ADCM (*attached*) p3
3. Matters arising from those Minutes
4. Team Vicar's Report (*to follow*)
5. Presentation of the Electoral Roll for Saint Nicolas Church
6. Financial Report (*attached*) p9
7. Other Reports (*attached*)
  - 7.1 Statistics p 12
  - 7.2 Church Wardens p 12
  - 7.3 Fabric p 14
  - 7.4 Safeguarding p 14
  - 7.5 Ministry of Welcome p 15
  - 7.6 Donations p 15
  - 7.7 Bell ringing p 16
  - 7.8 House Group p 16
  - 7.9 St Nicolas DCC p 17
  - 7.10 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC p 18
  - 7.11 Proceedings of the Abingdon Deanery Synod p 19
  - 7.12 Proceedings of the Diocesan Synod p 20
  - 7.13 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon p 21
8. Nominations, Elections and Appointments
  - 8.1 Nomination of TWO church wardens
  - 8.2 Election of four DCC members to serve until 2027
  - 8.3 Nomination of two PCC representative to serve to 2026 & 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 p 22
9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest (Chairman's discretion)
10. Team Vicar's Address

E Hallas. Acting Hon. Sec.

March 2025



**Saint Nicolas Church**  
**Minutes of the Annual District Church Meeting held**  
**on Thursday 11 April 2024, 7pm in Church**

**Present:** Revd P A Smith (Chairman), Mrs J Bishop, Dr H Bishop, Dr I Cade  
Dr A Colborne; Mrs S Cox, Dr R Cox, Mr T G Currey, Mrs J Fishpool,  
Mrs E. Hallas, Mrs S Holligan, Dr P Holligan, Mrs J Lawrence, Dr G Lewis, Mrs  
H Magabi, Mrs H Nagel Hyde, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond,  
Mr J A Richmond, Dr J Smith, Mr R Smith

*Apologies: Mrs E Currey*

1. The Team Vicar welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer, remembering especially Dr Andrew Birks and Mr David Howard to the congregation who had died in the past year.
2. The **Minutes of the 2023** Meeting, circulated in advance, were proposed S Holligan, seconded R Cox and approved nem con subject to correcting the date in Item 1 to read Minutes of the 2022 Meeting.
3. **Matters Arising** – St Nicolas School and Education Trust, Abingdon  
The Trust is still in a transitional stage as discussions continue between the new CIO, the Diocesan Trustees and the Charity Commission over the Recoupment Scheme and transfer of assets. It is hoped that the CIO will be in a position to appoint Investment Managers and to determine how best to meet its objectives in 2024.
4. **The Team Vicar's Report** (presented in advance) was noted
5. **Electoral Roll.** The St Nicolas' section of the Parish Roll as presented contained 62 names. This was a decrease of 1; comprising 5 additions, 4 losses through death and two other losses (one intra-Parish transfer, one move out of Parish).
6. **Financial Report.** The Hon. Treasurer, Dr J Metcalfe, presented the accounts for the year ending December 2023 – with reference to a report distributed in advance.

The General Account showed a slight surplus on the year of £5k. This was partly due to a reduction in Parish Share and helped by good income from investments and cash on deposit.

A generous Legacy from Mrs D Barnes – specifically for the restoration of the Blacknall Monument – was acknowledged with gratitude.

Restricted and designated accounts showed a deficit, as funds raised in 2022 towards the refurbishment of the Annexe were spent. A zero VAT rating on some of the works resulted in a welcome decrease in total costs, and enabled some designated funds (ie allocated by DCC not specifically donated to the project) to be re-assigned to general funds at the end of the project.

St Nicolas now only has seven Restricted Funds (where there are restrictions on what the funds may be used for):

- Blacknall (for the maintenance of the fabric and fittings of the Church)
- Blacknall Tomb (work on Blacknall Memorial)
- Bell Fund
- Church Lands (Fabric)
- Churchyard Maintenance
- Flowers
- and Altar Linen.

Two former funds (Fabric & Restructuring) were emptied (ie all money spent in accordance with restrictions) and closed.

Church investments had increased in value by £13.7k.

Total Church funds were up by £4k despite the expenditure on the Annexe. However JM warned that we must not be complacent, as costs would continue to rise.

A successful Stewardship Campaign in March 2024 has increased general donations, but losses and movement in the congregation has diluted this.

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

## **7 Other Reports.**

### **7.1 Statistics 2023**

Baptisms: 0

Funerals: 4

Memorial Services: 0

Weddings: 2

Wedding Blessing: 0

### **7.2 The Church Wardens' Report** was noted.

With one correction – Mrs Sue Holligan is a Licenced Lay Minister (not Lay Reader)

### **7.3 The Fabric Report** was noted.

### **7.4 The Safeguarding Report** was noted, and thanks expressed to JF for her work as Church Safeguarding Officer and with other Parish Officers.

### **7.5 The Ministry of Welcome Report** was noted.

Thanks were expressed to all who offer a Ministry of Welcome at our Services. New volunteers are always welcome, and training will be offered.

### **7.6 The Donations Committee Report** was noted.

### **7.7 The Bell Ringing Report** was noted

Thanks were expressed to the Band for ring Sunday-by-Sunday, and for Special Occasions including Weddings and Funerals.

### **7.8 The House Group Report** was noted.

**7.9 The Report on the proceedings of the DCC** was noted.

It was reported that the Revd Jen Brown is leading the Parish initiative on Eco-Church. This would include looking at ecological impact of our buildings (including possibly solar panels); congregational support and preaching. Roger Cox was leading for St N.

**7.10 The Report on the proceedings of the PCC** was noted.

**7.11 The Report on the proceedings of the Abingdon Deanery Synod** was noted.

**7.12 The Report of the Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon** was noted and S Holligan thanked for representing St N.

It was noted that the Good Friday Walk of Witness now concluded with an Act of Worship in the Market Place.

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 Roderick Smith, seconded J Smith  
Paul Rast-Lindsell, proposed Jenny Fishpool, seconded Gwyneth Lewis

The nomination would go forward to the Annual Parochial Meeting.

PAS thanked the two candidates for being willing to restand.

**8.2 DCC Members:**

Dr I Cade proposed, Eluned Hallas, seconded Andrew Colborne  
Approved by acclamation

**8.3 PCC Representatives:**

Dr G Lewis, proposed Jenny Fishpool, seconded Hildegard Nagel-Hyde  
The nomination would go forward to the Annual Parochial Meeting.

**8.4 Church-in-Abingdon Representative.**

S Holligan was thanked for her willingness to continue in this role.

**8.5 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, Mrs H Mafabi, Mr C Mugabi,

Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr P Rast-Lindsell,  
Mrs L Richmond

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

## **9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest**

### ***Music at St Nicolas' – Mr G Currey***

To most people, including many of the St Nicolas' congregation, music is a key part of worship. However with no Director of Music at St Nicolas' for over 10 years, the quality of musical direction had decreased. For example

- No continuity of music style
- Gradual decline of the choir
- Loss of sung psalms, canticles and anthems
- Introduction of new music is haphazard

What might be done to address this?

- Nothing – a pity
- Seek professional help – has cost implications. Might the St Nicolas Education Trust be able to help here?  
If we were to employ a Director of Music, we would not wish to lose the input of the excellent musicians who currently support our services
- Think outside the box  
Peripatetic Parish Choir?  
Invite schools' choirs to join us for some services

If music is important to our worship we need to look as to how it might be improved (copy of GC's written paper available on request)

It was agreed that the DCC and Hymn Choosing Group be asked to take this forward.

## **10. Team Vicars Address**

The Team Vicar highlighted a few key achievements over the past year:

The refurbishment of the Annexe offering much improved facilities. Many members of the congregation had contributed – but especial thanks were due to Gwyneth Lewis and Colin Sanderson for co-ordinating the project. It was fitting that this work be recognised with Gwyneth & Colin being made members of the Fellowship of St Birinus, and particularly that membership was confirmed by the Archdeacon at the Patronal Festival, which also included the Blessing of the Annexe.

Monthly Services of Communion by Extension had resumed for our two local Care Homes (Bridge House and Old Station House). It was pleasing to be able to hold the Old Station House Service in St Nic's in fine weather, and to be able to offer refreshments after.

He was now leading Collective Worship monthly in St Nicolas' School.

Unfortunately, however, the administrative aspects of his work continued to mount – eating into time for school and pastoral work, and study. Joint meetings with the Wardens of St N & St M were helping here.

Looking forward there were plans in hand to restore the Blacknall Memorial and Aisle in time for a commemoration on the Anniversary of their death in August 2025. He acknowledged a generous legacy from the estate of Mrs Doreen Barnes – specifically for this project, and thanked Jenny Smith for her work on driving this forward.

Finally, Fr Paul thanked all those who helped with the worship (clergy & lay) and activities of the church, and thanked all congregation members for their contribution to the common life of St Nicolas. Everyone plays a part and no contribution is too small.

The meeting closed with prayer.



## **Reports to the 2025 Annual Meeting of St Nicolas Church**

### **Financial Report to the Annual Church Meeting 2025**

The total assets of St Nicolas' Church were £58,500 higher at the end of 2024 compared to the end of 2023. The reasons for these good figures are explained below.

#### **General Unrestricted Funds**

There was a surplus of £5,000 on the general unrestricted funds. This was partly due to an increase in Diocesan Parish Share rebate, an increase in fees for the use of the church and more income from savings and investments. Otherwise there has been an increase in most areas of income matched with an increase in expenses.

#### **Restricted Funds**

The Restricted Blacknall Maintenance Fund received a payment of £11,559 in 2024. There was investment income of £3,974 and a refund of VAT on expenditure on the church building of £447. The money held within an investment increased in value by £1,861. We only spent £4,385 from this fund on the church building and its insurance. The fund was valued at £125,665 at the end of 2023, putting us in a good position for much needed work on the church.

The Blacknall Tomb repair Fund has been boosted by a legacy of £39,284 from Andrew Birks' relatives. We have also received £811 in donations after Andrew Birks' funeral. We have spent money on cabling for wiring adjacent to the memorial and almost £3,000 for a further wall survey. At the end of the year this fund stood at £48,418 and should be enough for the planned conservation work on the Blacknall memorial and the adjacent wall.

A new Restricted Fund for the organ has been opened as the organ requires some expensive remedial work. At the end of the year this fund stood at £87 but is open and ready for donations.

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.

#### **Donations 2024**

I would refer you to the donations committee report but in summary just over £1,341 was sent to charities in 2024 from collections together with gift aid. This figure represents 33% of our loose plate collections plus gift aid.

#### **Parish Share**

Our Parish Share in 2024 was £33,268 but we only had to pay £32,609 as we have a 1% discount for paying by direct debit and also had a refund of £330 for parochial fees that we paid in 2022. We have subsequently received a further refund of 4% i.e. £1,317. In 2025 our Parish share will be £34,442 and this will not only have the 1% reduction but also a refund for

parochial fees of £1,121 will be taken incrementally from our monthly payments resulting in an annual payment of £32,988.

## Summary

Overall last year's accounts look good because of a large legacy, the increase in the value of investments by £3,286 and little spending on work on the fabric of the church.

Last year there was concern about a £1,700 drop from regular donors but a successful Stewardship campaign in Lent brought us up to the levels of giving that we saw in 2023. Nevertheless we are seeing costs increasing - Parish share, utilities, and service costs. This next year a lot of our reserves will be spent and although we are covering costs at present, it would not take much to alter that fine balance of keeping income above expenditure with a reserve to cover urgent matters.

## Balance Sheet 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

	General Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023
Fixed Assets and Investments	29,288	83,143	48,551	160,982	158,042
Current Assets:					
Debtors	4,557	895		5,452	3,478
Short term deposits	22,001	94,004		116,005	61,000
Cash at bank	-126	2,364		2,238	4,449
	55,720	180,406	48,551	284,677	226,969
LIABILITIES	3,166			3,166	3,968
TOTAL ASSETS	52,554	180,406	48,551	281,511	223,001

**St Nicolas' Church, Abingdon**  
**Statement of Financial Activities 2024**

	<b>General Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Endowment Funds</b>		<b>Total Funds 2024</b>	<b>Total Funds 2023</b>
	£	£	£		£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>						
From Donors	49,672	40,322			89,994	59,254
Other Voluntary Incoming resources	1,956				1,956	3,318
Income from Investments	2,035	5,857			7,892	5,999
Income from church activities	3,173	20			3,193	2,456
Other Income incl. Grants	408	13,349			13,757	28,317
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>57,244</b>	<b>59,548</b>			<b>116,792</b>	<b>99,344</b>
<b>RESOURCES USED</b>						
Diocesan Parish Share	32,609				32,609	31,841
Church Activities	18,288	9,330			27,618	29,347
Expenditure on building work					0	47,163
Charitable Donations	1,341				1,341	1,216
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES USED</b>	<b>52,238</b>	<b>9,330</b>			<b>61,568</b>	<b>109,567</b>
<b>NET INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>5,006</b>	<b>50,218</b>			<b>55,224</b>	<b>-10,223</b>
<b>GAINS/LOSSES ON INVESTMENTS</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>1,860</b>	<b>1,074</b>		<b>3,286</b>	<b>13,758</b>
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>	<b>5,358</b>	<b>52,078</b>	<b>1,074</b>		<b>58,510</b>	<b>3,535</b>
Balances Brought Forward 01.01.2024	47,196	128,328	47,477		223,001	219,466
Balances Carried Forward 31.12.2024	52,554	180,406	48,551		281,511	223,001

Jenny Metcalfe

## Other Reports

### 7.1 Statistics 2023

Baptisms: 1  
Funerals: 2  
Memorial Services: 0  
Weddings: 2  
Wedding Blessing: 0  
Wedding Renewal: 1

### 7.2 Church Wardens' Report

**Eluned Hallas**

#### *Services:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Activities:*

During the year a small group (headed by Roger Cox and Patrick Holligan) focussed on our environmental footprint – looking at how we use the building, energy consumption,

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

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

For many years we have displayed a Nativity Scene in the south porch in the run up to Christmas which has caught the eye of many passers-by. In 2024 we arranged a Lent Display, consisting of a stark wooden cross with symbols of Holy Week being added week by week during Lent. This too seemed to attract attention, and will be repeated in 2025, we are thinking of other innovative ways in which we could use the porch as outreach even when we are closed.

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

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

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

Many thanks to all who organised and supported these events.

### ***Thanks:***

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

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

## **7.3 Fabric**

**Eluned Hallas**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **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 - have completed the online training relevant to their particular roles. Almost all are due for renewal in 2025, and will be reminded by the safeguarding officer as their training expires so that they have time to renew it. We are extremely fortunate to have a new Parish Safeguarding Officer, Mrs Pat Hudson, who is very knowledgeable and experienced in safeguarding and is also licensed to do in-person

training, which she has done for several groups already. For those at St Nicolas who prefer to renew their training in person rather than online, she will organise this. I have been very grateful for Pat's help and advice.

Mrs Catherine Kimber at St Helen's Church is now the parish DBS verifier.

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

## **7.5 Ministry of Welcome**

**Paul Rast-Lindsell**

Members of the congregation take on various duties to assist the clergy and in helping those attending the church services. These duties are Steward, Reader, Intercessor (prayers), Sacristan, and Chalice Assistant.

The number of volunteers who do these jobs has remained almost the same as last year; there are still over 20 people who carry out these roles. Fr. Paul, Eluned and I are grateful for the time and effort they put into doing so.

One or two people have changed their duties, opting to take on another role or, as in one case, relinquishing one.

It is often difficult to find enough people to fill all the roles in any given month and, although there are usually enough Stewards and Readers, it would be beneficial to recruit at least one more each of Sacristan, Chalice Assistant and Intercessor. If you feel that you can help, please talk to Fr. Paul, Eluned or me.

## **7.6 Donations**

**Jenny Smith**

In 2024 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 2024 we had four special collections for specific causes.

- At the end of March a collection for the homeless together with Gift Aid allowed us to send £150 to the Gatehouse, a charity in Oxford that helps the homeless with their housing and future employment.
- On 30<sup>th</sup> June we had a collection for dementia care. With Gift Aid we raised £310.56 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 £180 to the Abingdon Foodbank and £180 to the Christian Aid Harvest Appeal. Gifts of produce were given to the Food Bank.
- Our Christmas 2024 collections resulted in a total after Gift Aid of £520, £260 of which was sent to the Childrens Society and £260 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. Just over one third of our loose plate collections goes 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.

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.

*Jenny Smith*

## **7.7 Bell ringing**

**Josh Ball**

Over the past year, we have successfully rung every Sunday morning, and for key events such as Remembrance Sunday and Christmas.

Our practice nights and service ringing have had a consistent turnout, including experienced ringers, young ringers, and learners. As the year has progressed, the quality of our ringing and ringing theory has noticeably improved.

Thank you to all the ringers and learners for their dedication to bell ringing; I look forward to another year of ringing.

*Josh Ball (Abingdon Ringing Master)*

## **7.8 House Group**

**Roderick Smith**

The house group based at St Nicolas' continued to meet approximately fortnightly throughout 2024. 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.

2024 was a 'Year B' of the liturgical lectionary when Mark is the usual gospel read at the main Sunday service. With this in mind the group decided that we would study Mark's account of the gospel. Even though Mark is the shortest of the gospels we had only reached the beginning of the passion account by the end of the year.

Mark presents Jesus as someone who those who encountered him recognised as having authority, over evil spirits and the natural world, and in his teaching. This leads those who follow or meet him to say, 'Who is this who does/says . . ?' As one commentator says, 'In Jesus, Mark's readers are confronted with the Kingdom of God in action and they must decide who Jesus is and to respond with their lives accordingly.' We hope and pray that through our house group studies we become more faithful disciples.

## 7.9 St Nicolas DCC

### Membership:

#### *Church Wardens*

Eluned Hallas  
Paul Rast Lindsell

#### *Ex-Officio Representatives on the Abingdon Deanery Synod*

Eluned Hallas Elected 2023 to serve until 2026

#### *Ex-Officio (LLM)*

Sue Holligan

#### *Representatives on the Abingdon Parochial Church Council*

Jenny Fishpool	Elected 2022 to serve until 2025
Jennifer Metcalfe (Smith)	Elected 2023 to serve until 2026
Gwyneth Lewis	Elected 2024 to serve until 2027

#### *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
Ian Cade	Elected 2024 to serve until 2027

#### *Church in Abingdon Representative:* Sue Holligan

#### *Appointments made by DCC:*

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

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

#### Discussions covered:

- Eco Church considerations and A Roche application
- Finance – regular monitoring, budget setting, fees etc;
- Fabric – particularly the Blacknall Aisle;
- Events – services, fundraising and special events;
- Music in Services;
- Charitable donations / special collections;
- Children, Young People and Family provision.

Safeguarding and H&S were regular items.

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.

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

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

PCC discussions during the year focussed on

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

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

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

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

## **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 26 churches in 10 benefices.

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

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

The Parish currently has 5 elected members from the House of Laity: Alexandra Green (St Helen's), Hazel Glennie (St Helen's), Alexandra Scott (St Michael and All Angels) ex officio Diocesan Synod, Sue Scott (St Michael and All Angels) Lay Chair and ex officio Diocesan Synod, Eluned Hallas (St Nicolas)

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

- Finance issues including the Budget, Parish Share, The Deanery Parish Support Fund and Mission Grants
- Opportunities to share good practice and expertise to develop Parish Mission Action Plans – with a particular focus on work with Children, Young people and

Families which is part of a 5 year focus for all parishes and deaneries in the Diocese.

- Outside speakers – including a report back from the General Synod and finding out about the work of Parish Development Officers.
- Raising awareness of Diocese resources and how to access services eg Churchwarden Training, use of Safeguarding Dashboards and Church Energy Audits
- New Congregations/New initiatives/ Eco church/Children and families/LLF updates

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

Minutes of all Synod meetings and Standing Committee meetings can be found on the website at [abingdondeanery.org.uk](http://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 Diocesan Synod**

**Sue Scott**

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

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

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

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

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

- Living in Love and Faith

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

Further information about the work of the Synod can be found at [www.oxford.anglican.org](http://www.oxford.anglican.org)

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

*Sue Scott, Diocesan Synod Representative /Bishop's Council.*

### **7.13 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon**

**Sue Holligan**

Over the past year CiA has continued to inform us of the different activities going on in the churches of the town and to provide us with occasions when we can all worship together.

- The Good Friday service in the Market Place was well attended and was a very moving occasion. It drew the attention of the people in the area and those who were interested were given information about the events of Good Friday and about Easter as well as information about the times of the services being held on Easter Day.
- The Abingdon Passion Play was a new experience for me, one I enjoyed very much. It was interesting and instructive, how lovely if we could get more people taking part.
- The service prior to the Ock Street Fair took place a little earlier than usual. I was unable to go this year but it seems like the perfect introduction to such a significant town event.
- Christmas carols were sung in the Market Place during Advent and, with chairs for some people to sit on, proved increasingly popular.
- January is a busy CiA time in St Nic's as we host the talks for The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU). The talks this year looked at ways the churches and community activities care for people facing difficulties. We had talks on caring for the bereaved, the lonely, the homeless, refugees and the hungry. The attendances varied between 25 and 50 which made life quite challenging for those who were doing the catering. However the lunches were very much appreciated, giving people time to ask more questions of the speakers and to get to know people who worship in different churches. I am very grateful to all of you who did so much to make the week so successful.
- The WPCU always ends with a quiz. Although this is a competition it is a social event, your team does enter to do its best but their chief intention is to enjoy themselves. Dr Ian Cade joined the team this year, cutting our average age a little, and we did quite well!

It would be good to see the Open Air services better attended by church members from across the town. These acts of worship are important in informing and welcoming our more secular society into the Christian Faith. This is something that our recent Third Sunday Services have highlighted as being an important issue. If you have any ideas about how this might be achieved, please let me know.

## **8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments**

### **8.6 Stewards**

**8.00am:** Mr M Cady, Mrs J Lawrence, Mr B Tonks

**11.15am:** Dr A Colborne, Dr I Cade, 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 Nakalembe-Majabi, Mr C Mugabi, Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond