

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2026

Thursday 16 April 2026, at 7:30pm in Church

AGENDA

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- 8.2 Election of up to four DCC members to serve until 2027
- 8.3 Nomination of PCC representative to serve to 2029
- 8.4 Nomination of a Deanery Synod representative to serve to 2029
- 8.5 Appointment of Church-in-Abingdon representative(s)
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9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest (Chairman's discretion)
10. Team Rector's Address

E Hallas. Acting Hon. Sec.

March 2026

Saint Nicolas Church
Minutes of the Annual District Church Meeting held
on Tuesday 8 April 2025, 7pm in Church

Present: Revd P A Smith (Chairman), Dr H Bishop, Dr I Cade, Dr A Colborne, Mrs E Currey, 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, Mr C J Mugabi, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Miss P Randles, Mrs L Richmond, Mr J A Richmond, Mrs J Smith (Dr J Metcalfe), Mr R Smith

Apologies: Mrs S Cox, Dr R Cox, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs H Nagel Hyde,

1. The Team Vicar welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer, remembering especially the Revd Christopher Seaman who had died during the past year.
2. The **Minutes of the 2024 Meeting**, circulated in advance, were proposed G Currey, seconded H Bishop and approved nem con.
3. **Matters Arising** – none not covered elsewhere.
The Chairman announced that Church Music would be addressed under AoB.
4. **The Team Vicar's Report** (presented in advance) was noted.
5. **Electoral Roll.** EH reported that, due to the timing of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, the 2025 Electoral Roll was not yet closed. 2025 was also the year that the Roll was completely renewed with no names being carried forward.
As at 7 April the St Nicolas' section of the Parish Roll as presented contained 50 names. There were a number of former members who had not renewed – some young family members who had moved away, and some who had lost touch with the church during Covid. It was good to report, however, that the new roll included 6 new names.
[At the close of the ER on 10 April, the St Nicolas section stood at 53 names.]
6. **Financial Report.** The Hon. Treasurer, Dr J Metcalfe, presented the accounts for the year ending December 2024 – 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 one year increase in the Parish Share rebate for the year. Full year general donations, and gift aid reclaimable, showed the benefit of the successful 2024 Stewardship Campaign.
A new Restricted Fund – the Blacknall Aisle Fund – had been created to hold funds received for the restoration of the Blacknall Monument and the stabilisation and future conservation of the Blacknall Aisle. The fund had benefited from a substantial donation from the family of the Dr Andrew Birks, and other donations in his memory. Which donations were acknowledged with gratitude. These donations plus the Barnes legacy should be sufficient to fund the proposed work to the Blacknall Aisle – for most of which the permissions were now in place. With the work planned for spring / summer 2025 the high reserves would be depleted by the end of the year.

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Another new Restricted Fund – the Organ Fund – held money donated for the maintenance of the Organ. The Organ tuners had noted that a considerable refurbishment would be needed in the reasonably near term.

The value of Church investments at the end of the year was up on 2024, but these unrealised gains had been lost in the early months of 2025.

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

7 Other Reports.

7.1 Statistics 2024

Baptisms: 1

Funerals: 2

Memorial Services: 0

Weddings: 2

Wedding Blessing: 0

Renewal of Wedding Vows: 1

7.2 The Church Wardens' Report was noted.

7.3 The Fabric Report was noted.

The donation of an Icon of St Nicolas by the family of former congregation member Patrica Pugh was acknowledged with thanks. A place to display this in church would be found.

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

The next in-person Safeguarding Training in the Parish, led by Parish Safeguarding Officer Pat Hudson, would be on 5 June.

7.5 The Ministry of Welcome Report was noted.

7.6 The Donations Committee Report was noted.

7.7 The Bell Ringing Report was noted

Thanks were expressed to the Band for ringing 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.

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 on the Proceedings of the Diocesan Synod was noted.

7.13 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.

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments.

8.1 Church Wardens:

Eluned Hallas, proposed Jenny Smith, seconded Roderick Smith

The nomination would go forward to the Annual Parochial Meeting.

PAS thanked Paul Rast-Lindsell for all his support during his time as Warden.

It was noted that another Nomination could be accepted to put before the APCM.

8.2 DCC Members (to stand until 2028):

Mrs Sue Cox Proposed: R Cox, Seconded S Holligan
Mrs Hilda Nakalembe-Mafabi

8.3 PCC Representatives (to stand until 2028)::

Dr Lewis had, regrettably, tendered her resignation due to the pressure of other commitments as an Abingdon Town Councillor.

Mrs Jenny Fishpool Proposed: S Holligan, Seconded: E Hallas
Dr Roger Cox Proposed: S Cox, Seconded: S Holligan

All offers being accepted by acclamation the nominations would go forward to the Annual Parochial Meeting.

8.4 Deanery Synod Representative – no candidate on the day

8.5 Church-in-Abingdon Representative.

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

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-Mafabi, Mr C Mugabi,
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 approval.

9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest

Music at St Nicolas' – Mr G Currey

Mr Currey had asked to be able to re-raise the topic of music first discussed at the 2024 ADCM. It was disappointing that there was no concrete progress to report.

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Was this due to a lack of resources? He noted that the accounts had shown a small surplus in each of the past two years. We are also blessed with a wonderful building, a dedicated clergy team, an enthusiastically musical congregation, good musicians who play week by week, and the English church music tradition.

The appointment of a Director of Music would complement this and enhance our worship, ideally increasing the choir and strengthening the depth of our music (possibly a return to sung Psalms).

He urged the DCC to seek and appoint a DoM, so that St Nicolas might, in the words of Sunday's psalm 'reap in joy' having 'sown in tears' for long enough.

In response members of the DCC confirmed that it had been discussed several times – but with no positive outcomes. AC queried whether there was a collective zeal to take this forward, and wondered what St N had to offer any putative DoM. PAS agreed that the DCC would revisit the topic in 2025/26.

Prayer Space in St Nicolas'

EH reported that following discussions at DCC and Third Sunday Services, the Prayer Cards (offered to visitors to take at no charge) had been replenished along with a custom display stand.

However, Diocesan guidelines on H&S information and statutory notices which needed to be clearly displayed in churches, required the repurposing of the former Prayer Board.

The creation of a Quiet Prayer Space in the Chancel was not well used by visitors. Where could a prayer space be created?

10. Team Vicars Address

The Team Vicar provided an update in the Team Rector Vacancy.

A small team (representing all three churches) had pulled together a profile of the Parish (and town); following on from the Open Meeting in January, the Wardens and PCC had drawn up Person Specification and an Advertisement. These three documents had been approved by the PCC and the Appointment Panel which included Deanery and Diocesan representatives. The advertisement would go live on 2 May, with the hope of holding interviews in June.

It had been good to see how well the PCC and Wardens had worked together on this process. He thanked them for their work, thanked all the team clergy, retired priests and LLMs for their help in the smooth running of the Parish during the vacancy, and called for continued prayer for the process, those involved from the Parish, and all those who might be called to apply.

Referring to an Occupational Health Review following his recent return from ill health, including a period of phased return to work, it had become apparent that he was finding things physically more difficult than had been the case at his last review. The Archdeacon had recommended that he should pace himself more including being rigorous in working only two out of three sessions (morning, afternoon, evening) a day

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and in taking two rest days consecutively every 4-6 weeks. He would be aiming to follow this CoE best practice advice.

Looking forward he reported that Bishop Gavin had agreed to join us for Evensong on 21 August to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of John & Mary Blacknall. Details were still being worked on

He expressed his thanks to the St Nicolas' congregation (present and otherwise) for their faithfulness and to wardens Eluned & Paul for their work during the year.

Finally he thanked God for his provision and faithfulness, and reminded those present of Christ's promise to be with us always and in all things.

The meeting closed with prayer at 8:10pm.

Team Rector's Report

It was with great joy that I took up the post of Rector in October 2025. My induction/installation service (held at St Helen's) was a joyful event and it was lovely to be so warmly welcomed to my new role. The autumn proved to be quite a time of transition within the ministry team, as we bade farewell to Fr Paul Smith on 9th October at his final service (held at St Michael's) before retirement. This was a bittersweet event, as we were sad to say goodbye to Fr Paul, but at the same time joyfully celebrated his years in ministry and give thanks for all he has given to the parish. At the start of November, it was my privilege to accompany Linda Hobbs to her licensing as a Lay Minister in the parish. It was wonderful to see many from the parish, including members of St Nicolas', at that service to support Linda, and it has been wonderful to welcome her to the ministry team.

Services

In the period of vacancy leading up to my installation as Rector, and that following Fr Paul's retirement, our regular provision of Sunday services continued, both at 11.15am and the 8am Book of Common Prayer Communion service, which is held in St Helen's and St Nicolas' Church in alternating months. I am grateful to Fr AKMA, all our honorary assistant clergy, and lay ministers for all that they do, and for their willingness to take on additional services, both during the vacancy period leading up to my installation as Rector, and in the subsequent vacancy following Fr Paul's retirement.

In August, we celebrated the restoration of the Blacknall memorial in St Nicolas' Church with a special service, followed by a reception in the Roysse room. This was a lovely occasion, which also provided an opportunity to celebrate the work of the composer Orlando Gibbons, as 2025 marked 400 years since his death.

St Nicolas' Church hosted the parish to Evensong on 7th December for St Nicolas' day, and it was a joy to join the congregation of St Nicolas', together with individuals from our other churches, at the St Nicolas' Day lunch at Cosener's House earlier in the day. For practical reasons relating to the Team Vicar vacancy, the St Nicolas' carol service was rescheduled from the evening to the morning on the last Sunday before Christmas, and this proved to be a great success. It is likely that the carol service will be held at this time in 2026, as well.

Outreach

St Nicolas' Church again made use of the south porch to put up displays highlighting and explaining liturgical seasons and festivals. In the run-up to Christmas, members of our congregations set up a table outside St Nicolas' to greet people and hand out mince pies and information about our Christmas services.

Finally

As we go forward into 2026, I am grateful to Eluned and the DCC for their support and hard work, to our parish staff, to Graham Howell, the hymn choosing group, the choir, and all who contribute to Sunday services. I would also like to thank Jenny Metcalfe for her work as treasurer, and to Jenny Fishpool for her work as safeguarding officer for St Nicolas'.

The Revd Dr Jen Brown, Team Rector

Financial Report to the Annual Church Meeting 2026

The total assets of St Nicolas' Church were £33,200 lower at the end of 2025 compared to the end of 2024. The reasons for these figures are explained below.

General Unrestricted Funds

There was a surplus of £9,394 on the general unrestricted funds. The greatest increase in income was due to a very pleasing increase in pledged, gift-aidable donations, thank you. We also received an increase in loose plate and contactless donations, an increase in fees for the use of the church and a legacy of £500. The increase in the Diocesan Parish Share rebate from 2.5% to 4% occurred again in 2025.

Expenditure was reduced as Paul Smith did not find time for a retreat and his expenses were less as he retired. From the beginning of November our Parish Share was reduced due to the loss of a stipendiary minister. Electricity costs were reduced by 25% and gas costs were lower due to 2025 being milder than 2024.

Restricted Funds

The Restricted Blacknall Maintenance Fund received a payment of just over £10,000 in 2025. There was investment income of £4,142 and a refund of VAT on expenditure on the church building of £3,816. We spent £18,384 from this fund on the new lighting but did receive an additional £3,300 in grants to offset some of that cost. The other costs were new bell ropes, some internal decoration, external work to gutters and drains and the insurance. We therefore spent £4,319 more than we received and the fund ended the year with a value of £118,022.

The Blacknall Tomb Repair Fund began the year with a value of £48,417. We have received £1,465 of interest on the deposit. The expenditure on the work to the monument and the wall amounted to £40,319 but we received a VAT refund of £6,720. The memorial has been restored and conservation and cleaning work done on the wall. The wall is being monitored for a year which will cost at least another £1,000. We currently have £16,283 in the fund which will be used for the wall when a decision is made in the summer of 2026 as to its final appearance.

There are six 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. Unfortunately our investments have lost value over the year.

Donations 2025

I would refer you to the donations committee report but in summary £1,828 was sent to charities in 2025 from collections together with gift aid.

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Parish Share

Our Parish Share in 2025 was £34,442 but we had a 1% reduction for paying by direct debit and a refund for parochial fees that we paid in 2023 of £1,121 meaning that we were expecting to pay £32,988. We subsequently received a further refund of 4% i.e. £1,333. In 2026 our Parish share will be £35,440. This will have the 1% reduction and a refund of the 2024 parochial fees of £489 resulting in an annual payment of £34,601, an increase of over £1,600 on 2025. 2026 fees will be reduced by 10% during the vacancy.

St Nicolas' Church, Abingdon Statement of Financial Activities 2025

	General Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES					
From Donors	52,466	652		53,118	89,994
Other Voluntary Incoming resources	2,207	41		2,248	1,956
Income from Investments	1,876	6,986		8,862	7,892
Income from church activities	3,859			3,859	3,193
Other Income incl. Grants	100	24,826		24,926	13,757
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	60,508	32,505		93,013	116,792
RESOURCES USED					
Diocesan Parish Share	32,432			32,432	32,609
Church Activities	16,883	3,266		20,149	27,618
Expenditure on building work		66,072		66,072	0
Charitable Donations	1,799			1,799	1,341
TOTAL RESOURCES USED	51,114	69,338		120,452	61,568
NET INCOMING RESOURCES	9,394	-36,833		-27,439	55,224
GAINS/LOSSES ON INVESTMENTS	-156	-3,324	-2,282	-5,762	3,286
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	9,238	-40,157	-2,282	-33,201	58,510
Balances Brought Forward 01.01.2025	52,554	180,407	48,551	281,512	223,002
Balances Carried Forward 31.12.2025	61,792	140,250	46,269	248,311	281,512

Balance Sheet 31st December 2025

	General Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
Fixed Assets and Investments	28,785	79,819	46,270	154,874	160,982
Current Assets:					
Debtors	4,815	297		5,112	5,452
Short term deposits	36,014	56,008		92,022	116,005
Cash at bank	-4,543	4,704		161	2,238
	65,071	140,828	46,270	252,169	284,677
LIABILITIES	3,279	578		3,857	3,166
TOTAL ASSETS	61,792	140,250	46,270	248,312	281,511

Summary

Last year there was a loss of value on the accounts of £33,200. This is a good result considering the complete updating of the lighting system, extensive restoration work in the Blacknall aisle, new bell ropes, and some internal and external fabric work. Unfortunately the value of our investments dropped by £5,762. This is a concern as the fall in value was greater than the markets would have led us to expect. CCLA are addressing the issue and have promised a 5% increase in dividends in 2026. CCLA are now in the Jupiter Group and access to other advisers should improve the investment portfolio.

We are in a good position financially but there are causes for concern. Extensive work is required on the west end of the church and from 1st April 2026 VAT will no longer be recoverable. Our Parish Share has increased by the second highest increase in the deanery. We will be sheltered from that increase in 2026 by the 10% reduction in cost during the vacancy but that will result in the increase in 2027 appearing to be even greater.

In view of our surplus in the General Funds at the end of 2025 and the aim for the church to achieve net zero, at the beginning of 2026 £5,000 of General Funds was put into a designated fund for "Low Carbon Energy and Heating" in order for us to build up a pot of money for when the heating system needs to be changed.

Jennifer Metcalfe

Other Reports

7.1 Statistics 2025

Baptisms: 0
Funerals: 2
Weddings: 1

7.2 Church Wardens' Report

Eluned Hallas

Comings & Goings

In the summer of 2025 Fr Paul announced his intention to retire, after 25 years ministry – 15 in Abingdon. It was a great sadness for us, but obviously the right decision for him. St Nicolas is, unfortunately, a bit small to host large Parish events, but we were pleased to be able to join in a lovely farewell tea at St Michael's. Fr Paul's final service at St Nic's was, perhaps appropriately, Morning Prayer when it was good to see so many well wishers come to say good-bye (God be with you). At this service he presented us with a water colour of the St Nicolas window which is currently in the clergy vestry. His final Service in the Parish was a joint Mass at St Michael's on 9 October. We wish him well in his retirement.

Also in October was the institution by the Bishop of Dorchester Rt Revd Gavin Collins and the induction and installation by the Archdeacon of Dorchester the Venerable David Tyler of Revd Dr Jen Brown as Rector of Abingdon on Thames which took place in St Helen's. In November Linda Hobbs was licenced as a Licensed Lay Minister at Christ Church Cathedral.

And in December we heard that Revd Kevin Beer had been granted Permission to Officiate (PTO) in the Parish – we look forward to his new ministry among us.

In the spring we were pleased to have Sophie with us as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme volunteering. Sophie helped with a number of tasks around church (particularly the new notice board layouts and tidying the children's activities) and also joined us at Services.

Services:

Our Sunday Services followed the normal pattern in 2025, with the 8.00am Parish Holy Communion (1662), alternating monthly with St Helen's, and our main morning service at 11.15am. We aim to zoom all 11:15am (and celebration) services, and also to make the sermons available on line.

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.

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A special delight this year was the Evensong, at which Bishop Gavin officiated and preached, to commemorate the 400th Anniversary of the death of John and Mary Blacknall, and to celebrate the completion of the restoration of the Blacknall Memorial. The evening aimed to be close to that which would have been familiar to the Blacknalls. So we had 1662 Evensong, with readings from the King James Bible, settings by Orlando Gibbons, and hymns with 17th Century words and / or music. The refreshments provided after the service were refreshments that John Blacknall would have recognised – bread, English butter, local cheeses, local ham, and fresh plums. The drinks – elderflower, apple juice, wine, cider and small beer - were common in John Blacknall's days. Our thanks to all involved in the planning of, and with helping on, the day.

Our monthly Services of Communion by Extension for residents of Bridge House and Old Station House continued, and it has been good to welcome some residents to our morning services.

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 services were based around local community groups – covering their activities and links with the Church in Abingdon, and including shared witnesses from their users and volunteers. 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 Revd Christopher Seaman and Pauline Burren who had given many years of Service to the church.

Activities:

For several years we have used the south porch as a gentle outreach to passersby- by displaying a Nativity Scene in the run up to Christmas, and a Lent Display. In 2025 we expanded this to include displays for Ascension Day, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, and Advent. Thanks to all who helped with these displays.

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 the 'Picture in a Day' art exhibition was repeated, and drew a greater number of entries than the first year.

After-service coffee on Third Sundays offers the opportunity for the congregation to talk and get to know each other more. The traditional St Nicolas Day Lunch at Coseners House in December was well attended by members from all three churches in the Parish.

We hosted the usual Sunday afternoon concerts by Abbey Chamber Concerts, other concerts, and charity events, 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. Many thanks to all who stewarded and supported these events.

Thanks too to the Revd Richard Pyke who gave us permission to use one of his pictures of St Nicolas in the snow as a basis for a St Nicolas Christmas Card.

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, and Sue Cox for her work maintaining and enhancing the garden. Thank you too, to those who have led our prayers and our music, who acts as Stewards on Sundays and other occasions and to those who assist as Sacristans and Communion Assistants.

Finally, my thanks to everyone who has supported St Nicolas throughout the year - through prayer, donations, or practical work week by week - doing those small tasks which we would only notice if they were not done. Your support is what enables St Nic's to be St Nic's.

7.3 Fabric

Eluned Hallas

The major project of 2025 was work on the refurbishment of the Blacknall Memorial which was completed in July. The monument was carefully cleaned, the top section paint meticulously restored and the bottom stone effect repainted.

In the Blacknall Aisle the lower paintwork (badly affected by damp) was carefully cleaned and stabilised. The north east corner will be monitored for moisture content for a year, after which decisions will be made about a long term plan for the area – which could be to repaint in the original Victorian scheme, install light weight panelling or some combination.

External work to try to protect the Blacknall Aisle from further damp included the replacement of the guttering around the aisle, and changes to the external drainage along the north wall.

While in church the plaster specialists did some remedial work to tidy up the sites where the old gas heaters had been removed; rawl plugs and unneeded fittings were removed and the holes made good with appropriate materials. After this the soot stained areas were washed and repainted using the same paint as originally applied.

Also during the year the church lighting was renewed, with new energy efficient lighting installed throughout the church. We also took the opportunity to install motion sensitive lighting in those areas where lights were unintentionally left on – behind the organ, in the vestries and staircase. New emergency lighting was also fitted. We believe we are already benefitting from reduced electricity bills. We are grateful for a Diocesan energy efficiency grant towards this work.

Plans for new external noticeboards were put forward. As all three churches in the Parish are looking to replace their noticeboards it was agreed to adopt a co-ordinated parish style. We hope these will be in place in 2026.

Dr Cox and Professor Holligan continued to keep a watching eye on developments in net zero technology which may be applicable in St Nic's.

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 continue to be efficient and cooperative regarding safeguarding training - many thanks to all. There have been no safeguarding incidents at St Nicolas this year. At time of writing, there is still a frustrating wait for DBS checks and renewals, following the hack of the diocese's previous provider. A new provider has been chosen and approved by the PCC, and our parish verifier, Mrs Catherine Kimber, is about to be trained in the new system, after which she can start on the backlog. Once this has been done, our third Sunday services can be led by lay people again. Pat Hudson continues to lead the parish safeguarding team with sensitivity and diligence, and has organised several meetings between the safeguarding officers of the three churches, which have been useful. Pat is willing to run in-person training courses for those who prefer this to doing it online.

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

7.5 Ministry of Welcome **Paul Rast-Lindsell**

Many members of the congregation take on duties to assist the clergy and help those attending the church services. These duties are Steward, Reader, Intercessor (prayers), Sacristan, and Chalice Assistant.

Over the year, we have had an increase in the number of volunteers to do these jobs. Around 25 people carry out these roles and the church is very grateful for the time and effort they put in.

In any month, it can be difficult to find enough available people to fill all the duties; there are usually enough Stewards and Readers, but it would be most helpful if we could add to the positions of Sacristan, Chalice Assistant and Intercessor. If you feel that you can help, please talk to Eluned or me.

7.6 Donations **Jenny Smith**

In 2025 St Nicolas' Church has continued to support the Church in Abingdon. CiA are currently supporting The Abingdon Bridge, Desire Youth Network, Abingdon Street Pastors, Experience Easter and Archway.

During 2025 we had seven special collections for specific causes:-

- In early March over the course of two Sundays our collections, together with Gift Aid, raised £375 for the homeless. This was shared between the Gatehouse, a charity in Oxford that helps the homeless with their housing and future employment, Homeless Oxfordshire and the Church Homeless Charity.
- On 25th May and 1st June collections raised, together with Gift Aid, £274 for local dementia care. This was sent to Kennington Memory Club.
- On 11th May £29.25 was raised for Christian Aid. The congregation were encouraged to give directly to Christian Aid so that Gift Aid could be claimed.

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- Donations given at our Blacknall Celebrations on 21st August together with Gift Aid - £180 - was given to the Abingdon Foodbank as John Blacknall used to provide food for the poor of the town.
- At our Harvest Festival the loose plate collection together with Gift Aid was given to a charity helping the hungry abroad. £176.25 was sent to the World Food Bank. Gifts of produce were given to the Abingdon Foodbank.
- On 14/12/2025 £73.50 was raised and sent to the Oxford Diocese Advent Appeal for the Jamaica and the Cayman Islands Diocesan Disaster Relief Fund following the devastation of Hurricane Melissa.
- Our Christmas 2025 collections resulted in a total after Gift Aid of £550, £275 of which was sent to the Children's Society and £275 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. More than 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. This raised £55.11.

A concert given by *Arco e Vento* in late November raised £170 for Médecins sans Frontières.

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 continued to ring regularly for Sunday services and special occasions, including Remembrance Sunday and Christmas. The standard of ringing has been kept high, with the band progressing well.

During this year, the bell ropes were replaced. This has been a great improvement over the old ropes and has made a noticeable difference to the handling of the bells.

Attendance has remained steady but modest. We have maintained a committed core group of ringers, keeping the bells ringing for Sunday services, but we are keen to recruit new members.

Thank you to all the ringers who have dedicated their time to bell ringing this year; I look forward to another year of great ringing.

Josh Ball (St Nicolas' Ringing Master)

7.8 **House Group**

Roderick Smith

The house group based at St Nicolas' continued to meet approximately fortnightly throughout 2025. 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 few months of 2025 we completed a study of the gospel according to Mark (started in 2024). We studied Mark's account of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem and his final week there. Along with Mark's readers down the centuries we were puzzled by the brevity of Mark's account of the Resurrection of Jesus. It was therefore good to move onto a study of Acts which starts with the presence of the risen Lord before his Ascension. Luke, at the very beginning of Acts, refers to all that Jesus began to do which was written about in his first book. The implication is that Jesus continues to act through the Holy Spirit in the teaching, encounters and journeys of his apostles and other followers. During our discussions we have reflected on the extent to which the apostles' way of evangelising can be a model to copy for us here and now.

7.9 St Nicolas DCC

Membership:

Church Wardens

Eluned Hallas

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

Jennifer Metcalfe (Smith)

Elected 2023 to serve until 2026

Roger Cox

Elected 2025 to serve until 2028

Jenny Fishpool

Elected 2025 to serve until 2028

Members of St. Nicolas' Church Council

Hildegard Hyde

Elected 2023 to serve until 2026

Ian Cade

Elected 2024 to serve until 2027

Sue Cox

Elected 2025 to serve until 2028

Hilda Mafabi

Elected 2025 to serve until 2028

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. Discussions covered:

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- Finance – regular monitoring, budget setting, fees etc;
- Fabric – particularly the Blacknall Aisle;
- Events – services, fundraising and special events;
- Music in Services;
- Safeguarding;
- and H&S.

The results of these discussions are reported under the Warden's and Fabric reports.

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 includes statutory governance – finance, Safeguarding, Health & Safety etc and those issues best approached on a Parish, rather than Church, basis. It is also a forum for communications throughout the Parish, including details of Parish and Church sponsored events, and feedback on Deanery and Diocesan issues.

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met eight times during 2025, with the Standing Committee / Clergy & Wardens Group meeting regularly between full PCC meetings.

Perhaps the most important work of the PCC during 2025 concerned the appointment of a new Team Rector. Throughout the process congregation members were asked to hold the process in prayer, and to feed in their comments via PCC members. Work started with an open meeting of parishioners in January, at which those able to attend identified the type of qualities and person sought. A small team, of PCC members and others, and representative of the three churches, was tasked with drawing up a Parish Profile – showcasing the town and Parish, and the activities of our three congregations. The PCC were active participants commenting on and amending all the documents required for the application pack. All six 2024/25 wardens were on the interview panel, along with the Team Rector, Bishop, Archdeacon and Area Dean; members of the clergy team and of all three congregations were invited to meet all three candidates interviewed.

At the conclusion of a six months prayerful consideration, on the part of both the Parish and the candidates, we were delighted to be able to invite Rev Jen to the post, and have our invitation accepted.

In the absence of a Team Rector, until October 2025 the PCC was guided by Sue Scott as Lay Chair and Fr Paul. Discussions focussed on

- Safeguarding: the PSO worked with Wardens and others to get safeguarding training up to date, and embed safer working procedures into the activities of the Parish. Our grateful thanks to Pat Hudson, and the District Safeguarding Officers for all their work on this.

As part of our wider safeguarding responsibility the PCC opened discussions on how

best to respond to visitors to our churches seeking support, both practical and spiritual.

- Finance including regular monitoring and budget setting. The PCC continued to receive and review 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.
- Health & Safety Governance – continuing the work to establish, consolidate and standardise H&S practices across the Parish.
- Clergy welfare.
- Publicity for Christmas & Easter Services, and other church organised events, aiming to reduce date conflict and improve awareness within the church community and beyond.

The PCC continues to review and approve faculty applications and other fabric matters across the Parish, which this year included a new external light at St Michael's, restoration and repair of the Blacknall Aisle and Monument at St Nicolas', new energy efficient lighting at St Nicolas', and the start of the new Lighting Project at St Helen's. New noticeboards at all three churches are under consideration – with the same 'look & feel' to be adopted across the parish.

GDPR and Parish Policies remain regular items on the PCC agendas

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, Bishop's Council and Deputy Chair of the House of Laity Oxford Diocese
- Eluned Hallas (St Nicolas)

The Synod met 4 times in 2025 (January, April, September 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 Rev Asa Humphreys a Parish Development officer from the Diocese and an experienced planning officer. He gave an informative presentation about the issue of church engaging effectively with new housing developments and things for us to consider.
- Raising awareness of Diocese resources and how to access services eg Churchwarden Training, use of Safeguarding Dashboards and Church Energy Audits

The Deanery also now holds an online zoom Prayer meeting on the first and third Tuesday of each month 7.30-8.00am led by Sue Scott Lay Chair. Materials are distributed to all Deanery clergy, Church Wardens and Deanery Synod Reps. Each meeting begins with prayers for one of our churches/benefices and each church/benefice is prayed for in rotation.

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 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.

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. Synod met in March, June and November 2025.

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:

- Safeguarding
- Children and Young people strategy
- Financial matters including Parish Share
- Diocesan Board of Education
- Living in Love and Faith
- Eco church and Environmental issues

Further information about the work of the Synod can be found at www.oxford.anglican.org

The pathway to follow is – homepage>who we are>How we are governed>Diocesan Synod> documents

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 / Deputy Chair House of Laity
Oxford Diocese*

7.13 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon

At a CiA Governing Body meeting in September 2025, it was agreed that:

- The Governing Body (comprising all staff members and one lay representative from each church, plus officials) would meet twice a year, in the first and third quarter.
- The activities of the CiA would be streamlined to those that work collectively with a focus on mission to the people of Abingdon.
- The Administrator hours to be reduced from 7 hours a week to 3.5 hours, given the streamlining as described.
- All task groups would function independently but were open to ask for support and submit notices via the monthly CiA News.
- Community funding to cease after the current 3-year period ends in December 2026.

During the year:

- The Christian Aid group held the Christian Aid Week.
- The Christian Forum column continued 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 took place.
- The work of Desire continued.

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- Two Alpha launch nights took place at Christ Church and St Edmund as a prelude to their Alpha courses.
- The work of Prayer Spaces continued in Abingdon schools with Ellie Ball in charge of schools in south Abingdon and Heather Hughes leading those in schools in north Abingdon.
- 35 Ock Street, a hospitality centre for the community offering a café and a listening ear, and meeting rooms for local groups and agencies.
- Abingdon Street Pastors continued operations.

January

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, whose theme was Serving Others in Our Local Community, the usual events took place: the Inter-church quiz, which took place at Abingdon Baptist Church, and was again won by Abingdon Baptist Church, and raised £123.60 for the charity Helen and Douglas House. Midday prayers took place at St Nics Church.

February

A Connect youth event took place.

March

The World Day of Prayer service took place at St Helen's Church organised by the CiA Administrator and volunteers from the previous WDP committee. The service for 2025 was prepared by the women of The Cook Islands with the theme 'I made you wonderful'. Revd Ruth and Richard Pyke led the service. £350.85 was raised for the work of the WDP charity.

Trinity Learning's Easter Experience took place at Trinity Church offering both live and online workshops to KS2 school children to access the Easter story.

The procession of witness took place on Good Friday from Abingdon Library to the lawn of the Roysse Room on Bridge Street for a short outdoor service led by Helen Cameron and the Salvation Army Band. An Easter Tract was given out.

April

A Connect youth event took place.

May

Christian Aid week took place and raised £3,178 from its market place sale and its street/online collections.

June

Church Twinning welcomed visitors from Sint Niklaas, Argentan and Schongau to mark 25 years of church twinning.

July

The South Abingdon Play & Activity Day event took place in south Abingdon.

September

Christ Church and St Edmund both held Alpha launch nights, prior to the start of their Alpha courses.

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A Connect youth event took place.

October

The Michaelmas fair service took place led by Revd Georgina Bondzi-Simpson.

A Church Twinning visit took place to Sint Niklaas.

December

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

Children's crafts were also on offer as well as hot pasties and mulled wine from Abingdon Street Pastors.

From the CiA Annual Report, D Mcknight Administrator

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 N Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs S Holligan, Dr P Holligan, Mrs H Nakalembe-Majabi, Mr C Mugabi, Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond