

ST NICOLAS CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT 2023
TEAM VICAR'S REPORT

Introduction:

As I write this report and reflect on the past year, I am aware of just how quickly the year passed. I rejoice that we now live in a more familiar world and for the spirit of cooperation and goodwill present in our common life. In times where there are many challenges and pressures within the life of the church, and a reduction of resources generally, I want to thank you all for your contributions to our mission and ministry in this place.

In this report, I highlight below some of the notable achievements and during last year with some concluding remarks.

1. Church Annexe

It is wonderful that the Church Annexe is now fully complete which is a superb facility for us. We owe much gratitude to Gwyneth and Colin and all the team for this achievement. In recognition of their work I wrote to the bishop to ask that each one of the team become members of the Fellowship of St Birinus. Sadly, his office returned my request by saying only two people could be honoured in this way. So this was given to Gwyneth and Colin for leading the project, but I know it is received by them on behalf of each of you who worked on the building. Because Gwyneth and Colin were unable to attend the St Birinus Fellowship annual service, I was very pleased that this could take place here at our Patronal Festival when the Archdeacon came to preach, and, in addition, bless and open the Church Annexe. (as also noted by Paul, our Warden, in his report).

2. Care Home Ministry

We have now resumed our Care Home Ministry and brought it back to where it was four years ago. We hold a short service of Extended Communion, with hymns (which the residents always enjoy). We visit Bridge House on the first Monday afternoon of each month and Old Station House, with the help of their staff and people here, bring residents to church on the last Monday of every month. It has been good to welcome the residents into church – even as last winter approached. It seems to be a better setting than in Old Station House itself.

I want to express my thanks to Eluned, Jenny and Tony and Lyn for making up the team which supports this important ministry. Special thanks go to Larysa, who has taken on the role of our pianist, having come to live here from the Ukraine. Her contribution has been greatly appreciated. As we move forward into another year, I am pleased that there are other clergy who are now able to step in and lead these services when I have annual leave or other commitments.

3. St Nicolas School

I am now visiting St Nicolas School on a monthly basis to lead Collective Worship on a Monday morning. It is always enjoyable to have this privilege, to speak and teach the children on a programme based on the adopted values of the school. They do occasionally catch me out with the unexpected question, but this always keeps me on my toes! I meet with the Headteacher afterwards when I visit.

4. Ministerial Colleagues

I want to extend my thanks to all my clergy colleagues who work alongside me in our worship on Sundays: both those who are part of our team and also to our honorary assistants who give of their time so generously in retirement.

I am delighted that Sue Holligan was finally licensed with as LLM with PTO last Autumn. It is a privilege and blessing that we have Sue among us with her wisdom and experience and I extend my to Sue for all she is doing.

On 3 September we bade farewell to Canon Charles Masheder and his wife, Felicity, after their four years with us. The parish gathered together for Charles' final Eucharist at St Helen's followed by a drinks reception. The contribution Charles made to the life of the parish was considerable. His capacity for ministry was exemplary and the Holy Spirit knew what he was doing when he called Charles to minister among us. Now having moved to Gloucestershire for retirement, Charles and Felicity have settled in quickly and are very active in their new setting!

We were saddened to lose Bishop Henry and Catherine to pastures news. Bishop Henry's contribution to our church was notable over many years and we owe him a huge debt of gratitude for his ministry and fellowship with us here. He and Catherine, having moved to Chipping Norton, are well-established there and we wish them well in their new life and ministry in that place.

Concluding Remarks

When I returned from Sabbatical in November 2022, I resolved that I would consolidate how I worked across my two churches. I am pleased that our wardens at both churches have met with me together which has been helpful to us all. There is still more to be done in this area as both churches share me as Vicar. At present I am overstretched with meetings in both churches, (which doesn't include other statutory or regular meetings across the parish or beyond: in the deanery, for example). Looking at this area of my day-to-day workload to free me up for other ministry is necessary. With the appointment of The Revd Dr Andrew Adam (AKMA) in the Autumn, it is good that he is able to have a more actively supportive role both here and at St Michael's.

I want to thank you all for your contributions again. I add my thanks to Jenny Metcalfe for her diligent work as Treasurer and for all she has does week by week and for bringing us to this point with a clear set of accounts for last year. And I want to thank Jenny too for her support in the pastoral ministry of our church.

Finally I conclude with my personal thanks to Eluned and Paul – but also on behalf of us all - for their hard work and support as Wardens for which I am deeply grateful.

May the risen Christ bless us in the coming year and give us grace to share the good news as we live his risen life.

*The Revd Paul Smith, Vicar
April 2024*