



**ANNUAL REPORT
&
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

For year ending 31st December 2019

(As required by Church Accounting Regulations 2006)

**PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
ANNUAL REPORT
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2019**

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is a registered charity, Charity Registration Number 1129833.

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is situated in the town of Abingdon, Oxfordshire. It is part of the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is:

The Hon Secretary, Abingdon-on-Thames PCC
c/o The Parish Centre, St Helen's Court, Abingdon OX14 5BS

The Parish comprises the churches and congregations of St Helen, St Michael & All Angels and St Nicolas.

PCC members

PCC members are the Trustees of the Charity. PCC members who have served from 1st January 2019 until the date that this report and the financial statements were approved are:

Stipendiary Team clergy:

The Revd Dr E C Miller
The Revd P A Smith

Non-stipendiary clergy:

The Revd J Brown (from 17 March)
The Revd C P T Masheder
(house for duty from November 2019)
The Revd M Williamson
(house for duty until October 2019)

Licensed Lay Minister

Mrs G Bevington

Churchwardens:

Mr A Coker
Dr C N P Gee (to April 2019)
Mrs L Hobbs
Miss J Kelly (from April 2019)
Dr G Meen (from April 2019)
Mr P Rast-Lindsell
Mr P Squire

Officers:

Chairman	The Revd Dr E C Miller
Vice Chairman	Miss A E Green
Secretary	Mrs E Hallas
Treasurer	Dr A R Birks

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Dr A R Birks
Dr H Glennie
Miss A E Green
Mrs E Hallas
Mr P Penfold
Miss A Scott
Mrs S Scott (St M)

Ex-Officio

– representatives on Diocesan Synod:

Miss A Scott
Mrs C Worthington

Elected PCC members:

Dr H Bishop
Mr J Clare
Mrs H Clare
Mrs J Collins
Dr R Cox
Miss M Horton
Mrs S Scott (St H)

Auditors

Mercer Lewin Chartered Accountants
41 Cornmarket Street,
Oxford,
OX1 3HA

Weblinks:

St Helen's: <https://www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk/homepage.html>
St Nicolas': <https://www.stnicolasabingdon.org.uk/>
St Michael & All Angels: <http://www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk/>

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AIMS AND PURPOSES

Under the PCC (Powers) Measure 1956, the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Dr Charles Miller, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Each DCC is similarly required to co-operate with the minister in charge of the district church. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Parish Centre (in St Helen's Court) and Enock House (2 Musson Close).

1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

1a Team Rector's Report [Charles Miller]

The parish has moved forward on an even keel during 2019. The lay leadership has been of a high order and all three congregations have benefitted from full teams of able wardens. I thank them for their commitment of time, energy, expertise and skill.

The formal clergy 'Team' has once again changed. In early September we said farewell and thank you to The Revd Mary Williamson who was our first House-for-Duty Associate Priest (living in Enock House). She returned to the West Country where she had served and where her retirement home is. We welcomed The Revd Jen Brown onto the Team as a Self-supporting 'Associate Priest', and with her has come her husband, Chris. Jen has paid ministry employment at Ripon College Cuddesdon near Oxford and also (more recently) with the College of Preachers.

In early November we welcomed Mary's replacement, Canon Charles Masheded, as our next House-for-Duty 'Associate Priest'. Bp Colin Fletcher and our Archdeacon Judy French led the Licensing service, and expressed their delight that Charles had returned to our Diocese where he had ably served for many years before assuming retirement duties in the West Country. Charles, with his wife Felicity, worked hard to prepare Enock House as their new home, and they both are eager and delightful participants in our parish's life. Thanks to warden Linda Hobbs for managing their transition to Enock House.

Our Licensed Lay Minister Gwen Bevington adds yet another dimension to our Team and through the year has taken part in worship and as preacher in all three of our Team churches, where her ministry has been much appreciated.

The Clergy Chapter meets each Wednesday at the Parish Centre at 11.30 am for discussion and decisions about parish ministry. Such gatherings always include a time of prayer together.

The parish and the formal ministry 'Team' continue to be blessed with invaluable support from retired clergy living in Abingdon: John Barton, Jane Baun, David Bevington, Ros Rutherford, Bishop Henry Scriven, Roger Williams, Keith Ward, (who in 2019 stepped down in retirement from further ministry) and Emma Percy (St Nicolas' Bowles Lecturer). Their free-will contributions to the rota of services and to other aspects of our life and ministry, as well as their friendly presence and pastoral and theological wisdom are a huge enrichment to life and ministry in our parish. I thank also the many lay members who assist in our worship including: Michael Hosking (St Helen's), Beryl Clements (particularly St Michael's & St Nicolas'), and the Third Sunday leaders at St Nicolas'.

Both Fr Paul Smith and I, after seasons of convalescence or ill-health in the previous year, have done well through the year. Certainly the presence of able lay leadership and ministry support has been a key factor. Both Fr Paul and I had a Ministry Development Review in 2019. It is a helpful 'health-check' on priestly life and ministry

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I am especially gratified that our three congregations work more and more closely in planning and in appropriate opportunities for joint worship at points throughout the year. We have embraced a pattern of Corporate Communion services for Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day and Trinity Sunday when our musical forces also combine.

Fr Paul Smith and I, together with Beryl Clement (St Michael's), Roderick Smith (St Nicolas') and Margaret Hoskins (St Helen's) form the PCC's 'Christian Teaching & Spiritual Growth' team. This team emerged after a PCC summer Away Day two summers ago, and we have built a good momentum through 2019. Our brief is to assist the PCC in strengthening and coordinating the ministry of our three churches in those two areas. In 2019 we proposed, and the PCC accepted, two additions to our current round of programmes: 1. A pre-Lent quiet day; and 2. A teaching day on the theme of 'the Ascension' in the period before the festival in 2020. These are occasions for clergy and laypeople to work together in providing parish-wide teaching about the faith and its practice. This accords with Bp Stephen Croft's emphasis on catechesis as part of his vision for our Diocese. The wardens continue to field the growing amount of paperwork from the diocese and / or national church. But all that is being suitably handled, and we should all be grateful to them!

The Administrator, Jenny Balshaw, continues to offer us all superb administrative support. She fields a huge amount of diverse business with only one volunteer helper, Brenda Johnstone. We owe them both admiration and thanks since without the office's support it would be almost impossible to do what we do.

As Team Rector I appreciate the work of volunteers who give time and energy to key tasks at the PCC level: our Parish Treasurer, Dr Andrew Birks, the PCC Vice-Chair Alexandra Green, and the PCC Secretary Mrs Eluned Hallas. Without their contributions of time, energy and expertise the work of the PCC would not have got to where it is now. Thank you!

1b Church Electoral Roll [Richard Kirby]

There is a Parish Electoral Roll Officer for Abingdon-on-Thames, but each of the three churches in the parish maintains a section of the Roll. The table below gives the changes from 2016 to 2017 for the three churches in the Parish.

The review in 2019 was a complete review, in which all members had to re-join the roll. The drop in numbers at a complete review is always disappointing, not unexpected, but the roll is likely to climb at the revisions between those, due to the system used.

Electoral Roll Numbers 2018-19

	2019 roll	2018 roll	% change
St Helen	177	348	- 49%
St Michael	71	91	-22%
St Nicolas	60	71	-15%
Abingdon on Thames	308	510	-40%

1c LLM Report [Gwen Bevington]

It's my lonely privilege to be the LLM in the parish. Sometimes there's a bit of confusion about my role: I've been asked why I'm filling in an electoral roll form, whether I'm going to be celebrant at the eucharist, how many days a week I work... The clue is in the second L of LLM – I'm a licensed LAY minister – one of the plebs, and proud of it.

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I was glad to attend the diocesan annual LLM conference in June; one reminder from that is that LLM ministry is as varied as the people who exercise it. For me, it's mainly about having the bishop's licence to preach, at the invitation of the Rector. It's been a great joy this year to put my toe under the lectern at St Michael's and St Nicolas's, as well as at St Helen's.

I see "Readership" (Reader is still the legal name) as primarily a preaching/teaching order. Others of the 350 or so LLMs in the diocese may have a different balance: some are more fired by leading worship than by preaching, or have a particular ministry say, to a community (a school, say, or care home) or group (eg bereaved people) where it is a real help to be able to present themselves as licensed by the church. Of course, huge amounts of lay ministry happen without the need of "licence".

I'm very grateful for the support and encouragement I receive from clergy and congregations. I'd always be happy to talk about LL ministry to people who could be wondering if it is for them.

1d PCC [Eluned Hallas]

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met six times during 2019-20 (and the Standing Committee once).

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 continues to review and approve faculty applications across the Parish, and consideration of GDPR, Safeguarding and the finances of the Parish remain regular items on the PCC and Standing Committee agendas.

During the year the Parish Safeguarding Policy was revised, updated and adopted, and a Lone Worker Policy adopted. Work began on implementing the parish GDPR policy, and gathering the permission of congregation members and other contacts to hold and use the data in appropriate ways.

Another very successful PCC Away Day in June enabled PCC members to discuss Parish communications, and action planning – with particular reference to Diocesan priorities.

The PCC has also received and discussed reports from the three cross-church Working Groups covering Finance, Communications; and Spiritual Growth (see below).

1e Safeguarding [Maria Gibson, Parish Verifier]

The PCC is complying and will comply with its duty under Section 5 (reporting any clergy misconduct towards parishioners or church staff) of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, in line with the House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults".

The Revised Parish Safeguarding Policy was agreed by the PCC in September, and signed by the three Church Safeguarding Officers, the Rector and Team Vicar. A copy of the document, together with contact details and associated information, has been put up on all three Church websites, and a hard copy sent to the Diocese.

Volunteers in all three churches have been reminded of Safeguarding practice in the Parish, and the need to comply with Church of England and government Safeguarding regulations. Training is provided by the Diocese.

St Michael's has begun a process of reviewing and extending the terms and conditions for hirers of

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the church and/or church room. From early 2020, hirers will have to agree to conform to basic Parish safeguarding principles. Groups potentially including young people or vulnerable adults will have to agree to abide by the full safeguarding policy, or that of their organisation if applicable, and to familiarise themselves with the appropriate diocesan good practice guides which will be available from the website.

Safeguarding Officers within the Parish:

Maria Gibson – St. Helen's

Carol Bowman – St. Michael's

Jenny Fishpool - St. Nicolas'

1f Communications Working Group [Margaret Horton]

The PCC Communications group was set up in order to further and to improve communication, both within the parish and from the parish to the town and wider world. The initial group of Jenni Collins (St. M), Andrew Coker (St. N) and Margaret Horton (St. H) presented their suggestions and ideas to the PCC at the Awayday in June 2019 and after discussion it was decided to pursue the following priorities:

1. To set up a new parish Website including parish pages and links to the 3 churches and their individual pages. Examples of 'parish pages' would be a 'welcome' and 'who's who' page, information on baptisms, weddings and funerals, spiritual growth. Specific church pages would include as examples a page on the locality and opening times of that church, a 'history' page, details of service times etc. Across the parish we have a lot of in house IT talent and it was agreed that the current website managers (Steve Thomas (St. H), David Duce (St. M), Nick and Eluned Hallas (St. N)) be invited to join the group and to be responsible for the technical side, whilst the other group members give directions on content and design. At the time of writing quite a lot of draft parish pages have been produced by Steve Thomas and some individual church pages. It is a time consuming and lengthy process but it is hoped that it may be ready to go live by Easter or as soon after as we can manage.

2. Printed publications. The PCC felt that there was a need to review our current parish publications of the Window and Teamword. Since it was introduced over 20 years ago, the focus and audience of the Window has altered, raising questions about its content and purpose. It was decided that there would be a break in publication from Jan 2020 for this review to take place.

3. Social media. Church involvement in social media is crucial in an age when almost everyone (85%+) under the age of 45 uses it at least occasionally if not regularly. It is the prime form of communication in this age group and we cannot ignore it! At the Awayday in June 2019 it was decided to go ahead with a parish Instagram account which was set up and at the time of writing has 106 followers. Those taking the lead in this are Roger Cox (St. H), Alexandra Scott (St. M), Abielle Hallas (St. N); please send them photos of upcoming or past events that they can post on our behalf. We are grateful for their work.

Eluned Hallas runs the St. N Facebook account and this is another form of social media that could be extended parish wide.

It still feels like early days but we hope that by these means and others we can foster a closer and more informed relationship between our 3 churches and that we can showcase more widely what we do and have to offer to the town and to the world beyond.

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1g Christian Teaching and Spiritual Growth Working Group

[Beryl Clements, Roderick Smith, Margaret Hoskins]

Following concerns expressed by the PCC in 2018, representatives from all three churches in the Parish met with the Team Rector and Team Vicar on four occasions. Our remit was to review what was already happening in the Parish and to identify any areas where we might recommend expansion or refocussing of activities. We each began by listing all the ways available to teach and encourage congregants to understand the Christian faith and to grow in spiritual maturity – a life-long process. Our assembled lists included Parent and Toddler groups, teaching of younger members, study groups, recommended reading, varied forms of worship, explorations of the arts, as well as sermons and informal/personal discussions.

We raised the inevitable limitations of time and resources but appreciated other ways of teaching/communicating were essential as well as ‘words’ – e.g. actions, visual media, quiet days and pilgrimage. Some of these ideas have been and are being explored and implemented - e.g. the pre-Lent and Ascensiontide Quiet Days, which give time for guided reflection as well as (for those who feel a need) opportunity for one-to-one spiritual direction.

1h Abingdon Deanery Synod [Sue Scott]

The Synod has met four times this year and has provided an opportunity for Parishes to share information and learning opportunities together.

Each meeting is comprised of both business and a presentation from a speaker. This year there have been enlightening presentations from Andrew Anderson Gear the Diocesan Director of Missions who spoke about “Setting God’s People free”, another about the work of Christian Aid. In addition there have also been presentations about the services provided by the Citizen Advice service and finally a presentation from Tina Molyneux Discipleship Enabler in the Oxford Diocese about the Personal Discipleship Plan (PDP).

Business has been varied and has included issues which face all parishes – including information about how the Parish share is calculated and Safeguarding.

In all aspects of its work the Synod is there to support and enable parishes as we all strive to become a more Christ like Church in today’s challenging world.

The Abingdon Deanery website has been redesigned and is a valuable resource for anyone who would like to find out more about the work of the Synod.

As a member of the congregation of St Michael and All Angels and also of the Parish of Abingdon PCC it is a honour to serve on the Synod.

Sue Scott, Deputy Chair Abingdon Deanery Synod

1i Oxford Diocesan Synod [Alexandra Scott]

The Parish of Abingdon on Thames representatives:

- o Carol Worthington – St Helen’s, Abingdon
- o Alexandra Scott – St Michaels, Abingdon

The Diocesan Synod meets three times a year, on Saturdays. The aim is to move the meetings around the Diocese, meaning that people get to see new parts of the Diocese and the distance of travelling is equalised. The 2019 meetings were held on the 16th March in St James Church, Gerrards Cross, the 15th June in Unipart Conference Centre, Cowley and the 16th November in The Church of the Servant King, Milton Keynes.

The meetings follow the general structure:

- o Opening prayers and devotions,
- o Bishop Steven’s welcome and Presidential Address,

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- o Diocesan and Deanery business
- o News from General Synod
- o Guest speaker, presentation or a group discussion.
- o Reflection on the morning's business
- o Closing worship

In March, Bishop Steven's Presidential Address was entitled "I won't wear makeup on Thursdays" based on Jess Glynn's single, which was played to the Diocesan Synod. Statistically, the Diocese has the biggest engagement with children, young people and families within the Thames Valley. Furthermore, harrowing statistics were presented that 1 in 4 girls in the country over the age of 14 self-harm in some way. In addition, 1 in 10 children aged 5-16 now suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder. Young LGBTI people have higher rates of poor mental health, self-harm and suicide, and regardless of differing views uncritical support would help to lessen the pain and suffering if asked for. A link was drawn between the storm on Galilee and the storm that resides within young people today, threatening to overwhelm us.

June, was based on the teachings of Luke, entitled "Put into Deep Water". The Diocese is at a pivotal point within the Common Vision where we are called to be a more contemplative, compassionate and courageous church. Also, the focus now must be how every church is able to share in the process of being more Christ-like. Linking to the teachings in Luke, the aim must be to "put into deep water and let down your nets for a catch". It is urged that churches listen to Christ's calling and respond to this, enabling the common vision to be realised. Lastly, all were reminded that we are individuals that form one church and as such it is not possible to standardise the growth of the church. We must be listening to Jesus and responding in individual ways but working towards a common vision.

November's address was entitled: How to pray for the General Election. Reminding the Synod of our duty to be praying for both sides of Parliament as the politicians have approached Bishop Steven asking for prayers.

In addition, financial matters always form part of the proceedings – important as can be the basis of the formulation of Parish Shares.

The Diocesan Synod continues to look at ways of coming together and working collaboratively to spread the good news.

Further information can be found about the meeting on the Diocesan Synod website:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/who-we-are/governance/diocesan-synod/>

Furthermore, there is a digest that is available shortly after the meeting.

2 *STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP*

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames is served by a Team Rector, based at St Helen's, and a Team Vicar shared between St Nicolas' and St Michael's.

Abingdon has a Local Ecumenical Project – the Church in Abingdon (CiA) – to which all the Anglican churches belong.

The Parochial Church Council of Abingdon-on-Thames is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure, and was formally registered with the Charity Commission on 27 May 2009.

Lay members of the PCC are appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Church Representation Rules, as originally authorized as Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure

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1969 and subsequently amended by the General Synod. All eligible church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

In addition to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames, there are three District Church Councils (DCCs). The PCC has delegated to the DCCs responsibility for detailed implementation of most of its functions, in a continuation of a Scheme approved by the Bishop. The PCC is therefore able to concentrate on those matters which cannot be delegated, or are of common concern. It has two committees:

The *Standing Committee* (comprising the team clergy, church wardens, the secretary, the treasurer, and the vice-chairman) has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC.

The *Finance Working Group* (comprising the Parish Treasurer and the Treasurers of the DCCs) oversees the financial activities of the parish, and prepares the annual budget and financial statements for the parish. It meets as required. The budget and financial statements are approved by the PCC after individual church finances have been considered by individual DCCs.

During 2019 a number of Working groups were established to co-ordinate the work of the Parish in key areas of common concern. Membership of these groups covers all three churches and includes both PCC and non-PCC members.

PCC members (and DCC members) are encouraged to attend training sessions as appropriate. Most often these are courses organised by the Diocese of Oxford.

The PCC is exposed to risks associated with buildings, finances and availability of volunteer effort. Dealing with the secular aspects first: buildings are insured and regularly inspected, finances are managed by the parish treasurer, and DCC treasurers and volunteers are constantly sought to carry the administrative burden of the PCC and DCCs. The maintenance of ancient buildings is a heavy responsibility for the PCC, but this is not unusual in the Church of England. Health and Safety, Child Protection and other pertinent legislation is adhered to, and there are policies in place to this effect. DCCs operate within a budget and financial envelope determined by their annual income and reserves and approved by the PCC. Each church has an annual stewardship programme to invite donors to respond to the income targets. Special appeals are launched for special projects (typically capital projects) as appropriate. To say 'The Lord will provide' may not be an acceptable approach to financial risk management in the secular world; but seeking the Will of God through constant prayer and responding to His Will moment by moment are key instruments by which the PCC manages risk in labour and financial matters.

3 **PROPERTY**

3a **Musson Close [Linda Hobbs]**

2 Musson Close, is a property used by St. Helens Church as home for the Associate Priest during the period of license. Until August 2019, the property was the residence of the Revd. Mary Williams; since the end of October 2019, it has been the home of Canon Charles Masheder, licensed as Associate Priest on 4th November 2019 and his wife Felicity

2 Musson Close, is a 3 bedroom Town house, situated in South Abingdon, within easy walking distance of Abingdon and the three churches of St. Helens, St. Nicolas and St. Michaels.

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As Associate Priest, Charles Masheder, under the terms of his license has use of the property, until the end of the license, when it is required to be returned to the church.

Under the terms of the license, no rent, water rates, insurance or Council Tax are liable to be paid. All costs are met by Church funds. Repairs and costs incurred due to repair or maintenance of the property, are also met by Church funds. All costs incurred by the Associate Priest, in fulfilling the post, are also met by Church funds.

Repairs necessary since the last report are: replacement basin and taps with the fitting of an extractor fan to the bathroom, the requirement to clear a blocked drain in the office, and the annual Gas Safety Certificate, a requirement by law, for all residences under license or tenancy. All costs are paid from the Parish Clerical House Fund.

The property continues to be managed by Linda Hobbs.

3b Fairacres Road [David Scott]

At the time of his death in 2009, Mr Derek Enock was the sole trustee and had the sole remainder interest in a property in Fairacres Road, Oxford. The property is held in a Settled Land Act Trust. The occupant has the right to reside in the property for as long as she wishes. If the property is sold, she will be entitled to the income from the invested sale proceeds. Upon her death the property or proceeds from the sale will pass to the following beneficiaries of Mr Enock's estate:-

1. St Michael and All Angels Church.
2. St Helen's Church.
3. St Nicolas Church.
4. Trinity Church.
5. The Churchill Hospital.

The following were appointed Trustees in 2009. David Scott, Michael Beach, Ruth Sillitoe and Jane Maitland a partner of the firm Henmans now Freeths.

Current status.

There has been no change to the above situation. I received 2 pieces of correspondence from Freeths during 2019, one of which was to approve an invoice for professional services, and the other notification of a change to investments. There has been no meeting of the Trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The following Vision Statement was agreed by the PCC on 22nd November 2000 and continues to apply to the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames:

“A single unified parish with a Team Ministry in which clergy and laity work together to serve interdependent congregations, within an active ecumenical organisation where:

- The Gospel of Christ is celebrated through worship and fellowship, with individual congregations providing a spectrum of traditions
- The life of the Church is built up through teaching, preaching, evangelism, pastoral care and ecumenical co-operation
- God's love is made known in mission and service to the community and society as a whole.”

The following objectives for the Team Rector appeared in the Parish Profile agreed by the PCC in November 2005.

- In liaison and collaboration with the Church in Abingdon, to refresh and progress the strategy for the development of a Christian presence in south Abingdon.

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- To encourage, enable and release lay leadership and ministry to enable the Parish to be better equipped to respond to the changing patterns of stipendiary ministry.
- To continue to develop joint working within the churches and across the team, to ensure we use our resources effectively in the propagation of the gospel.

The activities undertaken to enable the PCC to achieve these objectives are described in the Review of the Year.

The PCC is heavily dependent upon the contribution of volunteers to drive forward the mission of the church and the Kingdom of God.

The PCC delegates to DCCs the matter of policy for making grants and donations from their income. The financial statements record donations made during the reporting year.

Public Benefit

The PCC is aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in "The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit" and have regard to it in their administration of the Parish. The PCC believes that, by fulfilling its responsibility to work together with the incumbent in the Parish and co-operate in all matters of concern and importance for the promotion of the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, it provides a benefit to the public by:

- providing resources and facilities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual, moral and intellectual development, both for its members and for anyone who wishes to benefit from what the Church offers;
- promoting Christian values, and service by members of the churches in the Parish to their communities, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

Reports from individual churches, St Nicolas CofE School and the Church in Abingdon are attached as Appendices to this report.

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Appendix 1
St Helen's Church
Church Wardens' & Fabric Reports

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Worship and Leadership

St. Helens has continued its regular pattern of services, with a steady number of congregation attending morning and evening services. It has been gratifying to see a growing number of those who previously attended services now joining our ever expanding choir.

In late summer we said farewell to Mary Williamson our House for Duty Associate Priest for the last three years. In October we welcomed Rev. Cannon Charles Masheder as her replacement, together with his wife Felicity. Charles quickly picked up where Mary had left off and he has been welcomed by the congregation of all three churches.

St Helens continues to be the venue for end of term and carol services for several of our larger schools in addition to being a popular location for a variety of community- based musical events. Whilst this requires additional sides persons, it is an important outreach, bringing into the church many who would not normally visit, it is to be hoped that this initial visit, will encourage further exploration of the Christian Faith

The Christingle service was well attended and enjoyed by 676 adults and children. This was the largest event to take place at St. Helens in 2019.

The registers record a total of 253 people attended services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and record that from the start of Advent until the Epiphany tea we welcomed over 5,000 people to our church

The congregation appreciate the Quest and Junior Church reports following the Eucharist, both groups being well supported with numbers continuing to rise.

Mission

As the biggest Church in Abingdon we receive many visitors who are "passing through" the town and we welcome all who enter our Church. The area surrounding Abingdon continues to be developed for housing it is important that steps are taken to welcome all who are new to the town and ensure that all visitors are made welcome.

Faith Forum on the first Sunday of the month continues to be well attended, with participants from across the Parish, presentations cover both scientific and spiritual topics, always followed by lively discussion. Fellowship is appreciated by all along with a light shared breakfast provided by a willing and able band of volunteers, to whom we are very grateful

The number attending the Wednesday morning Eucharist service continues to grow, the hospitality and fellowship which follows is enjoyed by all. In December, a Christmas meal was enjoyed by the group who were joined by clergy and helpers.

"Desiring Life" and several house groups continue to meet, offering both intellectual stimulation and fellowship.

Families seeking to have their children baptised at St Helen's are encouraged to attend the monthly Morning Praise, a service for family worship, with a significant congregation of young families.

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Unfortunately, the past year has seen the celebration of fewer weddings at St Helen's but couples continue to be required to attend the "circle of love" marriage preparation.

Pastoral Care, caring for each other.

St. Helens has a strong and committed Pastoral Care group. The aim of the group is to offer assistance and support to all who are past or present members of our congregation. Regular visits to peoples' homes as well as residential homes, ensures continued contact with the church. It's very important that those no longer able to attend our services, continue to feel valued members of our "church family".

Both clergy and lay people continue to take communion to those who are unable to attend services in times of frailty or need.

Visitors.

The church continues to be open to visitors from Easter through to the end of September. The time and commitment from many members of the congregation acting as stewards enabled us to welcome over 2,500 people from around the world. As they enter our doors visitors frequently express delight in our beautiful building, spending time in quiet contemplation and prayer as they appreciate the atmosphere of peace, feeling the centuries of prayer and worship throughout our church.

Administration

The Parish Office continues to be the "heart" of much that happens at St. Helens and in the Parish. The administrator, Jenny Balshaw, continues to ensure that clergy, wardens, members of the congregation together with any visitors are ensured of a welcome, as well as the knowledge that all enquiries or necessary work will be undertaken in a timely and efficient manner.

GDPR

In response to the requirements of the data protection regulations, a cross-party parish group has considered the implications and agreed a joint policy. As a result, at St Helens, all members of the congregation on the electoral role have been contacted, asking for permission to use email addresses as a way of improving communication in addition to more traditional means. Notices were sent out in the Autumn with a good response. Full information will eventually be included in a restricted data base, ensuring personal details are kept secure.

Thank you to all who responded.

Linda Hobbs & Geoff Meen

FABRIC REPORT

The five-year fixed wiring tests went ahead during 2019 for both the Church and the Parish Centre. There were no dangerous conditions identified, but the report listed a number of remedial actions required to improve the electrical installations. Most of the actions are straightforward, but further investigation is needed for cables with low insulation resistance. There are signs of corrosion for some sections of cable in the Church, where the copper cladding has been in contact with damp lime render, following roof leaks some years ago. It may be sufficient just to replace these short sections of damaged cable, but if the damp penetration is more extensive, the worst-case scenario is that complete stretches of cable will need to be replaced over three aisles of the Church.

There was a problem with a loose wooden ceiling board above the Choir Vestry. The board appeared to have slipped down and was no longer resting on the supporting beam at the top. The

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board had also slipped out of the grooves in the beams to the sides, so a long section of the board was completely unsupported, with large gaps at the edges. There was, however, a complication in planning the ceiling repair – bat droppings had been found inside the organ case, not far away from the loose ceiling board. A bat conservation expert confirmed that the gaps around the board were not being used by bats for access to the roost site on ceiling boards above the organ, so we were able to go ahead with the repair, without any complications.

Measurements of water flow in the Parish Centre showed that the continuous filling of the cistern for the urinals was using a huge amount of water, about 500 litres per day, 70% of the total for the Centre. A water flow controller has been installed to reduce this water wastage. An Infrared motion sensor triggers the controller, which opens the valve on the water inlet for a set time in order to fill up the cistern.

The Parish Centre roof continued to deteriorate during 2019, resulting in increased numbers of cracked and delaminated tiles, particularly over the kitchen area where the roof has a shallower gradient. This created a risk of broken sections of tiles falling to ground level, causing injury to passers-by. The broken tiles have been replaced and the roof is being monitored closely to check for any further deterioration. The poor condition of the roof had been noted in the Quinquennial Report from 2017 – the recommendation is to continue with replacement of individual broken tiles in the short term, but to consider replacement of the whole roof within the next five years.

Stephen Thomas

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Appendix 2
St Michael and All Angels' Church
Church Wardens' & Fabric Reports

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Worship and Services:

During 2019, our regular pattern of services continued with the Mass at 09.30 on Sundays, a Said Mass at 19.30 on most Tuesdays (combined with lay-led meditations at the Stations of the Cross during Lent), and a Said Mass at 12.30 on Thursdays. We are most grateful to honorary clergy and the clergy team for their cover from time to time.

In addition, certain Holy Days (e.g. Epiphany, Dedication Festival, Corpus Christi and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) were marked by a weekday mass.

The average attendance on Sundays has increased slightly to 44 (42 in 2018) whereas the average attendance at the Tuesday and Thursday services (9 and 12, respectively) was similar to that recorded in 2018.

In June, St Michael's hosted the Trinity Sunday Corporate Parish Communion and there were also 4 baptisms, 5 weddings, 1 blessing following a civil marriage, and 6 funerals during the year.

Easter: In Holy Week, which attracted 307 communicants (a significant increase on 2018), Mass was celebrated on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Throughout the week, addresses were delivered by The Reverend Paul Cowan, Chaplain to Bishop Steven.

We observed the Triduum in the usual way, beginning on Maundy Thursday we observed the Mass of the Lord's Supper with the Washing of Feet, the Stripping of the Altar and Watch of the Passion. Compline was then said at midnight.

On Good Friday morning Carol Bowman led a short inter-active children's service attended by 27 adults and 15 children and followed by a variety of craft activities whilst refreshments were served. Thanks to two of our young church members, Carys Hopkins and Sarah Clark who helped with both the service and crafts. This was followed by the Liturgy of the Passion in the afternoon.

The Lighting of the New Fire and Easter Vigil was celebrated on Holy Saturday and this was followed on Easter Day by The Sung Mass of the Resurrection.

Christmas: Our Christmas celebrations commenced with our popular Crib service, led by Carol Bowman again with the help of Carys Hopkins and Sarah Clark and accompanied by Keith Bowman on the piano, and attended by 80 adults and 25 children.

The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve saw a full Church with an attendance of 208. Many thanks to Glynne Butt and the choir for the outstanding music on the evening. This was followed by Midnight Mass with 25 communicants (32 in 2018) and Christmas Morning Mass with 47 communicants (40 in 2018).

Outreach: St Nicolas' Primary School did not hold its normal service at St Michael's at the end of the Spring Term due to bad weather but Abingdon School held three services at St Michael's during 2019: A leavers' service in June at which 207 were in attendance; and Lower and Upper School Carol Services in December with 490 in attendance.

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On two Saturdays in August, the general public were able to visit the church and enjoy afternoon tea and on 14 September we welcomed visitors participating in the Abingdon Heritage Weekend and Oxford Diocese Ride and Stride.

During the year, concerts were given at the Church by Abingdon Concert Band and Wantage Academy Band, and the Church was hired in October by New Life Church (Oxford). Our church room continues to be well used on a regular basis by five local organisations.

Fund-raising: We continued to fund-raise, during the year, for our two nominated charities - The Abingdon Bridge (a charity for young people based in the town), and Tariro, a youth charity in Zimbabwe.

In late August, John and Hilary Clare raised funds for the Simean Mountains Mobile Medical Support Unit (a medical charity in Ethiopia) by hosting a BALMORAL afternoon which included showing a film of Royal Deeside and giving an insight of the life there of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

We also supported: 1. CMS with a cash donation; 2. The Porch Day Centre in Oxford by donating our Harvest gifts and a proportion of the significant funds raised by a very successful Autumn Fair; and 3. Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust by sponsoring Louise Heffernan and Nicola Ng for the Oxford Diocese Ride and Stride.

Many thanks: To all who contributed in any way to our common life, particularly to those who serve at the altar, our sacristan, our organists, the dedicated band of choir members, members of the DCC, cleaners and flower arrangers; and, finally, to Fr Paul for his leadership, support, kindness and love over the year. Let us continue to pray for the Lord's blessing on him.

Joyce Kelly and Peter Squire, February 2020

FABRIC REPORT

In January the five floodlights in the nave were replaced. At the same time the opportunity was taken to repair the defective spotlights in the chancel, and to conduct portable appliance testing and the 5-yearly testing of the fixed electrical installation.

The heating system has suffered a number of failures this year after a decade of generally satisfactory service. These have been both failures of individual elements and also the breakdown of the core control system. The successful integration of the replacement controller has taken some time, and the advent of winter weather has shown that more work may be necessary.

During the first half of the year building work was undertaken by our neighbours at 28 Park Road. This caused no particular problems although safety issues identified whilst the work was in progress did necessitate the temporary erection of scaffolding on the church's land.

The small piano was sold after agreement by the DCC.

During the Easter Triduum, the statue of St Michael, which had been removed from the nave to the vestry as part of the ceremonies, was extensively damaged whilst stored. An estimate for the repair was obtained and the process for obtaining a faculty for the repair was commenced.

Routine maintenance of the fire alarm, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers and organ all took place, along with the usual day-to-day tasks of keeping the church and its contents in good order together with preliminary planning of works for execution in 2020.

Keith Bowman, 12 February 2020

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Appendix 3
St Nicolas' Church
Church Wardens' & Fabric Reports

This has been my fifth year serving as a Churchwarden; the third alongside fellow Warden Andrew Coker whom I would like to thank for all his hard work during 2019.

Services:

Our Sunday Service pattern has continued much the same as last year. An 8.00am Parish Holy Communion is held every odd month, with St Helen's church hosting the even months.

Our main morning service is at 11.15am offering a range of worship types - Morning Prayer (Mattins) on the first Sunday, Holy Communion on the second and fourth Sundays, and a less-formal service on the third Sunday during which the sermon is replaced by a study and discussion on topics from the bible followed by an opportunity for fellowship with a coffee afterwards. This service has become more popular over the year with more people taking on the role of leading it. If there is a fifth Sunday in the month, the service is a 'lighter', more modern, Family Communion. As is the Church's custom, we of course hold various specific services according to the time of year such as Easter, Harvest Thanksgiving, our Patronal Festival in early December and the Christmas services which include a Crib service for children; a Carol service and two Communion services. There were over 130 for the crib service and the church was almost full. These major feast days are always well-attended.

Other Services include lunch time prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and Ascension Day when St Nicolas' hosts the parish Communion.

Activities:

During the year, St Nicolas has remained open for a few hours on most weekdays – enabling visitors and locals to enjoy a time of quiet reflection, or a chat and refreshment if preferred. The church attracts many visitors, mainly during the Summer months and we receive a considerable number of people from both the UK and abroad; many of whom express their delight in finding the building accessible.

St Nicolas has also continued to be used as a venue Sunday afternoon concerts. The very popular weekly 'market' of home-grown fruit, flowers and crafts came to an end this year though the craft fair continued on Friday mornings.

Members of the congregations from St Nicolas and St Helen's, together with others, make up a house-group which meets up on a fortnightly basis to read and discuss various chapters or books in the bible.

There are other varied and irregular activities throughout the year when St Nicolas plays host to a variety of events, for example, Art exhibitions, talks and film screenings. We once more offered our space to 'Cards for Good Causes', who were tremendously pleased to be able to use St Nicolas again during October, November and December.

St Nicolas again had a cascade of knitted and crocheted poppies made by local people to commemorate Remembrance Sunday. These were then offered to the RBL who turn them into broaches which they sell for a premium. A good example of St Nic's being at the centre of the community.

The year always closes with our participation in the annual Abingdon Extravaganza. However, in 2019 there was a real push to make money and £1,300 was raised. Congratulations to all involved.

Inventory: Andrew undertook to review the church's inventory, finding everything as it should be.

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Meetings

The Church Council (DCC) met regularly during the year to consider the normal business of the church, special projects and events. The proposed changes to the toilet block were put back until the full cost of the tower remedial work was ascertained. The financial position of St Nicolas remained of concern, although the year did find us better off than the budget set. The accounts continue to be monitored.

The Standing Committee (The Vicar, Churchwardens and the Treasurer) met occasionally to review various elements of church business, consider the budget and set DCC agendas.

The Vicar, Churchwardens and elected representatives attended Parochial Church Council (PCC) meetings to represent St Nicolas views on wider Parish matters.

This year members of the PCC attended an 'away-day' on Boar's Hill to have a more informal discussion about the Parish and what was of importance. This proved to be very beneficial as the group was freely able to 'bounce around' ideas and 'think outside the box'. The list of thoughts included items such as worship, outreach, communications and social activities.

Paul Rast-Lindsell

FABRIC REPORT

The fall of masonry inside the church from the bell tower necessitated work to begin immediately to discover the cause. A faulty is now (February 2020) being applied for and work to make safe should be done in the next few months. A concise reason for the situation is that cracks have formed between the medieval putlocks (scaffolding anchors in the walls) which have disintegrated over time. The bells are silenced whilst the situation is resolved.

The new heating system is continuing to work very well with people commenting on a "warm church" in more ways than one.

Through the generosity of families there has been a renewal of two window shelves with oak to match the Nave altar. In memory of Mike and Barbara, the Randles family paid for the Nave middle south side windowsill to be made good, as opposed to the utilitarian "boxing in." It is a match to the shelf nearest the pulpit on the south side, which was paid for in a most generous legacy from the Snowdon family in memory of Elizabeth and Mac. The Snowdon family also gave money to upgrade the existing sound system install originally by their father, Mac. It is now infinitely better than before, but builds on the really good system which was already had. We are indebted to Clive and Valery Challis, worshippers at Christ Church North Abingdon, for their hard work, dedication, imagination creativity in bringing a good sound system back to life. Moving the mic signal receiver to the organ was a major reason for the better coverage.

Work was undertaken on the main west door to ensure water ingress would not stain or affect it. The kitchen block remains a problem, but it should be sorted this year. We continue to benefit from a payment from Abingdon Town Council towards the upkeep of the closed church yard.

The Blacknall aisle plans will be formulated in 2020 in time for 2025, the anniversary of the death of John & Mary Blacknall.

The historic altar table has been found to be free of current wood worm infestation, but a review of the wood worm insurance with Rent a Kill will happen after an inspection in the summer of 2020.

Andrew Coker

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Appendix 4
St Nicolas' C E Primary School

Eluned Hallas, Foundation Governor

This report covers the calendar year 2019, obviously the Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020, had a significant impact on the school, and its community. This will be covered in the 2020 Annual Report, but it is good to report that despite the difficulties Bibles were presented to Foundation Year pupils as has been customary for at least the past 20 years.

St Nicolas is a successful primary school - larger than average with a full pupil roll of some 400 pupils aged from 4+ to 11+, and over 50 staff.

The School has active links with both Abingdon Parishes, and with other members of the Church-in-Abingdon. Whole school assemblies are an important part of the school life, and opportunities for class reflection are sought. There are whole school church services for St Nicolas Day (Trinity Church), at Easter (St Michael's) and at the end of the school year (St Helen's) – usually led by a member of the Parish Clergy Team. Children in year 6, and staff leaving at the end of the summer term, receive a candle at this last service – as a symbol of taking the light of St Nicolas into the next phase of their lives. A copy of the Scripture Union 'Moving On' book is also presented to each child on leaving Year 6. All children new in school at the end of the summer term receive a Bible, funded through the St Nicolas School Trust. The 'Value of the Month' programme, underpinned by Biblical teaching is now firmly embedded, showing the teaching and working out of Christian Faith. With the help of the Desire Group, and supported by volunteers from local churches, Prayer Space weeks are now a regular part of the school calendar.

St Nicolas' has always aimed to provide a broad 'topic based' education beyond the core subjects of Reading, Writing & Mathematics. An extensive wider curriculum includes regular whole year group drama and music performances, choir and orchestra concerts, excellent sport provision including successes in inter-school competitions, and residential trips in Year 4 and Year 6. A wide range of school clubs (held after school and at lunch break) offers pupils additional opportunities to take part in a range of activities that suit their interests and provide ways to experience success. The introduction during the year of cricket nets, a table tennis table, a new adventure playground, and static gym equipment provided new opportunities for children during break and lunch times. The results in the end of school Standard Assessment Tests (Yr 6 SATs), remain strong, and behaviour in school and on external visits is good.

During 2019 there were key areas of focus on:

- Teaching and embedding higher order thinking in mathematics particularly in the area of problem solving.
- Mental and emotional health and wellbeing of pupils and staff. Two staff INSET days were focussed on mental health training, to help build staff confidence in recognising and supporting pupils with mental or emotional health needs, and a member of staff undertook specific training for trauma support allowing an increase in in-school provision.
- International relations - establishing a relationship with Davidson School in South Africa. Working in partnership with BEFSA and the British Council, the school welcomed class teacher Clever Sithole from Davidson School for a week at the end of June. During this "international week" whole school learning about South Africa and the launch of a joint

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project between pupils of both schools about energy and sustainability was celebrated with an Express Event at the end of the week.

The Governing Body represents all stakeholders in the school - staff, parents, and the Diocese - with co-opted members adding specific skills to the team. There are two Foundation Governors appointed by the Diocese, with the Team Vicar at St Nicolas' Church, Father Paul Smith, a co-opted Governor. The Governing Body includes members from a range of Anglican traditions and those of no formal faith, thus making it broadly representative of the school – both pupils and staff – and the community in which it sits. In discussions and decision making, all viewpoints are expressed and debated in a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance, while maintaining the school's Anglican foundation. The Governing Body works closely with the staff team for the benefit of all stakeholders, supporting and challenging, working with the school management to set the strategic direction of the school and playing a full part in monitoring effectiveness. Individual Governors take on monitoring responsibility for one or more areas of school life – such as legal responsibilities (Health & Safety, GDPR, Safeguarding), curriculum topics, or identified development areas. Governors are also encouraged to attend Local Authority & Diocesan training sessions throughout their term in post, and in areas identified through an annual skills audit.

Looking to the future, the school will be continuing to focus on delivering an holistic and broad curriculum and ensuring that the new skills taught in mathematics are embedded going forwards. We will continue to have a focus on mental and emotional health and, as part of this, look to see the work started on Growth Mindset a few years ago come back to the heart of the way the school approaches all aspects of teaching and learning. With the completion of the two year "Achievement for All" programme to support disadvantaged learners, we will be looking at the outcomes identified in determining our focus to continue supporting these learners and those with additional or special needs. Above all, we will continue to be directed and guided by our vision and aims:

We give thanks for the skill and dedication of the teachers, teaching assistants, office, site support and specialist staff, and for all the volunteers (including governors) who give their time and skills in support of the children in our care. Please continue to hold the school community in your prayers.

Being part of the St Nic's family is about enjoying coming to school as we learn through great experiences, inside and outside of the classroom. We have high expectations of each other. We value our staff who help every child engage with every opportunity on offer. At St Nic's we are learning excellence as we live life to the full and prepare for the next stage of life by living out our Christian values.

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Appendix 5
Report on the activities of the Church in Abingdon

The CiA was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of pastor Ed Evans in July. Ed was Pastor of the Abingdon Community Church and Chairman of the CiA, and played a very active part in its many activities. He will be much missed.

A new Salvation Army Captain, Alexandra Devine, has been appointed and is in post.

United activities in 2019

- Abingdon Street Pastors continued to operate
- Christian Forum column has moved from weekly in the Abingdon Herald to Round and About (monthly magazine). It was felt that it might have more chance of being read in the latter. New contributors are needed as many of the long-term contributors are now stepping down.
- Passion Play 2019: It was a lovely day and a good turnout but the format in 2019 of modern dress did not appeal to some people, and children in particular had difficulty in identifying characters. Holding the event in the Market Square, in the heart of the town, was thought to have more impact than in the Abbey Park
- Alpha launch: About 85 people attended the successful event, showcasing churches working together and reaching out to spread the gospel.
- Midday prayers as part of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Attendance is usually in the range of 15-20 with different people coming each day. These are informal, reflective cross-church events with good fellowship after.
- CiA Lent Lectures: These require a lot of effort to organise, and, as churches no longer suspend their own meetings or concurrent events during the Lent lectures (as happened when CiA was founded) attendance is falling. Churches and their congregations need to support the lectures, otherwise perhaps they should stop.
- Maundy Thursday shoe cleaning, children's crafts were introduced which helped to draw in parents.
- Good Friday procession: This is a good witness and stopping in the square to sing worked well.
- Trinity Learning Experience Easter: The still, quietness of this event had a great impact on both children and staff.
- Fun in the Park: This is a great outreach event for the CiA to take part in and people come back year after year to take advantage of the activities that the CiA stall offers. However, volunteer help has declined considerably and unless this improves, the CiA may have to pull out of taking part, which would be a big shame and loss of a good witness to the people of Abingdon.
- South Abingdon Play & Activity Day: a free community fun day for families in south Abingdon, mainly led by the community churches in south Abingdon.
- CiA Annual Bereavement Service
- Pre-election hustings, 2 December 2019, held at the Amey Theatre. Very good turnout and successful evening with all candidates attending. Organised jointly between CiA and Abingdon Chamber of Commerce.
- Prayer Spaces in schools