



ANNUAL REPORT

For year ending 31st December 2021

(As required by Church Accounting Regulations 2006)

Registered Charity Number 1129833

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
ANNUAL REPORT
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

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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 2021 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
The Revd P T C Masheder

Licensed Lay Minister

Mrs G Bevington

Churchwardens:

Mr A Coker (until March 2021)
Mrs E Hallas (from April 2021)
Mrs L Heffernan (from April 2021)
Mrs L Hobbs
Miss J Kelly
Dr G Meen
Mr P Rast-Lindsell (until September 2021)
Mr P Squire (until September 2021)

Officers (from April 2021):

Chairman	The Revd Dr E C Miller
Vice Chairman	Mrs S Scott
Secretary	Mrs E Hallas
Treasurer	Mrs S E M Read

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Miss A E Green
Mrs E Hallas
Mr P Penfold (to April 2021)
Miss A Scott
Mrs S Scott

Ex-Officio

– representatives on Diocesan Synod:

Miss A Scott
Mrs C Worthington (to July 2021)

Elected PCC members:

Mr J Clare
Mrs H Clare
Dr R Cox (to April 2021)
Miss M Horton (to April 2021)
Dr G Lewis (from April 2021)
Dr A R Birks

Auditors

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

Weblinks:

<http://www.abingdonparish.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]

I said at the end of last year's report (that is, for the year 2020) that our task was to re-group in 2020 and to re-build in 2021. The wave of variants on Covid-19 that succeeded that first very deadly on-set of 2019 have slowed the hoped-for 're-building' but have not stopped it. Indeed through 2021 good, significant steps were taken by our three congregations to re-build and, where possible, enhance our parish's life and witness in search of a 'new normal'.

With the recognition that tactile transmission of the virus was less likely than through the air, and with less severe succeeding variants "out there", the rigorous and burdensome protocols for church cleansing were relaxed; that in turn made it possible to return to something like our regular sequence of services in customary places through 2021 – a welcome 'return' by us all and especially by those who felt that their needs were not being catered for. By the middle of the year that was no longer an issue. Sadly, dealing with the issue of worship spaces and the provision of in-person and on-line services had by late winter of 2021 resulted in some combusive exchanges among the parish leadership – a sign at the very least of the fractious results of an ambient unhappiness which afflicted us all during the continuing pandemic and its baleful impact.

It was very satisfying to return to almost customary patterns of worship in the summer so that we could look forward to a robust church life come September. To some extent that happened; I for one was pleased at how many were ready and willing to return to worship in church and I was impressed by the overall commitment to the protocols expected both from the church centre (Church House and Diocesan Church House), which by now had recognized the rightness of making local decisions, and from our congregational leaders. In some cases remarkable, unexpected explosions of interest took place (I think here of the St Helen's Choir), whereas in others a serious lack of volunteers made the steps toward normalcy hard and tiring.

The pastoral offices revived (funerals, weddings and baptisms) but not on the scale we would normally expect, especially through the summer months. Where we could minister, we did, and we ministered well to the satisfaction of those involved. Equally, the 'behind the scenes' work picked-up with 'Circle of Love' preparation for Holy Matrimony and one-on-one baptism preparation taking place. Some congregational programming began, though in a mixed-economy of in-person and Zoom.

In the course of the autumn and early winter new ministerial faces appeared. On All Saints' Sunday our Area Bishop, Gavin Collins, visited St Helen's where he presided and preached and administered Baptism and Confirmation to a former Abingdon School pupil who had "come to faith" (I had been preparing him through the pandemic – at a distance!). The Revd Elizabeth Birch, former Chaplain at the School of St Helen & St Katharine, came 'on board' as an honorary assistant in Advent. (She had already ministered in the parish on an occasional basis, so we knew her worth!)

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In the early summer I hosted a dinner for the Team and honorary clergy (and spouses) to help rebuild our sense of ministerial solidarity. Our clergy rota was only slowly returning to full force of participation and, in fact, at time of writing there are still valued members of our wider team who cannot yet join in the work of priestly ministry. May 2022 see that change.

Zoom meetings notwithstanding, leading PCC meetings and working with our Secretary and Treasurer have been satisfying. Our Secretary is hugely efficient and proactive, and so is our new parish Treasurer, Susan Read. At the 2021 APCM we said “Thank you” to Dr Andrew Birks, Treasurer of decades-long standing, and welcomed Susan on board. She had already begun to assemble an able team of local church treasurers and /or bookkeepers and made quick progress in bringing district church accounting into a parish-wide coherent pattern. A chief result will be that the PCC will have quarterly reports of the financial state of churches and the parish as a whole, and so will be better equipped to think strategically about financing the parish’s maintenance, ministry and mission.

Some of you will have caught wind of the ‘Save the Parish’ movement in respond to reports and proposals flowing from Church House, Westminster. Whatever merits or de-merits there may be to the proposals, discussions and debates (I don’t follow it closely), the shrinking financial base of the CoE at parish level is relentless; only well-managed, well-ministering, well-worshipping, learning and sharing congregations will survive (and should it be otherwise?). We have a solid base in those regards to build on and build we must. Part of that will be strategic planning and, in my view, consolidating financial resources to make the most of what we have and what previous generations have given us.

As to resources 2021 saw advances in bringing the St Nicolas School Abingdon Land Trust into the parish as a Charitable Independent Organisation (CIO). As lead trustee of the Land Trust I have been working with successive wardens of St Nicolas’ Church and the Team Vicar to take forward this change. It has been slow going but 2022 should see it consummated, and I look forward to speaking more about this development at the 2022 APCM.

The 2021 APCM saw both continuity and change among our parish wardens. Paul Rast-Lindsell came to the end of his six years in office; he had been working ‘solo’ after the resignation of Andrew Coker earlier in the year. Eluned Hallas returned to the role in Andrew’s stead. Peter Squire stepped down but Louise Heffernan took his place to work with Joyce Kelly who continues in office. Linda Hobbs and Geoff Meen continued at St Helen’s (with Chris Jefferis and Rob Bough as Pro-Wardens). So we have an excellent team of wardens which has aided the work of the PCC greatly. Sue Scott (St Michael’s) was elected as PCC Vice-Chair; she has already proved a very valuable asset in our discussions and decision-making not least because she also wears the ‘hat’ of Lay Chair of the Abingdon Deanery Synod! All of us wish to see the PCC move to a more strategic posture in the months and years ahead. Issues raised in relation to ‘Save the Parish’ point in that direction too, if we even needed an external prompt.

At an early summer meeting of the Parochial Church Council we welcomed the Associate Archdeacon, the Revd David Tyler, who explained that the Diocese was reviewing of all Team Ministries, and the process in our Archdeaconry would begin with our parish. The format of the review was a ‘work-in-progress’ and David Tyler shared how he planned to proceed with his review through the summer months. Various interviews followed and by late November he submitted a draft report to me which he then presented to the PCC in November. He reported that on the whole the Team works well but also pointed out a few areas which would benefit from attention. Follow-up began in January 2022 with discussion of the review document by the Team members; discussion will move back to the PCC in 2022. It is encouraging that through the changes and challenges of recent years the Team is functioning well and is taking steps to function better!

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In 2021 annual Ministerial Development Reviews took place for the Team clergy. We have all emerged unscathed! The Diocese is keen that we attend carefully to ‘flourishing’ in ministry, so there is attention – especially after the hardships of the pandemic – to clergy wellness, the importance of annual retreats and Continuing Ministerial Development. Those are matters raised in MDRs which will be agenda items for 2022.

I owe thanks to all my colleagues and lay officers who enable the parish to function smoothly and well. Quality volunteer support – the exercise of lay ministry – is vital to our life, worship and witness. In the aftermath of the dark days of the pandemic we need to be refreshed and recommitted in appropriate ways to filling and expanding the many volunteer roles in our churches. But we need to remember that despite all the institutional and business apparatus which characterizes parochial life, the church is more like a family than anything else; therefore it is always in a state of flux, growth and change. It never stands still; there is ebb, there is flow.

As 2021 ends and the New Year begins I pray hard that flow will overtake ebb, and that the theme of flourishing will character all aspects of our life in Christ.

Respectfully,

The Revd Dr Charles Miller, Team Rector

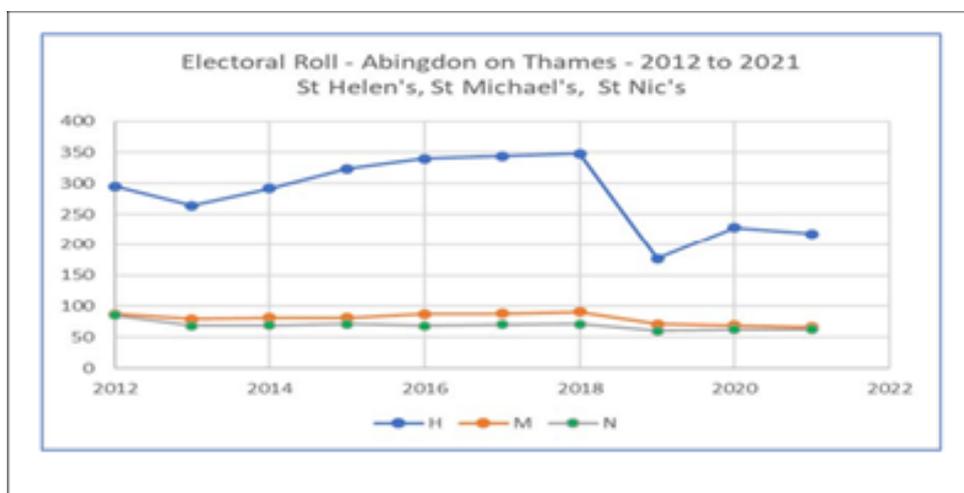
1b Church Electoral Roll [Richard Kirby]

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.

Looking at figures compiled in 2021, we see typically a very slow decline in numbers over the years at St Michael’s and St Nicolas’, both having dropped by about 10% over the last 10 years.

St Helen’s is different with less stability, showing increases each year from the years of the new roll (2013, 2019) then a significant drop when the new roll is constructed. There are those more qualified to explain this, but my perception is that St Helen’s is a church in the town to where newcomers may naturally migrate, the team are experienced at encouraging new faces to enrol, but these are transitory people.

We should not make predictions without having data on all the influences on the final roll number (such as age, time on the roll, community faith, ...), so we can only wait to see the outcome of this year’s electoral roll revision; but we shall be tempted to guess anyway!



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We are just about to start the annual revision of the Electoral Roll for the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames. With all the restrictions we have endured over the last 12 months, my prediction is that we shall see a further decrease in the roll, purely because there has been little face-to-face activity to enrol new members.

Electoral Roll Numbers 2020 to 2021

	2020	2021				
	roll	deletions	additions	change	roll	% change
St Helen	228	12	2	-10	218	-4%
St Michael	69	3	0	-3	66	-4%
St Nicolas	62	3	3	0	62	0%
Abingdon on Thames	359	18	5	-13	346	-4%

GILL TITCOME

We could not collect this vital data without the support of a brilliant team (Eluned, Keith and our latest team member Jackie).

But I must say a huge thankyou to Gill. Gill took over as the St Helen’s Church ER officer a couple of years ago and with her energy and positive character, unsurprisingly did a fabulous job putting her own stamp on the work. We all miss her so much, but will be saying for many years to come ‘Can you remember when Gill ...’ Thanks Gill

1c LLM Report [Gwen Bevington]

I remained the sole LLM in the parish through 2021. I have loved having opportunities once more to preach in all three churches (zoom alone, in person and live-streamed), and to lead one or two non-eucharistic services in St Nicolas’ Church.

The usual diocesan LLM events were largely suspended in 2020 and 2021, but are now set to restart in 2022.

I’m very aware that all the congregations are blessed with lay members who are long-standing Christian disciples, deep thinkers and theologically well informed. It seems crazy for me to be the LLM, but such is the state of play. I keep in mind that this ministry is a privilege, and not a right.

1d PCC [Eluned Hallas]

The business of the PCC concerns those issues best approached on a Parish, rather than Church, basis. It is also a useful forum for communications throughout the Parish, including details of Parish and Church sponsored events, staff updates and feedback on Deanery and Diocesan issues.

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met in person or on zoom seven times during 2021, with the Standing Committee / Clergy & Wardens Group meeting as necessary to during the year.

The discussion of Covid mitigation protocols in our three churches was, necessarily, of major importance during the year – with precautions being tailored to the individual church situation.

Preparation for, and feedback from, the Parish Review by Associate Archdeacon David Tyler was a focus for several meetings, and discussions on the recommendations made will continue into the new year. It was also good to be able to discuss Christmas Service patterns, and the role of Faith Forum

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in the Parish education programme, across the three churches. Work by the Communications Group should see the launch of a new website early in 2022.

During the year the PCC agreed to focus on three key themes in 2022 – Pastoral; Outreach; and Financial Strategy. Discussion and implementation will continue at both PCC and DCC level, with parish and church initiatives working together and complementing each other. Work on the new co-ordinated approach to church accounts has allowed greater financial oversight, and changes to the Finance Working Group (p10) will continue this progress.

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

1e Safeguarding [Maria Gibson]

The PCC has complied with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

In 2021 there were no new incidents within the Parish that required Safeguarding assistance or input.

The annual review of the Parish Safeguarding Policy was completed in June

As from January 2022, individuals' DBS status will be renewed every 3 years, in accordance with revised church safer recruitment and people management guidance.

Training

It is a Diocesan requirement that all volunteers should comply with the Church of England and government safeguarding regulations, and the three churches carry out regular reviews to ensure this.

Other issues

As is best practice, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, Maria Gibson, is looking for another person to share the role as Parish Verifier.

Safeguarding Officers within the Parish:

Maria Gibson – St. Helen's

Carol Bowman – St. Michael & All Angels

Jenny Fishpool – St. Nicolas'

Maria Gibson (Parish Safeguarding Officer & Parish verifier), February 2022

1f Communications [Margaret Horton / Robert Rutherford]

For the first three months of 2021, most communication across the parish was once again reduced to being electronic as we went through another lockdown. Fortunately all three churches by this point were able to offer live streamed and recorded Sunday services (St. Helen's) a live streamed Sunday morning service and recorded sermons (St. Nicolas) and Mass celebrated online via Zoom at St. Michael's. As well as this, our websites offered a wide variety of home grown and outside resources, and links to Diocesan services and other online offerings. It is interesting to note that at the time of writing (Feb 2022) there is still a live streamed offering every Sunday from St. Nicolas

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and St. Helen's, with small but very loyal followings, suggesting the ongoing need for such provision.

Once we were able to meet again in person and to look at a screen together, the parish website group met again to continue our work in creating a new website for the parish as a whole. We have met 6 times since June 2021 and are on the verge of launching it. A massive thank you must go to Stephen Thomas who has done the bulk of the work in writing and creating it, but thanks are also due to Nick Hallas for assistance on the technical side and to Eluned Hallas and Louise Heffernan for providing the content for St Nicolas and St Michael's church respectively, whilst I have provided the content from St. Helen's. One thing I have learned from the process is that a website is never 'finished', there is always more to add or to alter, so when it goes live, please consider it as a work in progress. In particular, we would like to have as many photos as possible of activities and people in our churches, so if you have any please send them to the parish office, to be forwarded to me. In a similar vein, we cannot put information about events and activities on the website if we don't know about them, so please let us know!

Margaret Horton

A Candle in the Window

You will remember that this online version of 'The Window' was started in April 2020 as one means by which members of the Parish could keep in touch during the pandemic. It still seems to be fulfilling a need - so as long as the writers, editors and compilers have enough energy, it will continue for the time being. It sometimes has themes which are words that can be interpreted in a number of ways. Some writers find this helpful, others find it unhelpful but we never stick rigorously to the theme anyway.

Our guiding principles remain the same:

- To represent the whole Parish by encouraging as many as possible to contribute
- To encourage a wide readership
- To inform, educate and entertain.

We continue to monitor the number of downloads to check that it is still being read – as far as we can tell, it is. In round numbers about 200 copies are 'picked up'.

Thank you to contributors and to readers. Please continue to contribute and to read! Thanks too to those that make printed copies available to those without connectivity. *Robert Rutherford*

1g 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. And its membership includes 25 churches in 9 benefices.

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

The Synod is also 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.

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The Parish currently has 4 elected members from the House of Laity:-

Alexandra Green (St Helen's)

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

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

Eluned Hallas (St Nicolas)

There are currently 2 vacancies for the Parish because of the ex officio status of two of the current elected Lay representatives.

The Parish currently has 4 members from the House of Clergy:-

Revd Charles Miller

Revd Paul Smith

Revd Charles Masheder

Revd Rosalind Rutherford (PTO rep)

The Synod met 4 times in 2021 (February, May, September and November) and so far once in 2022 (January). Some of the business included: -

- Finance including the Budget, Parish Share, Contingency Fund and Mission grants
- Episcopal visitation visits
- Opportunities to share in Break-out Rooms
- Address followed by Q and A session with Bishop Gavin Collins Bishop of Dorchester
- Living in Love and Faith and how this course might be used in Parishes
- New Congregations/New initiatives

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.

Minutes of all Synod meetings and Standing Committee meetings can be found on the website at <https://www.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, Deanery Synod representative, Lay Chair Abingdon Deanery

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 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

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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. Over the coming year, the intention is to expand both the membership and the activities of the Group to reflect the changing needs of the parish. In addition to meeting its statutory requirements, the Group will develop methods of financial control in order to better monitor outcomes throughout the year. The Group will also aim to produce budgets that look towards the medium term and that align more closely to the stated priorities of the PCC.

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]

Two Musson Close was purchased in 2015 for use as a House for Duty, the property is currently occupied by Rev. Canon Charles Masheder, Associate Priest and his wife Felicity.

The property is a 4 bedroom Town House situated within walking distance of the town and therefore the three Parish churches.

The property has been occupied by the Rev. Canon Masheder since his appointment in 2019, the current License to occupy will continue until the end of the current P.T.O. from the Diocese.

Currently the property is expected to remain in use as a House for Duty residence.

Since the last report all repairs to the property have been met from Parish funds, as agreed under the License to Occupy.

Repairs have been minimal, with the exception of the need to replace the heating boiler and water

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tank. It's not anticipated that any further major repairs will be required to the fabric or interior of the building in the near future, but any required repairs will be dealt with as necessary.

The property continues to be managed by Linda Hobbs, Church Warden.

Linda Hobbs

3b Fairacres Road [Rob Bough]

Pursuant to a bequest from Mr Derek Enock in 2009, each church in the parish has an interest in a residential property in Fairacres Road, Oxford, which is held on a trust. The current occupant of the property has the right to reside there 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; and
5. The Churchill Hospital.

The administrative changes to the trusteeship of the trust reported to the last APCM have been taken forward in this past year, but otherwise there is nothing further to report.

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.
- 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 Achievements & Performance section, and in the reports from the constituent churches.

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.

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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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TREASURER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DEC 2021

The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames consists of three churches (St Helen's, St Michael's and St Nicolas') which have separate treasurers and accounts. The Parish accounts are produced by consolidating the accounts of the three churches.

Income and Expenditure

In 2021, our churches were open for much more of the year than in 2020, but the pandemic still took its toll on our finances. The accounts for 2021 show a deficit on unrestricted funds of £9k (2020 deficit £43k). But with a small surplus on restricted funds of £2k (2020 deficit £19k), the overall deficit was less, £7k (2020:£62k).

Giving and collections provided nearly 90% of our churches' income on the General Fund and it was disappointing to see that regular giving by standing order and envelope dropped slightly (2021: £157k, 2020: £163k).

Sundry donations included a generous donation to St Michael's in memory of a congregant. That donation made a considerable difference to the overall "bottom line" but we cannot rely on such donations every year.

Where expenditure is concerned, around 60% of the costs on the General Fund are in the Parish Share, and that dropped as predicted compared with 2020 (2021: £161k, 2020: £166k).

2021 expenditure included much less spending on repairs to our churches than in 2020 or 2019 and the result shows on the Unrestricted Funds report below.

Please note the two tables included below. The first gives more detail of the Unrestricted Funds by church than the published accounts. The second table breaks down the figures from the published accounts by church in a similar way to that done by Andrew Birks in his 2019 report. I have included a budget column on each table. It is useful to compare the budget and actual figures, as demonstrated in the variance columns shown. I should point out that there were no budgets prepared for 2021 for either St Nicolas' or St Michael's Churches. Instead, I have used the actual end of year figures from 2019, the last "normal" year, as the "budgets".

Balance Sheet

The Parish owns two freehold properties, the Parish Centre and the House for Duty property purchased in 2015. Legal title of both is held by the Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd as custodian trustees on behalf of the Parish. Both are held for the mission of the church. The two properties appear in the balance sheet as Tangible Fixed Assets.

PCC policy is that all unused fund balances should be invested with CBF Church of England funds. At the end of 2021 over 90% of Parish investments were with CBF Church of England funds and efforts were made in 2021 to transfer the remainder of our investments. The value of the Parish investments rose by 24% overall in the year (2021: £587k, 2020: £472k, 2019 £440k). This looks good, but the value is affected by the state of the stock market. It is likely that the war in Ukraine will adversely affect the value of our investments in 2022.

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
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Going Concern

The PCC is required to operate on a going concern basis, and considers that each church should A) aim to maintain a minimum reserve of two months expenditure in hand in Unrestricted Funds and B) to have reserves, appropriate to each church, to cover the future demands of building maintenance. A) is easy to calculate, as shown on the Unrestricted funds report below. I will ask the Finance Group to recommend a way of evaluating B).

Susan Read,
PCC Treasurer, 14 March 2022

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

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

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

2021 was inevitably, again, a year of uncertainty, and the pandemic heavily influenced the deliberations of the six DCC meetings, (administered by Gwen Bevington). Nevertheless, it was also a year of some progress and hope for the future; it is on these aspects that our report concentrates.

The year began with the completion of repairs to the North Aisle and Nave; consequently, most of the work on the fabric this year has concerned the more routine work that is always an on-going feature of a mediaeval church, with work once again being overseen by Steve Thomas. Work has included repairs to the lightening conductor, repairs to the electrics, and permission obtained to install an external light at the South Porch.

Financially, 2020 had been a difficult year with a loss of approximately £25,000; this was no surprise and most churches suffered badly, but, clearly, we could not continue in that position. Although 2021 is still likely to have recorded a further loss, it will be much lower than in the previous year. Since income from hiring the church and parish hall is still very low, we continue to rely on the generosity of our congregation through the Planned Giving scheme. Financial control has also been improved with major work to standardize the accounting practices of the three churches in the parish; this has been a time-consuming activity for the Parish Treasurer, Susan Read, to whom our thanks must go.

Given the restrictions on congregation numbers that were in place for much of the year, there was considerable concern whether attendance would recover, as restrictions eased in the autumn. But, despite the need to be aware of social distancing and the continuing and valuable streaming of our services - a crucial (and probably permanent) feature of our worship - we have been delighted with the numbers who have returned to worship in person; numbers are now approaching pre- pandemic levels, indicating the centrality of St Helen's in the community.

The electronic provision within the church has continued to be improved; an important addition has been an internet network link from the Parish Centre to a new hub at the amplifier box near the West door of the church. This has, for example, allowed the streaming of wedding ceremonies to external audiences. We are extremely fortunate in having a highly competent technical team consisting of Norman Gee, Rob Rutherford and Steve Thomas (although they would appreciate new volunteers). In addition, work by a joint team is taking place on a new parish-wide website which is due to come into operation shortly. Margaret Horton and Steve Thomas are heavily involved from St Helen's.

Concern for the wider community, lay behind the decision in the summer to open the church for prayer and to visitors each day between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm. This extended period means that the church is open even when stewards are not available to welcome visitors. Nevertheless, our stewarding team, led by Elizabeth Simpson, continues to play an important role. The longer opening hours involved some risk and was originally introduced for a monthly trial period. However, we have been delighted with the response and the respect with which the church has been treated; therefore, the church still remains open daily at these times. To have the church open is an important outreach initiative which we hope to continue. Further outreach initiatives in the community included the West Porch displays at Christmas, Easter and Harvest (supported by a team of volunteers) and an input on church history during Abingdon's Heritage Day. This year, in November, we were pleased to reinstate

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

the Christmas market, organised by Margaret Horton, producing a valuable surplus of more than £2,000 for church funds.

Faith Forum was once again able to take place in the Parish Centre; the Rector led a short series of discussions on the topic 'Living in Love and Faith'. It is anticipated and hoped that the coming year will allow these popular Sunday morning lectures to be enjoyed by more participants.

The important work of the Pastoral team has continued, led by the Reverend Canon Charles Masheder; the team has continued to meet regularly, either in person or by zoom. The requirement to observe Covid restrictions necessitated, on occasions, that contact with our more vulnerable members was by phone, but this important contact continued to provide a much-appreciated link with the life of the church. It is hoped in the months ahead, as restrictions ease or are lifted, that home visits and visits to care homes will, once again, be possible.

As part of the re-ordering scheme, it has been agreed that improvements in the lighting should be the priority. The re-ordering team, led by Chris Jefferis, has visited a number of churches in the area and has seen how good lighting can transform the atmosphere. This is an exciting development and the team is currently in consultation with our architects. However, a high-quality scheme will not come without cost; we hope that this is an initiative that our congregation will, in due course, wish to support financially.

On a smaller scale, new seating cushions have been ordered for all the pews (they are wine-coloured) and should be in place in the next month. They should afford greater comfort, both during services and external events such as concerts. The cushions have been financed from the annual grant we receive from the Friends of St Helen. With the easing of lock down restrictions, the Friends has been able to restart its activities.

St Helen's DCC has discussed its priorities for the coming year. In addition to the lighting proposals, two developments are considered particularly important, which require a parish-wide approach. The first is, inevitably, financial stability. Financial strength is not an objective in its own right, but it facilitates the activities that we believe are central to church life. If we are able to reach a position where we can maintain a modest surplus each year, it allows us scope for expansion into new areas. The second priority involves promotion of church membership.

The Parish Office, ably and efficiently managed by Jackie Cunningham, supported by a small team of volunteers, Alexandra Green, Susan Scott and Rosemary Smith, has been instrumental in enabling us to move smoothly through the many changes in services and protocols necessitated by Covid. The weekly Newsletter, produced both in paper and electronic forms, has enabled everyone, whether able to attend church or not, to stay connected with the life of the church.

A small banking team of volunteers (Mike Austin, Jeff Dale, Linda Hobbs, Geoff Meen, John Thompson, Alex Titcombe) meets each Monday to count and bank all monies received; this help is appreciated by the Parish Treasurer Susan Read and her assistant Ann Murdoch.

We should in addition note and thank Jenny Balshaw and Phil Atkinson for their years of service as administrator and caretaker respectively; Jenny left us to be married, Phil to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. They are both missed, but we welcome Jackie Cunningham and Robin Day who have quickly and efficiently settled into their new roles, making the lives of the wardens much easier.

Finally, there are many people in the congregation who need to be thanked for their support over the last year. St. Helens continues to offer a supportive and varied 'church life' and we are very blessed by the staff, clergy and volunteers who work to support all aspects of the work of the church.

Linda Hobbs, Geoff Meen

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

FABRIC REPORT

The priority for fabric work in 2021 has been repairs and modifications of the electrics in the Church and Parish Centre to correct unsatisfactory conditions which had been identified in the 2019 Electrical Installation Reports. In some cases, it was possible to reduce the overall cost of the repairs by choosing to lower the capacity of the system. For example, one of the modifications was to add residual current devices for 32A sockets, which would have required an expensive upgrade to the distribution board. These sockets had been fitted some time ago, with the expectation that they might be needed for stage lighting operating at high power. We now have the option of lower-power LED lighting rigs, plugged into standard 13A sockets, so there is no longer any need for 32A capability. The 32A sockets have therefore been removed, avoiding the cost of an upgrade.

The electrical modifications also included the installation of an earth bonding cable for the lightning conductor, intended to reduce the likelihood of a sideways flashover into the church tower electrics, with the associated risk of fire. The lightning bond would normally be connected to the incoming mains earth terminal, but the large distance (over 50 metres) would have made the bonding ineffective because of the propagation delay for current along the cable. The electrician instead fed the cable through an existing hole in the church wall, following the route of wiring for the slype external light, with a connection then to the earth of the nearby distribution board.

For the Parish Centre, there were measurements of low insulation resistance for the circuits connecting to fluorescent emergency lights. The faulty lights have been disconnected and will be replaced with LED emergency lights.

There was a problem with the church lightning conductor where it crossed the tower parapet walkway. The fixings into mortar joints were working loose and an unsupported section of the conductor was flexing during windy conditions, with a risk of developing cracks. This section has been cut out, with a new section bonded in, now anchored firmly into mortar along its whole length.

Stephen Thomas

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

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

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Worship and services:

2021 started off with the country in Lockdown 3. It was decided by the PCC though Places of Worship did not have to close this time, that our churches in the Parish would do so. This was done to protect the safety of our congregations and the NHS. So on the 17th of January we commenced our worship over Zoom. The average number of attendees was 25. We would like to thank all who helped or participated in any in our Zoom services.

This continued until 28th March, Palm Sunday, when we recommenced our services in person. Thankfully, we were able to keep the church open for the remainder of the year, but still with restrictions in place.

For the first time in 2 years we were able to celebrate Easter. We held our Patronal Mass on the 26th of September followed by lunch and entertainment. We also held a Mass on 29th September, our actual Patronal Day. We celebrated Christmas with a Carol Service on Christmas Eve and Mass on Christmas Day. Said Mass recommenced on the 9th of May. We have not recommenced our Tuesday evening Said Mass.

We had 3 weddings, 2 baptisms, 1 thanksgiving service, 11 funerals, and 1 interment of ashes in 2021.

The pandemic continues to affect us in many ways, but it has been good to be able to gather in church for the Eucharist, meeting our friends, and coffee.

We are most grateful to our honorary clergy and our clergy for enabling us to worship at St Michael's.

Outreach:

Unfortunately, due to continued restrictions Abingdon School were unable to hold their Leavers' Service in June, but we welcomed them back to the church for their Carol Services in December. The Oxford Diocese Ride and Stride did go ahead. We opened the church to meet and greet the cyclists and offered refreshments'

Bookings for the Church and Church Room commenced in September, and we welcomed back the Albert Park Singers, AA, and NA. The Albert Park Singers were able to give their Christmas Concert which was a most enjoyable occasion.

During the autumn 2 Sunday afternoon concerts were organised by our Director of Music. The East Oxford Community Choir also held a Sunday Afternoon Concert. These were well received and very much enjoyed. We are incredibly grateful to Glynne for her organisation and for her musical talent which enriches our experience both in our concerts and in our services through her leadership of the choir.

We were able to hold our Christmas Fair, which was successful. We thank everyone who contributed in any way to its success.

Fundraising:

We continue to support:

Abingdon Bridge (a local charity that provides support and guidance for young people) and
Tariro (a youth charity in Zimbabwe),

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

The Porch Day Centre (supporting homeless people in Oxford) to whom we gave money this year instead of Harvest gifts,
Oxfordshire Historic Churches by sponsoring Louise Heffernan and Nicola Ng for the Oxford Ride and Stride.

Volunteers:

When things run smoothly, we don't always notice or appreciate all the work that goes on behind the scenes. We owe thanks to all our many volunteers: the folks that come in and do the cleaning, the flower arrangers, those who do the odd vital jobs – fixing things or sorting out the heating or sound, those who make the coffee, the gardeners, the writers or contributors of the pew leaflet and website. We thank you all.

Many thanks:

To all who help in our worship – those who serve at the altar, our sacristan, our organists, and dedicated choir members. To the DCC members, and all our sidepersons.

We would also like to particularly to thank Peter Squire, who stepped down as Church Warden in 2021 though he continues to work hard behind the scenes. His help has been invaluable, and he has served the Church faithfully in his 4 years as a Warden.

Finally, a big thank you to Fr Paul who in another difficult year has given leadership, support, kindness, and love. Let us continue to pray for the Lord's blessing on him.

Joyce Kelly and Louise Heffernan February 2022

FABRIC REPORT

2021 again saw the church closed for worship at the beginning of the year, the need has remained to keep the building and its contents safe, secure and in good order. Routine maintenance of the heating system, fire alarm, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, PAT testing, and organ all took place as usual.

Last year's report made mention that the Quinquennial Review would take place, and this did indeed happen. The Fabric Committee has met and now needs to action what is required.

At the end of 2021 there was again a problem with the heating, and we decided that during the month of December that we needed to keep the heating on 24/7 to ensure the comfort of both the congregation and anyone using the building.

Joyce Kelly February 2022

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

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

Services:

2021 was another year in which activities have been limited by Covid. Almost immediately after Christmas we entered 'lockdown' again, and our Services went back online. We were able to host both 11:15am and occasional 8am Services. We were back in Church for Easter, but with a shortened and constrained liturgy. Over the year constraints were gradually lifted (and more and more elements reintroduced into the Services), but the end of the year still saw mask wearing (including during hymns) recommended. Despite these limitations we were still able to celebrate St Nicolas Evensong (when we were ably supported by the St Helen's Choir and Organists), an evening Carol Service (for which the choir was augmented by friends from the congregation and further afield), and the traditional young people led Crib Service – which this year was zoomed too and included an international audience.

Activities:

As Covid precautions were relaxed it was good to be able to arrange a Harvest Lunch outside at Pizza Express which was enjoyed by some 30 congregation members and friends. The St Nicolas Day Lunch at Coseners House in December was also well attended by members from all three churches in the Parish.

"EAT - Edible Abingdon on Thames" - a free exhibition looking at the growing, preparation and consuming of food and drink in Abingdon through the ages, hosted as part of Abingdon's Heritage Open Days programme, was well received and attracted over 500 visitors on the Saturday of HODS weekend. A spring Art Exhibition by the Abbey Art Group was also very successful. It was also good to be able to welcome back the Abbey Chamber Recitals' Sunday afternoon concerts. In Autumn we were able to hold a couple of fundraising events – a successful book sale (sadly without the coffee and cake this year) and a very enjoyable concert from Arco Strings.

Finance

During the year Dr Andrew Birks, Treasurer for many years, handed over responsibility to Jenny Metcalfe as Treasurer and Nick Hallas as Stewardship Recorder. The year has seen all financial recording move online, to an integrated system used by all three Churches. This has been a major task, but one which we hope will reap rewards in the years to come – both for St Nic's and the parish. My grateful thanks to Jenny for all her work on this, and, of course, to Andrew for his many years as both St Nicolas' and parish Treasurer.

Ministry of welcome:

Many thanks to all who support our Services and weekly activities, through stewarding, reading the lessons, leading the prayers, flower arranging, helping in the garden or with cleaning & tidying, and organising, and attending, fund raising and social events etc. Visitors often comment on the prayerful and cared for feel of the church, to which everyone contributes.

In this my first year as Warden (second term) I would like to thank my predecessors – Paul Rast-Lindsell and Andrew Coker - and DCC members for all their support and work, and to all those who cheerfully offer help week by week.

Thank you too, to all who support St Nicolas through donations and prayers.

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

FABRIC REPORT

Work on the Tower repairs finally started in April 2021 – after several Covid disruptions. The delays did however, give us more time to fundraise, and we acknowledge with grateful thanks a generous grant from the Government / Historic England Culture Recovery Fund towards the costs. The works were completed in May, and the bells soon rang out for Services and our first post-Covid wedding. It was good to hear them ring again.

During the year we worked with the owners of the former TSB building as they redeveloped the ground floor. A coffee shop opened at the street end in May, and plans were put forward for two flats in the back of the building which have now received planning permission. St Nicolas' did write in comment on the plans which will see new windows facing the north church door and vestry extension. As part of the building process both parties have appointed surveyors under party wall legislation to oversee works affecting the party wall, and negotiate on areas of mutual interest.

Uncertainty over how much work was needed on the party wall, delayed work on the reordering of the Toilet/Kitchen Block. However plans are now being drawn up, and we are hoping to start work on site soon.

Our Quinquennial (five-yearly) inspection in November identified a number of projects (guttering, re-decorating, some roof and floor repairs etc) which need to be undertaken in the next couple of years. However nothing was flagged as urgent, and indicative costs are not frightening.

Longer term we would like to restore the Blacknall memorial / Blacknall Aisle in time for 2025 – four hundred years from the death of John Blacknall. The organ, too, now in place for over 50 years would benefit from a major restoration. We are very fortunate in receiving an annual legacy (the Blacknall Fund) which is restricted to works to the church fabric to help us keep our lovely building in good repair.

Eluned Hallas

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

Appendix 4
St Nicolas' C E Primary School

St Nicolas CE Primary School is a two-form entry primary school in the heart of Abingdon and has on roll 420 pupils aged from 4-11 (Reception to Year 6). Pupils are taught and supported by over 50 staff, many of whom have been at the school for five years or more. The school has a strong relationship with the Pre School that independently operates on the same site, and has active links with both Abingdon Parishes, and with other members of the Church-in-Abingdon.

Following the challenges of COVID-19 in 2020, it was hoped that 2021 would see the school reverting to “normal”. However, that was not to be the case, and the year started with a second lockdown resulting in the majority of pupils not returning to school until March 8th. During that time, home learning resources continued to be offered to all year groups, and children from vulnerable or keyworker homes were still taught in school. We celebrate the ongoing dedication of staff in continuing to teach and engage with their classes during this time, the commitment of parents and carers who continued to help their children access learning during this challenging time, and the pupils themselves for adapting once again to the necessary changes.

Despite this uncertain start to the year, once pupils returned, they settled back into the classroom very quickly, with teachers focused on helping their classes catch up on missed learning both academically and socially, supporting them in the classroom and outside in the playground. The additional “catch up” funding provided by the Government was invaluable to being able to provide small group and individual catch up sessions that had a swift and positive impact on the children. In addition, after school clubs resumed to offer additional extra-curricular activities and the Year 5 pupils have returned to swimming lessons. However, as a result of ongoing restrictions, school trips were unable to take place.

Although Collective Worship restarted with the return to school, these were limited to being on Zoom or within the classroom. They remained an important part of school life to finding ways to continue to promote the “value of the month” and reflect on what these values meant as a school, class, or individual – this required some creative thinking by the staff and pupils themselves. The tradition of celebrating achievements, including where pupils had demonstrated the living out of the value of the month, continued on Friday afternoons – even if done by Zoom. The start of 2022 has seen these assemblies and collective worship times revert to being in person where possible which has been a great joy.

Towards the end of the 2020/21 academic year, priority was giving to helping the Year 6 pupils prepare for the move to secondary school while also being able to celebrate their time at St Nic’s, albeit in COVID-friendly ways! This included presenting them with a copy of the Scripture Union “Moving On” book, creating bespoke year group hoodies and a photobook of their memories at school. The ‘Leavers Service’ creatively took place on the school playground where Year 6 parents were invited to attend a service that was primarily led by our Year 6 children. This proved both very personal and emotional for everyone involved and we were delighted that there was an opportunity to officially celebrate our Year 6 cohort.

Throughout the year, staff and pupil wellbeing has been a priority as it is recognised that everyone has had a different – and often challenging – experience of COVID-19 and that it continues to affect

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

day to day life as well as physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Parent Teacher Interviews have continued online making engagement between staff and parents easier and reducing footfall on-site, staff absences have been covered in-house where possible to ensure continuity of teaching for pupils from teachers they know, hot meals have returned at lunchtime and are available to staff and pupils, and the school gates continue to close at 5pm to ensure that teachers go home on time to help maintain work-life balance.

At the start of the new academic year, and as we head into 2022, the focus has been to review and refresh the school's vision and mission. As a Church of England School, St Nic's is to be a school with a distinctively Christian culture and ethos that is reflected in its Christian values based on the life of Jesus Christ. Inspired by Jesus' words in John 10, the team at St Nic's are committed to ensuring that each member of the school family can "live life to the full" – pupils, staff, and families. They recognise that we are all on our journey and as we prepare for the next step (in our learning, in our schooling, in our lives), we want to make the most of every opportunity – and that these opportunities should be accessible to all. Pupils and staff will be encouraged on this journey using a framework of "navigate, inspire, challenge, succeed" (NICS), to help them best determine what "living life to the full" looks like for them.

There is much to give thanks for not least for the dedication and hard work of the whole school community – pupils, teachers, teaching assistants, admin staff, specialists, cooks, cleaners, and families and carers. The school community has in reality been a school family with each member taking care of other members. But please do continue to pray: COVID-19 is still very present and we are only just beginning to grasp the emotional and mental impact it has had on us all as well as on our children's learning. Please also pray for all schools and educational establishments, children and their families, teachers and all who work in education, and governors and other volunteers who give their time to support the future.

Katrina Hancock, Chair of Governors

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

Appendix 5
Report on the activities of the Church in Abingdon

Member churches and staff:

Much of the life and work of the CiA, and the individual churches, has not been able to take place in 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic dating back to March 2020.

There has been one main change in the clergy: Steve Millard left Abingdon Baptist Church in November 2021. Until a new minister is assigned, the Church Secretary Ian Millgate, who is also a retired minister, is acting as the temporary lead.

Task groups and associated projects:

The CiA has continued to support a number of community projects and working groups that concentrate on specific areas of cooperation. However, many of these were affected by the coronavirus pandemic and could not operate as normal, if at all.

- The Abingdon Bridge continued to reach out to the youth of Abingdon, providing support, advice and guidance to an increasing number of vulnerable young people in the community due to the effects of the ongoing pandemic. They moved to larger premises in the Market Place and launched two new projects.
- Abingdon Street Pastors have been out on the streets whenever possible. More Street Pastors are urgently needed.
- The Christian Aid group in Abingdon held several fundraising activities but with a difference.
- The Christian Forum column continues to appear in the Abingdon Round & About monthly magazine
- The usual exchange visits of the Church Twinning group could not take place.
- The work of Desire has continued in secondary schools but has shrunk as schools stopped all visitors.
- A 'virtual' Experience Easter was organised by Trinity Learning, and new projects include the Toolkit for Happiness - to support 'well-being' in schools.
- The Alpha launch-type event could not take place but various online Alpha courses took place.
- The work of Prayer Spaces has continued in Abingdon schools where possible.

Communication:

The CiA News and a newly launched website have continued under the direction of the Debra Mcknight, while publication of the Christian Focus magazine under the direction of the editor, Ben Jeapes, with assistance from Margaret Langsford and others has been reduced to one issue this year.

United activities 2021

Most churches were closed for the first quarter of 2021, offering live streaming services, until the relaxation of rules in May when churches started to resume on-site services following Covid guidelines.

The following events took place:

- Christian Aid annual New Year's Day walk raised £1077 and their online quiz £853. Christian Aid week activities took place with adaptations and raised £7074, the afternoon in St

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

Ethelwold's House and garden £410, the Walk for Water £600, the online autumn quiz £420 and carol singing in the Farmers Market raised a further sum.

- The Baptist Thrive Network prepared a service on You Tube for the World Day of Prayer
- Trinity learning launched a virtual Easter Experience which children took part in from their classrooms.
- The Michaelmas fair service took place with Revd Dr Charles Miller leading.
- The Annual Bereavement Service took place at Trinity Church with Deacon Selina Nisbett leading but this was poorly attended. Many churches also had their own individual services to remember those in their congregations who had died as a result of the Covid pandemic.
- Desire delivered a well-being course in Fitzharrys School.
- People from all the churches gathered in the Market Square to sing carols and give out leaflets detailing all the Christmas services taking place across Abingdon.

The following events could not take place:

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the CiA AGM, the Lent Lectures, the shoe cleaning event on Maundy Thursday, the procession of witness/united service on Good Friday, Fun in the Park, an Alpha launch, the South Abingdon Play & Activity Day, The Abingdon Extravaganza.

Finance

A new three-year phase of funding (£6K) for 2021-2023 had been agreed and the following grants paid:

The Abingdon Bridge	£2000 / year	for their work with disadvantaged young people.
DESIRE youth network	£1000 / year	to help run schools' weeks and larger events.
DESIRE prayer spaces	£150 / year	to provide prayer spaces in schools.
Abingdon Street Pastors	£1000 / year	to fund their ongoing help for people out at night.
Experience Easter	£750 / year	to help school children and teachers explore the Easter story.
Thrive South Abingdon	£1000 / year	for their work reaching out to young people.
Salvation Army Drop-in Centre	£100	to provide drop-in centre for the homeless and needy.

Julia Bishop January 2022

PARISH OF ABINGDON-ON-THAMES
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

Appendix 6
Report on the Abingdon Foodbank

Abingdon Food Bank continues to be an important lifeline for many families in need within our community. The food bank is now under the management of the Trussel Trust, although local management remains unchanged.

There are now two food banks within Abingdon, the Christchurch hub operates on a Tuesday and Friday morning with the Preston Road food bank operational on Wednesday afternoons.

There is an ever increasing demand for support, recent changes in the rates of Universal Credit payments, whilst seeming small, have had a negative impact, increasing food poverty in the area.

The Parish of Abingdon has continued to actively support the work of the Food banks, with regular donations of tinned foods and gifts of money. Harvest Festival saw a large quantity of food donated to this local cause, a cause which many people feel needs to be actively supported.

Thanks must go to all who have contributed in any way to the work of Food Banks, both locally and nationally. Staff, volunteers and of course “clients” appreciate the support given at a time when everyone is facing increased demands on their resources.

Linda Hobbs
Church Warden and Food Bank volunteer.