

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2017

Monday 27 March 2017, at 7:30pm in St Nicolas' Church.

Agenda:

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 2016 ADCM. p2-5
3. Matters arising from those Minutes
4. Presentation of the Electoral Roll for Saint Nicolas Church
5. Financial Report See separate sheet
6. Other Reports (*attached*)
 - 6.1 Statistics p6
 - 6.2 Church Warden p6
 - 6.3 Young People's Activities p7
 - 6.4 Fabric p9
 - 6.5 Donations p10
 - 6.6 Choir and Music p11
 - 6.7 Church Helpers p11
 - 6.8 Flowers p12
 - 6.9 Churchyard garden p12
 - 6.10 Bell ringing p12
 - 6.11 The Window p12
 - 6.12 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC p13
 - 6.13 Proceedings of the Abingdon Deanery Synod p14
 - 6.14 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon p15
7. Nominations, Elections and Appointments p19
 - 7.1 Nomination of TWO church wardens.
 - 7.2 Election of THREE DCC members to serve until 2020
and TWO to serve until 2018
 - 7.3 Nomination of TWO PCC representatives to serve until 2019 & 2020
 - 7.4 Nomination of TWO Deanery Synod Representatives to serve until 2020
 - 7.4 Appointment of Church-in-Abingdon representative(s)
 - 7.5 Approve the nominations of stewards
8. Other matters of parochial or general church interest (Chairman's discretion)
9. The Team Vicar's Address.

E Hallas. Acting Hon. Sec.

Saint Nicolas Church
Minutes of the Annual district Church Meeting held
on Monday April 18 2016 in St Nicolas Church.

Present: Revd Dr J Baun, Dr A Birks, Mrs J Bishop, Dr H Bishop, Mrs P Burren, Mr J Burren, Dr A Colborne, Mrs E. Hallas, Miss R Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs J Hicks, Mr D Howard, Mrs M Hoskins, Mr A Hoskins, Mrs J Lawrence, Mrs P Lay, Miss P Randles, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond, Mr J A Richmond, Revd P Smith, Mrs A Smith, Mr J Smith, Dr J Smith, Mr R Smith.

1. **Welcome.** Rev'd Paul Smith, as Chairman of the meeting, welcomed those attending and began with prayer.
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Mrs E. Currey, Mr G. Currey, Miss K Doney, Mrs S Henderson, Mrs H Nakalembe-Mafabi, Mrs B Randles
3. The **Minutes of the 2015** Meeting were approved, subject to the following amendments:
 - P2 - addition of **Mr Paul Rast-Lindsell** to those present
last paragraph, change *Reading Deanery* to **Reading Archdeaconry**
 - P3 8.1 change of *APM* to **APCM**
8.2 change to **four** unfilled vacancies on DCC
4. **Electoral Roll.** The St Nicolas section of the Parish Electoral Roll was presented. The roll stood at 68; during 2015/16 1 name had been added and 4 removed – a net decrease of 3.
5. **Financial Report.** The Hon. Treasurer, Dr A. Birks, presented the accounts for the year ending December 2015 – with reference to a summary sheet distributed in advance. Copies of the full accounts for the year, approved by the DCC in March, were available.

Dr Birks started his report by noting that 2015 had been an apparently good year for the church, with the accounts showing a surplus on unrestricted funds of £7,600. This was mainly due to a sizeable one-off donation (including gift aid recoverable), income due to hosting the Cards for Good Causes sale, and a rebate on the Parish Share contribution as a result of the whole deanery share being paid in full and on time.

However, regular planned giving was gradually decreasing as the congregation declined - with a 2.1% fall from 2014 figures. This was not sustainable long term, as, at the least, unrestricted income should match expenditure. The 2016 budget showed a deficit on unrestricted funds of £7,900.

(Note: un-restricted / general funds are available for the general purposes of the Church; restricted funds eg Blacknall may only be spent in accordance with the donors' wishes, and designated funds are monies which the Church / DCC has allocated for specific purposes, not available for day-to-day running without prior consideration.)

During the year the Standing Committee and DCC had considered the various designated funds held by the church, and had agreed some re-organisation, including the amalgamation of various funds to create a Re-ordering Fund (of around £13k) which had made available for work to the kitchen / toilet block.

Works to the fabric of the church were usually paid for from the Blacknall Funds which were restricted to expenditure the repair of the fabric and fittings of the church.

Dr Birks was thanked for his work as Treasurer, and the Accounts were accepted – Proposed Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Seconded Mr R Smith, passed nem con.

6 Other Reports.

6.1 Statistics 2015

Funerals: 1

Memorial Services: 0

Weddings: 4

Baptisms: 0 / Thanksgiving Service: 0

6.2 The Church Wardens' Report was noted.

6.3 Young Peoples Activities Report was noted.

6.4 The Fabric Report was noted

6.4a The Report from the Buildings Working Group was noted

6.5 The Donations Committee Report was noted

6.6 The Report on the Choir and Music was noted.

6.7 The Report on Church Helpers was noted.

It was re-iterated that additional offers of help were always welcome.

6.8 The Report on the Churchyard Garden was noted

6.9 The Bellringing Report was noted

6.10 The report on the proceedings of the Abingdon-on-Thames Parochial Church Council was noted.

7.11 The report of the proceedings of Abingdon Deanery Synod was noted.

7.12 The Report of the Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon was noted.

There had a lot of staff changes in the year. The Revd Tim Davies (Christchurch) was on long term sick leave, and prayers were requested for him and all those offering support in the parish.

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments.

8.1 Church Wardens.

Mrs Eluned Hallas – proposed Mr TG Currey, seconded Mr D Howard

Mr Paul Rast-Lindsell – proposed Mr A Richmond, seconded Mrs H Hyde

These names would go forward for election at the Abingdon-on-Thames APCM.

8.2 DCC Members to serve until 2018

With 7 vacancies, there were four nominations in advance:

Mrs Hilda Mufabi proposed Mr T Richmond, seconded Mrs E Hallas
Mrs Julia Bishop, proposed Mrs E Currey, seconded Mrs H Hyde
Mrs J Fishpool proposed Miss R Hallas, seconded Mrs E Coker
Mrs A Smith proposed Mrs P Burren, seconded Mr J Burren

8.3 PCC Representatives.

Mr Paul Rast-Lindsell was now a member of the PCC ex-officio.

No member was elected in his place – Proposed Mrs Eluned Hallas, Seconded Mrs Julia Bishop. Approved nem con.

Dr Hugh Bishop (2017) & Mr John Burren (2018) continue in post.

8.4 Deanery Synod Representatives.

No election this year, Mrs Pauline Burren and Dr Andrew Birks continue in post.

8.5 Church-in-Abingdon Representative.

Mrs Julia Bishop.

8.6 Stewards.

8.00am: Mrs J Hobbs, Mrs J Lawrence, Mr B Tonks.

11.15am: Mr A Coker, Dr A Colborne, Mr D Dawswell, Miss K Doney; Mrs J Fishpool, Mrs E Hallas, Mr N Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs H Hyde, Mr T. Oates, Mr P Rast-Lindsell; Mrs L Richmond

Approved nem con.

9. Other matters of Parochial or General Interest.

Mrs Julia Bishop reported on a new initiative to provide space for a Mobility Café in St Nicolas’ particularly aimed at users of mobility aids such as wheelchairs, ‘frames’, motorised ‘scooters’ etc. Representatives of Age UK would be on hand at some sessions to provide advice to visitors.

This had started as a weekly event in Autumn 2015, and attracted a few visitors. The use of the Church for Cards for Good Causes in October / November had restricted space and momentum had been lost.

The post-Christmas re-launch had been of a monthly event, but there had been no visitors.

Mrs Bishop invited suggestions as to how to refocus.

It was noted that Age UK hosted drop-in sessions at other venues which might be more congenial.

Visitors with limited mobility might appreciate the church being kept a bit warmer than it was currently.

There was a willingness to take the initiative forward positively, perhaps through appealing to a wider audience.

10 The Team Vicar's Address.

Revd Smith reminded members present of the St Nicolas’ Vision Day challenge to ‘*Choose life or death*’. The current congregation was a small one, meeting faithfully to worship. Although Sunday numbers can appear worrying he reminded members of Jesus’ saying ‘*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*’ (Matthew 18:20 King James Version (KJV))

He spoke of life seen and found on one and another, and in our relationships .
He spoke of our outreach - through St Nicolas' School and in Old Station House and Bridge House where we offer monthly Communion Services and pastoral care .

There is no formula for growth in numbers, but he hoped that during the coming year congregation members could deepen our faith, our love of God and our need for prayer. The re-branded Third Sunday Service was aimed specifically at teaching, and the forthcoming 'The Hope within Us' week would be a springboard for learning and praying together, as individuals and congregations within the Parish.

10 The Third Sunday (written paper presented)

The Revd Jane Baun explained that the change of format had arisen because of a perceived need for an inclusive, teaching service - open to all, offering spiritual nurturing, growth in faith, fellowship, teaching and discipleship, in a way that engaged all ages - with space for discussion and interaction.

The new format aimed to be accessible to all who attend, including the young and young in faith, but not '*dumbing down*'.

There had been a feeling among those involved in service planning that the title 'Family Service' could be misleading as few young families attended, and could sound alienating.

The new title sought to encapsulate both the regular slot - the third Sunday in the month, but also resonate with wider concepts such as 'The Third Day' / resurrection etc.

Services could be lay led, and would not necessarily be on the lectionary readings for the day. Series could be put together to explore topics in greater depth.

The language used would be flexible to address the style of the congregation attending, neither based on Common Worship (which could be overly wordy) nor BCP (too traditional).

In discussion congregation members were supportive of, and interested in, the ideas put forward. There was some concern that the title 'Third Sunday' was rather vague and open to interpretation. However it was agreed that the idea should be adopted and built on, and opportunities taken to explain the new format and encourage attendance.

Interested congregation members would be encouraged to get involved, possibly through the creation of a 'steering group'.

To sum up: if we have joy in our worship it will be infectious and invite others to share.

The meeting closed, with prayer, at 9.30pm.

M E Hallas, May 2016

6 Reports

6.1 Statistics 2016

Baptisms: 1
Funerals: 0
Memorial Services: 0
Weddings: 1

6.2 Church Wardens' Report

Paul Rast-Lindsell

Services:

Our Sunday Services continue with their normal pattern with an 8.00am Holy Communion on the odd months (January, March, etc.) and a main morning service at 11.15 a.m. The main services are a balance of forms with Morning Prayer (Mattins) on the first Sunday, Holy Communion on the second and fourth Sundays, and a less formal 'Third Sunday' Service. If there is a fifth Sunday in the month, we hold a less formal Family Communion. All the services continue to have good, though variable, attendance, with a pleasing increase in the numbers of young people attending. The re-ordering at the west end of the Nave gives good space and opportunity for quiet play and teaching; occasionally Junior Church sessions are held in the ringing chamber.

We have continued with the informal, evening service held on the first Thursday of every month. Called 'Nourishment in Christ' (N.I.C.), the service, which is lay-led, is an opportunity to 'de-stress' and allow yourself to spend quiet time being still to allow the opportunity and space to talk with God. This service continues to be well-received by those who attend.

Following discussions within the leadership team, and at our Annual meeting in 2016, our Family Service was relaunched after Easter 2016. The newly named 'Third Sunday' Service (reflecting its position in the month, but also alluding to 'on the Third Day') is an explorer style service of the word - open to all. We have chosen to depart from the set lectionary readings in favour of themes spanning several Services (eg The Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount). In place of a Sermon there are opportunities to explore the meaning of the texts in different ways - through 'prayer spaces', small group discussions, silence, open church discussions etc. Lay leadership of these services is also being built up, and the services are followed by a great time of fellowship over refreshments.

St Nicolas' offers monthly services of Communion by Extension to the two neighbouring care homes, Old Station House and Bridge House. These continue to be enjoyed by an average congregation of over 20 in each home and are an important part of our outreach to the community.

As is our custom, we hold special services according to the time of year such as Easter, Harvest Thanksgiving, our Patronal Festival in early December and, of course, Christmas. This year, due to a quirk of planning and some misinformation, our Carol

Service in December was extremely well-attended - the church being full to capacity with over 100 people making a joyful noise to the Lord.

We were also delighted to be able to host the Parish Confirmation and Eucharist for Ascension Day, a special Evensong of Thanksgiving for the 90th Birthday of Her Majesty the Queen in June, and to celebrate the Feast of St Edmund of Abingdon in October.

Activities:

It was a pleasure to take part in the Parish *The Hope within Us* programme in May. In lunchtime talks five speakers approached different aspects of the Creed, with power and insight. The talks were a good spring board for the ecumenical discussions that followed over the lunches provided by members of the congregation.

During the year, we ran two Pilgrim courses. These were lay-led sessions, run in the evening that explored what it means to be a Christian and how the Christian life should be lived. Although the group was small, there were some lively discussions. We also hosted the weekday Services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - very thought provoking. A house-group, made up from the congregations of the Parish, continues to meet on a fortnightly basis to read and discuss various chapters from books in the bible.

The church has continued to be used as a venue for concerts - particularly the Sunday afternoon Abingdon Chamber Concerts. Other activities are varied and irregular but include Art exhibitions, talks, film screenings, school visits and, for the second time, 'Cards for Good Causes', who were once again exceptionally pleased to use St Nicolas with its better access for visitors.

The weekly 'market' of home-grown fruit, flowers and crafts is held in the in the churchyard on Fridays and this has increased in popularity. The Abingdon Cancer Support Group continues to meet monthly in church.

The church remains open for a few hours each weekday – enabling both visitors and locals to enjoy a time of quiet reflection, or a chat and refreshment as they prefer - and our dedicated Prayer Space is well used. Our Verger, Jim, is the mainstay of this outreach, ably supported by many members of our congregation. It is also good that our Vicar is usually able to visit for an hour or so a week, to meet and talk to visitors - both regular and occasional.

Once again, our annual participation in Abingdon Extravaganza was considered to be a success.

Meetings

The DCC met 5 times during the year, to consider the normal business of the church, including the proposed changes to the toilet block. Our financial position remains an

area of concern, and the accounts were closely monitored throughout the year. Minutes of meetings, once approved, are made available on the church website.

The Standing Committee (The Vicar, Churchwardens and the Treasurer) met as required to discuss various aspects of church business and set DCC agendas.

The Vicar, Churchwardens, Treasurer and PCC Representatives attended PCC meetings as representatives of St Nicolas' church, and we were represented at Deanery Synod also.

6.3 Young People's Activities

Eluned Hallas

We thank all the congregation for your support of and interest in the activities of our young members. We continue to enjoy our lively young people at St Nic's. Our regular young members always make visitors welcome, and it is good to hear them playing quietly together at the back of church. Play mats, cushions and 'quiet' toys all help make the space welcoming.

Junior church meets in the Tower Room occasionally, and has produced some great artwork - to take home or for display at the back of church.

Our 'Third Sundays' have been fun and thought provoking, and included demonstration songs by our younger members. Many thanks to Jane for her inspirational ideas, and managing to engage all ages!

We continue to benefit from the input of 'older' young people, and value all their contributions, as readers, stewards, sound technicians, intercessors, box and furniture shifters and other 'voluntary' jobs!

The Christmas Crib Service was very well attended again this year, and calmly and competently led by our young people! It was also great to have a young 'cellist to augment the piano in some of the carols.

The Abingdon Extravaganza was another event that saw the church full of visitors, families and children. It was lovely to welcome them and share time together making Christmas crafts. For many, the St Nicolas Extravaganza Christmas crafts have become part of their annual festive routine, which is lovely.

Some St. Nicolas volunteers have continued to help with Prayer Space & Experience Easter activities in local schools, which are always well received by the children

Not solely for the young, but the wonderful Christmas Crib scene in the South Porch attracted much interest again this year. Thanks to the Coker family for the initial idea, and for their creativity each year!

Twenty-sixteen was a year of quiet consolidation on the fabric front. The reordered west end of church continued to be well used and much appreciated. Various consultations with congregation and others encouraged us to apply for formal approval to make the change permanent and dispose of the pews. As usual with DAC issues progress is slower than had been hoped, but we are now awaiting final approval.

In April, we finally re-mounted the wall plaque referring to the image of Saint Nicolas in the East Window and the accompanying explanatory plaque. The plaques were blessed by our Bowles Lecturer on one of her regular visits to church, as provided for in the will of the Revd Bowles - a relative of the donor of window which was given in memory of another family member. Our grateful thanks to Mrs Cannon-Brookes for her support for the project - from the restoration of the original plaque to the commissioning of the new.

The lightning conductor has been repaired and a further test is due later in the year. Other routine maintenance / testing was carried out on the organ, lighting, fire extinguishers, gas heaters etc. We are aware that some of the heaters are not operating, and we have sought quotes for new or replacement systems. As noted elsewhere there has also been work in the ringing chamber.

Progress is being made on the getting repair work done on the West doorway. Proposals and options have been finalised, and concerns overcome, with the paperwork submitted to the Diocese. We have yet to confirm when this work might take place but it is expected to be well within the year.

Work on the Blacknall aisle is currently not being dealt with. This needs to be reconsidered for the coming year.

Our Quinquennial inspection in 2016 highlighted several issues that require resolution. None of them are out of the ordinary, being typical of the type of things a building like ours might attract. The exception is some crumbling stonework on the Southeast corner which does urgent need attention, and steps are in hand to put this right as quickly as possible. We are fortunate indeed in having funds from the Blacknall bequest which can only be spent on works to the fabric and fittings of the church, and which will be available to fund this work, and the work to the west doorway.

The Buildings Working Group continued looking at options for improving the facilities available in the church and toilet block - including informal discussions with the DAC and planning authorities. Following a formal church meeting the Architect was invited to draw up plans. Further discussions have followed but plans for the toilet block and ramp were drawn up and will be submitted to the DAC for approval in principle. We have started to look at sources of grant funding to assist with the costs.

6.5 Donations

Jenny Smith

The Donations Committee met once to allocate the money the DCC agreed was available for charities from the 2016 budget. The sum available was £1,000 from which the St Nicolas donation to CiA for CiA sponsored projects was taken leaving £708. The cost of the "Moving on" books for pupils at St Nicolas School was paid by the DCC in addition to this figure. The DCC added a further £148 from an historic designated fund to this sum giving us £856 to allocate.

CiA supported Abingdon Bridge, 35 Ock Street, Abingdon Street Pastors, Back to 35, and work in schools as well as making a small donation to the Abingdon Passion Play.

The following divisions were agreed:

Abingdon/U.K. Charities:	Archway	£214
	Alzheimer's Society	£214
Overseas Missions:	USPG	£214
	CMS Work in Central and South America	£214

In addition:

- Our Harvest Collection in 2016 was £147.80 and went to USPG. Gifts of produce (where suitable) were given to the food bank and fresh produce was taken by members of the congregation who were asked to put a contribution in to the church funds in exchange for the produce.
- Our Christmas 2016 Collection was £390 and went to the Children's Society.
- Foodbank support has continued

We were also able to host two fundraising events by other charities during the year, taking advantage of our position on the Market Place:

Alzheimers Sale

Cards for Good Causes

Both of these made a donation to the church, but also raised funds for their own causes.

In view of the current financial shortfall in St Nicolas Church finances the continuation of the church giving to charities may be considered no longer financially viable. Most of the congregation already give to other charities of their choice and therefore we are wondering if it is still appropriate to give to other charities from church funds. In future years we suggest continuing church support of CiA and St Nicolas School, for us to continue our special donations at Christmas and Harvest Festival and for us to arrange special collections on perhaps two Sundays a year e.g. Refugee Sunday or on a Sunday if we can invite a speaker, but not routinely giving to other charities from church funds.

We would also like to hear from any other member of the congregation who may wish to help with donations and charities. Further input is always helpful with regard to

suggesting speakers, poster displays in church, details of other local or overseas charities etc.

Jenny Smith, Katie Doney

6.6 Choir and Music

Eluned Hallas

We have been without a regular organist for the past six months, after Rhianydd's return to Wales. I would like to thank the many people - from our own congregation, friends from Abingdon and from wider afield who have played for us week by week. A Service without Organ or Piano would have a very different feel.

Thanks too to those who have joined us to sing for special Services - at Christmas and Easter and elsewhere. It is always good to be part of a larger body of singers and our repertoire can expand accordingly. We are particularly grateful to Christopher Fletcher-Campbell and the St Helen's choir members for their support.

Despite our limitations there were musical highlights at special Evensongs for Ascension Day (when we sang an Anthem composed by a member of the congregation), Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday, St Edmunds Day (when we were joined by members from St Edmund's Church and sang a hymn composed by members of their choir in St Edmund's honour), St Nicolas Day and at our particularly memorable Carol Service - which started with a duet by two of our own choir.

We were saddened when Patricia Pugh decided she could no longer join us in the choir stalls, but are always delighted to see her in the congregation.

We are still seeking a permanent Organist / Director of Music, and would be delighted to see new members join the choir - either regularly or for special services.

6.7 Church Helpers

Geoffrey Currey

We recognize once again the small army of people who help in so many different ways in the running of church services, and in keeping the church and the church yard looking clean and tidy. For the services, we rely on our stewards, readers, musicians, sacristans, chalice assistants and those who lead the intercessions. We are welcomed to church by the ever-cheerful sound of the bells ringing, and through most of the year as we enter the church we see attractive flower arrangements. Then there are the people who wash the linen and polish the silver. All these are essential to the conduct of a service and to each one of you, we wish to express our gratitude. Without this steady commitment, much of it low-key and unseen, the services would not and could not happen in an orderly fashion.

It is with great pleasure that I mention Dick Barnes as I did in this context a year ago; we offer our hearty congratulations to him on receiving the Order of the British

Empire Medal (BEM) in the Queen's New Year Honours list in January this year, given in recognition of his extensive services to the community; we at Saint Nicolas Church have more reason than most to be thankful for his faithful service over some seven decades.

It remains the case that we are fairly thinly stretched at some times and in some areas to cover the duties and we could always do with more helpers so if on reading this, you feel you could offer some help, please do let a church warden know. In the meantime, to all those who do help in any way, a hearty thank you.

6.8 Flowers

Emma Coker

I am grateful for this opportunity to thank our enthusiastic and talented team of flower arrangers at St Nicolas. They continue to use their skills and creativity to decorate the church, especially during festivals, which is appreciated by congregations and visitors alike. We are always looking for new volunteers and no previous experience is needed to join us in this enjoyable and rewarding area of church life.

6.9 Churchyard garden

Hugh Bishop

The garden continues to attract favourable comments. The shaping of the bay tree by Douglas Brown is particularly appreciated. We will continue to replace ageing perennials and to use annuals to give additional summer colour.

6.10 Bell ringing

Hugh Bishop

Service ringing and practices have been well attended over the year and the bells were rung for the bun throwing on the 11th June.

The bell frame was painted in August. The wooden bosses in the ceiling of the ringing chamber had become worn and were damaging the ropes, so these were replaced with aluminium ones in January. The old clock chamber has been cleared of a lot of rubbish to make way for spare ropes presently stored in the gallery above the ringing chamber. There will now be space to store less frequently used items such as Christmas decorations in the gallery.

6.11 Parish magazine *The Window*

Andrew Colborne, Editor

In the year under review the scheduled 10 editions of the magazine (designated issue 'numbers') were published in a timely manner. The early numbers were dominated by the parish project 'The Hope within Us', publicizing key features leading up to the event followed by the reporting of some aspects of the proceedings.

The content generally continues to be varied, topical and pertinent to the seasons and the church calendar, with occasional items of broader interest. The quizzes, crosswords and listings of what's on in the parish continue to be popular features.

The editorial board recently considered the relative share of the three churches towards content, costs and administration of the magazine and discussion is ongoing. Below is a brief summary of contributions authored, commissioned or otherwise due to our congregation and appearing in 2016.

March	Mobility Café relaunch	[newspiece]
	Rupert Shortt (profile)	[article, Andrew Colborne]
April	God’s creation	[lead article, Paul Rast-Lindsell]
May	Bowles plaque restored	[newspiece]
June	Servant Queen	[Book review, Andrew Coker]
July/Aug	Heart of Hope	[edited commentary, Andrew Colborne]
	Sudan revisited	[article, Tony Richmond]
September	Governing church schools	[book review, Eluned Hallas]
	Bruce Kent lecture	[report, Andrew Colborne]
November	Finance and faith	[lead article, Andrew Birks]
	St Edmund (profile)	[article, Eluned Hallas]
Dec/Jan	Wassailing, mumming	[article, Andrew Colborne]

6.12 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC Alexandra Green, Secretary to the PCC

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met four times during 2015. Routine business included reports from churches, reports from the Deanery Synod, the approval of faculty applications, and the correspondence/communications between congregations, clergy and church leadership, as well as by the churches and their wider communities.

Additional topics of discussion by the PCC during 2016 included The Hope within Us and managing the appointment of Safeguarding Officers for the parish. The new initiative of the holding of Open meetings, to which all parishioners were invited to hear about topics of general interest, was discontinued.

In October, the Archdeacon of Dorchester, the Ven. Judy French licensed The Revd Mary Williamson to serve in the Abingdon-on-Thames Team as associate priest on a House for Duty basis.

At the November meeting Dr A R Birks, Parish Treasurer, presented the provisional outturn forecasts for 2016 and the proposed budgets for the three churches (St Helen’s, St Michael’s and St Nicolas’) for 2017. The wardens and treasurers in addition met and discussed financial issues for both the DCCs and the PCC.

Consideration of the finances of the Parish remains a regular item on the PCC and Standing Committee agendas.

The Abingdon Deanery Synod met four times during 2016, on February 11, June 23, September 22 and November 24. There were also two meetings of the Deanery Share Group in the summer.

The Deanery Synod forms the link between the Parishes on the one hand and the Diocese and the National Church on the other, and is a forum for discussion of common problems between the constituent parishes and for the formulation of common policies. Thus discussions include matters of pastoral organisation, in particular the development of the Deanery Mission Action Plan (MAP). There was little explicit discussion of the MAP during the reporting year, but the Synod initiated a Deanery away-day to be held in early 2017 to discuss the Deanery's Mission priorities and how to take them forward. This is probably a topic for next year's report, but those of us who attended had a very interesting day.

All but one of the meetings included a presentation from a keynote speaker. The first meeting, in February, began with an act of worship which was followed by a introduction by the Revd Charles Miller to the plans for 'The Hope Within Us'. This was the first meeting of the new Lay Chair, Shirley Northover, elected the previous November.

The speaker at the second meeting in June was Jayne Ozanne, a General Synod member from Littlemoor who has agreed to act as a link between the Abingdon Deanery Synod and the General Synod. She spoke of the work of members of the General Synod and of the major themes expected to dominate the current sessions, including the Reform and Renewal programme, ecumenical issues, and human sexuality. A lively discussion followed. The formal business of the meeting included the election of Martin Steel as the new Deanery Treasurer.

The September meeting, at Sutton Courtenay, was addressed by Richard & Catherine Webber, respectively county and district councillors, who spoke of their various roles in local government with particular reference to planning issues and the provision of services. The question and answer session that followed included discussion of the growing housing needs and provisions in the area, which relates to one of the current preoccupations within the Diocese - resourcing mission in the extensive new housing developments which are appearing throughout Oxfordshire, and in particular within the Abingdon deanery. The Synod also heard a report by the Revd Charles Miller on The Hope within Us, held during May.

Finally it was reported at this meeting that the five members of the DAMASCUS group of Parishes, which have been working together increasingly closely as a cluster for some years, had formally voted to combine together as a single Parish, and had asked the Synod to approve that this request be forwarded to the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committee for the preparation of a draft Pastoral Scheme. This

was approved by the Synod nem con. (The DAMASCUS cluster comprises the parishes of Drayton, Appleford, Milton, Sutton Courtenay and Steventon.)

The fourth Meeting of the Synod was held at Christ Church, at which the main item of Business on 24 November was the allocation of Parish Share for 2017.

One of the annual responsibilities of the Synod is the allocation of the Parish Share among the churches. As in previous years the Deanery Share Group was convened by the new Treasurer to review the Share allocation formula and make recommendations to the Synod. Two meetings of the group were held during the summer, and a report given to September Synod. The main issue to be resolved was whether to continue the transition formula used in previous years, or to move to the final allocation.

The issue was finally decided at the November meeting, at which Synod voted to continue the transition. This was the main item of business at the meeting, which also marked the retirement of Revd Richard Zair as Area Dean. The meeting thanked Richard for his work during his term. A new Area Dean will take office in 2017.

Andrew R. Birks

6.14 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon

Julia Bishop

Staff changes

Following Tim Davies' long term illness, Keith Dunnett has taken over at Christchurch and Kath and Phil Cooke at Long Furlong.

Rebecca Peters is now the minister at Peachcroft.

Mary Williamson is the curate at St Helen's, concentrating on work with older people.

Jane Carter has left the Salvation Army, but her replacement has not yet been appointed.

Projects supported by the CiA

The CiA has continued to support a number of community projects and working groups, as follows:

35 Ock Street offers refreshments, a listening ear, and meeting rooms for local groups and agencies; these include family support work, local charities, CiA- supported groups such as Back to 35 (in liaison with Age UK) and Archway (for lonely people), as well as the work of the Abingdon Baptist Church.

The Abingdon Bridge works with young people in liaison with the local police and other community groups.

Abingdon Street Pastors care for, listen to and help people in Abingdon town centre late at night on Saturdays every week. They are well received by the police and local authorities. Further Street Pastors and Prayer Pastors need to be recruited from our churches.

The Christian Aid group in Abingdon organised many activities over the year, including carol singing in the market square, a new year sponsored walk, a market

square sale, the house-to-house collection in Christian Aid Week and themed evenings.

The weekly **Christian Forum** column in the Herald series of newspapers has continued under the direction of the CiA Administrator Debra Mcknight.

The Church Twinning group continues to build links between the churches of our twin towns.

The DESIRE network of youth and schools workers works in Abingdon secondary schools through lunch clubs, assemblies and lessons.

Experience Easter, organised by Trinity Learning has been running since 2010, enabling children from local schools to explore the Easter story through reflective activities.

Prayer Spaces in schools have been in great demand, and the equipment (which is provided in part by CiA) is used very regularly. A reflective prayer space was set up in the community shop in Abingdon town centre at both Easter and Christmas.

Communication: The CiA News and website have continued under the direction of the CiA Administrator, Debra Mcknight, and the Christian Focus magazine under the direction of the editor, Ben Jeapes, with assistance from Margaret Langsford and others.

United activities 2016:

January

Christian Aid ran the annual **New Year's Day walk**; and a fundraising dinner for the Malaria in Nigeria appeal.

The **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** was marked by three events:

The **Annual Quiz** raised £219 for the Abingdon Passion Play.

A **United Service** was held at St Edmund's Church.

Midday Prayers each weekday at St Nicolas' Church, led by clergy from CiA member churches.

The **Annual Abingdon Alpha Launch** took place at the Spice Valley restaurant with a talk by Simon Pinchbeck, a former Metropolitan Police officer. Following this, **Alpha courses** took place in six of the CiA member churches.

February

CiA Lent Lectures took place at All Saints on Dave Perry's passion narrative of St Mark's Gospel.

March

The **Women's World Day of Prayer** was marked with a service at St Helen's Church, with the material this year coming from the Christian women of Cuba.

The second **Abingdon Passion Play** took place in Abingdon Market Place.

A **shoe cleaning event** took place again **on Maundy Thursday** in Abingdon Market place, led by Ed Evans of Abingdon Community Church and Clare Simpson of St Edmund's.

On **Good Friday**, there was a **procession of witness** through the town followed by a service in St Nicolas Church led by Revd Paul Goodliff.

Experience Easter was hosted by Trinity Learning, and many of the Abingdon schools brought children through to understand more of what Easter means to Christians.

The prayer space team organised a reflective space in the community shop in the precinct.

April

Church Twinning organised a visit to Argentan, Germany.

Christian Listeners hosted two new modules on effective and applied listening practice.

May

Christian Aid week included a Christian Aid Service at All Saints Church, a sale in the market square, as well as the door-to-door collection.

June

Various churches worked together to represent the CiA at the **Fun in the Park** event. The Vineyard Church supported the **South Abingdon Play Day** event.

September

35 Ock Street celebrated its 20th anniversary.

October

Father Phil Carroll led the **Michaelmas fair service** in town.

November

The **Annual Bereavement Service** was organised in conjunction with local funeral directors and held at St Helen's Church, led by Revd Dr Charles Miller. A donation of £278.80 was sent to Christian Aid for the Haiti appeal.

Several activities, including short concerts, children's crafts, various stalls, task groups displays, refreshments, were hosted at St Nics again as part of the **Abingdon Extravaganza**.

December

Church Twinning organised a visit to Schongau, Germany.

Christian Aid organised **carol singing at the pre-Christmas Farmers' Market** with contributions going toward their Christmas Appeal.

The prayer space team organised a reflective space in the community shop in the precinct, where members of the public could reflect on the meaning of Christmas.

Finance

The balance at 31 Dec 2016 was £4141.24, in line with the decision to hold no more than one year's salaries and associated costs in reserve.

The expenditure for Community Projects is normally funded by church donations indicating that only a small balance in hand is necessary. There is a commitment of £6400 as detailed below for the three years 2015-2017:

- The Abingdon Bridge £2500 a year for their work with disadvantaged young people
- DESIRE youth network £1000 a year to help run schools weeks and larger events
- Prayer spaces in schools £500 a year to help fund resources needed for their work
- Abingdon Street Pastors £1000 a year to fund their ongoing help for people out at night
- Experience Easter £750 a year to help school children and their teachers explore the Easter story
- 35 Ock Street £500 a year for their work as a meeting place for church and the community.
- Back to 35 £150 a year for their work providing a place for retired people to meet

Requests for member churches' annual contributions for 2018-2020 will be issued at the end of March and grants will be paid out in May.

Officers

The Church in Abingdon Governing Body recorded thanks to all its officers for all their work in 2016:

Debra McKnight (Administrator) Linda King (Treasurer) Pastor Ed Evans (GB Chair)

The Finance Committee: Ruth Baker (convenor) Margaret Langsford, Brian Mansfield, Celia Smith.

7 Nominations, Elections and Appointments

7.5 Stewards

8.00am : Mrs J Hobbs, Mrs J Lawrence and Mr B Tonks

11.15am: Mr A Coker, Dr A Colborne, Mr D Dawswell, Miss K Doney, Mrs J Fishpool, Mrs E Currey, Mr G Currey, Mrs E Hallas, Mr I Hallas, Mr N Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs H Hyde, Mr D Howard, Mr T Oates, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond