

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2018

Monday 9 April 2018, at 7:30pm in St Nicolas' Church.

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 - 8.2 Election of THREE DCC members to serve until 2021
(*One member retiring plus two vacancies*)
 - 8.3 Nomination of TWO PCC representatives to serve until 2019 & 2021
(*One member retiring plus existing vacancy*)
 - 8.4 Appointment of Church-in-Abingdon representative(s)
 - 8.5 Approve the nominations of stewards
9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest (Chairman's discretion)
10. The Team Vicar's Address.

E Hallas. Acting Hon. Sec.

**Minutes of the Annual district Church Meeting held
on Monday March 27 2017 in St Nicolas Church.**

Present: The Team Rector, The Team Vicar, Dr A Birks, Mrs J Bishop, Dr H Bishop, Mrs P Burren, Mr J Burren, Mrs E Coker, Mrs E Currey, Mr T G Currey, Mrs E Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mr D Howard, Mrs M Hoskins, Mr A Hoskins, Mrs H Hyde, Mrs J Lawrence, Miss P Randles, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond, Mr J A Richmond, Mr J Smith, Dr J Smith, Mr R Smith.

1. **Welcome.** The Team Vicar, The Revd Paul Smith, as Chairman of the meeting, welcomed those attending and began with prayer based on Psalm 127 v1:

Unless the Lord builds the house,
the builders labour in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.

2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Mr A Colborne, Mrs S Henderson, Mrs J Hicks. Dr G Lewis, Dr J Lewis, Mrs B Randles, Mrs A Smith
3. The **Minutes of the 2016** Meeting were approved, with no amendments, Proposed: Mrs J Bishop, seconded Mr T Richmond, passed nem con.
4. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere.
5. **Electoral Roll.** The St Nicolas section of the Parish Electoral Roll was presented. The roll stood at 70; during 2016/17 5 names had been added and 3 removed – a net increase of 2.
6. **Financial Report.** The Hon. Treasurer, Dr A Birks, presented the accounts for the year ending December 2016 – 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 as a charity St Nicolas' used charity accounting, accounting separately for:

- un-restricted / general funds available for the general purposes of the Church.
- restricted funds eg Blacknall which may only be spent in accordance with the donors' wishes. This also includes funds raised for a specific purpose, identified at the time of fundraising.
- designated funds which the Church / DCC has allocated for specific purposes, not available for day-to-day running without prior consideration,
- endowment funds where the church had the benefit of the income generated, but could not touch the capital sums.

His report would concentrate on the church's General Funds as it is these over which there was most flexibility and where most concerns lie.

Dr Birks reminded those present that the 2017 agreed budget had allowed for a deficit of £7,100. In the event the actual deficit on the year was for £3,689, before investment

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gains. (2015 showed a surplus of £10,038 thanks mainly to a single donation of £10,000 plus gift aid).

The better than budgeted outcome was due to a combination of a deanery share rebate, the receipt of previously unprovisioned gift aid, and a reduction in costs due to the lack of a permanent Organist / Director of Music. Unrealised investment gains resulted in a net increase of £778 over 2016.

However, Dr Birks reported that unrestricted income fell 26% over 2015, and pledged giving was down 9%. Annual expenditure had been largely in line with budget, with unrestricted expenditure down 10%, due to a reduction in expenditure on Donations to Missions and Charities and salary costs for a DoM. The Parish Share had fallen slightly in 2016, but would increase in 2017.

Maintenance expenditure in the year, both small value routine work, and the more major item of cleaning and repainting the bell frame, had largely been paid for from restricted funds. The Blacknall income (restricted to expenditure on the Fabric & Fittings of the Church) was £13,569 in 2016 (£12,339 in 2015).

There had been unrealised gains in investment value of both the general and endowment funds.

In summary, the outcome had been better than anticipated, but a deficit was budgeted for 2017, and the church needed to continue to focus on restoring a balanced budget.

Asked about the Stewardship Campaign launched in February, Dr Birks commented that 17 replies had been received to date. These pledged an increase in regular giving of £1,680 over a full year (including Gift Aid). In addition one off donations of £738 had also been received. A generous and welcome response.

Dr J Smith asked about the designated Donations Fund showing in the accounts. Dr Birks explained that this was a change in accounting policy for accruals, whereby the backlog of donations allocated by the church but not yet paid was shown as a designated fund rather than a debt to increase transparency.

As Treasurer he had inherited a backlog, which was slowly being addressed with due regard to church finances and cash flow.

Members present flagged a concern that money pledged to outside bodies was not being passed on quickly, and asked that the Treasurer take action on this.

It was noted that the amounts concerned were included in the accounts, so were not an unrecorded future liability.

Dr Smith also noted that keeping St Nicolas open, as a sign of Christian presence in the town, was a cost to St Nicolas. Should this be partly funded by the PCC?

Members present indicated agreement with this sentiment.

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The Rector asked about St Nicolas' Endowment Funds. The Treasurer explained that all St Nicolas' endowment income is restricted.

The Abingdon Church Lands fund is a 17th Century fund generating income for the maintenance of the fabric of the church. The income covered much of the routine maintenance of the building.

There was a further restricted endowment for Altar Linen, and the income was used appropriately.

Dr Miller also suggested that the appointment of a Stewardship Recorder to work with the Treasurer, could help recover Gift Aid in a timely manner.

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

7 Other Reports.

7.1 Statistics 2016

Funerals: 1

Memorial Services: 0

Weddings: 1

Baptisms: 1 / Thanksgiving Service: 0

7.2 The Church Wardens' Report was noted.

7.3 Young Peoples Activities Report was noted.

7.4 The Fabric Report was noted.

It was reported that the long term plan was to get a set of stacking chairs to replace the pews and existing occasional seating. In the short term chairs were borrowed from the neighbouring Music Centre when needed.

A Faculty request for the work to Toilet Block and Churchyard had been submitted to the DAC. Formal Planning Approval would also be needed. Fundraising would follow on outline permission to proceed.

7.5 The Donations Committee Report was noted.

7.6 The Report on the Choir and Music was noted.

7.7 The Report on Church Helpers was noted.

Mr Richmond noted that Mr Dick Barnes was now withdrawing from his roles at the 8am Communion and Friday Morning Prayer. It was agreed that the Secretary should write thanking Mr Barnes for his years of dedicated service.

It was noted that Mr P Rast Lindsell would be taking over drawing up the Service assistants' rotas from April.

7.8 The Report on the Flowers was noted.

7.9 The Report on the Churchyard Garden was noted.

7.10 The Bellringing Report was noted.

7.11 The Report on The Window was noted.

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

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

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

It was reported that with Revd Tim Davies' continuing illness, Revd Keith Dunnett had taken day-to-day responsibility for the Parish of North Abingdon, although Mr Davies remained Team Vicar.

The possibility of inviting preachers from PNA to participate in AoT services was aired.

The Team Vicar expressed thanks to all who had written reports, and to all those who contributed to the life of the Church throughout the year.

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments.

8.1 Church Wardens.

Mr Paul Rast-Lindsell – proposed Mr A Richmond, seconded Mrs E Currey

Mrs E Hallas, whose name had been proposed, had now served six years as Warden, and further years service were discouraged under the Churchwardens' Measure of 2001. Her name was therefore withdrawn. She was thanked for her years in post.

Mr P Rast-Lindsell's name would go forward for election at the Abingdon-on-Thames APCM.

Subsequent to the meeting, Mr A Coker, who had not been present at the meeting, was Proposed by Mrs E Coker and Seconded by Mr P Rast-Lindsell. His nomination was circulated to the congregation and was accepted to go forward to the APCM.

8.2 DCC Members to serve until 2020:

There were three nominations in advance:

Mrs Hildegard Hyde	proposed Mrs J Bishop, seconded Mrs E Hallas
Mrs Emma Coker,	proposed Mr P Rast-Lindsell, seconded Mrs E Currey
Mr D Howard	proposed Mrs H Mafabi, seconded Dr A Birks

8.3 PCC Representatives.:

Dr Hugh Bishop (to 2020)	proposed Mrs H Mafabi, seconded Dr A Birks
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8.4 Deanery Synod Representatives.

Dr A Birks	proposed Mr P Rast-Lindsell, seconded Mrs E Hallas
Mrs E Hallas	proposed Miss P Randles, seconded Mr J Burren

8.5 Church-in-Abingdon Representative.

Mrs Julia Bishop.

8.6 Stewards.

8.00am: Mr E Blanks, 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

9. Other matters of Parochial or General Interest. *None taken*

10 The Team Vicar's Address.

Revd Smith started by thanking everyone for their contribution to the life of the St Nicolas' community, singling out especially

the Churchwardens

the Verger, Mr Jim Barker

Mr Currey for his work on the rotas and smooth running of services

Mr & Mrs Hoskins for their many years' service in particular recently keeping the external notice boards up to date and publicising our regular and special Services. They would be much missed as they started to withdraw from these activities.

He noted that worship in St Nicolas' in its variety and music was both reverent and creative, commenting particularly on two stand out events of 2016:

The Service of Evensong commemorating the 90th Birthday of Her Majesty the Queen had been both distinctive and memorable. It had been good to welcome the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and Mayor to this, and to have a joint choir from the Parishes of Abingdon-on-Thames and Radley.

The Choral BCP Evensong for St Edmund of Abingdon had been the launch of an initiative to promote interest in St Edmund both in Abingdon and wider afield. Members of the St Edmund choir had joined the Parish choir and Fr Jamie McGrath (Our Lady and St Edmund of Abingdon) had led the prayers.

However, returning to his theme for the day (Psalm 127 v1), he challenged members that 'The builders of this house are long gone, we are the builders of today. The Lord builds his house with those who worship in it'. We are not here to just 'keep the show on the road'.

As a community St Nicolas' needs to clear of our identity, working with appropriate openness and reciprocity with the three churches of the Parish.

We also need to be mindful of the balance between being a building and a house of prayer.

11 The Team Rector's Address.

The Team Rector urged members present not to consider 'jobs which need to be done' but rather 'ministries which can be performed'.

We need to encourage everyone to get as involved as much as possible, even if just for a short time.

Break for refreshments

12 Looking Forward

Paul Rast Lindsell circulated a questionnaire seeking congregation members views on the current position of St Nicolas, this would also be circulated to those not able to attend the ADCM.

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Respondents were asked to comment on what they valued about St Nicolas', what should be built upon, what amended. The responses would be used to guide future planning.

Looking particularly at the new style 'Third Sunday Services' there was some very positive feedback. (*One of the best things to happen for a while*).

It was, perhaps, a pity that more was not offered for small children, but this demographic was not well represented in the St Nicolas' congregation at present.

Some of the more modern music introduced at these services was new to the congregation and difficult to access on one hearing. Thought would be given to how this could be improved.

St Nicolas would be taking part in the Archbishop's 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative in 2017, in partnership with St Michael's and Trinity Church. Members present encouraged even greater collaboration with other denominations and the Parish of North Abingdon.

Thanking everyone for coming, the Team Vicar closed the meeting with prayer

M E Hallas, May 2017

Reports to the 2018 Annual Meeting of St Nicolas Church

4 Team Vicars Report

Introduction

In this report I lay down a few reflections and facts on the year that has passed. It wasn't an entirely straightforward year, when suddenly, we were all shocked and saddened by the Team Rector's heart attack and subsequent complications during the summer. I want to pay tribute to all those who worked so hard, Wardens and Clergy, to more than 'keep the show on the road'. It was a time of challenge, but also a time of enrichment, which calls for gratitude for the way in which people pulled together to continue the work of mission and ministry throughout the parish. I personally owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mary Williamson who was a source of stability, calm and effectiveness; and to Jane Baun who, following her sabbatical, returned and worked hard with us alongside her demanding role at Ripon College Cuddesdon. As Team Vicar in the parish I observed a coming together of people who were willing, supportive and loving in all they did. Thank you all. What I say pertains to the whole parish.

It was a privilege to minister to Charles during his time of illness when either Mary or I visited with the Sacrament on a weekly basis. We were all delighted that he made such progress following some convalescence at Burrowswood Christian Hospital, that he was well enough to begin a phased return on All Saints Sunday.

My own health took an unexpected turn when I was diagnosed with an infected and inflamed Gall Bladder in October. Surgery took place on St Andrew's Day, but at Christmas, I was taken very ill with pain and jaundice and it was discovered following hospital admission that there were complications. Efforts to remove a solitary stone failed twice and further surgery has had to be planned. This has caused me great frustration and instability in terms of working, so thanks again to those who have energetically and generously worked to cover my absence.

Fabric Initiatives and Building Workings Group

A full account on Fabric and the projects for the hopeful enhancement of our facilities is contained in this report. I want to pay particular thanks to Andrew Coker (Warden) for the initiatives both supported and begun, and to Julia Bishop (Chair, Buildings Working Group), for the progress made. Such initiatives are not easy, and can be complex, requiring a strong perseverance which they have visibly shown. So thank you to them both.

Visitors to St Nicolas

Firstly, I want to say thank you to Verger, Jim Barker, who keeps the church open for a short time on week days. He has a demanding role in both welcoming and looking after visitors, as well as cleaning the church. Additionally, there have been concerns over the past year about the people who visit us with particular difficulties: primarily those suffering with Mental Health conditions. There have been events which have made the daily opening of the church a concern; and, not least, how we effectively, and above all, safely, welcome and minister to such people. When there have been 'disturbances', the

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police have been called, and I am grateful to the local Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) for the way they have worked with us. I am grateful also to Andrew Coker for working with the PCSO's in ensuring safety over one particular visitor whose behaviour was potentially dangerous towards others and herself.

The physical situation of our building is ideal, even unique, to provide a welcome and ministry to those who wish to visit our historic church, learn of our heritage, and receive hospitality. Our real desire is to continue that. However, I think it is important in the coming year that the DCC continues to work on thinking about what other measures need to be taken for the safety and well-being of all – both visitors, our Verger, and other members of the church.

Looking Forward

Our attendance on a weekly basis is in decline. This is a cause for sadness and concern and the DCC will be working hard in 2018 to address this issue. In addition to a 'brain storming' meeting at the beginning of the year, further work needs to be done. There must be discussion and thinking which is fully rooted in the mission of God, our corporate and individual lives of prayer, and how we relate to, and work with, the other two churches within the parish. Some very good work has already been done in building relationships across the parish. As a community in St Nic's one of the questions that needs addressing and answering is: 'What is our identity'. This is a question that has been around for sometime, and while it might be very challenging and time consuming to reach some sort of answer, I believe it is something that has an acute urgency.

In the growing sense that we are one Parish, St Nic's has been pleased to host the Ascension Day Eucharist for the Parish, and launch in the Parish the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative from the Archbishops which has been running between Ascension and Pentecost for a few years now. This will continue in 2018.

Finally, we need to address the balance between being a sacred space and house of prayer, and a church which hosts the good events (Abingdon Artists, Cards for Good Causes, Abbey Chamber Concerts) and how these two things can happen more creatively and comfortably in the future. This is not an easy balance to achieve, and has caused some distress among some members. So there is more work to be done.

My exhortation to the Annual Meeting last year 'Unless the Lord builds the house, those who labour, do so in vain' (Ps 127v1) has taken little root. I apologise, and seek forgiveness, for any ways in which I have failed in enabling this to happen. In addition to the extra Sunday events that go on, namely the very good Nourishment in Christ event and the bible study which draws people from three churches, we need to discern what the Spirit is saying about the future. What else will help us grow in faith, share the good news boldly and joyfully, and be a community that will draw others in?

The work of keeping 'a church going', can be tiring and burdensome, and in a relatively small community, fall on the same shoulders. I want to say a wholehearted thank you in particular to our Wardens at St Nicolas', Paul Rast Lindsell and Andrew Coker, and to Eluned Hallas and family in this respect. But, also, I want to say thanks to each of you

who make any contribution, large or small, to the day-to-day working out of our common life. It is hugely appreciated by me.

The Revd Paul Smith, Team Vicar

Other Reports

7.1 Statistics 2016

Baptisms: 3

Funerals: 0

Memorial Services: 0

Weddings: 1

7.2 Church Wardens' Report

Andrew Coker

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 (Matins) 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. 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.

The '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. 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.

The DCC will be looking at ways to increase attendance and a special meeting is being held in April to discuss proposals

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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.

Activities:

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 week of Christian Unity prayer meetings were held in the church and had a consistent attendance. The Ascension day service was again held in the church as were events for Thy Kingdom Come. This year for the first time there was an Animal Blessing service, hosted in the church

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 third time, 'Cards for Good Causes', who were once again exceptionally pleased to use St Nicolas with its better access for visitors. Plans are being agreed to make this a more manageable arrangement in 2018 and for the stock to be more discretely stored on Sundays

The weekly 'market' of home-grown fruit, flowers and crafts is held 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.

Our contribution to the Abingdon Extravaganza was a considered to be a success and again plans are in place to make it an even better event in 2018.

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 but through the good efforts of Andre Birks less so. Plans for having more Gift Aid are being explored by Andrew. The accounts were closely monitored throughout the year.

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.

7.3 Young People's Activities

Eluned Hallas

It has been a delight to welcome young families to church. Our few regular young members are always very welcoming to newcomers, and it is always a joy to see the enthusiasm with which they run into church. Their work often decorates the south notice board.

As usual our Crib Service was entirely led by our young (and not so young former) members. The Nativity Scene in the South Porch (thanks to the Cokers) is always a great advertisement for this.

We thank all the congregation for your week by week welcome, prayerful support of and interest in the activities of our young members.

7.4 Fabric

Andrew Coker

2017 was quite a busy year in terms of the fabric of St Nicolas.

Work on the stonework continues with repairs to the buttress completed and parts of the Norman arch west door removed for re-carving. At the time of writing this has yet to be completed.

The organ blower ceased working in late October. It is thought that it is the original blower installed in the 1950's and had therefore done very good service. It was replaced in February 2018.

The reordered west end of church continued to be well used and much appreciated. Seven pews were removed and stored at St Michael's with much thanks to them for their generous support. All the pews are now sold and chairs are being ordered in their place.

Because of electrical outages caused by SSE there were various issues with electrical devices in the church such as some lights and the main doors. These were resolved by SSE at no extra charge. After which electrical testing was carried out.

Work on the Blacknall aisle is currently not being dealt with. During 2018 a full plan will be drawn up and presented to the DCC. In consultation with the town council, now owners of the memorial glass taken out of the church in 1880, it has been agreed in principle that the glass can be restored to the windows. A full proposal will be drawn up in 2018.

The heating system will also need to be replaced in 2018 and quotes are being sought.

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. Registration of the church and grounds is also being sought by the diocese to enable the church to apply for various grants.

Finally time has stood still in the market place as the town council have yet to mend their clock on the west front. No change there then.

7.5 Donations

Jenny Smith

The Donations Committee has not met as the DCC was unable to allocate any money for charities from the 2017 budget beyond the St Nicolas donation to CiA for CiA sponsored projects and the cost of the "It's Your Move" books for pupils at St Nicolas School.

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.

In addition at St Nicolas:

- There were collections in all three parish churches towards the *DEC appeal for the East Africa famine* in April. St Nicolas' congregation members contributed £320.75.
- Our *Harvest Collection* in 2017 was £133 and went to Christian Aid. 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.
- In October a collection was taken at the Animal Blessing Service for the *Oxford Animal Sanctuary*. This raised £53
- Our Christmas 2017 Collection was £415 and went to *the Children's Society*.
- *Foodbank* support has continued weekly.
- We were also able to host a fundraising event for another charity during the year, taking advantage of our position on the Market Place.
- We were also able to host "Cards for Good Causes", taking advantage of our position on the Market Place. They make a donation to the church, but also raise funds for their own causes.

Congregation member Jan Lawrence runs a *Traidcraft* stall once a month (sales directly support the work of Traidcraft, plus we are able to make a donation back to Traidcraft from surplus every year - which in 2017 was £150). In March 2017 we hosted the 2017 Big Brew Coffee Morning in aid of Traidcraft.

As our current financial position does not allow us to make donations directly to charities we propose about four opportunities in the year for us to make special donations. We will continue to have our Christmas collections for the Children's Society and a collection at Harvest Festival for hunger in the third world. We will try to arrange perhaps two other collections in the year either linked to special dates e.g. Refugee Sunday or Bible Sunday, or linked to a speaker from a local charity or charity dealing with an international problem or in response to a national appeal as we did last year for the East African famine. We do not propose more than four appeals per year so that we do not get "donor fatigue".

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.

7.6 Choir and Music

Eluned Hallas

Music is an important part of our worship as witnessed by the number of comments we get when things go especially well (or sometimes where there is a blip). Unfortunately we have still not been successful in recruiting a permanent Director of Music / Organist. However, we have been greatly blessed by the support of many musicians (local and not so local) who have played for us over the year, and we thank them all.

We also welcome and thank the many singers who have augmented our choir for special services throughout the year - particularly Easter, Ascension Day and Christmas. It has been especially good to have the generous support of the Directors of Music and choirs at our sister churches - St Helen's & St Michael's.

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.

7.7 Ministry of Welcome: Stewards and other Duties **Paul Rast-Lindsell**

At our services in St Nicolas, there are a few roles that are undertaken by members of the congregation. These comprise of Sacristan, Steward, Reader, Intercessor and Chalice Assistant.

In the past year three more people were added to the list of volunteers. St Nicolas is blessed to now have over 20 people who regularly carry out these duties and we are very grateful for the time and effort they put into doing so.

On a week to week basis, it is sometimes difficult to find enough people to fill all the necessary roles – especially Intercessors and Chalice Assistants. It would also be beneficial for us to have an additional Sacristan as this job currently rests with only two. If you feel that you may be able to help in any way, please talk to Fr. Paul, the Churchwardens or Eluned Hallas.

7.8 Flowers

Emma Coker

Many thanks to our small but dedicated team of flower arrangers at St Nicolas who take great pleasure in decorating the church for its three main festivals and throughout the year. With so many visitors to the church we hope our efforts add to the warm welcome and show that the church is loved. Flower arranging often feels like another form of ministry as it encourages conversations with visitors and parishioners while being a therapeutic activity for those who participate. A highlight this last year was contributing to the flower festival at St Michael's which was great fun and helped forge new friendships between our two churches.

Church flower arrangements also enable those who wish to make a donation in memory of loved ones to contribute towards something that is enjoyed by the church community. We are always looking to expand our team and no experience is necessary as we all learn from each other.

7.9 Churchyard garden

Hugh Bishop

The bay tree has reached a size that requires professional pruning. As a closed churchyard, maintenance is the responsibility of the local authority. Andrew Coker is in discussions with the council and we hope to have the tree pruned in the near future.

7.10 Bell ringing

Hugh Bishop

Sunday service ringing has been regular throughout the year and practices have been well attended. We have a regular visitor on Sunday mornings, Eric Peberdy, the son of Rebecca, one of our ringers. Eric was born on the 31st of July 2017 and Rebecca was ringing up to a few days before his birth!

The recent (January 2018) well publicised accident to a learner at St Helens' has led us to review safety in the tower. In general, we have adopted the same procedures as St Helens', but there are two areas that need attention. It is good practice to lock the door to the bell chamber. This is not practicable at present as the door has to be left open to allow the bells to be heard in the ringing chamber. Also the ropes should be secured when anyone is working on the bells. Whites have been asked to come up with proposals to address these problems.

7.11 Extravaganza

Julia Bishop

The proceeds from the Extravaganza were as follows:

Cakes and Cookies	£255
Bric-a-brac	£ 87
Raffle/history books	£157
Books	£ 75
Toys	£ 45
Tombola	£ 97
CDs etc	£ 25
Refreshments	£ 59
Donations and others	£ 19
Total	£819

Although the total sum raised was in line with recent years, this was largely due to Emma and Harriet selling large numbers of cookies in the Market Place. An Extravaganza Group (led by Andrew Coker) have met since, and agreed that the event needs to be re-launched to encourage more children and young families to come into the church. Work in progress.

7.12 St Nicolas DCC

Eluned Hallas, Secretary

Membership:

Church Wardens

Andrew Coker	From April 2017
Paul Rast-Lindsell (Eluned Hallas	From April 2016 To April 2017)

Representatives on the Abingdon Deanery Synod

Andrew Birks	Re -Elected 2017 to serve until 2020
Eluned Hallas	Elected 2017 to serve until 2020
(Pauline Burren	Elected 2014 to serve until 2017)

Representatives on the Abingdon Parochial Church Council

John Burren	Elected 2015 to serve until 2018
Hugh Bishop	Re-Elected 2017 to serve until 2020

Members of St. Nicolas' Church Council

Anne Smith	Elected 2016 to serve until 2018
Julia Bishop	Elected 2016 to serve until 2019
Jenny Fishpool	Elected 2016 to serve until 2019
Hilda Mafabi	Elected 2016 to serve until 2019
Emma Coker	Elected 2017 to serve until 2020
David Howard	Re-Elected 2017 to serve until 2020
Hildegard Hyde	Elected 2017 to serve until 2020

Church in Abingdon Representatives: Julia Bishop

Appointments made by DCC:

Treasurer: Andrew Birks
Secretary: Eluned Hallas
Safeguarding: Katie Doney
Health & Safety: Paul Rast-Lindsell

The DCC & Standing Committee met regularly throughout the year to discuss the maintenance and enhancement of the church fabric (reported elsewhere); church services and other events; inter-parish, inter-CiA and community co-operation; and finance (see separate report). Specific areas of concern during the last year have been issues around keeping the church open as a daily witness to the town, and future priorities for church development.

7.13 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC Erin McElhatton, Secretary to the PCC

The PCC of the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames met five times during 2017 and early 2018 and discussed the following topics:

- Review of the Pastoral Scheme governing DCC
- Report from the New Housing Welcome Group
- Energy Audit
- Data Protection Policy

Additional topics of discussion by the PCC during 2017 included the appointment of Dr Peter Foster as Director of Music and the appointment of an independent examiner/auditor.

At the November meeting a Safeguarding Report was given by Maria Gibson and the Safeguarding Policy was reviewed. During this meeting Dr A R Birks, Parish Treasurer, also presented the provisional outturn forecasts for 2017 and the proposed budgets for the three churches (St Helen's, St Michael's and St Nicolas') for 2018.

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.

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

7.14 Proceedings of the Abingdon Deanery Synod Carol Worthington

Abingdon Deanery Synod meets four times a year, usually in February, June, September and November. Meetings are hosted voluntarily by individual churches within the Deanery, who are all entitled to send both clergy and lay representatives to Synod. In our parish of Abingdon on Thames, we are well represented, with eight lay members, two of whom serve on the Standing Committee, where we also have a clergy member: details are given later.

Synod meetings follow a similar pattern:

- Opening worship
- Speaker or presentation on a topic of common interest
- Business, usually concerning items such as clergy changes in parishes and financial matters, particularly the Parish Share (every church's contribution to the communal 'pot' to pay for salaries of clergy and other church employees). The Abingdon Deanery also sets aside money for Mission Grants, which parishes can apply for to help with outreach to the local community.
- News from individual parishes is circulated, often about successes in particular outreach initiatives supporting the Deanery Mission Action Plan (MAP), to which all parishes contribute.
- The meetings always conclude with prayer.

2017 was a year when many changes took place, following the resignations of the Area Dean, Lay Chair and several members of the standing committee, including treasurer

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2018

and secretary, at the end of 2016. The first meeting in February, therefore, started on a sombre note, but was immensely cheered by the visiting speaker, the Venerable Archdeacon Judy French, who gave an entertaining description of ‘What does an Archdeacon really do?’, summing up that she is a servant of servants and her role is to serve God and the people.

We were further cheered when the new treasurer confirmed that the Deanery goals and targets for the 2016 Parish Share had been met, - and the new acting secretary was introduced! Thanks were given for answered prayers and there was a feeling of optimism for the future, particularly the up-coming Deanery Away-Day.

The Deanery Away day on March 11th 2017 had been planned so that the Deanery Mission Action Plan could be evaluated and updated. It was a well-attended and successful day, in which missional priorities were intensely debated: finally, five key priorities were arrived at:

1. Developing work with children and young people.
2. Engaging with people in new housing developments.
3. Offering ways for communities to experience the church.
4. Developing our work with elderly people and vulnerable adults.
5. Deepening our life with God.

At the June meeting, the new parish representatives were introduced, and the new Lay Chair, Secretary and Standing Committee were elected; the new MAP priorities were accepted and adopted. With so many parishes affected by new housing developments, the presentation was given by speakers from Long Furlong church, who told the history of how they had ‘planted’ that church from Christchurch in the early 1990’s, when the Long Furlong housing development was under construction. With MAP priority number 2 in mind, this proved to be a fascinating story, and one to be kept in mind by parishes currently facing a similar situation with new housing developments.

This meeting turned out to be a turning point in the fortunes of the Deanery Synod. The new secretary completely re-organised and revitalised the website and the new Area Dean, Lay Chair and Standing Committee became very pro-active in leadership, being helped by up to date communications to avoid unnecessary delay in making decisions. Parishes are being encouraged to apply for mission grants to support community projects based on the MAP priorities. One has recently been used at St Helen’s to help fund the setting up of ‘Open the Book’ assemblies in a parish school.

The development of work with elderly people and vulnerable adults has also been boosted by the expertise of the Revd Mary Williamson at St Helens, who led the presentation at the November meeting.

The MAP is becoming a focus for future development in the Deanery Synod and much good work is going on, in outreach to local communities. There is also good news about the Parish Share – there was a surplus last year and every parish is eligible for a rebate! With future finances in mind, the Standing Committee planned a presentation about a new scheme for parish giving for the first meeting in 2018.

If anyone wishes to know about the activities of the Deanery Synod in more depth, look on the website: www.abingdondeanery.org.uk.

7.15 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon

Julia Bishop

1. Organisations financially supported by the CiA, the CiA supports the following organisations financially:

- The Abingdon Bridge £2000 a year for their work with disadvantaged young people
- DESIRE youth network £1000 a year to help run schools' weeks and larger events
- 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 to support 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
- Thrive South Abingdon £1000 a year for their work reaching out to young people alongside other youth organisations in the area
- Passion Play in 2019 There was also a request for a one-off grant of £1000 in 2018. This will be collected separately as an additional contribution from churches as they feel appropriate.

2. Other Task Groups and projects associated with the CiA in 2017

- The Christian Aid Group organised many activities, including carol singing in the Market Place, the New Year sponsored walk, a Market Place sale, and a house to house collection.
- Prayer spaces in seven local primary schools and Fitzharrys Secondary school.
- The Weekly Christian Forum column in the Herald newspapers organised by Debra McKnight, who would welcome more contributors.
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity events in January
- Alpha launch in January
- Lent Lectures in March
- World day of Prayer in March
- Shoe cleaning event on Maundy Thursday and procession through town and Service on Good Friday
- Pre-election hustings in May
- Christian Aid week in May
- "Thy Kingdom Come" national prayer initiative
- Fun in the Park and South Abingdon Play Day event, both in June

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- Church Twinning visit to Sint Niklaas in June and group from Argentan to Abingdon in November
- Michaelmas fair service in town accompanied by Abingdon Town band in October
- Annual Bereavement Service in November, with proceeds to Sobell House.

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments

8.5 Stewards

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

11.15am: Mrs E Coker, Mr A Coker, Dr A Colborne, Ms D Curry-Lowe, 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 A Joinson, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond