

Saint Nicolas Annual District Church Meeting 2022

Wednesday 30 March 2022, at 7pm in Church

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2021 ADCM (*attached*) p3
3. Matters arising from those Minutes
4. Team Vicar's Report p9
5. Statement concerning the St Nicolas School Education Trust
6. Presentation of the Electoral Roll for Saint Nicolas Church
7. Financial Report (*separate document*)
8. Other Reports (*attached*)
 - 8.1 Statistics p11
 - 8.2 Church Warden p11
 - 8.3 Fabric p12
 - 8.4 Safeguarding p13
 - 8.5 Donations p13
 - 8.6 Bell ringing p14
 - 8.7 The Church Garden p14
 - 8.8 House Group p14
 - 8.9 St Nicolas DCC p15
 - 8.10 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC p16
 - 8.11 Proceedings of the Abingdon Deanery Synod p17
 - 8.12 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon p18
9. Nominations, Elections and Appointments
 - 9.1 Nomination of TWO church wardens.
 - 9.2 Election of THREE DCC members to serve until 2024
Election of THREE DCC members to serve until 2025
Election of ONE DCC member to serve until 2023
 - 9.3 Nomination of a PCC representative to serve 2024
 - 9.4 Appointment of Church-in-Abingdon representative(s)
 - 9.5 Approve the nominations of stewards p19
10. Other matters of parochial or general church interest (Chairman's discretion)

Team Vicar's Address

E Hallas. Acting Hon. Sec.

Saint Nicolas Church
Minutes of the Annual District Church Meeting held
on Monday 12 April 2021 via Zoom

Present: Revd P A Smith (Chairman), Dr A Birks, Dr H Bishop, Mrs J Bishop, Mrs C Cannon Brookes, Mrs S Cox, Mr R Cox, Mr D Dawswell, Mrs E Currey, Mr T G Currey, Mrs J Fishpool, Miss A Hallas, Mrs E. Hallas, Miss R Hallas, Mrs S Holligan, Mr P Holligan, Mrs J Lawrence, Dr G Lewis, Mrs H Mafabi, Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr P Penfold, Miss P Randles, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond, Mr J A Richmond, Mrs S Smith, Mr J Smith, Dr J Smith, Mr R Smith

The Team Vicar welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.

1. **Apologies for absence** none received.
2. The **Minutes of the 2020** Meeting, circulated in advance, were Proposed: PRL, Seconded GL and approved, with no amendments, nem con.
3. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere.
4. The **Team Vicar's Report**, previously circulated, was noted.
5. **Electoral Roll.** The St Nicolas' section of the Parish Roll as presented contained 62 names. This was no net change comprising 1 removal by request, 2 losses through death, and 3 transfers within the Parish.
6. **Financial Report.** The Hon. Treasurer, Dr A. Birks, presented the accounts for the year ending December 2020 – with reference to a summary sheet distributed in advance (Appendix 1).

Dr Birks started his report by noting that he would be looking particularly at the general funds as it is these over which there was most flexibility. These cover the general operational income and expenditure of the Church.

The 2020 agreed budget had allowed for a deficit of £10k before the Diocesan rebate. In the event the actual unrestricted deficit on the year was for £5, before unrealised gains on investment. (2019, deficit of £11.4k).

Despite the Covid restrictions income had held up reasonably well, although there was a loss of income from the wall safe, venue hire and fund raising. Expenditure had also been below budget with the Church closed for some time.

Restricted funds had seen a payment of £18k from the Blacknall Charity, plus a rebate on VAT paid in previous years. Costs associated with the ongoing work on the Tower had been assigned to the Blacknall Fund. Restricted Funds at the year end were greater than at the end of 2019.

Total funds at year end, including investments which showed unrealised gains over the year, stood at £203.3k, compared to £194.4k in 2019.

Despite this encouraging year end position, there had been a deficit on general funds over the year, and this would need to be addressed by the DCC going forward.

There were no questions.

Dr Birks was thanked for his report and his work throughout the year. It was noted that he was preparing to hand over his responsibilities in a phased manner, and working in partnership with his successors as Treasurer and Stewardship Recorder.

7 Other Reports.

7.1 Statistics 2020

Baptisms: 0

Funerals: 0

Memorial Services: 0

Weddings: 1

Wedding Blessing: 1

7.2 The Church Wardens' Report was noted, and the Wardens thanked for all their work.

7.3 The Fabric Report was noted.

It was reported that work on the tower delayed by Covid, and while external grant funding was secured, was due to start shortly.

Also, that there were currently NO plans to dispose of the toilet block, and a new approach to refurbishment was being investigated.

7.4 The Safeguarding Report was noted.

7.5 The Donations Committee Report was noted.

7.5 The Bell Ringing Report was noted.

7.6 The Report on the proceedings of the DCC was noted.

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

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

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

The Chairman thanked all contributors for their reports, and their work throughout the year.

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments.

8.1 Church Wardens:

The outgoing wardens were thanked for all their work in support of St Nicolas, and the Parish, during their terms of Office.

There were currently no nominations for Church Warden from St Nicolas.
The Vicar commented that this was clearly not a good position, but that nominations could still be put forward until the date of the APCM.

8.2 DCC Members:

Abielle Hallas (to 2023) Proposed Geoffrey Currey, Seconded Eila Currey
Elected by acclamation

Four elected vacancies remain.

8.3 PCC Representatives:

Gwyneth Lewis (to 2024) Proposed Paul Rast Lindsell, seconded Eluned Hallas
This name would go forward for election at the Abingdon-on-Thames APCM.

One vacancy (to 2022) remained, although the Wardens and the Deanery Synod Representative are ex-Officio members of the PCC.

8.4 Church-in-Abingdon Representative.

Mrs Julia Bishop was willing to continue to represent St Nicolas' (Proposed HNH, Seconded RC, approved by acclamation) and was thanked for her representation on this group.

8.5 Stewards

8.00am: Mrs J Hobbs, Mr R Kirby, Mrs J Lawrence, Mr B Tonks

11.15am: Dr A Colborne, Mr D Dawswell, Mrs J Fishpool, Mrs E Currey,
Mr G Currey, Mrs E Hallas, Mr I Hallas, Mr N Hallas, Mrs E Hancox,
Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr A Joinson, Mrs H Mafabi, Mr P Rast-Lindsell,
Mrs L Richmond

All were elected by acclamation

9. Other matters of parochial or general church interest

PP thanked St Nicolas' for the support provided to the 8am Service during the Covid Pandemic and queried whether the Tower works would affect Services in Church?

The building works will restrict access to church during the week, but Sunday Worship would not be affected.

Thanks were expressed to the Vicar and others, for maintaining worship and community during the pandemic.

10. Team Vicars Address

The Team Vicar noted that the Covid lockdown had been difficult for everyone. Entering lockdown had been quick, the process of unlocking was likely to be slower but more demanding. He reminded those present of the Bishop of Oxford's advice to Ministers and congregations 'be gentle with yourselves and each other, and remember that all things take time' and commended the Bishop's 'Comfortable Words' reflections on Isaiah.

It was regrettable that the Vicar's Sabbatical, originally planned for 2020, had had to be postponed again. It was hoped it would now happen in 2022.

He finished by re-iterating his thanks to all for their support during the year, and closed the meeting with prayer.

St. Nicolas' Church, Abingdon

Financial Report to the Annual Church Meeting 2021

The accounts for the year 2020 (before gains of £5,724 on revaluation of our investments) show a deficit on unrestricted funds of £4,870 (2019: £13,725). The deficit on general fund (excluding designated fund) expenditure is £4,880 (2019: £11,343); there was little activity on designated funds. The situation might be summarized as follows:

	2020 £k	2019 £k
General Income	48.0	51.8
General Expenditure	(53.0)	(63.2)
	(5.0)	(11.4)
Other Income:		
Blacknall Charity	18.1	15.9
Other restricted / designated income	0.6	12.4
Restricted and Designated Expenditure	(10.5)	(9.7)
	3.0	(7.2)

The total funds of the Church at 31st December 2020 were made up as follows:

	2020 £k	2019 £k
General unrestricted funds	31.2	33.0
Designated Funds	28.8	28.7
Restricted funds	100.2	92.2
	160.2	153.9
Endowment funds (we only have use of the income)	43.1	40.5
	203.3	194.4

Income and Expenditure

The year 2020 was unusual owing to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected both the income and outgoings of the church. Thus a comparison with the 2019 out-turn is not really like-for-like, and must be treated with caution. The church was closed for much of the year, so loose plate income and irregular donations fell, and there was a loss of fundraising income. Similarly the closure of the church will have resulted in the reduction of certain categories of expenditure. However, pledged giving (before recoverable tax), remained stable.

Overall, the general unrestricted funds of the church showed a deficit of £4,880, which compares favourably with the expectations of a more typical year.

Regular payments from the Blacknall charity continued, and the amount received in 2020, in respect of the calendar year 2019, was £18,101 (2019: £15,889). In addition, a grant of £329.10 was received from the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme against expenditure in 2019, to cover the VAT.

Parish Share

The gross Parish Share for 2020 was £35,242, 0.8% higher than the 2019 figure of £34,976 before any rebate, while the 1% direct debit discount reduces the monthly payment and the net share. The Parish Share set for 2021 (before any rebate) is £34,181, a reduction of 3%.

Donations

Apart from our contribution to the Church in Abingdon Community Projects and continuing support of St. Nicolas School, no additional sum has been set aside for general donations from unrestricted income in 2020. Nevertheless, special collections raised a total of £494 (plus some potential GASDS); this sum includes £218 raised by the Christmas collections, which following our past practice will be given to the Children's Society.

Building Maintenance

Aside from regular routine items no new work relating to the fabric of the church was undertaken in 2020, although further costs were incurred in connection with the problem with the tower that arose in 2019. These were largely charged to the Blacknall Maintenance Fund, since they relate to the fabric of the church.

Share Values

The stock market has rallied recently, and revaluation of our investments shows an increase in value of £5,724 (2019: 13,717) since the start of the year. Of this, £3,113 (54%) was attributable to the unrestricted funds. The balance of £2,611 relates to the endowment funds, of which we only have use of the income.

Outlook

In October 2019 St. Nicolas adopted a budget for 2020 which (after amendment) projected a deficit of almost £10,000. The effects of the pandemic have of course invalidated the assumptions made, and the out-turn shown here is reassuring in the short term, but this emphasizes the need to take action to reduce the prevalence of significant deficits in the medium term.

A more detailed Statement of Financial Activities and summary Balance Sheet is shown overleaf.

Andrew R. Birks

April 2021

ST NICOLAS' CHURCH, ABINGDON

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES for the year ended 31st December 2020

	<i>General Funds</i> £	<i>Designated Funds</i> £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2019 £
INCOMING RESOURCES							
Incoming resources from donors	39,964	-	39,964	494	-	40,458	44,587
Other voluntary incoming resources	565	-	565	16,721	-	17,286	20,942
Income from investments	1,605	10	1,615	1,320	-	2,936	3,033
Income from charitable & ancillary trading	583	-	583	-	-	583	997
Other income	5,358	-	5,358	-	-	5,358	10,565
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	48,075	10	48,086	18,535	-	66,621	80,124
RESOURCES USED							
Grants	461	-	461	494	-	955	1,348
Church Activities	51,254	-	51,254	10,028	-	61,282	68,819
Costs of Generating Funds	41	-	41	-	-	41	1,521
Governance Costs	1,200	-	1,200	-	-	1,200	1,200
Other expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL RESOURCES USED	52,956	-	52,956	10,522	-	63,478	72,888
NET INCOMING RESOURCES	(4,880)	10	(4,870)	8,013	-	3,143	7,236
Transfer Between Funds	(4,880)	10					
UNREALISED GAINS ON INVESTMENTS	3,113	0	3,113	-	2,611	5,724	13,717
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	(1,767)	10	(1,757)	8,013	2,611	8,867	20,953
Balances brought forward 1.1.2020	33,001	28,729	61,730	92,220	40,473	194,423	173,470
Balances carried forward 31.12.2020	31,234	28,739	59,973	100,233	43,084	203,290	194,423
BALANCE SHEET							
Fixed Assets and Investments	51,489	6,936	58,425	0	43,084	101,509	96,134
CURRENT ASSETS							
Debtors	4,227	5,278	9,505	4,500	0	14,005	22,226
Short term deposits	28,458	13,238	41,696	31,998	0	73,694	73,600
Cash at bank	(37,853)	3,287	(34,565.8)	63,736	0	29,170	13,982
	46,320	28,739	75,059	100,234	43,084	218,377	205,942
LIABILITIES	(15,085)		(15,085)	0	0	(15,085)	(11,514)
TOTAL ASSETS	31,235	28,739	59,974	100,234	43,084	203,292	194,428

Reports to the 2022 Annual Meeting of St Nicolas Church

4 Team Vicar's Report

Introduction

The year of 2021 was not easy as we continued to navigate the pandemic. We began with a difficult winter, straight into a further lockdown, causing more separation and isolation. We were able to benefit from virtual worship, via Zoom, and I am grateful to those who made this possible – especially Eluned and Nick Hallas – and to those from around the clergy team who made their own contributions as officiants. Returning to worship from Palm Sunday, and being able to keep Good Friday and Easter Day within the building was a cause for rejoicing.

With the impressive vaccination programme the force and fear of the pandemic was relieved. We were given a sense of hope of protection from the impact of the virus, and gradually, as the year went on, people became fully vaccinated. The need to remain 'Covid safe' continued, however, and it is a tribute to everyone that this has worked so well. I am deeply grateful to all those who, on a day-to-day basis, bore the extra burden of making this happen.

There is no doubt that since the pandemic hit life has changed beyond recognition and much of our thinking and way of living is very different. It remains true (not least at the time of writing as we see infection rates rising), that we are still in a period of transition and recovery. Our bishops remain clear that taking care of one another in every way: body, mind, and spirit, is paramount. Moreover, that we cannot know the time when recovery for congregations will be. Within each church across the land there will be a different pace of recovery and 'convalescence' as spiritual communities.

Worship

Following on from the above, I simply want to say that having the ability to Zoom our Sunday worship, and to record sermons which are made available each week on our website, has been a great advance in what we offer. This is indeed something which we have 'gained' from the difficult experience of Covid. We can now reach more people, and those who may not be able to come to church for whatever reason, but have internet access, can worship with us at home. Recording our sermons is similarly a new innovation for us and can be a good discipline for the preacher in terms of the length of preaching! In the same way that worship via Zoom happened, my profound thanks go to Eluned and Nick Hallas for enabling our Sunday services to go on Zoom and for sermons to be recorded.

Patronal Festival

We were able to celebrate our Patronal with lunch at Cosener's House which was a wonderful occasion with people joining us from around the parish. It was very good to return for this well-established tradition. We gathered for Choral Evensong with a good choir and were delighted to welcome the Revd Canon Dr Emma Percy to preach on that occasion. It was a joy to have Emma back with us and to hear an excellent sermon.

She had written a poem for the occasion, which was her gift to us on the Patronal. The poem was subsequently published in the Candle in the Window.

Christmas

Services were planned in order to resource them carefully across the parish. We were able to hold a congregation Carol Service and enjoy singing together this year after a two year break. On Christmas Eve, there was a First Eucharist for Christmas at St Helen's for the whole parish. Earlier that afternoon, although our Crib Service on Christmas Eve was a much smaller gathering than is typical, it was good that it took place and the congregation was appreciative. The service was mostly led by the Mafabi children with an introduction and ending from me. Their 'performance' was impressive and professional for which we owe them our deepest gratitude.

Fabric: Toilet and Kitchen Block

Eluned Hallas, as Churchwarden, has kindly reported on the status of the above. But I did want to add that this has been a frustrating time with delays impeding progress. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, we hope this project can move on apace once a builder is found. I would like to convey my special thanks to Colin Sanderson and Gwyneth Lewis for their extensive research and detailed plans.

Sabbatical

You will be aware that my Sabbatical leave was due to take place in 2020. This has been postponed twice, but is now happening from mid-August to mid-November in 2022. There is still considerable planning to be done, but much is now underway and I shall be sharing further details in due course.

At the time of the Annual Meeting, I shall be able to report on the status of the recruitment of a Personal Assistant for me.

A Final Thank You

I want to offer my gratitude to all my team colleagues and our honorary assistant clergy in the parish for their generosity in supporting the liturgical and worshipping life of our congregation. My deep appreciation goes also to Eluned Hallas, our Warden, for all her hard work, commitment and support, alongside the other tasks she takes on in the wider parish.

Finally, thank you to you all for whatever part you play in our community. We have been living in the most challenging times, and I am most grateful for all that you do.

With the assurance of my prayers for the forthcoming year.

Fr Paul Smith, Team Vicar, March 2022

Other Reports

8.1 Statistics 2021

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

8.2 Church Wardens' Report

Eluned Hallas

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.

8.3 Fabric

Eluned Hallas

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.

8.4 Safeguarding

Jenny Fishpool

The Parish Safeguarding Officer, Maria Gibson, is looking for another person among the parishioners to share the role of Verifier alongside her. She has been advised by the Diocese Safeguarding Team that it would be a good idea to have a second person stepping in if she is not available (e.g. away on holiday, unwell, other engagements etc.).

Please contact Maria on 07828 796415 if you are interested, for further information on the role.

No new safeguarding training has been required of anyone at St Nicolas in the last year, though St Nicolas Safeguarding Officer (Jenny Fishpool) has completed the Safer Recruitment and People Management course online.

8.5 Donations

Jenny Smith

St Nicolas Church has continued to support the Church in Abingdon. £225.60 of our annual membership goes towards community projects. CiA usually supports The Abingdon Bridge, Desire Youth Network, Abingdon Street Pastors, Trinity Learning/ Experience Easter, Thrive, and the Salvation Army Drop-in centre.

Apart from giving pupils in year 6 at St Nicolas' School the "It's Your Move" books, we also bought Advent candles for use by the school.

Members of the Congregation may have noticed that special collections on a Sunday are no longer for a specific charity. Instead at our Harvest Festival we had a collection "to help alleviate world hunger" and the Christmas collections were for "Children's Charities". This is in order to allow us to collect Gift Aid on the donations.

- At our Harvest Festival the loose plate collection of £148.60 together with the surplus from the Harvest lunch and Gift Aid resulted in a cheque for £232 being sent to Action Against Hunger. Gifts of produce were given to the Food Bank.
- Our Christmas 2021 collections resulted in a total of £254.27 which, with Gift Aid, meant that we were able to send £255.34 to Save the Children and £62.50 to the Children's Society.

Foodbank support has continued when Covid restrictions allowed. Items for the Foodbank have been collected in church when the church was open. Methods of giving to the Foodbank and a list of items needed have been regularly advertised in the church pewslip.

We had a poppy collection box for the Royal British Legion in the run up to Remembrance Sunday and £52 was collected.

With regular Sunday services resuming we intend to have special Sunday collections for the homeless and dementia care. That will result in 6-7 services a year being for outside charities. Special collections bring in a much larger donation than normal Sunday services and in 2021 the special collections were almost 15.2% of all the loose plate collections so with the planned increase to having special collections four times a year about 20% of loose plate collections will go to outside charities.

Unfortunately this year we were unable to host Cards for Good Causes in the run up to Christmas as they have had to greatly reduce the number of outlets.

We were able to offer the Kennington Memory Club the use of the church for a very successful sale.

If any other member of the congregation wishes to help with donations and charities please speak to Jenny Smith or Eluned Hallas. Further input is always helpful with suggestions of poster displays in church, details of other local or overseas charities or suggestions for special collections during the year.

8.6 Bell ringing

Hugh Bishop

Work strengthening the tower finally started in January. Extensive work was required to repair the cracks and to tie the cross beams into the walls to prevent further cracking. Work finished early in June and we chimed the bells for service on the 6th but had to wait until the 27th, to allow the mortar to cure, before we could resume full ringing. In spite of the constraints set by covid we have been able to ring normally for Sunday services and shortened practices have been well attended.

8.7 The Church Garden

Hugh Bishop

The garden has been well used during the pandemic. Many people have found it a convenient place to meet up in the open air. Customers at the new coffee shop have also found it a good place to sit.

Unfortunately, the bay tree has now grown to a size that it requires regular professional pruning. This represents a substantial continuing expense. I feel the tree has become too large for its environment and would like to replace it with say a flowering cherry.

I have now been looking after the garden for 15 years and feel it is time for someone else to take over. Any offers?

8.8 House Group

Roderick Smith

The house group continued meeting fortnightly throughout the COVID pandemic lockdowns using the Zoom platform. From the beginning of August 2021, as restrictions were relaxed, we decided to meet in-person in St Nicolas' church building. We arrange the chairs at the western pew-free end of the nave in as wide a circle as we feel appropriate for safety. We are grateful to the churchwarden, Eluned Hallas, for suggesting and giving permission for this meeting venue. Since we haven't met in a domestic venue since the start of the pandemic we haven't strictly been a 'house' group at all! The group is inclusive in that we have people from all three churches of the parish.

Our usual practice is to start with a short opening prayer and then read and discuss one or more biblical passages. We then finish by saying Compline including a time for open or silent prayers. We generally make our way through a particular biblical book or follow a chosen theme for several months.

In the first half of 2021 we studied 2 Corinthians, noting the difficulties the apostle Paul had with the church he had founded in Corinth. But he never gave up on them and reminded them that they were ‘the temple of the living God’. The letter wonderfully ends with the ‘grace’ prayer which has been used by the church ever since Paul wrote it.

Coinciding with our resumption of in-person meetings in St Nic’s we started studying the parables of Jesus using the book ‘The Parables’ by Paula Gooder as our guide. We have been led to appreciate how varied the parables are – some need a lot of background knowledge of the life and times in which Jesus lived but equally some are best not explained but left to leave the reader or listener thinking. Such has been the interest and discussion stimulated by these studies that we are far from finished with them.

8.9 St Nicolas DCC

Membership:

Church Wardens

Eluned Hallas

Paul Rast-Lindsell (until September 2021)

Representatives on the Abingdon Deanery Synod

Eluned Hallas

Elected 2020 to serve until 2023

Representatives on the Abingdon Parochial Church Council

Andrew Birks

Elected 2020 to serve until 2023

Gwyneth Lewis

Elected 2021 to serve until 2024

Members of St. Nicolas’ Church Council

Jenny Fishpool

Elected 2019 to serve until 2022

Hilda Mafabi

Elected 2019 to serve until 2022

Hugh Bishop

Elected 2020 to serve until 2022

Emma Coker

Elected 2020 to serve until 2023

Hildegard Hyde

Elected 2020 to serve until 2023

Gwyneth Lewis

Elected 2020 to serve until 2023

Abielle Hallas

Elected 2021 to serve until 2023

Co-opted 2021

Paul Rast-Lindsell

Jenny Metcalfe

Church in Abingdon Representatives: Julia Bishop

Appointments made by DCC:

Treasurer: Jenny Metcalfe

Secretary: Eluned Hallas

Safeguarding: Jenny Fishpool

Health & Safety: Paul Rast-Lindsell

The DCC met seven times during the year, with the Standing Committee meeting as needed. All were carried out on line.

Discussions have included the following: how we should come out of lockdown safely, our response to Living in Love and Faith (LLF), fabric (the completion of the tower repair, and ongoing plans for the refurbishment of the kitchen and toilet block, which have had to take into account the development of the neighbouring building), finance and a stewardship campaign, and staffing (the provision of secretarial support for the Vicar).

The elected and ex-Officio (Vicar, Churchwardens) members continued to attend Parochial Church Council (PCC), and Deanery Synod meetings to represent St Nicolas' views on wider matters.

8.10 Abingdon-on-Thames PCC

Secretary to the PCC

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 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 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.

8.11 Proceedings of the 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.

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 initiative

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 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 is Lay Chair of the Deanery Synod, and a member of the AOT PCC

7.12 Proceedings of the Church-in-Abingdon

Julia Bishop

Changes in clergy

Captain Alexandra Devine was appointed leader at the Salvation Army
Michael Ivey took over as main leader at Abingdon Community Church.

Projects which were able to continue, if in a limited way:

- The Abingdon Bridge staff worked from home to continue providing support, advice and guidance to vulnerable young people.
- Christian Aid organised some events online.
- The Christian Forum columns appeared in the Round and About magazine.
- The work of Desire and the Prayer Spaces have continued in secondary schools where possible.
- The monthly CiA News has continued but the work of Christian Focus has been reduced.

United activities in 2020

- Christian Aid's annual New Year's Day walk started and ended at Abingdon Baptist Church.
- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was marked by midday prayers at St Nicolas' church, the annual quiz at St Michael's and a United service at Christ Church.
- A service for the World Day of prayer took place at Trinity Church, put together by the women of Zimbabwe.
- Trinity Learning went into St Nicolas' School to support a group of 8-9 year old children delivering an assembly to the whole school.
- The Annual Bereavement Service could not take place in November but Deacon Selina Nesbitt organised an online service that was posted on YouTube and on the Abingdon Facebook page.
- "Carols on your doorstep" took place across Abingdon, supported by Abingdon Council.

Groups and activities unable to take place because of the Covid19 restrictions:

The Shoe cleaning event on Maundy Thursday, the procession of witness and Good Friday service at St Nicolas' church, Fun in the Park, South Abingdon Play Day in Southern Park, the Alpha launch, the Michaelmas fair and fair service, the Extravaganza.

Financial support was given to the following projects:

The Abingdon Bridge £2000, Desire youth network £1000, Abingdon Street Pastors £1000, Experience Easter £750, 35 Ock Street £500, Back to 35 £150 and Thrive £1000.

Julia Bishop 15.02.2021

8 Nominations, Elections and Appointments

8.5 Stewards

8.00am: Mrs J Lawrence, Mr B Tonks

11.15am: Dr A Colborne, Mr D Dawswell, Mrs J Fishpool, Miss A Hallas, Mrs E Hallas, Mr I Hallas, Mr N Hallas, Mrs E Hancox, Mrs S Holligan, Mr P Holligan, Mrs H Mafabi, Mrs H Nagel-Hyde, Mr P Rast-Lindsell, Mrs L Richmond, Mrs C Scriven