



ST. STEPHENS  
UPPER BASILDON  
ANNUAL MEETING  
2024



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Parish of Basildon, Bradfield Deanery, Diocese of Oxford.

For year ending 31st December 2023

***Chair: The Revd Grant Fensome***

# **BASILDON PARCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING**

**Sunday 21 April 2024**

***following Morning Service at 10am***

### **Annual General Meeting of Parishioners**

Opening Prayer & Introduction

Election of Churchwardens

### **Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

1. Apologies
2. Confirmation of minutes of Last Year's Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes
4. Appointments to the PCC
  - a. PCC Members
  - b. Deanery Synod Rep
  - c. Hon Treasurer
  - d. Hon Secretary
  - e. Electoral Roll Officer
  - f. Safeguarding Officer
5. Annual Benefice Report
6. Annual Accounts
7. Appointment of the independent examiner of the finances for 2024
8. Churchwarden's Report
9. Electoral Roll Report
10. Appointment of Sidesmen
11. Deanery Synod Report
12. All Churches Together Report
13. Any Other Business – as received prior to the start of the meeting
14. Closing Prayers

**MINUTES of BASILDON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING**  
**Sunday 23rd April 2023**  
*following Morning worship -in person and by Zoom*

## **Annual General Meeting of Parishioners**

Opening Prayers led by Revd. Grant Fensome.

### **Election of Churchwarden**

- Jo Eley was unanimously re-elected as the Churchwarden for St. Stephen's; the Vicar conveyed huge thanks to JE for her continued hard work as Churchwarden.
- There remains one vacancy for this role and the parishioners were encouraged to think of anyone who might be prepared to take on this role.
- As previously discussed, this will be Jo Eley's last year as Churchwarden.

## **Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

### **In attendance:**

Revd. Grant Fensome, Revd. Amy Cavender, Nathaniel Davies, Jo Eley, Geoff Eley, Rusty Ford, Elizabeth Hayter, Richard Hudson, Henry Killender, Alison Laing, Rosemary MacDonald, Andrew Marshall, Helen Northrop, Emily Northrop, Rosmary Sandbach, Jonathan Sandbach, Ann Schlee, Nick Schlee, Pam Slingsby, Cate Statham, Ralph Webber, Clive Williams.

**Apologies:** Revd. Katy Weston, Nicky Larkin, Lynn Smith.

### **2. Confirmation of the Minutes:**

- The minutes (pp 3 - 5) of the previous APCM held on Sunday 24th April 2022 were approved by the meeting and signed as a true and correct record by the Vicar after the correction of Pam Bhalla's name.
- It was also noted that Jane Westerman plays the clarinet (not the flute).

### **3. Matters Arising from the Minutes:**

- No matters were raised from the 2022 minutes.

### **4. Appointments to the PCC:**

- Nominations were received for Helen Northrop and Emily Northrop to join the PCC. They were both duly appointed to the vacant positions.
- Pam Slingsby was welcomed as the new PCC Secretary further to Alison Laing standing down. She was duly appointed and co-opted to the PCC.
- The following PCC members were unanimously reappointed: Nathaniel Davies, Nicky Larkin, Jonathan Sandbach (Treasurer), Cate Statham, and Clive Williams (Deanery Synod Rep).

- The Treasurer expressed his intention to stand down when a replacement could be found. Emily Northrop expressed interest in this role.
- Thanks were given to Lynn Smith who has continued to submit Parish returns on behalf of St. Stephen's.

#### **5. Annual Benefice Report by Revd. Grant Fensome:**

- The Vicar drew attention to his report (pp 6 - 8) which had been circulated prior to the meeting. In particular he drew attention to the addition of Revd. Jen Green to the Benefice. Along with Revd. Katy Weston who has now been licensed and the input of Amy Cavender there is a strong Benefice Ministry Team.
- More connections have been made in the community. Tiddlers now records a healthy attendance (up to 35). Revd. Grant thanked Rosemary MacDonald, Cate Statham, and Alison Laing for helping the Tiddlers' team.
- Bacon Butty Sunday continued to move forward.
- It was felt that 2022 has been a good year of recovery after the constraints of Covid. It is heartening to feel the church as a focal point for Village life - as expressed in 'A glass with the Vicar'.
- Special thanks were given to the Churchwarden, Jo Eley, for her work preparing stats for the Diocese.
- The Vicar was thanked for his report - the photos were commented on, and the Treasurer expressed his encouragement for growth in the coming year.
- The Ministry Team were thanked for their contribution to the Benefice by Revd. Grant before the report was received by the congregation.

#### **6. Annual Accounts:**

- The Treasurer, Jonathan Sandbach, referred the meeting to the accounts which were published (pp 12 - 15).
- It is noticeable that income is up - as well as expenditure.
- It is hoped the deficit will be less than the previous year and less than earlier predictions.
- Activity in the church was reflected in the increased spending, which included an increase in energy bills - as reflected in domestic bills.
- The Treasurer urged members of St. Stephen's to consider using the Parish Giving Scheme to make the role easier and to ensure income increased in line with inflation.
- The Vicar added his thanks for financial support and donations.

#### **7. Appointment of the independent examiner:**

- The Treasurer expressed thanks to Andrew Taylor who continues to act as the independent examiner.
- The Vicar will write to thank him.

#### **8. Mission Giving Report:**

- As noted in the circulated report (pp 16 - 17) the income from School House along with Church funds allowed for donations to St. Stephen's three Mission Partners (CCA, Yeldell Manor and the Grace School) and, in addition special payments were made to the Disaster Emergency Committee's appeal for Ukraine.

- A Ukrainian family who had been rehomed in the community had also benefited from financial support from St. Stephen's.
- The meeting was asked to pray for them as they begin another new chapter in New York, USA.

#### **9. Churchwardens' Report:**

- The Churchwarden's report (pp 18 - 19) was received by the meeting with special thanks added by the Vicar, Revd. Grant, for all that Jo Eley does in her role.

#### **10. Report on the Electoral Roll:**

- St. Stephen's electoral roll number was recorded as 37.
- Two more have now been added to the roll.

#### **11. Deanery Synod Report:**

- In addition to the attached report (page 21) the Vicar and Clive Williams, Deanery Synod representative, both reported ongoing uncertainties about the local Deanery Synod.
- It is still not clear how the Parish Share might be organized, and discussions continue amongst local Synods within the Oxford Diocese.

#### **12. Appointment of Sidesmen:**

- The Sidesmen listed (page 22) were all reappointed.
- The Vicar outlined the three duties that they were expected to undertake and expressed his thanks for all they do to ensure the running of the church every week.

#### **13. Any Other Business:**

- a) Clive Williams noted that eleven gardens are successfully on board for an Upper Basildon Open Gardens event 17/09/23. It is hoped the Church can play a central role in this community event.
- b) Amy Cavender wondered if a more formal Youth/Sidesperson role might be established for Church services.

The meeting closed with a prayer for St. Stephen's; for Church people and for the whole community, followed by The Grace.



ST. STEPHEN'S  
UPPER BASILDON

## Vicars report 2023

*It is the responsibility of each PCC, together with the incumbent of the joint Benefice of Basildon, Aldworth and Ashampstead, to promote in the ecclesiastical parishes the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical. Each PCC is responsible for maintaining the church buildings and in addition, Basildon PCC is responsible for maintaining the School House, Upper Basildon. Each PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The Churches operate under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956. The PCCs are exempted by order from registering with the Charity Commission. Members of the PCCs are either designated ex-officio, co-opted, or are elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. Each PCC meets between four and six times in the year.*

On balance, 2023 was a good year for St. Stephen's Upper Basildon. We carefully and successfully planned lots of events and services including new services, fundraising events and discipleship groups which continued to bring the church and the community together and we have seen the number of people returning to church, or attending with families grow this year. We sadly lost a few members of our community who leave irreplaceable holes in our community. However, St Stephen's village church is a place where we seek to journey together through life's ups and downs. We seek to be a place where everybody is truly and deeply welcomed, listened to, and cherished and we all can hear afresh the good news of Jesus Christ.

**A word of thanks** I really am very grateful for all the people who do so much to help with St. Stephen's church life, worship, ministry, and day-to-day caretaking. One of the things I really enjoy about St. Stephen's is that it feels like a 'team effort'. There are too many names to list here individually of course, and Jo Eley has kindly added her thanks to many in her Churchwarden report for which I thank her for.

However, as Jo will be standing down at this year's APCM, it would be remiss of me not to mention Jo. Jo Eley has served St. Stephen's as Churchwarden with care and diligence. Her attention to detail and willingness to attend to matters has been wonderful. Further to this, she is a friend to many, and somebody of keen pastoral awareness, which, when we are split across three churches is a wonderful gift. Thank you, Jo, for all the hours you have put into making St. Stephen's the welcoming, caring church that it is today.

## **Ministry Team updates:**

**The Revd. Grant Fensome (Vicar)** – In the latter half of 2023, Grant was appointed as Area Dean for Bradfield Deanery. This work involves arranging Deanery Chapter (the meeting of local clergy), convening Deanery Synod, and visiting and supporting parishes particularly through vacancies. Grant also attends regular leadership meetings with Bishop Olivia and senior staff for the Berkshire Archdeaconry. It's a varied and interesting role!

**The Revd. Katy Weston (Associate Priest)** – Katy has been busy throughout 2023 with continuing to support the varied parish and worship life of our churches, with a primary focus of work in Aldworth and Ashampstead. From October 2023, Katy was seconded to the Aldermaston Benefice (until March 2024) – to offer support and help the Benefice there which has one minister across 7 churches. We are of course looking forward to having Katy return to us in 2024 but it's fair to say that she has been a huge and invaluable support to our brothers and sisters in that benefice during her time there, which included Christmas (& Easter).

**The Revd. Jen Green (Curate)** – It was wonderful to welcome Jen back after her maternity leave in October 2023. She returned straight into the run-up to Christmas where she led a Messy-Christmas event at school and continued to preach and lead across the churches. Jen is developing an important school's ministry, not just here in Basildon, but linking up with secondary school, *The Downs*, as well as completing the varied training sessions the Diocese provide for curates.

**The Revd. Amy Cavender** – During 2023 we welcomed Amy to join the ministry team within the Benefice. Amy had served a placement under Revd. Will Watts' and is known by many here. She joins us on a part-time basis, with a focus on pastoral visiting, mission, and running the pilgrims group.

**Dr. Jonathan and Mrs. Rosemary Sandbach** continue to serve in their ministry as Licensed Lay Readers and have done so with utmost love and dedication. It is an understatement to say that without their ministry our service rota and pattern simply wouldn't work. From music, to preaching and everything in between, their input and devotion is treasured.

**Dr. Mike Penny** continues as our local authorized preacher and is regularly leading an online bible study alongside his excellent work with young people across Reading and the Open Bible Trust. Mike regularly appears on BBC Berkshire thought for the day radio program.

**Ministry 2023:** So much has happened at St. Stephen's across 2023 so I'll pick out a few highlights.

In Lent of 2023 we organized a lent group at the Vicarage based on the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*. It was well attended and much appreciated. The journey to Easter culminated in some wonderful joy-filled services including a new Dawn Communion service outside around the cross. This proved a popular service which was a wonderful way to celebrate Easter as a community.

Similarly, we also ran a small group called *The Blessings Course* at the Vicarage, which was a powerful and practical course giving confidence in practicing blessing our neighbours, friends, families, land, churches, schools – just about anything!

We also begun a new form of service and ministry at St. Stephen's in 2023 called, '*The Master's Studio*'. This is an experimental form of gathering which is based around creativity. People can come and use the various spaces across the church to connect with one another and work on their creation and allow God to work on his! More dates planned for 2024.

Tiddlers continues to be a strong community engaging ministry. With the invaluable help of Rosemary Macdonald, we welcome and connect with local families regularly. Please do keep Tiddlers in your prayers.

During the summer of 2023, Clive Williams kindly organised a hugely successful fundraising day of Open Gardens. It was lovely to see the village so busy and full of people supporting the church by opening their lovely gardens. A huge thank you to all involved. Whilst on the fundraising subject, Rosemary and Jonathan organised a fun Quiz night which also raised significant sums for St. Stephen's and provided a much-needed evening of fun and light relief during the winter months.

St Stephen's Café: During 2023 we approached a number of local organisations to see if they might like to host the community café once a month. This allows us to reopen this fine community asset on a weekly basis. Each week of the month a different team takes a turn of hosting it, providing cakes and refreshments. We have moved the cafe into the church for safety purposes. Increasing numbers were affecting safe access to fire exits. This move into the church provides more room, especially between tables, solving an accessibility issue for those who are disabled. It also allows space for people of all ages to mingle with less risk of accidents happening. Please do continue to make use of the café as we combat social isolation and loneliness here in our village and connect with our neighbours.

Christmas of 2023 was simply wonderful. We were able to welcome Basildon Primary school for a Christingle Service. We held several carol services both inside and outside. Our annual carol service with the Fish and Chip Van was well attended even in the rain. Thanks to VEO Events Ltd, who beautifully lit the church in majestic Christmassy colours as we sang round together. For the first time we held a very successful evening of carols at The Red Lion pub. December hosted a full schedule of services, but each one filled with joy and celebration. It was particularly lovely on Christmas Eve to see the church full of families.

St. Bartholomew's: Sadly, the roof collapse at St. Bartholomew's, Lower Basildon in 2022 meant that no services were held in St. Bartholomew's in 2023. The Churches Conservation Trust have temporarily fixed the roof and are undergoing a focussed fundraising effort to restore the church. We hope to arrange services, with the choir, for 2024.

Thank you to everybody for pulling together and making this church a living, breathing community hub of hope, love, and grace. I eagerly await to see how God will move in our church and village in 2024!

Revd. Grant Fensome, Vicar



# **BASILDON PARISH CHURCH**

## **Annual Report and Accounts of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31 December 2023**

### **Contents**

Independent Examiner's Report

Receipts and Payments Account

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Notes to the Accounts

## **Independent Examiner's Report to the members / trustees of Basildon Parochial Church**

I report on the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 3 to 6.

### **Respective responsibilities of the PCC and examiner**

As trustees of the charity, the members of the PCC are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### **Basis of independent examiner's report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit and, consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

### **Independent examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention:

- (1) which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; or
  - to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting records have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



**Andrew Taylor**  
Quarrenden  
Upper Red Cross Road  
Goring  
Oxfordshire

**February 2024**

**Basildon Parochial Church Council**

**Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Receipts and Payments Account**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	2022 £
<b>RECEIPTS</b>					
<b>Receipts from generated funds:</b>					
Voluntary income	3	43,827	-	43,827	45,595
Activities for generating funds	4	12,319	-	12,319	15,102
Investment income	5	1,267	18,538	19,805	16,935
		<u>57,413</u>	<u>18,538</u>	<u>75,951</u>	<u>77,632</u>
<b>Other cash receipts</b>	6	-	-	-	418
<b>Total receipts</b>		<u>57,413</u>	<u>18,538</u>	<u>75,951</u>	<u>78,050</u>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>					
<b>Payments for generating funds:</b>					
Fundraising costs	7	1,064	-	1,064	29
Investment management costs	8	-	3,247	3,247	3,524
		<u>1,064</u>	<u>3,247</u>	<u>4,311</u>	<u>3,554</u>
<b>Church activities</b>	9	47,703	-	47,703	49,669
<b>Charitable donations</b>	10	3,346	2,500	5,846	3,604
<b>Church management &amp; administration</b>	11	2,210	-	2,210	4,240
<b>Other payments</b>	12	2,881	11,777	14,658	19,946
<b>Total payments</b>		<u>57,203</u>	<u>17,524</u>	<u>74,728</u>	<u>81,012</u>
<b>NET RECEIPTS / (PAYMENTS)</b>		209	1,014	1,223	(2,963)
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	12	-	-	-	100
<b>NET RECEIPTS / (PAYMENTS) after transfers</b>		<u>209</u>	<u>1,014</u>	<u>1,223</u>	<u>(2,863)</u>
Cash balances at start of year		49,842	37,268	89,107	91,970
Cash balances at end of year		<u>50,052</u>	<u>38,282</u>	<u>90,330</u>	<u>89,107</u>

*The notes on pages 5 to 6 form part of these accounts.  
Summations are subject to rounding.*

# Basildon Parochial Church Council

## Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023

### Statement of assets and liabilities as at 31 December 2023

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	2022 £
<b>Monetary assets</b>				
Bank current account	11,820	1,660	13,480	14,652
CBF Deposit account	37,832	39,617	77,449	75,044
Cash and cheques in church safe	399	-	399	409
	<u>50,051</u>	<u>41,277</u>	<u>91,328</u>	<u>90,105</u>

*Summations are subject to rounding.*

#### Fixed assets

Church seating  
Church centre and office  
Fixtures and fittings to the above  
PA Equipment  
Laptop Computer & related software  
Giving Station  
Shed  
Lawnmower  
Cooker

The PCC is also the administrative trustee for the Old School House.

There were no contingent liabilities.

The notes on pages 5 to 6 form part of these accounts.

These financial statements were approved by the Parochial Church Council on  
\*\* February 2023.

**Basildon Parochial Church Council**

**Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Notes to the financial statements**

**1 Accounting policies**

The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts and Payments basis.

2 Any apparent differences in summations will result from rounding.

**3 Voluntary income**

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	2022
	£	£	£	£
<b>Recurring income:</b>				
Tax - efficient planned giving (excl. tax)	27,842	-	27,842	29,470
Other planned giving	600	-	600	780
Collections of loose cash & card donations at services & Tiddlers	3,960	-	3,960	1,356
Tax recovered	6,060	-	6,060	5,604
	38,462	-	38,462	37,210
<b>Non-recurring income:</b>				
Legacies	-	-	-	1,003
Other non-recurring donations	5,365	-	5,365	7,382
	43,827	-	43,827	45,595

**4 Activities for generating funds**

Fundraising Events				
Café St. Stephen's	617	-	617	469
CCA Book Sale	197	-	197	315
Other fundraising	2,642	-	2,642	1,148
Fees - weddings, funerals etc	984	-	984	299
School House management fee	3,247	-	3,247	3,101
Church Centre lettings	4,633	-	4,633	5,625
	12,319	-	12,319	10,957

**5 Investment income**

Bank Interest	1,267	1,138	2,405	985
School House rental income	-	17,400	17,400	15,950
	1,267	18,538	19,805	16,935

**6 Other receipts**

ODBF grants	-	-	-	418
Restricted funds (defibrillator & fire fund)	-	-	-	4,144
	-	-	-	418

**7 Fundraising costs**

Café St. Stephen's	153	-	153	29
Other fund raising costs	911	-	911	-
	1,064	-	1,064	29

**8 Investment management costs**

School House legal costs, and management and letting fee	-	3,247	3,247	3,524
	-	3,247	3,247	3,524

*Summations are subject to rounding.*

**Basildon Parochial Church Council**

**Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Notes to the financial statements**

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	2022 £	
<b>9 Church activities</b>					
Parish share	39,758	-	39,758	38,421	
Church running costs:					
Heating, lighting & water	1,332	-	1,332	5,571	
Internet	495	-	495	432	
Cleaning	594	-	594	1,457	
Repairs & Maintenance	2,483	-	2,483	1,299	
Insurance premiums	1,450	-	1,450	1,318	
Printing, stationary & sundries	318	-	318		
Cost of services	1,273	-	1,273	1,171	
	47,703	-	47,703	49,669	
<b>10 Charitable donations</b>					
Donations to Mission Partners	3,243	-	3,243	2,451	
Other Church donations (Royal British Legion, Macmillan)	103	-	103	1,153	
Other donations from restricted funds	-	2,500	2,500	-	
	3,346	2,500	5,846	3,604	
<b>11 Church management and administration</b>					
Joint Treasurers' Fund	2,210	-	2,210	4,240	
	2,210	-	2,210	4,240	
<b>12 Other payments</b>					
Improvements to PCC Property	2,881	-	2,881	2,044	
Vicarage environmental survey	-	-	-	4,014	
School House Fund expenditure	-	-	-		
Repairs and maintenance	-	1,898	1,898	2,999	
Insurance	-	496	496	415	
Grants & young people work	-	9,383	9,383	10,474	
	2,881	11,777	14,658	19,946	
<b>13 Fund movements</b>					
	01-Jan-23 £	Receipts £	Payments £	Transfers £	31-Dec-23 £
<b>General Fund</b>	49,842	57,413	(57,203)	-	50,052
<b>Restricted Funds</b>					
School House Fund	37,073	18,538	(15,025)	-	40,586
Defibrillator	196	-	-	-	196
Fire Fund	2,994	-	(2,500)	-	494
<b>Total fund movements</b>	90,105	75,951	(74,728)	-	91,328
<b>General fund designation</b>					
Mission	2,682	-	(3,243)	3,067	2,506
Fabric	26,918	-	(5,364)	5,741	27,295
Undesignated	20,242	57,413	(48,596)	(8,809)	20,250
	49,842	57,413	(57,203)	-	50,052

Summations are subject to rounding.

## Churchwarden's Report 2023

Special changes this year include:

- Revd. Jen Green returned from Maternity Leave in late Autumn, coinciding with her Ordination which took place in St Stephens church, where one other ordinand was also licensed.
- Revd. Amy Cavender was confirmed as an additional member of our Ministry Team.
- In October, the bishop co-opted Revd. Katy Weston to work in another benefice for a 6-month term, supporting the Vicar of Aldermaston and Woolhampton.
- New services were trialled, and, in the Autumn, Revd. Grant Fensome introduced a new service pattern. There is now a Family Holy Communion Service each month, an All-Age Family Worship Service and the informal "Butty Church" Service has moved to the fourth Sunday of each month.
- A sunrise Easter Morning service was held in the church grounds and followed by a barbecue breakfast. This was exceptionally well attended, despite near zero air temperatures.

The numbers attending church have crept up over 2023, and when I submitted the statistics to the Diocese for the year just past, it was apparent that the age demographic has reduced also.

Special occasions such as Revd. Jen's Ordination and Christmas Eve Family Service saw more than 100 people packed inside the building – we were almost filled to bursting point and running out of seats!

Two fundraising events were organised:

- Clive Williams ran an Open Gardens event on a Sunday afternoon in September. He had inspired 10 households in and around the village to open their gardens, and entry tickets to visit all of them were available for purchase either at the gates of each property or from the church. Despite heavy rain in the preceding hours running up to the opening of the event, which in all probability reduced numbers attending, those who braved the damp conditions, there was very positive feedback and a happy atmosphere. Refreshments were served in the Church Hall and had a busy uptake, also contributing to the financial benefit.
- In November, a Quiz Night with Fish and Chip supper was organised by Rosemary and Jonathan Sandbach. This was very well attended, with a packed Worship Space, numbers seemingly back to those encountered in 2017/ 18 for a similar event.

Upon the retirement of our long serving church cleaner, Elizabeth Hayter, we were very fortunate to have Alice, Emily, and Helen Northrop volunteer to take on this role for the first part of 2023. However, with Alice taking up her university place in autumn, we needed to search for a new cleaning contractor. Rosemary Sandbach and I led on collating a draft contract, terms and conditions and advertising the post. It was not easy to find someone prepared to undertake the role. However, we are most fortunate to find that Lynne Froud was interested in the job, and she commenced work in early December. Although Lynne does not live in the Benefice, she does have links with our parish.

Of the matters concerning the building fabric, we continue to find it difficult to achieve reliable and efficient means to achieve thermal comfort during cooler parts of the year. With its 1960s construction and the pyramidal shape of the Worship Space, it is a problem maintaining an even temperature

throughout any time that the space is in use. To attempt to improve thermal comfort, we have had the existing ceiling level air circulation fans linked to the boiler programmer, so these automatically operate when the boiler is running.

We have had upgrades and improvements, with additional power sockets to enable the card reader machine and the coffee maker to function in different locations without the need for extension leads. The lectern and one of the silver patens have been repaired. Also, the petrol mower was overhauled and serviced. Generously, our local mower repair service company provided this work without charge.

The building has had minor adaptations to make it more child safe: the original overhead closing device to the doors between the lobby and Worship Space were replaced to reduce the risk of trapped fingers and to reduce the risk of toddlers dashing through it during *Tiddlers* sessions, and a stair gate has been fitted in the lobby.

We have reviewed building security and that of the oil storage tank. There is now security lighting over the tank and at the main entrance.

In autumn, we had a mouse infestation within the roof voids and the upstairs room. This has been eradicated, and permanent bait traps are now installed and being monitored.

In 2023, our church was due to have another Quinquennial Inspection – a five yearly survey and report from an architect who is approved by the Diocese. This took place in September. The resulting report was generally very satisfactory, with all our documentation and routine safety check records found to be in order, the building in general good condition but, as we were aware, in need soon of external redecoration.

I am standing aside at the end of this business year, having undertaken the role for 6 years. Church of England rules state that a Churchwarden should hold that post for the maximum of a six-year continuous term and special clearances are required to continue beyond that span. I would like to thank the members of the PCCs and the Ministry team members over my tenure, as well as so many of the congregation and supporters of our church, for their support, input and all the practical efforts and suggestions they have made to help me.

Mrs. Jo Eley, Churchwarden



## Electoral Roll Update

The electoral roll was revised and produced in the specified timeframe for the APCM. There are currently 34 people on the electoral roll.

As there are under 50 people on the roll, the number of places for people on the PCC remains at 6 (ex-officio members are: Vicar, Churchwarden(s), and Deanery Synod Representative).

Lynn Smith, Electoral Roll Officer

## Appointment of Sidesmen

The PCC extends its thanks to all those who have served in the many roles during the last year.

The appointment to Sidesman for following member is proposed for the coming year:

Welcome Team	Chalice Assistants
Pam Bhalla	Amy Cavender
Rusty Ford	Naomi Fensome
Elizabeth Hayter	Jen Green
Richard Hudson	Helen Northrop
Alison Laing	Jonathan Sandbach
Rosemary McDonald	Rosemary Sandbach
Nick Schlee	Pam Slingsby
David Smith	Cate Statham
Lynn Smith	
Pam Stevens	
Clive Williams	

# Deanery Synod Report

## New Officers

- Revd. Grant has taken over from Revd. David Archer as Area Dean.
- Terry Webster, of Aldermaston & Woolhampton has been elected as Lay Chair further to Chris Newman stepping down.
- Stephen Billyeald, late of this Parish and now living in Pangbourne, is the Treasurer.
- Pam Slingsby is now the Deanery Secretary, replacing Debbie Corrigan.

## Parish Share

- This is based on the rather complicated Oxford formula, which looks at a number of factors: Ministry stipend; support; wealth of community; size of electoral roll; church attendance.
- Basildon, contributing £40,160 is 5<sup>th</sup> highest out of 21. Pangbourne (with Sulham & Tidmarsh) and Burghfield both pay just over £68K; Purley £57K and Mortimer £47K
- If you include Aldworth ((£12,661 & Ashampstead (£15,247) we pay as a joint Benefice £68,108, as much as Pangbourne and Burghfield. If you factor in population then pro/rata we pay more than any other Benefice.
- However, we are now in the fortunate position of having 3 priests for 3 Churches – the most generous provision in the Deanery, so I keep my head down.
- In addition, when the Rev David Archer was Area Dean, Purley was given a 15% rebate on its parish share to reflect the time he was spending on Area Dean functions. I assume that rebate will now come the way of ourselves (including Aldworth and Ashampstead).

## Diocesan Vision

- A Diocesan Vision document was produced 4 years ago, and a Deanery Working Party was set up to look at it in detail.
- The Vision contains 5 focus areas:
  - Making a bigger difference to world
  - Sharing faith and growing local communities
  - Growing new congregations
  - Serving every school in our communities and engaging in new ways with young people, families, and children
  - Celebrating and blessing the City of Milton Keynes
- Five working Groups were set up to see how to put flesh on the bones. The Bishop of Oxford was chairing one, the Bishop of Reading (who is retiring) another, and the Archdeacon of Berkshire a third.
- The 5 Working Parties were as follows:
  - Environmental action
  - Christian formation and discipleship
  - Growing new congregations
  - Children, young people, and schools
  - Addressing poverty and inequality

- The Deanery Working Party reported back to Synod. There was a discussion, and the following points were recorded in the Synod Minutes:
  - It wasn't very clear how the action points linked to the Contemplative, Compassionate and Courageous Church (the Vision is for a more Christ-like Church becoming C, C & C)
  - It felt a bit like a scatter gun approach
  - Not so much reference to growing congregations
  - Brilliant resources but fails to recognize that churches are struggling to just keep going
  - Big disconnect between the Diocese and local level. Not sure they understand just how hard it is.
  - Contemplative toolkit great but need someone local to run it.
  - Is the perception correct that a lot of money is being spent at the centre, and if not address that perception.
  - There is a disconnect between planning and launching events. The planning is not nearly early enough. Launch event just announced for November (then October) – far too soon.
  - Licensed lay ministers feel under-valued. We should be nurturing and encouraging those who have trained.
  - Need better communication on who is in post.
- I have heard nothing further since, though I have picked up from a zoom meeting involving the Bishop of Reading, that the Diocese are now committed to net zero. But not sure how what this actually means, what work will be required or what it will cost. Will we have to buy Grant an electric car?

#### **Human Sexuality – 'Living in Love and Faith Process'**

- It is clear from another Zoom meeting we were able to join, that the Church is deeply divided on the issues raised in connection with human sexuality.
- It appears to be the case that at present it is left to each Minister to follow his or her own conscience when it comes to matters such as gay blessings or marriages.

Clive Williams, Deanery Synod Representative for Basildon, Ashampstead and Aldworth

# All Churches Together (ACT), Pangbourne & District

## Who are All Churches Together?

St Bernadette's, Pangbourne

St James the Less, Pangbourne

St Laurence, Tidmarsh

St Mary's, Purley on Thames

St Nicholas, Sulham

St Stephen's, Upper Basildon

## What is All Churches Together about?

The family of Christians is made up of all sorts of people with differing personalities and ways of expressing their faith. As a result, there are many different denominations of the Christian Church, with different service structures and ways of doing things, but the same faith. We all share the same desire to serve God and to share with others our experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Just as families flourish from getting to know one another better and meeting up for such occasions as weddings or other significant events, so the different Christian denominations benefit from getting to know each other and joining forces for specific purposes. Each church has its own activities yet flourishes when getting together with others for special occasions and celebrating and witnessing to our unity as Christians by worshipping together.

All Churches Together in Pangbourne & District's activities are planned by a committee of lay people and clergy from each of our participating churches. The ACT year runs from July to June. I have been on the ACT committee for about 4 years. I was elected Chair at the last AGM, June 2023, following Rev Tony Naden's retirement in April 2023. We welcome anyone interested to join the committee – we need new ideas and a fresh perspective! The committee meets quarterly.

## What does All Churches Together do?

In 2023-24

- A Unity service between Ascension and Pentecost 2023. Whilst an annual feature which is well attended, this year we tried a new format - an Agape meal - which was very well received. This was at St Bernadette's with contributions from representatives of all the churches in our district.
- Whitchurch Art Cafe one Saturday, which was successful, so it is planned to continue doing this, as an outreach and fundraiser.
- Annual summer 'Boat Leaflet' distribution to those boats moored at Pangbourne Meadows, on late Saturday afternoons. The leaflet details of all our churches and services, and an invitation to attend. If you would like to help this summer, please let me know.
- Another well-received Advent Service at St James with contributions from all churches in the group.
- Our next event is the Unity service, at St James Pangbourne at 7:30pm on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May. Revd. Jen Green will lead the service. Please make a note of the date and join us.

Rosemary Sandbach, Chair, ACT