



Annual Report

2022

Informal Reports

For the parish church of
St George the Martyr, Wash Common





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Vicar's Introduction



I hope you will enjoy sitting down with a cup of coffee and reading through all the reports shared here from across many different areas of life at St George's in 2022. I'm sure, like me, you will be struck by the huge commitment of so many people in all sorts of different ways. Behind each report are all the volunteers who keep the church clean and tidy, who maintain the building, arrange flowers, order the supplies, meet and greet, serve coffee, produce the rotas, lead the music and singing... the list goes on and on.

At the heart of all this activity is our life of prayer and worship, of gathering at the Lord's table to be fed, hearing and exploring the Scriptures, growing in faith, fellowship and service. The gradual return during 2022 to worship free of all Covid restrictions has felt like coming home.

As we look to the future and take forward the vision and outreach priorities outlined to the congregation in September (see page 7) we need to stay rooted and grounded in the discipline of collective worship, coming to church as regularly as possible to help build the body of Christ by being formed and reformed in the gracious abundant love of God.

Our vision to be a church where we are 'called by God and inspired by Jesus to encourage and equip one another to grow in faith and love, serving the parish of Wash Common, reaching out to all people, especially those in need, and being good and faithful stewards of our gifts and the world's resources' is our motivation and goal as we look to the future in a changing world.

I very much look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, 25 April at 7pm for refreshments ahead of the 7.30pm start of our Annual Parochial Church Meeting. There's much to give thanks for.

Revd Becky Bevan, Vicar



Report of the Proceedings of the PCC

St George's Church is a constituent part of the Benefice of St George and St John Newbury in the Newbury Deanery of the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is St George's Church, 206 Andover Road, Wash Common, Newbury, RG14 6NU. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a charity (number 1133241) registered with the Charity Commission.

St George's Vision Statement

At St George's Church we are called by God and inspired by Jesus to encourage and equip one another to grow in faith and love, serving the community of Wash Common, reaching out to all people, especially those in need, and being good and faithful stewards of our gifts and the world's resources.

Responsibilities and Purposes

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, in promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. As the parish church of Wash Common, we have a special responsibility to be active in supporting and encouraging the community life of the parish, helping those in need and offering pastoral services. The PCC has overall responsibility for the church, St George's Centre and St Luke's Chapel situated on the same land. Safeguarding, Health and Safety and GDPR compliance are key responsibilities of the PCC.

PCC Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

During the year the following served as members of the PCC:

Incumbent	Revd Becky Bevan
Associate Vicar	Revd Gary Collins
Curate	Revd Julie Howell (until August 2022)
Associate Priest	Revd Terry Winrow

Wardens	John Huckle Rita Gardner
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Representatives on the Deanery Synod

Philip Read
Ronnie Herd
Kathy Winrow

Elected members	Emma Moffatt Ronnie Herd (Standing Committee) Robin Clugston Linda Ling (Standing Committee) Kim Tiley John Gardner Philip Read
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	Sarah Pook
	John Bolan
Co-opted	Revd Rita Ball
Safeguarding Officer	Kathy Winrow
Secretary	Mary-Ann Ferneley
Treasurer	Francis Clayton

Organisational Structure

Working with the incumbent, the PCC is the elected leadership team of the Church ensuring full compliance with charity and ecclesiastical law as well as helping St George's to fulfil its aims and objectives. The Standing Committee has delegated powers to conduct PCC business between meetings – this committee is made up of incumbent, licensed clergy, churchwardens, PCC secretary, treasurer, and two elected members of the PCC. It met 6 times during 2022. A Safeguarding sub-group of the PCC, led by the Safeguarding Officer, ensures that the PCC's full commitment to excellence in this area is delivered. Additionally, there are 7 Working Groups of the PCC, which meet at least termly and report to the PCC: Communications; Children and Youth; Facilities and Fabric; Finance, Funding and Giving; Nurturing Faith; Pastoral Care Co-ordination; Worship and Liturgy.

Risk Assessment

The PCC is required to give consideration both to the major risks to which it is exposed, and to systems designed to mitigate those risks. The major risks requiring comment are summarised in line with the recommendations in the document 'The Charities Act 1993 and the PCC: The duties of the PCC', section 1.43.

Financial risk

Reporting to the PCC, the Finance, Funding and Giving Working Group, manages all financial dealings of the church and Centre and provides regular, updated reports for the PCC. These are in the form of management accounts, which are produced monthly. These detail actual income and expenditure, and a forecasted monthly cash flow for the total year versus the budget.

The treasurer, who leads the Working Group, provides detailed financial reports at every Standing Committee and PCC meeting and answers any questions related to the financial health of the church. The Church's Cash Handling Policy is reviewed annually by the PCC and implemented throughout the charity. In 2022 a new policy 'Expenditure Commitment and Gifts Policy' was adopted by the PCC.

It is the policy of the PCC to hold minimum cash balances of £20,000 for the church and £10,000 for the Centre. At any time of the year, if the cash flow forecasts show that either of these balances is expected to fall below the minimum figure, the treasurer must inform the PCC and explain the circumstances.

Reputational Risk and Publicity

The church publicises much of its work via the St George's website and Facebook page. With the move to online services and digital communications increasing since the pandemic, care has been taken to assess our position with copyright and GDPR. Our licence with CCLI has been duly updated and renewed for the changed circumstances. Throughout 2022 we have moved to livestreaming services. To protect the privacy of those who do not wish to appear on camera, clear signs are displayed in church indicating that services are broadcast and advising where to sit to be out of camera shot. No close-ups of members of the congregation are shown. Newsletters are regularly distributed, and the local press and local

radio stations used for special events or news. Advertising is also used, usually to promote fundraising events and seasonal services.

A key responsibility of the incumbent and PCC is to ensure that the reputation of St George's is not compromised in any way because of publicity and external communications. There is contact with the Diocesan Communications Department to keep up to date with the changing responsibilities in this area.

During the year, the Wash Commoner magazine was published three times, online and in printed editions with the Christmas issue delivered to around 2000 homes in the parish. The magazine accepts local articles and adverts and carries a disclaimer about the views expressed in the magazine.

Our GDPR privacy and data policy, which is reviewed annually, is published on our website. In March 2022 the PCC further adopted a Social Media Policy based on guidelines from the Oxford Diocese.

Statutory and Legal Requirements

Great care is taken to ensure that the PCC satisfies all statutory and legal needs related to St George's Church and Centre. The major aspects are in health and safety, safeguarding, cash handling, security, GDPR and personnel.

Duties of the PCC Members

All PCC members are aware of their legal and statutory responsibilities as Trustees of a charity as well as other obligations as leaders in the church. All new PCC members receive a document summarising the expectations of PCC members, and the responsibilities of trustees.

Health and Safety

Working within the parameters of our Health & Safety Policy all buildings within the St George's complex are regularly inspected by certain PCC members and by professional safety personnel to ensure that a safe environment exists. Emphasis is given to kitchens, fire safety, gas and electricity supplies. Fire extinguishers are tested annually by external professionals.

Safeguarding

In May 2022 the PCC reviewed and approved the Church's Safeguarding Policy and Kathy Winrow was re-appointed as St George's Safeguarding Officer. At every meeting a report is received from the Safeguarding Officer. The Safeguarding Group has ensured St George's is fully compliant with all aspects of safeguarding, using Oxford Diocese guidelines. All PCC members have received Safeguarding Training. The DBS register is kept up to date and volunteer agreements are being completed. During 2021/22 the Oxford Diocese introduced Parish Safeguarding Dashboards which were outlined to the PCC and reviewed throughout the year, being updated regularly to ensure excellence in this area.

Security

CCTV is fitted externally on site to deter vandalism and theft. Signs are posted to alert visitors of its use.

Operational Risk

All church buildings are fully insured with Ecclesiastical Insurance against all likely risks. This company specialises in the insurance of church buildings, including church halls. Regular examinations of both the internal and external structures take place, and preventative maintenance ensures that the buildings are kept in the best possible condition.

Activities of the PCC

The full PCC met six times during 2022 and was pleased to be able to meet in person after the interruptions caused by the pandemic. One member joined meetings via a Zoom link. Typical attendance at meetings throughout the year was over 75 per cent.

There was a PCC away morning on 17 September to look at our vision and outreach priorities to help the church to build back after Covid.

Key focus areas for the PCC in 2022 have been:

- **Exploring the possibility of becoming a three-church benefice with St Michael and All Angels, Enborne.**

Over the past year the relationship with St Michael's has developed while the process of the formal reorganisation takes its course. The Enborne Task Group (ETG), commissioned by the PCCs of St George's and St John's to undertake due diligence regarding St Michael's becoming part of the benefice, reported to the PCCs in 2022 with the recommendation that we support the formal proposed reorganisation. Following the full report from the St George's and St John's ETG the PCC approved the Draft Pastoral Re-organisation Measure received from the Diocese in November 2022, with one caveat, that the name of the new benefice be the South Newbury Benefice of St George, St John and St Michael.

- **Vision and outreach priorities.**

The PCC worked throughout 2022 on ways to encourage and support the return to normal parish life after all the interruptions caused by Covid seeking to make the most of what we have learnt and by building on any new positive changes. Additionally, the PCC stepped back to assess and review our overall vision and priorities as we look to the future.

A review took place of the existing Vision Statement and of the 6 overarching mission and outreach priorities. We agreed to simplify the Statement as follows:

At St George's Church we are called by God and inspired by Jesus to:

Encourage and equip one another to grow in faith and love;

Serve the community of Wash Common, reaching out to all people, especially those in need;

Be good and faithful stewards of our gifts and assets and of the world's resources.

Following a PCC Away Day, the following priorities were agreed for 2022-2024 in pursuit of this vision:

1. To serve the community of Wash Common in the current economic climate by offering a warm welcome community café at St George's.
2. To reach out to all people by a) investing further in our ministry with children and families, and to explore recruitment of a part-time paid Children and Families worker to add to our existing provision; b) to identify ways to improve our welcome, inclusion and hospitality at services and events.
3. To be good and faithful stewards of our gifts and assets by a) supporting the neighbouring parish of St Michael's Enborne to find a sustainable future; b) by renovating the exterior of St George's to ensure that it is fit for the future and to develop the outside area around the church as a green and biodiverse space to be enjoyed by people and wildlife.
4. To be more deliberate, open, and active in encouraging volunteering and generous giving in support of these priorities.

Throughout the year, St George's saw encouraging signs of growth and renewal after two difficult years. Services returned to a familiar pattern and format, with the gradual easing of Covid safety measures from March onwards. Livestreaming of services began in February,

removing the need for clergy to record separate services. This has worked very well and has settled into a usual online viewing figure of 30 – 40. Attendance on Sundays increased gradually during 2022 and in recent months is almost back to pre-pandemic levels. This is especially encouraging given the general statistics relating to post-Covid decline in church attendance reported nationally.

During 2022, 21 funerals and interments of ashes were taken by St George's clergy. There were 13 baptisms, and 1 wedding conducted at St George's.

All the church seasons were marked in full with services, study and fellowship groups, and social events returned in full as well as a church pilgrimage to the Oberammergau Passion Play in Germany and a walking pilgrimage across Somerset to Bristol Cathedral.

Along with the full provision of opportunities for worship, our provision for children and young people has gone from strength to strength, including a very successful Holiday Club. Groups met throughout the year on Sunday mornings, and in the evening for older teenagers. On Wednesdays our Toddler Group has been as popular as ever.

A huge amount of work has been undertaken during 2022 to ensure our facilities are in good order, including addressing issues with the ground source heat pump, and replacement of light bulbs at high level in the church.

We were delighted to begin a warm welcome café in December and look forward to this continuing to develop over the coming year.

At the end of 2022 our PCC Secretary Mary-Ann Ferneley stepped down from the role. The PCC thanked her for her dedication and support throughout her years as Secretary. She will be greatly missed.

It is thanks to the dedication, commitment, and generosity of volunteers in all areas of church life, and to a benefice clergy team who have worked together effectively and fruitfully to serve our parishes that we can look to the future with hope. Our vision to be a church where we 'are called by God and inspired by Jesus to encourage and equip one another to grow in faith and love, serving the community of Wash Common, reaching out to all people, especially those in need, and being good and faithful stewards of our gifts and the world's resources' is our motivation and goal as we look to the future in a changing world.

This report was approved by the members of the PCC on 14 March 2023 at the PCC meeting and signed on their behalf by Revd Becky Bevan.

Electoral Roll report

In line with Church Representation Rules, the Electoral Roll was updated and posted at least 14 days ahead of the APCM.

There are 195 names on it this year, up from 188 last year.

Margaret Blaine, Electoral Roll Officer

Sidespeople

The end of Covid measures has allowed arrangements for stewarding at the Sunday morning 9.30am service to return to normal. I would like to thank the Sidespeople for their flexibility and patience over the pandemic period.

The following have acted as Sidespeople during 2022/23: Phillip Bevan, Alex Brown, Rebecca Foster, Elizabeth Hanning, Helena Herd, Linda Ling and Eila Orr.

We currently have fewer sidespeople than we have traditionally had. It is an important role, providing a welcoming friendly face at services and it would be good to have some new recruits to the team. If anyone would be interested in becoming a Sidesperson please contact me or Revd Becky.

Ronnie Herd

Safeguarding

Safeguarding runs through all aspects of church life and everyone has a responsibility for the safeguarding of others.

Safeguarding team consists of Kathy Winrow, (Parish Safeguarding Officer), Jon Houghton and Kavashni Bamfield. All three members are experienced in safeguarding and trained appropriately. We meet approximately 6 times per year and report to every PCC meeting. We work in line with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidelines. PCCs are formally obliged to report to the APCM on whether or not the PCC has complied with the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Key areas of focus in 2022-2023 were;

DBS Checks - Currently there are 40 people on the register. We are required to update these so there is a regular review every three years.

Training - Online training at the appropriate level has been completed by all members of the PCC, Pastoral Working Group, Young People leaders, those working with vulnerable adults, some choir members and the Benefice Office Manager.

To date, Basic level (23), Foundation (13), Leadership (7), Safer Recruitment (1), Domestic Abuse (4)

All members of PCC are required to complete both Basic and Foundation levels.

Tracking Documents - Working Group Leaders are required to update the safeguarding tracking documents which include details of training, role outlines, and volunteer agreements. These are reviewed by the Safeguarding team.

A Safeguarding Dashboard - was introduced by the Diocese in 2021-2 to ensure all parishes fulfil the expectations of the National Safeguarding Team. There are 3 levels of engagement. We have successfully completed all 3 levels – well ahead of most parishes. The dashboard requires responses on Policies and Action Plans, Procedures, Roles, Reviews and Reports, church activities, displayed information, non-church information, safer recruitment and people management. The workload is demanding but beneficial. The PCC have been updated on actions taken. Kathy Winrow and Revd Becky can interact with the dashboard. Jon Houghton can access. The dashboard is regularly reviewed and updated by the Diocese and at our Safeguarding meetings.

Church Action Plan - The dashboard generates an Action Plan which is reviewed and updated by the Safeguarding Team and reported to PCC.

Advice - There have been several enquiries for advice since the last APCM. Individuals have been supported by the PSO. There has not been any reason to report to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Next Steps - To update the section on a Safer Recruitment (including training). To produce a succession plan and recruit appropriate people to the Team including a PSO by the end of 2023/start of 2024.

Kathy Winrow - Parish Safeguarding Officer

Churchwardens' Report

Church Fabric

Work on the fabric is covered in more detail elsewhere but there are a few points to emphasise:

The ground source heat pumps are being monitored and we are in communication with Nicholls to develop a way forward with the system and, we hope, no more failures.

Failure of the ground source heat pumps means we have to revert to the gas boiler to heat the church which increases our expenses as well as having a higher impact on the environment.

The lighting has been restored but the solution is short term. A long-term solution needs to be sought and then funded.

The guttering work around the Annexe area should be regarded as a necessary precursor to any work on the decoration of the outside of the church.

Decorating the outside of the church will be an expensive activity and once the appropriate solution found will need significant fundraising activity.

Volunteers have given up two Saturday mornings to clean up the church and grounds and we are grateful to them.

Inventory and Terrier

- **Furnishings, Ornaments and Service Materials**

Older chairs have been dismantled. The upholstered seats and backs, which were quite worn and stained will be discarded. The metal frames will be sold for scrap.

Sacristy and service items are accounted for. Ornaments are in good order and are in designated places.

- **Terrier**

St Luke's Chapel, hired by New Era Players, has had its contract updated. This step fulfils an obligation by St George's, as a charity, to ensure that the assets belonging to the church are properly managed. New Era manages the maintenance and this is reflected in the rental charge.

Review

- **Clergy Visits**

The Assistant Archdeacon, Liz Jackson, led the Visitation at St Nicholas Church, Newbury, in June 2022. This service officially admits the annually elected churchwardens.

Revd Julie Howell's last service in the South Newbury Benefice was in September 2022. She has taken up her new post in Hampshire. Her leaving service in Newbury and licensing service in Hurstborne Tarrant were moving moments.

The unique benefice service of Forest Church, conducted by Fr Gary of St John's, was held outdoors several times this year at St Michael and All Angels in Enborne.

Our clergy-led Advent and Lent groups are held in church, a change from being led in homes of parishioners. Those attending have found the sessions enjoyable and giving good thought for contemplation.

Health and Safety

The H&S Policies are reviewed and updated regularly. Accident and 'near miss' forms are in plastic wallets on bulletin boards in the lobbies of the church, office and hall.

There have been no serious incidents reported this year.

Social

The events group have been able to schedule the annual fundraising activities. The Murder Mystery in October, Christmas Concert in December, and Themed Quiz in January were well attended and joyful gatherings. An added event was a celebratory lunch in the hall for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee - an exuberant atmosphere prevailed. Her death in September was duly commemorated.

Holiday Club was a 'limited edition' which ran for 3 days and had 50+ children in attendance. As usual, it was a tremendous success.

Pilgrimage is a part of worship at St George's, but also a time for social comradeship. The annual August trek was from Somerset to Bristol Cathedral; the theme was 'Following the Wesleys'. There is a usually a monthly pilgrimage walk from St John's to St Michael's on the last Saturday of the month.

The Monday Meet, on the third Monday of each month, at the Bowlers Arms is well attended. There is usually a speaker, but when not, we just speak to each other!

The convivial Lent Lunches - simple soup and bread - had good attendance. Donations went to Christian Aid.

For a chat and a cup of coffee or tea, there is the morning Warm Welcome Café on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 am until noon (recently Friday has changed to 1.30pm – 4.30pm). To date customer numbers have not been high but there a number of regular customers.

Every third Tuesday there is a Friendship Tea at 2 pm in the Large Meeting Room.

(A heartfelt thanks to all who organise and contribute time to create these events.)

Congregational update

The congregational numbers on a Sunday are back to pre-Covid attendance. Regretfully, a few former members have not returned, some have moved away or into care and sadly some have died. We have been delighted to welcome many new people to St George's. New attendees are invited to join our mailing list and be added to the electoral roll.

The Benefice Contemplative Prayer Group is held weekly at St John's on a Thursday at 6pm. Morning Prayer at St George's is held at 8.45am on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. All are welcome to join these prayer sessions. An afternoon Eucharist is held at 2pm on Thursday.

The Prayer Ministry during the Sunday Service, after Communion, is soon to return. It is a listening time for those with concerns to be prayed for.

The notices for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 25 April 2023 were duly posted in the church lobby.

Thankfulness

Our thanks go to Ann Edmonds and her team of flower arrangers who work so hard to create and maintain the beautiful floral displays in the church throughout the year. This included a flower festival with some magnificent displays created to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

A sense of gratitude goes to Margaret Blaine for tackling the papers that were kept in the campanile. She and Bruce have taken the PCC Minutes of previous years to the Berkshire Records Office. Past copies of The Wash Commoner are stored in the flower vestry for archival reference.

An encompassing thanks to all in the congregation who do so much to create a welcoming and lively ambience to the church. The time and the talents of all are enormously valued.

The administrative and financial undertakings by Alex and Francis are significant; we are blessed with their steadfastness.

To Becky and Terry thank you for the cure of our spirit; the thought that goes into the content of your sermons is truly appreciated. The support of the retired clergy is a gift - gratefulness to Rita Ball, George Carey and Tom Moffatt.

From Rita G: a heartfelt thank you to all who have made my churchwarden experience an adventure. The support has given me an unforeseen opportunity for growth. Norma Murray and Simon Pook were helpfully kind as I gained my footing in learning the role. Becky was patient as I vacillated on misgivings as to whether I was able to do well enough. My husband, John G, supported my wish to complete the six-year commitment, despite some doubts. It has been a pleasure to share the role with John Huckle; he steps up to all the plates with willingness. His dry humour has helped when keeping tasks in sensible perspective.

From John H: my personal thanks go to Rita for all the help she has extended to me as I learnt the tasks involved in being a Churchwarden, particularly as the definition of 'normal' has changed over the last three years! It was a pleasure working with her. I am looking forward to welcoming her successor as churchwarden and I hope that I can find them as easy to work with.



Rita Gardner and John Huckle



Worship and Liturgy Working Group

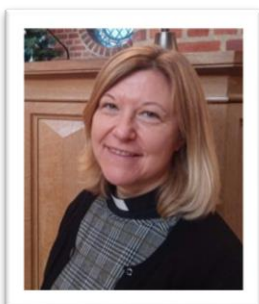
The aim of this group is to plan, review and develop our Sunday and weekday worship. This includes all aspects of worship from logistics and practicalities to liturgical considerations and music. The Group meets 4-5 times a year.

The members of the group are Revd Becky (facilitator), Revd Terry, Robert Bigg, Jenny Blakeley, Helen Tuck and Elizabeth Pook.

During 2022 we were able to get back to normal after the interruptions of Covid, with the return of communion in both kinds and the reintroduction of the chalice. Numbers attending services on Sundays began to increase, though attendance at both Easter and Christmas services was affected by on-going cases of Covid. Our 9.30am service has continued to be livestreamed and is much appreciated by those unable to get to church.

The Thursday Eucharist which has a small but faithful congregation met throughout the year. The zoom Wednesday evening prayer service which began in 2020 ended in the summer of 2022. Morning Prayer took place Wednesday to Friday in church throughout the year, along with a benefice Zoom service on Tuesday mornings.

In addition to the full range of seasonal worship, various special services were held in 2022 including services to mark the Queen's jubilee, and her death in September. The annual Memorial Service took place in October, an outdoor Act of Remembrance followed the eucharist on Remembrance Sunday and was attended by around 200 including Wash Common's Uniformed Organisations.



The benefice came together for a special service on 4 September to bid farewell to our curate Revd Julie Howell who had completed her three years training to move on to her first post of responsibility.

Occasional Offices

During 2022, 21 funerals and interment of ashes were taken by St George's clergy. There were 13 baptisms and one wedding.

Baptism Team – our baptisms are very well supported by a team of lay people, organised by Heather Rasman, who offer practical support to the clergy conducting services and a warm welcome to all who attend.

Children and Young People

Strategy Group. This group was formed to oversee the implementation of the CYP Strategy agreed by the PCC in 2019. Much has been achieved and a new strategic plan will be presented to PCC later in the year.

There are two areas of focus still remaining; provision for Early Years during Sunday worship, and appointment of a Children and Families Worker.

Sarah Pook initiated support for Early Years at the end of February 2023. There is a team of volunteers all of whom are DBS checked ready to welcome children into Star Club on Sunday mornings.

A small group has formed to consider preparations for appointing a Children and Families Worker. It is anticipated this position will be a paid part-time worker with a priority of strengthening links with young families.

Justacross consists of young people aged 13-18, who meet with Terry & Kathy on a regular basis every other Sunday evening at their home. Attendance averages between 6 and 12 – one never knows! Five members left for University in September and another is preparing for A levels with the expectation of University this September.

There is an overlap with CIA and younger members may join later in the year. There has been a varied programme of activities including serious discussions as well as fun evenings and always food! Examples of our discussions are, 'Is the Bible sexist?', 'The problem of Evil', 'Family focus', 'Mental Health', as well as Foodbank support, Christmas dinner, Pancake making etc. The group was very involved in preparations for the annual Holiday Club

Special Services. The youngsters contribute regularly to All Age services as well as special events. They were responsible for producing and presenting at Harvest, Christmas, Mothering Sunday and during Holy Week.



CIA/Sunday Club. The two groups meet in the LMR (SC) and the Breakout Room (CIA) each week. Currently SC is small in number as five Year 7 youngsters moved up to CIA in September. Over the two groups, numbers average 10 young people each week. Two of our young people will be baptized in June.

There is a team of 4 leaders – Derek Orr, Kim Tiley, Sarah Pook who recently stepped down to run Star Club, and Kathy Winrow. The latter prepares for both groups based on weekly themes from the Lectionary.



Holiday Club. In February we ran a 2-day Holiday Club called 'Creative Curiosity' just for church children focused on an Easter theme. Some of the output was then on display during Holy Week. Then the main Club returned in the Summer for 3 days with 50 children attending and a team of 30 volunteers including Justacross. We decided to limit numbers this year but were thrilled to have 5 Ukrainian children among them.

The Hall was transformed into our 'Wonder Zone' celebrating our theme of 'Curiosity Chasers' engaging their curiosity in fun and learning ranging from simple games to experiments with photosynthesis, splitting light with prisms, shadow puppets, learning braille and the solar system. All focused around the wisdom of Solomon, the parable of the Lost Son, the healing of a blind man and Jesus as the light of the world.

Whole Church Focus. Children and young people are the church of today. Their spiritual development is as important as their physical, emotional, and academic development. As a church we continue to pledge to encourage and value each one of them.

Kathy Winrow

Tiddlers and Toddlers

Tiddlers and Toddlers meets weekly every Wednesday morning in term time in the Church Hall. We cater for children, newborns to four years old, and their parents, grandparents, carers, childminders and nannies.

In the last year we have registered 150 children, with an average weekly attendance of 38 children. We provide a large space for free play, a weekly craft, singing, musical instruments and an outside play space.

Twice a year – at Christmas and Easter - we go into the Church where Revd Becky gives a little talk and to enjoy some singing.



It has been a busy year; our highlight was a celebration of the Late Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a Royal Party and tea where each child received a commemorative book.

As part of the Late Queen's Green Canopy initiative, a crab apple tree was planted in the Church grounds by Tiddlers and Toddlers.



The Toddler group would not be such a success without the team of volunteers who give their time, weekly, fortnightly or monthly. The parents frequently thank us for all that the team do to make Wednesday mornings fun for the children. A special thank you to our Volunteer Team: Revd Becky, Katrina Jones, Eila Orr, Sarah Pook, Carol Melville, Rita Gardner, Sandra Goodyear, Val Bolan, Sandra Harris, Pat Burgess, Janet Higgins, Heather Rasman, Emma Moffatt,

Frances Rayson, Phil Bevan, Mary Bishop, Elizabeth Pook, Alex Brown and Revd Terry.

We are always on the lookout for helpers, to attend the sessions, make cakes, tidy up, anything you would like to do would be appreciated.

Helena Herd

Choir and Music Group

2022 began with John Kane in the post of Musical Director overseeing the music used in our services and leading our choir. Before Easter and following a recruitment, process Mike Harris was offered and accepted the post of organist to assist John in taking forward our music following the difficulties caused by the pandemic.

As Covid restrictions were eased it became possible for the choir to begin to function again, initially singing behind face masks! Gradually singing was able to return to normal and the choir and congregation could enjoy music in its normal format.

During the year it became clear that pressures of work were making it extremely difficult for John to fulfil his role as Musical Director. He therefore stood back from doing so and Mike agreed to take over responsibility for the choir during the period leading up to Christmas. Following a request during one of the morning services several people agreed to swell the

numbers in the choir which resulted in a very pleasing contribution from the choir in the Christmas Concert.

In February one of the choir members arranged for opera tenor Jeff Stewart to come to the church and lead an all-day session on how people can get the most out of their singing voice. The session was well attended by members of St George's as well as by members of other church choirs. It gave renewed confidence to singers and helped to carry forward the commitment of the choir.

Mike has continued to look after the choir who have now returned to singing anthems during services and (with extra members) will be singing The Crucifixion by Stainer on Good Friday.

Mike Harris

Nurturing Faith Working Group

This group meets 4 or 5 times per year to plan, prepare and review nurturing faith activities and resources. Members are Revd Becky, Revd Terry, Revd Rita, Elizabeth Pook and Kathy Winrow (Facilitator). Sandra Harris has recently stepped down from the group so we are looking to extend the team. Please speak to Kathy Winrow if you can help. Fresh ideas would be good.

Living in Love and Faith. Some of the groups continued last summer after a positive start earlier in the year. Bishop Steven's reflections 'Together in Love and Faith' was shared with Group Leaders.

The resources provided by the national church were well used. People gave very positive feedback including how safe they felt in the small groups.

Advent Course: Three sessions were held in church reflecting on the themes, Faithful, Watchful and Obedient.

Pilgrim: The Pilgrim group meets on a monthly basis led by Kathy Winrow. Following a focus on Jesus' parables earlier in the year we turned our attention to 'Women of Courage', including Lydia, Tabitha/Dorcas and Mary. The group then identified themes they wished to pursue relevant to daily life – Guilt, Anxiety, Prayer, Thankfulness. Part of the programme is an occasional meal out with 12 people recently enjoying a Chinese.

Lent 2023 Two groups met – Tuesday morning and Thursday evening. Both were well attended with over 30 people in total. The focus was on 'Meeting Jesus' starting with the Temptations, and considering his response to Nicodemus, the Woman at the Well and the man born blind.

Thank you to all who have joined this journey. If you want to know more, offer suggestions or assist leading a group please speak to me.

Kathy Winrow



'As I have loved you, love one another ...'

Pastoral Care Co-ordination Group

Members: Revd Terry Winrow (Facilitator), Revd Becky Bevan, Elizabeth Pook. Cathie Read, Avril Bainbridge.

The team meets on a fortnightly basis. Pastoral care is all our responsibility. This group exists to co-ordinate and monitor pastoral care in 4 specific key areas.

Maintain the bonds of church community through Home Communion. This ministry is primarily aimed at the permanently housebound or those who may be temporarily housebound due to illness and unable to attend regular services. There are approximately 6 people receiving home communion at any time, varying between a weekly and monthly visit.

Keep an eye out for those facing new and challenging circumstances. Primarily illness / accident who may just need a pastoral visit / phone call, but with a specific focus also on the recently bereaved. Condolence cards are sent immediately we are notified, followed by calls and a further card on the anniversary of a bereavement.

Try to ensure we demonstrate to everyone how we value each individual. This is about maintaining a focus, as far as is practical, on the individual as well as maintain the integrity of the St George's community. It entails a regular review of any we may not have seen for some weeks and following this up with a phone call to check all is OK.

A specific focus is also placed on new members of the congregation to ensure we encourage and monitor their integration into the community with a sense of 'belonging'.

When necessary a 'Welcome Meeting' is organised to provide new members with more information. One such meeting was held on 5th March 2023

Services in the Community The team co-ordinate and deliver services in the community, specifically at Falkland Grange Care Home and the Priory Cloisters High Dependency Rehabilitation Unit. Small teams are organised involving other members of the congregation and the services are held on a monthly basis.

Revd Terry Winrow

Foodbank collections at St George's

Throughout 2022 the collection point in the church cloisters has been well supported. At Harvest we saw a record level of giving. Our thanks go to Phillip Bevan for delivering the collection on a weekly basis to the warehouse at Greenham Park.

Donations to other Charities

Throughout 2022 we supported our usual charities – Christian Aid, The Children's Society, West Berkshire Homeless and the Soup Kitchen, and donated to the DEC in response to the war in Ukraine.

Due to the financial pressures created by the pandemic less was given than in a normal year, our aim is to return to former levels of giving in 2023.



Welcome Café

In the autumn of 2022, the PCC decided that St George's should open a Warm Hub café. We would be using our building, which is heated in an environmentally friendly manner by a ground source heat pump, to offer a place for anyone who wanted a warm space or some company. A team was put together to set up the café, which was named the Welcome Café.

The Welcome Café opened its doors at the end of November, initially in the Large Meeting Room (due to some challenges with the heating in the church) but subsequently in the North Meeting Room (the glassed area to the left of the altar at the front of the church).

A large number of people have been involved in making the Café a success. We have over 20 people who volunteer to serve in the Café, along with other people who helped in setting up the café or who have donated biscuits or baked cakes. We serve freshly brewed fairtrade filter coffee and tea along with biscuits and, sometimes, cakes. Local company, Apple Print & Creative have very generously donated the trolley that we use, all of the initial signage and leaflets. We have publicised the Café on our own website and those listing warm-hubs and with leaflets, and Linda Ling has been interviewed about the Café on Kennet Radio. We now open from 9.00am – 12.00pm on Mondays and Wednesdays, and 1.30pm – 4.30pm on Fridays.

Attendance has been building up and we can have up to 20 people per day visit the Café. The Welcome Café is more than a warm hub, it provides a welcoming meeting place for church people and Wash Common residents with no connection to the church alike. We hope that the number of visitors will continue to build and it is planned that the Welcome Café will continue all year round as part of St George's service to the community.

I would like to give my very warm thanks to everyone who has been involved in setting up, running and supporting the Welcome Café.

Ronnie Herd



Followship and the Community

Social Events

2022 was the year in which people began returning to live social events, following two largely barren years of the pandemic.

In February, the Themed Quiz returned - the theme was based on the film The Full Monty and the winning table received a hamper of Yorkshire foods.



In June, a Queen's Jubilee Party was held in the Church Hall (at short notice as the weather forecast for the car park was looking a bit iffy) and over one hundred people attended. Games were organised for the children, there was singing from the choir and a giant conga weaved its way around the tables.



In the same month, concert goers enjoyed listening to the sounds of the Summer Serenade, whilst tucking into their strawberries and Pimms.



In the Autumn, the St George's Radio Players entertained us with their latest Murder Mystery play - this time three tables guessed 'Who did it'.

Finally, in December a mixture of choirs, musicians and singers took part in the annual Christmas Concert in the church. The audience enjoyed mulled wine in the interval and all the proceeds were donated to the West Berkshire Homeless charity.



Not all social events are intended to raise funds, but those that did raised over £4,500 in total.

The split was as follows:

Themed Quiz	£1,181
Summer Serenade	£875
Murder Mystery play	£1,655
Christmas Concert	£842

Susan and Peter Wright

Community Festival

St George's once again joined the community festival which took place at Falkland Cricket Ground on 10th September. This has fast made itself a regular feature on the Wash Common calendar.

We were delighted to welcome many people for a chat and to help entertain their children for a while.



The Monday Meet

After two greatly disrupted years, The Monday Meet was able to hold a full programme of events for 2022-23. As a reminder of what we'd missed, we celebrated Christmas in May and were treated to a splendid talk from Thomas Forrester, who enlightened us with tales from his time on TV's 'Bargain Hunt'.

The focus for June was recycling. The Thatcham Refillable founders, Tom and Jenny Kirby, provided insights into how we can lessen our impact on the environment with their range of household cleaning and personal care products.



The annual Three Pubs Walk took place in July 2022, with a small band of travellers gathering at St George's Church on a blisteringly hot evening (37°C at the time of departure). Visits included The Swan in Newtown, The Woodpecker in Wash Water, finishing up at The Bowler's Arms. The walk was reprised in August.

In September, Chris Barnes of Greenham Bees delivered a superb talk about what it means to be a local beekeeper with fascinating insights into the lives of these extraordinary creatures and a taste of their delicious produce.

Forty folks gathered in October to hear a brilliant presentation from Becky Bevan and Alison Gill as they reflected on their visit to Oberammergau earlier this year. They did a magnificent job of combining the spiritual, the theatrical and the factual, leaving us with plenty on which to reflect about the extraordinary world in which we live.

November saw Linda Ling delivering a fabulous talk entitled *Motoring and Mobility*, where she presented the remarkable technologies available to enable a continuation of motoring when illness, injuring or aging might otherwise prevent people from enjoying the use of their cars.



We had our second Christmas supper of the year in the more conventional month of December at The Bowler's Arms, where guests were beautifully looked after by Richard Hayman and his team who prepared a healthy supply of treats for us throughout the evening. Revd Tom Moffatt kept the audience entertained and led a rousing carol session.

The new year kicked off with Peter Wright providing an animated talk on the 2022 St George's pilgrimage, between St Cuthbert's Church in Osborne and Bristol Cathedral, with Peter highlighting the great scenery that was experienced by the walkers, the indulgence in hearty fare, the shared faith, and the great company amongst the band of travellers.

On 20 February 2023, Carole Neal delivered a talk on the work of the Charlie Waller Trust which seeks to improve young people's understanding of their mental health and wellbeing and to equip them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to look out for themselves, their friends and those around them.

Our most recent meeting, Tandem Travels Around the World, featured Neil and Maggie Taylor giving a fascinating talk about their 30 years of adventures on a tandem bike. We were in awe of their bravery, heading off with only their outward flight ticket and first night's accommodation. They answered a host of questions from the floor, with many an interesting and hair-raising anecdote.

Average attendance for the year was 30.4 guests, with the Christmas suppers proving the most popular events and the weather conspiring against us for the Three Pubs Walk evenings.

I'm delighted to report that the Monday Meet also donated over £1,000 to speakers' charities over the year under review.

Forthcoming events

Date	Event	Speaker
15 May 2023	Building a new house – The Architect's Tale,	Phil Bevan
19 June 2023	Musings on Modern Art,	Gary Collins
17 July 2023	Three Pubs Walk	



And finally, a Facebook page was also created for The Monday Meet which is beginning to build a wider awareness in the community as a result. You can find it using the QR code – go on, try it!

Craig Brown

The Friendship Group

During 2022 the group met monthly for chat, games, and tea and cake. All are welcome to come along to meetings on the third Tuesday of each month. Speak to Sandra Goodyear, Norma Murray or Rita Gardner for more information.

Lent lunches for Christian Aid

In 2022 we enjoyed gathering in person for our Lent lunches and enjoyed simple soup lunches and fellowship to support the work of Christian Aid. Most weeks saw over 20 people attending and we raised over £500.

Greek course

It is a delight to teach one of the biblical languages! Koiné Greek is the language of the New Testament and I have six keen and very bright pupils in the second year of our course. It is not an easy language to learn, but through repetition and homework a high standard may be reached. This is the case for my learners! I am honoured to teach and, indirectly, learn from them.

George Carey

The Community Service Payback Scheme

We are grateful to this scheme and to Chris Gwynn for the wonderful work which has been carried out during 2022 to keep the outside of the church and hall looking in good order.

St George's Mothers' Union, Wash Common Branch

Branch Meetings: Members and their guests meet on the first Tuesday of the month in the Large Meeting Room at St George's Church at 2pm and enjoy a programme of speakers, discussions, bible study and a garden party in July; thank you Cathie. Everyone is invited to Mothers' Union meetings.

Speakers included members Emma Moffatt - Adventures with Mothers' Union and Carole Neal - Charlie Waller Mental Health Charity, and guests Revd Gary- a personal journey, Alison Bennet - Hospital project, Mary Lennard - Wash Common library, Revd Becky and Alison Gill - St George's pilgrimage to Oberammergau. Grateful thanks to all our speakers.

Membership: Members attended the funeral of Rosemary Higginson in February, a faithful member of Mothers' Union for many years and fondly remembered. The branch recruited and welcomed three new members.

Supporting Diocesan Projects: Lots of knitting by members, often at short notice especially for Baby Basics and Children Heard and Seen; coffee, tea and practical items provided for parents of seriously ill children who stay in the new Ronald McDonald house at John Radcliffe Hospital; an excellent team who supported the MU Oxford Diocese AGM and Autumn meeting in Benson in October by providing refreshments for 80+ attendees; financial support for AFIA. Some branch members attended the Diocesan Quiet Day in March at Wantage Convent and the Lady Day Service in Witney in March; Wave of Prayer in April in St George's Church; Val attended the Mothers' Union Conference in Liverpool Hope University in July, as an Oxford Diocese Trustee.

Fundraising: the annual bring and buy table in February and March contributed £135 for Make a Mothers' Day Appeal, and £100 was raised for Summer of Hope. Both are National appeals which provide practical help for women around the world. A financial contribution was sent to MU Overseas fund for Literacy and Financial Education Project and MU Diocesan General Fund. Members continue to buy cards and other items from MU, thank you Sandra for purchasing them on our behalf. Members contribute £2 per meeting attended to cover costs and support the MU Charities.

Branch Committee: Elected at the ABM Branch Leader: Val Bolan, Secretary; Gwyneth Stevenson, Treasurer: Sandra Goodyear, Revd Rita Ball, Heather Rasman, Frances Rayson, Sandra Harris.

Mission: Mothers' Union is a Christian Charity, with a mission to bring about a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships.

www.muoxford.org.uk
www.mothersunion.org

Gwyneth Stevenson

Pilgrimage to the Oberammergau Passion Play

Oberammergau is a small village in southern Germany which has performed a Passion Play every 10 years since 1634. In 1633, a plague was sweeping through the area and, despite the village's attempts to quarantine itself, the disease eventually came into the village via a villager desperate to see his family, causing at least 84 deaths. The village elders went to the church and vowed to God that they would perform the Passion Play every 10 years in order to be spared further deaths and have done so ever since. In 2018, we started planning a trip with McCabe to see the performance scheduled for 2020, not imagining that a pandemic would lead to its postponement until 2022.



On 27th of May 2022, 22 members of the Parish met at St George's to catch a coach to Heathrow to start this long-awaited Pilgrimage to Oberammergau. We met two more travellers who had booked independently onto our trip at Heathrow. From here we flew to Munich and then travelled by coach to Maria Alm, a small village in Austria where we were to spend the first part of our

pilgrimage, prior to travelling to Oberammergau at the end of the week for the play. We stayed in a lovely, traditional Austrian hotel and were looked after very well by Rena, the local McCabe representative. Our time in Maria Alm was great – we visited a number of chapels and churches in the region, walked part of the famous pilgrim route, the Jakobsweg, and had an opportunity to join the local parishioners at their Sunday service, many of whom were wearing traditional Austrian costume. We also spent a day in Salzburg, where we were lucky to be given a private tour of the cathedral vestry to see some ancient vestments, and to sample the church wine. Maria Alm is surrounded by mountains and many of us made use of the local cable car to explore the area at the top of one of the mountains, and to marvel at our beautiful surroundings.

The first part of the trip enabled us to make new friends, learn more about existing friends and to share some lovely moments and our faith together before we continued on our pilgrimage to our final destination, Oberammergau.

On arrival in Oberammergau, we were divided between two hotels and one guest house and many spent the first evening and following morning wandering the streets of the village, marvelling at the wonderfully painted buildings and shop displays of carved wooden figures, and discovering how all the villagers are immersed in the play and welcoming visitors. The play is performed in purpose-built theatre (completed in 1900) which seats 4500 people, so we found ourselves part of a much larger shared experience, the streets filled with tourists and fellow pilgrims with their own religious leaders.

After lunch on the second day, we took our seats in the theatre, where there was an electric atmosphere and a buzz of anticipation, which then turned to silence when the orchestra started playing. The play had a cast of 1769 (including 420 children), all from the village, a number of live animals, and an orchestra of 60.

It is difficult to find words sufficient to describe the play – amazing, moving, dramatic are just a few. All those attending probably had slightly different experiences. All went through a range of emotions whilst feeling like a witness to the events that unfolded during Holy Week – emotions ranging from anger to sadness, and one found oneself questioning the motives of some of the key characters. It was great to share this experience with our group, whom we had got to know so well during the course of our pilgrimage. We are now planning another pilgrimage with McCabe in 2024, possibly to Rome and Assisi and look forward to a different pilgrimage experience in a different country.

Alison Gill and Becky Bevan

Pilgrimage across Somerset to Bristol Cathedral



Over four days in August, thirteen pilgrims walked from Osborne near Sherborne to Bristol Cathedral, a distance of forty-five miles. The weather set fair for our pilgrimage and we enjoyed excellent walking conditions - no rain, a gentle breeze and not too hot. The theme of the pilgrimage was the Wesley brothers and the impact Methodism had on the countryside through which we were travelling. You can still visit John Wesley's house in Bristol. We also learned that Michael Eavis (of Glastonbury fame) is a Methodist and we actually saw the family burial plot when passing the church in

Pilton. The accommodation for two of our nights was Methodist halls/churches-we were made very welcome and even had a freshly baked round of shortbread left for us.

Our journey took us across the Somerset countryside, with far reaching views (particularly of Glastonbury Tor). Overnight accommodation involved halls in Castle Carey, Wells and Chew Stoke, a small village south of Bristol near Chew Lake.

In Wells we took the opportunity to visit the cathedral twice, once for Evensong and the following day for Morning Prayers. Spiritually refreshed, we tackled the 600-foot climb from Wookey Hole with enthusiasm and slightly less tired legs.

We were blessed with good hostelries every day for our lunchtime stops, even if this did mean sometimes deviating from our planned route. One consequence of the rise of gastropubs and pub closures is the difficulty in rural locations of finding suitable good value hostelries.

The final afternoon involved crossing the Clifton Suspension Bridge and walking through the bustling streets of Clifton to reach Bristol Cathedral, where we had a celebration service in the cathedral garden and a talk from the Deputy Dean. The pilgrim group included two pilgrim novices from St Mary's in Thatcham. They were warmly welcomed into the group and by the end of our journey had become seasoned pilgrims.



Peter Wright

Part of the wider Church family ...

Our Benefice

Over the past few years, the relationship between St George's and St John's has developed well with a shared Office Manager, shared systems, newsletter and website, and a clergy team working together in a supportive way across the churches. In 2022 we enjoyed a benefice evensong, farewell Eucharist for Revd Julie Howell, and a benefice carol service with a joint choir. People from across the two churches came together for special Advent and Lent services and activities, and for a Quiet Day at Wantage.

Relationship with St Michael and All Angels, Enborne

Over the year our relationship with St Michael's deepened with our clergy taking fortnightly services, and many people from the benefice enjoying special events at Enborne such as an advent carol service, and a vineyard tour and evensong at harvest. We also gathered for Forest Church at Enborne on 4 occasions. This informal outdoor service attracts people of all ages from the three parishes and beyond. During the year Revd Becky led Collective Worship at Enborne Church of England Primary School every fortnight and is a school foundation governor.



In December 2022 all three PCCs passed a resolution to continue the formal pastoral reorganisation process, approving the draft measures received from the Diocese, and now awaiting final approval (likely to be summer 2023).

Thanks go to John Bolan and Glenn Wycherley for their work with the churchwardens at St Michaels as co-opted members of the Enborne PCC.

Newbury Deanery Synod

St George's is well represented on Deanery Synod: Revd Rita, Revd Becky and Revd Terry are in the House of Clergy, while Ronnie Herd, Philip Read and Kathy Winrow are in the House of Laity.

The Deanery Synod met three times during 2022, two meetings being by Zoom and one at St George's. A summary of key matters discussed follows.

24 February 2022 – The Treasurer reported that the Deanery as a whole had not met its Parish Share for 2021, paying only 91.7% of the amount requested by the Diocese, but he was grateful for the significant efforts made by many Parishes in the Deanery. A small rebate had been received from the Diocese, as we had paid 50% of the Share by the end of July 2021, and 2/3^{rds} was to be refunded to those Parishes that had met the target of 50% by the end of July. Synod broke into groups to consider the following questions:

- What is going well now?
- what would you like to see in your Parish over next two years?
- What is preventing this happening?
- How can we help each other?

It was clear that there were significant challenges arising from the Covid pandemic. The first steps forward were to be aware of the issues we all face and to pray for each other.

16 June 2022 – The proposal to measure Total Sunday Attendance during June each year, and to use these numbers in calculating the Share allocation to each Benefice in the Deanery were explained. The experiences of two churches in innovations to bring people together in the wake of the pandemic were shared. The Area Dean outlined issues with Clergy deployment in the Deanery, and how the involvement of the laity in each Benefice was important in formalising how a new Incumbent would be fully supported.

13 Oct 2022 – There was a full debate on the proposed allocation of the 2023 Share to each Benefice in the Deanery, with part of the allocation being based on June 2022 Total Sunday Attendance numbers. There was a discussion on the implications of the cost of living crisis, and a sharing of what Parishes were doing in response. There was also a discussion on Eco Church issues.

Diocesan Synod

Members of Diocesan Synod worshipping at St George's are: Philip Read and Kathy Winrow. Kathy Winrow also sits on Bishop's Council. The typical format for a Diocesan Synod meeting includes an address from the Bishop, questions from members, procedural matters, finance and a focus on one of many Diocesan outreach initiatives.

Diocesan Synod met three times in 2022. A summary of key matters discussed follows.

12 March 2022 - Bishop Steven focussed on three matters in his Presidential Address: Ukraine, and how we as Christians might respond; reflection on his visits to every Deanery in the Diocese; and a focus on the Lord's Prayer in the Come and See series of webcasts. There were updates on the Discipleship initiative and Living in Love and Faith. The painful issues of the relationship with the Dean of Christ Church were being slowly resolved. The accounts of Christ Church were tabled. There was a verbal update on the financial position of the Diocese at 31 December 2021, and a brief summary of the discussions at the recent General Synod.

11 June 2022 - The Bishop spoke again about climate change, focusing on the environment and climate emergency. One action is to focus on Net Zero work to our Vicarages. The report of the Parish Share Review Group was published and accepted after a lengthy debate. The annual review of the Bishop's Council and a financial report were received, together with the preliminary Budget for 2023 and the first stab at the Parish Share allocation for 2023. There was a discussion on Church Fees and Safeguarding.

12 November 2022 - The Bishop explained at length the next stage in the Living in Love and Faith discussions. He had recently published his own views on human sexuality. This is clearly a matter where there are strong feelings and the Bishop called for mutual respect between those with differing views. There was a report from Bishop Alan Wilson on the recent Lambeth Conference. The 2023 Budget and Share Allocation and projections for 2024 – 2025 were approved. Dealing with inflation at current levels was clearly a challenge, as some 85% of the Diocesan Budget relates to Clergy stipend and related costs. There were lengthy discussions on Governance at Christ Church Cathedral. A comprehensive summary of the discussions at General Synod on 8-12 July 2022 was appended to the Minutes.

All papers and Minutes can be found on the Diocesan website.

Philip Read



Finance, Funding and Giving Working Group

The Finance Group aims to assist in the mission and outreach of the church by ensuring good stewardship of our financial resources, encouraging giving and securing funding, so that we can be generous in fulfilling our aims and objectives. The group members are Francis Clayton (Treasurer), Simon Pook (Planned Giving), Mike McKenzie (External Funding), Rita Gardner (Churchwarden) and John Huckle (Churchwarden).

The Finance Group met twice in 2022, once earlier in the year to discuss the annual renewal of giving in the light of CoE material made available and once later in the year prior to the budget to discuss and agree the proposed 2023 budget.

The 2022 figures were no longer affected by the Covid pandemic although it became clear that Centre income had stabilised at a level significantly lower than before Covid although costs were also lower due to the move to a more favourable cleaning service arrangement. Centre income for 2022 was £31,600 compared with £46,000 in 2019, before Covid. Centre expenditure in 2022 was £30,000 compared with £50,000 before Covid although the 2019 expenditure included significant ‘one-off’ items as well as the expensive servicing contract. The Centre bank balance increased by £3,800 during 2022 to £13,609.

Church income in 2022 was lower than budget by £20,000 primarily due to not executing the church painting project with the associated expected income from grants and fundraising. There was also a delay in receiving gift aid due, this issue is being pursued with HMRC, and to withheld contributions intended to be matched to Greenham Common Trust matched funding. It is intended to raise projects in 2023 and the delayed contributions will be made. However, ad hoc giving was higher than budgeted and regular giving also higher as a result of the annual Renewal of Giving programme (an increase of £2,000 over 2021).

Church expenditure was also lower than budget by £8,000, mainly due to not executing the church painting project. However, individual expenditure areas exceeded budget. These included higher than expected stationery and photocopying costs, Wash Commoner expenses, maintenance/Ground Source Heat Pump related expenses (£5,000), church fees and sound system expenses. However, less than budgeted was spent on Children & Young People, Going Greener and Community Support/Donations. The latter area will be addressed in 2023 by the creation of a Mission Giving group to progress charitable donations. Overall, the Church bank balance dropped by £18,700 in 2022 to £22,832 and there will be a need to keep to budgets in 2023.

Key initiatives during the year were:

Completion of the new AV system project

Implementation of the new Director of Music position

Temporary resolution of the Ground Source Heat Pump problems

Work planned for 2023 includes:

Guttering and external maintenance works supported by matched funding

Creation of a Mission Giving group to progress charitable donations

Francis Clayton, Treasurer

Facilities & Fabric Working Group

Group members: Revd Rita Ball [Coordinator], Phillip Bevan, Bruce Blaine, Rita Gardner [CW], John Huckle [CW], Terry Rayson, Lyn Evans – from September 2022.

F&F had four formal meetings in 2022; several post-9.30am service informal meetings and regular contact by phone and email. Inevitably much of the fabric issues are responses to notified problems and this has been particularly the situation through 2022.

Lettings: there are regular daytime hall lettings Monday to Saturday in term time and some evenings, but “large event” lettings are now scarce which has affected the income level. The LMR has some weekly lettings but a number of groups have not returned since the pandemic and space has been intentionally reserved for the use of church groups. There was a small increase in rental rates from September because of rising servicing costs.

Maintenance: all routine maintenance of automatic doors, fire extinguishers, boilers, urinals and PAT testing for equipment has been carried out. In the second half of 2022 the Community Service group withdrew from their monthly session of exterior work in the church grounds – this was a result of a change of management of this group. A small number of volunteers led by Chris Gwynn have filled the gap, and a general cleaning day was held in November. The waste collection agreement with Veolia was renegotiated.

Major issues: there was an ongoing problem with the ground source heat pump system and several visits by Nicholls. New thermostats were fitted in the church and one section of the GSHP put out of service, a new drainage pump was fitted in the boiler room; these actions restored the church heating. The lighting system in church was investigated with the intention of making a change to LED but this proved more complicated and costly than expected and a whole replacement of existing bulbs was done by Nurse Electrical; this is not a long-lasting solution and a new system using LED will be progressed. A diocesan-provided eco audit was commissioned for the whole site.

Guttering around the kitchen area of the hall and along the annexe failed completely early in 2022 and it proved extremely difficult to find a contractor to do the repair work, as a result of which the guttering will now be done in 2023. Some internal damage unfortunately resulted because of the broken gutters.

Use - and abuse - of church carparks by those who are neither hirers nor church users remains a serious problem especially in bad weather.

Overview and challenges: the outside of the church is in urgent need of redecoration and the right way forward with this continues to be investigated.

The hall and the annexe both need interior decoration and other refurbishment.

Health & safety: minor reported incidents were logged and filed; there is now a supply of mixed salt and grit for use on paths and entrance areas in icy conditions.

Members of F&F have given many hours to liaise with contractors, carry out small DIY repairs, and to be helpful in many ways to keep the whole site in a safe and suitable condition for both church and community use. In common with most housekeeping tasks their work is only highlighted when something goes wrong, and the fact that not more things go awry is thanks to their diligence and hard work. We are excellently informed and supported by Alex and by the many others who take a lead in church cleaning and preparations for worship – to all of them many thanks.

Rita Ball



Communications Working Group

The Communications team consists of: Ronnie Herd, Alex Brown, Gemma Previt , Linda Ling, Revd Becky and Revd Gary. The team supports the Church's internal and external communications, including flyers, The Wash Commoner and the church website. The team generally meets quarterly and at other times as needed.

As we have come out of Covid it has been possible to publish The Wash Commoner again, although we have not been able to return to publishing 10 issues per year as we have in the past, principally because of rapidly rising printing. In addition, Alex Brown and her co-editor, Morgan O'Kennedy decided to retire as editors over two years ago. We are very grateful that they have been willing to continue to edit The Wash Commoner temporarily. However, we now need to recruit a new team continue this important church outreach communication to ensure it continues into the future. For the future it is likely that we will combine a mix of four printed magazines per year with a Wash Commoner website with regular articles and adverts for events in Wash Common. We are hoping to find a number of volunteers to carry out the various functions that are necessary to organise and produce the magazine.

We are a small team and we would always welcome new members, particularly anyone who has an interest in communications using social media. If you are interested in joining the team please contact me or Revd Becky.

Ronnie Herd

The Wash Commoner

The Wash Commoner magazine continued with the planned 3 printed editions during 2022 – Easter, Autumn and Christmas. The magazine was also available online, via the church website and Facebook. Thanks to Gemma Previt  and Helena Herd for their sterling work in promoting through the various social media.

The more sporadic publication during the year made it slightly harder to attract advertisers and there were significant increases in print costs for each edition.

The Communications team are taking all these factors into consideration and are currently looking at how the publication model may change for the future. This includes the need to expand the publication team from 2, to include separate responsibility for editing, publishing, advertising, design and distribution. If you feel you have the skills to help in any of these smaller roles, we would be delighted to hear from you.

As ever, I thank all those people and organisations who provide interesting articles, to the advertisers without whom it would simply not be possible to print the magazine, to the many who walk the streets delivering the magazine in all weathers, but most especially to Morgan O'Kennedy for continuing to design and layout the magazine so brilliantly.

Alex Brown, Editor

Finally ...



A picture of our wonderful benefice churchwardens. And a very big and special thank you to Rita Gardner as she finishes her term of office. Together as a team across the benefice we have navigated our way through two years of pandemic and have come out the other side still smiling. Thanks be to God for so many blessings.

‘All things come from you, O Lord, and of your own do we give you.’



Newbury, St George & St John

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