

File Ref. 2022/05/003



ST. JOHN'S CHURCH LACEY GREEN, LOOSLEY ROW AND SPEEN

Annual Reports

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Annual Reports 2021

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Vicar's Remarks

When I wrote my remarks for the Annual Report in April 2021, it was then the presumption that the government's national lockdown would be ending in late June of last year, and I think it was widely assumed at that time that the Covid 19 pandemic crisis would then be over and that no further lockdowns would be needed. In the event, that proved not to be the case with a further surge of infections over the winter period resulting in a further period of restrictions. And, as I write these remarks, the Covid infection rate, both nationally and locally as well as internationally, remains high though the number of people becoming seriously ill with Covid appears to be a much smaller percentage of the total number of people infected than was the case in previous waves of infection. For many Churches, and of course for very many other institutions, the length and severity of the Covid 19 pandemic has had a seriously adverse and detrimental effect on activities and economic outcomes. So far as Saint John's Church is concerned, it is apparent that there are a small number of people who were attending our Services before the first Covid 19 lockdown who have not, at least as yet, returned to attending in-person worship with us. In particular, it does seem that it has been our work with children and young families that has been hardest hit. Having said that, it has been encouraging to welcome a number of new people to our Services who have quickly become part of our Church family since the resumption of in-person worship. Our provision of online worship during lockdown appears to have been appreciated and, at the present time, we are continuing with a monthly online Evensong Service whilst we continue to assess what the right balance between in-person and online worship is going to need to be into the future.

As I write, we are all too aware of the ongoing terrible conflict in Ukraine, and the distressing and tragic consequences for people's lives. We have registered Saint John's Church as a "Welcoming Church" for refugees from the war and it is known that there are some 30 or more local families who are opening up their homes to refugees from Ukraine, several of whom have already arrived with their hosts. We are also aware of the consequences for many people, both here and elsewhere in the world, of rising inflation and energy costs, no doubt partly driven by consequences of the Covid 19 pandemic and by the wider effects of the war in Ukraine. It is to be hoped that the opportunities for prayer and pastoral support which the Church provides can be a valuable avenue of support for people facing very difficult times.

At the time of the 2021 Annual Report, we were still in the process of raising funds for the restoration and repair of our Samuel Green pipe organ. And so we were very pleased when the project was able to get underway by way of the removal of the instrument at the end of last October in order for the restoration and repair work to begin. In fact, this happened in two stages. First the organ pipes were removed and taken to an organ pipework specialist and then, a few days later, the rest of the organ was removed to the organ builder's workshop in Surrey. And earlier this year came the very pleasing announcement that the government's VAT grant scheme for Listed Places of Worship had been extended for a further three years from 1st April of this year which will be a significant saving to the total cost of the works being carried out. At the time of writing these remarks, we are eagerly awaiting an update from the organ builder concerning progress so far with the work being undertaken. It remains our intention to have a celebration event when the works are fully completed and the organ is back in situ.

Friday assemblies at St. John's School and Speen First School continue to be a valuable opportunity to reach a large number of children on behalf of the Church. Those currently on the rota for this ministry are myself, the Reverend Peter Godden from St. Dunstan's, and Padre Andi Chapman from RAF High Wycombe who replaced Padre Chrissie Lacey as RAF Chaplain in

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January of this year. With Schools having now fully returned to normal working patterns, both of our Parish Schools have been able to resume holding services in St. John's Church including End of Term and Harvest; and, in the case of St. John's School, Start of Term services; Harvest; Armistice Day; Christingle and other Carol services; as well as services for Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, and other special occasions in the Church calendar. We were also pleased to have St. John's School this year represented at our Mothering Sunday service. As is known, St. John's School has been a member of the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust since this multi-academy trust was founded by the Diocese of Oxford; with Speen First School having been accepted for membership and approved by the Secretary of State to join later in the current calendar year.

So far as my own extra-curricular activities are concerned, I am currently Vice-Chair of Churches Together in Risborough, as well as Vice-President Elect of the Princes Risborough Rotary Club. I continue to be a Bishop's Reviewer for the Diocese of Oxford, having undertaken four clergy Ministerial Reviews in 2021 on behalf of the Bishop. I continue to chair the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Student Hardship Fund, and I am still currently on the rota for the occasional Saga Cruise as ship's chaplain.

I am glad to have this opportunity to thank our Churchwardens Pat and Margaret for their continuing friendship and support. Likewise, I do also wish to thank our PCC Treasurer Caroline, our PCC Secretary Mark, and all the key officers of the Church and all members of the PCC, for their hard work and commitment. I am also very grateful to our Licensed Lay Minister Graham for his ongoing help and commitment; and also to my clergy team colleagues in the Risborough Team Ministry, as well as the retired clergy who actively support us at St. John's, notably the Reverends Peter Viney, Nick Molony, and Rose Williams. I also thank our organist Cher, as well as Gavin, and their family, for all they bring to the high standards of the quality of our Church music and worship. And I do thank all members of our St. John's congregation for the commitment and hard work that has enabled our Church life to be sustained and, in many ways, even to flourish despite all the challenges and difficulties of the recent past.

Reverend Canon A. F. Bundock, Vicar of St. John's

Churchwardens' Annual Report

We welcome you to St John's Annual Parochial Church Meeting for the year ending December 2021. Our APCM is taking place later again this year owing to the Coronavirus pandemic but hopefully by now you should have received all the relevant paperwork by email or other means.

We can report that the fabric of the Church is in reasonably good order but inevitably repairs need to be done from time to time. The Quinquennial inspection has been done following lockdown and issues needed to be resolved will be done.

Several people in the congregation have come forward to do jobs which has been very welcome but mostly they prefer not to be named. The churchyard has been well kept by a group of enthusiastic volunteers; the hedges and frontage have been kept in an immaculate order,

There are also a number of people who work, often in the background, who have offered help with ongoing jobs in the Church, and many, who have participated for lots of years' service, who also have continued their commitment. We have 4 teams of cleaners working on a weekly rota basis and we thank them for their support. They have cleaned and sanitized the Church week

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after week during the pandemic to keep everyone safe and their efforts are very much appreciated.

We would as usual like to give thanks to a number of people who do so much, often working in the background and without whom the Church would not function. Our thanks must go to;

- the ladies who wash the linen and set up the Communion.
- the Verger, servers, sidespersons, readers, intercessors and the PCC.
- the flower ladies.
- the choir, their leaders and the organists.
- the people on the coffee rota.
- the people on the cleaning rota.
- all who assist with fundraising.
- the helpers who look after jobs inside and outside of the Church and those who keep the Churchyard tidy.

We apologise to any person(s) we have omitted to mention.

We would like some extra cleaners and people to go on the Coffee Rota so that the jobs are spread more evenly. If you feel you can help, please speak to Margaret or myself.

Everyone has gifts, of one sort or another, to enrich the life of St John's and we do urge you to come forward with your time and talents to help us to upkeep our lovely Church.

Pat Rushmere & Margaret Gray, Churchwardens

Deanery Synod

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the restrictions imposed on church activities, there is no Deanery Synod Report.

Pat Rushmere & Margaret Gray, Deanery Synod Representatives

Safeguarding

In regard to safeguarding, the focus again this year has been to try and ensure that all members of the PCC and other appropriate members of the Parish, successfully undertake the relevant on-line safeguarding training, as required for their roles by the Diocese of Oxford. This will mean that there is a good common understanding of what to look out for, and what actions to take if any issues arise.

A useful development to mention is that the Oxford Diocese has recently introduced a safeguarding tracking dashboard. St. John's Church has recently signed up to this system, which will provide us with a useful way of checking that we have implemented all necessary tasks. Sometimes it feels like there are a lot of communications and pieces of advice coming our way, and this will make it simpler for us to check that we are on top of everything, and to be able to

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download any new guidance or documents that we may need. For the Diocese of course it means they can see what progress all their Parishes are making in relation to best safeguarding practice.

Vince Stothard, Safeguarding Officer

Pastoral Visiting Committee

The Pastoral Visiting Committee has not met in 2021. There is no report for this year.

Christine Rooney

St. John's Church Choir

The Choir had been unable to sing in church since March 2020, due to Covid Lockdowns. Throughout this time, Cher and Gavin with assistance from Tom and Inês (when available) provided music for ZOOM Services. For special services, other members of the choir were recorded singing.

On 5th July 2021 we had our first Choir Practice, socially distanced in the body of the church. We were allowed to sing for services in the Choir Stalls, and one of the first services was the funeral of Stella Boll on 15th July. The choir then took their usual summer break and returned to something like normal in September. Since then, we have been able to sing at all services where we were needed.

We were sad to lose Mike Eden, due to other commitments, but were fortunate to be joined by Gavin Mole and Hugh Thomas Davis. Ian Ward and his son Patrick also returned to help out and have been helping to provide a music group for All Age Worship. We hope to be able to build on this and look forward to welcoming more children and young people in church, now that they have a service specially for them.

Catherine Tillotson allowed the church to use her lovely garden in Lane Farm for a garden party to raise money for the Organ Fund on Saturday 18th September. We are grateful to her and her family, and also to the choir members who worked so hard to provide music and refreshments. Catherine's son Alexander has been playing the organ for some services, and this has been a great help to Cher. We are so lucky to have a talented young man to stand in when needed.

On Remembrance Day the choir sang the Rutter Pie Jesu, with a solo by Carla Galvin, who left to work in Canada the next day. She and Lucy have just returned, and we hope to be welcoming them back to the choir soon. Alexander Tillotson played the trumpet solo for The Last Post. Cher is keen to start a Junior Choir, and Carla will help with this. Some of Cher's piano pupils have already sung at the 9 Lessons and Carols, The Crib Service and Mothering Sunday Services.

Advent and Christmas were the usual busy time for the choir, with the Lessons and Carols, Crib Service, Midnight and Christmas morning services. The choir also decorated a tree for the Christmas Tree Festival, with the theme of Angels from the Realms of Glory. We all helped to make the angels and achieved second place.

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A very special occasion was the marriage of Marina Deacon and Rob Eldridge just before Christmas at which Mike sang the solo. Lent went by in a whirl of activity, with several of us contracting Covid in spite of being fully vaccinated. On Mothering Sunday, we provided cupcakes. It was special joy to have the Junior Choir leading the singing and joined by three very young children. It was also a pleasure for the choir to be able to sing All in the April Evening again at the Palm Sunday Service. Fortunately, we had a good turnout for Easter, and were able to sing around the Cross of Daffodils as usual.

The organ was dismantled and taken away for a complete rebuild in November, and we eagerly await its return. We plan a special concert to mark this event. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be happening soon, and several choir members will be singing some of the Coronation music with massed choirs from the RSCM at a special service on 14th May at St John the Baptist in Windsor.

On the evening of Sat. 4th. June, Gavin and his friend Gary Bland will be putting on a cabaret 'Jazz From The Musicals' just prior to its first performance in London. Tickets can be obtained from Tony.

As always, our grateful thanks go to Cher for all she does. She has risen to every challenge in the last couple of years. What would we do without her!

Rosemary Mortham (for the Choir Members of St. John's Church)

Server's Report

During 2021 I have continued to support the clergy at St. John's during the main Sunday services, although more of the things the Server traditionally does have been re-introduced. For much of the year Communion has been received "in one kind" so my duties as Sanitiser in Chief have continued.

As a side-line, I have over the past couple of years been looking to try and save St. John's a few pennies in terms of consumables costs notably candles. At St. John's we still use traditional wax candles on the Altars, in the Sanctuary and Chancel and for the Paschal Candle, whereas other churches, such as St. Dunstan's use nylon oil. There are pros and cons for each. Using wax candles does mean you get short lengths / stubs left over which are not fit for further use and we had built up a sizable collection of these. At Christmas and other times, we use votive lights in red plastic cases and a couple of glass cased lights elsewhere during the year including for the hanging Sanctuary lamp. I have now been melting the candle stubs down to cast replacement candle inserts for these votive lights so I am hopeful we should not need to buy any more plastic votive lights / votive light inserts for a good while. Now before anyone asks, no I am not able to mould candles for the altar so we will still need to buy 1 inch diameter candles, but as Tesco's would say "every little helps". My acquired skills have allowed me to set up a side-line of home-produced candles including candles in teacups for sale at e.g., the Advent Coffee Morning in November, at which I did a modest trade for church funds.

I remain as Chair of the local (St. Osyth) Chapter of the Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary for 2019. Like many organisations the Servers' Guild not been operating in the normal way due to Covid restrictions. The Chapter met for the first time since January 2020 by holding a Guild Offices at St. Mary's Aylesbury during June with a second service being held at St. John's in

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September at which Canon Tony gave the Address. Unfortunately for various reasons, we have not met again since then.

There is still an opening for a reserve / second server to provide cover for when I am away or on a more regular basis, so if there are any willing volunteers who would be willing to be trained up, then please contact Canon Tony or myself.

Mark Roberts, PCC Secretary, Sacristan and Senior Server

Junior Church

No report received.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the restrictions imposed on church activities, there were no Junior Church meetings during 2021. When things get more back to normal, a focus area will be on reinvigorating engagement activities with the younger members of our Church Community.

Church Mice

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the restrictions imposed on church activities, there were no Church Mice meetings during 2021.

Jenny Stothard

Treasurer's Report (Including Fundraising)

General Fund

For the year ended 31st December 2021 the accounts showed a deficit of £1,837, with the pandemic having a continued impact. The suspension of services between January and the end of April 2021 meant that we did not benefit from collections from those who do not give by way of stewardship and visitors at popular services such as Mothering Sunday and Easter. The Omicron wave at the end of the year also meant that the usually popular Christmas services were poorly attended as were our fundraising events.

Similar to last year, over 80% of our income was derived from stewardship giving, church collections, and the related gift aid with the other main contributors being one off donations, fees received for weddings and funerals and fundraising. A breakdown of income, including an analysis of our fundraising income, is included in Appendices 1 and 2.

As is the case every year, a large portion of our income (72%) was used in paying our parish share. The Parish Share is the amount of money that each parish is asked to contribute to support the mission and ministry of the Church in the Diocese of Oxford and is spent on housing and stipend for our clergy, training and other ministerial support such as church schools, safeguarding and work with young people. The calculation of the parish share for each church is based on income, numbers on the electoral role and clergy cost. The payment of the parish share is

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mandatory and so maximising our receipts and keeping all other costs in check is critical. We are fortunate that we have a number of dedicated volunteers whose help with cleaning, lawn mowing, hedge trimming and general maintenance means that we can save on these expenses. We remain extremely grateful.

Charitable donations this year were limited to amounts collected for Christian Aid and The Children's Society, together with our regular donation to Churches Together in Risborough. As is customary, Bibles were presented to the year 6 pupils leaving St John's school in July 2021. In addition to the amounts shown in the accounts, we also made donations of non-perishable harvest produce to Risborough Food Cupboard; and donated a large number of toys to the Salvation Army for distribution at Christmas.

Reserves in the general fund amounted to £8,560 at 31st December 2021.

Restoration Fund and Organ Fund

On a more upbeat note, having agreed to proceed with the refurbishment of the Samuel Green organ, we have been delighted to raise sufficient funds to cover the budgeted cost of this. This was made possible due to many generous donations and grants together with gift aid thereon, and an extremely enjoyable and successful fundraising concert in the summer, for which we are most grateful to the choir and our hosts at Lane Farm. The balance on the organ fund was £27,765 at 31 December 2021. There is also a balance of £15,551 in respect of the restoration fund.

Outlook For 2022

Although the majority of COVID-19 restrictions have now been eased it is clear that it is going to take us some time to recover from the pandemic. I urge you all to pray about your giving and consider joining the Parish Giving Scheme.

For anyone interested, the full annual accounts compiled to satisfy the requirements of the Charities Act and subject to Independent Examination, are displayed on the church notice board and will be available on the church website after this meeting.

If you have any questions or would like more detail on any of the above, then please do ask me and I would be happy to talk to you.

Caroline Gulliver
Treasurer

Appendix 1. Receipts Less Payments

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Income	£	£	£	£	£
Standing orders	19,226	18,376	17,811	16,231	16,396
Weekly Envelopes	2,520	2,336	2,465	2,585	2,917
Tax refund	5,922	6,496	9,701	7,657	7,051
Other collections	2,560	2,603	7,074	6,213	7,876
	30,228	29,811	37,051	32,686	34,240
PCC fees	2,544	1,894	1,305	1,526	2,297
Fundraising	2,160	5,328	6,921	4,701	5,217
Other	2,533	3,105	2,841	4,245	5,911
Total Income	37,465	40,138	48,118	43,158	47,665
Grants to charities	737	833	2,353	1,558	1,584
Diocesan Quota	27,012	27,007	28,792	27,889	28,791
Church running costs	3,877	4,914	5,828	5,360	5,257
Vicars expenses and telephone	3,008	1,918	2,788	3,054	3,021
Cost of services	3,926	3,733	4,697	4,392	4,755
Building & grounds maintenance	445	680	426	302	2,045
Other	297	439	1,487	1,371	1,787
Total Expenditure	39,302	39,524	46,371	43,926	47,240
Surplus /(Deficit)	(1,837)	614	1,747	(768)	425

Appendix 2. Fundraising Activities

	2021	2020	2019
	£	£	£
Sponsored walk 2021 (gift aid)	624	4,741	1,067
Quiz night	-	353	-
Christmas fayre	803	98	1,223
Christmas cards	49	72	59
Easy Fundraising	172	64	60
Dinner dance	-	-	1,600
Summer Fete	-	-	1,417
Christmas Tree Festival	512	-	620
Ceilidh	-	-	419
Progressive supper	-	-	330
Pancake party	-	-	98
Plant sale	-	-	28
Harvest lunch	-	-	-
Choir concert	-	-	-
Bucks Ride & Stride	-	-	-
History Exhibition	-	-	-
Total	£2,160	£5,328	£6,921

An additional £1,262 was raised for the organ restoration fund at the 2021 Summer Music Concert. In 2019, the dinner dance raised £3,990 of which £2,390 was allocated to the organ restoration fund and £1,600 to general church funds.