



**Annual Report and Financial Statements of the
Parochial Church Council**

for the Year ended 31 December 2023

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council

The trustees of the Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas', Marston (the members of the PCC) present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Incumbent

The Revd Elizabeth (Skye) Denno

Charitable Status

All Parochial Church Councils in the Church of England are recognized as charities by the Charity Commission; PCCs such as ours, with a gross income over £100,000, are required to register with the Commission. The members of the PCC are the trustees of the charity.

Registered Charity Number 1138507

Legal Name of the Charity

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Nicholas Marston

Working Names of the Charity St Nicholas' PCC
PCC (of) St Nicholas, Marston

Address of the Charity

The Vicarage, Elsfield Road, Marston Oxford OX3 0PR

Independent Examiner

Professor David Nowell C.Eng., F.I.Mech.E.
16 Jack Straws Lane, Headington, Oxford OX3 0DL

Bankers

The Cooperative Bank, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester.

Officers

Incumbent (Vicar)	Revd Skye Denno
Associate Priest	Revd Andy Gosler
Permission to Officiate (PTO)	Revd Stephanie Bullock
Licensed Lay Ministers	David Cranston
	Joel Denno
	Neil Barker
	Geoff Hale
Churchwardens	Judith Piggott
	Jan Lawrie
PCC Chair	Skye Denno
PCC Secretary	Debbie Bailey (from April)
PCC Treasurer	Geoff Hale

Representatives on Cowley Deanery Synod

Skye Denno
Maureen Davis (to 23 April)
Isabel Fenton (from 23 April)
Millius Palayiwa

The clergy are members of Deanery Synod *ex officio*; the other members are elected to serve until April 2024.

Members of the PCC

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules, members of the PCC are either elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, are co-opted by the PCC, or are members of the PCC *ex officio*.

The following served as members of the PCC during the calendar year 2023:

Helen Barker	Andy Gosler	Emily Meredith
Jane Burd (to 23 April)	Geoff Hale	Eileen Palayiwa
Maureen Davis	Duncan Hatfield	Millius Palayiwa
Skye Denno	Tessa Hennessy (from 23 April)	Judith Piggott
Isabel Fenton	Jan Lawrie	Ian Ross
		Jackie Whittaker (from 23 April)

Elected PCC members serve for three-year terms. The current terms of office of the elected PCC members are as follows:

Serving until 2024	Serving until 2025	Serving until 2026
Helen Barker	Geoff Hale	Maureen Davis
Duncan Hatfield	Eileen Palayiwa	Tessa Hennessy
Emily Meredith	Ian Ross	Jackie Whittaker

Objectives and Governance

The parish of St Nicholas, Marston, is one of the parishes in the Deanery of Cowley, within the Diocese of Oxford. It shares a joint benefice with the separate parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, Elsfield.

The Parochial Church Council ('the PCC') is governed by the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure (1956) as amended, and by the current version (2011) of the Church Representation Rules. Its responsibilities include that of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St Nicholas'. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning our activities for the year, the incumbent and the PCC have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and specifically the guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing knowledge of and trust in Jesus Christ.

Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.

Missionary activity and outreach work.

Facilitating this work depends on the voluntary work of many people, and the PCC very much appreciates their service to the church and to the local community. The incumbent receives a stipend paid by the Diocese. No other trustees are paid for their services.

A connected charity is Marston Church Properties Ltd ('MCP'), which is both a registered charity, no. 1085739, and a company limited by guarantee. Four of the five directors of MCP are members of the PCC, and the vicar is the chair of the company by virtue of her incumbency.

Vicar's Report

As 2023 began, I was still recovering from Covid. As a result, I had not been able to work the last few days before Christmas of the previous year. It was not quite what I had imagined, but thanks to the sterling efforts of the team, especially the church wardens, Andy Gosler and Sofia Denno (my daughter), worship carried on and only two services were cancelled. By New Year I was back on my feet for a New Year Baptism, our New Year Lunch at the Victoria Arms, and the planned PCC focus morning on Saturday the 21st January. Here are the main points from the morning along with brief progress reports on how they unfolded over the rest of the year.

- a) **We exist because God has formed us into a community, to be the church in our place.** *A desire to reconnect to one another* - We acknowledged that St Nicholas was still a dispersed community; attendance had changed and 'regular' for most now meant once or twice a month. This, along with a variety of services, means folk were no longer seeing each other as often as they did. It was hard to ensure all had received communications, and most importantly folk missed each other. The result of this discussion at our PCC focus morning was the launching of our **All-Together** Communion Services on the 1st Sunday of the month, with a shared lunch following. This has been a welcome new addition to our worship pattern and I'm grateful to Neil Barker (our Music director) worship band and Choirs for their help in leading worship; more recently the church wardens have helped in organising hot food. A huge thank you to you all.

- b) **Review of the worship pattern to make it easy to remember** - *different starting times were confusing and it was hard to remember what Sunday it was!* - Feedback from the questionnaire indicated that a variety of services on the whole were very welcomed, but the time differences and not having a 10am service every Sunday was difficult for some to remember. Following the PCC we ensured all Sundays had a 10am; on the third Sunday of the month, which is rather busy, this service is lay led. This has proved to be helpful, not only for those who attend the church regularly, but also for visitors.

- c) **St Nicholas church is simply to be welcoming, inclusive & friendly.** During the PCC focus morning I asked the question; What is the thread that connects all our doing and being as church? It was apparent that one of the most important factors was simply that St Nicholas remains welcoming, inclusive and friendly to all. This factor has been a driving force in joining the Inclusive Network and why I am so grateful to Sally Richards for being our Inclusive Church advocate and writing our statement - '*St Nicholas is an Inclusive Church. This means we are welcome and affirm everyone in the name of Jesus Christ, whoever they are and wherever they may be on their*

spiritual Journey'. All our advertising now features the Inclusive Network logo and we will review our efforts regularly. We are still at the start of this journey and have much to do. I am grateful for the increased accessibility resulting from the removal of the pews around the font.

- d) **We need to prioritise outreach with a focus on children and family.** The fourth point to draw our attention to from the PCC focus morning was the need to engage with families in our community. To have facilities for children on a Sunday and to develop the Toddler Group, Youth group and our Fun Days. We were so blessed to have Helen Norman join the St Nicholas Ministry Team in April. Helen has brought with her a wealth of experiences in teaching and working with Children. It was wonderful to leave the youth group and Autumn Fun Day - 4th November - in her capable hands. Thank you to Helen, Gill Hale and all those who volunteer with our Children, Young people and fun days.

The early part of last year included preparing for my Sabbatical, which meant I was away for June, July and August. It was a wonderful time of resting, painting, reading and walking. To be able to step away from church and know she is in safe hands, is a beautiful gift. Judith Piggott and Jan Lawrie, as churchwardens were fantastic, as were the ministry team, Stephanie Bullock, Andy Gosler, Joel Denno, David Cranston, Neil Barker and Geoff Hale who was both treasurer and covered all funerals for me whilst I was away. Thank you so much taking on extra so that I could have this precious time of recharging the batteries. I am grateful also for the guest speakers and presiders that came during this time to help cover my sabbatical and for all the PCC members. I know St Nicholas church community is helped by so many volunteers who give their time and their talents, those who deliver hospitality, those who flower arrange, those who help clean, polish and tidy inside the church, those who pick up folk and take them home, those who serve during the services, at Communion and at community events, our wonderful Bell ringers, the list could go on... Thank you and please know I am grateful and I see what you do. We are always looking for more volunteers and helpers for a variety of things so do look at the pew sheet or have a chat with me. Debbie has been our administrator for the past year and continues to be in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Thanks to her we have our pew sheets, a busy and well used hall and lots of booklets, flyers and posters printed ready to be used and circulated.

Marston and Elsfield continue to work together in showing God's love to our communities, and the shared services have been a highlight in our worship as a unified Benefice. Mothering Sunday service at St Thomas was very special with the Jr choir from St Nicholas leading our worship, and the compline services during Lent and the Songs of Praise in the summer have a wonderful congregation from across the two parishes.

2023 has been a busy year but also a year to pause, pray and prepare. For 2024, the word pause has been replaced with **patience**. A time to pause has provided the opportunity to take stock, to reflect and review where we are as a church family, to offer spiritual emotional and pastoral support and to provide worship in a variety of ways to increase accessibility and be more missional. A time to practice patience is a time of waiting with God after the pause, to see new shoots emerging from beneath the winter ground, because there is so much life and new growth.

A time to pray is linked very much into this, with the opportunity to look backwards and forwards and to ask for God's guidance and wisdom for the future; all that we do must be grounded in prayer. A time to prepare is the opportunity to reshape and think through what we might need to do for the future. To prepare for mission and ministry both in church and digitally, a hybrid mixture of worship, to re-establish fellowship and friendship and explore how we can reach out to our local community, especially families and those isolated and alone. *Skye Denno*

Deanery Synod Report

The Synod met four times during the year, all in-person. There was no joint meeting with the Oxford Deanery Synod in 2023. Discussion have mainly been about future **financial** challenges facing the deanery. This has implications for the level of parish shares payable in the future. A **review** of the parish share formular will be undertaken during 2024.

The future **financial challenges** facing the Deanery are due to the fact that for the year 2024, the Deanery share has been calculated at **£505,532**. This is the amount the Deanery pays to the Diocese. From that, the Diocese pays the clergy stipendiaries, pensions and housing. The Deanery gets its money from parish shares paid by each parish.

The Deanery has spent a great deal of time looking at the possibility of **Pastoral Re-organisation**. This would mean and might lead to the **reduction of the number of Clergy** in Cowley Deanery. A similar exercise was undertaken in 1975 to reduce the number of Clergy in the Deanery to 14, as recorded in the minute of St Nicholas Parish Church of the 4th September 1975. This will be a major exercise and will occupy the Deanery for most of 2024.

At present, the Deanery has **14 parishes**, and **12 stipendiary clergy**, serving a population of 104,650. Four clergy vacancies occurred during the year.

Your representatives on the Deanery Synod are Millius Palayiwa (who is also on the Deanery Standing Committee) and Isabel Fenton (who is also the Deanery Synod Minute Secretary). *Millius Palayiwa*

Diocesan Synod Report

Diocesan Synod meetings have continued to be online, with one in-person meeting during the year. Discussions about Living in Love and Faith have continued. Environment and climate concerns are always on the agenda, as reports on mission, children and family work and schools and education. Reports from General Synod are received at one of the meetings. The Diocese has a UKME Oversight Group (United Kingdom Minority Ethnic) that meets four times a year and is chaired by the bishop. The group was set up following the Archbishops' Reports: **From Lament to Action** and the **Commission on Racial Equality**. Millius is on that group. *Millius Palayiwa*

Elsfield

2023 allowed us, as a PCC and as a village, to continue reinforcing the values of community both socially and spiritually.

We have been fortunate to welcome two new families to the village in 2023, with members of both joining our congregation as well as offering to join our PCC.

Whilst we typically hold only one service each month, we celebrate an array of formats to suit everyone – matins, common worship, holy communion, evensong (including our popular Hymns and Pimm's in June) and celebrations at Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and Christmas. In addition, our evening compline services, held every Thursday at 8.00pm during Lent, provide a welcome period for quiet contemplation and reflection.

We particularly enjoyed hosting 32 friends from Elsfield and Marston to our Maundy Thursday fish 'n' chip supper with informal communion. This has always been a joyous occasion with Neil Barker leading us in song.

Our village community calendar includes the inter-village wine tasting competition on the first Saturday in February, bring-and-share Harvest supper, the Christmas fair and carols around the Christmas tree.

Whilst we are a small village, we bring people together when we can in the hope that, over time, we will build a stronger, supportive and more committed community. *James Plunkett*

Committees and Working Groups

The PCC operates with committees and working groups, which meet and report to it as appropriate. Participation in these groups is open to all church members.

Standing Committee

Elected annually, this comprises the Vicar, churchwardens, treasurer and such other members as the PCC agrees. It exists to conduct essential business between full meetings of the PCC.

Pastoral Care - Prayer and Support Network

The Prayer and Care groups have continued to function well and are ensuring that all the members have a point of contact in the church who will make sure they are kept informed about what is happening in church. The group leader will also pray for them and inform the vicar of cases of illness. One or two of our leaders have had to give up during the year so we would welcome offers of help in this area.

A number of church members who cannot get to services are visited for Home Communion.

A small Bereavement Support Group ran during 2023 and this was appreciated by the members, who were able to share their feelings and difficulties more easily in this sort of setting and who were also able to provide mutual support. We will offer this again when there is a need. *Eileen Palayiwa*

Communications

The Marston Times is now printed four times a year: March, June, September and December. The intervening months are produced electronically and sent by email on request and made available on the website. We post a few copies to some who can't access emails and receive a donation towards the cost. Regular articles What to Quote, Nature Notes and What to Cook have proved very popular together with the Vicar's letter and information. News from the Parish Council and Marston Community Gardening have returned to their regular format. *Jan Lawrie*

Website

The church website is an important link between the church and the community. A lot of people rely on it to find out what is happening in the church and what the church is doing in the community. On the website you can find out what is happening and see pictures of the various activities. We have received a lot of positive feedback. The website provides a way of contacting us. It runs parallel with our Facebook page. A lot of church members have come to rely upon it more if they are unable to attend services and unable to pick up a pew sheet. You can also download the latest Marston Times. Keeping it up-to-date can take a lot of time sometimes. *Duncan Hatfield*

Churches Together

St Nicholas is a member of Churches Together in Marston and Northway (CTMN). Our representatives during 2023 were Skye Denno, Maureen Davis and Geoff Hale. In May we held a 'Love Marston Love Life' event for the local community with musical items, magician, bouncy castles and stalls. It was very well attended. Other joint events include a monthly dementia-friendly service, and ecumenical fellowship and study groups which meet each month and weekly through Advent and Lent. However, it is noticeable that some of the member churches are struggling to be as involved as in the past. *Geoff Hale*

Review of the Year

Church attendance

The new roll presented at the annual meeting contained 114 names (2022: 117), of whom 45 were non-resident (2022: 44). The gradual decline continues year on year (2005: 207; 2012: 155).

Attendance at Sunday services during October was as follows:

	In church	Online views
October 1	109	33
October 8	53	20
October 15	71	No online
October 22	60	20
October 29	116	No online
Average	82	24

Comparison with Sunday Services in October 2022

	In church	Online views
October 2	22	18
October 9	105	46
October 16	17	18
October 23	58	24
October 30	112	15
Average	63	24

Statistics for occasional offices: baptisms, weddings, and funerals

Baptisms. There were 5 baptisms (2022: 4)
Confirmations. There were 6 confirmations (2022: 0)
Weddings. There were 3 weddings. (2022: 2)
Funerals. The clergy conducted 12 funeral services. (2022: 10)

Ministry Team

The team is led by Revd Skye Denno and assisted by Revd Stephanie Bullock (PTO) and Revd Andy Gosler (Associate Priest).

Preaching was shared with licensed lay ministers David Cranston, Joel Denno, Neil Barker and Geoff Hale. Neil Barker continued to serve as Director of Music, Organist and Choir Master and to lead our informal cafe services.

Debbie Bailey continues as Parish Administrator.

Helen Norman was appointed as Children and Family Minister.

Music

We have had another wonderful year of musicmaking. It is pleasing that we have been able to consolidate our Junior Choir and we have seen the bass section of the Youth Choir develop over the year. Our SATB choir particularly enjoyed singing at some special choral evensongs shared with St Mary's Iffley and with Holy Trinity, Headington Quarry.

Our choirs have also sung at a number of RSCM events organised by Helen Meredith. I have also particularly appreciated this year the support of Sophie Meredith with the training up of the Junior Choir and also Jane Burd's musical support as needed with all our choirs.

One highlight for all the choirs was singing at our Love Marston Love Life event one Sunday summer afternoon. A more recent highlight for our SATB & Youth Choir was the Nine Lessons & Carols service which was well attended and appreciated.

Once again, we were grateful for the support of Old Marston Parish Council with a grant of £300 towards music resources for our Junior and Youth choristers.

Children and Family Minister

I joined St Nicholas as Children and Family Minister in May 2023 and have been warmly welcomed into your church community. I have been busy helping run already established and flourishing groups for toddlers, babies and youth. Hopefully building new links across the provision and making connections with the local community. With Skye I have been involved in helping families prepare for a family member to be baptized. With Gill Hale I helped plan and organize a baptism celebration BBQ, as well as visiting St Nicholas School with a termly Open the book assembly (where we retell a bible story linked to the school values with the children dressing up in character). I promoted children and young people activities at 'Love Marston, Love Life' and the Mortimer Hall Community days. Helped organize a scout service, made Christingles with the 43rd beavers as well as the Christmas Nativity service and carols around the tree. I have had the opportunity to attend training and have reflection time with the Diocese in the

church house which allowed me time to consider my role and purpose within the parish as well as share ideas on organization and vision. Connections with Montessori Forest School in Elsfield have also been developed with an Autumn visit and scavenger hunt at St Thomas as well as six weekly visits to retell a bible story with crafts to the junior school. I have seen the creativity of the Messy Church team led by Jane Burd as well as been impressed by the varied breakfast on offer organized by Harvey Burd. By the lively songs and music chosen by Duncan and the support and prayer of the rest of the team, Brian, Sue, Alison, Jennie, Dianne, Margaret, Alison and Pauline. In addition to this I have had the delight together with Jackie Whittaker of planning and organizing the Autumn Fun Day with crafts, raffle, hot dogs and games and look forward to the Spring Fun Day which is planned for the 23rd March. These events could not run without enthusiastic and keen volunteers and I am immensely thankful for all their efforts and care they have in future generations. *Helen Norman*

Mission in the Parish

Messy Church

We have been meeting monthly in the church hall through the year. We have a regular group of families who come along plus many others who visit occasionally. We love to share a great breakfast, lots of interesting crafts, bible stories, songs (and dances) and stories from our church family. This year we interviewed such interesting folk, with stories of God in their work, studies, health and their community. It's been a joy to share these times together. *Jane Burd*

Baby and Toddler Group

It has been a busy year at toddler group and it continues to be a delight to welcome new members and see the group grow. We have a wide range of adults from parents, grandparents, nannies and child minders and all the children and babies they care for and we average around twenty children each week. We were sad to see Geoff and Gill leave but Felicity Dendy has continued to lead the singing session every week with her giant book of songs and we have a few new adults who will help Joel North and Helen Norman set up and clear away after each session.

We have been donated a number of new toys including dressing up clothes, ride-ons, books, craft supplies and a wooden Noah's ark as well as purchasing a tuff spot, in which we have been able to extend our provision of messy play (for example spaghetti, gloop, ice blocks and finger painting). Each term has had a theme and weekly craft activity often devised and resourced by Margaret Harding. The children have enjoyed contributing to our new display board and

see their work continuing to grow. In the Summer Holiday we had an extended session and picnic at Mortimer recreation ground and we have plans for one off termly lunch following a session. *Helen Norman*

Energy - Junior Church

Junior church was relaunched during advent 2023 on the second and fourth Sundays of the month and we currently have two regular members. The children gather at the beginning of the service to collect candles and the children's bible, to be sent to their activity in the vestry via a prayer said with the congregation. Activities are linked to the lectionary and the children return to the service at the peace and will share their craft with the congregation at the end of the service.

During the first Sunday of the month an activity is linked to the service at the children's area at the front of church, where children's books and toys can also be found. The number of children in this service has risen due to siblings of members of the junior choir. Additional activities are left in the children's area and during the week a number of the crafts are completed and taken away. Helen and Margaret are currently running this activity with support from Adam Meridith and additional volunteers would be much appreciated. *Helen Norman*

Coffee Pot

Coffee Pot continues to be very popular and has over 30 people attending each month, many of whom live alone. There is always a happy atmosphere of people enjoying meeting friends over delicious refreshments! Many thanks to the fantastic team who together make this such an enjoyable event. *Eileen Palayiwa*

Lunch Club

Lunch Club, which meets on the last Friday of each month, has been thriving this year with growing numbers. Most months the numbers exceed 40 people present. As we cannot hold a Lunch Club in December (as it would fall between Christmas and New Year), we have a New Year meal at the Victoria Arms. This is sponsored by Victoria Arms and OMTC but organised by St Nicholas. This year over 50 people were present. *Judith Piggott*

Pulse Youth Group

Every second and fourth Saturday in the church hall we run a youth group for young people 11+ and we have been 12 and 20 young people attending each week. We have a 'God Slot' at the beginning of each session where we discuss and read a bible passage related to the Christian season or Sunday readings. There are always snacks and drinks available, board and card games, pool,

table football and a table tennis table as well as a themed food of the evening which have ranged from chocolate fountain, toasties, s'mores, smoothies, toast and spreads and pancakes. In addition to this we have an activity of the evening, these are diverse and range from games, quiz, escape room, bake off, pastry making, star gazing, bell ringing and craft activities. In addition to these sessions, we have had a Christmas shared meal, Summer BBQ and an Autumn walking meal. Joel Denno, Brian North and Helen Norman run the group at present with Skye Denno and Luke Norman. Youth group is a fun and rewarding space to be part of and we always welcome new ideas or volunteers. *Helen Norman*

Mission in the World

Divya Shanthi Mission Support

DSMS has continued to support the work of Divya Shanthi Christian Association and Trust in Bangalore, India. Divya Shanthi provides free and subsidised education, a home for vulnerable children, free medical and family support and vocational training in impoverished parts of Bangalore. Divya Shanthi faced many challenges in 2023 including extreme weather, rising inflation and a difficult political background which does not favour the work of Christian organisations. Despite this, they were able to:

- Open a new Health and Wellness clinic which undertakes community health work and provide a clinic staffed by volunteer doctors;
- Provide extra teaching for high school children in Hindi and Kannada and in science and maths to help students succeed in the state exams;
- Open an outreach centre in the Nandini Layout. The centre provides a pre-school creche, a women's tailoring unit, extra tuition in English for school children and a prayer group;
- Run a vocational training programme for young people who have lost their jobs and need to re-train; and
- Celebrate Christmas in four locations as part of their outreach efforts.

In Marston, DSMS continues to support Divya Shanthi through a programme of child sponsors (with 40 children currently sponsored), a loan scheme for higher education students (via the Hazel Sargeant Memorial Fund) and donations towards their wider charitable work. *Tessa Hennessy*

Church Mission Society

We continue to support Andy and Kati Walsh in Brazil. Regular updates have been made available in Church. *Neil Barker*

Church Fabric

As reported last year, we submitted a Faculty to remove the pews from the South Aisle back (by the font) and to restore the floor in the church. This was approved and the work started in June this year and completed in 6 weeks. The carpet was only replaced in the central aisle of the nave and the pews removal provided us with welcome space near the door. The Faculty has been extended to April 2025 while we consider whether we purchase the chairs for the area around the font.

The bicycle racks were installed in the churchyard and planted up for spring and autumn.

We are still monitoring the heating trying to find the right balance of warmth against costs. *Judith Piggott and Jan Lawrie.*

Safeguarding

No safeguarding issues or concerns have been reported during the year. We are up to date with our DBS checks for all those who needed to be checked.

We have kept abreast with, as much as we could, with safeguarding issues. The main concern diocesan wide, has been the rise of “financial scam” targeting the elderly and vulnerable. This seems to be a growing phenomenon.

A major event during the year was A Services for Safeguarding Parish Officers (PSO) that was held at Christ Church Cathedral on 19th November. The event started at 2.00pm with workshops on “Spiritual Abuse” and on “Managing Risk”, followed by a service in the Cathedral, addressed by the bishop. Millius is on the Diocesan PSO Working Group that advises on PSO guidelines and working.

More and more work and materials seem to be coming up all the time with the introduction of using “dashboards” etc.

Millius has established a good working relationship with the Team Adviser for Oxford and have met from time to time to review Safeguarding issues in general.
Millius Palayiwa

Financial Report

Receipts

There was a small reduction of 1% in planned giving, but we received an increased level of grants including £5,733 from the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance towards the costs of employing the Family Minister

Net parochial fees were higher than in 2022. The rent on 1B Mill Lane was increased in line with inflation. Overall, there was a 10% increase in receipts, not counting the special gift of £25,000 received in 2022.

Payments

The deanery suspended individual assessments of Parish Share and increased them all in line with increased costs. Meanwhile, our other charitable donations decreased by 21%.

Running expenses and the cost of church ministry decreased by 4%. The PCC reimburses the vicar for telephone and broadband costs.

Meanwhile, there was a significant increase in the costs of Ministry and Mission in the Parish following the appointment of a Family Minister in May 2023. These extra costs were met from the special gift received in 2022 and the ODBF grant.

We spent £35,898 on a project to remove some pews and restore walls and flooring. This was met from reserves that had been allocated for repairs to the fabric.

Investments

There was a net gain of £9,715 in our CBF investments due to the increase in stock markets during 2023.

At the Year End

At the end of 2023 we had a balance of £45,164 in the General fund (unrestricted), equivalent to about four months expenditure. There was a balance of £15,680 in the Bell fund and £50,097 in other restricted and designated funds.

Looking Ahead

Following an appeal in November 2022, seven members pledged to increase their planned giving. There have been no additional pledges since then. There are currently 46 regular donors, but several of them are no longer worshipping at the church and others are expected to leave during 2024. The church needs to increase its regular donor base if it is to meet its future financial commitments. Parish Share for 2024 has been assessed based on the previous formula and is expected to reduce by 3.6% compared with 2023.

Electricity costs increased sharply in Oct 2023 with a new fixed term contract and will typically be about £1,500 per month in the winter, even with a reduced level of heating.

Due to falling income and increasing costs, we project a budget deficit of about £13,000 in 2024. *Geoff Hale*

Independent Examiner's Report

I report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended December 31, 2023, which are set out in the following pages.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any

such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the next statement.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met, or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached

(Signed)

Professor David Nowell C.Eng., F.I.Mech.E.
16 Jack Straws Lane
Headington
Oxford
OX3 0DL