

CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN

Church Way Iffley Oxford OX4 4EG



The Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council for the year ended 31 December 2022

Incumbent

The Revd Andrew McKearney,
The Rectory, Mill Lane, Iffley, Oxford, OX4 4EJ

Bank

Barclays, PO Box 333, Oxford, OX1 3HS

Independent Examiner

Mr John McLintock, 12 Mill Lane, Iffley, Oxford, OX4 4EJ

Registered Charity Number

1128523

SUMMARY OF OUR VOCATION

*We are called to be A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world:
contemplative, compassionate, courageous.*

We would like to be known for six things:

- The depth of our spiritual life
- Our commitment to bring life to others
- The stepping-stones we put in place for those who wish to journey with us
- The vibrancy of our common life
- The beauty of our church building
- Our ability to work together

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Purpose

St Mary's Parochial Church Council (the PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has responsibility for the management of the Church property in the parish – St Mary's Church and Churchyard, the Church Hall, Church Vestry, Church Office and Church House.

Membership (since the APCM)

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) or co-opted by the PCC in accordance with the Church Representation Rules 2022.

<i>Vicar</i>	Andrew McKearney	Ex officio
<i>Churchwardens</i>	Tom Leach	Ex officio 2020 onwards
	Sarah Beaver	Ex officio 2022 onwards
<i>Representatives on Cowley Deanery Synod</i>	Sarah McKearney	Ex officio 2020-2023
	Elizabeth Harré	Ex officio 2022-2023
<i>Elected PCC members</i>	Mark Phythian-Adams	Ex officio 2022-2023
	John Eastwood	2017-2023
	Penny Tyack	2017-2023
	Roger Wagner	2017-2023
	<i>Vacancy</i>	2022-2023
	Hilary Pearson	2018-2024
	Guin Webster	2020-2024
	<i>Vacancy</i>	2022-2024
	<i>Vacancy</i>	2022-2024
	Alex Marshall	2019-2025
	Jane McBain	2019-2025
	<i>Vacancy</i>	2022-2025
	<i>Vacancy</i>	2022-2025
<i>Co-opted PCC members</i>	Kate Stilborn	2022-2023
<i>Officers</i>	<i>Vacancy</i>	2022-2023
<i>PCC Appointments</i>	Tom Leach	<i>PCC Vice Chair</i>
	Kate Stilborn	<i>PCC Secretary</i>
	Alex Marshall	<i>PCC Treasurer</i>
	Janet Low	<i>Electoral Roll Officer</i>
	Hilary Pearson	<i>Data Compliance Officer</i>
	Sarah Beaver	<i>Health & Safety Officer</i>
		<i>Fire Officer</i>
	Penny Tyack	<i>Safeguarding Officer</i>
	Jane McBain	<i>Children's Advocate</i>
	Lorna Bourdeaux	<i>Disclosure and Barring Service Verifier</i>
	Penny Tyack	<i>Assistant Disclosure & Barring Service Verifier</i>
	Hilary Pearson	<i>Friends of St Mary's</i>
	Penny Tyack	<i>Friends of St Mary's</i>
	Janet Low	<i>Parish Secretary</i>
	Lucy Phillips	<i>Assistant Parish Secretary & Hall Bookings Secretary</i>
	David Patrick	<i>Website & Social Media</i>

REVIEW OF 2022

Incumbent's Report on the Activities of the Parish

There is a lot about St Mary's which is encouraging, and this is reflected in the annual report. I hope that you will feel as I do when you read it – a profound sense of gratitude to so many for their commitment, generosity, creativity and hard work. There is so much good will and warmth about St Mary's, rooted in worship and prayer. There is real concern for one another and the disadvantaged, as well as engagement in the issues of the day and for the future of our planet. St Mary's is a thoughtful and faithful congregation. However, there are some matters of genuine concern. Attendance at public worship is down since pre-pandemic times about 20%, in common with much of the Church of England. Our early morning Sunday service now gathers just once a month. Some of our small groups have stopped meeting. There are no young children coming to the crèche. The numbers on the Church electoral roll are down and the amount of money raised through the Parish Giving Scheme is down. Brexit led to a significant loss at St Mary's of children and young families who decided to return to their homes in Europe. The pandemic led some people to alter their habits, others reassessed their lives and have moved house, and on others, particularly the frail and elderly, the pandemic has taken its toll. The increased pressures of life mean that many have less time, money and energy to contribute to the life of the church. But those same pressures are leading others to ask deeper questions about life, its meaning and purpose. And always the love of God is present, faith is always new and hope is always surprising. So, I write this last annual report profoundly grateful for the last 16 ½ years as your vicar, and I look to the future with steady confidence in God's purposes for St Mary's.

Andrew McKearney

Church Electoral Roll

At the end of 2022 (2021) there were 126 (135) members on the Electoral roll, of which 34 (34) lived outside the parish.

Janet Low

Churchwardens' Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Church

A report of the work carried out on the Church, Vestry, Churchyard, and Church House during 2022 is contained in the Fabric Committee Report. The annual check of the Church Silver, Fixtures and Fittings has been carried out. The digital Terrier is complete with digital and hard copy photographs of all church silver. The current hardcopy Terrier is also complete and available for inspection.

Tom Leach & Sarah Beaver

Safeguarding

At least 40 of the people who volunteer their time and skill within our church community have undertaken safeguarding training offered by the Church of England. This year 32 people took responsibility for the wellbeing of children and/or vulnerable adults. 9 of these were working specifically with children and young people, 4 as authorised lay preachers, 2 as pastoral assistants, 4 as volunteers with Community Cupboard and 13 as members of the PCC. Living Stones had 17 volunteers, 7 of whom took a leading role with children and vulnerable adults and had, like all the above, up-to-date safeguarding training and DBS certificates. The bellringers made great strides with encouraging their leaders to apply for DBS checks and to undertake the requisite training. In 2022 eleven people updated their safeguarding training, and ten renewed their DBS checks. Safeguarding is a regular item on every PCC agenda and is a

core function of this church. We are finding that the more we talk together about what we learn from the training the more confident we feel about acting if we are concerned. We are discovering that as an alert and caring community we really can help, not least by knowing how to record concerns and to access professional guidance.

Penny Tyack

Health & Safety

In addition to the usual mandatory annual checks (PAT testing; fire extinguishers) the five-year Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) inspections were carried out in the Church, Vestry, and Hall in August 2022 and minor remedial works were undertaken to ensure compliance with essential requirements. The lightning conductor was also checked and inspected in May 2022. A practice evacuation of the church was also carried out in August 2022 at the end of the 10am service and the established written procedures (included in the Handbook for duty Churchwardens) worked well. However, as part of the annual review of health and safety arrangements, in particular the detailed review of the fire safety arrangements using a template from Ecclesiastical Insurance, it became clear that for major services and events (for example weddings, large funerals, Christingle services, carol services, and concerts) where many attendees will be unfamiliar with the church, there needs to be a separate Fire Emergency Safety Plan with additional stewards. A fire risk assessment was also carried out for the Vestry and at the request of the landlords, the Landmark Trust, smoke alarms were installed. Other H&S measures implemented included the posting of fire notices in the emergency night-time evacuations of the Church and Vestry, and the supply of legally compliant Accident Books. The review also identified the scope to improve the safety of the steps to the bell tower by the installation of an internal rope rail, a proposal on which Diocesan advice on the faculty requirements is currently being sought. The Church Health and Safety Policy, revised risk assessment, etc were reviewed and adopted at the November 2022 PCC meeting, as was the Church Fire Emergency Safety Plan subject to further advice (obtained from the Ecclesiastical H&S adviser) and consideration of the arrangements for the placement and location of those with limited mobility at major events. A training session for the stewards on duty at the Christingle and Carol services was held on 18 December.

Sarah Beaver

General Data Protection Regulation

There are no matters to report.

Hilary Pearson

COUNCILS, COMMITTEES & SYNODS

Proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

Introduction The role of the PCC is to (along with the incumbent) promote the mission of God in the parish, be responsible for the parish finances and have ultimate responsibility for the care and maintenance of all church buildings and their contents. The PCC and the incumbent also have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the vulnerable in their church community. As we exited formal lockdown restrictions, we moved back to face-to-face PCC meetings in the Church Hall which allowed for greater discussion and debate than having meetings via Zoom. During 2022 we said farewell to Nikolaj Christensen who left St Mary's to take on a new role as Rector of the Wantage Downs Benefice. Maureen McNaboe stepped down as Churchwarden after four years. The PCC recognised the great contribution that Nikolaj and Maureen had made in their roles. Sarah Beaver became the new Church warden alongside Tom Leach. Towards the end of the year, Liz Spain was welcomed as the new part-time Community Chaplain working in Rose Hill. The PCC also started work on next steps following the sad news that Andrew and Sarah McKearney would be retiring in 2023. A team was appointed to produce a Parish Profile to plan for a replacement incumbent with assistance from a Parish Development Adviser.

Promoting the Mission of God in the Parish

Leadership: The PCC explored and discussed the implications and repercussions of Andrew's and Sarah's retirement, particularly in the light of the fact that St Mary's wouldn't get another curate for 18-24 months following Nikolaj's departure. Options that the PCC explored included a self-supporting priest (with or without housing) or a recently retired priest who may have a house of their own. Locally supported priests who may or may not have a house were also discussed. This naturally will be the most important priority for the PCC in 2023.

Worship: The 10am Sunday morning services were restored albeit with continued restrictions which were eased throughout the year with agreement from the PCC. A positive outcome from the pandemic has been the increased use of technology in worship. The Sunday morning service is now livestreamed each week (whilst being GDPR compliant) and saved to YouTube so that it is accessible to all. During the year the PCC endorsed Hilary Pearson, Alice Lawhead and Roger Wagner as Lay Preachers and they were authorised in these roles by the end of the year.

St Mary's Vision and Values: The PCC oversaw a successful event on December 11th following the Parish Eucharist to collate views from the congregation on what was treasured about St Mary's and what could be improved. This meeting was one of the first stages of reviewing St Mary's vision and purpose and will be particularly useful in producing the Parish Profile to ensure we get the best new incumbent possible for our Parish.

Living Stones: The PCC endorsed and fully supported the work of Penny Tyack and the team of Living Stones volunteers throughout the year. The PCC recognise the important outreach work achieved by Living Stones in sharing the history and beauty of the Church with our wider community.

Living in Love & Faith: This is a Church of England initiative that helps Christians understand human identity, changing patterns in relationships and families, changing sexual attitudes and activity. During 2022 the Ministry team and the PCC attended an excellent six-week course which improved our knowledge and understanding of identity.

Community Cupboard: The cost-of-living crisis increased the importance and focus of the work of Community Cupboard. The work of community cupboard and the funds and resources required to support the work remained high on the agenda throughout the year.

The Church Building

Repairs and Maintenance: The PCC approved work on the wire guards on the windows as a result of a Condition Report on the Glazing. The Friends of St Mary's agreed to fund this work. The PCC agreed that all the lighting inside the church should be replaced with LED bulbs in order to reduce the building's carbon footprint and running costs. The Friends of St Mary agreed to fund this with help from Godfrey Townsend's bequest. A quote for the quinquennial electrical installation inspection for the church was agreed by the PCC and this was completed within the year.

St Mary's Guide Book: 3000 copies of the Guide Book were revised (to include the new altar frontal) and reprinted, also funded by the Friends of St Mary's.

Court Place Gardens University Development: The vicar and others from the PCC met up with various third parties throughout the year in regard to the development of Court Place Gardens. Particular focus was on proposals for a pathway through the Churchyard to the gardens. It was agreed in principle that the developers would pay for a path using the existing gateway in the south wall of the churchyard. It will be two years until the work is completed on Court Place and the PCC will revisit nearer the time.

Churchyard Feasibility Study

The PCC reviewed the Churchyard Development Plan that was endorsed by the PCC in May 2018. It was encouraging to see that many of the 13 items were completed. The areas that were not completed included those that might become more relevant now that the Court Place Gardens Development was underway. A feasibility study of the Churchyard was discussed with an aim to provide improved paths, viewing opportunities and meeting areas particularly outside the west front. This will proceed with financial support from the Friends of St Mary's.

The Church Hall

Within the accounts a provision has been made for rethatching of the Church Hall. Quotes were obtained within the year which were higher than anticipated and subsequently the PCC agreed to delegate to the Hall Committee the authority to make an application for funding from the FCC Community Action Fund. This funding was unfortunately not obtained as the grant application had not got the support of a specialist surveyor. This has now been rectified.

Curacy House

In recent months the future of Curacy House was one of the most pressing matters discussed by the PCC as a result of Nikolaj's departure. There were two immediate concerns. The first was that there were cracks in the house most likely due to subsidence. The second was the fact that a vacant house could lead to squatters moving in unless the house was well secured. After considerable work by Sarah Beaver and after seeking much advice from relevant third parties the PCC approved that the house be let (after some essential maintenance was completed). Following a surveyor's report, the PCC were satisfied that the cracks were not of immediate concern and the house was safe to occupy. However, work progresses to establish the cause of the cracks, undertake repairs and obtain a Certificate of Structural Adequacy should the PCC decide to sell the property in the future. This was all discussed in the context of the ministry in Rose Hill and the fact that the PCC were assured that in the event of having a curate in the future their accommodation would not be dependent on the parish providing a house.

Iffley Rectory

The PCC sought reassurances about the future of Iffley Rectory as a result of Andrew's retirement. The PCC now understand that it is a settled matter that the rectory be used by the vicar of St Mary's. Maintenance work will take place during the interregnum between incumbents.

Parish Finances

The PCC agreed a prudent budget for the year that forecast an overall deficit of 14k. The budget was set at a time of uncertainty following Covid restrictions. The PCC recognised that although utility costs were higher than forecast this would be some way offset by buoyant bookings of the Church Hall throughout the year.

Regulatory requirements

These were discussed at each meeting of the PCC.

Charitable Support

The work of the Charity Committee was discussed and supported at each meeting and all proposals supported. There was additional work carried out to explore how St Mary's might support refugees through the Community Sponsorship Scheme, particularly at the start of the Ukraine war. The conclusion reached was that even with support of other local groups this might be too financially ambitious. Other avenues such as working with Asylum Welcome and Refugee Resource were agreed as well as practically supporting parish members who welcomed Ukrainian into their own homes.

Kate Stilborn

Standing Committee

Andrew McKearney, Tom Leach, Sarah Beaver, Alex Marshall, Kate Stilborn

The Standing Committee did not meet during 2022 and PCC agendas were agreed by email.

Andrew McKearney

Charities Committee

Andrew McKearney, Kate Stilborn, Jane McBain, Sarah Beaver, Debbie Burrows, Maggie Wilson, Sarah McKearney

The committee met in March, June, and October. A total of £16,592 (£19,647 in 2021) was raised in the course of 2022. This broke down into £2,283 (£5,426) Christian Aid Week, £511 (NIL) Organ Recital, £10,960 (£11,540) Harvest Appeal, £2,446 (£2,681) Christmas Appeal, £392 (NIL) Christingle Service – The Children's Society. The PCC continued with its charity grants of £5,000 throughout 2022 despite the pressure on church finances. These grants were distributed between The Children's Society (£500), Ark-T (£1,000), Freedom from Torture (£750), Yellow Submarine (£750), Rose Hill & Donnington Advice Centre (£1,000) and Donnington Doorstep Family Centre (£1,000). We are very grateful to Sarah Beaver, and Debbie Burrows joining the committee.

Andrew McKearney

Finance Committee

Andrew McKearney, Viviane Robertson, Alex Marshall, Tim Brunton, Helen Powell, Barry & Stephanie Newsome, Sarah Beaver, Lucy Phillips

The committee met twice in March and October. The pressure on parish finances has remained throughout 2022 as is clear from the annual accounts – this is set to continue in 2023 and beyond with rising costs, inflation, poor returns on investments and an uplift in the Parish Share. All those involved in the financial affairs of the parish are owed a huge debt of gratitude for their diligence and hard work, as is the generosity of congregational members.

Andrew McKearney

Church Hall Committee

Tim Brunton, Nikolaj Christensen, John Dean, John Harris, Alex Marshall, Patricia Michael, Stephen Michael, Lucy Phillips, Viviane Robertson, Andrew McKearney, Diana Nettleton

During the year the committee continued to manage the activities and upkeep of Iffley Church Hall, in support of St Mary's parish mission and the social activities of the wider community. The Church Hall Committee dealt with enquiries, made bookings, managed maintenance issues and attended to compliance monitoring. By the beginning of the calendar year, the substantial constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic had been replaced by a return to business near-normality. Income rebounded encouragingly, and end of year totals indicated income of £24,820.25, an increase of over 18 percent compared with 2019, the last 'normal' pre-pandemic trading year, and a rise of £15,198.25 as against 2021 earnings. This increase represented a growth in business volume as well as a reflection of higher hourly charges. There was a noticeable change in the pattern of business with good growth in valued regular hirers and a decline in ad hoc party-type business. The diligence and commitment of the Bookings Secretary in achieving this very satisfactory level of bookings and income has been noted by the committee. Maintenance tasks undertaken in 2022 included improvements to the courtyard garden, the introduction of LED lighting in the upstairs room, draught proofing of doors, and gutter, window and beam cleaning. Much of the committee's time was devoted to preparations for the proposed re-thatching of the east roof elevation and ridge, provisionally scheduled for Easter 2023 at an indicative cost of £50,000. A substantial grant application to FCC Community Action Fund was assembled, with excellent help and co-operation from village committees, organisations and individuals. This was not successful because of limitations on grant funding and insufficient evidence that it was necessary to carry out the rethatching at the present time. (A specialist survey in January 2023 indicated that the work could reasonably be postponed for 2-3 years). Meetings of the committee took place on 16 February, 25 May, 15 July and 9 December. Patricia Michael and Stephen Michael stood down from the committee with effect from the 25 May meeting and were warmly thanked for their many years of faithful service. The continuing commitment and energy of all members is again acknowledged.

John Harris

Fabric Committee

Mark Phythian-Adams, Andrew McKearney, Tom Leach, Sarah Beaver, Tim Brunton, Penny Tyack

The Fabric Committee met in June 2022 for the first time since 2018. The meeting was also attended by Andrew Townsend, the Church Architect, and a walkaround inspection of the inside and outside of the Church confirmed that most of the matters arising from the 2018 Quinquennial Inspection had been dealt with. The Committee also considered a Condition Report on the Glazing prepared by Jim Budd of Jim Budd Stained Glass. This indicated that the glass is generally in good condition but included a number of recommendations for cleaning and general maintenance work on cords, hinges, etc., the replacement of some of the grilles, and the installation of Environmental Protection Glazing (EPG) on the 15th century panel in the south wall of the nave containing the de la Pole arms. Following further consideration, including of its high cost and the visual impact of the installation of EPG, the PCC approved the implementation of the other repairs at a cost of £4,750 excluding VAT. This work, which will be funded by a grant from the Friends of St Mary's (FOSM) and is a List A project (requires reporting to the Diocese but not a Faculty) will be carried out in March or April 2023. The Committee also recommended, and the PCC subsequently approved, the replacement of the halogen lights in Church and external floodlights with LEDs. This was funded with a generous grant from the Friends of St Mary's (FOSM) from Godfrey Townsend's bequest. The work was carried out in August 2022, but several of the new lights failed, and although the new lights were supposed to be compatible with the existing drivers, it was decided that the drivers should also be replaced.

This additional work was funded by a further grant from FOSM and a £150 grant obtained from the Diocese from its Energy Efficiency Fund. There have been some ongoing problems with flickering of lights on the dimmer switch and this will now be replaced by an on/off switch. Overall expenditure on this project to date has amounted to some £3,743 (Ex VAT, which the Church can reclaim). The Committee noted that while it was hoped that Legal and General's redevelopment of Court Place on behalf of the University might include some contribution towards improving the landscaping around the Church, there was no immediate urgency as the project was in its relatively early stages and not due to complete until September 2024. It recommended that Andrew Townsend should be invited to undertake a feasibility study, to include indicative costings, of the proposed landscaping scheme to include improved disabled access to the church and churchyard and the possible provision of an accessible toilet. The PCC initially considered that the Church needed to focus on other more immediate priorities but has now agreed that the initial feasibility study should proceed at a cost of up to £4,500 excluding VAT, noting that the implementation of any agreed works could be phased. Fees for associated investigations and research could cost up to another £4,750.

The Church

Apart from the replacement of the lighting, there were no major works in 2022.

The Churchyard

The churchyard is closed to new burials which means that the Council has overall responsibility for its maintenance. Its garden of remembrance nevertheless continues to be in regular use; there were 5 burials of ashes there in 2022. A small team of volunteers has continued its work to maintain the church yard and benches while the Council mows some of the grass, respecting the roped off areas so that wild flowers can grow and a contractor engaged by the Church mows the paths. The moles have also continued to enjoy the church yard. Contractors also trimmed the hedge and removed some multi-stem hazel trees to the west of the church. A particular feature of the last year has been the small field of wooden crosses with blue and yellow ribbons generously made by Ed Ling for individual planting with prayers as a symbol of the support and prayers of visitors and members of the congregation for both the Ukrainians and Russians killed in the conflict. Immediate priorities for 2023 will be the removal of the ivy from the perimeter walls and the repair of the wall between the West Lawn area of the church and Court Place where the capping stones are loose and at risk of falling. We shall also be considering the proposals for the future development of the Churchyard that emerge from the feasibility study.

The Vestry

The Landmark Trust, as the owner of the building, is responsible for its fabric. The PCC pays rent for use of the Vestry.

Church House

Following the Christensens' report in mid-September of further cracking in the ceilings and walls at Church House, the Church surveyor inspected the house and confirmed that it remained safe to occupy but recommended that the insurers should be contacted about potential subsidence. An EICR inspection (and minor remedial works), a gas safety inspection, PAT and alarms testing were all carried out at Church House in November/early December 2022 prior to the commencement of a tenancy.

Church Office

This is currently housed at the Rectory and the Rectory is owned by Christ Church.

Sarah Beaver

Magazine Committee

Rhys Hedges, Nikolaj Christensen replaced by Graham Low, John Harris, Edwin Pritchard, Jackie Pritchard, Cecily Kirtland

The Committee met mostly monthly. For details of income and expenditure please see the Treasurer's Report. Seven issues consisted of 24 pages, one of 20, and three of 28. Regular advertising accounted for eight pages in the December 2022 issue. The print run was 275 per month for 2022.

Jackie Pritchard

Living Stones Committee

Andrew McKearney, Penny Tyack, Hilary Pearson, Janet Low, Debbie Burrows, Maureen McNaboe, Marion Casey. Elizabeth Mullett is the Minutes secretary.

The role of Living Stones, the education and outreach arm of the church, has recently been highlighted by members of the congregation as a positive feature of St Mary's. 'Living Stones brings in other visitors interested in the heritage of Iffley church' and 'brings the church into the community'. The work of its 17 friendly and energetic volunteers makes this possible. By regularly welcoming visitors to the church, and by organising special events, the team adds significantly to a shared understanding of, and care for, this historic building. On Sunday afternoons from Easter to the end of September they spoke to 332 visitors, among whom was one who stayed for nearly an hour and said, 'It is my first time in a church. Really peaceful and really beautiful.' The year began with a special event for volunteers: tea, and a viewing of the delightful Virtual Tour that had been made during lockdown, reinvigorated the team as welcomers, church guides and organisers of the events planned for 2022. Altogether 150 people attended the four events. 35 people enjoyed learning about devotional singing during the tumultuous years of the Reformation, with lecture-recitals and a service of Evensong; 20 participated in a day-school in Drawing Iffley Church with Sally Levell and Phil Whiting; 55 climbed the bell tower, followed a variety of churchyard trails and viewed excerpts of the film made by Sub Rosa of a re-enactment of Annora's service of Enclosure; and 40 spent an enlightening afternoon studying the stained glass windows of Iffley Church. 'Fascinating, informative and eye-opening,' was a not untypical comment on the events, as was another observation, 'It was good, because of meetings with creative people and exchanging ideas.' The year ended with a special tour for volunteers of medieval glass in New College Chapel and Christ Church Cathedral. Appetites were whetted for more Living Stones guiding and study days in 2023, and for more volunteers to share their love of the building with others who feel, like one visitor, that it is 'an extraordinary church... always something different to wonder at.

Spectacular! Thank you for the tour!

Penny Tyack

Eco Church @ St Mary's

The Eco Church group was formed in early 2019 and meetings took place roughly on a monthly basis between then and summer 2022. The pattern of regular monthly meetings (second Sunday of the month after church) was re-established in November 2022 after several months of hiatus following the departure of three key members at the beginning of September.

Up to November 2022 the group undertook a number of activities, including a 'litter pick' in conjunction with a low carbon group based in Rose Hill (RHILC), a climate Sunday service, occasional intercessions with an environmental theme during the year. During 2022 the group was seeking wider congregational involvement through a couple of carbon footprint stalls after church on a Sunday to help members of the congregation to work out their own carbon footprint. It also ran two presentations about Eco Church with bookstalls in the Church Hall to attempt to recruit more group members. At the same time there were active exchanges via the Whatsapp group "St Mary's Eco Chat" which had attracted approx. 20 participants and a regular page had

been designed and set up on the church website. However it has become clear that Eco Church activity needs to maintain non-digital information and communication to stay in touch with all members of St Mary's congregation. During 2022 a number of themes emerged:

- The need for regular group meetings to sustain and follow up the commitment to action in the Eco Church group. This has now been put in place with monthly meetings booked in the diary until the end of December 2023.
- A strong desire to involve children and younger members of the congregation in the activities of Eco Church, which is reciprocated by young people themselves, for example in the comments to the December 2022 workshop (Looking to the Future of Iffley Parish). The Eco Church group is still looking for ways to make this happen.
- As a recent contribution has made clear, the group needs to engage with the political side of climate change. As we pursue a silver award with Arocha, we will need to demonstrate a more political level of awareness and capability for example by joining forces with other climate related campaigns, and inviting MPs and councillors as speakers. The group identified water quality and river pollution as a local issue on which there is already some local activity and it is testing how much support there is likely to be in the parish for ongoing activity on this issue. A water quality statement was produced in support of the local end-sewage-pollution-thames-campaign (for more information: endsewagepollutionthames.wordpress.com)

Tom Leach

Cowley Deanery Synod

Sarah McKearney, Mark Phythian-Adams, Elizabeth Harré

No report has been received of the work of the Synod.

GROUPS & TEAMS

Ministry Team

The ministry team shares with the vicar in developing and sustaining the vision of the parish together with the week-by-week running of St Mary's. During 2022 Nikolaj Christensen concluded his curacy. Our churchwardens, Tom Leach and Sarah Beaver, have been a great blessing, together with our retired priests, Graham Low and David Barton, our licensed lay minister, Sarah McKearney, our newly authorised lay preachers, Alice Lawhead, Hilary Pearson and Roger Wagner, and our pastoral team headed up by our lay pastoral assistant, Susan Morrison. We have met roughly fortnightly, alternating between in person and online. We have been delighted to welcome an ordinand on placement in the parish, hold a parish retreat, and resume the healing ministry. The administrative support provided by Janet Low and Lucy Phillips, with Kate Stilborn as PCC Secretary, continues to be exceptional. In November we welcomed Rebecca Dean back to lead our study evening entitled 'Does the New Testament bring Good News for women?' In 2022 (2021) there were 15 (6) Baptisms, 3 (0) Admissions to Holy Communion, 0 (6) Confirmations, 10 (8) Banns of Marriage published, 1 (1) Blessing of a Marriage, 10 (5) Weddings, 9 (14) Funerals, 21 (24) Interment of Ashes, 0 (2) Burials, and 0 (2) Memorial Services.

Andrew McKearney

Music in Worship

We are very thankful that, after two years of very limited music-making in church, 2022 saw the emergence of sung services again at St Mary's and an established pattern of a monthly sung evening service (with a break over the summer). Mostly these take the form of a simple Evensong with choir introit and anthem, plus responses, psalm and canticles for everyone to join in. We did one full Choral Evensong in June to celebrate HM the Queen's 70th year on the throne, when we also sang some special music at the morning service. There were special evenings of Music and Readings, for Passiontide, Remembrance and Advent and (at last!) a full Carol Service the weekend before Christmas. Other musical things also reappeared – carol-singing round the village followed by a Barn Dance, an organ recital in June, plus the Epiphany Festival service and the Annual Choirs Festival, both held in the cathedral and attended by a large number of singers from RSCM choirs around the Diocese, including groups from St Mary's. The Iffley Music Society was able to present many varied concerts in the hall and the church and other visiting groups came to sing or play too. St Mary's Choir has grown over the year with new members joining us from near and far, and long-term singers gradually re-emerging from isolation, which means we now have about 40 singers on the list to invite each time we sing! Most of the evening services work with around 20 singers but we numbered 25 at Advent and 28 at Christmas, including one or two visitors from afar! None of this would be possible without the unfailing support of the other organists, Geoffrey, Tim and Paul who have played regularly on Sunday mornings and evenings as well as for the special occasions – thank you all very much! We have also been very fortunate to have Andrew's unfailing support and interest in everything we have tried to achieve. He has crafted wonderful services for the simple evenings but also amazing compilations of Music and Readings for the various special occasions during the church's year – Passiontide, Remembrance, Advent and Christmas – using poetry as well as scripture to enhance our worship. We shall miss him and Sarah very much but wish them every happiness in their new home and way of life!

Janet Low

Taizé Evening Services

Services were held monthly on the third Sunday at 8pm. There were three exceptions: no service in April because Easter Day fell on the third Sunday and August when too many of the key team were on holiday. Missing August is a regular gap. In December the Carol Service was held on the third Sunday and we held a service on Wednesday, 21 December at 6.30pm. Average attendance numbers rose. There were fluctuations ranging between 10 and 21. It became a regular occurrence that some people could not be seated in the chancel but overflowed into the tower pews. The December service (held on the Wednesday before Christmas at 6.30pm) was attended by 21 people. Mo Rooney, Sarah McKearney and Pemma Spencer Chapman wrote and led services after Anne Borrowdale moved away. Lorna Bourdeaux was unable to join the team due to ill health. Discussions were held to think about possible people to approach to join the team. (At the time of writing this report in early February, 2023, two people have been found.) Alex Marshall and Pemma continue to lead the music most months. Liz Marshall joined Alex in place of Pemma when she was leading services.

Pemma Spencer-Chapman

Community Cupboard

Throughout the year, Community Cupboard based at Rose Hill Methodist Church has continued to support vulnerable people by offering a foodbank every Wednesday afternoon, along with a free meal, drinks, snacks and the opportunity to meet with others. We are very grateful to all the volunteers who give of their time so freely, whether that is on 'the frontline' on a Wednesday afternoon, or behind the scenes setting up, collecting/purchasing food, or delivering food parcels. In October Liz Spain was appointed by the Oxford Circuit of the Methodist Church as a part time Community Chaplain to Rose Hill, and being chaplain to Community Cupboard is one of her main areas of work. Since taking up her appointment, Liz has been enjoying getting to know the volunteers and friends of Community Cupboard. She has been liaising with our referral agencies and making good links with Rose Hill and Donnington Advice Centre, who are now our primary referrer. We are seeing an increase in the number of 'friends' who come to Community Cupboard, and regularly serve upwards of 40 families each week. It is always a privilege to be able to listen to their stories and offer support. At Christmas we had a very successful Christmas party, and gave a present to each family who came. We had a successful grant application to the Oxfordshire Community Foundation Cost of Living Crisis grant which is helping us enormously during these difficult times. And we are very grateful too, to St Mary's Church for making us one of their charities, and for all the other financial donations and donations of goods that we receive. With thanks for your ongoing prayerful support for this important partnership of Rose Hill Methodist Church and St Mary's, Iffley.

Liz Spain

Worship & Prayer Groups

Prayers & Toast

After Covid lockdown prayers on Zoom each Friday morning Prayers and Toast happily returned to the Vestry at 8:00 a.m. unless the weather is so inclement that we cannot walk there safely. We pray with the prayer requests left in church and for many whom we bring in our hearts who are sick, dying, the world of war, disasters, famine, ourselves and people we bless and give thanks for. This prayer time is very meaningful and strengthening. Our tradition of serving toast and marmalade, peanut butter and jams with freshly brewed coffee and tea continues from 7:45 a.m. We welcome anyone who would like to join us even for a single visit.

Barbara Alderson

Julian Group

The Julian Group continues to flourish. We met each month during the year, enjoying being able to meet in person again. We continued to meet in the church, its inspiring space and spiritual atmosphere feeding our time of silent prayer together. The group varies in number, from four up to fifteen. However many or few we are, the period of shared silence is always profound and powerful. Those who are unable to come to the church for the meetings often keep a time of silence at home at the same time.

Sally Brodhurst

Discussion Groups

Poetry Group

A group of about ten of us has met monthly throughout the year in the Church Hall. We have greatly enjoyed reading and reflecting on poems and commentaries from: Hearing God in Poetry: fifty poems for Lent and Easter, an outstanding anthology compiled by Richard Harries. We are now reading poems from A Century of Poetry: 100 poems for searching the heart, another excellent anthology, this time compiled by Rowan Williams.

Graham Low

Widening Horizons

Normally a new group is formed twice a year, summer and autumn, to read a book together meeting once a month over the course of 3 months, 7.30-9pm online with anything up to 10 participants. There is no obligation to attend more than one series. We look for books that are quite short (about 120 pages if possible), have spiritual and theological depth, without being too academic. Participants agree to a) attend the meetings b) read the chapters under discussion and c) engage with the ideas raised in the book. In 2022 we read Cyprian Smith 'The Way of Paradox: Spiritual life as taught by Meister Eckhart. In addition, during Lent we met weekly for a shorter time (7.30-8.30pm) to read Stephen Cherry 'Thy Will Be Done'. The group has meant a great deal to its participants, both for the opportunity to read a book but also, importantly, to share ideas and insights. However, with Andrew leaving and Wendy unable to participate due to ill health, the future of the group needs to be discussed.

Andrew McKearney

Home Groups

Bible Study Group

This year proved, unfortunately, to be one very short on face-to-face meetings. Bereavement, illness, hospitalisations and recovery, moving house and the departure overseas of a key member, all combined to decimate the proposed schedule. Only two meetings took place, one at Barbara's and one at Zoe's, both being hosted for lunch at the same time. We discussed The Hospitality of the Heart and how we are welcome in the Kingdom of God (especially related to Luke's account of the Last Supper – Luke 22, v. 14 to 22,) as well as a question put to Jesus about banqueting (Luke 14, v. 15 to 24). However, the group strongly supported one another in prayer throughout the year and were otherwise regularly in touch. We intend to have a thriving study group in 2023.

Barbara Alderson, Jan & Jonathan Stockland

Bible Study Group

It has been a blessing being able to meet in the Church Hall for over two years now. We meet on alternate Thursday afternoons from 3 until 5 for two terms a year – one beginning in September and the other in mid- February. We meet for 7-8 sessions each term. An hour of bible study is followed by coffee and biscuits and a lot of conversation. We, as a group, are so very grateful to be able to use the Hall. We now have a group of 14 people, our newest member joined for our first session in 2023. Attendance fluctuates but we usually have at least 10 people

each Thursday. We are a bit short on leaders, but we usually manage, and everyone is truly wonderful at participating and contributing to our discussions. In the Winter/Spring of 2022 we used the Stephen Cherry book 'Thy Will be Done' looking at the Lord's Prayer, as did many others in the Church at large. We did struggle and disagree at times with some of the ideas in the book, but we found being able to look at the prayer in detail brought many lively discussions and enabled us to express our emotions, ideas and feelings of the prayer that is central to our life together. In the Autumn of 2022, we decided to go back to studying a book of the Bible and chose Hebrews to read and discuss. Not an easy choice, but it was a challenge and again brought interesting discussions connecting Old Testament stories and history to New Testament Christianity. It also gave us inspiration for our first term in 2023. We decided to focus on several OT leaders. Our thanks to Mandy Watts who organized the material for our discussion sessions in 2022. It goes without saying that we miss Sheila Fairfield greatly, but she will always be a guiding light to us.

Maureen McNaboe

Abberbury Road House Group

Whilst we may look like a book group – even to ourselves! – the aim of our house group is to encourage one another in spiritual growth; that is, in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Toward that end, we spent the first part of the year looking at what Jesus said about himself. We used Tom Wright's books 'John for Everyone' to guide our study. Then, with an appetite to understand the Bible better, we discussed Nick Page's book, 'The Badly Behaved Bible.' It's a humorous book on a serious topic, and as a group we found it at times exasperating yet always challenging as we learned more about how the Bible was written, how it came to us, and how one reads the various types of literature within it. Always closing our meetings in prayer, we are privileged to share with one another our own concerns and the concerns we have for our church and the wider world.

Alice Lawhead

Crèche Report

There are currently no children who use the crèche.

Gaynor Dean

Fish and Chip Club Report

In the period from Easter to September 2022 the number of children coming to the Fish and Chip Club continued to be small, with intermittent attendance. Since September there has been a noticeable increase, both in numbers and regularity of attendance. The average attendance for the year is 3.9 children a week. We have been pleased to welcome a new family and some occasional visitors. The majority of the children are now in school year 5 (aged ten). They will have one more year in Fish and Chip Club before moving on to secondary school. It has been decided not to hold Family Services for the present and there have been fewer extra activities because of low numbers, but we held a pancake party for the children in February. The good attendance at the Christingle Service on Christmas Eve was encouraging after the gap for Covid lockdown. We continue the pattern of games, bible stories, discussion and craft activities. Returning to church in time for the children to go up to the altar with their parents for a blessing or to receive communion makes them feel very much a part of the church body. Though Fish and Chip Club is for the children, it is also for parents, giving them some quiet time to be in church and find refreshment and nourishment there. I am very grateful to Anwen Keyes for her reliable help and to parents who have stepped in to help when needed, covering the legal requirement for two adults to be present. I have told the churchwardens of my decision to stand down as leader of Fish and Chip Club at the end of this school year. A new team of leaders and helpers is needed. At the recent meeting to discuss the future direction of St Mary's, it was

recognised by all the participants that our children are the future of the church and that we should do all we can to support and promote the work amongst children and families. Speaking with one of the children recently, I heard that in his school there is almost no teaching about Christianity. All our children in the parish of Donnington, Rose Hill and Iffley deserve to hear about God's love and, at the very least, to find out about the basics of Christian faith. The name Fish and Chip Club was chosen by the children when Sarah McKearney took over the leadership of the Sunday school; it reflects the children's experience of fun and belonging. As Sarah and Andrew prepare to move on from the parish, we give our warmest thanks to Sarah for her years of creative commitment and hard work, and to both of them for their unflinching support and care for the children and families.

Elizabeth Roberts

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 28 March 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



The Revd Andrew McKearney – Chair of the PCC



Kate Stilborn – Honorary Secretary

Accepted by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on 9 May 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

The Revd Andrew McKearney – Chair of the APCM



Kate Stilborn – Honorary Secretary

