



PARISH OF CUMNOR

Parish of Cumnor

**Incorporating St Michael's Church Cumnor,
St Andrew's Church Dean Court, and St Mary's Church Farmoor**

2019 REVIEW

**Report on Parish Activity in 2019
for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
held on October 19th 2020**

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THE PARISH OF CUMNOR
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
Monday 19 October 2020 at 7.30pm at St Michael's Church, Cumnor

This meeting is open to all those on the electoral roll of the Parish of Cumnor and also to those residents in the parish whose names are on a register of local government electors by reason of such residence.

Business will begin at 7.30pm.

AGENDA

Worship

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS FOR THE ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Election of two churchwardens for the year 2020 - 2021

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 29 April 2019
2. Matters arising
3. Election of Deanery Synod Reps and new PCC members
4. Finance - *Malcolm Taylor*
 - 4.1 Annual inspected accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019
 - 4.2 Proposed budget for 2020
 - 4.3 Appointment of examiner for accounts for year ending 31 December 2020
5. Reports of parish activities - *see Annual Report booklet*
6. Presentation of terrier and inventory - *Churchwardens*
7. Any other business
8. Commissioning of new PCC

VICARS REPORT

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” - John 13:34-35

At the last APCM, 18 months ago, I laid before you the PCCs strategy for growing younger by pivoting away from youth work for now and investing in Children and Families work. I just want to clarify that this doesn't mean that we're only interested in being here for children and families, any more than someone saying "Black Lives Matter" means that only black lives matter. As the national church, The Church of England, is here for everyone, whether they attend regularly, irregularly or not at all. At my licensing, Bishop Colin entrusted me with the cure of souls of everyone in this parish. This is our mission field and it means that we have a duty and a calling to share the good news of God's love in Jesus with everyone here.

There's a practical reason for growing younger too. Picture our congregations and imagine how many of us will still be here in 5 years time? In 10? In 20? It's sobering. We have to reach out to the missing generations. If we don't, who will?

Some progress is being made despite the difficulties. We've a brilliant new AV system which is transforming our all-age worship, and it was wonderful to welcome some 7 families with 16 children to Big Story Sunday in March, the last before the lockdown.

Of course, it's not an easy road and there are no quick fixes. We have no youth worker or children and families worker at this time, and we won't be rushing to recruit. It is hard to pioneer these areas from scratch and we are much more likely to be able to recruit successfully in a few years once we've rebuilt from the ground up and we've got a core of families coming regularly.

Churches that grow are not necessarily those that do things the best, or have the most staff, or have the widest range of groups and activities. They're the ones who despite their differences walk together in unity and love on the adventure that God has for them. That's why what works in one place and time won't

necessarily work somewhere else. It's about learning to follow God together and learning to walk with him. And as we do, step by step, we're changed together into his likeness. As we become a more Christlike church, more full of grace, and kindness, with love and truth held together, we can become the kind of community that people long to be part of. That's what will draw new people and see us growing younger. There's no strategy or plan that can compete with the presence of Jesus in our midst.

It will take lots of patience, lots of hard work and lots of prayer. We have some great people, full of faith and energy, and we have strong links with the communities of Dean Court, Farmoor and Cumnor which our three churches serve. The coming year will be an especially important time in the life of St Andrew's as revised plans for the new building are submitted for planning approval and work starts. And building work will be a good theme for all of us as we seek to rebuild parish life and mission once the pandemic passes.

If we can come together and learn to love each other in spite of our differences then we can grow and become the sort of vibrant, life-giving multi-generational community church that people of all shapes, sizes, ages and interests in Cumnor will be desperate to be a part of.

Jonathan Widdess
Vicar of Cumnor

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CUMNOR PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The parish of Cumnor sits on the edge of Oxford. The three Anglican churches in the parish are broadly evangelical in tradition, but each has its own distinctive style of worship. The PCC represents the three churches. In addition to two churchwardens, there are 13 elected members (two of whom serve on the Deanery Synod). The Vicar, our associate clergy (Helen Azer) and our licensed lay ministers (Neil Grady, Eve Lockett) are ex officio members, making a total of 19 members.

Members of the Parochial Church Council for 2019 were as follows:-

Ex-Officio Members

Rev Jonathan Widdess (Chair), Rev Helen Azer, Neil Grady, Eve Lockett (Vice-Chair), Dr David Henderson-Slater

Elected Members

Jean Carroll (Churchwarden), Roland Fuggle (Churchwarden), Karen Adamson, Kate Elliott, Angela Evans (Deanery Synod Rep), Chris Evans, Valerie Grady, Claire Horsman, Dr Jane Impey, Roger Long, Sheila Millard, Vivien Payne, Dr Chris Scruby (Deanery Synod Rep), Malcolm Taylor (Treasurer), Jane Vlitos

The PCC met 8 times throughout the year as a full committee.

In addition, there were smaller meetings of groups elected by and accountable to the PCC:

Standing Committee: This is the only Committee required by Church law. It has the power to transact PCC business between meetings, subject to any directions received from the PPC. Members were: Rev Jonathan Widdess (Chair), Jean Carroll, Roland Fuggle, Eve Lockett, and Malcolm Taylor.

Finance Committee: Members were: Malcolm Taylor (Chair), Neil Grady, Jan Harris, Vivian Payne, Tony Wyatt

Fabric Committee: Members were: Jean Carroll (Chair), Jane Vlitos, Roger long, David Nowakowski, Chris Evans, Jane Impey

Mission Group: Members were: Chris Evans (Chair), Chris Scruby, Rev Jonathan Widdess

SVMG: Members were: Neil Grady (Chair), Celia Clarke, Claire Horsman, Sheila Millard, Roland Fuggle.

ELECTORAL ROLL

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules, the Electoral Roll was revised this year. There are now 124 parishioners on the Electoral Roll.

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SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Safeguarding is looked upon by some as a bureaucratic exercise and by others with anxiety because it requires us to consider the unthinkable. It is, nevertheless, important since it strives to ensure that when in our care, children, young people and vulnerable adults are safe, valued and cared for. Over the past year we have done our best to keep policies and procedures in place to do this.

We have continued to follow recommended safeguarding procedures and this year three volunteers have obtained DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) certificates for the first time whilst two others have had theirs renewed. With regard to this, thanks must go to Eve Lockett and Canon Jessica Turner, who as Verifiers, check the ID and all documents of DBS applicants. In July, 23 volunteers attended a safeguarding training course at St Michael's whilst four others received training through their places of employment and two attended courses at Church House.

This year, 2020, all Church of England dioceses are undertaking a comprehensive safeguarding review. We have been asked to look into the past and ensure that all safeguarding concerns involving clergy and church officers, in relation to children, young people, adults and domestic abuse have been reported. We must also put in place the new 'Promoting a Safer Church' action plan. This 25 point plan will be taken to the PCC on 1/4/20 and thereafter reviewed regularly. The Parish Safeguarding Policy, which is displayed in all our three churches and also on the church website, will have its annual review at the same time.

Our churches must be places where everyone is welcomed. It is therefore important that we all see safeguarding as part of our responsibility.

Val Livesley

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FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Finance Committee met 4 times in 2019 and following these meetings, quarterly financial updates were presented to the PCC. The current members of the Finance Committee are Malcolm Taylor (Chairman), Vivien Payne (Secretary), Tony Wyatt, Neil Grady, Roger Long and Jan Harris.

During 2019 total funds under the control of the PCC grew significantly from £59,000 to £360,000K. The principal gain was in our Restricted Funds which grew by £283K. Unrestricted Funds grew by £18K. The major movement in Restricted Funds was a growth of £63K in the St Andrew's Building Project Fund. In addition, we were blessed by a significant legacy donation of £210K, for which a new Restricted fund has been set up.

In February 2019 the PCC approved a very challenging expense budget for our ongoing operations of £168K an increase of 10% vs 2018 actual. We had incurred a deficit of £7K in 2018 so to breakeven in 2019 required an increase in total income of 16%. A key part of this overall increase was the requirement for an increase in planned giving and donations of 21%. At year end actual expenditure was 99.7% of budget, and planned giving and donations did hit the required 21% increase following a successful stewardship campaign in the early part of the year – a very welcome and encouraging result.

As mentioned in last year's report, early in 2018, we were the victim of a very sophisticated fraud in which £20,000 was transferred out of our account to a third party account set up in a false name. It is pleasing to report that following an intervention by the Financial Ombudsman, the money was credited back to us in full.

The Annual Accounts for 2019 were independently inspected by Critchleys and reviewed and accepted by the PCC in April 2020. A copy of the inspected annual accounts will be available for inspection at the annual Parochial Church Meeting.

Malcolm Taylor, Treasurer & Chair of the Finance Committee

ABINGDON DEANERY SYNOD

Synods were held during the PCC year 2019-20 in the following deanery churches:

Steventon in July: First there was a presentation on the work of Citizens Advice (CA), which has given advice to over 11,000 people across Oxfordshire. CA is in need of more volunteers, and although it is largely dependent on grants from town and district councils, this is insufficient to support the work. This was followed by a Diocesan Synod report. The treasurer then gave a first presentation of the proposed Parish Share for 2020. He also encouraged parishes to apply to the Diocesan Development Fund for missional activities. There was then some feedback from the Common Vision Conference in May. Finally, the chair welcomed new synod lay representatives and as always the meeting closed with news from the parishes.

Kennington in November: There was a presentation by the Diocesan Discipleship Enabler on Personal Discipleship Plans (PDPs), an initiative to enable church members to deepen their walk with Christ with the help of an encourager or mentor. Training courses for mentors were available. This was followed by a useful Q and A session. The other main items were presentations on the Parish Shares for 2020 and mission grants in the deanery.

Cumnor in January: Synod started with a presentation on the work of Church Mission Society by Heather Ramsey. After a brief history, Heather spoke about their four areas of work: global mission, training local leaders, pioneer mission training and “Partnership for Missional Church”. At the end we were all challenged to consider how we could join in with mission. This was followed first by a report on the Diocesan Synod, and then by a presentation of the deanery accounts for 2019 and budget for 2020. The treasurer also brought our attention to the revised criteria for mission grants. Finally, parishes were reminded that it was time to review and amend if necessary their mission action plans (MAPs).

The PCC is routinely given copies of deanery synod minutes, reports and presentations.

The plans for meetings for the rest of 2020 were disrupted by the pandemic.

Deanery Synod did not meet again until September 24th 2020 and will continue to meet using Zoom.

Angela Evans and Chris Scruby – lay representatives

CHURCH FABRIC AND BUILDINGS

This is the prayer we start our meetings with;

God of mission, we are your Church, Christ's body on earth, Your holy people for your needy world. In our thinking, give us wisdom, In our planning, give us faith to move mountains, In our action, give us the power of your Spirit, That all we do and think and say may be for your glory. And for the growth of the kingdom of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

1. All quinquennial repairs have been completed so we are ready for the next inspection this summer. We were pleased with Hillsdon builders work and their helpful approach.
2. The missing chalice was discovered and is safely stored in the church.
3. The committee recommended that a team be set up to oversee the AVA installation but in the event Chris Evans alone was left to manage this. The committee discussed the change of location of the electrics stack to the coat cupboard in the vestry and some disquiet was expressed that there was no discussion with either the SMIG or Fabric committee about this. The PCC has asked this committee to discuss the matter and also the location of the two new screens standing in St Thomas's chapel. One issue that arises, apart from appearance, is security. At present the church remains locked to comply with our insurers' advice, which is a loss to both visitors and those wishing to pray.
4. The meadow area at the south-east corner of the churchyard has been sown with a variety of wild flowers, 50% being yellow rattle. It is planned to feature this on the church website.
5. The churchyard has looked good thanks to our gardeners and a team of helpers who regularly tidy up and eat brownies! We have worked particularly hard to strip the walls of ivy. Unfortunately, we are no longer to receive a grant of £3,300 from the Parish Council for mowing as they have been advised that this is illegal.

6. Andy Hartle, chimney sweep, cleaned out the crypt for nothing.
ashchimneysweep@gmail.com mob. 07766 770892
7. St Mary's exterior window frames and door have been painted as well as the toilet. A new heater and vinyl floor covering have been installed. There was a leak making a stain on one wall but the builders could not be sure where it came from without removing some of the roof, so we are monitoring this and there has been no further report as yet.
8. The Oxford Preservation Trust awarded a certificate of commendation for the SMIG project, which is on view in church. Congratulations to the committee who achieved this. Thanks to Jane Mellanby for continuing to deal with any snagging issues with the contractors.

Records of the project are to be archived, along with those of the church cottages refurbishment, at the Reading Records office.
9. We invited builders to quote for repair/replacement of the lead on the church tower. It was quickly apparent that this 18th century lead could no longer be repaired but needed replacing. There are hand and footprints in the lead as well as dates and names of the church wardens at the time so we shall make every effort to preserve these. Three builders have been selected to tender and architect Robert Montgomery, who did the Quinquennial inspection and knows our church well, is now managing this for us.
10. The Fabrics and Building budget was accepted by the Finance Committee and is now in use.
11. St Andrew's has had some tree and hedge work done. Thanks to Roger Long and his team for so ably looking after the building while they plan and fundraise for the new one!

Profound thanks to the committee for sharing their experience, expertise and brainpower as well as fellowship with me. They are Jane Mellanby; Jane Vlitos;

David Nowakowski; Roger Long; Chris Evans; Hugh Manson, who resigned at the end of 2019.

Jean Carroll

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STAFF & VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

The Staff Management Group met regularly from 13th March 2019 following the setting up of additional committees and working groups by the PCC to serve the administration of the Parish.

Group members were Neil Grady (chair), Sheila Millard, Claire Horsman and Celia Clark, with Roland Fuggle representing the Church Wardens or Jean Carroll covering when required. It presented an initial report to PCC on 8 April 2019 in order to clarify its remit and terms of reference.

Its purpose was agreed by the PCC: “ to carry out the PCC’s responsibility as an employer of staff, to ensure detail is looked at, advice taken when required, and issues referred to the PCC when necessary, in order to ensure staff are adequately supported and the PCC is fulfilling its duty of care towards employees.”

Following feedback from the PCC, it was suggested the scope of the group should include care and support of volunteers, and to develop a fuller volunteer agreement including things like procedures for expenses, or expectations about development and support. The scope and title were duly amended in October to become The Staff and Volunteer Management Group (SVMG).

In its first year the Group has carried out the following work:

- It has reviewed the current experience of staff employed by the PCC - who manages and supports them, what is/isn’t working.
- Interviews were held with staff and the Vicar to understand current practices.
- A new model of operating was proposed to the PCC in June 2019 recommending a volunteer mentor role to give the PCC oversight of the wellbeing and performance of employees. The PCC approved the volunteer being a mentor/overseer role and the Vicar acting as day-to-day line manager. The Group drafted a role description for this volunteer role (not yet approved).

- The SVMG has produced recommended questions for exit interviews to be held routinely with all staff at their point of leaving; two staff exit interviews have since been conducted.
- It has been involved in discussions with the PCC around the departure of staff and discussions of whether or not to re-recruit.
- Started work on creating a Staff and Volunteer Manual for the Parish to use in all areas of recruiting and managing staff and volunteers.
- A subgroup consisting of Claire and Celia was formed to work on the Manual, drawing on best-practice documents produced for faith and non-faith organisations. The purpose of the Manual is to ensure the PCC appropriately recruits, trains, develops, manages and supervises paid staff or volunteers within its legal, ethical and moral duties as an employer in the faith sector.
- The SVMG collaborated in the drafting of the Interim Pastoral Care Ministry Strategy for Cumnor Parish which was agreed and passed at the PCC Meeting in October 2019.
- The Group paused meetings when the initial Covid-19 lockdown was implemented but has now resumed work on the Staff and Volunteer Manual.

Neil Grady

COMMUNITY LIFE – PASTORAL MINISTRY AND HOME GROUPS

The ministry team, supported by pastoral volunteers continued throughout 2019 to support people who are unwell, bereaved or lonely within the parish, regardless of whether or not they attend church, and we are always keen to hear about anyone in our area who would welcome a visit. Those of us who are licensed to do so, visit residential homes and individuals in their own homes to give Holy Communion by extension (using bread and wine which has been consecrated in the usual way in a church service). As part of my pastoral ministry I take a small team who lead a regular monthly service in Oxenford House and have taken communion to parishioners at home too. In the same way, others in the team were regular visitors to Shrublands, Cumnor Hill House, Oakenholt, Wytham House and Chawley Grove. A number of the team visited individually too. We provided Home Communion to around eighty people each month. None of this would be possible without our dedicated team of volunteers, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who serve God in this ministry.

This, of course, in addition to all the wonderful, informal pastoral support that our home groups and congregations offer one another, and the neighbourliness they extend to our community. Our vision is to provide appropriate training and support for each of these key roles. Might God be calling you to get involved in this vital ministry? Please do pray about it and do get in touch with me.

A particular focus over the next year will be continuing to develop plans for a more formal pastoral care system with appropriate training for volunteers and building a team to offer regular prayer ministry for healing or any other need after Church services.

Home Groups

There were five home groups that met in homes around the Parish, 4 drawn from the St Michael's congregations and one from St Andrew's. Between them they enable a significant proportion of our congregations to meet in small groups, to pray for one another and provide pastoral care, to grow in faith and discipleship, to explore their gifts and grow in leadership and to support one another in mission.

In 2019 they worked together through the Seasons of Giving stewardship material and much else besides including studies on Galatians, the HTB Prayer Course, Colossians, Genesis and the Passion of Christ in the 4 Gospels.

Encouraging growth in prayer and worship during the groups has been reported by our home group leaders.

Thank you so much to all who have led and hosted our home groups over the past year.

Jonathan Widdess

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LINKS WITH CUMNOR CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Links with the School continue to be strong. This year we've been taking assemblies, welcoming pupils and parents alike to termly services at St. Michael's, hosting classes on visits to the church, helping with RE in Year 1 and Year 5. This work has mostly been undertaken by Jonathan, who was ably assisted by Jez, Joy and Catherine while they were with us. He's also been able to be a regular presence on the school drive

One of the visits involved a play wedding in church where Foundation children dressed up and the staff wore hats and buttonholes. Involvement in RE teaching has included Jonathan being invited to teach Year 5 pupils about the Holy Spirit in RE lessons, while Joy was interviewed about what it means to be a Christian today by Year 1.

The school has been used to disseminate information about Church events which might be attractive to families, like the Big Story Sunday service, Christingle and other Christmas Services, Easter services and the Science and Miracles family outreach event.

Once again, 'Carols in the Vine' before Christmas, with singing led by members of St Michael's, was much appreciated and proved to be a valuable opportunity to meet parents in an informal social setting and raise funds for the PTA.

The School Governors include Jonathan, those formally appointed by the church, (Foundation Governors) as well as active members of St. Michael's congregation appointed in another capacity: Sue Fuggle, Joy Topping, Jane Vlitos and Voirrey Carr, who is the Chair of Governors. In addition to their ongoing, formal, contributions to regular meetings about the organisation and resourcing of the school, they also support a range of activities at the school, attending fundraising events, concerts, sports day and the like. Before each school service at St. Michael's the Governors welcome parents and family with coffee and biscuits. This is just one way in which they aim to be a recognizable presence in the life of the school. Their commitment and contributions are greatly appreciated.

Jane Vlitos and Jonathan Widdess

CHILDREN, FAMILIES & YOUNG PEOPLE

In line with our mission aim of “Developing our work with Children and Young People” this remains an important priority for us. In 2019 the PCC made the significant decision that despite some excellent and imaginative work from our then Youth Worker, Jez Ferguson, we were unable to properly support the pioneering work that was needed to see our youth work thriving as it had in previous times. We therefore adopted a new strategy to prioritise growing renewed links with children and young families and restart youth work as those links developed and we helped raise new disciples. This meant that Jez was made redundant and he left the parish in June 2019. The attitude he kept throughout his notice period is a great testimony to his faith and strength of character during a difficult time.

Big Story Sunday

Building on our strong toddler group and links with the School, Big Story Sunday grew slowly through the year, with new ideas being tried including worship outside and a brilliant Experience Easter service on Good Friday. Jackie Laar led a wonderful, creative service helping us to learn more about St Frideswide’s Big Story. The new AV facilities at St Michael’s are helping to transform our all-age worship.

Christingle

The Christmas Christingle Services were again very well attended and it was wonderful to welcome so many local families into church on Christmas Eve to celebrate the good news of Jesus’ birth.

Together – Science and Miracles

In October we held a special event we called Together, with the theme of Science and Miracles. There were special science themed refreshments, and various experiments for families to try. We enjoyed a time of worship where Joy Clough gave a talk on how we can reconcile science with faith, and we ended together with a party tea in church.

Joy left us in the Autumn to take up a more senior position in another church.

Sunday School

A team of committed volunteers ran Sunday School after Joy's departure. Weekly sessions began in church and when the children crossed the road they watched a video together and had a discussion followed by a drink and a biscuit!

Confirmation Classes

Jonathan ran a youth confirmation class in 2019 with help from Jez. This culminated in 4 young people being confirmed by Bishop Colin at a wonderful service in St Michael's in June.

Matthew Arnold Bible Club

After Jez's departure Jonathan continued to run the lunchtime Bible Club at Matthew Arnold with sessions suggested by the young people themselves. We saw solid growth in this throughout 2019 both spiritually and numerically.

Thank you to everyone who was involved with our children, families and youth work in 2019!

Jonathan Widdess

MISSION GIVING

In line with the PCC's commitment to give away ten percent of the church's planned giving, the Mission Action Group drew up the following list which was approved by the PCC. Letters were received from each organisation expressing their thanks for our encouragement by helping them in this way.

During the year we met and have heard regularly from our CMS linked mission partner Rabiah as she settled into her role working with the church in Turkey. Stephen Rand of Open Doors talked to us of the plight of the suffering church around the world and the advocacy which goes on in the UK on their behalf and Peter Teagle of Friends International spoke about the work being done in Oxford amongst overseas students.

Cumnor Parish - Mission Giving for 2019		
Regular commitments	£3,000.00	CMS - Rabiah's support
	£450.00	Cumnor School Bibles for leavers
Local:	£600.00	Emmaus Oxford - providing shelter and meaningful work to the homeless
	£300.00	BeSpace
	£600.00	Friends International Oxford
National:	£600.00	Christians Against Poverty - releasing people from poverty, debt, unemployment and addiction
	£600.00	Youth For Christ - taking good news relevantly to British young people
	£600.00	Archway Foundation provides facilities for those who are lonely.
International:	£600.00	Bible Society - making the Bible available throughout the world
	£600.00	Open Doors seeing persecuted Christians
10%	£500.00	Tear Fund
	£1,000.00	Heatcry - Helen Azer
	£400.00	Citizens Advice Bureau (Vivien Payne & Jan Harris)
	£150.00	Oxford House
	£100.00	SeeSaw - meeting the needs of bereaved children and young people in Oxfordshire
	£10,100.00	

Chris Evans

JUNIOR CHOIR

The children are very enthusiastic and are singing very well. Their confidence has improved, and they have taken part in special services and concerts during the year. We sing a very wide range of music from church music, carols and rounds to songs from the Disney films and songs from the shows. The choir performed to a full house at a concert organised by and with the Vivace, the local community choir and also sang beautifully at the Cumnor service of 9 Lessons and Carols. We meet at 6pm on Fridays in school term time, New members would be very welcome. Contact Voirrey.carr@gmail.com for more information.

Voirrey Carr

ST MICHAEL'S CHOIR

St Michael's Church continues to enjoy a dedicated and enthusiastic choir who faithfully attend all choral services on Sundays. Members take an immense pride leading the singing in worship through hymns, psalms and other musical

items. Sadly, I have to report we are still reduced to the faithful few who turn out Sunday by Sunday to support the musical items of each service.

However, the gloom will hopefully be lifted with the further advancement of the Junior Choir. They have their own practice before the main choir practice at 6pm on Fridays and having accompanied them and heard them sing, I really hope some do decide to join the main church choir, and assist with the choral worship, but time will tell. I know I repeat this every year but there is always room for additional choir members. Therefore, if you enjoy singing, do please consider joining us. We have lots of fun and, our presence will be all the more important to support the Church services throughout this coming year.

The Choir currently has 7 regular adult members, while the junior choir fluctuates between 5 and 8 members mostly from Cumnor Primary School, hopefully soon to be joined by others. The essence of our practices, worship and all we do is “enjoyment”, and I think we mostly achieve this – ask any choir member. The Choir have sung for all choral services in the morning and evening, performing solo items and encouraging the congregation as required.

The highlight for me was again the Christmas Services when various new carols challenged all of us, resulting in a wonderful occasion to be cherished by all. It is always nice when so many old choristers returned to swell our ranks. Every year I promise myself the chosen carol items will be less challenging, both for me and the choir, and every year it seems to get more difficult and demanding. This last year proved no exception and the choir excelled themselves with “Tomorrow shall be my dancing day” with all its tricky rhythms and “Ring the Bells” – a carol specifically written to help the homeless (all royalties going to that cause).

It was good to welcome the junior choir to swell the ranks and help us with two of the carols and I think they enjoyed the service!

The Future

In spite of falling numbers we have continued to maintain a high standard, mainly thanks to the enthusiasm of existing members, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their unstinting support over the past year. We have had a lot of fun and hope to continue to sing as a group leading the services at St Michaels in the future.

On a personal note, I must also express my sincere thanks to our Vicar Jonathan and members of our congregation for all the support, comments and advice they have given me over the past year. Also, my personal thanks to all members of the choir(s) for their musical achievements. I could not have done it without you

Andrew Dyer

BABY & TODDLER GROUP

- Continued increase in numbers due to new families moving to the area and word of mouth.
- Top attendance so far - 22 children plus parents (a bit of a squash and a squeeze!)
- Average per week is around 14 children
- Space is sometimes a challenge
- Friendly atmosphere with good coffee and conversation
- Very much a support / networking group for parents
- Mums have started a monthly book club, a running club, childcare and babysitting for each other
- Good friendships being forged
- Thank you to Amanda as always for her loyal support, especially during Jan/Feb. (Angela travelling and knee surgery for Dianne)
- Some families are attending BSS, Messy Church, and of course the Christingle Service is always very popular
- Thanks to Jonathan for his special Christmas story session, specifically geared towards this young age group.
- Dianne and Angela still enjoying the group after nearly 9 years

Angela Evans & Dianne Taylor

FLOWERS IN CHURCH

This year the team Tizzie Ballard, Frances Buchan, Liz Davies, Angela Evans, Marion Goodall, Janet Pottle, Hilary Prior and Tricia Venables decorated the Church for five weddings; we had a lot of fun with beautiful flowers and made enough profit to pay for the Patronal and Harvest Festival Flowers. Sadly,

there are only two weddings on schedule for this year and of course we may not be asked to contribute.

I have been leading the flowers team for 22 years at Easter, my creative juices are running dry, so I am very grateful to Angela Evans who has agreed to take over the leadership in time for the Easter flowers.

I have had amazing support not only from the team, who give unstintingly of their time and money but from four Vicars and an always generous congregation who have been so appreciative of our efforts to make the Church look more beautiful. My thanks to everyone who has made the 22 years such fun and especially to my husband Colin who has painted and moved stands, made mechanics, conditioned, and even at times arranged, flowers. I could not have done it without you all.

Please give Angela the support you have given so generously to me.

Jean Entwistle, Team Leader

BREAKFAST DISCUSSION GROUP



There are two big problems with the breakfast discussions. The first is how to persuade people to stop chatting over breakfast so that the discussion can start. The second is how to get the discussion to stop.

The first two hard-to-stop discussions in 2019 made up a Lent mini-series on *Fasting and Feasting*. After a good breakfast, we thought about fasting and its relevance for our spiritual lives today; another good breakfast was the prelude to recalling how, in Christian feasts, we celebrate the bounty and kindness of our Creator and Redeemer.

For our summer series we returned to the theme of *What the Bible says about ...*, and under the title 'Owning and Sharing' looked first at a Christian attitude to possessions. Then in 'Time and Timing' we discussed how to make the best use of our time and asked if we can interpret particular events in our lives as examples of God's timing. The series concluded with a discussion on what we can learn from the Bible about Church and Community – the church as a community, and also the local church within the wider local community.

In the autumn, in a longer-than-usual series which spilled over into January 2020, we found *Encouragement from Hebrews*, looking at four themes from that most challenging yet exciting of New Testament books. Given the subject, many of us were grateful that the series was led entirely by clergy. (But it's the only time in the history of the breakfast discussions that this has happened, such are the resources within the St Michael's congregation on which we've been able to draw).

Each year we aim in our programme to include something on deepening our faith, something on working out our faith in practical action, and something to help our understanding of what we believe. We're always delighted to welcome anyone who's never been to a breakfast discussion before. Do come along, and you can see for yourself why getting both the breakfast and the discussion to finish on time is such a problem.

Howard Emmens

BELL RINGING

St Michael's continues to have a committed band of ringers who provide service ringing each Sunday throughout the year to call the community of Cumnor to worship. During 2019, the band also rang for five weddings and other special occasions.

The Bellringers' Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place at St Michael's on 27 November 2019, chaired by our Vicar, Jonathan Widdess, with the following officers elected:

- Tower Captain – Jenny Dyer
- Treasurer – Guy Matthews
- Secretary – Janette Swaine, with Andrew Dyer responsible for liaising with visiting bands
- Steeple Keeper – Matthew Hall

Recruitment of new ringers – recruitment was discussed at our AGM, with an 'open day' planned for 2020, whereby members of the local community will have the opportunity to try their hand at ringing.

Safeguarding - committed to the safeguarding, care and nurture of the children and people of all ages who ring in our tower, and in accordance with the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers' Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults in the context of Bell Ringing Policy, Jenny Dyer, as tower captain, and Matthew Hall, as ringing instructor, both attended the Church of England's C2 Safeguarding Training on 9 November 2019.

Visiting bands - Three bands have visited during the past year, the most recent being from the Oxford University Society Freshers' outing, which continues to maintain links with Cumnor.

Handbells – Members of our band were delighted to ring carols on handbells prior to the start of the Christmas Eve Service at St Michael's.

Annual Supper - In January 2020, ringers and their partners enjoyed a superb supper, hosted by Janette and Derwent Swaine.

Jenny Dyer – Tower Captain

FUNDRAISING

I would like to thank those people who supported the three events which I organised, Church Fete, Craft Fair and Progressive Supper. All three occasions were well supported by people living in our parish and we, the church, are grateful to them. We raised approximately £4,000 for St Michael's Church. After thirty years I have decided I can no longer organise the church fete but am hopeful that someone will come forward to take over the reigns. Hard work, but well worth it!

Esme Wyatt

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH DEAN COURT

The past year has been one of challenges and encouragements for St Andrew's. We were encouraged by the support from the wider parish – the staff, the

wardens, and the PCC. We appreciated the short-lived contributions of Joy Clough and of Catherine Schneider and her family and wish them every blessing in their new ministries. We have seen declining numbers, partly due to our older age profile, but we keep going, trusting in God's strength in our weakness, and believing that he is at work in the area.

We have welcomed opportunities to invite local people to our events and were delighted at the numbers who came to our fund-raising barbecue (a new venture for us) in October, but non-regulars at Christmas were strikingly absent although we had put leaflets round every door in Dean Court.

We are grateful to everyone who puts time, effort and prayer into running our activities including those behind the scenes such as providing refreshments, putting out (and mending!) chairs, organising rotas, cutting the grass, arranging flowers, and welcoming hirers. The building has continued to be used a great deal during the week a wide range of activities. We feel this is a useful contribution to the area and value the ongoing contacts with our community which this brings.

Rebuilding Project

Our rebuilding project is now two thirds of the way through its fund-raising phase. We are indebted to the 'team' of Sue Allwright, Andrew Bowman, Malcolm Taylor, Tish Spivey, Angela Sheppard, and David (and Clare) Wenham, each of whom, in best project style, bring their own expertise to the task(s) in hand.

- **Prayer** (Angela): We have attempted to pray throughout the project and Angela has been a great motivator in getting us to do so. We pray before and after every meeting and have seen notable response in our restricted fund; praise God indeed. We will continue to add an extra prayer slot after the Parish at Prayer breakfast when it is at St Andrew's.
- **Fund raising** (Andy, David, Tish, Roger). Andy has worked tirelessly to get a steady supply of funding applications coming in and going out. Response has been mixed with the notable exceptions of the Diocese and the PCC who have been overwhelmingly generous; our sincere thanks to all who have contributed. We held a barbecue in October which raised over £1,000, and we are planning informal fund-raising concerts on 25 April and 28 June. We are humbled by the JOY Place's dedication in fund-raising throughout the year.

- We have formally launched the **20:20 vision campaign** which is accompanied by business cards which ask 1,000 people to give us £350! This would complete the fund-raising. We currently know of 10 so only 990 to go.... You can see why we said 'vision' as one needs faith to succeed and a vision to guide us.
- **Planning (Roger):** We have several tasks to get on with as several of our grants demand some building work be started by the end of 2020. We have re-engaged with our architect Steve Wolstenholme who is putting together a budget to get the building regulation drawings submitted and approved and also a 'start building plan' whereby we would extend STAC and complete the new toilets, car parking, meeting rooms and drains before attempting the main hall. This is currently work in progress and PCC should be updated by April. We have the money to do this and it may prove a useful way of maintaining our presence on the site until we have fully funded the main building replacement. There are still a couple of legal matters to tidy up concerning our neighbourhood trees and we also need to get a relaxation of a covenant which was attached to the small triangle of land to the side of STAC which is held by Sovereign Housing.

We are putting together a time-line plan through to December this year which will hopefully draw together all the activities needed to be completed so that building can commence towards the close of the year. Please keep praying for us and thank you for your support thus far; we have £394,000 out of £720,000 (plus fees and VAT). We know it's a big ask but we worship a big, big God.

Sundays

We are grateful to our pianists, Margery Dent and Rod Sharp, who play week after week. We are sad to have lost the help of Joy Green and her guitar in leading the singing. We occasionally have other instrumentalists playing and have put out a request for more of these to help us regularly.

We are always glad to welcome children. We have had a few with us on All-age Sundays, and are prepared to run a group if any come on other Sundays. For some years we have been holding children's events on Good Friday and plan to continue this in 2020.

The JOY Place monthly service for adults with learning disabilities has continued to fill the church once a month with joyful singing along with accessible teaching. This became part of the parish in 2016 and is led by Anita and Chuck Saunders and Matt and Jenny Long (see report below).

During the week

In addition to our church groups, we have been delighted to welcome a monthly Tamil fellowship and an occasional Fijian congregation.

We are pleased to have a variety of hirers and value these links with local organisations. Regular hirers over the year have been: an art group, dance classes, Pilates classes, Cumnor Choral Society, several upholstery sessions, Slimming World, national and local elections, a half-term forest school, and sports events on the games area.

Coffee Club and Faith Group

Coffee Club (for over-50s) has continued fortnightly with its usual mix of games, talks and entertainment, always appreciated by those who come. It is encouraging that some of the members now meet up at other times and have formed firm friendships. Faith Group continues monthly and there is keen interest from those who come. Numbers are considerably down, owing partly to the time of year, and partly to increasing mobility problems. However we have had a few new people recently, and any newcomers would be warmly welcomed.

Margery Dent adds:

"We are grateful to God for all the help we have had over the past 11+ years with Coffee Club, but Angela and I both feel that it would be the right action officially to close it down at the end of June.

Such monies in the funds have been handed to the treasurer to be put into the St Andrew's rebuilding fund."

Little Fishes

The toddler group, led by Joy Clough, Margaret Scruby and Felicity Stanley, has met every Monday in term-time, but as there were very few people coming last term, and as Joy Clough has now left the parish, we decided to discontinue the group for the time being. We had our last session at the end of December with a Christmas party. If there is anyone who can volunteer to lead a toddler group in the future with a team of helpers then we would be happy to start again, perhaps on a different day.

Prayer and fellowship

We continue to meet to pray for the church and parish once a month at Time to Pray at 6.45pm, and every two months host the Parish at Prayer breakfast,

alternating with St Michael's. The Fellowship Group has been meeting fortnightly for Bible study and prayer.

Contributed by Sue Allwright, Margery Dent, Roger Long, Margaret Scruby, Clare Wenham

The JOY Place

The JOY Place, a church service specifically designed for people with learning disabilities, their friends and family, has continued to meet the first Sunday of each month at 3pm for one hour to provide loving support and a safe environment for nurturing a growing knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We teach very simple and life applicational lessons from the Bible and continue to have 50-60 people attending each service.

This past year the JOY Place decided we wanted to thank St Andrew's for its generosity toward us, by helping with the new building project. At each service we have been holding a raffle and all the funds have been given to the rebuilding project. A group from Witney that come to the JOY Place each month did a fund-raising walk and all the money was donated to the building fund.

Please know how much we appreciate you all, and we do hope that some of you will come alongside and use the gifts God has given you to help at the JOY Place. Our firm belief is that all men and women, from the most brilliant to the most simplest, have a yearning to know that they are beloved of God.

Anita Saunders

You can see the video produced by the JOY Place at <https://youtu.be/uiKi5Z-iQ7I>

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ST MARY'S CHURCH FARMOOR

St Mary's continues with its small but faithful few, as part of the Christian presence in Farmoor. We are very grateful to Joy Green with her guitar and John Dawson, his daughter Julie and Rod Sharp, who have provided musical accompaniment throughout the year, all who lead worship at St Mary's, and Katrina Hancox for her regular sidesperson-plus role: thank you all.

We had a lovely afternoon in December of 'Carols and Cake', when the little church was full to overflowing. With the church set out café-style, beautifully decorated by Lillian Stallon and Heather Halls, we enjoyed carols, Christmas readings, a Christmas thought from Jean Pryce-Williams and music from the High Jinks Ukelele band, not to mention some delicious cake. It was lovely to see young and old enjoying the Christmas celebration.

We are currently exploring ideas for services on the first Sunday of the month which is currently a discussion/bible study – watch this space!

Jessica Turner