



PARISH OF CUMNOR

Parish of Cumnor

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

2020 REVIEW

**Report on Parish Activity in 2020
for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
held on 18th July 2021**

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THE PARISH OF CUMNOR
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
Sunday 18th July 2021, 11.30am 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 11.30am.

APCM AGENDA

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS FOR THE ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Election of two churchwardens for the year 2021 - 2022

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 19th October 2020
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 2020
 - 4.2 Proposed budget for 2021
 - 4.3 Appointment of examiner for accounts for year ending 31 December 2021
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

It's been an extraordinarily challenging and demanding year for everyone.

We've lost so many people we love in our church, our families and our communities. We've had to cope with so many changes in the way we live. We've lost freedom and opportunities to COVID and its 'accompanying restrictions. We've not been able to see people we love and miss dearly. We've had to carry the burdens of anxiety and fear. We've had to help our children or grandchildren cope with home schooling. We've had to get used to working from home and parenting at the same time. We've been forced to keep distanced when we want to hug others close. We've not been able to help when we've wanted to.

All this has taken a considerable toll on our emotional and mental health. We're all exhausted. Recovery will take time. Healing will take time.

I think many of us have learned a lot about doing things differently this year, whether that is online, on the telephone or chatting on the doorstep. It has not all been bad. Many of us have got to know the local area and it's footpaths better, and it's made all of us think long and hard about what's really important in life. People gave incredibly generously to the Foodbank at Harvest, Advent and Lent. Carol singing around the Churchyard Christmas Tree was a much needed occasion for hope and for joy in what was a very dark winter.

Church services with social distancing and masks have been challenging; so too has conducting services online, but it is amazing what we can get used to, given the time. Those of us who preach, teach and lead worship had to adapt to speaking to cameras rather than live congregations and it's been inspiring to help them be part of the journey as we've gone from baby steps filming in the vicarage lounge to being able to live-stream services from St Michael's on demand, and even outside-broadcasting from St Andrew's and the churchyard for Church Outdoors. It's been inspiring to see the ways we've creatively explored the possibilities that online worship offers, with series like Worship for Seniors and David Lockett's "Art and Faith", and services like the Tenebrae Service, Eve Lockett led on Maundy Thursday, and the Darkest Night Bereavement Carol Service Jessica led at Christmas. Our Taizé service has gone online too, with Jackie and Dominie providing a webpage of readings, prayers and contemplative worship each month.

It's been so hard not to be able to worship together in person for long periods of time but so heartening to see the adaptability of people as we've been able

to gather again at both St Andrew's and St Michael's and coped cheerfully with the somewhat limited menu enforced by the restrictions. We hope to resume something more like normal service as the pandemic recedes. Special thanks of course to Andrew and the Choir for the ways they've adapted this year to help keep our musical traditions very much alive through trying times.

A group of us have begun to pray together every Monday morning on Zoom and although I wasn't sure how well it would work to start with I've come to really value that time each week! Why? Because we get to see each other and even if we are in our own spaces at home, we connect with God and with one another.

I want to thank Chris and Malcolm, for sterling support as Church Wardens, and Sarah too, who has had additional challenges to face this year. I also want to thank you all for being part of the church community here in our parish, for your prayers, support, help, encouragement, attendance, hospitality, (when we were able), your ministry – whether you are a warden, PCC secretary, lead worship, make tea, welcome people to church, arrange flowers, lead a home group, preach or teach, or have kept in touch with one or two people throughout the year – thank you, you have done a great job!

There are two things that stand out to me from this time. First, that life and faith are all about relationships, our relationship with God and with others. It should be no surprise because that is what God calls us into – relationship. But often we are too busy rushing from one thing to another and we can so easily forget what is important.

The second thing is that life is more fragile than we realise and goes by so fast. Time is precious and I know that I am called to spend mine sharing the life and love of God with others. This should be our number one priority, but it gets lost in so many things. In some ways COVID has brought us back to this, offering time to listen and to pray and share the good news of Jesus' love with our friends and neighbours in practical ways and simple words.

Some people are saying that things will never go back to what they were before the pandemic. We have lost so much that they may be right, and I know that I don't want us lose the things that we have gained. Instead, I pray that we can build on the good together and continue to look outwards to the communities we live in.

Jonathan Widdess
Vicar of Cumnor

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 11 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 15 members.

Members of the Parochial Church Council for 2020 were as follows:-

Ex-Officio Members

Rev Jonathan Widdess (Chair), Rev Helen Azer, Neil Grady, Eve Lockett,

Elected Members

Karen Adamson, Kate Elliott, Chris Evans (Vice Chair), Valerie Grady, Claire Horsman, Roger Long, Vivien Payne, Dr Chris Scruby, Dr David Henderson-Slater, 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), Chris Evans, Chris Scruby and Malcolm Taylor.

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

Fabric Committee: Members were: Jane Vlitos, Roger long, David Nowakowski, Chris Evans.

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

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

ELECTORAL ROLL

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules, the Electoral Roll was revised this year. There are now 125 parishioners on the Electoral Roll.

CHURCHWARDENS REPORT

2020 was a very difficult year for our 3 churches compounded by the impact of the Corona virus pandemic.

2019 had ended with the very disappointing loss of our Children's and Young Families worker and our Curate. Much of the PCC time in the 1st quarter was spent in trying to understand the reasons for this and what this meant for the future direction of the church. Unfortunately, this led to the resignations of Jean Carroll and Roland Fuggle as church wardens in February. The current churchwardens were elected to replace them at the APCM meeting in October.

When the COVID pandemic hit, all our church activities shut down in common with all other churches. We were then hugely blessed by the IT skills of our Vicar who very quickly set up very impressive processes for online worship. We all got steadily more experienced in ZOOM technology which allowed PCC meetings, Home group meetings, and weekly prayer meetings to be set up online to try and ensure the congregation stayed connected in those difficult times. Then when a carefully controlled return to live worship was possible, the yearning for personal contact and desire to sing once again was reflected in the really encouraging response to our first outdoor service on Easter Sunday.

Now as we approach a full easing of restrictions, it is clear that church as we knew it will change. The PCC is currently developing a renewed vision for the 3 churches which we pray will direct our path in the coming weeks and months.

Chris Evans and Malcom Taylor

SAFEGUARDING

The past year has been full of uncertainties and seen many changes because of the Covid19 pandemic. Safeguarding, however, did not go away. Cessation of the children's and young people's groups along with meetings for the elderly, the uncertainty of knowing when they may restart and of not knowing the volunteers who will be involved when they do has led to the Basic Safeguarding Training Course not being held this year. This course was being held every three years, so that volunteers could remain updated, and will need to be arranged again once activities restart and groups can meet indoors.

The DBS certificates needed by those who are seen to be key in leading groups, once they begin again, have, however, been checked and four have been renewed. This should avoid any delay once the 'all clear' is given. My thanks go again to Eve Lockett and Canon Jessica Turner who, as Verifiers for the parish check the ID and official documents of those who apply for a DBS certificate. All members of the PCC are now required to take Basic Safeguarding Training. This has been available 'online' during lockdown and I am happy to report that almost all members have now completed the course. Those members who hold the Bishop's Licence, Authority or Permission have all their training monitored by the Bishop's Office and they have had to undergo more in- depth safeguarding training.

At the beginning of June I stood down from being Safeguarding Officer for the Parish and would like to say thank you to leaders and volunteers alike who have responded willingly when asked to fill in yet another form or attend further training. Bureaucratic these might have seemed at times but all necessary in ensuring that the Church remains a safe place. Safeguarding is now in the capable hands of Kate Elliott who, I believe to be an excellent choice and wish her well.

Val Livesley.

The next steps...

Following the retirement of Val Livesley from the role of Parish safeguarding Officer after her significant service, Kate Elliott assumed the role on 7th June 2021. Kate would like to thank Val for her thorough and efficient handover.

These are the priorities for action that will inform Kate's work, both in the short, medium and longer term, under the umbrella of the national movement for 'a safer church for all'.

- KE to train within the Diocese Safeguarding Leadership programme
- Make visible the role of the Parish Safeguarding lead under Kate's tenure
- Create a robust, electronic central register of volunteers
- Make explicit the process to become a volunteer and personally support applications and scrutiny
- Identify those who require DBS (both new and updating) and training and facilitate
- Report with heart at PCC meetings

The following events will support the priorities:

10 October - Safeguarding Sunday

The National Safeguarding Team are working with [thirtyone:eight](#) to support and promote Safeguarding Sunday on 10 October 2021. This is an ecumenical event that was marked by more than 850 churches last year and is an opportunity to highlight all that is done to create safer places and explain what is in place to safeguard vulnerable people. There will be online resources for parishes which will be circulated when they are available. Perhaps this could be an opportunity for you to champion safeguarding within the Parish of Cumnor?

18 October - Safeguarding Area Meetings

KE to attend

Kate Elliott

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

In January 2020, the PCC agreed a budget for 2020 which projected an annual surplus of £18K in the general operating fund. Unrestricted funds were then projected to be in balance by year end. Then COVID happened! From the start of the lock down at the end of 1st quarter, our income from planned giving, donations and collections fell by over 20%, and our normal regular income from wedding fees, building rental and fundraising events disappeared overnight. The impact For 2020, total income was £34K below 2019 actual

and more than £36K below budget. Expense was 5% below budget but that still meant we had a £11K deficit in our operating budget compared to the budgeted £18K surplus.

Through 2020, our total Funds did in fact increase from £370K at the start of the year to £544K at year end, almost entirely due to a very welcome legacy of more than £200K from the Olive Herbert Trust Fund.

This same trend continues in 2021, with giving and other income remaining fairly constant in lockdown resulting in a continuing ongoing monthly deficit of more than £2,000. We can only look forward to the easing of controls to allow a return to more normal activity in our 3 churches, and recovery of income to pre COVID levels.

Malcolm Taylor, Treasurer & Chair of the Finance Committee

ABINGDON DEANERY SYNOD

Abingdon Deanery Synod has met 3 times since the last APCM using Zoom, with a particular emphasis on sharing experiences and learning together as the Parishes of the deanery have responded to COVID.

We received a presentation from Ian MacDonald (Diocesan Youth Adviser) who shared some of the creative ways Parishes across the diocese have responded to the restrictions and challenged us to make 5 shifts to help reconnect young people and families to church. These were:

Five Cultural Shifts

- Viewing children and young people as active participants and pilgrims
- A shift from viewing children and young people as a problem/deficit/challenge to children and young people as active participants and pilgrims.
 - Engaging with children, young people and families intergenerationally

- A shift from running separate programmes to living intergenerationally.
 - Being intentional disciple makers
- A shift from ‘vague influencers’ to intentional disciple makers.
 - Enabling those engaging with children and young people to be ‘called’, ‘formed’ and ‘equipped’ ministers
- A shift from pressed volunteers and workers to called and formed ministers.
 - Being the change we want to see
 - A shift from an ‘adults-only’ Church to an ‘all-age community of grace’

Another interesting development from the Deanery was the creation of a Contingency Fund, to aid parishes who are struggling to meet their Parish Share due to loss of giving or fundraising during the pandemic.

All that in addition to the usual work of sharing news from around the Deanery and monitoring the Deanery finances.

Once the lifting of COVID restrictions makes meeting together in person possible, these will resume, with people still able to join in using Zoom. It is expected that the Winter meetings will remain online only.

Jonathan Widdess

STANDING COMMITTEE

PCC Standing Committee has played an important role over the past year meeting between PCC meetings and making decisions together as we’ve grappled with the consequences and implications of the Coronavirus pandemic. Standing Committee has helped me to steer the PCC agenda as we’ve been learning how to meet together well online using Zoom and begun

to look ahead to what God is calling our Parish to be and to do as we all begin to reconstruct things after COVID.

I am very grateful to Malcolm Taylor, Chris Evans and Chris Scruby who've given their time and wisdom in serving the church in this way and shared with me some of the burdens of leading us all through this very difficult time.

Jonathan Widdess

CHURCH FABRIC AND BUILDINGS

Keeping the church building requires constant care and intervention and despite various lockdowns this work has continued. We had a churchyard tidy-up session in the autumn and many thanks to all those who met and made this possible.

The lead on the tower roof finally has succumbed to its age and work has been ongoing in getting the work required assessed, specifications drawn up and tenders sent out and submitted. A preferred bidder was chosen and a faculty to get the work done has been submitted and as soon as the work is approved the work will be completed. An archaeologist has been at work taking photographs of all the graffiti carved in the lead and it is hoped that a piece of the original lead embossed with the original date of 1790 will be kept and mounted and displayed in the church.

We have now received the next quinquennial review of the church fabric and these items will be worked on in due course and order.

Chris Evans

STAFF & VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

The main focus of activity this year has been researching existing employee management resources and producing a Staff Handbook for the Parish. This will be finished by the end of August 2021.

The Group has not had to advise on any specific staff issues this year, besides being consulted about the change of work pattern of the Parish Administrator.

Neil Grady

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Despite the challenges of the past year, with no part of Pastoral ministry unaffected by the restrictions, the clergy and lay ministers, supported by pastoral volunteers have continued to offer support to people who are unwell, bereaved or lonely within the parish, regardless of whether or not they attend church.

In the early days, when home visiting was not permitted, a small team of volunteers undertook to contact everyone on the Electoral roll who wasn't already being offered care through a home group. As restrictions have eased, and people have been vaccinated, more has been possible.

Home Communion, Care Home Visits, Marriage and Baptism preparation have all been greatly affected.

Jonathan Widdess

BEREAVEMENT MINISTRY

Funerals have been greatly affected by COVID.

Initially, only graveside funerals with family in attendance were permitted, and although restrictions have gradually been reduced through the year there has been a lingering sense of sadness among families at losing loved ones in these circumstances and not being able to mourn quite "properly" somehow.

It has been wonderful to be able to offer live-streaming of the service to families thanks to the new AV system at St Michael's. A recent funeral of a 16 year old was joined online by over 2000 mourners and several others have been in the high hundreds.

Much funeral visiting has had to take place using video calling this year, which has been a very different experience for those of us who visit like this and the families too. It has been good in recent months to be able to meet with them again face to face.

Jonathan Widdess

CARE HOMES AND WORSHIP FOR SENIORS

We have 6 care homes in the parish and this is an important part of our pastoral ministry. In pre-COVID times, each care home was visited regularly and Home communion taken to the residents.

It will be good to restart these ministries once it is permissible again.

In the meantime, William Cutting has launched an online series called "Worship for Seniors" which has a talk packed with practical and biblical wisdom, a prayer and a hymn each month and which is available to everyone via Vimeo. Many of the care homes have SmartTV's in the day lounge so the residents can watch there, or they have iPads that individuals can use. The June episode has been viewed around 100 times which is wonderful. Many thanks to William and to Chris Scruby for their work on this.

Jonathan Widdess

HOME GROUPS

Wednesday Home Group The group continued to meet throughout the year with meetings exclusively on Zoom. We did bible studies each fortnight covering topics in Acts, Zechariah and Psalms. During covid times we additionally met in the 'off weeks' between studies for a 40 minute 'catch up chat call' to share news and support one another during the lockdown period. In addition, we continued to meet over much of summer 2020 as people were not away for the usual holiday period. We were pleased to welcome a couple of new people to the group. On-line meetings were off-putting for some members but helpful for others who find it difficult to get out in the evening. We look forward to meeting again in person once the restrictions allow, and we intend to trial 'hybrid' meetings for anyone who would wish to join in on-line too.

Hazel Tyson

Exploring Faith We have continued to meet on alternate Tuesdays through term times, albeit via Zoom. We usually have about nine or ten people at our meetings. Using Zoom brought us a few challenges but it also brought some benefits. Among the benefits should have been the reduced waistlines from not eating the delicious cakes that we usually start with! But one serious benefit was that people who had moved away from the area; had moved to different churches; or, who were on holiday, were able to join in our meetings. Over the past year we have studied;

- *Summer 20, The Resurrection Appearances of Jesus* - from Mary of Magdala to Paul.
- *Autumn 20*, We looked at some themes introduced by the writer of *Hebrews*, focusing on Jesus and our relationship with Him.
- *January to May 21*, We used a book called *The Prayer Mountain* by Br Ramon SSJ. Br Ramon took us on a journey of mountaintop experiences with some of the giants of the Bible. We started on Mount Ararat with Noah, spent time with Abraham, Moses, Elijah and Jesus, then finished on Mount Zion in The Book of Revelations.
- *Summer 21*, We have looked at *The Four Gospel Writers*. Who they were; why did they write their Gospel; who they were writing for; and the circumstances at the time of their writing.

Dominie Burton

The Cumnor Hill Homegroup has continued to meet virtually for the past year, due to COVID restrictions. After some initial difficulties and teething problems, the sessions have been remarkably successful, and members who were away or isolating were able to log in.

There are 12 of us in the group, and we meet alternate Mondays (term time) This year we have used study material from the Bishop, we then trialled the Bible course, (with mixed response) and finished with a 4 week study from the Psalms, ably developed by John Rees.

In between sessions we keep in touch using what's app for sharing news and prayer concerns.

A highlight this year, once COVID restrictions were relaxed was a fabulous Dawn chorus walk around Farmoor, facilitated by Jessica, (She did it twice to accommodate all of us!) So we have had a very good year, despite the circumstances, but I look forward to meeting for real, and am excited to resurrect the cake club!

Dianne Taylor

St Andrew's Fellowship Group Lockdown changed everything as it did for us all and we took a little while to get going with fellowship meetings on zoom. Amongst the things we did were the Diocesan material by Bishop Steven entitled 'Living is Christ, Dying is Gain' and 'The Bible Course' led by Roger Long and David Wenham. Also, as a one-off, Eve Lockett led an evening on the theme of Remembrance.

Margery and Angela have now relinquished their joint leadership of the group and we await whatever ongoing plans there may be for the future.

Margery Dent & Angela Sheppard

LINKS WITH CUMNOR CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

In the face of the pandemic, the efforts of the head and staff to maintain a sense of 'normality' as far as the children are concerned has been little short of heroic. In addition to preparing and delivering mixed on- line and face- to- face teaching, the head and teachers have offered considerable support to children

and parents. The planning and implementation of covid-safe arrangements on school premises has also been demanding, but as a result of the timely and careful strategy there have been no cases of exclusion. Parents and children have responded well to the clear guidance and support provided by the school and it has been much appreciated. However, these essential arrangements have resulted in additional expenses for the school, while at the same time making it impossible for the school/PTA to run the usual fundraising activities. It was a great pity that the pandemic meant that we could not enjoy our usual end of term celebrations in Church for Harvest, Christmas, Easter and farewell to pupils moving on to new schools at the end of the school year. Many very creative outdoor and classroom events were shown online so the parents could at least see their children celebrating these milestones in the school year. The school has been grateful for the weekly online assemblies provided by Jonathan. We hope to develop our collaboration with the school as the lockdowns ease.

Jane Vlitos & Voirrey Carr

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 despite the pandemic.

Bible Club

Matthew Arnold Bible Club has not been able to run due to the COVID rules at Matthew Arnold. We hope it will be able to resume during in the Autumn term.

Big Story Sunday

We continued with our all-age service, Big Story Sunday, throughout lockdown, initially online and then in Church. It runs once a month and consistently draws families. We’ve been learning to make full use of the AV equipment, with creative drama, video and animation which makes the service much more engaging for families in particular.

Messy Church

At Christmas and Easter we offered Messy Church at Home bags for families to “click and collect”. These had seasonal and biblical booklets, craft ideas and recipes, treats for the children and things to make and colour in together while exploring the Christmas and Easter Stories.

Each time we gave away 30-40 bags and were able to have good conversations with local families. It will be good to resume Messy Church in person once we can do so safely.

Christingle

The annual Christingle service was limited in attendance this year due to the pandemic, and although many families were also able to join us online it obviously wasn't the same without a full church. We made "Build your own Christingle" kits available to help promote the service and to help those watching online participate. Those in church assembled their Christingle during the service.

School Assemblies and School Services

We have continued to provide a weekly School Assembly for Cumnor C.E. School throughout this school year. Each has been about 10 minutes long with a talk, a prayer and a worship song. These have been shown in the school classrooms, as the COVID bubbles have meant there has been no school-wide collective worship. They have also been available online for home-learners during periods of self-isolation and lockdown. This has led to many encouraging conversations with parents around the school gate and in the community as they have watched our assemblies with their kids at home. School Services such as Harvest, Christmas, Easter and the Leaver's service have all been online and included a talk, prayer, and blessing from Jonathan.

Sunday School

Sadly, it has not been possible to offer Sunday School in a COVID-safe way during the pandemic.

Jonathan Widdess

MISSION GIVING FOR 2020

<i>Regular commitments</i>	£3000	CMS – Rabiah’s support
	£ 450	Cumnor School Bibles for Leavers
<i>Local</i>	£ 600	Emmaus Oxford
	£ 300	BeSpace
	£ 600	Friends International, Oxford
<i>National</i>	£ 600	Christians Against Poverty
	£ 600	Youth For Christ
	£ 600	Archway Foundation
<i>International</i>	£ 600	Bible Society
	£ 600	Open Doors
<i>Other</i>	£ 200	Tear Fund
	£ 500	Heartcry
	£ 250	South & Vale Citizens Advice Bureau
	£ 100	Oxenford House

	£9000	

Chris Evans

ST MICHAEL’S CHOIR

St Michael’s Church continues to enjoy a dedicated and enthusiastic choir who, owing to the effects of Covid 19 last year, have been unable to lead services as normal. Indeed, such was the changes to patterns of worship including a total ban on singing, our traditional role of leading the services could not happen at all during the year.

However, we were allowed to meet in church, maintaining social distances, and with the assistance and expertise of Jonathan, our Vicar, we were able to record videos to form a collection of hymns and anthems applicable to the seasons of the church’s year. These were then successfully wound into the acts of worship and formed part of the on-line services broadcast to the many both in church and via the web site.

Members have always taken an immense pride leading the singing in worship through hymns, psalms and other musical items, and it is good we are still able to carry on albeit via pre-recordings and the big screen. Although we are still reduced to the faithful few who used to turn out Sunday by Sunday to support the musical items of each service, we have had the benefit of an additional soprano, Emma Adams, who joined us earlier in the year. Regretfully with the Covid 19 lockdown, our Junior choir is on temporary "Hold", but hopefully will resume again once restrictions are lifted.

The Future This has been a remarkable year in the church's musical tradition – I think the last person to stop all singing in church was Oliver Cromwell, and that proved equally unpopular! Even now I sometimes detect a humming in church behind the masked faces when hymns are being performed – it is exceedingly difficult not to sing along with something that is well known or brings back happy memories.

I and the choir will continue to hope for a return to normal singing and service participation soon, and in the meantime, we will carry on recording hymns and anthems to be used in the services as requested, maintaining our previous high standard. This hope is encouraged by the enthusiasm of the Vicar and existing choir 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.

Andrew Dyer

BABY & TODDLER GROUP

Sadly, we have been unable to meet for the past year due to the Covid restrictions. However, we have kept in touch through emails, and met informally in the park (2 new families came along). We also prepared some Advent and Easter activity bags, which were very eagerly received by the families. We plan to meet in the park before term end so say goodbye to the toddlers starting school in September.

We look forward to restarting the Toddler group in September.

Angela Evans & Dianne Taylor

FLOWERS IN CHURCH

We are very blessed to have such an able team of flower arrangers in St Michael's.

During the last year we have been restricted as to what we can do but have always had flowers or foliage on the high altar. I am very grateful to the team for being so adaptable in the current climate.

We enjoyed decorating the church for Christmas and Easter and felt somewhat liberated that we were able to do something normal!

We are looking forward to St Michael's being open every day once again and to continue to be a small part of offering a welcome into the building through the medium of flowers.

Angela Evans, Team Leader

BELL RINGING

It is the first time since the Second World War that bells have fallen silent, due to the pandemic and lockdown.

Despite not being able to meet in the tower on Wednesday evenings for practice and Sunday service ringing, all was not lost - **Cumnor bellringings continued to meet weekly**, using a virtual platform called 'The Ringing Room' and communicating via 'Zoom'. Whilst no physical effort was required, only the pressing of the space bar, the intellectual challenge was very rewarding. The Ringing Room also enhanced our teamwork and up until May of this year, rang twice weekly for an hour.

During periods of lockdown easing, **the ringing of three bells was permitted** in August and September and for Christmas Day 2020, for no longer than 15 minutes, and following a strict risk assessment alongside.

It was not until May 2021 that we were **permitted to ring again regularly**, this time on up to six bells, with a range of measures in place, including sufficient ventilation of the tower, social distancing, masks and hand sanitiser precautions - once more the glorious sound of our bells rang out across the fields of Cumnor Parish. We are indeed very fortunate at Cumnor – we have a ‘ground floor ring’ within a large tower and can open both the north and west doors to provide ample ventilation; on some occasions we have almost been blown away!

I am pleased to report **the tenor bell was tolled 99 times for the Duke of Edinburgh**, following the announcement his death on 10th April and again prior to his funeral service on 17th April 2021. Here is a record of the ringing submitted on to ‘Bellboard’, a website containing ringing records across the country, and a picture of Guy and Richard Matthews:

**Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers
Cumnor, Oxfordshire**

St Michael

Saturday, 10 April 2021 (13–1–4 in F)

99 Tolling

8. Guy F Matthews & Richard D Matthews

A tribute to HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, at 12 noon.



**Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers
Cumnor, Oxfordshire**

St Michael

Saturday, 17 April 2021 (13–1–4 in F)

Tolling

8. Matthew Hall & Guy F Matthews

Rung to commemorate the life of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on the day of his funeral.

We look forward to a time when we can again welcome visitors to our tower and safely see a return of face-to-face teaching, so that we can pursue a recruitment campaign for new ringers to our band – watch this space!

Jenny Dyer – Tower Captain

FUNDRAISING

In past years we have benefitted from the income raised by several significant fund raising events across the Parish which has generated over £4,000 per year for the church. Most of these events occur in the summer and second half of the year. Sadly none of these regular events could take place after lockdown controls were imposed, and so no income was generated.

Malcolm Taylor

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH DEAN COURT

It has been an extraordinary off-on year at St Andrew's, with lots of things unable to happen because of Covid, but with several activities continuing.

Services In periods between lockdowns we have had Sunday services at the new time of 10am. They have mostly been shorter than usual, with pre-recorded hymns/songs. Social distancing has meant that 25 is about the maximum we can easily accommodate. Numbers have varied, with some of our most elderly members unable to get there, and with almost no children/young people coming. A special event was a Celebration of Creation on the lawn, led by Jessica Turner and Neil Clark, in connection with World Environment Day.

Rebuilding The work towards rebuilding the church has gone on steadily, though more slowly than we would like. Planning permission for a more affordable design was obtained from the Vale of White Horse, though with certain preconditions, the most complicated and onerous being for a flood relief and drainage plan. All of these preconditions have now been met, and we anticipate having the green light from the planners in mid-Jul. Our architects have completed necessary Building Regulations drawings, and we hope shortly to be able to get estimates and budgets for the work from the four construction companies who have expressed interest in the project. We anticipate that the costs are going to be nearly within our reach, given the gifts and pledges that we have already received (and for which we are very grateful), but we also expect to have to raise a not insignificant amount to complete the work and to equip the building. We are very grateful to Roger Long for his expert and time-consuming leading of the rebuilding project.

We are hopeful that the rebuilding will be able to start in the autumn, and that it will be completed within about six months. We are grateful to the Dean Court Community Centre for agreeing to accommodate us for our time of exile. We are looking forward to our final service in the old St Andrew's building and to the opening service in the new building.

As well as rebuilding the building we are acutely conscious of the importance of rebuilding the congregation and the work of St Andrew's. Sue Allwright is leading discussions on the future missional uses of the building.

JOY Place The monthly service for adults with learning disabilities has been unable to meet physically in St Andrew's, but has continued to take place online. The return of Chuck and Anita Saunders to the USA has had a big impact on JOY Place, since they have given such a positive and much appreciated lead to the work since its beginning. Their Zoom farewell was a joyful and special service. Their fellow leaders Matt and Jenny Long are working on the future of JOY Place, and are excited for God's leading of a new American couple into what remains a strategic and important ministry, linked to our parish. The hope is that JOY Place will also be able to use the Community Centre for the period of rebuilding

Fellowship and informal pastoral work have continued, with the St Andrew's Fellowship Group meeting via Zoom, enjoying the Bible Society's Bible Course. The monthly Time to Pray has also continued on Zoom under the leadership of Margery Dent. There have been occasional Sunday afternoon Zoom meetings for St Andrew's people for chat and fellowship, and individual pastoral care has continued via phone or in person.

Activities for young and old Little Fishes, our group for pre-schoolers, had to close in December 2019 as we did not have people to run it. The twice-monthly Coffee Club for older people closed more recently, as attendance by more infirm members was dwindling, and it was becoming a major challenge to provide lifts for the more disabled. These activities would have had to close during lockdown; we hope that with the new building will come a fresh range of activities and leaders.

Online parish resources, including the services from St Michael's, as masterminded by Jonathan and involving many others including from St Andrew's, have been much appreciated, and have been especially important when physical contact has been impossible.

We are thankful for the Lord's blessings, but conscious of the huge challenges facing us and of the need for constant prayer as we move forward into the new year for the church.

David Wenham

ST MARY'S CHURCH FARMOOR

Due to the pandemic, we have not generally been able to meet together for worship, but have kept in touch. Some folk have been particularly grateful for the telephone line as well as online services. On Easter Sunday we were able to share Holy Communion together in the church where, socially distanced and bubbled, we were 17 people and a very well-behaved dog. It felt very special to celebrate our Lord's resurrection together.

Jessica Turner
