



PARISH OF CUMNOR

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

2021 REPORT

**Report on Parish Activity from July 2021 – April 2022
for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting
held on 1st May 2022**

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ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
Sunday 1st May 2022, 11.30am at St Michael's Church,
Cumnor

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS FOR THE ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS

This is open to anyone who is either (a) on the church electoral roll of the parish; or (b) living in the parish and have their name entered on the local government electors register. The meeting follows the format of the Church Wardens Measure 2001

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Election of two churchwardens for the year 2022 - 2023

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

This is open to anyone who is on the church electoral roll of the parish; others may observe but not vote. The meeting follows the pattern prescribed in the Church Representation Rules 2020 Part 9.

1. To approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 18th July 2021
2. To receive the following reports provided by the PCC:
 - (a) a report on the changes in the electoral roll since the last APCM
 - (b) a report on the proceedings of the PCC during the last year
 - (c) the Financial Statement for the Year ending 31 December 2021

- (d) the annual fabric report
 - (e) a report on the proceedings of the deanery synod
 - (f) the statement on whether the PCC has complied with the duty under the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have regard to the House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
3. To appoint the Independent Examiner or Auditor of the PCC accounts
 4. Election of Deanery Synod Reps (2 Casual Vacancies for a 1 year term to April 2023)
 5. Election of PCC members (8 members serving a 3 year term to April 2025)
 6. Questions and any other discussions raised by Electoral Roll members
 7. Closing Prayer

VICARS REPORT

The year has continued to be dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic. For a significant part of the year, services, groups, school assemblies and meetings remained online using Zoom and YouTube live-streaming. God's provision of the generous legacy which funded the new AV system and live streaming equipment purchased in the previous year has been a real blessing.

Whilst online viewing of services has reduced, there is still a significant contingent of 'catch up' viewers, and there are examples of new members trying us out online first so our digital presence in reaching out to the community remains very important. The continuing demand for live-streaming of Weddings and Funerals remains pastorally important too.

Children and Youth have been an important mission focus for many years, and so it has been great to reconnect with the school children through returning to in-person assemblies, and with local families through Big Story Sunday and the Messy Churches we ran at Christmas and Easter.

Government guidance has continued to be followed with face coverings, bubbling and distancing as necessary through the year. As restrictions have eased it has been so good to return

towards normal worship patterns, with singing and people able to remain for fellowship afterwards.

Attendances and finances have both been significantly affected by the pandemic as some have relocated for work or family reason, others have moved churches, and others have been coming less frequently.

Last year I spoke about the framework of “Response, Recovery and Reconstruction”. The pandemic has had a much longer tail than we might have expected even last July, and so we perhaps find ourselves between Recovery and Reconstruction.

It’s been exciting to see the new St Andrew’s Dean Court taking shape week by week, and it serves as a reminder that there is much to do in reconstructing our life together as a parish.

Three priorities for the coming year:

1. Getting back to “normal”. Returning to regular opening of St Michael’s and a weekly 8am Holy Communion and reaching out and finding ways to help those who see one of our churches as “their church”, but who haven’t yet re-engaged with church life post-COVID, to reconnect.

2. Finishing the St Andrew's rebuild and beginning the adventure of using the new facilities for mission.
3. Working to rebuild our Children's and Youth work and rethinking how we help families grow as followers of Jesus.

Rev. Jonathan Widdess
Vicar of 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 all three churches.

There were 8 elected members (one of whom serves on the Deanery Synod). The Vicar, associate clergy (Helen Azer) and the licensed lay ministers (Neil Grady, Eve Lockett) are ex officio members, making a total of 11 members.

Members of the Parochial Church Council for 2021 were as follows:-

Ex-Officio Members

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

Elected Members

Karen Adamson, Kate Elliott, Jan Harris, Claire Horsman, Roger Long, Vivien Payne, Dr David Henderson-Slater (Vice-

Chair), Jane Vlitos

The PCC met 7 times throughout the year as a full committee.

In addition, these sub-groups are elected by and accountable to the PCC:

Standing Committee: Rev Jonathan Widdess (Chair), Karen Adamson, Neil Grady, Dr David Henderson-Slater.

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

Fabric Committee: Rev Jonathan Widdess, Jane Vlitos, Roger Long, David Nowakowski, Chris Evans.

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

SVMG: Neil Grady (Chair), Celia Clarke, Claire Horsman.

ELECTORAL ROLL

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules, the Electoral Roll was revised this year. There are now 116 parishioners on the Electoral Roll.

CHURCHWARDENS REPORT

No Churchwardens were elected at the APCM in 2021 and so we are currently a parish without Churchwardens.

Churchwarden is a role that each person makes their own to some extent. It is a mix both of practical responsibility, and oversight of areas of church life. Although the best way to fulfil these duties is to elect at least one Churchwarden, the essential functions are being covered by the Vicar, the PCC and it's sub-groups, and the Safeguarding Officer.

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Introduction

Since Kate Elliott assumed the role on 7th June 2021, her work has been guided and informed in her role by the Church of England's active policy document: 'A Safer Church for All'. This document contains the ambition to develop robust policy and procedures across the Church, its Dioceses and Parishes and to develop a strong and supportive pastoral culture where all can feel secure, not only in the knowledge of God's love, but also supported and nurtured in the church family.

Safeguarding return

There have been no formal safeguarding concerns registered during the period since the last AGM.

Progress

The following represents the significant progress made within the Parish to embed and embrace best practice in safeguarding

- KE has completed her full induction training within the Diocese Safeguarding Leadership programme, including training in Domestic Abuse and Safer Recruitment practices.
- KE has attended an area safeguarding meeting
- The role of the Parish Safeguarding lead and KE's contact details have been widely shared across the Parish to comply with expectations as detailed within the Diocesan Safeguarding handbook
- Safeguarding Sunday was celebrated within St Michael's church within its Sunday service
- A robust, electronic central register of volunteers and their compliance status has been created and all paper files are stored safely within the Parish office.
- All new volunteers have been safely recruited and have completed the required induction training
- All volunteers have a current DBS and are appropriately trained
- Safeguarding is a standing item within PCC meeting
- The Safeguarding action plan has been completed for the Parish, presented within the PCC meeting and signed off as a dynamic document for action and scrutiny

Safeguarding is not just about compliance. It is our Christian practice of love and support to all, to which we all aspire within our Parish.

The parish has complied with the duty to “have due regard” to the House of Bishops’ guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Kate Elliott

Parish Safeguarding Officer

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The COVID pandemic continues to have a huge financial impact on the parish accounts. In January 2021 the PCC had approved a break-even operating budget for 2021 assuming planned giving and donations income at 2020 level, and rental and fundraising income returning to pre Pandemic levels in the 2nd half of the year. Unfortunately, with restrictions still in place and the churches remaining closed for part of the year, planned giving and donations were down by 26% vs this budget, and although expenses were down by 2%, the Parish had a significant operating deficit for the year for the second year running.

The project to rebuild St Andrew’s Church made significant progress in 2021. Fund raising has been very successful and by end February 2022, approx. 92% of the project budget of £634,000 had been secured.

Roger Long

On behalf of the Finance Committee

ABINGDON DEANERY SYNOD

The Deanery Synod has met 4 times since the last APCM; the first time here at St Michael's, subsequently 2 meetings by Zoom and the most recent at St Swithun's, Kennington.

Bishop Gavin addressed the September meeting and spoke of his calling as a Bishop to catch and then to cast and to share wider God's vision for the church and for the world around us and from that basis, what God is calling us to do in this time and place. Drawing from the three-strand Diocesan articulation of being a Christ-like church for the sake of the world – compassionate, courageous and contemplative - he sees his role as to encourage and affirm when he sees these qualities and to challenge and provoke when he doesn't see evidence of them. Referencing the most recent National Church three-word articulation of simpler, humbler and bolder, he added his own fourth word: deeper – deepening our experience with God. His final point was that the three values of the gospel should mark our lives: joy, unity and growth.

Following the Bishop's address, Martin Steele, Deanery Treasurer, presented the proposed parish share review, the intention of which was to clarify and simplify the allocation of parish share within the deanery. The proposals were taken back to be put before each PCC for approval and were then voted for, unanimously, at the November Deanery Synod.

In other meetings there has been feed-back from parishes on their various approaches to the Church's Living in Love and Faith initiative; a presentation on the Greenhouse initiative which is to encourage and support every deanery to nurture,

protect and grow new congregations of all shapes and sizes in their deanery and a discussion on how technology is being used within parishes post-Covid.

Claire Horsman

FABRIC REPORT

Keeping the church buildings in good condition requires constant care and intervention and this work has continued this year thanks in no small part to the members of the P.C.C. Fabric Committee.

Over the past year we have:

- obtained faculty permission to replace the lead on the tower roof
- arranged for a thorough photographic record of all lead work to be replaced
- cleared undergrowth and gutters
- removed a tree from a grave suffering with ash die-back
- discussed the possibility of instituting a garden of remembrance in the churchyard for the burial of ashes in perpetuity
- investigated the electrical fault affecting the bollard lights in the churchyard
- removed a damaged bollard from outside St Mary's, Farmoor
- had Commonwealth War Graves signage installed on the churchyard wall at St Michael's

- addressed a significant issue with dampness in the Stable Block that houses the Parish Office
- demolished the old St Andrew's Dean Court and begun building a replacement church on the site
- investigated the replacement of the Sexton's Hut, demolished by a falling beech tree during the winter storms
- improved the reliability of the AV system and live-streaming at St Michael's
- raised ongoing issues from the SMIG improvements with the architects Wright and Wright
- installed smart meters in the Parish Centre and Stable Block
- installed a smart thermostat in St Michael's allowing the heating to be set over the internet

In line with section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018, the terrier, inventory and log-book will be reviewed by the Fabric Committee at an upcoming meeting and subsequently presented to the PCC.

STAFF & VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Celia left the group at the end of August to concentrate on her business. We are indebted to her for her invaluable contribution to the group, in particular for her part in producing the manual Managing Employees in the Parish of Cumnor.

The primary focus of the SVMG has been to establish a consistent, fair, safe, and ethical approach to engaging and

employing staff and volunteers within the Parish and to produce a manual for use by all those involved in their engagement and employment. The final version of this document: **Managing Employees in the Parish of Cumnor** was approved and adopted by the PCC at its meeting of 14th July 2021.

The Oxford Diocesan website has an excellent section on the engagement of volunteers based on “**Working Well with Volunteers**” by the Church Urban Fund and the Church of England Lay Training Adviser and “**Faithfully Volunteering**”, a good practice guide by the diocese of Liverpool. The SVMG commends these resources for working with volunteers.

In August 2021, following her resignation as Parish Administrator, Neil and Claire conducted the exit interview for Sarah Evans, a transcript of which was circulated to the PCC.

Neil Grady

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Despite the challenges of the past year, with every part of Pastoral ministry continuing to be affected 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.

Occasional offices recovered slightly in 2021 with 6 Baptisms, 11 Funerals and 3 Weddings conducted in St Michael's. We

also took 3 full services at the Crematorium and an additional 6 burials of ashes after a funeral elsewhere.

The outlook for 2022 suggests that the numbers of Weddings will be higher than for some years with 8 already booked for this year.

CARE HOME MINISTRY

Care home ministry has tentatively restarted as the local situation in each home and availability of the Home Communion team has permitted.

We have 6 care homes in the parish and this is an important part of our pastoral ministry which we continue to rebuild.

William Cutting's popular online series, "Worship for Seniors" came to an end in the summer, and many of the local homes have been joining us for worship via the live-stream from St Michael's. 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.

HOME GROUPS

Wednesday Home Group The group continued to meet throughout the year with some meetings exclusively on Zoom (when the hosts had covid in the household, and/or case numbers were particularly high) and some as 'hybrid' meetings – in person for those who could come, and on Zoom for those who wanted to attend on-line. The camera set-up showing all in-person attendees together, and a large TV screen to see and hear the 'Zoomers' seemed to work well. We did bible studies each fortnight covering topics in Acts and Psalms, a series on the topic of 'Heaven', and then studies on David from 1 Samuel. *Hazel Tyson*

The Cumnor Hill Homegroup The Cumnor Hill group meets on alternate Mondays. We currently have 12 members, most have been together since its inception 13 years ago, so we know each other fairly well. Our study material is variable, the evenings are never dull or quiet, but always stimulating!!

The very popular cake club was re-established in Sept 2021 , for members attending for real. However, we still have some people who can't attend, due to health or travel reasons, and so we do a sort of hybrid meeting, not entirely ideal, but we persevere with the modern technology to try to accommodate everyone!

We have used the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book (2021) this year, and also dedicated an evening to prayer for the situation in Ukraine. Each session a different person facilitates the study, bringing their own perspective to the evening.

In between meetings we keep in regular contact via what's app, email, phone or by old-fashioned face to face!! My thanks go to the whole group for their faithful attendance, total commitment, and wholehearted and enthusiastic participation. Here's to the next year.

Dianne Taylor

LINKS WITH CUMNOR CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Through their outstanding efforts, the head and staff have continued to ensure that the children experience school life which is as normal as possible in the face of changing rules and covid infection rates among staff and pupils.

Inevitably some church-linked activities have been affected. The weekly assemblies led by the Vicar have been provided via zoom, or face-to-face with separate sessions for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in order to have fewer children in the school hall at one time. Only half the school attended a Christmas Service at St. Michael's and the Vicar joined the other half by zoom. Sadly, it was not possible to welcome parents and family to the service, as in previous years.

With careful attention to Covid Safety, an Advent Messy Church event was held at St. Michael's on December 4th and all children at the school were invited.

The activities of the PTA have been seriously curtailed in the past year, but an outdoor carol service (in collaboration with

the Church) in the churchyard, timed to coincide with the arrival of 'Santa' in the village, proved very successful.

Despite the on-going covid problems, every child in the school had the opportunity to attend a 'Prayer Space' with a programme of activities related to Easter with installations provided by BeSpace and supported by volunteers from the church.

Easter services for the school took place in St Michael's on April 8th and a Messy Church event on April 9th was promoted at the school.

In addition to the Vicar, the membership of the Governing Body includes Voirrey Carr (Chair), Joy Topping, Sue Fuggle, Jane Vlitos and the Vicar, who together with the other Governors, endeavour to ensure that the school is not only successful academically but also maintains the ethos and meets the responsibilities of a CE Primary School.

The School Improvement Plan includes the objective 'to strengthen the partnership with the parish church and enrich the community life of the school and church in Cumnor on its onward journey'. With the easing of covid restrictions we hope to develop our collaboration.

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 yet been able to resume due to lack of volunteers.

Big Story Sunday

We continued with our all-age service, Big Story Sunday, throughout the pandemic, initially online and then in Church. It runs once a month and consistently draws new families to church. 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.

Messy Church

At Christmas and Easter we were able to run Messy Church in St Michael’s and these were well run and thought through events that were well supported locally. Ahead of the Easter event we invested in some reusable banners to help with publicity. The next Messy Church is being planned for just before the Summer Holidays.

Christingle

Our annual Christingle service was again affected by COVID concerns. We again made “Build your own Christingle” kits so that those in church assembled their Christingle during the service. The oranges were kindly donated by Sri and Kiruba in the Post Office and the leftovers turned into marmalade

which won 3rd prize at the recent Cumnor Gardening Club Spring Show!

Cumnor C.E. School

We have continued to provide a weekly School Assembly for Cumnor C.E. School throughout this year, initially online and then it has been so good to resume collective worship face-to-face from the Autumn with moves back online whenever COVID cases soared.

School Services such as Harvest, Christmas, and Easter have resumed, and it's also been possible to spend time with Year 1 and 2 in the classroom.

We also worked with the school and BeSpace to run a Prayer Space in School just before Easter

Sunday School

Sadly, it has not yet been possible to resume our Sunday School.

Future Plans

The PCC has asked Jane Vlitos and Claire Horsman to gather others to discuss ways in which we might re-engage with families and young people, drawing on the expertise of Yvonne Morris who is the Discipleship Enabler (Dorchester & Oxford Areas) and Children's and Family Ministry specialist at Oxford Diocese.

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 who due to the various pandemic lockdowns has been working with her church in Turkey via social media from the UK. Jon and Kerry Rass (Kerry spent a year in the parish during her training as a youth worker) spoke to us of their work with Tek Ura in Albania. Ted Ura seeks to improve the lives of local disadvantaged and marginalised Albanian people by providing the support and opportunities they need to build better lives for themselves and their families. We have also heard about the work of Good News for Everyone (formerly The Gideons) and how Christians Against Poverty, a debt counselling agency helping to release people from poverty by providing practical help and holistic support through members of local churches.

Given earlier in the year

	£3539	CMS – Rabiah's support
	£ 439	Cumnor School Leavers Bibles
	£ 300	Jon & Kerry Rass
<i>Local</i>	£ 300	Emmaus Oxford
	£ 200	BeSpace

	£ 300	Friends International, Oxford
<i>National</i>	£ 300	Christians Against Poverty
	£ 300	Youth For Christ
	£ 300	Archway Foundation
<i>International</i>	£ 300	Bible Society
	£ 300	Open Doors
 <i>Other</i>	 £ 150	 Tear Fund
	£ 500	Heartcry
	£ 150	South & Vale Citizens Advice
	£ 100	Oxenford House

	£7478	

Chris Evans

ST MICHAEL'S CHOIR

Since my report last year with the relaxing of the Covid 19 restrictions, things have been getting back to something like normality with the choir leading the singing and worship from the choir stalls in the chancel.

Following guidelines set out in the risk assessments and sitting appropriate distances apart, the choir have been able to sing successfully without masks which has enabled them to make their normal contribution to each service with the occasional anthem, particularly during administration of Holy Communion.

Choir membership has sadly declined over the years, but the faithful few are still able to form a four-part choir on most Sundays. They also regularly attend choir practice on Fridays, when we all have an enjoyable time trying out new anthems and hymns for performances during the services.

Members have always taken an immense pride in leading the singing through hymns and other musical items, and it is reassuring that they are happy to continue, often expressing how much they enjoyed singing a particular hymn or anthem.

Sadly, with the Covid restrictions still in place, this year has seen the Junior Choir put on hold again, but I hope things may get better soon and we can encourage some younger members to join us.

The Future

Things have slowly improved this year regarding Covid restrictions. The Choir no longer must wear masks, making singing easier. Also, services are now regularly held every Sunday giving a reassurance that things are getting back to normal.

Despite the Covid restrictions this past year we have had a lot of fun and have been encouraged by everyone in the church family at St Michaels for which I and the choir thank you all most sincerely, for without your support we could not continue.

The future for the choir looks bright and we are conscious of the contribution and value we make to each service. We are fortunate in having a Vicar and congregation which appreciates our efforts – as noted by me in the comments made before and after the services. Thank you again to all – we do sincerely try, and I'm often amazed and moved by what we achieve. So, thank you all for your efforts and unstinted support over the last year.

We are, however, conscious of the need for more persons to come and sing with us every Sunday. If you enjoy singing and would like to join us, please let me know. Equally, if you would like a "taster" do drop by the Church any Friday from 6.30 – 7.30 pm to see what hymns and musical items are planned for the Sunday, and sample what we are doing. You may then hopefully decide to join us, in which case you would be made very welcome by us all.

The choir do have a lot of fun. Ask any of them, and they and I hope to continue to sing as a group leading the services at St Michaels in the future.

Andrew Dyer

BABY & TODDLER GROUP

It's been wonderful to restart the Toddler group (now in its 12th year) after the COVID restrictions. Several of the children 'graduated' to 'big' school, so we arranged to bump into them in the park last July to wish them well!

New families continue to find their way to us, many of these with children born during COVID, they are without exception

thrilled to meet other families and see their children mixing with their peer group. We probably average 8/10 families per week. We love getting to know the parents and seeing these babies and toddlers grow and develop. Sessions are very informal, and we try to show God's love just by being there, and answering questions, and facilitating conversations as appropriate.

Angela Evans & Dianne Taylor

FLOWERS IN CHURCH

It has been a joy to continue to arrange flowers in St Michaels during the past year. The flower team has worked well together at Harvest, Christmas and Easter to enhance the building with the beauty of God's creation. The team has diminished somewhat recently as two of our members decided to step down after many years of service. The remaining flower arrangers are very willing, able and faithful and I would like to thank them for their continued efforts.

An 'act of God' was responsible last year for the demolition of the Sexton's hut (by a falling tree), in which we housed flower arranging pedestals and other materials. We await the safe dismantling of the ruin to see if anything is salvageable! But mostly flower arranging is a safe and enjoyable activity and we can always use some extra help.

My thanks again to the team - Tizzie Ballard, Jean Entwistle, Janet Pottle, Hilary Prior, Tricia Venables.

Angela Evans, Coordinator

BELL RINGING

We continue to have a very dedicated band of ringers at St Michael's and are very grateful for the support Jonathan, our Vicar, and the PCC provide.

With the gradual easing of lockdown during 2021, ample ventilation of the tower, mask-wearing and hand sanitiser precautions, ringing at Cumnor resumed fully by June 2021, and once more the glorious sound of our bells rang out across the Parish of Cumnor.

Weddings – We were delighted to ring for three weddings during 2021, in July, November and December.

Quarter Peals – Two quarter peals have been rung during the past year. In September 2021, our band rang to celebrate the life of John H Sunderland and in February 2022, the 70th Anniversary of the Accession to the Throne of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

Here are the details of the quarter peals, as recorded on the national database, 'BellBoard', <https://bellboard.uk/>:

**Oxford Diocesan Guild
St Michael's, Cumnor,
Oxfordshire
Friday, 10 September 2021 in
49m
(Tenor: 13–1–4 in F)**

**1260 Grandsire
Doubles**

1. Christopher Brown
2. Marion Preston
3. Andrew J Dyer (C)
4. Jenny A Dyer
5. Guy F Matthews
6. Michele Winter

**Rung half muffled
in memory of
John (Sam) H Sunderland**

**Oxford Diocesan Guild
St Michael's, Cumnor,
Oxfordshire
Sunday, 6 February 2022 in
49m
(Tenor: 13–1–4 in F)**

**1260 Grandsire
Doubles**

1. Nicholas Speller*
2. Christopher Brown
3. Andrew J Dyer (C)
4. Jenny A Dyer
5. Guy F Matthews
6. Matthew Hall

*First Quarter Peal: 1

**To commemorate the
70th Anniversary of the
Accession to the Throne
of
HM Queen Elizabeth II.**

Website – We have recently launched a new website for Cumnor Bell Ringers, cumnorbellringers.uk, which provides an overview of ringing at St Michael's, information about the bells and links to various relevant resources. The site will be developed further, to provide information about learning to ring, so that we can attract and recruit more ringers to join the band from our community.

Courses & Recruitment - In preparation for the launch of a recruitment drive in 2022, two members of our band attended the Association of Ringing Teachers' bell handling course which covered a range of skills to teach bell handling.

Virtual Bellringing – Our band of ringers continue to meet weekly using the 'Ringing Room' virtual platform and communicating via 'Zoom' – this enables us to continue practicing our method skills beyond the tower and to keep in touch with one of our members who recently moved from the area.

Visitors – Earlier this year, we saw a return of visiting bands to St Michael's, welcoming the 'Roving Ringers' on Saturday, 26th February, as part of a ringing weekend in the area.

Jenny Dyer, Tower Captain, April 2022

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH DEAN COURT

After seven years of planning and fund-raising, it was with great thankfulness to God that we can now see the new St Andrew's building start to take shape. We have been looking to the future, praying for and discussing the use of the new building as a means of spreading the light and love of Jesus Christ in practical as well as spiritual ways in the community.

At the beginning of November 2021 it looked as though we might not be able to proceed because we had raised insufficient funding; but thanks to some generous giving we

reached the necessary 90% of what we required, and were able to go ahead with the work. The local building firm APH Construction, headed by Andrew Humphreys, was appointed, with our own Roger Long as Project Manager. The smaller St Andrew's Centre (known as STAC) has been retained, and is invaluable as an on-site Project Manager's office and as storage for church equipment. It will eventually be joined to the new main building.

The rebuilding is on course at the time of writing, with the roof about to go on at the beginning of April. The provisional date for a grand opening is Saturday 10 September. Funding has continued to come in, and we continue to pray for the full amount – to complete the work and to equip the building.

The multi-purpose games court behind the church has remained open when Covid restrictions allowed and has been well used, for anything from young people's vigorous football games to a practice area for small children learning to ride bicycles. We look forward to being able to run things using the court and the facilities of the new building together.

During the lockdowns we were unable to live-stream our services but could join those at St Michael's, in person or online. On Remembrance Sunday 14 November 2021 we held our first service in Dean Court Community Centre at the new time of 11.30 — not convenient for everyone but fitting in with other groups who had previously hired the hall. We are most grateful to the Community Association for giving us favourable rates; it is a great asset to us to be able to use the

Centre, even though it means bringing in equipment that we need each Sunday. Most other St Andrew's activities stopped in the past year, though the daytime Faith Group and table tennis have been able to continue in the Centre. Prayer and Bible study meetings have been held by Zoom. Just before the closing of the old building, we hosted a course for the parish on Creation Care and the climate emergency, involving our own experts including Neil Clark, Jessica Turner and Chris Scruby, and also external speakers including the Oxford economist Donald Hay, and video material including from the Canadian environmentalist Katherine Hayhoe (author of *Saving Us*).

We have lost several regular members who have moved house or been kept away through infirmity or old age, but welcomed a few others. We hope and pray that we will not only have a great new building, but also new 'labourers in the harvest' to enable fresh outreach and mission in the community.

JOY Place (the monthly service for adults with learning disabilities) held its meetings via Zoom, restarting in the Community Centre in December 2021. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Chuck and Anita Saunders, its co-founders and co-leaders (with Matt and Jenny Long), who returned to the USA after 12 years. The Longs continue with new leaders Hunter and Amberle Brown and plenty of participation from those who come to services.

The new building already has a cross in grey bricks etched into its red brick West wall; we pray that the self-sacrificial love of Christ will be seen in the life of St Andrew's as we

move into such an exciting new phase of our life together in Dean Court.

David Wenham

ST MARY'S CHURCH FARMOOR

After the challenges of lockdown, when we kept in touch with each other mainly by telephone, it has been a joy to start services again in St Mary's. We had a service of Holy Communion on Easter Sunday 2021, sitting in a suitably distanced circle, and it was very special to celebrate Christ's resurrection together.

We now have a monthly service, on the 4th Sunday afternoon at 3.30pm, 'Hymns and Cake'. This is a relaxed and informal time of fellowship and worship together. Our themes so far have been 'New beginnings', 'Love', 'Motherhood – does one size fit all', and 'Christ is risen!', the latter with a sharing of Holy Communion. Thank you to all those who support and help at this service, especially Rod Sharp for the music. If there is anyone who could assist with the serving tea etc, please speak to Jean Pryce-Williams or Jessica Turner.

Jessica Turner