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# 2023 Annual Review St. Michael & All Angels Church Sandhurst

Including Papers for the APCM  
Annual Church Meeting



## Contents

<b>Agenda</b>	3
<b>Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2022</b>	4
<b>Rector's Report 2022</b>	8
<b>Governance, Finance &amp; Estates</b>	
Report of the PCC	10
Treasurer's Report for 2022	11
Stewardship	12
Sonning Deanery Synod	13
WinSpire	14
St Mary's Fund	15
Churchyard	16
2 <sup>nd</sup> Saturday Report	17
Eco Church	17
Health & Safety	18
<b>Groups &amp; Community</b>	
Bell Ringers' Report	19
St. Michael's Belles	20
Baby and Toddler Time	20
Sandhurst Youth	21
Heritage Report	24
Social Committee	24
St Michael's CofE Primary School	26
<b>Nurturing &amp; Caring</b>	
Pastoral Care	27
House Groups	28
Sandhurst Counselling Service	29
Safeguarding	30
St Michael's Family Worker	31
Marriage Preparation and Support	32
<b>Serving &amp; Growing</b>	
Sides Persons' Report	33
Flower Arrangers	33
8am Servers & Communion Assistants	34
9.30am Servers	34
Church Choir	35
Kidz Church	37
Church Cleaners	38
Sacristans	38
Audio Visual Team	38

Annual Parochial Church Meeting  
to be held on  
Sunday 23 April 2023 at 11:45am  
St. Michael & All Angels Church

## Agenda

- 1) Opening prayer
- 2) Chairman's introduction
- 3) Apologies for absence
- 4) Election of two Churchwardens (those who are on the Electoral Roll or live in the parish are eligible to vote)
- 5) Minutes of the 2022 APCM
- 6) Presentation of Electoral Roll
- 7) Election of three representatives to Deanery Synod for three years (those who are on the electoral roll are eligible to vote)
- 8) Election of Parochial Church Council members  
(those who are on the Electoral Roll are eligible to vote)
  - a) Four vacancies for three years
  - b) One vacancy for one year
- 9) Election of Sides men and women
- 10) Financial reports
  - a) Annual accounts 2022
  - b) Appointment of Independent Examiner
- 11) Statutory reports
  - a) Incumbent's report
  - b) Fabric, Goods and Ornaments report  
(Please see Estates Report in this Annual Review)  
With updates on the WinSpire Project.
  - c) Report on the proceedings of the PCC (please see report in this Annual Review)
  - d) Deanery Synod Report (please see report in this Annual Review)
- 12) Any other business
- 13) Closing prayers

## Minutes of the 2022 APCM

Held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 8:00pm

### Attendees

Sarah Bishop	Peter Hulbert
John Campbell	John Martin
Sue Campbell	Stephanie Martin
Georgina Castle	Janet Pilbeam
Rev John Castle	Nicky Thomas
Rupert Cremer-Evans	Karen Symons
Sheridan Cremer-Evans	Jon Toohey
Mike Gower	Brendan Watson
Clare Hardy	Catherine Wilkins
Emma Hodge	Denise Yeomans
Jennie Hulbert	

### 1. Opening Prayers and Chairman's Introduction

John Castle opened the meeting with a reflection on *Psalms* 127:  
'Unless the Lord builds the house'.

John Castle welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Ruth Eve	Pat Johnstone
Lindsay Franklin	Dave Percival
Alun Grafton	Liz Percival
Wendy Grafton	Diane Pullar
Anne Harris	Martin Thomas
Chris Harris	Rosaria Toohey
Dorothy Hill	Rev John White
Martin Johnstone	Ken Wilkins

### 3. Election of Churchwardens

John Castle explained that technically this is the meeting of parishioners to elect the two churchwardens. John expressed how blessed we have been in the last year to have Emma and Catherine in the role of Churchwarden. However, Emma will be retiring this year after five years in post. John thanked her for her exceptional effort and dedication. Catherine agreed to stand as Churchwarden for one further year.

**Resolution:** That Catherine Wilkins is appointed Churchwarden for another year

**Proposed by:** Sue Campbell

**Seconded:** Diane Pullar

**Passed unanimously**

John asked the meeting to think and pray and give others the confidence to come forward next year.

### 4. Minutes of the meeting of the APCM held in October 2021

These were approved and there were no matters arising.

## 5. Presentation of the Electoral Roll

Claire Clay as Electoral Roll Officer provided the following update:

- 149 on the Electoral Roll for 2022.
- Of these 92 reside within the parish and 57 reside outside of the parish.
- This is a decrease of 3 on 2021 when there were 152 on the roll.

## 6. Election of one representative to Deanery Synod for three years

John Martin and Sue Campbell are our Deanery Synod representatives but there is a vacancy which was not filled last year. Steph Martin has kindly volunteered to fill the post.

**Resolution: That Steph Martin is elected to the Deanery Synod**

**Proposed:** Sheridan Cremer- Evans

**Seconded:** Sue Campbell

**Passed unanimously**

John Castle expressed his thanks to Sue Campbell and John Martin for being willing to serve as our Deanery Synod Representatives.

## 7. Election of Parochial Church Council members (those who are on the Electoral Roll are eligible to vote)

Two vacancies for one year – we received two nominations:

- **Brendan Watson** proposed by Sue Campbell and seconded by Catherine Wilkins
- **Derek Bartram** proposed by Sue Campbell and seconded by John Martin

Four vacancies for three years – we received three nominations.

- **Jon Toohey** nominated by Sue Campbell and seconded by John Campbell
- **Nicky Thomas** nominated by Georgina Castle and seconded by John Campbell
- **Emma Hodge** nominated by Catherine Wilkins and seconded by Clare Hardy

**All were voted in favour of being elected to the PCC.**

## 8. Election of sidesmen and sideswomen

The list of sidesmen and sides women were read out and all were thanked for the role in welcoming people to our services.

*8:00am, 9:30am & Evensong:*

Sue & John Campbell	Dorothy Hill	Val Travers
Sam & Paul Carpenter	John & Steph Martin	Brendan Watson
Wendy Grafton	Diana Pidgeon	
Ann & Chris Harris	Gill & Tim Robertson	

*Family Service:*

Abby Coleman	Katie O'Dwyer	Katy Robson-Malone
Seonaid Colville	Thea Parker	Sam Wilkins
Sara Kaufman	Andy Parker	Alison Wren
Kate Lampitt	Anita Pomroy	

## 9. Financial Reports

Jon Toohey noted that there were two events which are shown in last year's accounts. Firstly, the revaluation of the St Mary's site for £35000.00. Secondly, the money that has been placed in a long-term investment fund showed an increase of £20,000 in December, although recent political events may have lessened this amount.

### **The Budget 22-23**

Jon told the meeting that we always try to keep a balanced budget, but there is a need to keep our building in good repair. He proposes that we try to put £10,000 year into a sinking fund for long-term repair. This is a realistic target. We were able to have a £8,700 surplus this year which has been moved to a restricted fund for repairs.

We also have to remember that our youth worker and family worker are supported by designated funds, including the St Mary's Mission Fund. We will draw £25,000 on it this year and we have to be aware that this resource is finite.

Jon went on to thank those who give generously and regularly and to thank Brandon Ashton and Sunita McIntosh for their support in treasury matters. Jon expressed particular thanks to Karen Symons who has been independent examiner for the last 24 years but is now standing down.

**Resolution: That Kate Black is appointed as independent examiner.**

**Proposed:** Jon Toohey

**Seconded:** Emma Hodge

**Passed unanimously**

Jon went on to explain the accounts in detail which is on page 11 of the Annual Review. Jon went on to take a question on:

- **The progress of WinSpire fund:**  
Which Jon Toohey, Jon Martin and Catherine Wilkins answered, explaining that the difficulties of Covid over the last two years and the lack of a fundraising officer has made a difficult task more so. A general discussion ensued about the fact that most large projects are funded from within and that grant funding bodies are not focused on buildings but on building community.

### **10. Statutory reports**

The incumbent's report is on page 8 of the Annual Review.

John Castle expressed his thanks to all involved in all the different aspects of the life of the church.

The Fabric Goods and Ornaments Reports (otherwise known as Estates) starts on page 24 of the Annual Review.

#### **St. Mary's**

John Martin explained that the St Mary's land was in the process of being marketed and we were awaiting with interest the results of the offers which have been placed. It was possible that the amount realised will be more than the valuation.

The report of the PCC proceedings is on page 10 of the Annual Review.

The report of the Deanery Synod is on page 13 of the Annual Review.

### **11. Looking Ahead**

John Castle explained that we do not know what lies ahead, but God knows. We are out of the habit of making plans at present because of the Covid pandemic and there have been differing views in the congregation and how we move forward in this time.

St Michael's has always had a 'can do' attitude during pandemic. We haven't shut down more than we have to, but we have kept going when other churches have shut.



The Rector explained that he was grateful to the commitment of the congregation which have made this happen. John explained that he had great hopes for the future as we are a great church and there were people coming forward to fill the gaps and being welcomed by us because we are an outward looking and welcoming parish. Particularly, we need to get alongside and befriend those who attend the 9.30 and family service and try to reverse the decline in numbers through prayer and building relationships: 'Unless the lord builds the house'.

We have started several initiatives which we need to press on with, including:

- Developing an intergenerational church.
- Encouraging people to go to Spring Harvest. 37 went this year.
- Church socials and Picnics, events that we can do together
- WinSpire – a work in progress and a big challenge.
- Completing the sale of St Mary's for which, hopefully, we will get good value from it for the mission fund. John Castle thanked John Martin for 15 years hard work.

We have moved from bricks and motor, like St Mary's, to people impacting people and developing outreach in the community.

The report of the Deanery Synod is on page 13 of the Annual Review.

## **12. AOB**

- George asked the meeting to pray for Wendy Grafton, who is extremely ill, and for Alun and family.
- John reminded the meeting that from the following Monday, he would be on sabbatical leave for three months.

## **13. Closing Prayer led by John Castle**

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer at 12:24pm.

## **Agreement of the PCC**

The PCC agreed the proposal:

**That the current PCC officers stay in place for the Rector's Council meeting of the 27 April.**

**Proposed:** Sue Campbell

**Seconded:** John Campbell

**Passed unanimously**

## Rector's Report 2022

Usually, I begin my report by commenting on other people's. So this time I thought I'd start by mentioning what I do. People assume I'm always busy, which is usually true, but what does my work actually involve?

Obviously, planning services and writing sermons takes time. A ten or fifteen-minute sermon can take hours of work to prepare – doing background reading around the bible passage, mulling over what God might be saying to our church through it, and then actually writing it. So please do take the trouble to read a sermon you've missed one Sunday, or which you heard but found helpful or interesting, whether by me or one of our other preachers. We publish them all on our website.

Baptisms, weddings and funerals are all fantastic ways of connecting with people on the edge of our church community. For funerals, I'm fortunate to be assisted by Revd's John and Jane, and by Sheridan C-E and Sarah Ashton following up bereaved families afterwards. Our choir also have a role to play through the twice-yearly Memorial Services. Do please pray for those who have lost loved ones, that through contact with our church God will bring a fresh perspective on life, hope and strength for the future.

Our Marriage Prep team, Alison in the office and the vergers at weddings all help to show our care for couples getting married. Our Family Worker, Sarah Bishop, comes with me to visit couples requesting baptism for their children, and does a great job befriending the mums and encouraging them to come along to Baby & Toddler Time and the Family Service. All of this is important outreach work, and you can help it be more effective by your prayers.

Taking assemblies at three schools brings me into contact with about 600 children, as I share Bible stories and lead them in times of reflection and prayer. At St Michael's School, our outreach also includes Sarah's Bible Bites lunchtime club, and the work of our church Foundation Governors. I and others from our church are also involved in activities in the Deanery, with our sister churches in Sandhurst, and with Bracknell Forest Interfaith Forum. Your prayers for all of this work will also be much appreciated.

And of course, quite a lot of my time gets taken up with management – signing off invoices, recruiting cleaners, overseeing our excellent office team of Sunita and Alison, and dealing with unexpected one-off matters that land on my plate, some of which can be very time-consuming. Meetings with the PCC or with leaders of different groups and activities enable better decisions to be made, information to be exchanged, and more people to have a say in how our church is run. Please remember all of these in your prayers!

But please never think that I'm too busy to listen to a problem, or make a visit to you – I'd love to have more invitations, as one-to-one chats can so often bring such encouragement, and keep me in touch with what people are thinking, feeling and experiencing. Sharing a problem can bring relief, and open up new hope and possibilities. Seeking advice helps us to make better decisions.

This last year we've been very sad to lose some dear members of our church. Their contributions in the past have been valued, and their loss is keenly felt. We're also pleased to have been joined by new members, and we hope they and everyone who comes into contact with St Michael's will feel welcomed, and closer to God as a result. In this Year of Renewal, I'm praying that we will all grow into a deeper love of God, of each other, and of those outside our fellowship.



The other reports in this Annual Review all testify to the work and commitment of people who make up our church, whether the work is more practical, such as cleaning the church building and doing maintenance work, or more people-based, such as teaching children and young people or chatting to new parents at Baby and Toddler Time. Thank you all for everything you do! A particular thanks to Catherine Wilkins, who is stepping down after 4 years as Churchwarden, and to Karen Allen, who stepped up to the role last year and needs a colleague to share it with this year!

Although the church is the people, not the building, we do benefit from having a beautiful church building and a fantastic Pastoral Centre, and both will need some significant attention this year. Please pray for the time, talents and money that we need to be offered, so that we can put our buildings back into shape for the service of God's Kingdom.

Finally, let's remember that as the Body of Christ we all have a part to play, and that each of us in our own families, workplaces and friendship groups is an ambassador for Christ.

*'Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'* Colossians 3:17.

Rev John Castle

## Report of the PCC

Now in my second year as PCC Secretary.

The full PCC held ten regular meetings during the year. The average attendance at all meetings was 75.8%.

During the year, we met the first three times by Zoom because of restrictions imposed to restrict the Covid-19 pandemic. The Bishop of Oxford had signed an Instrument previously putting in place arrangements which enable meetings of PCCs to be held electronically, so that decisions taken at these meetings during these exceptional times have the same force as if taken at a physical meeting. The PCC then met in person on 7 occasions as restrictions lifted.

The Rector's Council consists of the Rector, the two churchwardens, the Vice Chairman of the PCC, the PCC Secretary, and the Treasurer. They have power to transact the business of the PCC between PCC meetings, reporting to the full PCC as appropriate. The Rector's Council met 11 times by remote means with an average attendance of 93%. Eight of the ten meetings being fully attended.

During the year, Dave Percival announced that he would resign as Stewardship secretary at the end of 2022 and the PCC would like to thank him for all his work in this role. On the positive side, we have safely recruited a new safeguarding officer, Jen Rose and also welcome James Mason as our Health & Safety Officer.

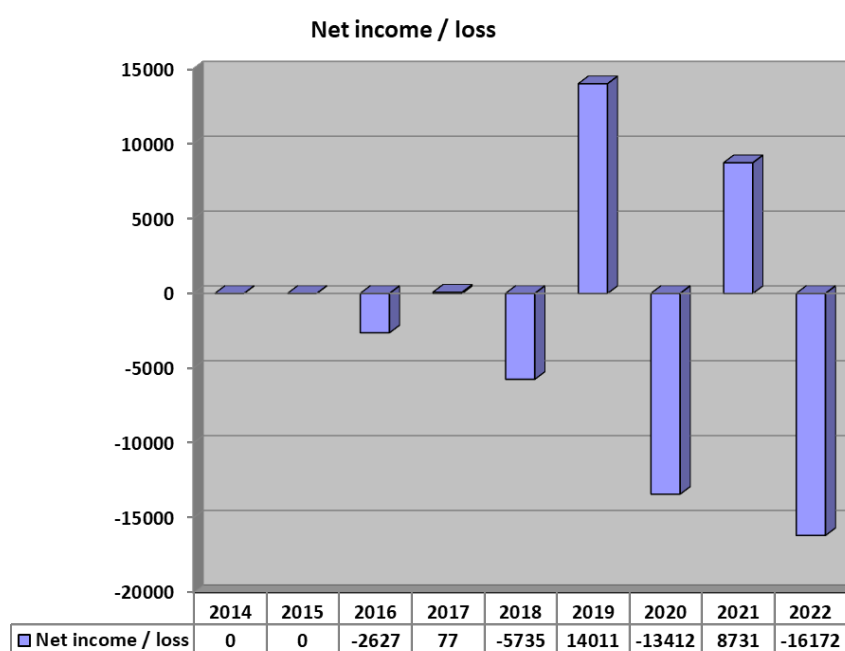
The meetings of the PCC have covered many subjects of the year including:

- To continue to explore and deal with the financial implications of the Covid Epidemic and to begin to explore how we as a church can encourage renewal and commitment.
- Nurturing the young: the PCC regularly receives feedback from those engaged in youth work and children's work and seeks ways to support them.
- Care of our estates, including the conclusion of the sale of the St Mary's land; how we make sure our buildings meet required safety standards and how we future-proof our aging infrastructure.
- How we steward our financial resources by sensible investment and the best way to use the money raised from the sale of St Mary's for the benefit of our community and Sandhurst.
- How we relate to the wider Anglican church, including updates from Sonning Deanery Synod.

The PCC represents and makes decisions on behalf of all the church. It is a pity therefore, that some groups are underrepresented. We have a few vacancies on the PCC and would love to welcome new members willing to engage with the future direction of the church.

*Sue Campbell, PCC Secretary*

## Treasurer's Report for 2022



The financial position of St Michaels can be described as 'Asset Rich, Income Poor';

- The designated and restricted funds have a very healthy balances – boosted in the year by the successful sale of St Marys.
- The general fund however, has made a loss of £16k in 2022 – possibly the highest ever – certainly since 2007 and surpassed the losses made in those years when parish share was running at 100k compared to 73k in 2022.

The general fund is where the daily activities of our church are transacted – income is mainly from our giving and hall rental. Expenses are mainly parish share, salaries (but not Youth or Family Worker), energy, choir, etc.(and missing is a contribution to a sinking fund for the buildings). For St Michaels to be sustainable, income must cover expenses.

The net result on the general fund - as shown in the graph – shows peaks and troughs, simplistically explained as follows;

**2019** – was a very encouraging year, everything went right and a contribution could have been made to a building sinking fund.

**2020** – saw the impact of Covid and most of hall rental income was lost

**2021** – was a positive result because hall income returned to pre-Covid levels but not all expenses

**2022** – expenses back to pre-Covid levels (and more) but lost regular hall income stream

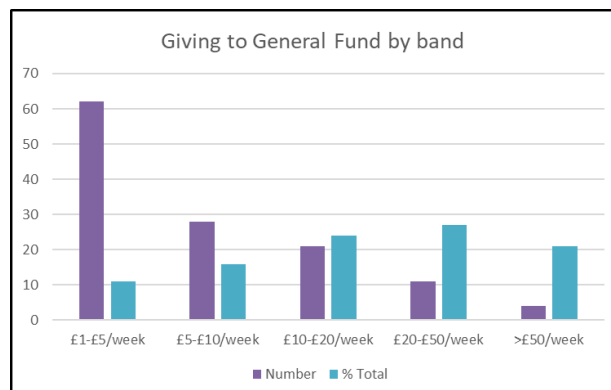
Currently we do not have a financially sustainable church – what are some solutions?

- Increase income – but it won't just happen. Key volunteer positions such as a Fund Raising Officer and a Stewardship Officer are vacant.
- Decrease expenses. We need to 'cut the suit to fit the cloth' and some difficult choices should be made.

However, the temptation is to avoid these actions and decisions and use the Mission fund to fund the losses in the general fund as has been done for 2022 for 16k and this is likely to continue.

A big thank you to those that continue to give generously (one of the positives in a difficult year) and continue to financially support St Michael's – there are a number of options;

- for regular giving, the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) (effectively a DD but also collects gift aid – unlike normal DD's or SO's you may have). PGS is itself a charity set up “to provide the most efficient and effective way for people to financially support the activity of the Church of England”. You can sign up to the PGS on the website.
- for one off gifts, the donate button on the website using your debit/credit card or PayPal account.



Both the above can be accessed [www.stmichaels-sandhurst.org.uk/donations](http://www.stmichaels-sandhurst.org.uk/donations)

- contactless giving at services (rather than cash in the plate) – fondly known as Zac.
- remember St Michaels in your will – ideally with a %

As regards reserves: the general reserve target is approximately three months expenditure. At the beginning of the year there was a little less than this and the trustees believe it necessary to maintain this and a transfer has been made from the designated Mission fund. The designated and restricted funds are healthy, as reflected in the accounts, but our repair/WinSpire funds are well short of the expected requirements and the trustees are considering using the Mission fund for required building repairs.

I would like to thank the following people – all who contribute so much to helping keep control of our finances;

- Brandon Ashton – for dealing with HMRC and recovering the tax due – a significant source of income.
- Kate Black – for taking on the role of being our independent examiner and accounts preparer.
- Sunita McIntosh – for everything else.

*Jon Toohey*

## Stewardship

Our God is faithful – keeping his word and his promises through every generation! We are truly grateful to those who have responded to his bountiful generosity by similarly keeping to their pledges even in these very challenging times.

Stewardship of all creation was the job given to mankind in the Garden of Eden – stewardship is about so much more than ‘money’; it's about enabling all creation to enter into an ever deeper relationship with God, and so sing his praise and his glory! This is the calling on our whole lives, and that of course includes the financial resources God has given us.

As with so many aspects of life, 2022 became increasingly challenging for all of us as year developed with all of us having to tighten our belts in one way or another. We are truly grateful to those who have trusted in God and have held their giving as ‘first to the Lord’ – as a parish we are incredibly blessed in this.

Looking at the figures:

- The underlying total given to the church rose by £1.5K over the year to £75K excluding a large gift in 2022 and the very large gift for youth work in 2021.
- Donations increased marginally as a result of those increasing their giving together with new givers (5) virtually balancing with those who have stopped giving or moved away (6) and those who have reduced their giving.:
- 15 donors (16 in 2021) provide over 50% of the total received into the General fund.
- 54 people are giving through PGS.

In worldly terms the financial pressures on all of us look set to continue to get worse in the coming year. God however has blessed us abundantly and we face the future trusting in his faithfulness and generous provision. We urge you to do likewise.

Finally, on a personal note, this will be my last report as Stewardship Officer. It has been a privilege to serve as such, and to see so many daily trusting in God's faithful word. I pray that you, and the parish, will continue to honour our words in response to his word.

*Dave Percival, Stewardship Officer*

### **Sonning Deanery Synod**

Four times a year, representatives from all the parishes in our Deanery ( Sonning ) meet to discuss Deanery matters and to learn about new initiatives and information passed down from the Diocese to the Deanery. Last year our representatives were myself, John Martin and Steph Martin with one vacancy.

The Deanery met four times last year. Twice in person and the Twice by Zoom. During this time, the Deanery Standing Committee got back to full strength with a new Lay Chair and Treasurer We also now have a new secretary who replaces the Rev Catherine Vaughan.

The main subject of discussion over the last year has been the rise in the Parish Share allocation which will probably mean a rise in the deanery's share of 2% as well as a change in the way that the paying of the share is distributed amongst the parishes.

Last March, The Rural Dean, reminded the synod that there were small environmental grants available from the deanery for green projects and there was discussion on how as a church we could encourage and give ideas to help one another. At the November meeting, the Rev. Katie Tupling, who is the Diocesan Disability Officer, had been invited to speak on 'Beyond, Ramps, T-Loops and Loos' and was very thought provoking indeed and had led St Michael's to look very carefully about how we welcome people with disabilities and to conduct a disability audit..

Under the chairmanship of Richard Lamey, the Rural Dean, the Deanery Synod seeks to further the gospel in this part of Berkshire by showing a Christian, caring face to the wider world through its initiatives and by supporting its parishes in their work. You do not have to be an elected member of the PCC to serve on the Deanery Synod, although you are entitled to attend PCC meetings. This year, we need to elect three members to the Deanery Synod for three-year terms. Myself and John Martin do not intend to stand again. We are looking for new Synod representatives who would enjoy being involved in the wider aspects of church life, meeting and talking with members from other parishes and helping shape the church for the future.

*Sue Campbell, PCC Secretary*

## WinSpire

To re-cap on the background, the spire built in 1853, is a striking feature of our beautiful church. It is clad in cedar tiles (known as shingles), which over the years become infested by insects which in turn attract birds that peck holes and nest in the spire. Large amounts of debris has to be cleared periodically and gradually the shingles fall off in high winds.

Every five years we are required to commission specialist architects to inspect the church structure. They produce a report on its condition and remedial work required, known as the Quinquennial Report. The last three reports have commented on the deterioration of the cladding and the 2021 Report highlighted that replacing the shingles was a priority and should be carried out within the next five years. The required standards of maintenance are more demanding because of the building's status as a Grade II\* listed building.

WinSpire is the name given to a fund raising project covering the spire and stained glass windows. A team of volunteers worked enthusiastically and hard and have achieved a great deal through fund raising events and seeking grants and donations from outside bodies. The west window has been restored to its former glory and in addition over £70,000 raised towards repair of the spire. However, lockdown disrupted the activities significantly and, for a variety of reasons, the earlier momentum has not been regained. At the same time the opportunities for large grants have diminished (although small grants may be achievable).

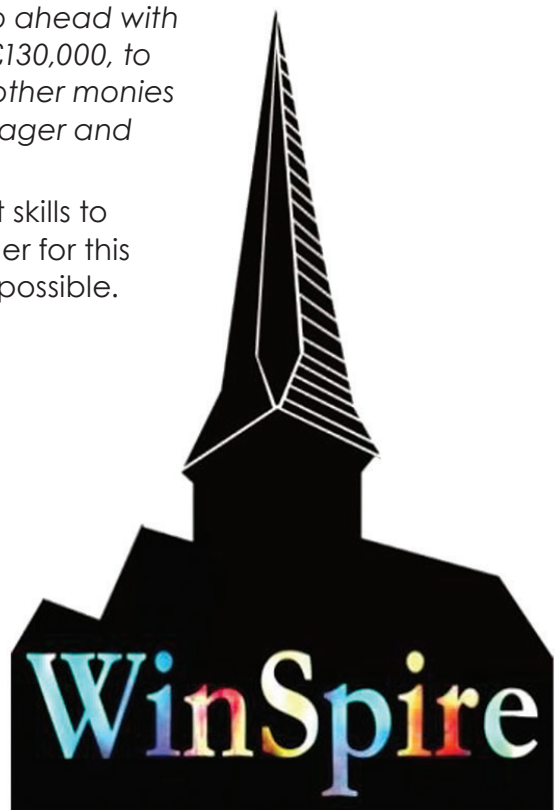
Meanwhile the spire continues to deteriorate and the cost of repairs inflates.

The PCC have considered the situation carefully in the context of the many other calls on our financial and human resources, our responsibilities as trustees to maintain the church building and grateful appreciation of the many people inside and outside the church community who have donated money and particularly the small group who worked strenuously to raise funds.

In the March 2023 meeting the PCC resolved *"to go ahead with the spire project, using money from reserves up to £130,000, to supplement the money already raised for this and other monies still to be raised and to seek a suitable project manager and fundraisers as soon as possible."*

A venture of this scale needs a person with the right skills to lead the project, so the next task is to find a volunteer for this and others to seek donations and grants wherever possible.

John Martin





### **St. Mary's Land**

In last year's Annual Review, we reported that the marketing had begun of the land in Wellington Road, formerly occupied by St Mary's. The marketing and sale were conducted according to rules laid down by the Charities Commission and the Diocese of Oxford. Many offers were received, and the sale completed in July 2022.

In terms of legalities, land such as this is now formerly registered by the relevant diocese, but parishes have beneficial ownership, which means St Michael's has the money from the sale after paying the Diocese of Oxford's expenses. This money is now in our Mission Fund.

So draws to a close a story that began in 1888 when some farmland was given to the Rector, Randal Parsons, and a Mission Room was built. Over the next 100 years the buildings took several forms. In 1998 the last of the buildings were closed for safety reasons and in 2005 they were demolished. At that time the PCC's intention was to build a curate's house on the site but progress was dogged by issues concerning the site boundaries and, indeed, the financial and the practical viability of the proposal. The idea was finally killed off when the financial crisis of the mid-2000s ended any possibility of the loan needed to finance the building.

It took several years to work through the fairly complex boundary issues but with these fully resolved, the PCC looked at various ways of using the land before deciding the best course of action was to secure planning permission for housing and then to liquidate the asset. Securing planning permission presented a number of challenges mainly due to the extensive root systems of the many protect trees in the area but with inputs from a number of professional advisors a good solution was found.

Over the years many people have worked on this project, too numerous to mention here. Several are no longer with us, but I'd like to thank them all for the prayer, time, thought and effort and they have put in.

This will be the last time a report on St Mary's land is include in the Annual Review.

*John Martin*



### **Churchyard – A triumph of teamwork**

Work in the churchyard can be a little like housework; the visual benefit of work done is by its nature temporary; the grass and hedges grow again, the lychgate fills with autumn leaves, the flower borders around the church and Pastoral Centre sprout weeds, twigs and branches descend onto paths and graves, visitors' rubbish fills the waste bins (often the wrong rubbish in the wrong bins!) and heavily used equipment needs repair. All except the last two are of course the work of nature, encountered by every gardener, but on a much larger scale in the churchyard. Oh yes, and the molehills! We try to work with nature where we can, letting the wildflowers grow before cutting the grass, avoiding hedge trimming until the nesting season is over, and not cutting the grass during those exceptionally hot spells we endured last year- for the sake of the grass and the grass cutter! It is a balance between enjoying the fruits of nature, and keeping the churchyard looking reasonably trim and tidy (and minimising any complaints of neglect we occasionally receive).

We have a large very supportive team of volunteers, of whom about half are drawn from the local community and half from church members. Their hard work during the year supplemented by a couple of working parties in May and October kept the churchyard in very good order throughout the year. Their help and enthusiasm has meant additional work has been possible on top of the regular maintenance activities; improving the area around the car park, Pastoral Centre and church, treating the benches and gates, unearthing long buried graves and clearing the bins more regularly than has been possible before.

Thanks are due to everyone involved for their support, including Chris Harris maintaining churchyard equipment aided by Trevor Norcott, and John Campbell and Rupert Cremer-Evans for helping ensure the working parties are as productive as they are - a triumph of teamwork indeed. I would also like to mention Derek Bartram who has been a hedge trimmer extraordinaire for some years whose deft work is evident from their trim appearance.

The Church's thanks go to everyone involved in 2022 and long may this team of helpers keep up the good work this year, as we await the advent of Spring.

*Peter Hulbert*



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday Report

It has been another busy year keeping up with the maintenance on the Church and Pastoral Centre.

In March '22 after damage from Storm Eunice, we put a patch on the North Aisle roof gully, rehung the slipped slates on the Pastoral Centre roof over the kitchen and repaired the blown over the signboard by the Pastoral Centre entrance.

The dishwasher in the Pastoral Centre kitchen has needed a certain amount of attention over the year, but is still working – just.

After a change of contract for the Pastoral Centre intruder, fire alarms and CCTV, a fair amount of time was needed to reprogramme all the entry fobs to get it back to working properly. Although there has been considerable outlay, it will be more economic in the long run.

We have been dealing with issues arising from the 2021 November Quinquennial Inspection, including updating electrical inspections and updating the asbestos register amongst many. Following the five yearly electrical mains testing, the Pastoral Centre internal emergency lights were found to be faulty and have now been rectified. There are still more to do, but all the necessary ones are all working. They can now be tested individually instead of having to turn off the power for whole building.

In November, we had an excellent working party, in which we built a ramp for the North Porch internal step and leveled-out the paving by the Pastoral Centre church-side door to enable better access. Some more slipped tiles on the vestry roof were rehung as well.

The various contractors doing the PAT testing, heating servicing, roofing repairs, asbestos checking or roof alarm maintenance all needed escorting and support over the year, to gain access to do their jobs.

The year ended on a low note with having to unblock the Pastoral Centre urinal waste pipework and replace a frozen flushing control, following a flood in the gents loo. The replacement is eco-friendly!

Lots of help from people keep the church buildings going. Many thanks to all who have done their bit during the year.

*John Campbell*

## Eco Church

In spring 2022, on behalf of the PCC, I made a brief presentation at a planning appeal at Bracknell Forest Council highlighting concerns about the detriment to the environment of St Michael's regarding an application to build 350 homes between Lower Church Road and the Wokingham Road. It was a good opportunity to consider how important our churchyard is for its flora and fauna, as well as it being a green space where people come to remember their loved ones. In the Autumn, we found out that the application had been turned down.

Eco Church articles are a regular fixture in our parish newsletter. This year they have covered post-Christmas recycling, the presence of nightingales between April and June (a red-list conservation bird due to shrinking habitat) in the churchyard, the energy crisis, keeping warm in church(!), energy bills, and a fair few other random musings.

There have been some changes to A Rocha's Eco Church programme and so with this in mind, a new emphasis will be placed on achieving Eco Church status in the coming year,



by breaking the whole task into manageable segments across the various areas of church life and encouraging more involvement with a revitalised and expanded team.

*Catherine Wilkins*



### **Health & Safety**

This has been my first year as Health and Safety Officer for St Michael's Church and I have been able to build upon the work started by Sue and John Campbell. Firstly, I must thank all the volunteers who give their time to repair St Michael and make it a safe place for our community and those who use the building.

During 2023, the electrics were due for test in the church and Pastoral Centre. Certificates have been now issued for both buildings, but considerable work was required on the electrics in the Pastoral Centre. The Pastoral Centre also has new Fire, Intruder CCTV Alarm providers and the system has been considerably updated. Thanks again to John and Sue for their work.

We are currently working on improving disability access and to the church and the Pastoral Centre to meet current expectations. My recent Health and Safety reviewed the need for more members of the congregation to be willing to volunteer as First Aiders and who currently have a First Aid qualification and people who help with catering St Michaels who would be willing to undertake an online food safety training course to make sure that we have enough people who are compliant with current standards.

If you identify issues of concern, please report them to me, either directly, through the Parish Office or through the Churchwardens.

*James Mason*

## Bell Ringers' Report

The bells are rung for Sunday services, plus weddings, funerals and special events.

During the year, our ringing returned to a pre-Covid level of ability, with a few new methods being learnt or re-established as we regained our confidence. It was a privilege to ring for our late Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June, and then for the bells to be rung fully muffled in September, during the period of national mourning.

Our church hosted the local area branch practice in March, when a visitor unfortunately bounced their bell on the stay, causing the stay to break (see picture). Stays are made of ash, which has the required strength without being brittle, but designed to break rather than cause damage elsewhere. Unfortunately, during the period when the stay was out of action, we also damaged the bell wheel, which required the services of a specialist company to make a new wheel.

Our new wheel (pictured) was fitted in late June and just in time for our first wedding of the year. I believe the other wheels originate from when the bells were installed, so are well over 150 years old and all showing considerable signs of wear. I expect the old wheels will be replaced when a complete refurbishment of our bells is undertaken once funding becomes available.

The band is always looking for new recruits, especially from our family service congregation. Full training will be given to anyone interested, but we would particularly like to hear from any lapsed ringers who would like to return to ringing. I would also like to thank our regular visitors from neighbouring towers, who have enabled us to continue with our regular ringing at Sandhurst.

Practice nights are on Monday Evening: 7:30pm until 8:30pm.

For further information, please contact Mike on the number below or via the Parish Office.

Mike Sherren  
07979 060925



## St. Michael Belles

After two years of restrictions, 2022 saw a return to normality. Our weekly rehearsals recommenced and we looked to reinstate bookings cancelled because of the pandemic.

The chair of the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain (HRGB) encouraged all groups to ring in celebration of the Queen's Jubilee on Sunday 5 June and provided a commissioned piece of music to add to our repertoire. We stood outside the Pastoral Centre and our 'Right Royal Ring' greeted parishioners as they made their way into the hall for coffee.

In addition to celebrating this wonderful event, there was an added bonus. The Rev Jane Kraft heard us ringing and expressed an interest in learning to ring handbells. Her participation led to another member of the clergy, The Rev Catherine Vaughan, vicar of Owlsmoor, also joining our ranks and we are delighted to report that Jane and Catherine are now fully paid up members of HRGB!

In September, rehearsals for our delayed concert with The Cecelia Singers began and this event took place in church in December. We also rang a programme of Christmas music for the residents of Beaumont Lodge in Camberley and took part in both Carol Services in church.

Autumn also saw the launch of our group for young and novice ringers, Blossoming Bells, under the guiding hands of Karen Allen and Emily Birch. They meet before the main group on Thursday evenings and have started ringing with bell plates, which are slightly easier to ring than bells. We are delighted to report that they have already performed at a Family and Nativity Service and recently attended a workshop run by HRGB for small handbell groups.

As we enter our 33rd year, three of the original six "Belles" are still ringing, but we sadly said goodbye to a fourth, as Chris Blackman retired. In addition to being a valued ringer, Chris was also our treasurer for the majority of this time and we thank her for the work she has done over the years.

We are always looking for new ringers. If you can read music, you're welcome to join the established group on a trial basis. Otherwise, why not try Blossoming Bells?

For more information or to express an interest, please contact Jenny Thorn or Karen Allen through the Church Office.

*Jennie Hulbert*

### **Baby and Toddler Time**

Baby and Toddler Time runs every 2nd and 4th Thursday during term-time from 9-11am in the Pastoral Centre. The sessions have continued to attract many attendees, both existing and new, including parents, grandparents, childminders and friends. The age range of children attending each week varies greatly from newborn babies only a few weeks old to pre-schoolers.

This group is the first point of contact for many families with the church and is also a place that families are referred to during baptism meetings and by our family worker. We offer a welcoming environment for children to play while the adults can have a hot drink and a chat with friendly faces. We strive to be a valuable support network for our community and our latest feedback from a new mum to the group was:

*"This is the friendliest toddler group I have been to including several church organised groups."*

We are very pleased to hear this.

Each session includes refreshments for both adults and children, free play, John Castle leads a bible story followed by singing time with Sarah and John. We are also still offering breastfeeding support, advertising our sessions through the breastfeeding network and social media to hopefully increase our presence in the Sandhurst community reaching and supporting more families by providing a valuable resource.

This last year the children of Baby and Toddler Time have been involved with the Gift Tree Project creating some wonderful greeting cards and donating presents to those in need.

Despite our continued success as a group it has been a very difficult year as we have lost two of our amazing volunteers, Wendy and Sheila, who sadly died in 2022 leaving a massive void within our team. The energy and warmth that they brought to our sessions has left a lasting impression and we will never forget all their hard work and how special they are.



To help keep our group running smoothly, and to share the workload, Sheridan and Gill have volunteered their time which we are very grateful. Without our volunteers our group could not run and be as successful as it is sharing God's love in everything we do. Thank you to Sara, Rachel, Sheridan, Bridget, Karen, Alun, George, John Campbell, Jenny, Sarah and Gill for all of their hard work and continued support.

Recently we received a generous donation for the group and with that we have been able to purchase new toys and equipment for the children which we are sure they will enjoy. It has been such a long time since we have been able to do this and we are so grateful for this magnificent gift.

If you would like to come and join our team or have pre-school children you would like to bring along to Baby and Toddler Time please do get in touch. We would love to see you!

Katy Robson-Malone

[malonekaty@hotmail.com](mailto:malonekaty@hotmail.com) / 07969 674545

### Youth work – including Sandhurst Youth

*“Little is known about ‘Homo Sapiens Youngsterus’ – it has the basic appearance of human, but appears to communicate principally in grunts and hand signals, and much of its social interaction takes place through electronic devices!”*

So might David Attenborough start a documentary on young people in Britain today! Because they are very precious and special, eight years ago the church, with equal backing from Sandhurst Town Council, set up Sandhurst Youth initially as a project, and then as an independent charity, to reach out and get alongside the young people of Sandhurst. As such it is one of two major projects (the other being the Counselling Service) established as stand-alone entities by the church to serve all of Sandhurst.

Our work is steadily growing and flourishing principally due to the tireless work of Mike (our full time Youth Worker), his team of five paid Session workers, and the church Volunteer team led by Liz Percival.

#### Routine Activities

Detached work – Mike, together with at least one of our Session workers aim to be out two to three evenings a week. The areas covered include all the major parks in Sandhurst, Morgan's Rec and Chaucer's Wood in Crowthorne (popular with many Sandhurst young people), and Horseshoe Lake.

Over the period more than 1000 youth encounters have taken place. Numbers encountered vary from 1 to over 50+ in any one session. The majority of the young people are estimated to be aged 13-15.

The detached team have built up relationships with many regular faces and groups which allows conversations to develop at more than just a casual level.

- Conversations with 2 young lads on apprenticeships doing carpentry and roofing about how it was going and how the summer heat was affecting the work;
- Discussion held with one girl who ¼ Russian ¼ Ukrainian and ½ English. Listened to how

*We spend a fair amount of time with a group of YP at Morgan Rec, one of the YP is really starting to come out of his shell. He was always the one that was quiet and slightly ridiculed (not nastily) by the others. He now stands up for himself and joins in our conversations.*

Sally Anne – Youth Worker

she struggled to understand why the invasion of the Ukraine occurred, and how her family were dealing with it.

- One discussion witnessed was one black lad talking to a white lad about the racism. The white lad was on his knees apologising about something and the black lad was saying it was the wrong way round. The white lad challenged this by saying that we are all equal.
- Often conversations have been around the use of cannabis. One group in Chaucer Park were talking about the quality, and how it does no harm. Often we are able to challenge in an informed way, and we value the openness that the young people show in trusting the workers.
- One contact resulted in a referral to BFC MASH of a young person (aged 10) who was clearly struggling with multiple issues of deprivation.

**Dream Big** – Dream Big, the weekly youth club, open to all young people in Sandhurst ran throughout all three terms this year with over 30 sessions held over the period. Numbers attending are growing steadily and are now well above pre-pandemic levels.

Sessions involving cooking and food continue to be particularly popular, alongside the large array of games (consoles, table tennis, pool, etc) and activities including hide-and-seek in the dark in church, Nerf gun battles, clay work, and water fights. The sessions are run largely with volunteer support only drawing on the session workers when volunteers aren't available.

**Schools work** – Sandhurst Youth has continued working with Year 7 pupils in Sandhurst School running five groups each of 5-6 pupils through each term. Additional funding for this work was obtained from Shanly Foundation and from Tesco.

The school recently wrote: *“For the past few years, Sandhurst Youth have worked and delivered workshops with our Year 7s, which has proved to be an invaluable part of the transition process to those Year 7s who benefit from this”.*

**Mentoring** – We currently have three mentors trained, and two volunteers waiting to be trained. Our one mentee this year decided she now had the confidence to handle the issues she was facing and has now signed off from the scheme.

**Reach (Church based group)** – Reach now runs every Sunday during the 9:30 service. Over the autumn the core of choir has been augmented by others in the Year 6+ age group. Some of the older young people bring a different perspective that helps the younger ones to explore their faith at a deeper level. Topics have included some of the early chapters of the bible and some advent and Christmas topics and how they relate to everyday life.

*I just wanted to let you know that our lad took a friend who lives in our road along with him to Dream Big tonight.*

*Tonight when I picked them up the friend said “That was the best 2 hours of my life!” He really enjoyed it and is keen to keep going.*

YP parent

*I’ve had a lovely bunch of kids from year seven this term. All very eager to participate in games and activities set out for them each week. One boy who suffered with anxiety was only coming in for my session and then going home.*

*The groups really bonded and supported one another; it was a joy to see confidence grow in each individual child.*

*I got some really positive feedback as well on their last day with me. Each student felt like they had been able to make friends, felt accepted, felt like they had overcome obstacles and didn’t want the sessions to end.*

Alison – Schools Worker

*Recently we were looking at creation. When we asked the young people they said they believed the story in the bible because they had been told it was true at school. As we tried to unpack what the creation story told us about God, a year 9 said that he didn't take the creation story literally as he was a scientist. He then told the younger ones that you believed what you were told at primary school but then were encouraged to explore and question things for yourself at secondary school. I was able to interact with the older youth as a scientist myself. The younger ones were being challenged by their peer as well as us to think for themselves, something they will need to do if they are going to stand firm in their faith as they get older. We were able to emphasise the need to take responsibility for their own faith. We are trying to help them to see God's world in a more realistic way and engage with its complexities.*

Some young people were involved in the early planning meetings for Church Together services. The church has continued these services on the 4th Sunday of the month and this appeals to a broader range of the young people in the church often coming along within a family group. Their participation in the worship and, prayer and readings has been encouraged.

A small group self-organised to attend the Diocesan youth event 'Yellow Braces' over the summer.

### Events

- **Activities** - At the end of the Summer term a weekend activity trip was held targeted mainly at growing confidence and teamwork among the young people attending Dream Big. Six young people booked though sadly 3 dropped out at the last minute (family and health reasons). Under supervision of an experienced Narrow Boat captain they had to open and close canal locks, learning what to do in the right order, as well as having a go at steering and preparing meals together.

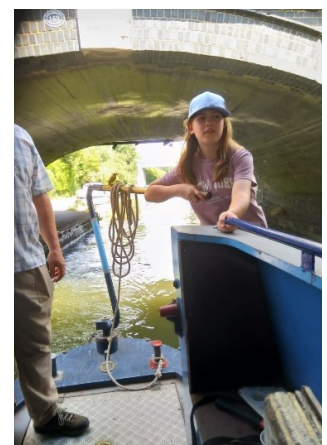
Over the summer we ran the annual youth week 'Summer Youth'. The Young people were extensively consulted about the activities to be included resulting in a programme which includes a bouncy castle, water fight, craft activities and pizza making.

The team were present at the fireworks event running a fire pit offering the opportunity to toast marshmallows, giving away more than 300 glow sticks/bracelets, and over 2kg of marshmallows! The feedback to the team included being called "*legends for providing a great service*".

- **Wider engagement** – Mike is involved with a BFC multi-agency initiative aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour; working with Bishop Olivia developing plans and approaches as to how parishes can better engage with the young people in an area; and is mentoring two of our session workers as they undertake professional development towards the next level on the NYA scale.

Sandhurst Youth is very grateful to the church for its support, both financially and to the volunteers who cheerfully give of their time, without which it could not continue its work among church young people, or in the community.

Dave & Liz Percival and Mike Gower



## Heritage Report

In June, the Heritage team co-ordinated the celebration of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee with a service in church led by Rev Jane Kraft which was followed by a Bring & Share lunch where there was a memorabilia and reminiscence area with various activities on the lawn areas of the churchyard, this was a truly intergenerational event with young and old mixing and taking part in the same activities. Many thanks go out to all those involved with organising and putting on the different areas of the day.

Then in September we had our Heritage Open Days and this was marked by the transition from the Elizabethan age to the Carolean Age as this was the first weekend after Her Majesty's death so in line with guidance from the National Heritage Open Days team, we continued in a more subdued manner, several people came in for a moment, to sign the condolence book, to be still in God's presence, to light a candle and to hear the proclamation of the ascension of King Charles III which, in the absence of John Castle, Catherine Wilkins as Churchwarden read. This is in keeping with tradition, where the proclamation is made in London and then carried to more regional cities and towns, and then to local parishes. While we are now used to hearing news instantly, this tradition was a reminder that news sometimes took a long time to reach places like Sandhurst.

The Heritage Open Days had displays which focusing on the theme of 'Astounding Inventions'. We continued to offer cream teas which were accompanied by plant, preserves and produce stall as well as churchyard walking to enhance the outreach of the Heritage Open Days.

The Heritage team are discussing how we can mark the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and plans are already underway for this year's Heritage Open Days in September with the theme of 'Creativity Unwrapped' including a craft evening on the Friday.

*Emma Hodge*

## Social Committee Report from March 2022 to February 2023.

The last twelve months have seen Covid become a concern to be borne in mind rather than a major "stopper" of events so far as we are concerned, and so we have been able to re-instate most of our regular shindigs. Given the size of the team, the list of events that we have either run directly, or supported in some way (usually by helping with refreshments) is quite impressive. They are summarized below, together with details of how much they have raised for church funds.

EVENT	DATE	SURPLUS PASSED TO CHURCH FUNDS	NOTES
Spring Buffet Lunch	1 May '22	£150 from raffle	Costs covered by donations eg. from Co-op
Plants & Preserves Sale	1 May '22	£400+	Including repeat sale on 8 May
Jubilee Event	3 June '22	N/A	Supported
Jubilee Concert	11 June '22	N/A	Supported
Heritage Weekend	10 & 11 September '22	£500+	From sale of refreshments
Quiz Evening	15 October '22	£500+	
Autumn Fair	6 November '22	£600+	+ £140 from Christmas Raffle
December Concerts	2 & 9 December '22	N/A	Supported by serving refreshments
Burns Night Supper	28 January '23	c. £1100	



Not everything went according to plan. A Barn Dance planned for 9 July clashed with a school event and, as we were unable to find a suitable date in the Autumn, had to be postponed to April 2023. It also became clear that, for a variety of reasons, we would not be able to run a post-Christmas Community Lunch. Hopefully, that will be run as a Spring Buffet Lunch as in 2022. On a brighter note, after a two-year gap, we organized a Burns' Night Supper again, complete with all the appropriate trimmings including a piper! This is by far the most demanding event that we do, and we are very grateful for all the support we received with catering, plus donations of unwanted whisky!

It is noteworthy that, thanks to your generosity, we have raised well over £3000 in total for church funds and, whilst raising funds is not our primary aim, it is rewarding to see events supported so well.

Finally, we were pleased to welcome Denise Yeomans to the committee. She joins Steph & John Martin, Catherine & Ken Wilkins, Rosaria Toohey, Karen Carter, Nicky Thomas and Ann & Chris Harris. My thanks go to all of them and, indeed, to you for your support during the last year. And if you would like to help out with the committee, or have any ideas as to possible events, please do get in touch.

*Chris Harris, Social Committee*



### St Michael's CofE Primary School

This year at St Michael's school has been very busy, our school community have worked incredible hard to enable the children to have such an enriched education, and the fantastic academic results for the last academic year were evident of this hard work, thanks to the incredible learning environment that staff are able to create for our children. The children have also enjoyed many different activities and trips to enhance their love of learning and each has been able to shine their own little light, thereby encapsulating the school vision. The school continue to benefit from worship leaders in school and have been able to attend a number of Church services in the church. The school prayer is very well known to the children, and they make good use of the Bible bites club run by Sarah Bishop. They continue to enjoy the charity house point scheme where the houses are able to choose their own local charities to raise money for, the children have really enjoyed this community involvement and it certainly has boosted the hunger for gaining house points!

The children are able to enjoy outdoor learning on a regular basis, with our youngest children walking to the Woods every week, for some fantastic learning opportunities in all weathers! The older years also enjoy regular woods walks, and the range of subjects that can be covered by a trip to the woods is fantastic. The children are able to write stories based on their surroundings, sometimes even with the help of a talking tree! They can collect sticks and stones to group and count with, they identify and draw trees, and learn about nature, history and geography too. Those budding archaeologists are still able to find some evidence of the old Victorian Manor!

The school WOW trips have continued to be very successful in igniting the children's learning opportunities – in a whole school visit to Windsor castle in May last year the children were able to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee, and were able to see many parts of the castle including the historical dolls house which they adored. The children were able to continue this wonderful learning back at school with a range of Jubilee related activities. In September the children started their new school year with a fresh WOW trip linked to climate change, conservation and global warming. The children spend two weeks investigating, researching, designing, creating and presenting work on the environment and the impact that we have on our planet, the children loved this opportunity and were able to share their work with the school community in a special open afternoon.

The children have taken part in a range of sporting, music and drama performances. The annual sports day was a great success, where the children were able to take part in a carousel of sporting activities, giving everyone the opportunity to try something new. The smiles on the children's faces were evident of their enjoyment! The residential trips for Year 5 and 6 to Hooke Court and Lakeside were able to go ahead this year, and the children had a fantastic time, with lifelong memories made. Year 6 also did a fantastic end of year production of Shakespeare Rocks, showcasing the immense talent the children have, even for those new to performing.

Class assemblies have returned this year too, with children being given a range of themes on which to base their assemblies.

The School values of Courage, Compassion, Creativity and Community continue to be at the heart of everything that the children do at St Michaels, and the love of learning, inspired by Christian values, is truly evident.

*Polly Harris, Vice Chair*





## Pastoral Care

It is becoming easier to visit in the community again following the lockdowns imposed by Covid and many members of our congregation have continued to help in diverse areas of need.

A Communication team was set up during Covid, and our thanks must go to the many volunteers who still continue to maintain personal and telephone contact with members of our church and others who were isolated or have become house bound as a consequence of illness. With the sad loss of some stalwart members of our church we are once again looking for volunteers who are willing to continue this valuable work. If you feel you can help in any way please contact myself or Emma.

Bereavement support is another crucial area of need in our community and caring response is organised by Sarah Ashton, assisted by Sheridan Cremer-Evans and our Bereavement team, providing sympathetic contact at this most difficult time, to maintain communication and act as a channel for prayer and support whenever it is needed.

Our Home Communion team is again able to visit since recent lifting of restrictions and a few housebound members are now able to benefit from this. If you know anyone who would like to receive Communion at home (or in residential care) please have a word with myself or Emma and we can arrange this.

Our Family Worker, Sarah Bishop, ran a most successful 'Light Party' in October and she is building up valuable links into primary schools and provides crucial support for families across our community. Katy Robson-Malone continues with her sterling work with Baby and Toddler Time and young families and set up the 'Angel Tree' appeal once more this Christmas. Both keep active communication with our families and younger members and arrange fun events whenever they can.

We ran the delayed Buffet Meal on Sunday 1 May which was enjoyed by all who came.

We have now linked a number of church members to those needing a lift to church.

Undoubtedly more lifts will be needed in future, so if you are able to offer a lift, or could act as the co-ordinator, please contact myself, one of our Welcome Greeters, or a Churchwarden.

[Pastoral Visiting](#) – Thanks must be given to all who visit and follow-up whenever a need arises. However, we are still looking for more offers of help for our pastoral outreach: this includes visiting the sick and house-bound, follow-up of bereaved families and Home Communion visitors. We would like to review how these visits take place in the future and I invite anyone willing to join our team to have a word with me.

[Prayer Chain](#) – The Prayer Chain is effective and active. Again, our thanks go to all those who serve and have served in this important ministry. If you feel you can offer prayer to support others, we invite you to consider offering to join our team.

[Prayer Corner](#) – There is a discrete 'Prayer Corner' in Church with the prayer board, space for the candle holder and prayer tree close to a pew for private prayer. The church is left open at Easter, Christmas and other times for candle-lighting and meditation. All are invited to use the Prayer Corner which helps give focus for those who enter, often for the first time, to find peace and to pray.

[Renewal](#) - We hope our focus on Renewal during this coming year will strengthen the development of our Pastoral Care and we currently have visitors making contact with each church member individually to renew our commitment to each other. We need to continue to 'take care' of each other and the wider community. In the past we have received offers of help to cook for the sick and young mothers, but we need a co-ordinator to run this.

All offers of help for Outreach meals and other church events are gratefully received and we will be calling on that help again, we are also grateful for offers of food etc. from local supermarkets towards these meals.

Currently we are carrying out a Disability Access Audit, and will receive advice from the Deanery to enable this. If you have any issues you would like to be considered within our audit we will appreciate hearing your views, so please contact myself or Emma to let us know. All these events take dedicated time, effort and many hands to organise.

We can call on the framework we have built towards these needs, but key members have retired or left the area. The Lord works through us all. If you are willing to assist in any way, or you feel you could help organise a current or new initiative that you have identified, please let myself or Emma know. Again, a big thank you to all those who help in so many ways.

*Steph Martin, Pastoral Care Co-ordinator*

### **House Groups**

I took over the role of House Groups Co-Ordinator just before last Christmas I'm very new to the role I'm looking forward to welcoming people into house groups knowing how much I personally gain from belonging to one.

On the run up to Christmas the House Groups listened and watched a recording of Peter Walker as he presented 'Christmas Unwrapped'. He took us on the journey to the stable in Bethlehem where Jesús was born, showing and describing his visits to various Holy places on this journey.

Currently the House Groups are using a variety of different materials including watching videos, listening to different sermons including from St Michael's. Films about biblical characters i.e. Abraham, Jacob & David. More documentary style as in 'Work as a Christian vocation'.

As you can see from the above, House Groups aren't about reading and studying great chunks of the bible and then trying to discern the meaning behind the words, although in some way that is what we are trying to do, find out what God's word means to us. We use various ways, as mentioned above to do this. We talk and discuss our thoughts and feelings ask questions and no question is too small to ask if they are too big then we can ask those who might know the answer for their input.

House Groups are a place where we can get to know people in our church community who we might never come into contact with otherwise. It's a very fertile ground for learning new ways of thinking about our faith for asking those questions we might not feel we can ask elsewhere.

It's a place where we can find support, acceptance and love plus cake ( if you are lucky) and a cuppa.

Please come along and try out a group you can come along for a taster session to see if it's for you.

Monday nights group is via Zoom the rest meet on Tuesday evening from 8pm.

Please contact me if you are interested I'd be very pleased to hear from you.

*Diana Taylor* [DT1864875@aol.com](mailto:DT1864875@aol.com)

## Sandhurst Counselling Service

The counselling service is a separate charity for governance and financial purposes, but is a key part of St Michael's mission to the community (alongside Sandhurst Youth) – St Michaels provides its premises, and contributes to its finances, and we are hugely grateful.

The pandemic in 2020 and 21 posed an existential threat to the service – requiring the service to establish new protocols to carry out all its services remotely. Having ridden these challenges, what we faced in 2022 was to move the service back onto a face-to-face basis, whilst maintaining some of the on-line features and benefits.

The service, and the church, owes a huge debt of thanks to Helen Wells (Clinical Manager) and Sunita (Admin Manager) for their commitment and leadership through yet another transition, and to all the practitioners and supervisors, who have had to adapt once again. In 2022 the service delivered over 1450 sessions of counselling, the large majority returning to being face-to-face.

The majority of our practitioners have completed their college courses and are building their experience towards being fully qualified. All practitioners give their time freely typically seeing three clients a week. SCS provides their supervision, management, premises and administration free of charge, an important consideration as they build up their experience to become fully qualified.

The journey to full qualification is costly in both financial and time terms, and in the current financial environment many find that as soon as they are qualified they need to move into paid work. This puts additional pressure on the service as it increases turn-over of valued staff.

We are hugely grateful for the support of the church, and too to Bracknell Forest Public Health who provide substantial grant funding towards our costs. The remainder is raised from our clients, and by the Trustees and our fundraiser, Claire, from local and national grant funding bodies. We were pleased to receive £500 from Berkshire Community Foundation to contribute to the additional heating costs in the Pastoral Centre this winter.

SCS covets the prayers of the church for this year, and of course welcomes any who feel they can assist, especially in the key tasks of fundraising, website and social media updates.

Dave Percival – Chair of SCS Trustees

*“My counsellor has been fantastic. So lucky she understood mental health and social work and the available government support. She always pulled me back to thinking of the present and also focusing on the here and now. She encouraged me to continue my own life, go for a swim, etc. Too much as I felt I was letting everyone down if I gave an hour to myself in the morning. She helped me with my grief. I would not be where I am today without her.”*

*“I have a broken relationship with a sibling and my parents had a difficult relationship which ended after 2 decades as lockdown started. I have teenage children and a meaningful but stressful partner relationship. All of the above led me into negative ways.*

*Counselling definitely helped me to reframe my understanding of the relationships I am in, and to feel much more confident about my values and achievements.”*

## Safeguarding

### What we have achieved so far

Claire and I started in our roles almost a year ago, in 2022/23 we have:

- Completed all the necessary training for the roles.
- Created a spreadsheet of all the groups and volunteers to track completion of DBS checks and safeguarding training, in particular Basic Awareness.
- Introduced a new process with the church office for capturing DBS updates.
- Started to undertake the Parish Safeguarding Audit.
- Updated the Safeguarding Policy – attached for PCC approval.
- Documents created to be displayed in church with safeguarding information – Safeguarding statement attached for PCC sign off.

We are always trying to improve, update and refine our records, but as the time of writing the report we believe this to be the current numbers on volunteers and their safeguarding checks and training.

GROUP	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS	DBS CHECKS COMPLETED	BASIC AWARENESS TRAINING COMPLETED
Baby & Toddler Time	11	7	6
Kidz Church	10	6	2
PCC	16	11	12
Choir	11	9	2
Pastoral visiting	6	4	1
Bible Bites	3	3	1
Nifty Knitters	1	1	0
Youth Group	14	11	4

### Plans for 2023

- Continue and complete the Parish Safeguarding Audit.
- Aim for all volunteers to have up to date DBS checks and completed the Basic Awareness Training.
- Complete volunteer agreements for all volunteers. This is to ensure they know what to expect of us and so we have contact details for all helpers.

*Jenny Rose and Claire Clay, Safeguarding Officers*

### St Michael's Family Worker

This quote from proverbs has helped me greatly this year, in what has been a year of new challenges:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.* Proverbs 3:5-6

During the first part of the year, I was able to offer some of our young people the chance to complete The Lord's Table course. This course is designed to enable children over 7yrs to understand the reasons behind taking communion. The course was a success with several children completing it and going on to take part in their first communion.

I also assisted in running the Youth Emmaus course for the older group. On completion, two of our young people decided they wanted to be Confirmed.

With John Castle being away on his sabbatical, I undertook the challenge of delivering weekly assemblies at St. Michael's school and the other two schools in our parish. A very daunting prospect, but I am pleased to say, I enjoyed doing them and hopefully the children learned something new.

The weekly bible club at St. Michael's school continues, with numbers settling to a more manageable amount. We have engaged the children with fun games and activities alongside bible study and prayers. Please pray that this continues to draw the young people along.



Probably my biggest challenge this year was to organise the Light Party. An alternative to Halloween, this event celebrates the light of Jesus. This was a large-scale event, offering outreach to the wider community. There was lots of activities, including crafts, pumpkin carving, a light trail and a campfire with songs. It was huge success, and I would like to offer my thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who helped.

The generosity of people in our church has been incredible this year. Every week the food donations have enabled me to support struggling families, and top up the donations received from the Co-Op. I would especially like to thank all those who donated from the allotments and those who contributed to the Christmas hampers. I also thank the lovely people who donated gift cards for the families I support. Everything given was much appreciated and helped those less fortunate have an enjoyable Christmas.

I look forward to the coming year and what God has planned next!

*Sarah Bishop, Family Worker*



### **Marriage Preparation and Support – ‘Beyond the honeymoon’**

Marriage Week UK has just ended as we write this. This year's theme was 'Healthy Marriages Matter'. They matter to families, to the Church and to God. For this reason the work here to prepare couples for marriage is important, as is all that is done by the clergy and many others in the church to make their wedding day, the start of the couples' marriages, special. There was an interregnum at St John's Crowthorne last year which meant that John took on a number of weddings there and couples were invited to the marriage preparation course at the end of March at St Michael's. The number of weddings at St Michael's from April 2022 to April 2023 was five, three of which were for this spring of 2023. The clergy and staff had a confusing time of it with couples booking weddings and then cancelling or postponing them – rather hard to keep track of! The two evening course in March 2022 was also tricky with a number of couples going down with Covid and one to one sessions having to be scheduled to make up for those missed.

Feedback on the course included:

*“It was very helpful in any situation that we may come up against.”*

Another couple said,

*“Very Good, very much looking forward to using some of the techniques.”*

The course this year is scheduled for the end of February with six couples booked on, all St Michael's weddings.

We continue to send Wedding cards, and Anniversary cards on the first anniversary, to the couples.

We continue to lead Anglican Marriage Encounter nationally and a number of weekends have been run both for married and for engaged couples. It's a real blessing to see God at work refreshing and encouraging these couples from all church and social backgrounds. If you'd like to know more, do ask us or visit the website, [www.marriageencounter.org.uk](http://www.marriageencounter.org.uk).

Liz and David Percival





## Sidespersons' Report

Writing this report is usually just a routine job, almost a repeat from year to year. Sadly, this report is very different as the last twelve months saw the passing of both Wendy Grafton and Dorothy Hill. Wendy was, relatively speaking, a newcomer to our ranks having been a Sidesperson for around five years. She was always willing, with a big smile – a pleasure to work with. I simply don't know how long Dorothy was a member of the team, and also a Verger, but it was many, many years. She was immensely knowledgeable about everything to do with those roles, a willing helper, always ready to step in when needed and to show others how things were done. Both are much missed.

So far as the 9.30 Service is concerned, we are continuing to roster two people, rather than the three of past years, and that seems to be sufficient. In addition, we do not cover the 'Church Together' Service on the fourth Sunday in the month, that is looked after by the Family Service team. So, with Brendan Watson having joined us, we have an adequate, but not generous, number of Sidespeople. At times when there are more services, Christmas and Easter spring to mind, we can be a bit stretched so one or two new faces would be very welcome. No doubt the Family Service team would also welcome some new helpers. If you feel you would like to join either of these teams please do contact Katy Robson-Malone (for Family Services) or Chris Harris (for Parish Communion/Evensong); or speak to one of the Churchwardens.

Finally, my thanks go to all our Sidespeople and members of the Family Service team who, at whatever service, unfailingly greet everybody with a smile and a friendly word as they enter the church. Thank you.

*Chris Harris*

## Church Flowers

Over the years the congregation at St. Michael's have become accustomed to our Church being decorated with beautiful flowers every week and extra displays throughout the Church for the festivals. Before each festival our little group meets to exchange ideas and plan something artistic and different each time. We then invite the wider group of flowers arrangers to help on the day. We hope the congregation enjoy the fruits of our labours.

Apart from the festival displays there is a rota of people who provide and arrange flowers in the brass pots on the altar each week. We are always very pleased to welcome more people onto the rota and to join us all doing the festival flowers. In line with our aim for St. Michael's to be an Intergenerational Church, we love to get as many people as possible involved. Last Harvest, Steph designed seed packets which the younger members of our Church and school decorated and wrote prayers for our display. At the Church Together service at the beginning of Advent, one of the activities in the Busy Zone was to decorate the Advent Ring which was then taken up to Church to light each Sunday during Advent.

When planning for the festivals we are very mindful that the cost of fresh flowers has shot up, even though we are most fortunate that Annette can obtain them for the Church at cost price, so we do our best with as little outlay as possible. We welcome donations in memory of loved ones for lilies at Easter but if you would like to give a donation so that we can continue to provide the festival displays too we would be very grateful.

*Sue, Annette, Steph & Sheridan*



### 8:00am Servers & Communion Assistants

We are a small group who provide assistance to the clergy in the preparation of the sacrament for the traditional 8 o'clock service of Holy Communion.

Since the last annual parish meeting and ending of all Covid restrictions, we have continued the routine of just helping with the initial preparations of the altar table, although the group has taken on the role of vergers for the 8am service during 2022.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the servers for their continued support throughout the year.

Should anyone be interested in joining our group, please contact the Rector or myself for more information.

Mike Sherren

07979 060925

### Servers – 9:30am

I would like to start this off by saying a huge thank you to Claire Clay, John Campbell and Brendan Watson for being part of the 9:30am servers and so willing to help out where possible.

Thankfully life has been a little more normal since I wrote the last review. We have settled into the new way of assisting at the services and certainly appreciate sitting in the main part of the church. (It is sort of warmer!)

Have you ever felt that you want to do a little bit more in the church in some way, but don't have too much time to commit, then a Server is a great way to contribute. The time is just a little bit extra at the beginning and end of a service and with more people on the rota it is only once a month at most. Full training and support will be given and we would never leave you to serve alone until you are confident enough to do so. If you are interested or if you would like to know more, please don't hesitate to speak to any one of us or to John Castle.

I looked on Google to try and find some interesting facts about Servers. One link took me to a training manual of a particular church, some of which I would not like to repeat here, in particular the part about what underwear you should not wear! However, in another link about the history, I did find this quote '*It is primarily a ministration to God on behalf of the lay people, and only incidentally an assistance to the priest.*' It is a privilege to be a Server, especially when you take time to think about what you are doing and realise that you are in fact serving God and not just helping out at the service.

Every year I write this last paragraph but it is still very relevant:

*Save us Jesus from hurrying away, because we do not wish to help, because we know not how to help, because we dare not. Inspire us to use our lives serving one another.*

Karen Symons

## Church Choir

We've had a lovely year of singing since writing the report in 2022. 'Jerusalem Joy' was indeed a joy – a dramatic musical performance on Palm Sunday in St John's Church, Crowthorne involving members of St George's Owlsmoor (thanks to Margaret Walker for masterminding the excellent band), Sandhurst and Crowthorne Methodist Church, Sandhurst Baptist Church, St Sebastian's Church, Crowthorne Junior School Choir, members of our choir and congregation as well as the hard-working



team from St John's. There were dramatic performances from our own John Castle (Herod) and James Mason (Caiaphas) and the chorus, especially the children really were absorbed by the story and sang their hearts out. Minor snags such as a leg falling off the donkey, probably the result of his entrance akin to the start of the Grand National, were ironed out by the evening and the drama was a thought provoking beginning to Holy Week for us all. And a grand opportunity for fellowship with our neighbouring churches.

It was a great shock to our Church Community when our dear friend Wendy Grafton died and we continue to hold her and Alun and the family in our hearts and in our prayers. Alun is a loyal and faithful member of our congregation and our choir and we treasure him and his skills (and his humour!) We'll perform his work '*...and the angels sing*' this year on Saturday 21 October, so save the date. June 11 2022 was the original date for this rescheduled post-covid performance, but instead the Choir presented a concert of 'Music through the Ages', starting with plainsong from approximately 600 AD, visiting Tudor and Elizabethan music by William Byrd and Thomas Tallis and finishing with some 21st Century uplifting examples by Bob Chilcott and John Rutter. It was lovely to see so many audience supporting the event and a chance for us to socialize with refreshments and marvel at the diversity of music that has enhanced worship for centuries.

It was a privilege to be invited to sing the services once again in Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford and what a joy to sing beautiful music in that ancient building with a packed congregation. Many of the people attending were visitors to the city and we were honoured to be able to provide a little oasis of quiet prayer and music away from the bustle of the world outside. We also had some excellent meals together thanks to Sarah and Carol's organization.



In September our Junior Choir organised a Saturday afternoon concert, choosing a charity to support, providing and serving refreshments as well as entertaining with songs and anthems, solos and some lovely piano playing by Eleanor. £430 was raised for the *Worldwide Cancer Research Charity*. Well done, Juniors. They play such an important part in the life of our church and give so much back as they are nurtured in their ministry of music.

They're keen to do another concert, so keep an eye out for a Summer entertainment this year.



Thursday evening rehearsals begin at 7pm with the Juniors round the piano and then when the adults arrive we move to the choir stalls to practise together music for the many upcoming services. This part of the practice is particularly valuable as we are all learning together in an intergenerational way, and often the juniors will show the adults what they have learned through telling them about a piece of music and performing it. At 8pm the Juniors leave and the adults (who need much more attention!) stay until 9pm. We have to work quickly; there's never a time when there's not enough to keep us fully occupied. As well as music for the Sunday morning Eucharist services there are Choral or Sung Evensong services every month and from the end of November we worked out that there were 10 extra events for which to prepare before Christmas Day. We loved them all! Some gave us a chance to welcome people through our doors, while others were a great opportunity for outreach to our community. What a variety: the Advent Celebration, a concert with the Silver Band, Street Carol Singing, carols outside Sandhurst Lodge with snow on the ground and a beautiful clear sky, two Carol Services each with a lovely congregation, happy faces at our Christingle Service, the quiet of the Midnight Eucharist and the joy of the service on Christmas morning.



The minister Mike Thomason invited to lead a Choral Evensong in High Cross Church, Camberley on 5 February and once again it was lovely to meet members of High Cross Church and to see supporters from St Michael's in the congregation. Jane did a great job managing the High Cross organ, a rather different beast from ours in St Michael's, and I was pleased and impressed with our 3 Junior Choristers who not only sang their hearts out but also mingled and chatted with the adults in the tea break and winsomely collected money at the end for the High Cross Charity.

It is indeed a privilege for us as a choir to play a part in the telling of the story of the Church Year. We hope that we support the congregation and enhance the worship. We certainly couldn't do this without Jane Palmer our organist and Janet Rogers who nips between piano and organ for our Informal services. The band is great! Steve Kaufman, Alison Wren, James Franklin and Alun Grafton have lifted the worship songs and our spirits. Particular thanks must go to our Junior Choir parents who make it possible for our young singers to attend, and to our Choir Committee for keeping us on track. And Diane who chooses the hymns and sings all the right notes in the right order.

*Karen Phillips, Musical Director*

## Kidz Church

Kidz Church is a group session held during the 9.30 service for the children of our church aged up to 10 years old. In theory the younger age is 3 years but with so few children under 3 attending the 9.30 service we just tend to be adaptable and welcome children of any age and then go with the flow! The session continues throughout school breaks when we show an appropriate biblical DVD to the group. This ensures that the children have something to look forward to each week, but the volunteers get a break from the planning and can restart the new term refreshed and ready to lead again.

If you feel that you could give just one Sunday morning during a school holiday to sit with children watching a DVD please do let me know.

The group meets in the pastoral centre each week during the 9.30 service. On 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays we start in the hall, on 2nd Sundays we start in church then move down to the hall. At the end of our session we join the congregation in church in time for communion. We do not meet on a 4th Sunday as this intergenerational service is perfect for children and adults to work together, so no need for specific sessions for children only.

The number of children attending Kidz Church has fallen this year, but I think Mike would report an equivalent rise in Reach attendance due to children moving from one group to the other as they have reached 10 years old. So the decrease in numbers does not reflect badly on St Michael's, it is simply an altered attendance.

However, the numbers attending Kidz Church can still be reasonable. We can vary between 2-3 & 10+ attending each session. This can make planning a little tricky at times not knowing how many children will be there or the age range, but it all adds to the fun! Often the variation in numbers is due to whether it is a family service week or not as we now have a couple of families who attend 9:30 and 11:15 services, but not necessarily on the same week!

Once we have joined the congregation in church the children enjoy feeding back to everyone what they have been doing and what they have learnt. They also enjoy hearing what has been learnt in the 9:30 service, so adults please speak up!

We try to work through a theme from the Scripture Union material which we work from. These sessions sometimes become separated due to the Church Together Worship, attendance etc, but a quick recap usually helps us to pick up from where we were.

I am always impressed by the depth of bible knowledge that the children have and the information they retain week on week. Whether they are children who attend Kidz Church regularly or not, it is clear to see which children are encouraged to talk about and be comfortable in their faith at home.

Each week the children are encouraged to take home the activity we have been working on in the hope they will share this with parents and continue the learning at home.

The leaders and helpers for Kidz Church deserve a big thank you for the time they put into the spiritual nurture of our children. Each volunteer brings something different and of great value to the group. Thank you all.

If you would like to join our merry band then please let me know, we would love to welcome you.

*Karen Allen, Kidz Church Leader*

### Church Cleaners

Many thanks to our team of volunteers who keep the church clean throughout the year. I would like to extend particular thanks to Bob and Jenny Oakley who have undertaken this task for many years but have now stepped down.

We are now on the lookout for people to join the team. You won't be committing yourself to cleaning the entire church, as each cleaner looks after one area. If you would like to volunteer, please let me know.

*Catherine Wilkins*

### Sacristans

Firstly a thanks for all the people who care for and tend to the church, those who clean the church, wash and the linens, change the frontals and banner, mend the kneelers are the sacristan team. The work is often hidden but vital.

Each week, linens used at communion are washed, starched and ironed and returned; as each season of the church's year occurs, frontals are changed to mark the different colours. In addition, this year the PCC brought material to make new table linen for the altar to replace ones worn out and thanks to Sue Campbell for her helping in making the new ones. This year has also seen the addition of new small linens, the material was donated in memory of Val Holmes and have been made up with embroidered designs chosen by her daughters Catherine and Juliette, some are already in use and others are currently still being embroidered.

My thanks to all involved, Jenny Thorn for repairing the mouse damaged kneelers, Gill Ostler for taking on the responsibility of washing and ironing the large table cloths.

*Emma Hodge, Sacristan*



### Audio Visual Team

The audio visual system continues to serve us well, boosting the spoken word so that everyone can hear better, and visual assistance by projection of text onto one or both screens of the service, for the hymns and contemporary song words.

Naturally some parts of the equipment wear out or need a service, so we had the projectors serviced, and the two lapel microphones replaced as the wires had frayed.

Streaming of the services was continued on a weekly basis, with the exception of Church Together on the fourth Sunday, as it does not lend itself to facility, but the 8am Communion was streamed in its place. The streaming has continued to be run mostly by Simon Ellis and Martin Thomas, to whom we are very grateful. As mentioned last year, it would be really good to have at least one more person to join the team towards making it a once a monthly contribution. It is not difficult to learn to use, and someone would need only average computer skills. Training and support would be provided.

Having this new streaming facility, means that we have also been able to offer this for Funerals and Weddings, where relatives are abroad or unable to be present at the service. This has been taken up for some occasions in 2022.

At the moment, there are no plans to change the equipment. The next step would possibly be to have a second or better camera, to improve the perspective of the streamed service. However, this would cost us £500-£1000.

*Rupert Cremer-Evans*