# THE PARISH OF

# HOLY TRINITY MINCHINHAMPTON

# with

# ST BARNABAS BOX

# ANNUAL REPORTS

# FROM

# CHURCH COMMITTEES

# AND

# ORGANISATIONS

# 2023 - 2024

## RECTOR’S REPORT – Revd Canon Howard Gilbert

This has been a positive year in most respects for Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton. Many of us have been praying and working towards something of a renewal in Minchinhampton, and it is beginning to look like our prayers are being answered!

We have built on our challenging vision to offer something to all generations and all stages of faith. It is clear that to achieve our vision we have to share this work with other churches in the town and across the benefice. Most notably, these relationships with other churches have fostered a new (soon to be announced) associate vicar running Amberley, Avening and Cherington, a ‘praying in and for our community’ project with Minchinhampton Baptist Church and we are also working more closely with Minch Life and the Parish Council as we care for the whole community, not just ourselves.

We have been going deeper in faith this year, and developing our praying in power! We have two new small/house groups who discuss the sermon from the previous week, and a new prayer ministry team praying with people for wholeness and healing once a month on a Sunday morning.

The 6Ps fundraising campaign continues. Having completed stage one (about 7 years ago) creating a warm, dry, open, and light space in the church building, we then moved onto the organ project. The newly restored, “historic” organ is expected to return around the end of this year, and we have just moved on to raising funds for the restoration of our windows.

The above projects, as well as so many other important jobs, take a lot of hard work on the part of many, many people. And it is wonderful to note that our hard work is being blessed with some green shoots of sustainability and growth. In particular, we are delighted to see a small and steady stream of new people joining us, bringing new energy to our number!

Looking to the coming year, our focus has to continue with growth and sustainability. We shall continue to invest resources in connecting with those outside the church. We will need to think carefully about inviting into church the people we connect with, and what we invite them to.

In the medium term, our biggest challenge is financial. Remarkably, we managed to roughly break even this year, but the bills for maintaining the building don’t get any smaller, and we are losing our older and very committed givers at quite a rate. Apart from growing our number, we must try our best to maximise income and minimise expenditure.

To conclude, we stand on the precipice of a new era filled with hope and anticipation. Together we have forged bonds of unity with our neighbours, dedicated to nurturing faith and fostering prayerful communities. Amidst the challenges of sustainability and financial stewardship, we will manage our resources wisely, mindful of the legacy entrusted to us by generations past. As we look ahead, let us not only cherish the strong foundations upon which we stand but also embrace the opportunity to shape the church of tomorrow with creativity, compassion, and unwavering faith.

Together, let us continue to journey towards God's Kingdom, extending a warm invitation to walk alongside all who seek faith and fellowship.

## STATUTORY REPORTS

## ELECTORAL ROLL – Jackie Natt, Electoral Roll Officer

The Electoral Roll is a requirement of the parish and is available for inspection by anyone.

To join, the applicant needs to be over the age of 16 years and be a member of the Church of England. If the applicant does not live in the parish, they need to have habitually attended the church for 6 months prior to enrolment. Being on the ER entitles people to vote at the AGM and to apply to join the PCC if they wish.

The Electoral Roll is revised every year. Every 6th year a new roll is prepared and everyone has to reapply to join. This will happen **next year** (2025).

The number on the current Electoral Roll is (at the time of writing) 208.

Sadly, this number is decreasing as several of our older parishioners have died. We have had a few new applicants but not many.

If anyone would like to apply to be on the Electoral Roll, please contact me.

## PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL – Margaret Sheather, Honorary Secretary

At the APCM Angie Ayling and Caroline Thackray were re-elected as Churchwardens and Goldsmith and Simon Ritter were elected to the PCC. At its first full meeting the PCC co-opted John Jutsum to continue as Honorary Treasurer. Margaret Sheather and Jackie Natt continued as Honorary Secretary and Electoral Roll Officer respectively.

There was an election for four representatives to the Deanery Synod. Alison Wood, Julian Elloway, Jennie South and Margaret Sheather were duly elected. The Synod brings together all the clergy and representatives of the laity from across the Stroud area. It provides a forum for sharing ideas (or problems!), hearing about developments across the diocese and is a channel of communication through from the parishes to the leadership of the diocese. It elects representatives onto the Diocesan Synod and onto the General Synod. A full report from the representatives can be found below.

The Parochial Church Council has met six times during the past year, following the decision to alternate PCC and Standing Committee meetings, rather than both meeting every month. It has a total membership of 16, of whom 10 are ex officio (clergy, reader, wardens and deanery synod representatives). Average attendance was 12.

Ministry in the Parish was carried out by Revd Canon Howard Gilbert as Rector and Revd Coral Francis and, from July 2023, Revd Tracey Clements as curates. Linda Jarvis has continued as Reader. They were also supported by a number of retired priests.

PCC meetings covered a wide variety of issues which were thoroughly discussed, including:

* The developing proposals to link the parishes of Avening and Cherington to this benefice and the potential appointment of a 0.5 stipendiary priest to serve them and Amberley, following the retirement of Revd John Spiers.
* An update on the implementation of the Vision through various activities. Some that were particularly noted were:
	+ The creation of the Welcome Board
	+ Church camp
	+ Youth choir development
	+ New house groups
	+ Prayer training and prayer walks
* Appointment of a new Parish Safeguarding Officer, approval of the Safeguarding Action Plan and confirming the procedure to be followed.
* Regular updates on the progress of fundraising for the Organ Project, and in due course confirmation that it was complete, with a vote of thanks to Leonora Rozee for leading the work.
* A range of fabric matters, some of which have been challenging and costly, and which are fully covered in the Church Wardens’ report.
* The further work on the churchyard plan
* Reports on the meetings of Deanery Synod, and a full discussion of the Deanery Strategic Plan, with comments in response agreed.

The Treasurer provided quarterly finance reports and at the meeting held on 21st March he presented the year end accounts which were agreed.

Warm thanks are due to Judith Cleever whose term of office ends this year.

Further detail of the parish’s activities can be found in the reports from Committees and Organisations later in this report.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – John Jutsum, Honorary Treasurer

These are contained in a separate report.

## FABRIC REPORT – Angie Ayling and Caroline Thackray, Church Wardens

 **‘6Ps’ PROJECT**

**Organ restoration/refurbishment** -It is with great joy that we report that fundraising for the organ repair hit the target, raising a terrific £232,000 by the end of December 2023. The organ fund is now closed. Very many thanks are offered to the project group, chaired by Leonora Rozee. They championed and led the whole process, achieving £13,000-worth of grants from local and national bodies and raised nearly £27k in donations from the ‘sponsor a pipe’ scheme. We are grateful for very generous donations from groups and individuals and for considerable funds raised from many and various events during 2022 and 2023 which completed our goal. The ‘6Ps fundraising team’, led by Tracey Clements and Mandy Jutsum are to be thanked for their hard work in all this.

The organ has already been dismantled and taken away by specialists, Goetz and Gwynn to their workshop for repair. The restoration work is expected to take between 10 and 12 months. It is proposed to hold a celebration event once the organ has been returned and tested. Do go to the website to see more details, including a list of grant funders <http://www.minchchurch.org.uk>

Baynham Monument – In removing the organ for repair, two elaborate monuments were incidentally revealed high up on the wall of the north transept either side of the organ cavity. One of these is very early 17thC and commemorates the sad loss of a baby of the Baynham family. It has excited the particular interest of the Local History Society which is pursuing its research and interpretation.

**Stained glass windows** - Without pause for breath, it’s on with the next part of our major fundraising and repair project – the conservation cleaning and repair of the stained glass windows. A project group has already been formed and is in action, led by David Thackray. Overall, the funds needed are likely to be £150,000 approx. Following assessment surveys and advice from the architect, the work will begin with the south transept. It will then progress clockwise around the church, ending with the great east window in the chancel. For the south transept project, photogrammetric survey (detailed and measured photography) will be followed by specifications, tenders, faculty preparation and consultation. It is anticipated that conservation work to the south transept might begin in early 2025. The fundraising group continue to support this part of the 6Ps project and will not be short of demands. A number of excellent events are already being prepared for 2024 and beyond. Thank you again!

**OTHER FABRIC ISSUES**

**Porch Room**

**Kitchen** – the damp above the window lintel, reported last year, has now (January 2024) been addressed with renewed damp-proof membrane below the parapet stonework.

**Lighting** - installation of LED replacement lighting took place earlier in 2023, as the old fluorescent lights are being phased out and the church is following its policy of replacing with energy-saving LED wherever possible.

**North aisle access hatches** – New floor hatches have been inserted in the north aisle floor (Sept 2023) to enable access to wiring ducts without lifting embedded paving stone.

**Electrical works -** Remedial works completed and upgraded. ‘Satisfactory’ certificate now received. Some further work in the chancel and north aisle has taken place; monitoring of this is ongoing.

**Health & Safety Audit** – Increased take-up of the church as an events venue has prompted us to further review existing H&S precautions. We conducted a self-imposed audit of these early in the year, and are still working on some of the outcomes.

**Lead theft from north aisle gutter lining -** In common with several other local churches and domestic buildings, at the beginning of December 2023 we had another incident of stolen lead. Part of the gutter lining on the lower slope of the roof above the north aisle was stolen, creating a serious leak. A temporary repair was very quickly put in place by Nick Miles (building contractor). Advice was taken and a licence application was rapidly submitted; consent was received at the end of January 2024. This includes both provision for repair (using terne-coated stainless steel to replace lead) and for a security beam sensor to give an audible intruder warning inside and outside the church and to elected mobile phones. An insurance claim has been submitted to cover both the roof repair and make good any related internal damage. Work was programmed for February 2024.

**Leak in roof truss of south aisle** – In September a slow leak became apparent below an internal roof corbel in the south aisle. Investigations by Nick Miles prompted a need for further work resulting in repair of splits to the cover flashing in the area above the damp patch inside the church. A 3m length of flashing was replaced and checks made for any further defects.

**Eco Church –** As part of this work, a cycle rack is now in place (faculty granted May 2023) and bird nesting boxes ordered up for the churchyard. Swift boxes are approved in principle by the PCC and are under consideration for location on part of the exterior of the church building itself. Many thanks to this volunteer group, led by Jennie South (see full Eco Church report below).

**Churchyard** – reported on fully below. New ‘Levelling Up’ legislation has meant that churchyards can now apply for grant aid support from local parish councils. An application will be made for this year and if successful, for subsequent ones to help us maintain our very large churchyard, which, in addition to its intended purpose as a dedicated burial site, is a much-used community asset for the town. Many thanks to the volunteer churchyard management group led by Gerald South.

**Flags** - Three new flags were purchased for the repaired flagpole in the front churchyard. Thanks are due to David Goldsmith for being our ‘Flag man’ and to those who generously donated to these purchases.

**Monuments** – An enthusiastic volunteer local historian has spent the summer recording our churchyard monuments and is creating a related database. In September, there was a fascinating temporary exhibition in church to share findings. Thanks are due to Martyn Beaufort for this; his research continues.

**Interpretation** – earlier in the summer a small working group helped the church wardens and rector to revise the welcome pamphlet; a new prayer walk/guide to church is in preparation. Thanks are due to that group and to Vicki Hayward for production which is currently under way.

**Thanks to volunteers** – It will be evident from the above report how very much we depend on and owe to our formidable volunteer force. Thank you all for supporting us and for making the work more a joy than a burden!!

## DEANERY SYNOD – Synod representatives

Deanery Synod meets three times a year at different venues across the deanery. There are seven benefices and over forty churches. Each meeting has included a short agenda item ‘Green Shoots’. This gives churches an opportunity to share recent ‘good news’ stories or learn from the experience of others in an area they are thinking of exploring. For example, in October there was an item about The Festival of Wonder at St Laurence Church in Stroud. This has become an annual event and is flourishing.

In May there was a presentation by Canon Dana Delap, DAC Chair (Diocesan Advisory Committee) on the Extended/Additional Uses for Church Buildings. Holy Trinity has already looked at this and undertaken a major reordering resulting in a church building that is now used for a wide range of activities. St George’s Nailsworth and Whiteshill are examples of churches just embarking on this process and those present shared about twenty different examples of imaginative uses of their church building: this included Amberley’s Community Shop. Churches are encouraged to start a conversation at an early stage with the DAC who are happy to offer help and guidance.

There were questions about vacancies in benefices not being filled for a long period of time. The response to this was that it is not a deliberate policy but that filling each vacancy is complex matter and needs careful preparation of the parish profile which can start as soon as a vacancy is announced.

In October Jennie South, who had recently undertaken the role of Deanery Environmental Ambassador, explained that it includes updating the deanery on the environmental work in the diocese and helping churches to engage with the CofE and Diocesan commitment to Net Zero Carbon by the end of 2030. One of the easiest ways that churches can help is by using the A Rocha Eco Church survey and Jennie will be supporting and encouraging more churches to do this. Those present discussed and completed a short set of questions to help inform her of the perceived difficulties and challenges that might make them reluctant to start the Eco Church survey and indicate ways in which she might be able to help.

At the February meeting, Lisa Harding, the Chief Finance Officer for the Diocese, accompanied by Archdeacon Hilary Dawson gave a clear and concise overview of the way the diocesan finance department is structured and managed. Wardens and Treasurers had been invited to the meeting. Lisa has been in post for about a year and said she had needed that time to gain a proper understanding of the complexities of the wide range of responsibilities and functions of the department and to begin to make some changes to improve efficiency. The Diocese currently has a £2.4 million annual deficit. It has reserves to cover this in the short term and the priority is to work over the next few years towards a balanced budget. The aim is for parishes to cover the clergy related costs of over £8 million. How this will be achieved is work in progress. She recognises the financial challenges faced by some parishes and will be working on a new Parish Share plan for approval at Synod in July for implementation in 2025.

Deanery Synod can agree to raise questions for consideration by Diocesan Synod. One such question recently asked what steps are being taken to address the increasing difficulty some parishes have in recruiting Church Wardens, Secretaries and Treasurers. The detailed written response from the Archdeacons of Gloucester and Cheltenham can be found in full on the deanery web site. It concludes by saying that the lack of people resource has been evident in the emerging Deanery Strategic Plans. As a consequence, deaneries are reviewing governance structures which will support mission and ministry locally and across the diocese.

The draft Stroud Deanery Strategic Plan is currently being discussed at PCC level and feedback sought for consideration by the DSP leadership team

The interim report from the Diocese shows that the Stroud Deanery Parish Share contribution for last year was £597,665. Some Parishes were able to contribute more than they originally pledged which helped towards the overall total. The Diocese hoped the deanery would have contributed more and it was just over £16,000 short of the amount requested.

Agendas, minutes and supporting documents are publicly available at <http://www.stroud-deanery.org.uk/docs.htlm>

Deanery Synod members: Julian Elloway, Margaret Sheather, Jennie South, Alison Wood

## COMMITTEE AND ORGANISATION REPORTS

## ST BARNABAS CHURCH, BOX – Revd Gerald South

In general, Eucharist services have continued to be held at 9.00 am each Sunday, mostly led by Howard Gilbert, Coral Francis, Ann Morris and Gerald South and with an average congregation of 10: many of the regular congregation live outside Box. Two Services of the Word took place at 10am on Sundays: Mothering Sunday attended by six children and 34 adults, and Harvest Festival attended by 11 adults.

We were fortunate to have had Peter Parker to play the piano at some of our services and we wished him well as he left us to take up his place at Cambridge University. We are also very grateful to David Whittaker for regularly accompanying our hymn singing.

In February we were delighted to celebrate the Baptism of Clementine, daughter of Tessa Oliver who grew up in Box.

During Advent the figures of Mary and Joseph travelled around the village visiting 12 homes, a coffee morning and a bar evening. They returned to the church during the Christmas Eve Nativity Service attended by 27 adults and 13 children. The story was delightfully narrated by three of the younger residents of Box, Annabel and Edward Roberts and Bracken Baxter. A collection resulted in £100 being sent to The Children’s Society.

A more formal Service of Lessons and Carols, attended by 42 adults, was held on the Friday before Christmas with readers representing nine of the village organisations. Our thanks go to Amanda Alexander for playing the piano at both these Christmas services.

During the year there have been repairs to the roof and to the plumbing but the fabric is in sound condition. The area at the back of the nave has been reordered, retaining many of the library books and jigsaws, and providing a more spacious appearance.

We are especially grateful to Mark Rogers, our Treasurer, and to Chris and Colin French who do so much to maintain the life of the church.

## WORSHIP, PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY COMMITTEE – Margaret Sheather

The Committee has continued its regular work throughout the year to ensure that worship and related activities are well-planned and communicated. We also look back particularly on major festivals and other significant occasions to see what can be learnt about how to improve them in future. The prayer group has continued to meet and the prayer station(s) reflect world events as appropriate. New house groups have also been formed.

Following a weekend on Prayer led by an excellent visiting speaker, prayer ministry has started to be offered after the 10am service once a month. Prayer for the community is also being developed in conjunction with the Baptist Church.

## STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE – The Rector

## Tim Mowat has left the chair and The Revd Canon Howard Gilbert (Rector) has taken on this role temporarily. Also on our committee are Angie Ayling, Caroline Thackray (Church wardens), John Jutsum (PCC Treasurer), Pat Swift (Recorder), Geoff Lloyd and David White.

 Our 2024 forecast returns (actual figures for 2023 in brackets) are:

Number of regular contributors       127              (139)
Total pledged incl. Gift Aid                   £95,900      (£109,825)

As ever, we are very grateful to existing donors who generously increased their donations. These increases did not make up for the reducing number of donors unfortunately, and this is something the whole church is responding to.

For 2024 the committee hopes to raise the profile of Stewardship further during a campaign in the autumn. We hope to further increase the number committed to the Parish Giving Scheme.

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee, I would like to thank all who have supported the churches over the past year, not only with their money but also their time and talents. The committee members are grateful to you all. We hope to see support for our living church continue strongly in 2024/5!

## PASTORAL CARE TEAM (PCT) – Linda Jarvis, Co-ordinator

The pastoral Care Team membership is going from strength to strength. I am pleased to report that Jenny South, Leslie Ferguson, Olha Bonnie, Jeff Green and Martyn Beaufort have now joined the team. We continue to offer monthly home visits and take reserved sacrament where needed.

Communion services are held monthly at both Cecily Court and Horsfall House. A thank you to John Cleever for playing the organ at Cecily court, to Julian Elloway for standing in when needed, to William Reddaway, who with myself takes the services and to Judith Cleever for supporting us every month. Also a thank you to Alison at Horsfall House for organising the services and to Liz for playing the organ.

During the year Pauline Godfrey came to talk to the PCT on ‘Unconscious Bias,’ which was well received.

Howard and Linda would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Pastoral Care Team for their continued and much appreciated support.

For your information here is a list of those on the PCT.

Martyn Beaufort Linda Jarvis               Jennie South

Paul Boon  Stephen Jarvis Lynne Swift

Olha Bonnie  Judy Lucas (Box) Jane Walden

Jamie D-Hamilton       Jackie Natt             Alison Whitaker

Mick Evans Gill Price Jeff Green

Sandy Emery William Reddaway Margaret Sheather

Leslie Ferguson Cheryl Ritter

Please phone Linda Jarvis on 01453 884545, if you know of anyone who would welcome a visit.

## CHURCH WARDENS’ REPORT – Angie Ayling and Caroline Thackray

We churchwardens have attempted to keep on top of our roles this year, coping with unexpected dilemmas (thefts, floods etc.) as well working with the fantastic team of clergy, staff and volunteers to keep the whole ‘show on the road’! We benefit enormously from having skilled and dedicated professionals to call upon for structural and electrical advice and emergencies, as well as day-to-day maintenance, allowing us to get many issues resolved which are actually beyond our personal capability.

A wedding reception held in October was a new venture and much was learnt from this experience (both positive and negative), to inform us in the case of any future similar event.

We were sorry to miss the opportunity to ‘wand’ the Bishop when he visited for the confirmation in February; Caroline was away and Angie was busy ringing a quarter peal for the event. Another time, perhaps!

## ECOCHURCH – Jennie South on behalf of Steering Group

Steering group members: Eleanor Chard, Darren Clements, Lena and David Homer, Jo Smith, Jennie South, David Thackray.

Caring for creation is an integral part of loving our neighbours and following Christ faithfully. The Church of England’s Fifth Mark of Mission is ***‘To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth’***. One way of helping us bring this vision to reality is participating in the A Rocha UK Eco Church Scheme: this provides a structured framework and our church is now working towards a Silver Award having gained a Bronze Award in June 2023. We report regularly on our activities in the pew sheet, the Parish Magazine and directly to the PCC.

Here are the five areas of focus in the survey **with just one activity** from the many over the past 12 months noted here as examples.

**Buildings.** The church used the CofE Energy Footprint Tool (EFT) for the first time giving a baseline figure for the church’s carbon emissions. As the relevant church committees continue to look at ways of reducing them, we can use this as an annual monitoring tool.

**Community and Global Engagement.** The church has renewed its Fairtrade Church Commitment and is looking at ways to fulfil this commitment now that Traidcraft has ceased trading.

**Land.** The church continues to encourage visitors to the churchyard with the addition of a mown grass labyrinth last summer.

**Lifestyle.**  An ethical investment and banking information evening was organised jointly with MinchCAN (Minchinhampton Climate Action Network) attended by over 20 people.

**Worship and Teaching.** Prayers for the environment are regularly included in the weekly intercessions and recently we marked Plough Sunday for the first time in a while.
It is great to have such interest, help and some helpful and constructive ideas from many of you as we continue to work together on the challenges and look for opportunities to be better stewards of God’s creation.

## CHURCHYARD – Angie Ayling, Church Warden

The mowing of the churchyard has again this year been carried out most diligently by Steve Bennett, who has liaised closely with the newly formed churchyard group (led by Gerald South) to draw up a schedule for mowing. The newer areas are mown regularly while some areas are left unmown until the autumn, to allow wild flowers and insects to thrive. A poster explaining this is on display in the entrance porch.

A labyrinth was created by Gerald at the top (north-east) of the churchyard and this was investigated and appreciated by many visitors. As more burials happen, this labyrinth may need to be relocated.

We have continued to have a few incidents of man-made objects (eg plastic or silk flowers, metal ornaments etc.) being placed on graves. These have been removed by the churchwardens and placed near the skips, for collection; 3 clear signs have been in place for over a year now, stating clearly what is allowed on a grave, but some people seem not to read these. Christmas wreaths create more work as people rarely return to take them away after the event but, as they are made of metal and plastic, they do need to be physically removed to the skip.

We did not feel the need to have a churchyard clearing day in the autumn, so there has only been a spring one in the past 12 months; these days are usually attended by up to a dozen people (we could do with more!), but it must be noted that there are a few dedicated volunteers who work all year round – notably David Homer, Trevor White and Steve Bennett (who gives time voluntarily, as well as being paid for mowing). A new volunteer is needed to strim the cremation area regularly.

A wall collapsed on the east wall in the autumn, falling into a neighbour’s garden. We sought quotes and got this repaired effectively using a local dry-stone-waller.

## MUSIC – Warwick Cole, Director of Music

At a time when many parishes struggle to maintain the strength of their choirs, it is very gratifying to report that our choral tradition remains in rude health. In the past twelve months we have welcomed new members to our choir both young and slightly older – we now have five under 18s – and the musical standard of the choir continues to improve. As ever, the choir excellently provides a leading role in the Sunday morning Eucharists, as well as the monthly choral evensong – to which, of course, all parishioners are cordially invited.

With the organ now taken away for restoration, we are reliant on singing ‘a capella’ anthems without accompaniment. This has presented a challenge to which choir members have unfailingly risen: singing unaccompanied requires accurate, skillful musicianship, the honing of which is a direct result of the commitment of individual choir members. Particularly pleasing to note is that the Junior Choir has helped younger members into the full choir ranks. And further, the music group, ably organised by Alison Wood, has benefitted from new members on a regular basis

In a wider sense, the musical life of the church has continued to grow. We now have increasingly larger audiences in our series of tea-time concerts, raising several thousands of pounds for the restoration of the organ and windows. Local choirs continue to use the church for their concerts; and we have hosted two commercial recordings, making the most of the relatively quiet surroundings and excellent acoustics of the church. Our now annual ‘MinchFest’ is now well into the planning stage for its fourth year. Again we will welcome a variety of singers, young/old, professional/amateur, to share in the wealth of liturgical music.

At the time of writing the organ has been removed and is undergoing restoration by Goetze and Gwyn. We expect it to be reinstalled some time towards the end of 2024/early 2025. In the meantime, we are grateful to Henry Parker of Amberley for the generous loan of his digital organ.

## HOSPITALITY AND SOCIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE – Jacqueline Natt & Darren Clements

The hospitality team has gone from strength to strength this year. Everyone in the team is efficient and willing and we would like to thank them all for the amount of time and energy that they give to the church.

In 2023 we had all the usual Church celebrations plus the King’s coronation in May. We also celebrated Tracey Clements being made deacon in July.

In August we held breakfast in church after the Big Top service at the circus. It was lovely to share responsibility with the Baptist church.

In November we served coffee/cake and also lunch for the very successful Christmas Fair. It has been a pleasure to help as a team at these fund raising events.

As well as the church events , the hospitality team has been on duty for the numerous concerts when the church has been booked. Our church is so beautiful with good acoustics for music and the number of bookings for concerts and events has grown steadily this year.

We have had to tighten up on numbers attending the concerts and other aspects of health and safety but this is a lovely way to get people to visit our church ….as well as being a good financial asset.

We look forward to next year’s activities. If anyone would care to join the team they would be very welcome. Please just have a word with Darren or Jackie.

## FRIDAY LUNCH CLUB AND SATURDAY COFFEE MORNINGS – Stephen Jarvis

**Friday Lunch Club**

On the third Friday of the month we serve a hot two course meal, with coffee, or tea, in church. Apart from an opportunity to share a meal together, it gives a place for people to gather from the community of Minchinhampton. Recently we have been serving around forty five meals, and two, or three are being taken home to those who were unable to attend on the day.

We have given the money raised to Masasi, and to the church.

**Saturday Coffee Morning**

On the first Saturday of the month there is a coffee morning in the porch room to which everyone is invited. We provide cake and drinks, from 10:00am to noon, and donations are given to the church.

## WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**Minchkins – Alison Wood**

Minchkins is a group for young families held on Tuesday mornings at the Hub. It is jointly run by the Holy Trinity and Baptist Churches in Minchinhampton and uses volunteers to help it run smoothly. It has a regular attendance of about 25 families consisting of any combination of mothers, fathers, grandparents, babies, toddlers and preschool children though some weeks there are quite a few more than 25 families.

Minchkins provides a large play space, lots of toys, craft activities and social interaction. There are plenty of snacks and drinks available for all. In addition, there are regular visits from outside agencies including health visitors with opportunities to weigh babies, Homestart, the Independence Trust, P3, governors and staff from the school and Music Minis. We run bi-annual paediatric first aid courses, hand out food vouchers and foods and nappies for those who need them. We also make referrals for funding where there is a need. It fulfils a huge need in the community and is much appreciated by all who attend.

**Children’s Church – Joan Goldsmith**

Children’s Church meets in the Porch Room on Sunday mornings except when there is an All Age, or other Special Services. Gill Price, Jo Smith and myself each lead a weekly session.

We often start with ‘News Time’ when the children share what they have enjoyed doing during the week or what they are looking forward to.

Together we then focus on a story relating to the readings in Church, and talk about this before carrying out some craft or art work.

Our objective is for the Children to enjoy what they are doing and feel part of the Church family.

One concern we have is that for Safeguarding purposes, we should always have a second adult in the room. However, this has not happened and needs to be addressed.

**Junior Choir and Children’s Space – Revd Tracey Clements**

**Children's Choir** continues to go well. Two children have graduated and now sing regularly in the youth choir, with our senior church choir, although one of them continues to do both junior and youth choir.

Junior Choir has several new children joining us this year as well as those who continue to sing with us.  We don't always make the most beautiful sounds but then that was not the sole purpose of the choir. The children who come do so regularly and enjoy the time we spend with them which is split into three sections, beginning with a drink and a snack followed by some reflections on things that have happened in the week and things that will be happening in the week to come and then we pray about them. We then move into the church and learn some songs, a little about music, and the theology of what we are singing about. Then finally we move back to the porch room where we do a craft or play games.

It is still a struggle to get the children to sing at our All Age services just because parents have other plans or Sunday sports activities are happening.  We aim to encourage them to come to festivals like Harvest etc.  However, having three young people join the main choir feels like a win.

**The Children’s Space** at the front of the church continues to be well used, not just on Sundays but at other times. Recently at a fundraising concert for the windows, it was well used by four families with children of various ages.  I have just added some new books for the Easter season as well as some craft materials.

**Youth Club – The Rector**

Around two years ago we took on the youth club when Minchinhampton Youth Club folded. In something of an emergency situation we enlisted help from Minchinhampton Baptist Church and the community to help run this with us.

Initially youth work was hard and difficult, but the model of work has evolved, now offering an ever better service to our community and offering opportunities for inter-generational interaction and support. We set up a supportive governance structure, involving the parish council and the school, as we honed our work and developed our skills as volunteers.

Having developed a youth club offering important support to children moving through the key transition from primary to secondary education (years 5-8), we then approached the parish council for funding to employ a youth worker, and pay for some professional youth work support in addition. A sessional youth worker has been found and they are giving invaluable professional support and making our youth club more sustainable.

In January, with the support of our new sessional youth worker (funded by the council), we re-launched a younger youth club, for year groups 2-5. This was quickly thriving, and has been a very positive experience for all the children and volunteers. This is still early days, but we have 20-40 young people at each session and great interaction between children, and between children and adults.

Our youth work project has been very hard work, but has moved from very challenging to becoming a real success. We are supporting our young people, our church leaders are further developing relationships with children and their families from the town and our approach is also beginning to foster similar models across the county, with SDC referring to this as “The Minchinhampton Model”! We look forward to finding a half-time youth worker (funded by the council) who will take our two projects to the next level, re-launch an older youth club (Year 8+), and undertake fundraising and grant applications. Please pray for us, and volunteer!!

## SAFEGUARDING

During the course of this year Jackie Ellis took up the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer, bringing substantial expertise from her experience as a school safeguarding lead. She has made good progress in bringing our DBS checks up to date, though there are still more to complete. She is also ensuring that we are meeting our training requirements, that we have the necessary policies and guidance in place and that we are able to track all this through the use of the Parish “Dashboard”, the monitoring system provided by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

## BELLRINGING – Angie Ayling, Tower Captain

Over the past 12 months, the bells have been rung for regular Sunday services as well as for practices, weddings, funerals, one confirmation and one coronation!

Just over a year ago, we advertised for new ringers to learn to ‘ring for the King’ and we were very pleased to then teach 3 new and one returning ringer; they all did indeed ring for the King and have continued to ring regularly and make good progress. We now have 11 regular ringers and one less regular, who is away at university.

Several of us have joined in Stroud Branch ringing outings to towers elsewhere in the county and, in February, we went as a tower band to ring once again for the Colesbourne Snowdrop festival. One Thursday, when we were unable to ring here, we went and joined in the practice at Frampton-on-Severn, which was an interesting experience! Three of us ring regularly at practices elsewhere in the branch while Tony, our ringing master, rings several times a week further afield as he is a much-sought-after expert ringer in the county!

## FLOWER GUILD – Kathy Hurst, Co-ordinator

During the year we have provided flowers for Easter, King’s Coronation, Harvest Festival, Remembrance and Christmas.

The income from Wedding flowers was very low this year at £149.  However, we supplied quite a few funeral flowers and made a profit of £518.

 Several of the Flower Guild members have attended Flower Arranging workshops and we are hoping to move away from using Oasis in floral displays.

 Our two main sources of income for the year came from donations for Lilies in Remembrance of loved ones at Easter and from our coffee morning in Mandy and John’s Garden which raised £626.73.

 This year we will be helping with Cash in the Attic by providing displays of flowers and helping to steward the event.

We are also organising a coffee morning to be held in Mandy & John’s garden on Friday 5th July.  Let’s all hope for good weather!

 On a sad note, our long-standing member Jacqui Dilkes has passed away and we provided flowers for her funeral in March.  Jacqui was very inspirational and supported many newer members of the Flower Guild.  We will miss her immensely.

## SACRISTANS – Alison Whitaker, Senior Sacristan

Thank you to all the Servers who faithfully serve at the 8am on Sunday and 11pm on Wednesday and any of the Red Letter Days.

My thanks also to those who Sacristan on Sunday at the 10am Service.

If anyone is interested in joining any of the teams please see me

## SERVERS – Margaret Sheather, Senior Server

The servers’ role is quietly to support the dignity and the drama of our worship, whether at a routine Sunday Eucharist or one of the major festival services of the church’s year. As we are now a rather small group, it may look like a “closed shop” but we would be delighted to welcome new members of the group. No previous experience is necessary as training will be offered and the more of us there are, the more widely the duties can be spread. Do contact me or any member of the serving team if you are interested:*m.sheather@btinternet.com*

I am very grateful to all the members of the team for their flexibility and hard work.

## WELCOMERS (Sidespeople) – Church Wardens

The welcome teams have continued to support regular church services, greeting all warmly on arrival and providing guidance and help where needed. John and Judith Cleever decided to take ‘retirement’ from the regular rota, but still support us when extras are needed; very many thanks to them for all their help. Happily, their place is now taken by Olha Bonney and Jennie South for which we are very grateful. Although we have regular teams for 10am services, it is always good to have extra support, even on an occasional basis. If you feel this is a role you could take on and are happy to offer some time before a service once a month, please do let a church warden know and we will happily ease you in! Minimal instruction is needed and you would be very welcome to swell our numbers. Again, we offer warm thanks to all in our teams, both at 8am and 10am services.

## MASASI GROUP – Stephen Jarvis

This last year our overseas link has been supported by our continued use of prayer for each other, and fund raising for specific requests received from Masasi.

In 2023 we held two fund raising events, a fete, and a quiz. The quiz specifically was to fund the purchase of formula milk for orphan babies. Our fete helped towards meeting our funding pledge for the training of four priests, which has now been met.

Sadly Bishop James is suffering from some health issues with arthritis in his back, giving him some discomfort and pain. He is having medication, to help with pain relief, and physiotherapy to assist his mobility.

**The Cornwall Bursary**

This fund was set up in memory of John and Benita Cornwall who worked in Masasi, where they met. It is for funding the education needs of students recommended to us by the diocese. In 2023 we were asked to support two students who were studying well at Rondo, but due to a change in circumstances their families were unable to continue paying their fees. With our help they have completed their secondary education.

Masasi Diocese was given the opportunity of a scholarship for a priest to study for a two year degree in theology at Dodoma University. Father Allen was chosen and started in 2022, completing his studies in June this year. We have provided further financial support to him and his family, to enable his university studies to continue.

Thank you to everyone for supporting our friends in Masasi, they really appreciate our link and our support, both in prayer, and in what we have given financially. I would also thank the PCC for their continued support in these difficult times.

## PARISH MAGAZINE – John Mounsey, Editor

I have now been editing the magazine for two years and feel reasonably confident about the process. That said, John Gerard is setting up a meeting with someone who may be able to assist in the production of the magazine when, as sometimes happens, I am particularly busy with other matters.

The regular new features introduced in 2022/3 have been well-received (as far as I can glean from speaking informally to people in the street) and the contributors are happy to continue their efforts. I am intending to host a drinks ‘do’ for these regulars as a way of saying thank-you.

Since the New Year, Vicki Hayward has been producing a list of Forthcoming Church Events which appears regularly on Page 3. This is a great improvement and makes it easy for readers to see at a glance what’s going on. My grateful thanks are due to Vicki for her hard work on this and the notification of recent deaths.

As I noted last year, reader feedback remains minimal despite regular requests in the magazine for more active participation. There seems little one can do about this. An Easter Garden competition I ran in 2023 produced a tiny number of entrants: I have not tried again this year (although a photo of my own 2023 Easter Garden forms the front cover of the current [March] issue).

I have yet to introduce the eighth page of colour (as agreed at the AGM in November) because this requires me to edit the diocesan pages myself and to date, I have not had the time to do so. The easiest move would be simply to cut the Bishop’s Letter, but this might be controversial. For the moment therefore, action in this area remains pending.

Finally, I have been liaising closely in recent months with Jamie Dalrymple Hamilton over the advertising on the back page. He has struck a number of successful deals with advertisers who are keen to use (and importantly, pay for) coverage on the back page. This should produce a useful additional source of revenue.

## CHURCH CLEANING GUILD – Angie Ayling, Church Warden

We continue to have a faithful band of people who hoover or dust and clean 4 times a year and keep the church looking at its best. Elizabeth & Derek Vestey, with Jennie South and Toby Whitehead, have recently taken over the much-needed upkeep of the Porch Room, which has made a huge difference to its appearance. All of these voluntary roles are very much appreciated.