



2022

# Thatcham Annual Parish Meeting Annual Report APCM 21 May 2023

Parish Office  
St Mary's Church  
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RG19 3PN

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## Thatcham Parochial Church Council 2022/3

<p><b>Ex Officio</b>  Revd. Mark Bennet  Revd Nicola Hulks  Revd Brenda Harland  Revd Angela Brennan</p> <p><b>Churchwardens</b>  Paul Bullock (2020)  Colin Waters (2020)  Christine Rice (2021)</p> <p><b>Deanery Synod Representatives (to 2023)</b>  Mary Stagg  Chris Watts  Tony Collie  Catherine Forbes</p>	<p><b>Elected Lay Members</b>  John Hicks (St Barnabas)  Bernadette Ellison (St Barnabas)  Leanne Fowler (St Barnabas)  Alison Dean (St Barnabas)  Lourdes Cottam (St Barnabas)</p> <p>Sue Ball (2022)  Simon Stagg (2021)  Chris Druce (2021)  Kevin Dunwell (2020)  Ann Watts (2020)  Viv Druce (2020)  Emma Watts (2020)</p> <p><b>Co-options</b>  Mark Backhouse (Tower Bells)  Mike Stevenson (PCC Secretary)  Ann Dibble (Safeguarding)</p>

## Team Rectors Report

2022 has been a hard year to look back on, especially given some of the things which have happened since, but when I open my diary I see a mixture of vibrant life and cautious steps out of COVID restrictions. I see people getting engaged with church life in new ways and feel the frustration of not being able to move faster. One thing we have gained is that now we share our services over Zoom every week, and we have people – including some who are vulnerable – who regularly join us. People have dialled in from holidays too ...

The events of 2022 which shaped the life of Church and nation included the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth, and later her death and the memorial events surrounding that where we achieved a dignity and connection with the community. Our Come and Be service led by Marcia and Leanne incorporated prayers following the shocking invasion of Ukraine, and we have kept a candle alight in the chapel ever since, and we were part of a revived Thatcham Festival of Arts and Leisure.

Alongside this, some of our regular events were back in something like their previous form – the pulpit swap for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, our celebrations of Easter and Christmas (including the Crib Service). School and Carol services were back in force, and our 8:00am communion service, with its small, but faithful congregation made its way back into the chapel from the main body of the church.

We celebrated Harvest. Weddings were back too, and baptism services, though somewhat reduced in number. It has been a joy to hold proper celebrations rather than feeling that people have had to hold back, and a couple of weddings took place after multiple re-schedulings. Funeral services too were different – funerals with few present can have a quiet dignity, but the sense of loss can be intensified if there are

many people who can't be there. Sadly a number of our regular members and contacts died during the year: amongst them Tony Baldwin, who had been a regular at 8:00am, John Fidler, Peter Laverack, Ken Rye (a regular, and former Mayor of Thatcham) and Ron Christopher (bellringer in Thatcham for over 70 years). In 2023 we have also had the unexpected news of the death of our former curate Revd Leonard Onugha, and also Joan Meechan.

Other movements of people included our ordinands Leanne and Alison developing their roles – Leanne significantly from her base in Thatcham Park School and Alison developing our monthly healing service. Marcia moved on – the good news is that she has now been ordained to serve in Hungerford, but it felt inexplicable that two seemingly good placements as curate fell through, and much love and prayer was expended in support and she made a temporary move to St Nics in Newbury.

Personally, I felt busy with the many school and civic events coming back on stream, and a minor operation twice delayed, and eventually in August, knocked me out rather.

We had the joyful news that Nicola and Ben had adopted Noah, and Nicola's adoption leave which has seen her present in our community but stepping back from ministry, leaving Brenda and Angela covering at St Barnabas.

Huge thanks also to John and Michael for their contributions to our worship, not least on Wednesday mornings, where also ABC has been coming back with fresh energy. Angela's new projects include the Baby Café about which she will have written, and its important connection with new parents and developing relationships.

CAMEO and the Methodist-based Vintage Adventure continue strongly too.

I could add more about Christian Aid, USPG, the Food Bank and other ways in which we support mission more widely than our own church base, but those will have their own reports.

Thanks are due to our churchwardens, PCC members and all who have contributed to the breadth and depth of our community life this year. Although our numbers have been rather down from pre-covid times we are now starting to see larger congregations, and some new people. The challenge of bringing families back remains, and our finances continue to be under significant pressure with major works required also on our building and the organ, and the challenge of reducing our carbon footprint.

But we remain focussed and faithful with the Easter Alleluias resounding with a fresh vibrancy, and it is with faith in God that we step forward into a new year.

Mark Bennet

## **Parochial Church Council – Background and Proceedings**

Thatcham PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Team Rector and the Team Vicar in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church – spiritual, pastoral, evangelistic and ecumenical.

The PCC met at St Mary's Church four times during 2022/3. The Standing Committee was convened twice using email.

Arrangements were made during 2022 for 55 baptisms (41 in 2021) and 7 (7) weddings and 1 Service of Prayer and Dedication following a civil marriage. In addition there were 36 (55) funerals (16 with a service at St Mary's, 20 with services at a crematorium or cemetery)

## **Membership**

Members of the PCC are either ex officio, co-opted or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. St Barnabas Church is represented on the PCC by up to 5 members elected by their own church meeting.

## **Committees**

The PCC operates through a Standing Committee and working groups on Safeguarding and Appeals (Organ and Major Repairs), which meet between full meetings of the Council. The Standing Committee is the only Committee required by law; it has power to transact business of the Council between meetings, subject to any decisions made by the PCC.

## **FINANCE REPORT**

### **Report to the Accounts December 2022**

St Mary's General Account (day to day running of church activities) shows a surplus of expenditure over income of £4,926 giving a cumulative deficit of £13,496. Regular giving through Standing Orders and The Parish Giving Scheme has been most welcome together with a number of significant donations but the need to attract new regular givers to replace those who have died or moved away is a challenge.

The St Barnabas General Account shows a positive balance of £3,657 at the end of the year.

We again managed to pay the Parish Share (our contribution to the diocese for clergy stipends, housing and pensions) in full (£88,869). The Parish Share was set at £95,790 for 2023 and is paid by Direct Debit in 12 instalments thereby enabling rebates from the diocese. The current monthly payment due from Thatcham Parish is £7,983.

Income from Services and other activities improved gradually through the year. Donations were attracted to the Organ Pipedream Repair Project including over £2,000 of matched funding through the Greenham Trust Good Exchange Scheme and a donation of £3,000 from Englefield Trust.

Two major gifts were received in 2022- a bequest of £25,000 from the estate of the late Pamela Broad and an anonymous donation of £20,000. These have been temporarily placed in the fabric fund until the costs and availability of grants for essential repairs to the organ and the church roof are known.

Of particular note is the £1500 + raised jointly with the URC by the 'Mousefest' event in September. My thanks go to Kate and Esther who inspired knitters to produce 120 'mice', arranged the display and sold them all.

Resumption of pre-pandemic levels of use of St Mary's resulted in expenditure of £4,000 on gas and electricity in 2022 (£2,160 in 2021) but the recent dramatic increases in these costs threatens to double this cost to £ 8,000 in 2023. The diocese gave a grant of £1,800 to St Mary's in 2022 but there is no sign of this being repeated in 2023 or any help to churches from government.

The need to increase regular giving is critical, especially if we are to meet the running costs of both churches and pay the Parish Share again in full in 2023. If anyone is thinking of increasing their Stewardship payments during 2023 or joining the Scheme, please speak to the Treasurer or any of the Churchwardens.

A particular vote of thanks is due to the small team maintaining the books and banking the cash - Ann Watts at St Mary's and Bernie Ellison at St Barnabas – and to all who so generously support the work of the Church in this parish.

### **Investments and Fund Structure**

There were no changes to the structure of the St Mary's PCC investment funds during 2022. The value of investments held by the PCC have begun to recover following significant impact on markets of Covid19 and the war in Ukraine.

There follows a brief description of the history, management and restrictions of each of these PCC managed funds.

### **Curates Housing and Expenses (formerly known as the Hatherley) Fund**

The capital arose from the sale of a house given to the Church in 1935 for a succession of curates to live in. The PCC has a 29.4% share of the rent after deduction of expenses on a property in Station Road which continued to be let by the Diocese while it is not required to house a curate. The income is applied for general parish purposes and so is **unrestricted**. However the first call on any surplus income is the payment of curate / clergy expenses.

### **Thatcham Church of England Charity**

The original capital arose from two-thirds of the sale proceeds of the Old Infant School in the Broadway; one-third is administered separately by the Diocesan Board of Education.

This charity is governed by a Charity Commission Scheme sealed on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1980; the clear income from the permanent endowment is for furthering the religious and other charitable work of the Church of England in the ecclesiastical parish of St Mary's Thatcham and is therefore an **unrestricted** fund. All the income is applied in the parish.

### **The Church Estate Charity**

Charity Commission ref – 00436

This is an ancient charity referred to in the Charity Commissioners Report of 1907; the income is to be applied to the upkeep of the church and the churchyard so this is a **restricted** fund.

Income is derived partly from investments and partly from 6/16ths of the income from Moor Meadow Charity, administered by Thatcham Parochial Charities.

### **The Rookery Church Fund**

The small amount of income arising from the legacy by Mrs Hall who died in 1916, subject to the income being **restricted** to the fostering of the Sunday school. The Rookery was the name of the house.

Bankers: St Mary's PCC - Lloyds Bank plc & St Barnabas - HSBC  
Independent Examiners: Tax Avenue, Turnfields Court,  
Thatcham Investment Managers:  
BlackRock Investment Managers, 12 Throgmorton Avenue London  
EC2N 2DL  
CCLA, Senator House, One Angel Lane , London EC4R 3AB

A summary of the Accounts is attached at Appendix 2.

### **Stewardship Secretary's Report – St Mary's.**

A total of £118,674 was given through the Stewardship Scheme in 2021 (£69,553 in 2021). This included £23,087 through the Parish Giving Scheme introduced in September 2018. Giving through weekly envelopes was £5,881 and standing order payments were £21,417. In addition, £15,580 was reclaimed from taxes paid to HMRC (£15,689 in 2021).

The significant increase in 2022 is the result of the bequest of £25,000 and a donation of £20,000 referred to above in the Finance Report.

By the end of 2022 there were 21 donors paying by Direct Debits through the Parish Giving Scheme. 31 donors gave to St Mary's through Standing Orders. 18 donors were supplied with weekly envelopes but the number of donors using envelopes fell to 13 by December.

Great thanks are due to the faithful members of the Stewardship Scheme who by regular and sacrificial levels of giving keep St Mary's and St Barnabas Churches going.

Please continue to review your giving at least annually – index linking is a principle worth considering. Occasional donations are greatly welcomed, but commitment to regular giving is essential if we are to budget for paying for our priests through the Parish Share, maintain the fabric and support sustainable growth of the church in Thatcham.

'Donate' facilities have been incorporated into the website for St Mary's and ideas to encourage online payments using smartphones are in development.

Giving by contactless payments via the GOODBOX at the back of St Mary's increased significantly to £1,462 (518 in 2021).

I continue to positively recommend the Parish Giving Scheme to all regular givers. Over half the Dioceses in England have joined and together they cover the costs of the small administrative team based at Gloucester Diocese. All that is donated is paid direct to the nominated parish by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and income tax is reclaimed

from HMRC through the GIFT AID scheme and distributed to parishes about five days later. This significantly reduces costs and administration at the local level.

Other bonuses are:

- the donations can be index linked if the donors so choose,
- the donations are paid as a single sum to the parish bank account thus avoiding the checking of multiple pages on Bank Statement entries,
- it reduces the bank charges (currently about £28 per month) for handling cheque or cash donations
- minimising the handling of cash and cheques, and delays in payment to the bank account via the Post Office (necessitated by the closure of the Thatcham branch of Lloyds Bank in August 2022)

I would again encourage everyone to make a will and to consider making a bequest to St Mary's. It is not difficult to arrange and can make a significant difference to the future of a growing church in Thatcham.

Chris Watts  
Stewardship Secretary

## Safeguarding

The safeguarding committee has been consolidated this year and we have met four times. The members of the committee are:

Rev Brenda Harland  
Churchwarden and deputy Safeguarding Officer Colin Waters  
Recruiter Sue Ball  
DBS verifier Steve Rice  
Parish Safeguarding Officer Ann Dibble

The Oxford Diocese has been developing their parish safeguarding support. We now have a dashboard system where we can log our achievements and where the next steps are clearly laid out. There are three levels and currently the parish is on level 2. Our main concerns this year have been to:

- Display information that provides those in need of support with appropriate contact details. This has been on the websites as well as on noticeboards.
- Obtain PCC approval for a policy for the recruitment of ex-offenders and The Procedure for Responding to Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations
- Identify a list of activities carried out in the name of the church and sort it into those where children and vulnerable adults may be involved and those where the level of risk is less. The activities we are thinking about are things like Baby Café and Cameo.
- Gather job descriptions and risk assessments into one place. This activity is ongoing and one of the issues is where should that one place be?
- Identify who are eligible for DBS checks and to make sure that we comply with the requirements for the id verification. We have established that because the PCC are trustees for the activities carried out in the name of the church, all members of the PCC must have a DBS check.
- Encourage as many parishioners as possible to complete the Diocesan safeguarding training. The training is available online and relevant to our circumstances.
- Fall into line with the House of Bishops requirement for the recruitment of volunteers. This is still work in progress.



Only two matters of safeguarding concern have been referred to the Parish Safeguarding Officer during this year and, after seeking advice from the Diocese, both were left to take their own course, with a watching brief in place. We have been delighted to be involved in ensuring that correct procedures were followed in the establishment of The Nest and of Boost. Sure signs that activities are emerging after the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Ann Dibble

## ABC

This has been a very good year for ABC. Numbers and enthusiasm have grown. At the moment we are delighted to have a group of grandparents who bring children, perhaps reflecting how childcare has changed since the pandemic. We continue to welcome everyone and are happy to see a fair few dads swelling our numbers.

So, the ABC congregation is thriving and becoming more aware of God in their lives. The prayer book is used for requests and people are growing in confidence both to ask for prayer and to pray and worship themselves.

During a session we enjoy a friendly time to chat and play and have refreshments which is followed by a short worship service that consists of an interactive story, singing and prayers with a blessing at the end. Jason the sheep is a great favourite of the children as he helps to tell the stories and joins in with the action songs. His friend Little Tom is livelier and likes to tease the children and make them laugh.



Our growing team of helpers enable us to function well and they are always ready with a smile of encouragement and a hot drink. Grateful thanks to everyone who contributes to this vital ministry. Towards the end of the summer term, we hold a leavers ceremony to say goodbye to those who are going off to Primary School. They are presented with a certificate and a Scripture union book entitled 'It's your next step' which is all about going to big school for the first time.

Another of the highlights of the year is Crib Service on Christmas Eve. The children dress up and become part of the story. It was wonderful to have that back for 2022. Upwards of 275 people attended. We also hold a mini version during the last ABC session of December. It means that most people have a chance to join the story if they happen to be away for Christmas Eve. The dressing up into a character is always great fun. Also, a very kind member of the group knitted us a set of characters for telling the story of the birth of Jesus, much enjoyed by the children. Here are some comments from people who currently attend the group:

*'The volunteers are all so friendly and welcoming. It's great that someone stays by the door, both to say hello and welcome but also so I know the little ones can't wander off and get out.'*

*'My daughter said she loves the juice and biscuits and likes playing with the pull along toys and cars.'*

*'ABC saved me when I was at my lowest. And helped me reinforce my relationship with God when I was in a very dark place and was angry with God.'*

*'It gave me friendship. It has been lovely to see the positive effect being here has had on my daughter's developing confidence.'*

*'A friendly and safe environment for children and adults to enjoy from new-born to school age.'*

The group is held on Wednesday mornings from 10.30am until 12 noon. If you have preschool children, come and pay us a visit.

Brenda and the ABC team

## **Children and Young People @ St Mary's 2022**

Groups take place during the 10.00am service on 1st, 3rd and 4th weeks and are held in the meeting room.

Our sessions comprise looking at a Bible story and reinforcing the message with discussion, crafts, and prayer.

An enjoyable time was had on Easter day, when we saw some new faces join us for an egg hunt, which ended with all going home with Easter baskets and chocolate.

As a team we would like to see our numbers grow, but remain enthusiastic for the small, but regular group of young people who attend.

A warm welcome awaits all young people who come through our doors, and we remain optimistic for the future.

Helen Holman

## **Curates Report**

As I write, we are almost 3 years to the day since lockdown began, and while those days of daily walks, Zoom services and clapping on doorsteps feel (to me at least) like they happened in another lifetime, barely a day seems to pass without a reminder that the scars of Covid run wide and deep. There are the personal challenges, both physical and mental, as well as practical challenges for communities about how we recover, if recovery is even the aim here.

I find myself coming back to two pieces of wisdom, serendipitously provided by my colleagues, and I hope they won't mind me quoting them here:

*'We must remember to be kind to each other.'*  
That was from Mark.

And, 'Sometimes we need to be reminded that going to church is good for us — its good for us to gather.'

From Nicola.

In both cases we were wondering aloud how we might 'recover' from Covid, lockdown and its aftermath. Covid recovery is a huge, and wide-ranging discussion, not just for the church. Questions about how to get our numbers back up in services, seem like very small potatoes indeed in the context of a mental health epidemic, an NHS in dire straits and the alarmingly precarious nature of global economics.

Priesting didn't bring with it any magic insights into how to 'fix' everything for everyone, not that I really expected that, but it would have been handy, so I am glad to have these two nuggets of hallowed good sense as a guide, or Rule, for life and ministry. We are the people of God, and we have a message of hope, light and life for the world. Good old fashioned kindness, and gathering to lift our gaze beyond our own horizons to to God's horizon — these are the places to start.

Things to report from the last year:

**Baby Cafe** continues with steady numbers on Tuesday mornings in term time. We had a record 17 mums with 19 little ones for our Christmas event, and 14 mums and 15 babies last week for hot cross buns. Massive thanks to the fantastic volunteer who keep the show, and the cakes, on the road.

**The Nest** is a new project between the Thatcham and Newbury churches to provide a toddler group for adoptive and foster families and funded jointly between the Common Vision fund at Oxford Diocese and Greenham Parish Council. It's been a slow start but I am hopeful that good local connections plus the Holy Spirit blowing our fliers in the right direction will get the word out to families who need it. Again, we are blessed with a brilliant and faithful team who facilitate The Nest.

**The Pipedreams Project** gathers pace. Significantly this year we have lodged the project with the Good Exchange, secured the consultancy services of Nicholas Thistlethwaite, and, thanks to Chris Watts, arranged for a replacement organ blower and the removal of asbestos in the blower cabinet.

We'll be applying for a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund this coming year. It's a big job and only part of a larger vision to repair the building as a whole — so huge thanks to the organ team, for their energy and commitment.

Children and Schools work has increased in recent months. Taking questions from children and teenagers is by far the most terrifying aspect of parish ministry so far, but also great fun and a huge privilege. Highlights have been the stampede to smell the myrrh in year 2, a grilling from year 9 about the problem of evil, and taking a fledgling chick to St Mary's for Thatcham Park's Easter Service. We also had a really successful Year 6 Leavers Day at St Mary's last June and planto repeat this format for Leavers Day going forward.

**Muddy Church** has had a bit of a hiatus, but a small team is planning a Muddy Church 'Eggstravaganza' in the churchyard for Holy Saturday. I can give no idea as to numbers, but I have invited all the baptism families this year, plus ABC, Baby Cafe, Muddy Church and the families from St M & St B's — so its my prayer that by the time you read this we will still be buzzing from the excitement of a churchyard full of children hunting for eggs, sowing seeds of hope, and singing 'Assembly Bangers' around the fire pit...

There is a recurring theme here, and in ministry as a whole, of volunteers who give up their time and money and energy to do things for other people. Churches simply do not work without people; groups do not run themselves, brass does not polish itself (thank you Rita), tea does not make itself. I am new enough to ordained ministry that I still can't quite fathom how I get to be the one at the front who says stuff — I hope the sense of responsibility and privilege never wears off — because its all very well being at the front, but when you get there, you realise very quickly that the work of the gospel is done mostly in other ways, the majority of it quiet and unseen.

Our numbers might be lower since Covid, and it's easy to obsess about that, or use the numbers as some kind of yardstick with which to beat ourselves up. I am not worried about numbers. I'm not worried because I've been at both churches a while now, and I know that St Mary's and St Barnabas are both full to the gunwales with people who share the gospel every day of the week in the good they do both in and for our community. Our numbers might be lower, but I think our commitment is greater than ever, and in the current climate, that just as well, as so is the need.

So thank you to all of you, for everything you do in and around this patch of earth to help share good news of God's love and grace and provision with those around us — I consider it a privilege and a blessing to serve alongside you.

Rev Angela Brennan

## Music at St. Mary's

It's been a good year for the choir. Numbers have remained steady. We lost our Friday evening accompanist due to family commitments but have been very fortunate in securing the services of Alice who also plays at the second Sunday service when her other commitments allow. Although she is still at school, she is a very talented musician and a real asset in our rehearsals.

We led two special services in Lent and Advent which were well attended and included anthems, hymns and readings creating a special atmosphere in order to reflect on the season away from the busyness of life.

In June we celebrated the Platinum Jubilee with a specially commissioned anthem from the RSCM. As always, the Autumn term was very busy beginning this year with 'Mousefest' where we performed six popular anthems as the public browsed the mice.



We also played a part in the Remembrance Day service both in Church and at the Memorial in November and supported the annual Time to Remember service. Being part of these memorial services is always a privilege. Advent began with our service of reflection and then we were launched into Christmas singing with Kennet School

Lower School Choir at the switch on of the Thatcham Lights where we finished the entertainment before seg-waying effortlessly into the lights being switched on.

Carol services for the Hospital League of Friends and the Town Council followed as well as our Community Carol service which featured a Children's Choir and mulled wine. Midnight Mass is always a very special service and this year the Chilcott anthem O Little Town which featured our wonderful bass line was spine tingling.

We have tried to balance well known and loved anthems with new ones both modern and more traditional which I think has been well received. As a choir we continue to be challenged and to bring depth and feeling to our singing in order to support worship.

As I said last year, we are very fortunate in having a very committed choir many of whom attend 5 services a month and some very competent and strong singers. We have recently awarded two new ribbons. One to Judith, who was long overdue to get her red ribbon. Her commitment to choir is second to none and she has blossomed in the last few years. The other ribbon was to Jim for Loyal Service. As a member of the choir for 40 years his service and loyalty cannot be doubted, and we all gratefully recognise his quiet contributions to the smooth running of the choir.



As always, we welcome new singers. There is no requirement to read music as all learning is done by rote and we would welcome anyone from the age of 14 into the adult choir in any section.

I shall finish by thanking Alice and Tim without whom we would be in a very poor state musically and by thanking all the members of the choir for sounding so brilliant every week!

Mary Stagg

## Prayer Ministry

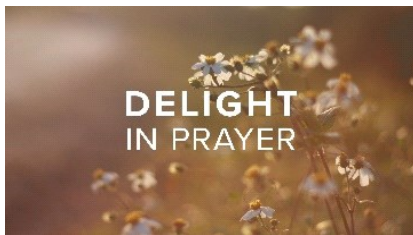
The prayer ministry provides regular meetings for quiet, personal and reflective prayer. The group is a local hub of the Guild of St. John and St. Mary Magdalene and respond to prayers requested from overseas and the local community in Thatcham & surrounding areas. The group is run by Michael Watson, meets every alternate Tuesday and is always encouraging others to join these times of worship.

We have set up a WhatsApp group for prayer requests that anyone can join and introduced a intercessional prayer Initiative for the local community to specifically pray for all those who are suffering and affected by the cost of living crisis. A prayer point has been established at the entrance to the church.

We have also started to work with other local church groups which bring together as many as possible from all the churches in Thatcham in order to pray for our town.

Sarah Summerbell

## Prayer Ministry Circle



We continue to pray in our homes, on our walks, on the phone and video calls, in fact wherever we have safely been whilst we haven't been able to pray with people in person.

Sue Stevenson.

## St Barnabas Church

Flushed and elated with the success of our first ever outdoor crib service for Christmas Eve 2021(attended by upwards of 80 people despite the heavy rain) we entered 2022 as St Barnabas church eagerly awaiting the lifting of Covid 19 restrictions as engaging with the community is something that St Barnabas does best.



Indeed, engaging with the school community is high on our agenda and so we enter all we can with enthusiasm. We are pleased to be back face to face in school doing collective worship, occasionally helping with lessons and helping at fundraisers.

A recent addition to our interaction with the school is that a group of 6 pupils from Thatcham Park come to Vintage Adventure each month with a member of staff. Vintage Adventure is for the young at heart and takes place at the Methodist church on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Each session is themed and includes chatting around tables, singing, praying, engaging in a craft activity and ending with tea and cake. This is run by churches together in Thatcham and has a high number of St Barnabas leaders and helpers building on the skills honed through our years of doing SOS sessions. The children from Thatcham Park really enjoy it and join in with enthusiasm, helping where appropriate. Strong bonds are formed.

We are delighted to have members of staff as part of our church, Amey, Sarah and Leanne who help us to know what is going on and where we can fit in. Leanne and Alison, another member of our congregation, are in the midst of training to become ordained ministers. They are both doing really well and are increasingly taking part in services etc. Please pray for them both as they approach the end of the second year of a 3-year course.

A very exciting event happened halfway through the year. Nicola went on parental leave and later on in the year we were thrilled to be introduced to little Noah as the Hulks family celebrated their happy event. Noah has now become an enthusiastic member of the St Barnabas family.

Other happy events included 2 baptisms of St Barnabas children, one at St Barnabas and one at St Mary's. It was wonderful that Leanne could help lead this service. We were also delighted to welcome back Glenn and Steph and their family as they popped back from Devon for the baptism of their newest granddaughter. And we were pleased to admit one of our young people to communion before confirmation. This is a stage on the way to confirmation. The young person can take communion and can be confirmed at a later stage as their faith grows and matures.

Our weekly services are held at 10am each Sunday. We alternate between worship and communion services. The beauty of holding services in a school hall is that we can move the furniture around and try new things. A recent service was called 'living room church' as we met in the round and had a carpet and tables and chairs in the centre for the children.

The congregation is a tad smaller since lock down but links are kept via various friendship groups, the home groups and by the weekly news and information email. One of our main aims is that St Barnabas Church should be a safe place to explore faith whether you have been coming to church for years or are a newcomer.

Over the past few months, we have been pleased to welcome a variety of preachers to enhance our worship. Our thanks go to them.

The music group continues to lead us in worship during our services. We thank them all (John, Stuart, Dave and Debbie) for their skill and dedication.

Our two homegroups are thriving. One run by Ben meets most weeks via zoom which was a great innovation that happened during lockdown. Many different topics are covered and faith and fellowship grows. The second group is a continuation of an Alpha group that meets fortnightly in person, led by Alison, for fellowship, reflection and prayer.

Muddy Church, another of our outreach activities, is a bit like SOS but outdoors down at the Nature Discovery Centre. It is for families and is well attended. It is on hold at the moment while Nicola and her family are on parental leave.



Safeguarding policy is up to speed. Brenda and Colin are part of the safeguarding team which meets regularly to discuss how to make the church environment as safe as possible for all concerned. We are impressed by the quality of the online training safeguarding that is available from the diocese and would urge everyone whether you have a role or not to participate in this training at least at basic level. It is really interesting and can help you be aware of anything that could happen if we are not vigilant. The parish safeguarding policy is displayed on a board at St Barnabas together with photos of those who are in office for safeguarding with relevant phone numbers including Cath our children's advocate.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the running of St Barnabas, for Angela our curate, Colin our church warden, those who are on various bodies, our PCC members, Deanery Synod and churches together reps. Thank you to Bernie our treasurer who beavers away paying bills and keeping us solvent. And all of you who help with setting up, clearing away and sharing God's love.

The year ended with a return to an indoor crib service and you could feel the pleasure and enthusiasm in the air as people joined together to begin their Christmas celebrations after so many restrictions.

We look to the future of St Barnabas Church with hope, faith and fellowship in our hearts.

Brenda Harland and Colin Waters

## Deanery Synod Report

Thatcham Parish is part of the Newbury Deanery – a group of parishes in West Berkshire running as far as Hungerford and Lambourn and up to Compton and The Ridgeway. In some recent documents the Deanery has described itself briefly as follows:

Newbury Deanery covers some 105 square miles of the western part of West Berkshire. It includes the urban centres of Newbury and Thatcham, the market town of Hungerford and an extensive rural hinterland. The eleven benefices (roughly speaking groups of churches overseen by a single priest) encompass 36 parishes ranging in population from over 25,000 to under 100,



together with 42 church buildings, and one church which has no building of its own.

The Deanery is an administrative unit of the Church of England which is part of its structure of “synodical government” – the way the Church makes decisions about its internal workings where they affect more than a single parish. Traditionally the Deanery has had two functions – (the money function) allocating the parish share which pays for the clergy and support costs (just under £1million for Newbury Deanery) and then collecting it; and (the people function) negotiating the deployment of clergy at a time when clergy numbers nationally have been declining. More recently the people function has been developed into a more positive mode of mission planning (The Mission Action Plan) – actively supporting parishes and their people to meet the common challenges we face.

The effects of the pandemic had meant progress on the plan had slowed. Bruce Laurie Lay Chair of Synod having reviewed the plan in 2021 found it was still wholly relevant to today’s needs. It was stressed that this is the Deanery’s plan to support and encourage benefices and parishes rather than to direct or impose requirements from the Diocese. Synod identified four action groups and started to put these into being. These are:

- Finance
- Schools and Education
- Lay Training
- Environment

(Consideration on new housing developments and also communities will be incorporated in due course.)

The Newbury Deanery Synod also maintains a link with the South African parish of Batlharos in the Diocese of Kimberley and Kuruman.

Deanery Synod elects representatives to Diocesan Synod – notably our own Team Rector.

The Deanery is run by the Deanery Synod. Like the PCC this is a mixture of clergy and elected lay members, but in the Deanery case the members represent the different parishes. The Deanery Synod elects a standing committee and appoints officers to act as an executive, and to progress the various aspects of its work. It may also receive requests from the Diocese of Oxford or from the National Church to respond to matters of interest. The Deanery Synod can also raise matters of concern and ask for these to be addressed at a Diocesan or national level.

In 2022/3 the Synod considered issues arising from progress on the Living in Love and Faith Report, the Cost of Living Crisis, promotion of the ECO Church strategy and arrangements for a Deanery visit by the Bishop of Oxford in March 2022.

The Deanery Share was paid in full to the Diocese, despite shortfalls from some benefices, by use of the reserve. Two-thirds of the rebate due to the Deanery will be distributed to parishes after further consideration is given to support those parishes in financial difficulty.

Thank you for your support for our clergy members of Synod and our lay members Mary, Tony, Cath and myself.

Chris Watts

## St. Mary's Church Bellringers

This year has been one dominated by events and also a significant reduction in our numbers. Three of our ringers have been unwell and did not ring for most of 2022. Long standing member, Ron Christopher was able to attend one practice following his operation in December 2021, but then was diagnosed with a further outbreak of cancer and sadly died in September. A nucleus of seven of the band have maintained ringing on Sundays, sometimes ringing only five bells due to holidays. Our practices have been attended by some regular visitors, enabling us to ring eight bells on most Tuesdays.

We were pleased to be joined by Rita and Kay Christopher, when we rang the bells the evening after Ron died. We then rang a quarter peal the evening before his funeral, for which we also rang. It was decided that we should provide a memorial board in recognition of his 75 years as a loyal ringer at St Mary's. The oak board has been manufactured and is currently with the signwriter. It will be dedicated at a service later this year.

Ian Judd of Goring and Cyril Lewendon, formerly of Bucklebury, both good friends of Thatcham Ringers died during the year. We rang quarter peals in their memory and rang for Cyril's funeral at St Mary's. We also rang half muffled for the death of H M Queen Elizabeth II, having rung the bells open in February to celebrate 70 years since her accession to the throne.

A memorial board for Bill Butler and the peal board for Bill's last peal at St Mary's were dedicated by Revd Mark Bennet at The Time to Remember service in November and are now hanging in the Tower. Bill's son Richard Butler was able to join us for ringing prior to the service.



John Kape organised an enjoyable evening outing to Overton in July, where we were joined by some of our regular Tuesday evening visitors. We then adjourned to The Vine at Hannington for a meal.



We were invited by Thatcham Town Council to take part in the Festival of Arts in October. Rachel Backhouse agreed to organise a belfry open day, which would be included in the Festival Programme. Rachel chose the same day as the Craft Fair held in the Church, in the hope of attracting visitors from that event. A gazebo was erected adjacent to the door at the bottom of the tower, where literature was displayed and numbers ascending the tower were monitored.

In the ringing room an area was roped off to provide a safe seating area. Three of the bells were rung by some of our ringers. A video camera had been installed in the belfry so that visitors could watch the bells in action in the ringing room. Rachel received assistance in setting up the equipment from Mark Backhouse, Richard Marshall and Graham John and on the day from a number of the ringers. There were two sessions lasting two hours. A total of 45 visitors ascended the tower and showed considerable interest.

We had hoped that some of the visitors would come forward as new recruits, but unfortunately none did so. However, Fiona Hockedy, who last rang with us thirteen years ago, was one of the visitors and has now returned to ring with us. Also, Rhiannan contacted the Parish Office, having seen some publicity for 'Ring for the King'. She is progressing well and will be ringing on Coronation Day.

It has been an honour and a privilege to have been Tower Captain at St Marys for 14 years, where bell ringing here has national recognition. At our AGM in March I did not seek re-election. Rachel Backhouse was unanimously elected as Tower Captain, with other positions unchanged. I wish Rachel every success.

I thank all the ringers for their valued contribution. I thank Sue for her support at

all times, Rachel for looking after the ringing in my absences, particularly at the beginning of the year and for organising the Open Day, Mark for fixing the muffles on numerous occasions, Richard and his team for looking after the bells and Treasurer, John for looking after the money. I thank Revd Mark for conducting Belfry Prayers, chairing our AGM and for his valued support and encouragement, particularly during the Covid Pandemic.

Tony Smith (Tower Captain)

## Churchwardens

As we come to the end of another year, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the great works accomplished by our community. Despite the challenges we faced, we have come together and made a positive impact on the lives of those around us.

This year, we reinstated warden and clergy meetings to aid the running of the church. It was a wise decision as it will help us to make subtle improvements in church life. The PCC meetings also proved invaluable in providing a forum for discussing and implementing changes that benefit the church community. As we head into another year, we are aware that there is still work to be done. We encourage the participation of all members of our community as we continue to work towards improving the life of our church. Together, we can achieve great things and overcome any challenges that may arise. Let us embrace the opportunities ahead of us with optimism and enthusiasm.

One of the highlights of the year was the Douai Abbey Day, where we welcomed hundreds of children before their move to secondary school. It was heart-warming to see the children engage with our church and learn about the importance of faith and community. The success of this event was a testament to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers.

Our ongoing programs, ABC and CAMEO, have continued to make a positive impact in our community. ABC continues to welcome families and young children, providing a safe and nurturing environment for them to learn and grow in their faith. CAMEO, on the other hand, reaches out to the elderly members of our community, providing them with fellowship and support. Our Christmas services were a beautiful display of community spirit and faith. The joy and love felt by all who attended were truly uplifting.

Similarly, the services over Easter were poignant and meaningful, reminding us of the power of resurrection and new beginnings. This year, we introduced Muddy Church in St. Mary's churchyard, which was a resounding success. It provided an opportunity for us to connect with nature and explore our faith in a unique and refreshing way. It was inspiring to see people of all ages participate in this event and come together in fellowship.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made by our choir and musicians. Their talent and dedication have enriched our services and helped us connect with our faith on a deeper level. The choir's beautiful singing has been an inspiration to us all, and we are grateful for their commitment to enhancing our church experience. We are also thankful for the efforts of our musicians, who have brought a wonderful range of music to our services. A special thanks to Tim for his exceptional playing of the organ. His skill and talent have enhanced our services and created an atmosphere of reverence and awe.

As we look forward to the future, there are some important works that we need to undertake to maintain our beautiful church building. These works include repairs to the

roof and the floor. It is essential that we address these issues to ensure that our church remains a safe and welcoming space for our community. In addition to these repairs, we also need to consider how we can achieve our net-zero goals. As a church, we have a responsibility to protect the environment and reduce our carbon footprint.

There are several steps we can take to achieve this, including energy efficiency upgrades, renewable energy, waste reduction, and education and awareness. I believe that as a community, we can work together to achieve these goals and make a positive impact on the environment. In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the success of our church program over the past year. Your dedication and hard work have made a significant impact on our community, and we are truly blessed to have you all as part of our church family. Let us continue to work together, learn, and grow in our faith, and make a positive difference in the world.

Sincerely,  
Paul Bullock, Colin Waters and Christine Rice

## Fabric

In summary the log of work by contractors and volunteers to the fabric of St Mary's includes:

- Spring and autumn clean and clear
- Monitor water/tree damaged areas to north nave wall and Pathfinders Room and the south west corner of the Meeting Room
- Test lightning conductor
- Test and service Fire Extinguishers
- Service heating boilers
- Tune and minor repairs to organ (noting the Choir manual is not operational)
- Clearing block drains and soakaways

The Revd Angela Brennan refers in her report to the work of a small group – Richard Foster, Christine Rice and Chris Watts and discussion has restarted with Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and contractors for repair of the organ. The church has registered with the Greenham Trust Good Exchange Scheme and a total of £8,000 received through donations, matched funding and Gift Aid. Work was successfully completed in April 2023 on the replacement of the blower and removal of asbestos. Other Good Exchange grant projects are in preparation. Potential sources of major grants for organ and roof repairs have also been contacted.

The PCC's architect, Christian Randall of Wantage submitted his first five yearly report on the state of the fabric in 2018. He listed the regular concerns of clearing gutters and repairs to rainwater downpipes, repairs to stonework and flint facing and ivy on the tower. In addition he noted:

- the need to address the repair of the roof and valley gutter to the western end of the north aisle and above the Pathfinders Room
- significant dampness and deterioration to the plaster on the external walls to north and south aisles,
- damaged floor tiles and 'subsidence' to the central and northern aisles
- rotting of timber thresholds to both north doors.
- a series of minor repairs to stonework

In addition improvements are required to the Meeting Room and kitchen.

A specification for the repairs to roof, walls and door thresholds has been prepared and is out for quotations. A faculty application has been approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee and is about to be granted. Options for repairs of the damaged floor tiles are in preparation.

The architect is due to submit his 2<sup>nd</sup> five yearly report in the autumn.

Thanks are again due to Chris Druce, Paul Bullock and also to Mark Backhouse for help with general repairs and lower level lamp replacements, to Marion and a team of dedicated gardeners for work on the flower borders, to Rita for polishing the brass and to all who regularly clean, arrange the flowers and maintain the equipment.

Chris Watts

## **Inventory**

New cameras and a donated tablet to facilitate streaming services on Zoom and a fabulous Memorial Book and oak case donated in memory of Clifford and Margaret Willis have been included in the Inventory together with other minor corrections.

## **Sewing group and Flowers.**

The Sewing Group has not met but continues to sew as required. As well as making linen items for use at communion we also repair items and alter the length of choir robes when the user changes or grows. We have been given lots of fabrics, lace, and other sewing items and these we use to create items for the craft sale and raffle usually in November.

Please feel free to visit us in the chapel at 2pm when we can get back to normal, and join in if you wish even if all you can do is tacking!

There are now a lovely group of flower arrangers with many differing talents all of which are welcomed and encouraged. Displays were created for Christmas and Easter.

Marion and team.

## **Little Churches, Home Communions.**

### **'Little Churches'**

I am delighted to report that things have pretty much returned to normal now that the Covid pandemic has all but gone away.

Faithful members of St. Mary's congregation volunteer to bring God's message of love and hope to those who, for one reason or another, are not able to attend church on a Sunday. With the requisite cuppa and biccies as part of our time together, Paul Bullock leads at Nevil Court, with Margaret Holmes supporting; Joan Collins takes care of the resumed Thatcham Court service and I take the lead at Ferndale Court.

Paul also helps me at Ferndale and I, in turn, help Joan to take the short service of Holy Communion, which includes hymns, scripture and prayer. These are run monthly and last approximately 45mins to an hour. My sincere thanks and appreciation to all the above named for their support in this valuable outreach ministry.

Steve Rice

**West Berkshire Community Hospital**

This service has also recommenced after a long period of not being able to meet because of the dreaded 'C' and other infections such as Norovirus. This vital outreach means that patients can see a different face and enjoy fellowship as part of a communion service.

Earlier this year, we welcomed our new chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Simon Thorn who is also chaplain to the hospital in Wokingham.

I would like to offer my thanks to Margaret Holmes for her previous attendance and also express my appreciation to the other helpers Joan Collins, Barbara Carwardine and Margaret Goodhead, all of whom have given up a hour or so on a Sunday afternoon to bring conversation and comfort to patients who might not otherwise see a visitor that day. This service last for about 35 minutes and attendance is usually in double figures made up of patients and visitors.

Steve Rice

**C.A.M.E.O. Come and Meet Each Other**

Like many organizations, it took us a while to get going again after the COVID shutdown but because many elderly people had not been out at all for some time we opened the doors as soon as it was feasible to do so. With some adjustments (open doors and blankets) we opened in April. Some members did not return but we gradually increased in numbers and now have around 25 fairly regular attenders.

Activities are limited to indoor and are not very strenuous due to age and mobility issues. Home made cakes, a raffle and tea are the focus for every week with quizzes, games, puzzles, bingo, singing or themed chats filling a little more of the time until our wonderful volunteer drivers return to take some back home. We always try to mark special occasions with a special tea which we did this year for the Jubilee, a summer garden Party was also held in June. A fish and chip lunch in September and a Christmas party at the beginning of December with a visiting choir from the U3A as entertainment rounded off the year for us. During the coming year we have arranged for a visiting poet, hand bells demonstration and a saxophonist to provide some entertainment on various occasions.

Although we are limited by physical space, we are still able to accommodate new members. So, if you know of anyone that is lonely or would benefit from meeting with a friendly, lively and supportive group of like-minded people, please get in touch with us.

Theresa Lucas - 635923  
Ann Dykes – 863199  
Viv Druce - 820718

**The Thatcham Parochial Charities**

This ancient charity has continued to play a significant role, both in the life of our churches and in support of local people in need, this year. The rector and our three churchwardens are ex officio members of the Board of Trustees and I (Chris Druce) am currently a representative of Thatcham Town Council and Chairman of Trustees.

Other members of the Trustees Board are drawn from representatives of other local councils in Cold Ash, Greenham and Midgham. We cover the area of the 'Ancient Borough of Thatcham', encompassing modern Thatcham, together with Cold Ash,

Midgham and Greenham. The trustees have a wide remit of responsibility, covering various needs of our local community.

There are 2 principal charities – the ‘Thatcham Parochial Almshouse Charity’ and ‘Thatcham Relief in Need Charity’.

**The Almshouses** – The first almshouses in Thatcham were established by Thomas Loundyes, in 1446 AD. Some of the present almshouse flats, in Chapel Street, are named after him. To qualify for accommodation, applicants should be ‘of a certain age’, a resident in the Ancient Borough and can demonstrate a housing need. We have 14 flats in all and all flats are currently occupied.

This year has continued to call for special attention, to ensure the continuing health and well-being of all our residents. With all residents being fully vaccinated against Covid, more regular visits are now possible, but maintenance work continues to be reduced to the more essential work, with contractors continuing to wear the necessary PPE and any non-essential work put on hold. Hand sanitizer stations and additional cleaning in communal areas are still in use. Fortunately, there has been no major outbreak of virus in any of the properties.

This has been a sad year, with the death of two of our residents but, following re-decoration, both flats are now re-let and all flats are again occupied.

**Relief in Need Charity –**

The object of this charity is to relieve, either generally or individually, persons resident in the Ancient Borough, who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress, by making grants of money or providing items or services to reduce that need.

As with the Almshouse Charity, this year had very special needs for our local community and Relief in Need was very much ‘Open for Business’. During the year, the charity made grants in excess of £15,000. In addition to individual needs, including a new mobility scooter, the charity made a donation towards playground equipment for young children and contributed to the local newspaper’s “over 80’s Christmas food-parcel” fund

So, as you can see, it has been another eventful year. If you know of anyone who may need a helping hand, or a piece of equipment otherwise unaffordable, do, please, have a word with me, Mark, or one of the churchwardens.

Thankyou – Chris Druce



## MISSIONS



### Thatcham Christian Aid Committee

First of all, a very big thank you on behalf of Christian Aid.

In Ukraine, Christian Aid has been able to deliver £10 million of emergency assistance to over 770,000 people affected by the war. The current focus is on micro-grant projects through a Survivor Community-Led Response approach, and winterisation activities (e.g. supplying warm clothing and bedding, generators, weatherproofing homes etc).

Equally, in the Turkey/NW Syrian earthquake, Christian Aid is distributing over £7 million. Christian Aid already had partner staff in the area, and so are focusing on NW Syria where there is specific expertise and experience.

In the immediate term (first 30 days) our partners were able to respond by:

- Setting up collective shelters in some of the worst affected areas
- Providing Ready to eat meals as most have lost access to a place to cook meals
- Distributions of heating materials, mattresses, blankets, winter survival kits, hygiene kits
- Individual case management for children (e.g., reunification to family, referral to others)

They will then move to more long-term aid, such as rebuilding earthquake-proof housing. This funding comes both from direct donations and a share of the DEC Appeal. St Mary's members have generously contributed to both these appeals, and we cannot thank you enough.

Locally (and in addition to these national campaigns), in the last accounting year (Oct 2021-Sept 2022) we also raised over £3000 - about £500 up from the year before, if still below pandemic levels.

We have raised still more since then, much of it thanks to generous St Mary's folks, with particular thanks to all who participated in the Beetle Drive and the 2 Lent Lunches, especially those who helped run them.

By the time of the Church Annual Meeting we will also just have finished this year's Christian Aid Week (May 14th to 20th), which remains our biggest fundraiser – volunteers for the church collection and other collections are always appreciated.

This year we are focussing on Malawi, where farmers are being provided with drought resistant pigeon peas. We are also campaigning for a 'loss and damage' fund for climate change, so that those in the undeveloped world - who are suffering most of the cost - can be recompensed by those who have most profited.

It is crucial that we continue to give however – much ‘extra’ government aid for disasters is simply moved from elsewhere in the aid budget. Also, currently 20% of ‘overseas’ government aid is being spent on housing asylum seekers in this country.

Most importantly, ongoing projects need funding to continue. Sadly, these also cost more now, with the international rise in the cost of energy and food stuffs.

For example, Christian Aid funded a pump to extract groundwater for a market-garden in Kenya. This enabled women to make enough profit to feed their families and send their children to school. But the increased cost of the (small amount of) petrol needed to run the pump was too much, and the garden is no more. So we must raise even more money if we are not to give up on people.

In these difficult economic times for all of us, can I as ever urge you to give what you can, and above all to pray.

With many thanks for your generous giving to Christian Aid throughout the year.

Sarah Bennet  
Chair, Thatcham Christian Aid Committee

### **Children’s Society and USPG**

The use of collecting boxes and globes has significantly declined in recent years, probably as a result in the reduction in the use of coins. Support for Missions has increasingly transferred to event such as the ever popular Cream Teas and to direct donations including those made online. *Collecting boxes continue to be available however for anyone wanting to support Missions in this way.*

£360.90 was donated to the Children’s Society in 2022. The money goes to help the Society and its network of centres and projects to deliver specialist services for children who face disaster and danger in their daily lives; children who are unable to find the support they need elsewhere.

### **USPG**

£333.18 was donated to USPG in 2022. USPG is working with the Anglican Church in Zambia to develop healthcare and leadership programmes that will have an impact on the life and outreach of the church and community. Support was given for training of specialists at the Hospital of St Francis at Katete and other health projects in Zambia.

If you would like to help with either of these Missions please speak to Ann Watts (864567).

Ann Watts

## West Berks Foodbank



The continuing pandemic and then cost of living increases have meant that a significant number of people used West Berks Foodbank (WBFB) during 2022. Single adults, couples and families contacted the Crisis FoodLine for help and support.

The Foodbank no longer collects donations from St Mary's. Donations continue to be made, however and thanks is due to Matt Evans for regular transfer of these to the depot at Greenham particularly at Harvest and Christmas.

WBFB's Foodbank Centres in Thatcham, Hungerford and Burghfield and Mortimer continue to experience increasing need for support. The hybrid operational model is also well used in responding to requests for food deliveries to clients unable to get to a Foodbank Centre.

Thank you for supporting the Foodbank – please continue to donate when you can.

## Rainbows (Girlguiding at St. Mary's)



Two separate groups of Rainbows (5-7 year olds) meet at St Mary's on Tuesday and Friday evenings to do all sorts of things from game and crafts to pamper evenings and escape rooms.

The Rangers has ceased due to lack of numbers.

If there is anyone who would like to volunteer to help with the Rainbows of Girlguiding please contact Julie, [julie@dunwell.org](mailto:julie@dunwell.org) or [www.girlguiding.org.uk/](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/)

## Connect

Connect, our parish magazine, is published ten times a year, double issues being December/January and July/August. Particular emphasis was made of circulating the magazine by email, on the website and by hand delivery on request. The magazine includes news, information and illustrations about services and events in St. Mary's and St. Barnabas. All of our clergy team provide a regular article but more contributors are always welcome. Any articles or adverts to be published can be sent to Steve Rice, [steverice1@virginmedia.com](mailto:steverice1@virginmedia.com), or Julie Dunwell, [julie@dunwell.org](mailto:julie@dunwell.org).

Julie Dunwell

### Service Rota Teams

We have continued to operate a scaled down version of the rota during the year, not quite getting back to normal but doing what we're comfortable with.

Thank you to everyone who supported Sunday services, baptisms, weddings and funerals by reading, leading prayers, handing out books, making people welcome, operating IT equipment to enable those at home to participate in worship.

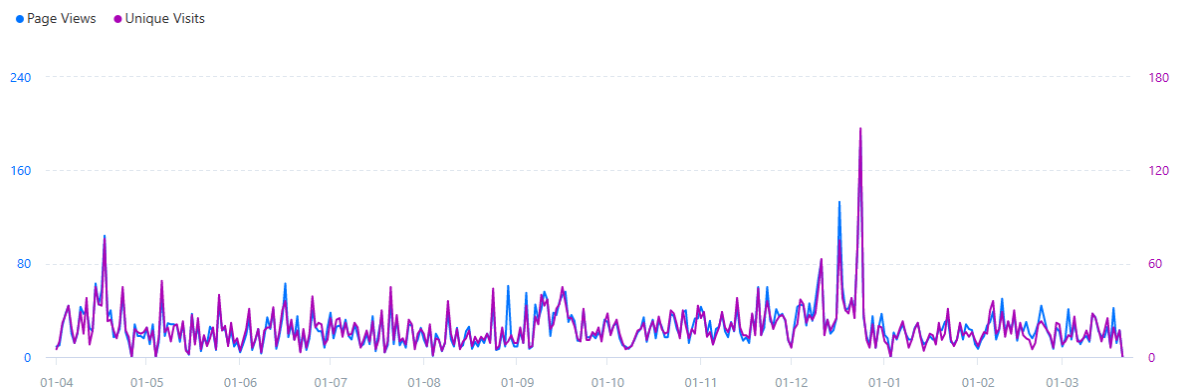
Additional help would be very welcome in any of the teams. Just get in touch.

Sue Stevenson

### St Mary's Church Website

There has been little change in the structure and management of the web site. The content remains fairly static with most of the updates being the Bulletin, Connect, What's On and the Choir schedule.

The following chart shows the number of unique visits and the number of page views over the period 1-April-2022 to 31-March-2023. The peak activities occur in the Easter and Christmas periods. The information that is shown seems to suggest that many users know what they need and go straight to the required page.



The traffic breakdown is shown in the chart below



As always, the web site is wholly reliant on its content from all participants who are directly and indirectly involved with St. Mary's and who produce information for general consumption and who organise events. The timely provision of such notices

is greatly appreciated and helps to promote the church activities and as can be seen from the charts above, keeps a very wide audience well informed. If there is an announcement to make, then it should be on the web site.

Please keep the information flowing.



**Minutes of the Thattham Annual Parish Meeting at St Mary’s Church on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2022 commencing at 3.30 pm**

**Attendance: Revd Mark Bennet (in Chair), Revd Brenda Harland, Revd Marion Fontaine, and 23 residents of Thattham**

**Apologies received from: Revd Nicola Hulks, Mary Baker, Emma Watts, Joan and Michael Collins, Michael and Susan Stevenson, Sue Ball, Anthony and Gaynor Collie, Jim Lowe, Alison Dean, Steve Rice, Jeremy Cottam, John Hicks, Ann and Roger Dykes**

**The Revd Mark Bennet opened the meeting with prayer.**

- 01 Minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
- 02 Election of Churchwardens  
Paul Bullock, Colin Waters and Christine Rice were proposed and seconded and elected to serve as Churchwardens for the year 2022/2023
- 03 Sue Ball was thanked for her interest in being nominated for Churchwarden and invited to take the role of a deputy Churchwarden for the year 2022/2023.

Mark thanked the wardens for their work in the past year

**The meeting ended at 3.35 pm**

.....Chairman

.....date

**Minutes of the Thatcham Annual Parochial Church Meeting at St Mary's Church on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2022 commencing at 3.35 pm**

**Attendance:** Revd Mark Bennet (in Chair), Revd Brenda Harland, Revd Marion Fontaine, and 23 residents of Thatcham

**Apologies received from:** Revd Nicola Hulks, Mary Baker, Emma Watts, Joan and Michael Collins, Michael and Susan Stevenson, Sue Ball, Anthony and Gaynor Collie, Jim Lowe, Alison Dean, Steve Rice, Jeremy Cottam, John Hicks, Ann and Roger Dykes

**Minutes of the APCM on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.**

**Matters arising**

None

**Annual Report**

**Proceedings of the PCC as summarised in the Report were noted.**

**Fabric of St Mary's and the Log Book.** It was agreed that the logbook for 2021/2 and the amended Inventory be agreed and placed in the records of St Mary's.

**Inventory.** It was noted that 24 of the wooden chairs in the gallery had been sold and sales of a further 8 chairs were pending. Also 5 halogen floodlights on the roof of St Mary's had been replaced with LED units.

**The report of the activities of St Mary's and St Barnabas Churches** in the past year was presented to the meeting. Following a proposal from Mark Bennet, seconded by Chris Druce, it was adopted unanimously. Thanks were expressed to all those who contribute to the work in the parish, often diligently, effectively and quietly behind the scenes.

It was reported that there were currently 179 names on the Electoral Roll as revised 15<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

In particular, Mark referred to the work of Ann Dibble and the Safeguarding team in dealing with the constant stream of requirements, revision to policies and guidance and in keeping up to date the certification people working with children and vulnerable adults. It was noted that Safeguarding must continue to be given high profile as part of everything that we do.

Michael Watson asked when we might move to reinstate pre- Covid practice in the administration of communion. Mark Bennet reported that this issue was receiving a mixed response in other local churches and he wished to seek a consensus over the summer so that we might move forward together in September. Mark would write an item for Connect and suggested an open discussion be arranged at St Mary's following a Parish Communion Service in August.

Viv Druce commented that the reorganisation of storage in the Tower Room had created some problems for access to equipment used for CAMEO. It was suggested that Viv should raise the matter with Paul Bullock.

Brenda Harland referred to the progress being made at St Barnabas and the increasing in person contact with governors, staff, pupils and parents at Thatcham Park School.

**Presentation of Accounts**

Chris Watts presented the accounts as approved by the PCC and as amended following examination by the Independent Examiner, Monika Tabat of Tax Avenue. He expressed thanks for help received over the year from Bernadette Ellison and Ann Watts.

St Mary's General Account (day to day running of church activities) showed a surplus of expenditure over income of £8,289. Regular giving through Standing Orders and The Parish Giving Scheme had been most welcome together with a number of significant donations but the need to attract new givers to replace those who have died or moved away remained a challenge.

The St Barnabas General Account showed a positive balance of £1,909 at the end of the year.

We again managed to pay the Parish Share (our contribution to the diocese for clergy stipends, housing and pensions) in full (£94,423). However not all parishes were able to pay the full amount and this reduced the level of Diocesan rebate payable to the Newbury Deanery in 2022. The Parish Share was set at £88,869 in 2022 as the number of full time paid clergy has had to be reduced. The monthly payment due from Thatcham Parish was £7,406.

The ongoing pandemic continued to affect our ability to raise funds but income from Services and other activities improved gradually through the autumn. Work has begun on fundraising initiatives for essential building repairs and organ restoration.

Expenditure on utilities fell significantly in 2021 following reduction in the use of St Mary's because of the pandemic, warmer weather and replacement of lighting with more economic LED lighting. Resumption of pre-pandemic levels of use of St Mary's and the dramatic increases in costs of gas and electricity will increase pressure on finances in 2022 and 2023.

The need to increase Stewardship giving is critical, especially if we are to meet the running costs of both churches and pay the Parish Share again in full in 2022.

Proposed by Mark Bennet, seconded by Simon Stagg and agreed unanimously that the Accounts for 2021 be approved.

#### **Appointment of Independent Examiners**

The Meeting accepted the recommendation that Tax Avenue Accountants of Turnfields Gate, Thatcham be appointed to examine the accounts for 2022.

#### **Election of PCC 2021**

John Hicks, Leanne Fowler, Bernadette Ellison, Alison Dean and Lourdes Cottam were elected to PCC to represent St Barnabas.

The meeting accepted the nomination of Sue Ball to membership of the PCC.

In summary the PCC includes

Ex officio members,

The clergy:

Revd Mark Bennet, Revd Nicola Hulks, Revd Brenda Harland and  
Revd Angela Brennan

Churchwardens:

Paul Bullock, Colin Waters and Christine Rice.

Deanery Synod Representatives for the period to 2020/4.

Tony Collie, Catherine Forbes, Mary Stagg and Chris Watts

Elected Lay Members:

Viv Druce (2020), Kevin Dunwell (2020), Ann Watts (2020) and Emma Watts (2020).

Chris Druce (2021) and Simon Stagg (2021)

Sue Ball (2022)

Appointed by St Barnabas:

John Hicks, Leanne Fowler, Bernadette Ellison, Alison Dean and Lourdes Cottam

Co-opted members to be as agreed by PCC



Mark thanked all those who have agreed to serve on the PCC from 2021 and expressed thanks to all who had served over the last year.

**Representatives on Christians Together in Thattham**

PCC agree that Viv Druce and Catherine Forbes be appointed as representative of the Anglican Church on CTiT

**The meeting ended with Compline at 4.30 pm**

..... Chairman

..... Date



**PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST. MARY'S, THATCHAM, BERKSHIRE**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total 2022 £	Total 2021 £
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>					
Incoming resources from donors	147,884	0	0	147,884	97,742
Other voluntary incoming resources	9,367	5,470	0	14,837	15,432
Income from investments	2,221	0	0	2,221	2,725
Income from charitable and ancillary trading	21,057	0	0	21,057	20,882
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>180,529</b>	<b>5,470</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>185,999</b>	<b>136,780</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>					
Grants and Special Collections	901	0	0	901	2,076
Activities relating to the work of the Church	129,379	0	0	129,379	131,284
Church Management and administration	6,402	450	0	6,852	6,378
Transfers	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>	<b>136,682</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>137,131</b>	<b>139,738</b>
<b>NET INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>43,847</b>	<b>5,020</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>48,867</b>	<b>(2,958)</b>
Gains on investment assets:					
on disposal	0	0	0		0
on revaluation	(4)	(2,973)	0	(2,977)	17,416
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>	<b>43,843</b>	<b>2,047</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>45,890</b>	<b>14,457</b>
BALANCES B/FWD 1 JANUARY	21,139	114,100	169,535	318,958	304,501
<b>BALANCES C/FWD 31 DECEMBER</b>	<b>64,982</b>	<b>116,147</b>	<b>169,535</b>	<b>364,848</b>	<b>318,958</b>

**Thatcham Team Ministry**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**As of 31 December 2022**

5:17 PM

22/04/23

Accrual Basis

	31 Dec 22	31 Dec 21
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
<b>Cash at bank and in hand</b>		
1001 · PCC Thatcham		
1002 · General Fund	(13,496)	(8,570)
1003 · Fabric	77,061	34,240
1004 · Organ (Designated)		
1004/1 · Organ Appeal Greenham Good Exch	2,975	0
1004 · Organ (Designated) - Other	5,402	654
<b>Total 1004 · Organ (Designated)</b>	<b>8,377</b>	<b>654</b>
1006 · Choir	191	(49)
1007 · Youth work	5	(495)
1008 · Curate (Hsg/Expenses)	6,716	3,809
1009 · Bell Maintenance	259	2,259
<b>Total 1001 · PCC Thatcham</b>	<b>79,113</b>	<b>31,848</b>
1050 · St Barnabas	3,657	1,909
1052 · St Barnabas - Set Up	90	90
2101 · Vicar & Churchwardens Treasurer	2,345	2,598
2102 · Vicar & Churchwardens Instant	1,114	1,010
<b>Total Cash at bank and in hand</b>	<b>86,319</b>	<b>37,455</b>
<b>Other Current Assets</b>		
2001 · Investment		
2005 · 47a Station Road	76,339	76,339
2010 · CBF Bell Maintenance 3	26,552	29,193
2020 · CBF Bell Maintenance 2	234	231
2030 · BLK C of E Charity COIF Perp	28,528	28,562
2050 · BLK Organ Fund (Designated)	3,489	3,493
2060 · BLK Organ Fund (Restricted)	41,860	41,908
2070 · Rookery Church Fund	91	114
2071 · Rookery Fund (Lloyds)	149	149
2090 · Thatcham Church Estate	2,928	3,156
2093 · Thatc02 BR Char UK Bond	18,085	18,085
2094 · Thatc02 BR Char UK Equity	69,168	69,168
<b>Total 2001 · Investment</b>	<b>267,423</b>	<b>270,398</b>
<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	<b>267,423</b>	<b>270,398</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>353,742</b>	<b>307,853</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>353,742</b>	<b>307,853</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>		
1010 · Share Capital Account	304,730	304,730
3200 · Unrestricted Net Assets	3,121	(13,335)
Profit for the Year	45,890	16,456
<b>Shareholder funds</b>	<b>353,741</b>	<b>307,851</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>353,741</b>	<b>307,851</b>

**Thattham Team Ministry**  
**Profit & Loss**  
 January through December 2022

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23/02/23 24/04/2023

Accrual Basis

	<u>Jan - Dec 22</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 21</u>
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
<b>3000 · General Income</b>		
<b>3100 · Donor income</b>		
<b>3110 · Service Collections</b>		
3112 · Goodbox	1,462	518
3113 · Petty Cash	-104	-26
3110 · Service Collections - Other	5,619	4,586
<b>Total 3110 · Service Collections</b>	<u>6,978</u>	<u>5,079</u>
<b>3120 · Stewardship</b>		
3121 · Envelopes	5,881	6,369
3122 · PGS	23,087	23,455
3123 · Standing Orders	21,417	24,060
3124 · Tax reclaimed	15,580	15,669
3125 · Donations	26,132	9,454
3126 · Bequests	25,937	0
3127 · Share Rebate	636	642
3128 · Stripe Parish Buying	5	0
<b>Total 3120 · Stewardship</b>	<u>118,674</u>	<u>79,649</u>
<b>3100 · Donor income - Other</b>	<u>65</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total 3100 · Donor income</b>	<u>125,717</u>	<u>84,728</u>
<b>3210 · Other voluntary income</b>		
<b>3220 · Mission</b>		
3221 · Childrens' Society	361	600
3222 · Christian Aid	5	0
3223 · USPG	333	1,066
<b>Total 3220 · Mission</b>	<u>699</u>	<u>1,666</u>
<b>3230 · St Barnabas - Share</b>	6,800	9,600
<b>3240 · Gifts / Presentations</b>	122	405
<b>3250 · Grants Youth Work</b>	1,588	762
<b>3251 · Grants general</b>	1,746	501
<b>3260 · Curate Hsg - Rent</b>	<u>5,470</u>	<u>3,260</u>
<b>Total 3210 · Other voluntary income</b>	<u>16,424</u>	<u>16,194</u>
<b>3310 · Investment Income</b>		
<b>3315 · Investment Income</b>	<u>2,221</u>	<u>2,725</u>
<b>Total 3310 · Investment Income</b>	<u>2,221</u>	<u>2,725</u>
<b>3410 · Charity and Trading</b>		
<b>3415 · BRF income</b>	209	227
<b>3420 · Fees</b>		
3421 · Memorial	0	400
3422 · Funerals	9,274	12,203
3423 · Registrar	0	6
3426 · Wedding	5,140	2,484
<b>Total 3420 · Fees</b>	<u>14,414</u>	<u>15,093</u>
<b>3427 · Advertisements</b>	0	80
<b>3428 · Printing / Photocopying</b>	86	81
<b>3430 · Functions / Activities</b>	1,314	295
<b>3440 · Mast Rental</b>	5,100	5,105
<b>3450 · Altar Books</b>	<u>-66</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total 3410 · Charity and Trading</b>	<u>21,057</u>	<u>20,882</u>
<b>3510 · Building / Equipment Income</b>		
<b>3520 · Hall Hire</b>	1,325	650
<b>3530 · Other B/E income</b>	1,260	606
<b>3536 · Organ Appeal</b>	<u>7,890</u>	<u>5</u>
<b>Total 3510 · Building / Equipment Income</b>	<u>10,475</u>	<u>1,261</u>
<b>3610 · Choir Income</b>		
<b>3620 · Choir Fees</b>	240	80
<b>3610 · Choir Income - Other</b>	<u>0</u>	<u>40</u>
<b>Total 3610 · Choir Income</b>	<u>240</u>	<u>120</u>
<b>3710 · St Barnabas Income</b>	<u>9,864</u>	<u>10,870</u>
<b>Total 3000 · General Income</b>	<u>185,999</u>	<u>136,780</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>185,999</u>	<u>136,780</u>

	<u>Jan - Dec 22</u>	<u>Jan - Dec 21</u>
<b>Expense</b>		
<b>4001 · General Expense</b>		
<b>4010 · Grants &amp; Special Collection</b>		
Total 4011 · Missions	804	1,676
4021 · Presentations	97	400
Total 4010 · Grants & Special Collection	<u>901</u>	<u>2,076</u>
<b>4030 · Work of the Church</b>		
<b>4031 · Ministry</b>		
4032 · Parish Share	88,869	94,423
4033 · Clergy Expenses	348	217
4034 · Youth work	1,483	782
4035 · Function & Activities	570	40
4036 · Fees (ODBF)	7,598	10,395
4036/1 · Fees (Clergy)	142	0
4037 · Bank Account Charges	405	330
4038 · BRF expenses	258	99,673.00
Total 4041 · Curate Training	450	66
4031 · Ministry - Other	50	50.00
Total 4031 · Ministry	<u>100,172</u>	<u>106,589</u>
<b>4051 · Church running costs</b>		
<b>4052 · Utilities</b>		
4053 · Electricity	2,070	1,338
4054 · Gas	1,621	820
4055 · Water	315	16
4056 · Telephone / Broadband	720	720
Total 4052 · Utilities	<u>4,725</u>	<u>2,895</u>
4057 · Insurance	4,918	4,889
4058 · Professional Fees	4,510	4,400
Total 4051 · Church running costs	<u>14,154</u>	<u>12,183</u>
<b>4061 · Upkeep of Services</b>		
4062 · Altar	754	359
Total 4061 · Upkeep of Services	<u>754</u>	<u>359</u>
Total 6510 · Choir expenses	<u>341</u>	<u>384</u>
Total 4030 · Work of the Church	<u>115,421</u>	<u>119,515</u>
<b>4070 · Administration</b>		
4072 · Copier	722	836
4073 · Stationery	900	61
4076 · Audit	882	864
4077 · Administrator	2,287	3,675
4078 · General Admin	144	211
4079 · Memorial Book	654	0
Total 4070 · Administration	<u>5,589</u>	<u>5,646</u>
Total 4001 · General Expense	<u>121,911</u>	<u>127,238</u>
<b>5001 · Building Expense</b>		
5010 · Repairs	119	90
Total 5020 · Fixed Equipment	472	281
5040 · Equipment repair & replacement	3,264	835
Total 5070 · Projects	<u>1,250</u>	<u>1,203</u>
Total 5001 · Building Expense	<u>5,105</u>	<u>2,408</u>
<b>7010 · Bells</b>		
Total 7020 · Projects	<u>2,000</u>	<u>589</u>
Total 7010 · Bells	<u>2,000</u>	<u>589</u>
<b>8001 · St Barnabas payments</b>	<u>8,115</u>	<u>9,503</u>
Total Expense	<u>137,131</u>	<u>139,738</u>
Net Ordinary Income	48,867	-2,958
<b>Other Income/Expense</b>		
<b>Other Income</b>		
Total 9000 · Unrealised revaluation	<u>-2,977</u>	<u>19,414</u>
Total Other Income	<u>-2,977</u>	<u>19,414</u>
Net Other Income	<u>-2,977</u>	<u>19,414</u>
Profit for the Year	<u><u>45,890</u></u>	<u><u>16,456</u></u>

**THATCHAM PCC****Year ended 31 December 2022**

<b>Unrestricted funds</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Organ</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Choir</b>	<b>St B</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>							
Incoming resources from donors	147,884	125,717		10,475	1,588	240	9,864
Other voluntary incoming resources	9,367	9,367					
Income from investments	2,221	2,221					
Income from charitable and ancillary trading	21,057	21,057					
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>180,529</b>	<b>158,362</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,475</b>	<b>1,588</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>9,864</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>							
Grants and Special Collections	901	901					0
Activities relating to the work of the Church	129,379	115,147		4,634	1,483		8,115
Church Management and administration	6,402	5,589	472			341	
Transfers	0						
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>	<b>136,682</b>	<b>121,637</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>4,634</b>	<b>1,483</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>8,115</b>
<b>NET INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>43,847</b>	<b>36,724</b>	<b>(472)</b>	<b>5,842</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>(101)</b>	<b>1,749</b>

<b>Restricted funds</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Bells Hatherley</b>	
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>			
Incoming resources from donors	0		
Other voluntary incoming resources	5,470	5,470	
Income from investments	0		
Income from charitable and ancillary trading	0		
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>5,470</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,470</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>			
Grants and Special Collections	0		
Activities relating to the work of the Church	0	0	
Church Management and administration	450	450	
Transfers	0		
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>NET INCOMING RESOURCES</b>	<b>5,020</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,020</b>
Gains on investment assets:			
on disposal			
on revaluation	(2,977)		(2,977)
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>	<b>2,043</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,020 (2,977)</b>

**THATCHAM PCC****Year ended 31 December 2022**

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Analysis of current account (Lloyds Bank)</b>		
General fund	-13,496	-8,289
Organ (Designated)	8,377	513
Organ (Restricted)	0	140
Fabric	77,061	34,240
Youth	5	-495
Choir	191	-49
Bell Maintenance	259	2,259
Curates Hsg/Expenses (formerly Hatherley)	6,716	3,809
other	0	-281
total	<u>79,113</u>	<u>31,847</u>
St Barnabas (HSBC Acc)	3,657	1,909
St Barnabas (Set up - HSBC Acc)	90	90
	<u>82,860</u>	<u>33,846</u>
<b>Assets of general funds</b>		
Current accounts (Lloyds + HSBC)	82,860	33,846
Charishare (CBF Organ Funds)	45,349	45,402
Charishare (Blk Bell Maintenance)	28,528	28,562
CBF (Bell Maintenance 2+ 3)	26,786	29,424
Total	<u>183,523</u>	<u>137,233</u>
<b>Endowments</b>		
Station Road (Curate Hsg)	76,339	76,339
Charifund (Diocesan Trustees (Oxford) Ltd)	87,253	87,253
Rookery	240	263
Church Estate (Blk Bond + Equity / V&C Lloyds)	6,387	6,764
	<u>170,219</u>	<u>170,619</u>
<b>Total assets</b>	<u><u>353,742</u></u>	<u><u>307,852</u></u>