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Vicar's Report

Looking back over the past year in my diary, I was reminded of several significant moments in the life of our Church.

On Saturday 6th May, King Charles III's coronation took place in Westminster Abbey, a first in our lifetime event for the vast majority of us, and we had a special combined service of celebration at Hughenden Church the following day.

It has been encouraging to witness the many ways in which we are engaging with our local community, and this grew significantly during 2023. Hughenden Singers has gone from strength to strength, with a growing choir, and several choir members have also started attending church, and social events which we organise. There was another stunning Hughenden Flower Festival between 26th-28th August – I have never seen our church so wondrously adorned with colour! There were some stunning displays, each based upon the theme of a favourite hymn, and our community came out in force to see for themselves.

Ben Brice produced an excellent pictorial display of our church vision, which can be seen in our church porch. Our PCC formed two new working groups in April, one headed by Helen, tasked with Community Engagement, and the other, which I lead, responsible for Buildings and Facilities. Our two groups have reported back to PCC regularly. The first significant outcome from our Community Engagement group has been the recommendation that we should look to appoint a full-time Children & Families Minister.

We continue to work well collaboratively with Wycombe Youth For Christ, hosting two local Primary Schools for Easter Eggsplained and Christmas Unwrapped, as well as Helen and myself leading weekly Collective Worship on Wednesdays at Great Kingshill School. We led another Prayer Space event for the children at the end of March in school, and the school was delighted to receive a very positive SIAMS report, following an inspection in November. SIAMS is like a religious Ofsted, which explores the Christian culture of the school, the relationship between our church and the school, and how well Christianity is embedded into the life of all aspects of school life.

I love the run-up to Christmas – so many opportunities to host schools and local Uniformed Organisations for carol services, as well as the chance to go into local pubs and Spring Valley Centre to sing carols and bring the good news of Christmas to many.

Our Christmas services in 2023 were exceptionally well attended – we welcomed well over 500 people alone on Christmas Eve, and it has been a real joy to see more children and young people contributing to our all age services, including leading and speaking, giving bible readings and prayers.

Discipleship remains a priority, and is encouraged especially through our home groups, and opportunities such as Alpha each autumn and the Bible Course, which I ran online in

the winter/early spring. Our Social & Outreach group organised a great programme of events which is also well supported and attended and definitely helped to draw people into our church family.

Friendship group, under the caring oversight of Penny Austin and her wonderful team of volunteers continues to offer a valuable support to the elderly and bereaved, and Hughenden Mothers Union does a great deal behind the scenes to support families and individuals in need, as well as organising lots of excellent events, such as coffee mornings and the Ploughman Lunch in the summer.

I loved sharing many of my personal experiences of my time in India, at our Taste of India evening, which we hosted to a packed church in February. I was so grateful to everyone who cooked authentic South Indian cuisine, and helped to ensure the evening ran smoothly.

Sadly, we said goodbye to two much loved and long standing members of the St Michael & All Angels church family during 2023: Alan Hawes and Joan Steele. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

As an Associate Area Dean in the Wycombe Deanery, there are occasions when I am asked to undertake Church Inspections, on behalf of the Archdeacon, and I find it fascinating to meet with churchwardens from other parishes in the deanery, and hear about their joys and challenges. It also reminds me just how blessed we are at Hughenden in so many different ways – especially with regards to our living stones (1 Peter 2:5) – each and every member who make up the body of Christ in our family.

We said goodbye to TJ in January, who had been our Assistant Curate since September 2019, as she moved to Wexham Park to complete the final year of her curacy. Helen has been awarded a sabbatical from April 2024, which she has more than earned. She will be missed immensely during her three month break from parish duties.

I am so grateful to Julia and Frank who continue to work hard as our churchwardens, undertaking so much work on our behalf behind the scenes.

I am sure to miss out so many worthy people if I try to embark on a list of thanking everyone for all that you do, to ensure that our church is a warm and welcoming place, sharing the love of Christ in countless ways. Thank you one and all, especially if your contributions are not readily noticed or thanked often – we really appreciate you.

Looking forward into 2024 and beyond, my hope is that we will make positive steps forward in our vision “to know God’s love and to share that love with everyone”. We need to ensure that our buildings and facilities are more readily accessible to all, and our services inclusive to all, as we continue to be an outward looking church, celebrating Christ’s love, and sharing his good news with all.

Rev. Keith Johnson

Occasional Offices 2023: Funerals 16 Weddings 5 Baptisms 9

Churchwardens' Report

FRANK HAWKINS

Firstly, I need to thank Julia for her conscientious and active time as churchwarden over the past seven years. As churchwardens we have worked well as a team, and it does share out the work involved.

I promised last year to update the work that has been done to put right the malicious damage done to the church in February 2023. The damage came to well over £20,000 and the major majority of this was covered by Insurance. Verger's cottage repairs have all been completed and additional security measures implemented.

New energy efficient flood lighting has been installed outside and here I need to thank Derek Brown for organizing the work and indeed in completing much of it himself. The person who did all the damages and who was arrested by the police is yet to come to court we are advised.

We have also completed this year new energy efficient lighting in the church at very competitive rates thanks to the considerable help from Lionel Erasmus. We have also changed the outside lighting circuits and lamps so that we have constant supply to the lamppost that has enabled us to establish a defibrillator alongside the noticeboard. We were privileged to be awarded grants from 1) The Department of Health and Social Care and 2) The Buckinghamshire Council Community Board (North West Chilterns) and 3) the Hughenden Church Bell Ringing team. We would like to thank these most sincerely for their support in this. This means that there is now a defibrillator available for all church activities and for the hundreds of people who regularly use the car park for walking dogs or other exercising etc. We have a Guardian appointed (Laura) one of our bellringing team and she will ensure any maintenance is done with our PCC funding this activity.

The work which also goes into maintaining the church and its grounds is also substantial and our thanks must go out to all those who so consistently help here. We urgently need additional volunteers to assist in this work so do please speak to one of the churchwardens if you would like to help.

A special word of thanks to Roger Grant since his service to the church this year has been outstanding both in his physical activities but also with his diligence to safeguarding matters. For all of us involved with children or vulnerable adults it is essential that we have the right training which is quite quick to receive so that we keep our church and all the people in it as safe as we can.

This year has also seen a substantial grant from the Development fund of the Diocese of Oxford for us to appoint a Children and Families Minister. This of course was not

achieved without substantial work from the team driving this forward who were Helen Peters, Lucy Rippon, Gwen Hill, Keith Johnson, James Wood at Oxford and myself. At the time of writing this matter has not been brought to completion.

I am delighted to see the numbers of people that are now coming along to St Michael & All Angels seems to be on the up and up. Additionally, our links with the community through Social and Outreach activities and the Community Choir that meets every Monday evening in the church are also having positive results. The excellent Burns Night organized by Julia and Roger was also very effective again in linking the church with our local community.

As churchwardens, we do these roles to help to maintain the church but more importantly to encourage people to come to our church and enjoy God's great love and the fellowship of other Christians here on earth. I hope we can all play our parts in this and that our church will go from strength to strength.

Frank Hawkins
Churchwarden

JULIA GRANT

I have now completed 7 years as churchwarden and definitely feel it is time to handover to someone else. It has been a privilege and I have felt humbled to be able to serve God and our Church in this way. A big thank you to Frank for the years we have worked together, it has been very enjoyable and makes the job so much easier. His diligence and energy are inspiring at times when I felt I was flagging!

We have gradually moved away from the shadow of the pandemic and finally have returned to using the shared cup for Holy Communion this year. Although a large number of congregation still ask the wine to be 'intincted' we now have an efficient system for managing this. We have reinstated the rota for two servers to support the clergy at the 11.00 am service.

Our congregation numbers have gradually increased this year and we have continued to provide online services, which are accessed by a number of people and are supportive of those who are too elderly, ill or unable to attend a service. I have certainly found this useful at times if I have been unwell. And at a time when many churches have struggled to survive we are indeed hugely blessed with our Clergy, tech team, worship leaders and all who are so dedicated to this service.

In October the Quinquennial Inspection was carried out by liberty Rose Architects. We were pleased it was reported that considerable work had been carried out in the church since the last inspection 5 years ago; particularly work on the Bell Tower, new lighting, new AV system, internal camera streaming system and cameras. It was noted that 'Generally, St Michael & All Angels Church, Hughenden is in a very good condition'

The PCC was pleased with the report; a calendar of works over 10 years with a price estimate was included in the report. The report is available for anybody to see if they so wish.

We also had an Energy Audit carried out in January. There were some inaccuracies in the report and we are not sure how much of it is possible to achieve due to the nature of our historic building. We are eligible for a small £300 grant for both Church and Church House and a group will get together shortly to look at how we interpret it. There was work on the bells in the tower last year, which is now completed.

As Frank has said the work which also goes into maintaining the church and its grounds is substantial and our thanks must go out to all those who so consistently help here. Thanks go particularly to David who has for many years organized the work needed in the churchyard, managing rotas, sorting equipment out etc. We urgently need additional volunteers to assist in the care of our church grounds; so do please speak to one of the churchwardens if you are able to help.

We have made significant progress this year with our engagement with our Eco Church goals and environmental issues. We have been awarded our bronze Eco Church award and in some areas are well on the way to silver. Although this will be reported in the Eco Church report, there are a number of ways we have supported this as a Church. Thank you to all the washing up that goes on after 11.00 am coffee so that we do not use disposable cups and the sorting of waste and recycling at events.

The church hosted a 'jam' meeting last autumn at Church House arranged by Wycombe Environment group. It was a fascinating evening bringing together conservation groups from all the villages surrounding us. There were many great ideas of how to take this forward and we hope to share some of these over the coming year.

Thank you to Keith, Helen and Arthur for their dedication and commitment during the last year. Thank you also to Lynn Brooks as our admin support for her flexibility under difficult circumstances.

Stewards and Welcomers

We are extremely grateful to the many people who offer themselves as Stewards and welcomers for all of the services. Thank you Amanda for organizing the 11.00 am service.

We have a number of new volunteers, which is really good to see but there are never enough willing volunteers. We continue to seek support help and service in the church in many areas, so please come and talk to us if you would be willing to help in any way.

As churchwarden I would like to thank the many people in our congregation who work so hard in different roles to serve God and our Church and do make the CW job easier.

Julia Grant
Churchwarden

Finance

An eventful year involving heavy expenditure on the fabric of our building saw a deficit of £27,428.

Voluntary income was considerably lower than 2022, mainly due to the lack of substantial 'Other' donations. Standing Orders were also down £6,000 on the previous year, clearly reflecting the strain of the difficult economic environment that we find ourselves in. Therefore, our aspiration of covering Parish Share (the regular payments that we make to Oxford Diocese to cover Vicars' salaries and other administrative items), is being missed to the tune of about £11,000. Saying this, we have seen a number of new regular Standing Orders towards the end of the year and a number of people have increased their monthly giving, for which huge thanks.

There appears to be a recognition of the £11,000 shortfall by our congregation, as we raised more than £6,000 at our Gift Day, double the previous year, despite it being held in December, a period of heavier than normal household bills. We will be holding the 2024 Gift Day on a more convenient day.

We took the decision to upgrade the lighting, which was badly needed, at a cost of £23,623. This new LED lighting will reduce our annual electricity bill and helps us towards our aspiration of being a greener church. We also spent nearly £10,000 on a new stone ramp at the entrance. This reduces the risk of tripping and makes access considerably easier for wheelchairs and for those using Zimmer frames.

The break-in earlier in the year caused £16,500 of repairs. This was covered by insurance and we are very grateful to Ecclesiastical Insurance for helping us in our hour of need. Unfortunately, we will have as much as £10,000 further associated cost in 2024, and will not be receiving any more insurance payout.

Inflation continued to run at around the 5% level, but oil costs for heating of around £5,000 and electricity of £3,500 were not as bad as earlier feared. Additionally, we earned nearly £9,000 of interest on around £190,000 held on deposit with CCLA.

We expect another deficit in 2024, due to our intention of hiring a new Children & Families Minister, which will hopefully be an excellent investment in the church's future.

Brian Morley
Treasurer

PCC Report

From March 2023 the PCC was constituted as follows:

Vicar:	Rev. Keith Johnson
Associate Minister:	Rev. Helen Peters
Lay Reader:	David Tester
Churchwardens:	Julia Grant and Frank Hawkins
Treasurer:	Brian Morley
Secretary:	Susan Brice
Deanery Synod:	Mike Hill
Elected Members:	Janet Booth, Andrew Cole, Clare Godfrey (Lay Chair), Antony Rippon, Ben Sharp, Mark Sherrington.

The AVM and APCM were held in church on Sunday 26th March 2023 at 11.30 am.

Thereafter, there was a PCC meeting on 4th May to appoint PCC officers and to establish a Standing Committee. Meetings followed in July, September, November, January and March, all held in Church House. The PCC meeting in March 2024 was chaired by Clare Godfrey at the Vicar's request.

The PCC has considered the Vision of the church and made tentative plans to move forward. It has also considered the document: 'Living in Love and Faith' when the debate over whether or not prayers should be said for same sex couples was discussed.

Roger Grant visited PCC meetings on more than one occasion to inform the committee about the position of the church with regard to safeguarding.

Susan Brice
PCC Secretary

Deanery Synod

Our church is one of the 35 local Anglican churches in Wycombe Deanery, whose vision is to see the churches flourishing individually, working effectively together, and contributing to the renewal of the wider church. This Deanery is one of the most inspired and inspiring Deaneries of our Diocese. Our church is represented by Keith, Helen and myself, though up to three more reps would be allowed, and visitors to the Synod meetings are always welcome. Come with me sometime. The next Synod will be 1st May with a particular emphasis on the Environment and Care for Creation, (which are of special interest to me).

A recent Synod focussed on Youth work, with a number of youth workers from several churches enthusing about our young people. The Deanery has appointed one of these, Mark Humphries, one day a week as the Deanery Youth and Children Network leader, to provide youth workers with colleagues for encouragement and inspiration. No doubt our expected Children and Families Minister will be able to benefit here.

The Deanery has a Mission Fund of about £30,000 available to give out each year. The money can be used for equipment or facilities or events, so long as it is clearly for mission. Churches that didn't apply last year (e.g. Hughenden) would be prioritised.

The rural churches mostly in the west of the Deanery are quite small and until the last few years had struggled on their own, but the Deanery-led Rural Forum has drawn them together and brought new hope and vigour. One new venture has been Wild Church, held out in the countryside every couple of months. It draws people from across the whole Deanery for a very informal act of worship.

Wycombe Deanery has a new website at www.wycombedeanery.com with the splendid strap-line:

Serving Our Fellowships | Shaping Our Future | Spurring On Our Friends | Sharing The Fire

But this is a very active strap-line, with one of these four emphasised at each meeting. I especially love "Sharing the fire" ... noticing where the Spirit is active, and joining in.

Mike Hill

Deanery Synod Representative

Safeguarding

INTRODUCTION

- Safeguarding remains an important and standing item at PCC meetings.
- Our church earnestly seeks to comply with the Church of England Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance, as issued by the House of Bishops.
- To keep abreast of changes, developments and improvements, the Parish Safeguarding Officer attends regular safeguarding face to face and Online meetings with members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and other PSOs across the diocese.

FORMAL OBLIGATIONS

- Under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 all authorised clergy, licensed readers, ministry group leaders and helpers, churchwardens and PCC members must comply with the safeguarding guidance issued by the House of Bishops (this includes both policy and practice guidance).

THE PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

- Roger Grant, 07909 960938, roger_h_grant@hotmail.com is the current Parish Safeguarding Officer and DBS Recruiter and Verifier.
- He has provided safeguarding training for the PCC, the outcomes from which contributed to our current Safeguarding Action Plan.
- Roger also provides PSO Induction Training, face-to-face and online training for the Basic, Foundation and Leadership level courses for the Diocese.
- To give more time to his PSO role, Roger has stepped back from providing online training, except for PSO Induction.

SAFEGUARDING POLICY, GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

- The Church of England Safeguarding Policy, 'Promoting a Safer Church', was agreed at the Parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting held on 9 November 2023. It is displayed in the entrance to the church and on our website.

- Guidance on ‘what to do if you have a safeguarding concern’ is available also on the church website.

SAFEGUARDING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Complying with DBS and training requirements, for all those involved in all our various ministry roles, remains a challenge. However, following training on the use of the new Oxford Diocese Safeguarding Hub online application, it is hoped the recording, tracking and updating of these aspects will be both easier and more efficient.

SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

- Currently, there are two recorded safeguarding concerns.

NEXT STEPS

- The focus of PSO work remains ensuring compliance for all our ministry groups in relation to role descriptions, DBS verification and training requirements.
- Contribute to the annual safeguarding audit.
- Make effective use of meeting with PSOs from four other local churches (a support group recently set up by Roger).
- Continue to make effective use of the online Safeguarding Dashboard (this resource generates an action plan, relevant to what matters have been completed and what remains to be done) and the Safeguarding Hub.

Roger Grant
Hughenden Parish Safeguarding Officer

Children and Youth

Children and young people who are part of our congregation at St Michael & All Angels are a real blessing to us. It has been a delight to see them mature this past year, moving up in year groups at school and taking on new responsibilities: taking part in All Age services: leading, reading, doing dramas, delivering prayers, and volunteering in the life of the church.

The Oxford diocese has recognised the importance of ministry to children, young people and their families. Bishop Stephen of Oxford wrote to all churches in the Diocese earlier this year encouraging us all to put the work with children, youth and families at the centre of all we do.

As a congregation we had already recognised the importance of this, and in line with our vision, had put forward a bid to the Church Development Fund for monies to help employ a full time Children and Family minister. At the time of writing this post has been offered to Paul, an exceptional candidate, and we await news of whether he feels a move to Buckinghamshire and St Michael & All Angels is right for him and his wife.

I am so grateful for the gifted team of volunteers who faithfully serve our children and young people on Sunday mornings.

Agnes Dodwell leads crèche and writes:

Creche for under-2s is running during Sunday 11.00 am Services in term-time in North Room, alongside Bubbles for pre-school children. Depending on what ages attend, we may join in with Bubbles or provide age-appropriate play for younger children. Parents are most welcome to pop in, stay or leave their little ones in our care whilst they attend the service.

May I thank all the volunteers on the creche rota - Ali Skillen, Christine Powell, Janet Booth, Mary Ames and myself. A special thank you goes to Ali from whom I have taken over the rota organisation in September 2023, and to Mary who is stepping down at Easter. This sadly leaves us very short of helpers. If you are interested to help us being a family-friendly church please speak to myself or Lucy (see over). You are welcome to pop in during a session and see what we do. No previous experience is required. Safeguarding training can be arranged. It helps if you like young children!

Agnes Dodwell - agnes.dodwell@btinternet.com

Lucy & Chloe Rippon head up Bubbles supported by Vicky Eaton and Lucy Leonard Lucy writes:

Preschoolers meet in North Room, within the church building and have the opportunity to join us in Bubbles to share a simple bible text through games and props and then enjoy a crafty activity and plenty of play. The children are keen to share their work at the end of the service and receive rapturous applause from a very supportive congregation. The emphasis is always on fun and recently two of our church youth have stepped up to take on the role of preparing and leading some sessions for which we are very grateful. Of course we respect and endorse the safeguarding regulations which means we always need two adults present so if you have a calling to join us in North room please do let me know - Lucy.rippon@gmail.com. Bubbles sessions are during the 11.00 All Age service each Sunday except for the first Sunday and during the school holidays.

Steve and Shelagh Sheppard lead JC Club and write:

This is a group for Primary School children and meet in Church house. Some weeks there are only one or two children – or none – occasionally we get a few more!

We always have a story, Bible reading, craft, and end with a prayer from one of the children.

Over the last few months we have learnt about Wycombe refugee partnership where we talked about what we would leave behind and what we would take with us if we were refugees. In Advent we made and decorated angels when we learned of the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary. We have also made stain glass windows, Celtic cross bookmarks and baked unleavened bread.

We've learned about the baptism of Jesus and baptised a baby doll in the kitchen sink! On Mothering Sunday, we talked about how important our Mums are, and made certificates for them.

Although we are unable to run JC Club every week, it is special to be with the children whenever we can.

Scott Clay leads monthly youth sessions and writes:

So far this year we have had three Sunday youth sessions. We have had discussions on what it means to be a Christian, faith and its importance (illustrated with David & Goliath) and the miracle of Jesus turning water into

wine. There has been lots of hot chocolate and fun games and icebreakers, my personal favourite Big Bible Numbers! I have also had amazing help with the sessions from Polly, Poppy, and Richard. Looking forward we are hoping for more valuable group discussions, bible study, original fun games, and of course hot chocolate.

Keith and I have continued to take weekly Collective Worship at Great Kingshill School. It's a privilege to be able to share the gospel with 400 plus children on a weekly basis, and their teachers.

As a church we hosted Christmas Unwrapped jointly with Wycombe Youth for Christ for Hughenden and Great Kingshill Year 6. Thank you to the team who helped with that. Great Kingshill year 6 joined us again for Easter Eggplained (Hughenden school unfortunately cancelled their visit due to a shortage of staff members on the day) again, thank you for the team that helped.

Keith welcomed the scouts at Christmas for their annual service, and Helen welcomed Pipers lower school who enjoyed their Christingle with us.

Helen Peters
Associate Minister

Communications Group

TECH

- Much of the effort of the techy section of the group, has been in making sure the operation of the Sunday Service tech, i.e. Proclaim and especially live streaming runs smoothly, and is easier to operate. Grateful thanks to Richard Peters and to Ben Sharp for their work, and also on getting the Welcome Screen operating easily. The Welcome screen not only is a bright informative and welcoming presence in Church throughout its opening hours, it also provides on screen text for the Minister or the Worship Band members to read.
- Two new members have recently offered their services as members of the tech team and are being trained. This will eventually alleviate the pressure on the team due to the immediate absence of two stalwarts. Crib sheets have been developed for both live streaming and proclaim, and a video for the Live Stream to assist operation.

NOTICE BOARDS

- The gate notice board was refurbished and weather protected, and the standard information updated. Grateful thanks to Derek Brown for his work. We hope that this provides a tidier and clearer guide to events. Ben Brice, as ever, produced many posters to reflect church events.
- Ben also was responsible for updating the 'tree' poster in the porch reflecting the variety of church activities.
- In church and in the porch, thanks go to Susan Brice who keeps an eye on the notices to ensure timeliness and neatness.

BOOKCASES

The advent of the Welcome Screen prompted a review of the back of the church. It was decided with PCC that the library should be dispensed with, which allowed the removal of the small bookcase behind the font, and the relocation of the publications from there to the large bookcase. This created more room behind the font which helps at baptisms.

FESTIVAL LEAFLETS

Christmas and Easter Leaflets setting out the details of the services, and including a message from Keith, were expertly designed by Ben Brice, printed locally and distributed by members of the congregation. Ours is a large and somewhat straggly parish, and the task of delivery is not inconsiderable, especially when the weather is inclement, as of late and thanks must go to all who slogged their way round the highways and byways, possibly dodging not only the showers but road works too.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

- We have endeavoured to clarify how members of the church can advertise events (whether by the AV Screens, print flyers or posters, via the magazine or website, etc) The first stop is to notify the office, for the booking of the church or church house and all methods of notification should follow from there. We hope this will mean that all possible appropriate methods of informing people about events are used in a timely way.
- The website is used more and more as people come to expect that that is the obvious place for information. Ben Brice continues to update and review its appearance.
- As a result of a request from PCC an online brochure was produced about the use of the church as a filming site and this was circulated to the various studios around this area.
- Many of you will have noticed that we have several new members of our congregations. Often, we expect new members to 'know how things work', but occasionally information is not obvious. We have asked (and perhaps need to ask again) newcomers to provide new members with the church magazine, and a contact form developed during the year, for those wishing to formally contact the ministry team.

MEMBERSHIP

The communications group consists of:

Ben Brice; Richard Peters; Guy Mannering; Andrew Collard; Alison Stacey; Jane Tyrer

I continue to be grateful for their involvement, expertise and good sense. Alison has decided the time has come to retire from the group, and we thank her most warmly for her contributions since the group's early days.

Jane Tyrer
Group Chair

Eco Church

CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

The Church of England has recognized the climate emergency and has called all parts of the Church to become net zero carbon by 2030. As you can imagine this will be a big challenge but at Hughenden Church we are very keen to move forward on this challenge. We are so fortunate to have a beautiful church in a National Trust park and have enrolled with an 'Eco Church' programme which will bring the care of God's creation to the heart of our Community. We now have an active group of people who meet regularly to take forward this work.

Eco Church is an award scheme for churches in the UK organized by a charity called 'A Rocha UK'. It provides a framework and a toolkit of resources to support the Church to take practical action on caring for God's earth. It also provides an action programme to support the improvement of biodiversity, address climate change and make a real difference to nature restoration.

We are delighted that we have recently been awarded a Bronze Eco Church Award and are now well on the way to Silver. Our church building, as a listed ancient church, provides challenges in some areas, for example double glazing would be almost impossible to be approved for our beautiful stained glass windows and heating an old building of this size presents challenges. However, the resources cover five categories: worship & teaching, buildings, land, community & global engagement, and lifestyle.

So what progress have we made so far?

Last year our next steps were to work on the use of our church grounds to become more active in the environmental management of this space and encourage the wildlife.

- We have started to achieve this: as well as working with Eco Church we have registered with Bucks, Berks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) Wilder Churches, who have been advising on the management of the church lands and surveyed the lichens and wild flowers in the church yard last summer.
- We are working with Bucks Raptor group and about to place owl boxes for Tawny owls in the church grounds.
- We applied to North West Chilterns Community Board for a grant and were awarded £973 to build a 'Quiet Garden'. It will be a restful place for people and wildlife. 'Come

with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest' said Jesus in Mark: 6:31. The Quiet Garden Movement nurtures access to outdoor space for prayer and reflection and we are currently looking at which part of the churchyard would best suit this and waiting for faculty approval.

- We have surveyed the yew tree and registered it as an 'ancient tree', it has been dated as being planted in 1612.
- We now have LED lights in the church and church flood lighting. We review every event in the light of our Eco Church goals; we use Fairtrade products wherever possible.
- We installed swift boxes in the Bell Tower when the repair work took place last year.
- Christians have become increasingly aware of the environmental crisis and our worship and teaching at times are focused on the environment and God's creation. This is not only at times like Harvest Festival but included in other teaching at the church.

Every day churchyards are visited by many people, whether or not they come to church services. We have many visitors due to our beautiful position in a National Trust park and it is an important place for relaxation, contemplation, prayer and to connect with friends.

I would like to say a big thank you to our fantastic team who are always enthusiastic and passionate about everything we discuss and happy to participate and contribute in any way they can.

Julia Grant
Churchwarden

Mike Hill
Wycombe Deanery Environmental Advocate

You can find further information about Eco Church at:

www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk

www.bbowt.org.uk

www.bbowt.org.uk/team-wilder/team-wilder-churches

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/action-pack

www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/improving-your-local-community/north-west-chilterns-community-board/

Mission Support Group

The MSG continues to encourage our church family in the support of Christian mission, near and far. We focus on a different mission each quarter, inviting a visiting speaker to talk on the organisation's work on a Sunday in that period. This focus is introduced by articles in Outlook and on the church website, and by displays on our mission noticeboard. This last 12 months, we have focussed on: Ukraine2Chilterns in April-June and Embrace the Middle East in Jul-Sep, followed by Wycombe Refugee Partnership in Oct-Dec. In Jan-Mar this year, our focus has been Wycombe Homeless Connection.

FORTHCOMING

We have a mission focus programme mapped out for the rest of this year. In the quarter Apr-Jun we will look at Mission Aviation Fellowship, and James Issott, a MAF Youth speaker will be at our 11.00 am service on 5 May. For July-September we will focus on Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, and Baroness Cox, HART's inspirational founder will speak at our services on 14 July. Then for the last quarter, our focus will probably be Chosen (formerly Azalea) but this is yet to be confirmed.

CHURCH FUNDING

In addition to the above, the MSG advises the PCC how to donate the church funds it allocates to wider mission causes. Last year (2023), the £2,000 was donated as follows:

- £800 to Church Mission Society (CMS), to support Kevin and Jen Cable.
- £100 to each speaker's focus charity in 2023, i.e. Open Doors, Ukraine2Chilterns, Embrace the Middle East, and Wycombe Refugee Partnership.
- £200 to each of 4 charities: HART, Chosen, MAF and Ebenezer Children's Centre.

CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS

The MSG also recommends the causes to be supported by our collections over the Christmas period. The total for Christmas 2023 was £3,123.01, including £159.30 raised for Wycombe Homeless Connection at the Naphill Carol Service. Many thanks to all those who contributed so generously. £1,147.21 was sent to Wycombe Homeless Connection and £987.90 each to One Can and Wycliffe Bible Translators. Grateful thanks were received from the charities.

KEVIN AND JEN CABLE, GAZA ETC.

We continue to support Kevin and Jen Cable in their ministry in the Holy Land, and we have received email and video updates from them in what has proved to be a really difficult year. Legal problems over permits for restoration of the church building, St Peter's Jaffa, which could not be resolved quickly, led them to refocus their ministry on the people they serve. For very good reasons, it was decided to link their work to Christchurch Anglican church in Jerusalem and rename their congregation Christchurch Jaffa. They continued to use the Immanuel Lutheran church for services and are grateful for an excellent relationship with that church. However, the Hamas terrorist attacks in October and the subsequent conflict changed the situation yet again. Israel adopted a war footing and the population a siege mentality: rocket attacks were frequent and unpredictable, many Israelis were called up for military service, and many expatriates and diplomats left the country. With their ministry on hold, Kevin and Jen moved to the relative safety of Jerusalem to work with traumatised internally displaced people (IDPs) from the south of Israel. They returned to Jaffa in early February to restart their work. In addition to the problems of working in an uncertain and changing situation, they also have a number of challenges, including a shortfall in financial support and difficulties renewing visas. Our church will continue to support them, and we have agreed to increase our giving to them via CMS considerably from the start of this year. Also, Philip Bingham of CMS will speak at services on 30 Jun about their work and how we can support them further.

ADDITIONAL CHURCH DONATIONS

In response to the conflict in the Holy Land and as suggested by Helen in one of her sermons, we decided to support relief work on both sides of the conflict in the Holy Land. Late last year, the church made donations of £500 to Embrace the Middle East to support its work in Gaza and £500 to the Church's Ministry among Jewish People to help Kevin and Jen's work with IDPs in Jerusalem.

David Tester

Social & Outreach

As has become custom, the church enjoyed another eclectic Social & Outreach (S&O) calendar with a huge variety of events and activities meeting a wide range of desires and needs. Importantly, the S&O team focussed on both the congregation and the community, as it sought to help to realise the Church Vision.

We kicked off the year with the New Year's Day walk, followed by a 'high tea' kindly hosted by Helen & Richard Peters, in what has become a bit of an annual tradition (the walk that is).

The S&O Committee worked with Keith to organise a 'Bring & Share India Night', in which Keith regaled a packed-out church with entertaining anecdotes and interesting stories about his time in South India, which he undertook as part of his 2023 sabbatical. The event included tasty refreshments from the region, which were served to a combination of congregation and community.

Two teams from the church joined in with the much-loved local 'Potter's Quiz', which had returned to Hughenden Village following a fallow period during Covid. Whilst neither of our teams won, it was a great opportunity for the church to be within the community and a really fun time was had by the quizzers.

Although not a church organised group, the popularity of the Hughenden Community singers has brought welcome outreach link with the local area and the organising team of Frank Hawkins (one of the Social & Outreach team and founder of this choir), Liz Moseley and Richard Peters have brought some new music into the church. This included the 'Sing for the King' event, which encouraged many people into the church for a full house concert. Bucks Fizz and Cake made this a very suitable celebration for the King's Coronation.

Later in the Spring, the 'Nature Quest and Dog Walkers' event saw people share in the wonder of God's flora and fauna in and around the church, offering people activities to do to discover nature within the churchyard and surrounding area as well as inviting dog walkers to join in and providing tasty treats for their much-loved pets.

Whilst the Committee supported preparations for the Hughenden Village Day, with plans to set up our pop-up bar, the St Michael's Arms, high winds saw the event cancelled but the church is planning to support in 2024.

The summer BBQ once again proved popular and it was lovely to see so many faces from our congregation enjoying drink, food, wonderful hospitality and for some, a swim. Thanks to Anu and the team for putting on this popular reoccurring event.

Later in the year, Church House was filled with teams for our own, home-grown quiz, accompanied by a 'Fish & Chip' supper. John Callow did a wonderful job of pitching it right and thanks go to him for a great evening.

2023 also saw a couple of key members of the Committee leave and our thanks go to Clare Godfrey and Mike Hill for all they have done over the years to support and lead the S&O agenda for the church.

We are so grateful that there are many of you who already support and help at the committee's events, even though you're not on the Committee, with a number of you being on the Social & Outreach Support Team.

However, looking ahead to the programme for 2024, the Committee is in urgent need of some 3-5 new members to sustain the regular, varied and high-quality events & activities, that are needed to nurture the fellowship within the congregation and to continue to draw alongside the Community in pursuit of our Church's Vision.

We would ask that those who join us contribute to driving our S&O agenda, through the creation & planning of events, and be willing to lead the occasional event themselves or in partnership with another. Our committee has a fun & friendly feel, with wine and cheese served at many of the meetings. If joining the Committee is of interest, please contact Antony.

Finally, we do hope you'll manage to join us for some, if not all, of our events and we wish to thank the volunteers, and of course our church and community participants, who make it all possible and worthwhile.

Take care and God Bless,

Antony Rippon
on behalf of the Social & Outreach team

Mothers' Union Baptism Rota

There have been eight Baptisms at St Michael & All Angels, during 2023 and three in the early part of this year, all taking place on a Sunday and usually at the 11.00 am Family Service. The custom of an MU member presenting a Baptism Card and Gift to the candidates has continued; Nicola Fairbairn arranges for the MU member to be present at this Baptism Service.

During the service, the parents and Godparents learn of the MU support that is available should the family be in need of it. There is always a note accompanying the card and gift introducing the church's 'Hughenden Weekly Baby & Toddlers Group' which includes the monthly Tiny Tots Service. Two members of the church's Tiny Tots Team attend this weekly Toddlers Group in the North Room, providing coffee, tea, biscuits and support of any kind: this has proved to be a very worthwhile PR exercise and undoubtedly encourages some parents to consider having their child baptised at St Michael & All Angels.

I am very grateful to the Mothers' Union representatives who have presented the card and gift at the Baptism Services. There is no doubt that this representation and support as part of our outreach programme continues to be appreciated and parents plus their families see it as a warm and welcoming gesture.

Nicola Fairbairn

Bellringing

Here at St Michael & All Angels, we are lucky to have one of the finest rings of eight bells in Buckinghamshire, and they are renowned for both their quality and sound, as well as the way they handle. In order to maintain them, they need regular care and attention and for the majority of that task I am grateful to Cliff Davies who has been Steeple Keeper here for the last six years and does a wonderful job. This report gives a brief outline of the current situation regarding both the current state of our bells and our ringers.

Now that the tower roof has been made secure, there seems to be little, if any, further corrosion to the bell frame that had resulted from years of water ingress and Cliff would like to thank all those involved in the restoration project that restored the tower roof and saw the installation of the metal staircase and gallery, in order to be

able to reach the hatchway to the outside of the roof. The current matter to be addressed now, is the need to investigate and assess the condition of the bearings on two of our bells. This became clear during the latest annual inspection carried out by a local firm of well-renowned bellhangers, Whites of Appleton. As a consequence, Whites will be returning next month to dismantle and if necessary, replace those bearings, with the cost of approximately £2,000 being met from tower funds.

Once this work is carried out, our bells will be in good shape for the future. Ideally the bell frames and fittings should be sand-blasted and repainted, however that would entail a great deal of preparation involving the removal of all wheels, ropes and fittings, and the bells would then be out of action for another extended period of time. There is the added consideration that it will be tricky to find suitable volunteers with the agility, time and capability to do that preparation work; something for us to consider and plan for, in the future.

The situation regarding our bellringers is looking positive. Three of our recruits, who started during the 'Ring for the King' campaign, are progressing nicely; they are now able to ring rounds and simple 'call changes' on a Sunday morning and have become valuable additions to the band. To support our new ringers, I have begun implementing a new structured and progressive nationally recognised learning scheme, which aims to train and develop new ringers, and both Cliff and I look forward to teaching the practical skills using this scheme.

It must be acknowledged however, that teaching new learners puts additional stress on the bells, and poor bell handling in a ringer's early stages of learning creates a significant amount of extra maintenance. For example, it puts considerable strain on the wooden 'stays' that allow the bells to be rested mouth upwards when ringing stops, and a number of stays have needed to be replaced, which takes a considerable amount of time and careful craftsmanship. Having said this, as the number of brand-new learners has reduced and our current learners are now making good progress, there should be less impact on the stays in the near future.

To conclude, the future looks promising for ringing at Hughenden. We have a small, but thriving band of ringers with great camaraderie and friendship amongst us and we are also lucky to attract ringers from other local towers who enjoy joining us at our evening practices. It will be a joy to help ensure ringing continues here for many years to come.

Verity Nicholls
Tower Captain

Church Flowers

St Michael & All Angels has been enhanced by flowers throughout the year except, of course, for the periods of Lent and Advent during which there are no flowers in church. The flower team numbers have increased with three more ladies joining.

The Christmas decorations with evergreens, baubles, gold cones and flowers, was as lovely as ever and together with the beautiful, decorated tree to the left of the altar, looked stunning. The holly last year was covered in berries and it was, perhaps, a sign of the milder weather that the birds had not stripped the trees before we could get to them! As usual on Mothering Sunday, daffodils were given out to the ladies at all three services and thanks go to the members of the team who tied them into bunches.

On 6th May the church looked beautiful decorated with lots of flowers in traditional patriotic colours for the Coronation of King Charles III.

In January 2024 a flower arranging demonstration was held to show how to do the flowers without using flower foam which is a bad pollutant. Carol Bennett from the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies showed about six different methods ranging from chicken wire to stones to twigs and jam jars etc. 40 people attended in Church House and enjoyed tea and cake afterwards. As our church is trying to become more ecologically friendly, our flower team will try to put some of these ideas into practice during the coming year.

A big thank you to all those who have helped to make our lovely church even more lovely throughout the year.

Sylvia Clark

Friendship Morning

The Friendship Group meets on the third Thursday of every month in Church House.

The Friendship Group was able to meet every month throughout 2023. Although we had 28 members on our register at least three ladies were reluctant to return since the Covid epidemic for fear of picking up an infection. I have been keeping in touch with them by phone and they are keeping alright. Two other ladies have picked up their lives more actively and do not feel the need for the group at present.

The numbers per meeting ranged from 13 people in February to 22 people in November with an average of 15 members meeting per month. Very sadly, Joan Steel passed away towards the end of the year. She had been a regular attender of our group - her last visit being in October. We miss her greatly. We have had four new members join the group who have become regulars.

We provided a range of activities for members to participate in as well as giving them plenty of time to chat. We held a Bible Quiz in February, a Soup Lunch in March, A Coronation Celebration for the King's Accession in May and an Organ Recital by Neil Brice our Organist in June. In July and September, we were able to sit in the Mother's Union Garden and enjoyed the sunshine. In August we provided a Ploughman's Lunch and in November, instead of going to a pub we provided a Fish and Chip Luncheon in Church House both of which worked very well. Finally in December we provided Christmas Fayre followed by carols. Ben Brice kindly accompanied us on the keyboard.

I would like to thank my regular support team of kind helpers led by Cathryn Carter who are Alison Stacey, Carol Plested, Yvonne Cook and Jennifer Neighbour. They provide and serve homemade scones and cakes with tea and coffee every month, a Ploughman's Lunch in the Summer, Fish and Chips in November and Christmas Fayre in December. They are a great team.

I would also like to welcome Ruth Smith who has recently joined the team. I hope that she will get to know the Group and that she will come with me to visit some of our past members who are no longer able to come to the group because of their frailty. I learned only yesterday that Grantley Hoath, who has been resident in a local Home for a number of years, and whom I had planned to visit in the afternoon, had passed away peacefully in the early morning.

Some of us also pick up members from their own homes who would otherwise not be able to get to the group. We have some kind volunteers who we can call upon should we need more help with transport. Finally I would like to thank Keith, Helen and Arthur who kindly offer so much support.

Penny Austin

Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union have had another successful year with membership numbers increasing slightly. A varied programme of speakers at the monthly meetings covered topics ranging from the music of Gershwin to the work of several local and international charities

Our coffee mornings and summer luncheon were popular with members, their friends and the public. These events enable us to extend the church outreach into the community. The money raised is used to support local and diocesan charities.

In June we did a tour of the local Prestwood farm and learnt about the workings of sheep, cattle and horticulture farming. A delicious cream tea afterwards was appreciated.

At Christmas, a large number of donations to the Women's Refuge were gratefully received. We also distributed boxes of biscuits to 20 members of the congregation which were greatly appreciated

We said goodbye to several longstanding members whose past involvement with the branch had been considerable and welcomed some new members.

Ann Gee

Parish Magazine – Outlook

Our magazine goes from strength to strength with many favourable comments about its colourful and clever layout and interesting and varied content. There had been some concern about the distribution reducing due to the magazine being online, but this has not proved to be the case. Our thanks particularly to Ben Brice who designs the layout and makes Outlook look so attractive. We again entered the National Parish Magazine Awards and came 22nd out of 450 entries in the A5 category so better than the previous year.

Our thanks to our regular contributors who continue to come up with fresh items. We use some pieces from The Parish Pump, a valuable online resource for parish magazine editors.

However, as always, we are delighted to receive any articles or anecdotes, etc from anyone who would like to submit them. It's always good to have items of local interest.

Andrew Cole and his team faithfully print the magazine each month and Andrew then delivers packs to distributors who put them through letter boxes. He also posts copies to people who no longer live around Hughenden. Many thanks to all concerned.

We have editors' meetings from time to time when we discuss any problems and suggest new ideas for future editions of Outlook. Suggestions from our readership are always welcome.

Sylvia Clark, Christopher & Jane Tyrer, Susan Brice
Editors

Tiny Tots

Tiny Tots has continued to meet weekly in term-time (usually in North Room, or in the summer months, the MU garden) with a monthly service in church. The service introduces the children to Bible stories, simple songs with piano accompaniment and prayers. There is also a craft activity related to the story. On these 'service weeks' there are lavish homemade refreshments, supplied by the Tiny Tots Team: amusingly, one Tiny Tot has described this event as 'Piano-Cake Church'! On the other weeks we provide tea/coffee and biscuits, and the 'mums' bring a healthy snack for the children.

Tiny Tots is very much a team affair, and whilst I write this report, I'd again like to thank Charlotte Tester and Jane Tyrer for taking the administrative lead in the group and keeping us well communicated – WhatsApp is a wonderful tool to keep all informed of what's going on! We now have two WhatsApp groups, one for the Tiny Tots Team and the second for all group members.

A huge thank you too for the rest of the very committed team: Christine Powell, Nicky Fairbairn and Barbara Willson, who take turns attending weekly sessions, providing refreshments, helping set up, clearing away – and lending a listening ear and prayer when appropriate to mums who need that. I would like to thank Dianne Walker who has more recently become a very important and valued addition to the team and also Sylvia Flint for offering help on many occasions.

As we build relationships, we gain trust, and so conversations can go deeper. The welcome and friendship aspects of the group make it particularly special to those who attend. We have a lovely regular core of families who join us on a weekly basis – and have welcomed many new babies this year, which is always a delight. It is lovely to observe that our families have grown into a strong group – who meet outside Tiny Tots for friendship and support. On several occasions we have been asked by families to pray for specific issues of concern.

Several baptisms of Tiny Tots children have taken place over the year and one member of the group attended the last Alpha course.

The group is also very welcoming of new people – with many new faces attending at different times throughout the year.

We especially enjoyed meeting in the Mothers' Union garden after Easter and throughout the summer where we held our annual Teddy Bear's picnic in June. As ever, the MU provided a wonderful picnic for which we thank them enormously, and the beautifully warm weather was an additional bonus.

Helen Peters

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