

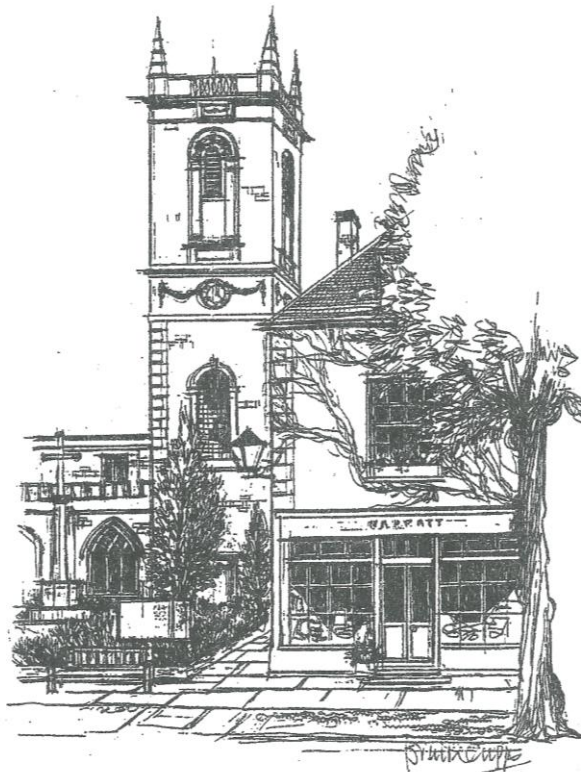


*Benefice of*  
WOODSTOCK & BLADON

# SAINT MARY MAGDALENE, WOODSTOCK

Vestry Meeting and  
Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2023

Agenda and Reports with 2022 minutes and  
accounts



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**ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING**  
**to be held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 12.15pm**

Agenda: To elect two Churchwardens

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**  
**to be held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023 following the above**

Agenda:

- 1 Opening prayer, Welcome and Apologies for absence
- 2 To approve Minutes of the 2021 Annual Parochial Church meeting
- 3 To receive a report from the Rector.
- 4 To receive a report on Safeguarding
- 5 To receive a report on the Electoral Roll
- 6 To receive a report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and other Church groups
- 7 To receive the Financial Statements of the Council for the year ending 31 December 2021 independently examined.
- 8 To receive a report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church from the churchwardens
- 9 To receive a report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod - included in booklet
- 10 To elect lay members to the Parochial Church Council
- 11 To appoint Sidespersons
- 12 To appoint an Independent Examiner

**Open Forum** *for questions and discussion about our mission and ministry*

**Closing Prayer**

## **REPORT OF THE RECTOR for the 2023 APCM**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Dear friends, here we are again! Another year has flown by and so much has happened. Life at St Mary Magdalene's has, for the first full year, returned to what we might call 'normal' although you may not agree and in many ways you will know better because I never experienced what you might have regarded as 'normal' before the pandemic. However, it seems to me that there is now a rhythm that was difficult to establish before with changing rules and regulations about what we could and could not do as well as people's quite natural reticence about re-emerging.

We are not perfect – there will always be things we can do better – but I am reminded of the couple trying out a new church who said to the vicar 'we're shopping around until we find the perfect church' to which the vicar responded as quick as a flash 'well if you find it, don't join it because you'll wreck it!' We are all flawed and if we were not, we would have no need of church. Therefore, what I hope we do is celebrate God's goodness, celebrate each other,

and support each other in our imperfection, that we grasp the moments of joy and journey together through the moments of sorrow.

There have been both this last year and no greater moment of shock and sorrow than the sudden death of our dear friend, brother-in-Christ and much-loved Churchwarden, Chris Wallworth. He continues to be so greatly missed – both his gentle presence around the community with Siân and in the many things he did quietly behind the scenes for both the church and both individuals and other community organisations. In the last year we have also had to say goodbye to other members of our community, Pauline Day, Daphne Skelton, Enriqueta Taylor, John Cullen, Barbara Pix and Don Wild. May they all, through the mercy of God, rest in peace and rise in glory.

As I mentioned, there have also been moments of joy – weddings, baptisms, last Sunday welcoming James and Jasmine Gray to the sacrament of Holy Communion, gatherings for the Coronation, and other important events including the fun garden party that we so enjoyed hosting in the Rectory garden during the hot summer.

### **OUR MISSION**

To build the Kingdom of love is God's mission and our role is to notice what God is already doing in the community of the world and to see where we can join in. A big part of that is to be a community of worship and prayer that welcomes others into the family of God and reaches out in love to the community. We have taken some time to re-emerge from the pandemic but I believe that we are in better heart than we were even last year and so I believe that we can look forward to another year of growth both in terms of our core activity of worship and prayer and in our outreach to the community.

### **SAFEGUARDING**

Right at the heart of God's mission is the protection of all God's people. Psalm 91 says that God 'will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge.' It is therefore crucial that the Church as the body of Christ is a place of safety and refuge. As I come fresh out of the latest safeguarding training, we must as a community seek to engender that place of love, acceptance and of safety in all that we do. I am committed therefore that all who encounter us and engage with us as a church feel safe and that all the leadership team are approachable. Safeguarding therefore remains high on the agenda of every PCC meeting and will remain so. I

want to express our gratitude to Sarah Forshaw who carries out the role of Safeguarding officer with such dedication and good grace and good sense.

### PASTORAL CARE

It has been a privilege for both me and my colleagues here in Woodstock to have engaged in some deep encounters with people over the last year. I have personally found huge richness in being with people at the end of their life which has happened several times this past year and to be able to pray with them and anoint them. It is also a great privilege to be alongside people when they are ill or struggling with aspects of their life. I say this to remind you that if you know of someone who would appreciate that kind of ministry, then please let one of the ministry team know.

One of the things of which many Anglicans are unaware is the ministry of reconciliation commonly known as 'Confession'. Several people have approached me over the past year seeking to make their confession and this is also really to remind people that this is available from me and all my priest colleagues.

Finally, I am aware that the pastoral ministry that takes place is largely on a fairly *ad hoc* basis and that it would be wonderful to have a more dedicated pastoral visiting team for more regular pastoral encounters. If this is something that you feel you could offer to do (even if only occasionally), the appropriate training can be organised.

### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Over the last year, many have continued to appreciate the amazing educational ministry provided by the 'Thursday Group'. Many topics have been covered over the last year including the study of missionaries, the book of Job and Andrew Bunch's as yet unpublished book 'The Arrow of Love'. These meetings normally take place chez David and Gerti Shepherd and anyone is welcome.

This past Lent, our Lent study group focussed on the film 'The Theory of Everything', the biographical film about the life and work of Professor Stephen Hawking. The course entitled 'The Mystery of Everything' took sections of the film and challenged and explored some of Hawking's views and aspects of his relationship with his family and others. All those who took part agreed that it was a very rich and deep exploration and it was wonderful to be able to share it with friends from both the Baptist and Methodist churches.

A proposal to begin a further study group looking at the Gospel for the coming Sunday has yet to get underway but it is hoped that in the Autumn, there will be an appropriate time to begin that.

### WORSHIP and MUSIC

Sunday morning and Wednesday morning worship continue to be the main activity that we share together (as indeed it should be). There has been a growth in attendance over the last year at both the 8am and 11am services on a Sunday whilst the Wednesday service has remained steady. The growth has, in part, been due to people coming back post-pandemic but there have also been new faces at both. On Sundays when the Junior Choir have sung, there has also been a number of younger faces as well. Children's ministry remains a bit of a 'chicken and egg' conundrum. Sometimes we have children in our services but because the attendance is erratic, it has been difficult to arrange anything consistent in terms of children's ministry. We have begun once again to put children's activity sheets related to the theme of the day on the children's table which we have brought down from upstairs into the north aisle of the church.

In the last few months, we have restored the Common Cup at all Eucharists as an option although we continue to offer the option of the priest intincting instead.

As well as our normal Sunday services, we have also had a range of other services including the incredibly well attended Christmas, Holy Week and Easter services that, on occasion, saw a packed church. The Agape meal on the Monday of Holy Week has become a feature of our Holy Week observances. Last year, around 14 attended; this year it was up to 40! That's quite some increase. Online Morning Prayer continues to be a powerhouse of prayer with a dedicated group continuing a tradition that began during lockdown. Thanks too to all of them for this really important ministry.

In terms of music, we currently have three groups providing music – the two wonderful cantors whose singing we have enjoyed and who have enhanced our worship so much since the start of the pandemic (Adina Henson and Claudia House), the senior choir which, as Ian Blunsdon says elsewhere, began as a small group of singers last year and has grown to be a choir of around a dozen people. They have sung at various services during the year. Lastly, and most recently, there has been the introduction of a small robed children's choir. It began at Christmas with around a dozen children and has now settled at around 6 regular committed singers. Again, there is a separate report for this group from Brian Taylor. We have also had, on two separate occasions this year, choirs of professional singers who sang at the late Queen's Jubilee service in June of last year and at the Choral Evensong we recently hosted for the Archdeacon's arrival. We are fortunate, over the year, to have had the services of several organists: Ian Blunsdon, Guy Reeves, Brian Taylor and Andrew Patterson, all of whom have enhanced our worship greatly.

#### OUTREACH and EVENTS (including ministry to schools and civic engagement)

It has been great to see the monthly café begin again over the last year and for the new Eco-café to have joined in with that providing tea, coffee, cake and handy tips and skills for re-cycling and upcycling. This has included a clothes swap and toy swap.

Collections have continued for the North Oxfordshire Foodbank in terms of food donated but also in terms of café proceeds.

More recently, there have been appeals to support aid in Ukraine and last year, we were involved as a depot for a large clothes collection for Afghanistan.

Through Community at Christmas, we once again served a full Christmas dinner in church on Christmas Day to those who wanted to come. This year, Blenheim Palace, generously donated and prepared all the food for the day.

Christian Aid Week continues to be an important moment in the church's calendar when last year a Christian Aid lunch was held (as indeed it will be after this year's APCM) to raise money for the incredible work that they do.

In terms of our civic and community involvement, members of our church community serve on the town council and in other organisations and we retain an excellent relationship with the town. The Platinum Jubilee of the Queen, the death of the HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, Remembrance Sunday, the death of HM the Queen and the Coronation of our new King were all marked with civic services, the Jubilee service also being attended by around 40 guests from Blindheim in Germany to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the first Duke of Marlborough.

It was also a surprising (in terms of numbers) moment of poignant celebration when over 100 people gathered in church on the day of the Coronation itself to watch the service in the Abbey with cake and coffee and an extra special surprise to see the former Rector, Adrian Daffern, take such a prominent role.

Our schools work has continued to thrive. Matt Bodinham's work at the Marlborough has continued to develop and this has recently been extended now into the Primary School. I continue to go into the Primary School each Thursday and periodically have also been into the secondary school for Collective Worship assemblies. I continue to serve as a Governor at Woodstock Primary School as well. It is from the Primary School that we have drawn the Junior Choir which has enhanced our worship in recent months. It was wonderful to have the Primary School in church in the lead up to Christmas for their carol services.

Year groups from both Woodstock Primary School and Year 7 at Marlborough have been on organised school visits to the church where they have explored the symbolism and even dressed up in the vestments!

#### OUR BUILDINGS

The roof dominates our building projects at present with the appeal being launched in the autumn of last year. Thanks to the hard work principally of Michael Holmes, Aidan Salter and Michael Bowles, and thanks to your donations and those of various bodies including the incredibly generous donation of £50,000 from the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, over £100,000 of the £160,000 needed has already been raised. This is a magnificent achievement and various events are planned during the remainder of this year and into next to raise the remaining amount.

Thanks to Aidan, Mike Holmes and Ruth for all the work they put into the running of the building and for organising the lets which have seen the Woodstock Christmas Fayre, the Woodstock Arts Week, concerts by the Woodstock Music Society and regular meetings of the Probus Club, Alcoholics Anonymous, The Woodstock Society, The Woodstock Literary Society and others take place in the church making it a real hub in the community. It has become a popular venue which was exactly the aim of the renovation project back in 2017.

#### MINISTRY TEAM

We are incredibly blessed to have a really active ministry team of honorary clergy and lay people in Shaun Henson, Stephen Pix, Andrew Bunch, Katie Jones, Ben Knighton and Gemma Ferrier who have not only been willing helpers at St Mary Magdalene's but also in Bladon and in the vacant parishes within the Deanery. Their help has been invaluable and I want to record my thanks to all of them. It was a pleasure also to have Edward Day with us on placement from Ripon College Cuddesdon in the final year of his ordination training for several months. It is incredibly important to be able to offer preaching and other experience to ordinands and I hope that we can do more of that in the coming year.

#### YOU!

And I want to conclude by thanking all of you who do so much for the life of the parish and without whom many of the activities that we engage in simply would not happen.

Thanks to our excellent Churchwarden, Ruth Sutherland, who has carried the load on her own since Chris's death but I also want to record our thanks to Chris here too for all that he did. We were unable to 'twist the arm' of anyone to take on the role of Churchwarden for the remainder

of the year but we are incredibly grateful to all those who have stepped in and undertaken duties to assist Ruth in that role.

Thanks too to the Teams who organise readers, leaders of intercessions, welcomers, chalice bearers, and those who make tea, coffee etc at the end of the service and thanks to all those who fulfil those roles. All of this adds hugely to the richness of the worship experience. One aspect of welcome is also the wonderful seasonal displays on the notice boards at the back and thanks to Carol Holmes for producing such interesting and arresting displays as well as producing various guides to the church that can be purchased at the back.

A debt of thanks is due also to the flower arranging team and especially this year for the quite magnificent and highly artistic displays that were organised for the Platinum Jubilee, the Queen's death and, most recently, the Coronation not to mention the wonderful arrangements for all the major festivals of the church. We were sad to say goodbye to Zandra Houston who had led the group for so many years and we thank her for her wonderful service over that time. Outside in the churchyard, Jenny Atkinson and her churchyard gang (including some new volunteers) continue to work incredibly hard to maintain and keep beautiful what is undoubtedly one of the finest churchyards for varieties of wild flowers and general beauty anywhere in Oxfordshire if not the whole country. We are very blessed here too.

Gill Morris, Annie Cripps, Caroline Thomson, Ruth Sutherland, Christine Arjun, Kathryn and Andrew Bunch, Katie Jones and others besides have done a fabulous job in organising and running the cafes both at the Christmas Fayre and at the monthly cafes and so thanks are very much due to them and to all who have made cakes and who have helped in any way.

The Holy Dusters have faithfully continued to keep the church looking beautiful week by week and do the unglamorous but essential tasks of cleaning the loos etc. Thanks to them as well and to Caroline Thomson and others who have looked after (and washed and ironed) all the altar linens so beautifully. Thanks too to all those who came together just before Easter and did such a wonderful job polishing brass, silver, cleaning and generally preparing the church so beautifully for Easter.

Thanks to the bellringers who do such a wonderful job in ringing pretty much every Sunday and at special festivals etc. You add joy not only to the church but to the whole town. We love hearing the bells!

Finally, having mentioned Ruth as Churchwarden earlier, I want also to express special thanks to Aidan Salter for his dedication and skill in the role of treasurer but in doing so much more besides in terms of the buildings and maintenance as well as in liaising with the architect and the DAC in relation to the roof appeal. It has been a huge amount of work and is largely unseen. Similarly, thanks to Glynda Salter for her work on Gift Aid recovery which adds so much to our annual income. Thanks too in that connection to Mike Holmes who continues also to do so much around the church and for his support of Aidan in his role as treasurer and continues in his pressure on the diocese to be more accountable with money and the way it is spent. Thank you to Ray Morris who also steps in and undertakes Warden duties to assist Ruth and who also each week comes in not only to do the banking but also to fold and staple every order of service. Thanks too to the PCC generally for their contributions over the year to the life of our church, to Sandy Rasch for her sterling service as secretary as she now stands down from that role.

And my heartfelt thanks finally to Marion who carries much of the administrative burden and often goes well beyond the call of duty and puts up with my foibles – and nearly always with a smile.



It continues to be a privilege to serve here as Rector and I thank you all for your support.

Jeremy Auld

25<sup>th</sup> May 2023

## Woodstock APCM 2022 Group Reports

### **Deanery Synod Annual report 2023**

#### *Deanery synod meetings*

We have had three meetings of the synod since the last APCM. All of these meetings were preceded by a short act of worship, which helped us to focus on God's love and the work of the church in the deanery. In June Revd Jeremy Auld presented Bishop Steven's address on climate change, given at the Diocesan Synod earlier in the month. We also had an update from Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone on General Synod matters. In November we welcomed Matt Bodinham, the chaplaincy team leader at the Marlborough CE School, Woodstock. Matt spoke about his work in the school. Currently this is partly funded by a diocesan grant, which will run out this year. We were asked whether any parishes who send students to the Marlborough School would think about contributing to financing this post. In March we met at Stonesfield where Charles Chadwick, our Parish Development Adviser, led small groups in discussing the key issues that should be included in our deanery mission action plan. This is due to be presented to the Mission and Pastoral Committee this summer.

#### *Comings and goings*

In September, Judy French, our archdeacon retired and some of us attended her farewell service in Dorchester Abbey. We are very pleased to report that our former Area Dean, David Tyler, has been appointed as our new Archdeacon. His collation was at Christ Church on Saturday 18 March at the 6.00pm Evensong service. David was formerly acting archdeacon, having been Assistant Archdeacon to Judy French before then. We still have two benefices in vacancy: Steeple Aston, North Aston and Tackley, and Wootton, Glympton and Kiddington. These posts are being advertised currently and we hope to appoint before Easter.

#### *Other things to mention*

We had a successful Winter Bash in January when deanery synod reps and church officers had the opportunity to meet together to celebrate Burns night. Deanery synod reps are due for re-election this year.

*Stephanie Lacey March 2023*

## **Safeguarding**

### **1. Introduction**

- Safeguarding means the actions the Church takes to promote a safer culture.
- It applies to the care and protection of children, young people<sup>1</sup> and vulnerable adults<sup>2</sup> involved in Church.
- Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all.
- Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at PCC meetings.
- Working in line with Church of England Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

### **2. Formal Obligation**

- PCCs are formally obliged to report to the APCM on whether or not the PCC 'has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and clergy discipline measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishops guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).'

### **3. Safeguarding Roles**

- Sarah Forshaw: Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)
- Marion Williams: DBS Recruiter and Verifier
- Erica Hegg: Case Worker Oxford & Dorchester (New November 2021)
- Rebecca Bull-Norris: Training and Development Officer
- Louise Whitehead: Head of Safeguarding (New)

### **4. Safeguarding Policy, Guidance and Information**

- Our Parish Safeguarding Policy is displayed on the Safeguarding board and reviewed annual by the PCC.
- Safeguarding guidance and information we promote and work in line with is the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook, Safer Environment and Activities, Code of Safer Working Practice.

### **5. Parish Safeguarding Dashboard**

- This new electronic tool shows at a glance by means of a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green) our compliance as a Church with required Safeguarding activities.
- The broad areas covered are: - Policy, procedures, roles, training, displayed information, reviews and reports; each with a number of sub-sections.

### **6. Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework (2021)**

- The framework has been revised with essential learning pathways for Church officers – see diocesan Safeguarding website.

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<sup>1</sup> Young person – is any individual aged 14-17 years old

<sup>2</sup> Vulnerable adult – is a person aged 18 or over who's ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired.

- Safer Recruitment and People Management guidance (2021) was implemented in January 2022. Along with the guidance there is a toolkit – templates for volunteer role description, application form, etc.
- I have attended an introductory training.
- Domestic Abuse e-learning is available to complete (1.5 – 2 hours) and will equip participants to engage thoughtfully and practically with the issues of DA. This training should be completed by the incumbent, PSO, and PCC members.

### **7. Other Activities Completed**

- All members of the PCC have received Safeguarding Pocket Guides which outlines how to handle and report concerns.

### **8. Next Steps**

- Areas of safeguarding I will be focusing on are: - completing outstanding actions of the Dashboard, encouraging completion of any training requirements such as the new Domestic Abuse training by PCC and other relevant roles and moving all DBS renewals to three years from the five year cycle.

Sarah Forshaw  
Parish Safeguarding Officer  
18<sup>th</sup> April 2023

### **Churches Together in Woodstock and Bladon**

This is a group composed of members of all the churches in Woodstock and Bladon. It is an opportunity to learn what other churches are doing, to exchange ideas and to plan joint ventures.

The representatives from St Mary Magdalene's are: The Rev Jeremy Auld, Alicia Wild (Secretary), Christine Zwart. The representative from Bladon is Chris Corser. The Baptists are represented by the Rev Andy Mills. The Methodists are The Rev Paul Carter, (Chairman) Sue Beuzeval, and Maureen Lake. The Catholics are Father Prem Fernando, Sandra Lenagan and Christine Gadsby.

The committee has met twice this year. The churches organized the following: The Walk of Witness on Good Friday, the Sunrise service in Blenheim on Easter Day, the World Day of Prayer, held at St Hugh's this year, publicity of the services at Christmas and Easter with leaflets in the churches, hotels and shops. We also took the back page of the Woodstock and Bladon News. It is intending to devise a Welcome pack for newcomers to the area. It also contributes news from the churches in Woodstock and Bladon News. It has resumed services each Sunday evening at Spencer Court which have been welcomed by the residents.

Several people went to see a very impressive production of an organisation called LAMPS at Cumnor Church, where a group of three actors enacted the events of Holy Week. We hope to organise this in our church during Lent next year. Sue Beuzeval has organised a one-woman enactment of Mary's meeting with Elizabeth at the Methodists in Advent.

Matthew Bodinham is working with young people for the Woodstock Youthwork Trust, which has in part been funded by the churches in Woodstock. He is chaplain at the

Marlborough School and has started a chaplaincy at the Primary School which is going very well. He had the opportunity to baptise a student recently. He is doing a great work in encouraging so many young people to become followers of Christ.

Alicia Wild

### **Senior Choir Annual Report 2022-23**

Woodstock Parish Church Choir is now established as a regular musical organisation within the church. The journey from no church choir after the pandemic to a group of singers who commit and contribute to the musical worship in church services as often as they can has been an interesting one.

We continue to hold regular choir practices at 7.30 on Wednesdays during term time. The choir is made up of singers who read music and some singers that are learning to read music. Time is taken to ensure all have access to this mystery of 'how to read music' by clear explanation of what all signs and symbols mean. I have also sent musical exercises and power point presentations by email to assist with this. However, the most important focus has always been on the actual singing, making sure everyone is confident with their part.

The choir has also worked at making a good overall sound especially with voice production, listening to each other, blending in and good dynamic contrast. Vocal warmups are an integral part of our rehearsal mixed in with a lot of fun. My wife Sue, a professional singing teacher has also given one or two lessons in voice production, and this has given another aspect of support to the choir.

This past Christmas the choir was able to make a musical contribution to the Advent Carol Service and the Christmas Carol Service. With the Advent Carol Service the choir sang solo items without assistance from more experienced singers but were joined by more experienced singers and the emerging Junior Choir for the Christmas Carol Service. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of our two cantors Adina and Claudia for their support at the Christmas Carol Service and some choir practices.

As I said last year in my report It is my intention to eventually establish a robed choir that will sing at all services, however this is an end goal which will take several years to achieve. In the meantime, the choir/musical ensemble will sing at special services and church festivals as and when we have the numbers and capability to do so.

I maintain that the choir is open to all who want to sing, who can sing in tune and blend in even if their music reading ability is limited. New members continue to find their voice and improved their music reading with the help of more experienced members. Choir practices will continue to be held on a Wednesday throughout term time with extra practices as necessary for special occasions.

We have had several new members join this past year including some members outside the parish and we continue to grow. It is worth mentioning that there is a great community spirit within the choir. Its members get on very well together and genuinely love being in the choir which is excellent for their mental, spiritual and general well-being.

I welcome support in how we can attract new members and younger members to the choir. I look forward to the continued development and encouragement of quality music making to enhance worship within St. Mary's Parish Church in Woodstock.

Ian Blunsdon GRNCM. Cert.Ed.

### **Junior Choir Report**

The Junior choir was created at Christmas time through a recruitment drive run by the the Rector and me mainly by visiting the Primary School, speaking to the children at Assemblies and through poster advertising. This was to begin a junior choir who would learn through the RSCM ribbon and medal scheme, how to read music and learn the liturgies of the church and how the choir, both through their singing and the example they set to others in worship, forms an integral part of the ministry of the church. This would then allow them to integrate into a larger choir with adults that would sing in four part harmony.

Friday night is 'Music Night' and was chosen from the beginning being the most popular time for most church choirs to practice, and close to Sunday Services. Other days were, and have been considered, but there are too many clashes with other activities in Woodstock.

The Choir sang at Christmas Services, and since then has been singing at least monthly and sometimes fortnightly at Sunday morning services. The pleasure and joy is only too apparent with our junior and adult choir members as well as our congregation. On the occasions that they sing, it has also brought new young families into church enjoying worshipping and supporting the choir.

**Activities.** The robed junior choir is based and founded on the Principles of the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). It encourages choir members to work through their 'Voice for Life' books and soon they will be receiving their ribbons and medals. There are also external awards at Bronze, Silver and Gold level.

Choir members attended Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford for rehearsal and Choral Evensong.

Recruitment is ongoing and before and after Summer Holidays is another golden opportunity to recruit for September start.

**Thanks** are extended to the RSCM for their valued support throughout this time.

Thanks extended to my wife and family for their full support in this new choir venture.

Thanks to the Rector, the choir and all their supporters, congregation and PCC.

**The Future.** We look for continued support either directly supporting the choir, help with the RSCM scheme, robing and/or supporting activities of the choir as they develop their music and repertoire and outside visits to other churches and Cathedrals.

Brian Taylor

### **Morning Prayer – ‘The Day Lies Open Before Us’**

Morning Prayer is an official service of the Church of England. It takes place in Woodstock on Zoom every weekday at nine o'clock and links St Mary Magdalene's to the prayer-life of thousands on thousands of other churches and congregations throughout the world. Everyone is welcome.

The basic pattern is always the same, drawing on three thousand years of history – the songs, stories and wisdom of the Old Testament; the messages and mission of the New; and leaders, thinkers and saints over the centuries. Within this basic pattern there are prayers for the modern Church and her life, locally in Woodstock and also nationally and globally; the world and its issues and needs, for example climate change and justice, the cost of living crisis, and violent conflicts in various countries throughout the world; and our personal concerns and intentions during the new day ahead.

On most days we refer by name to the clergy in all the churches of Woodstock, and in the course of each month we refer by name to all members of the St Mary Magdalene's congregation. Also on most days we refer to members of St Mary's who are currently unwell, or have been affected by a recent bereavement.

There are normally about 10 people present and there's a warm, welcoming, informal atmosphere. Between us we have a range of different viewpoints, interests and concerns, and hence gently influence each other, and quietly learn from each other.

There are Zoom joining instructions on the Benefice website at <http://woodstockandbladon.com/> . The meeting ID is 682 766 541, and the password is 786117.

Robin Richardson (correspondent), the Morning Prayer Team

### **The Church Cleaning Team**

The church is cleaned each week by a team of volunteers, known as “the Holy Dusters”, which also keeps the kneelers in good condition and polishes the silver and brass for special occasions, such as Easter and Christmas.

The extra-long extendable duster is more than earning its keep by enabling the cleaning team to remove the unsightly cobwebs from the high light fittings and window sills. The “Dusters” are on a rota to clean approximately once every two months, for about an hour and a half, on either a Friday or Saturday morning. The cleaning sessions provide an enjoyable opportunity to chat to the frequent visitors to our church at weekends and we are always happy to welcome new members to the team. If you are interested in joining us, please get in touch with Ruth Sutherland [stmmwarden1@gmail.com](mailto:stmmwarden1@gmail.com)

Ruth Sutherland

## **Bellringing**

There are the same number of ringers who are Woodstock members of the Oxford Diocesan Guild as last year (7). With the regular help of a few other local ringers we ring on at least 6 bells nearly every Sunday. We have lost our most stalwart ringer for many years: Bernard Coggins who has decided to call it a day (while still being one of the best ringers in the band). However, we have a new competent ringer called Fred who is a most welcome addition every Sunday.

We have 3 new learners which is a rarity for Woodstock tower. They are all resident in Woodstock which is also good as the last resident ringer recently moved. Fingers crossed that they continue.

Practices on Thursdays continue to be mostly well attended, by ourselves and a few regular visitors.

We rang a quarter peal for the platinum jubilee, but then had the sad task of ringing for the Queen's passing: at one point the Rector standing in when all but he had fled.

On Saturday 6th May 12 local ringers (including our 3 new learners) celebrated the coronation of Charles III by ringing rounds and various methods.

We would warmly welcome learners or returning ringers. Please come along any Thursday evening from 7.30. It would be helpful for a complete beginner to contact me in advance. We thank the Rector, Churchwardens and congregation for their continued support.

Malcolm Fairbairn, Tower Captain

## **Churchyard**

Many more people are now commenting on and enjoying the churchyard including visitors, workmen and young people picnicking in their lunch hour. Primroses and cowslips have spread magnificently, and the cherry blossom was superb but sadly the bee orchids have disappeared. Hopefully they will have seeded and will return another year.

Many wild flowers are spreading into the grass which will, in those places, be left unmown. Elsewhere other plants are spreading far too extensively and have to be kept under control e.g. Alkanet, Comfrey and Allium triquetrum. None of these I actually planted, they just appeared !

Regrettably dog poo, and dogs damaging some plants, is still a problem and I hope the new sign will encourage dog walkers to be more thoughtful.

A brief bat survey in the Autumn revealed 3 different species of bat flying round the churchyard but none roosting in the church walls.

I am delighted to report two strong men have recently volunteered to help in the churchyard for which I am extremely grateful, as each year that passes I find I am able to do less myself.

Jenny Atkinson

### **The Thursday Group.**

Our weekly meetings continue. Summer last year we considered the Epistle to the Hebrews; in the autumn it was a series entitled Historians and Theologians, ranging from Sts Theresa of Lisieux and of Calcutta, stopping off at such luminaries as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Nicky Gumbel and Desmond Tutu. In the spring we managed to cheer ourselves up by considering the Book of Job and at the moment we are having a fascinating time looking at chapters from Andrew Bunch's draft book, the Arrow of Love. Attendance continues to grow, regularly in the mid-teens and the day before we write this, we squeezed 21 into the lounge at 8a Crecy Walk. Our grateful thanks as always to our faithful friends who continue to give us the benefit of their wisdom and witness.

David and Gerti Shepherd

### **Flower Arrangers**

The flower arranging team have been very busy recently with Easter and the Coronation. We are 10 in number and have divided up the various responsibilities as Zandra Houston has stepped down. We thank her for her dedication and skill over the years. Jenny Atkinson is responsible for weddings and funerals now, and Annie Cripps finance. Please consider donating to the flower fund and volunteering to help decorate the church. The flower fund is not being replenished as before due to fewer weddings. Thank you to those who contributed to the Easter and Coronation flowers. We were also fortunate to have greenery supplied by Blenheim. We will move away from using products that are not ecologically sound but like all church groups will need to experiment with suitable alternatives!

Sue Manley, on behalf of the flower arrangers.



## ST MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH WOODSTOCK

### WOODSTOCK AND BLADON BENEFICE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VESTRY MEETING AND THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
HELD ON SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup> May 2022 IN THE CHURCH

**Present:** The Very Revd Jeremy Auld, Chris Wallworth, Ruth Sutherland, Sandy Rasch, Jenny Atkinson, Robin Richardson, Dr Ben Knighton, Rachel Knighton, John Brimble, Annie Cripps, Michael Bowles, Ray Morris, Jenifer Wates, Joan Perry, Neil Brockbank, Liz Brockbank, Sian Wallworth, Aidan Salter, Glynda Salter, Sarah Forshaw, Stephen Hignell, Caroline Thompson, Alicia Wild, Val Parke, Mike Holmes, Carol Holmes Kay Hall, Marion Williams, Marion Gadsby, Robin Richardson, Colin Turner, Val Parke, Andrew Bunch, Kathryn Bunch, Christine Steel, Graham Knox, Angela Knox, Daphne Dorman, Sylvia Stevenson.

Apologies: Jane Fletcher

#### ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

The meeting began with a prayer led by the Rector, The Very Reverend Jeremy Auld.

Election of Churchwardens: Chris Wallworth and Ruth Sutherland were nominated, proposed, agreed and duly elected, there were no other nominations. This election was proposed by Ray Morris and seconded by Sylvia Stevenson.

Chris Wallworth said he will be standing down after this coming year and a replacement will be needed for 2023.

#### ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

1. The Very Reverend Jeremy Auld opened the meeting with a prayer and welcomed everyone.
2. The minutes of the 2021 APCM were approved by Ray Morris, seconded by Sarah Forshaw and agreed nem con after the following amendment: The Foundation Governors for the Primary School are The Rector and Nicola Lacey.
3. The Rector's report: It has been less than a year since our last APCM (which was later than usual due to the Pandemic) and yet so much has changed.  
At our last APCM we were living under some strict government restrictions – we could not sing as a congregation, masks were compulsory and the requirement for social distancing remained a reality.

Since then all government restrictions have been lifted and whilst we remain cautious we have removed social distancing measures. We have not yet re introduced the common cup but provide communion in both kinds through priestly intinction and we continue to administer communion for the time being from the front of the nave rather than up at the alter rail. However, we are all singing again as a congregation and whilst we still have the wonderful services of a cantor (Adina or Claudia) for most Sundays, the choir has begun rehearsing again under Ian Blunsdon and indeed were singing today. A four part choir brought specially together for the Queen's Jubilee will singing next week. PCC meetings are now once again face to face and social events such as the bring 'n' share lunch last week have been running again and the five sessions of the Lent study course on 'Living in Love and Faith' were all held in person. It has

been wonderful also to recommence refreshments on a Sunday after the service in the north aisle and to see so many people stay for that.

Sunday morning worship is, of course, our main activity together (as it should be). Attendance at the 11am service fluctuates quite a bit but the Palm Sunday and Easter Day services were particularly well attended this year. We continue to struggle to attract young people although, again, children were present in good numbers on both Good Friday in the morning and on Easter Day. A few families have begun attending but it is difficult to resource young church activities that keep children engaged and therefore keep families coming. We are currently in discussion with Maddie Jane about starting up Messy Church and at the forthcoming clergy conference, I shall be attending a workshop on Godly Play.

We are very blessed to have the help and support of various members of the clergy at our Sunday services – Stephen Pix, Shaun Henson Andrew Bunch and now Katie Jones among clergy and Ben Knighton as LLM, have all been generous with their time and talents and I am very grateful to them for their willingness to be involved, as well as for their support and friendship. I have relied on them more than ever now that we no longer have a curate. Revd Annette Wade has been appointed to be with us for a period of 3 to 4 years but, following a secondment to Kidlington, elected to complete her curacy there because of the greater variety of ministries on offer. I would want to record my thanks for Annette's time with us and for her contribution to the life of the parish and I am sure that all will join me in wishing her very well in her future ministry. Whilst sad to lose Annette, I was delighted when Gemma Ferrier joined us on placement as she discerns her own vocation to ordained ministry. Although the original term of the placement has long expired, the Bishop has been happy to extend that placement in theory, should Gemma proceed to train for ministry, right up to her ordination. Gemma has been a welcome addition to the altar party on a Sunday morning and co-led the 'Living in Faith course.'

Whilst on the worship, thanks must also go to the Teams who organise readers, leaders of intercessions, welcomers and those who make tea, coffee etc at the end of the service. All of this adds hugely to the richness of the worship experience. One aspect of welcome is also the wonderful seasonal displays on the notice boards at the back and thanks to Carol Holmes for producing such interesting and arresting displays as well as working on a general guide book to the church and other more specific guides.

We are also extremely blessed to have Ian Blunsdon and Guy Reeves, two fine organists who offer us week by week a wonderful musical contribution to ur worship without which our services would be much poorer. Thanks to Ian for also giving up time each week to train the choir and thanks to those who have either joined or come back to the choir. A huge debt of thanks goes to Claudia House and Adina Henson who have unstintingly provided us with beautiful singing almost every Sunday. They not only provide a strong and talented lead to our congregational singing but often also solo motes and anthems. At a time when so many churches struggle to find an organist let alone singers we are indeed blessed.

Talent is not only to be found among the musicians for we have in Zandra Houston and all the flower arranging team a group that take flower arranging to a fine art. The arrangements are always beautiful and on special occasions the church always looks magnificent. Outside in the churchyard Jenny Atkinson and her churchyard gang (including her gardener Jess) continue to work incredibly hard to maintain and keep beautiful what is undoubtedly one of the finest churchyards for varieties of wild flowers and general beauty anywhere in Oxfordshire if not the whole country. We are very blessed here too.

There are teams of Holy Dusters who keep the church looking beautiful week by week and who do the unglamorous but essential work of cleaning the loos. Thanks to them as well and to Caroline and Angela who have looked after (and washed and ironed) all the altar linens.

There have been a variety of services outside our normal Sunday and Wednesday offerings. In particular, Advent and Lenten Complines and the Holy Week services (including for the first time, an Agape meal on the Tuesday of Holy Week, have all been appreciated).

Ministry to young people has also changed dramatically since my last report. Assemblies /Collective worship began with virtual gatherings with either Annette or me sitting in our respective studies at our computers and addressing a tile pattern of classrooms.

It was difficult to establish much rapport but gradually we moved to a hybrid of two classes being present in the school hall whilst the others were linked via a camera and screens to their classrooms. However, this last term, whole school assemblies have once again become a reality. Christian McGuinness has been very encouraging of the church's involvement in the life of the school and I have tried therefore, to be present and to lead school assemblies there each Thursday afternoon. Without a curate however, it is not always possible to be present but over the last school year, I have been able to be present most weeks and I have got to know the school well. Some school services, particularly around Harvest and Christmas resumed in the church and school visits to the church from both the primary school and Marlborough have been a regular feature. It was a particular pleasure to see some children bring their parents to Good Friday morning and then back again on Easter Day. The Marlborough have been much more cautious in their approach to whole school collective worship and continue to operate a model of my periodically producing a video talk and submitting it to the school which is then broadcast into their classrooms.

Last year, I spoke a bit about 'Communities at Christmas' which came out of a recognition that there were many during the pandemic who would not have enjoyed a Christmas lunch without this fabulous venture that saw a Christmas lunch held at St MM, and lots of lunches delivered to people's homes. We did the same again this last Christmas albeit on a reduced scale in terms of home deliverers as the country has opened up considerably by that stage but more people came to the lunch in church. It was, once again a wonderful thing to be part of and we know from feedback that it was hugely appreciated by many people. Small groups are currently in conversation about the possibility of other projects around climate change and starting a toddler group.

With regard to our buildings, there are always challenges! The current one is the roof! We are in the midst of obtaining final reports and quotations so that a proper appeal to raise the necessary funds can be launched. The Duke of Marlborough has agreed to be the patron of the appeal and I am really grateful to Mike Holmes, Michael Bowles and Aidan Salter for doing behind the scenes work on this.

The church continues to be well used at various times of the year by different groups and the votive candle stand has been a huge hit with a fairly constant stream of people coming in each day to light candles and to pray or simply sit quietly.

Finally, I want to thank the Churchwardens, Ruth and Chris for the amazing amount of work that they do behind the scenes and in making sure everything is set up and cleared up for services. They offer unstinting service and I am very grateful for that. I also want to thank Aidan Salter for his dedication and skill in the role of treasurer and the PCC generally for their contributions over the year to the life of our church, to Mike Holmes for all the work he has done and continues to do especially in relation to buildings, his representation on the Deanery Synod and standing committee and for his willingness to take on the parish share and other financial and buildings

matters. Thanks to Sandy Rasch who so efficiently produces all the minutes and to Sarah Forshaw who does the usually unglamorous but crucially important job of being the safeguarding officer. My heartfelt thanks also go to Marion who carries so much of the administrative burden and often goes well beyond the call of duty – and always does so with a smile.

Very finally, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve as your Rector over the past year and I look forward to the coming year and to where God will lead us in our journey together.

May God bless us all in our adventures and in faith together.

Jeremy Auld  
28<sup>th</sup> May 2022

This report was proposed by Mike Holmes, agreed by Val Parke and agreed nem con.

4. Safeguarding: Sarah Forman thanked everyone for their support and confirmed we are compliant with all safeguarding requirements.

5. The Electoral Roll: Carol Holmes reported we have 100 members on the Roll with no new comers. Carol was thanked for her work on this.

6. The Reports from the PCC and other Church groups were circulated prior to the AGM and are attached to the agenda and also included is a detailed financial statement.

JA thanked AS for his all work on the accounts. These were proposed by JB, seconded by AW and agreed nem con. It was reported we will have a new Examiner who is Jos Rush, the meeting agreed to this proposal.

7. Details of the accounts were circulated to the meeting and Aidan Salter said the Parish Giving scheme had helped our finances but this could be improved. Michael Bowles asked about the loan and Aidan said we still owe Blenheim £35,000, this was agreed in 2016 to be an interest free loan for the first 5 years and thereafter a decision will need to be made about repayment.

8. We now have the Candle Stand and the IT equipment has enabled the services to be broadcast

John Brimble asked about the identity of the headstones in the churchyard and Michael Holmes said there is an old document in the Vestry which needs to be located.

9. The Deanery Synod meetings have been held via Zoom and all business has been covered.

10. To elect members to the PCC: There are 2 vacancies for lay members. A bin is needed for dog waste and other litter. It was also reported an extra mow for the churchyard is needed and an appeal to the Town Council for this should be made.

11. It was reported all members of the congregation can become sides-persons so no appointments are necessary.

#### OPEN FORUM

Mike Bowles asked for an update on the roof, Mike Holmes replied the roof has been inspected and is in poor condition, it will not be replaced with lead but with stainless steel and the cost is not known. The architect has been asked to draw up some plans and this will then go to tender and we then need to consider a fund raising campaign.

John Brimble asked about identifying headstones in the churchyard. Carol Homes and Sandy Rasch will work through some old documents in the hope identification can be found. JAt suggested this could be a project for the Marlborough School.

The Marlborough School has Matt Bodinham who is funded to be Youth Chaplain and gives pastoral care. It is hoped Matt will continue to work with the Primary School and hold the Encounter Service for young people on Saturday evenings.

The Governors for the Marlborough School are Aidan Salter, Christine Arjun and Annie Cripps. The Rector and Nicola Lacey are Primary School Governors.

The meeting closed with a prayer at 13:50.