

THE CHURCH OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL STEEPLE ASTON



ANNUAL REPORT and FINANCIAL STATEMENTS of the PCC 2021 -2022

St Peter and St Paul's

The church of St Peter and St Paul is situated in rural Oxfordshire and is part of the United Benefice of Steeple Aston with North Aston and Tackley. The Benefice includes Middle Aston which for church administrative purposes is linked with Steeple Aston.

Our Rector is Revd Marcus Green, M.A. (Oxon).

Correspondence: The Rector, the Rectory, Fir Lane, Steeple Aston OX25 4SF

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2020-21

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the AGM of the PCC. During the last year the following have served as members:-

Chair: The Rector (ex officio)

Churchwardens: Graham Clifton

Eileen Baglin-Jones

Deanery Synod Representative: Eileen Baglin-Jones

Elected Members :

(2019) Martin Dale (elected 2021 for the final year of this cycle)

(2020) Caroline Parsons John White

(2021) Jeanette Cotterill Shirley Palmer David Stewart

Sidespeople elected at the 2021 APCM:

Jeana Atkins	Eileen Baglin-Jones
Roger Bradley	Heather Cleobury
Jeanette Cotterill	Martin Dale
Ruth Dale	Shirley Palmer
Caroline Parsons	John White
Lawrence White	

Introduction

This report is offered by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) as a record of its activities in the year 2021-22. It serves as a review of church life within the church over the past year.

The life of the congregation is mainly seen through the lens of its worship of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, week by week, throughout the year. This year of course has again been disrupted - both by the ongoing pandemic and by many other things, but our worship has drawn us together, as have our common bonds of care and love. It is our hope that the love of God that has sustained us through this pandemic time has somehow flowed through us and blessed our wider community too.

The PCC is elected on a three-year rolling basis by members of the church electoral roll and operates chiefly through five plenary meetings a year with recourse to various sub-committees whose duty it is to report back to the PCC. The PCC has overall responsibility for the maintenance of the church, the churchyard, graveyard, fabric and content. The pandemic, and the decision of several key members of our community to move away has made it difficult to keep this system working. As our electoral roll has slipped down to 50 it seems prudent to allow the PCC to be stripped back to six elected members, the proper size for a church with an electoral roll of 50 and under, especially as we approach the upcoming vacancy. Looking forward - we hope soon to build back as we already have new members joining, and are keen to grow as we begin to put these pandemic years behind us.

The Standing Committee is the only committee required by law, comprising the incumbent, churchwardens, secretary and treasurer. It has the power to transact business of the PCC subject to any directions given by the PCC without recourse to plenary meetings.

Rector's Report

And so I pen my final Rector's comments for an annual report.

We are but weeks away from my departure from the Benefice, and as I look back over the past year I think we're all aware it's been a very unusual year for me personally - and again for us as a church; but then we are sort of getting used to unusual years...

Our Easter service in 2021 was still held outdoors; we didn't resume a full schedule of services indoors in each parish until the summer months. Then, finally, our online 'Worship at Home' ceased, and not long after so too did my regular *Rector's Ramblings* emails. We began to try to become a community that gathered together again.

There have been fits and starts to this process - not least because the pandemic is still not over, and some folk are still cautious about meeting up, especially as most guidelines have been very much relaxed. We are still asking people to mask up when it's clear we have high numbers gathering, and communion remains by intinction rather than drinking from the common cup, but many of the restrictions of months past are now fading. Zoom meetings are less common, but we still struggle with places to hold small groups where all feel safe.

A highlight as we stepped forward was undoubtedly the summer Fete. A slightly simplified model, with almost everything done outdoors, it was fantastic to see such crowds come and spend such a lot of time together. I think we all needed that! It turns out this was the only Fete for which I chaired the committee - and it was an honour to work with such a terrific team.

In the autumn, my year took its first very sudden turn when I ended up in hospital for a few days, and then was told I would not be back in post before the New Year. The wardens were already gearing up for the second sudden turn, my three month sabbatical from January through March, and coped wonderfully. We all owe them a debt of thanks - and to Jeremy Auld, our area dean. I'm delighted to say that I am very much back in good health, thanks to time to recuperate and good medical care. And then the third sudden turn came when I was offered the post of chaplain at Worcester College.

I have been asked if this is a 'move upwards'. I very much detest that kind of thinking. It's just not how I work. It's a move to something very different, which feels like a gift and a call to the right thing at this time in my life and ministry. And if so for me - then I also believe that there will be someone who is a gift for the Benefice here, just waiting to be called when the diocesan processes get round to appointing my successor. I commend your prayers to that person, whoever he or she may be, that God is already placing you on their heart and preparing them to come. And I pray, that whomever God sends, it will be someone kind to bless all three villages and the life of all three congregations.

For now - I've already briefly mentioned the churchwardens, but I must thank them properly. Eileen and Graham are doing a wonderful job, and I know that everything

will run well and efficiently in their care. Do pray for them. I'm thankful to Jeanette as PCC Secretary, for all her thoughtfulness. All our PCC members carry that little extra responsibility in the months ahead, but are a wonderful team: thank you for all you do, for your prayers and for stepping up to do everything. Thanks to all our volunteers who make everything happen - they are described elsewhere in this report, and each and every one is vital. This is how a church runs: when everyone takes part. Through the long months of my illness and the sabbatical, thanks to everyone who led services - visiting clergy, and of course our lay reader Richard. I have been so pleased to hear such lovely comments about the services through the winter, and it's good to know that these folk will be available in the months ahead too. And in the wider benefice over the past nine years, I can never forget to thank Robin & Geoff for their fellowship and support.

We also said goodbye to others this year: dear friends who moved away from Steeple Aston, but whom we hope to see from time to time; and dear friends who have gone before us to glory. I took part in some of those services, and missed others through illness; but we all continue to remember them, and to pray for their families whose grief remains.

It is a truism - meant, I am sure, to put clergy in their place! - that 'rectors come and go'. Of course this is entirely right. So we do. We are but temporary, and at our best we point to Jesus and help people's faith rise higher; at our worst we demonstrate the frailty of all flesh... But God's love is eternal, and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. It has been an enormous privilege to be Rector of Steeple Aston with North Aston and Tackley and to have my name inscribed on the board as part of that company of servants going back over eight hundred years. But all of us who have had this privilege have been here simply as servants - and I look forward to seeing how the Lord continues to bless you in the years ahead.

Rev'd Marcus Green

PCC Secretary's Report

Here we are at the end of another, we hope, atypical year.

As last year's APCM was moved to July, there have been four PCC meetings since my last report. The first two of these took place while Covid regulations were still very much in place and were socially distanced meetings in a rather cold church. As regulations have eased, during Marcus' sabbatical we have been able to enjoy Eileen's hospitality for our January and March meetings, for which I am sure the PCC would like to thank her.

Topics discussed included:

- Regular reviews of Covid regulations and arrangements for worship.
- Church finances, church fabric, health and safety and safeguarding (covered elsewhere) were covered at each meeting.
- The building project has remained under review but has been paused for now.
- The PCC is aware of the effect the pandemic, among other events, has had on church numbers and there has been discussion on finding ways to move forward and build up connections within the community as we return to some sort of normality. With this in mind, we had a separate meeting simply to pray things through. We hope to do this again in future, including the whole church.
- Provision for children was discussed and remains very much on the agenda. The bags at the back of church were inspected and reorganized. A grant of £500 has been obtained from the Radcliffe Trust in order to update them. Any leftover funds will be put towards further developing children's work as we come out of the pandemic.
- An updating of the Benefice Directory is currently under way and it should be available by early summer.

Jeanette Cotterill

Churchwardens' Report

Our hopes of a more settled year in 2021 were sadly not realised. We continue to miss the significant people who have moved from the village; several others have not returned after Covid; services were not possible during the first six months of the year due first to the Delta virus, then to Omicron; our Rector became increasingly unwell towards the end of the year and unable to take the usual pattern of services or fulfil much of his pastoral role between November and December – overall this has not been our happiest year!

We have tried to keep things together and maintain the position of the church in the life of the village – difficult when even small events such as Snowdrop Sunday or the friendly moments of after service coffee could not take place. In the early months of the year Worship at Home videos and the messages in Rector's ramblings emails continued each week, reaching a wide audience. The flag which had been flown from the top of the Tower was irretrievably damaged. We were grateful when a new flag was donated to the church.

During Lent a group of about ten people met weekly on Zoom to talk about and learn from Bishop Steven's 'Come and See' videos and continued after Easter to focus on his 'Comfortable Words' reflections on Isaiah 55 for a few weeks. The church has been open for private prayer throughout the year and as people began to receive their vaccinations matters began to ease a little. On Easter Sunday the United Benefice service was held in the open air in Steeple Aston churchyard, fortunately in fair weather and an Easter communion service was filmed and streamed for people who preferred not to expose themselves to the possibility of catching covid. The Benefice wardens met the Rector – also in the open air in April and in May services were held in the open air in each of the Benefice churchyards in turn. Our Rector had been much involved in the production of the Living in Love and Faith report and a small group of us were fortunate to have his guidance as we worked our way (on Zoom) through the study guide accompanying the report – although we were unfortunately unable to complete the course because of his sudden illness. There were four funerals during the year, each held with varying kinds of restrictions because of covid. The Rural Dean took the funeral service when we said farewell to our friend Ted Atkins on November 1st.

We held a small service inside church on June 6th as banns needed to be called. Some semblance of normal church life was achieved after June 27th when we were able to resume the usual pattern of services, albeit still masked and observing social distancing and singing hymns with a reduced number of verses. A successful Fete was held on July 10th (all in the open air), a small, short concert took place on July 17th and there were two (masked) weddings and two baptisms in September. Harvest weekend on October 1st and 2nd began to feel as though we were moving towards a new normality and as if we were returning to former life. Village organisations and the flower team put Harvest displays around the church. We held

a Harvest Tea (sadly no harvest Supper was possible) on Saturday afternoon. It was a pity that it was very wet – but even so we had a good number of brave damp visitors and were able to serve coffee and leftover cake in the churchyard after Sunday morning service. Regrettably the church quiz had to be cancelled and then our Rector was ill so from November we began to get used to visits from retired or Diocesan clergy to take our services – all were welcome but the period from November to December was less satisfactory than having our own Rector in charge and leading us properly. Against all hopes the covid restrictions continued.

Christmas services were hit hard. The Carol service was a strange village affair with no priest or organist as anxieties about the new Omicron virus overtook the expected visitor from Oxford and people debated how and with whom they might ‘celebrate’ this important festival. We struggled on with a selection of readers from the village as usual, a piano accompaniment from a bell ringer – something of a DIY event! The Crib service was a happier afternoon with 20 children and 30 adults led by our Lay Reader. Our Rector, still unwell, struggled in to lead a rather subdued Christmas Morning service (and play the organ) before he left to begin his delayed Sabbatical. So ended 2021 – not the easiest or happiest year for our little community. We pray that 2022 will see an improvement in church life and that we can witness to the community with renewed energy and faith although somewhat daunted by the continuing absence of our Rector as he began his sabbatical.

However, we were not left struggling to find people to take services as Marcus had made careful and extremely helpful plans to ensure that services across the benefice were able to take place throughout the three months. We began to enjoy meeting other clergy and to have more Morning Prayer services taken by our LLM, Richard Bailey and were pleased that gradually our numbers built and after February 20th when we began serving coffee after morning service the positive and friendly pre-Covid atmosphere seemed to begin to be restored. Following two PCC meetings when a good deal of ‘ordinary’ business was covered (including beginning to plan for our contribution to celebrating the Platinum Jubilee), we were able to hold a successful Snowdrop Sunday. It was cold but clear and the promise not only of tea and cake but also two bookstalls, Nigel Francis’ photographs and a Quiz – all following the Quarter Peal to commemorate the Queen’s accession 70 years ago - encouraged a good attendance and it was a very happy afternoon.

Sadly there were two funerals of prominent people from village and church circles – Margaret Mason, long time chair of the Parish Council and our own friend Isabella Cleaver who had been such a servant to us all. Each of these were occasions when the church was heart warmingly full with services taken by Rev. Jeremy Auld and Rev. Stephen Pix. Faced with more sadness as the events in Ukraine unfolded, we paid special attention in prayers and thoughts to the dreadful situation for the people of Ukraine especially in our morning service on March 20th when a special collection was taken and sent to the Disasters Emergency Fund.

On a happier note, about 20 people gathered for a cheerful Lent Lunch in Middle Aston and our Mothering Sunday service went well with six children distributing posies to all and sundry, and with Simnel cake to accompany coffee. We look forward to welcoming Marcus back from April 1st although the announcement that he is leaving us to take up a post as Chaplain at Worcester College came as a shock – if not altogether a surprise – part way through his sabbatical. We believe that this post will suit him well and hope that he will find much happiness and opportunity to work in a different way from that of a parish priest. As for us – regretting the prospect of an interregnum especially after nearly six months without our Rector, at least we have had some opportunity to practise church life without him. We ask for God's blessings on him and on us as we move into the next phase of life at St Peter and St Paul's church.

Eileen Baglin-Jones, Graham Clifton

Fabric Report

In the midst of this troubled year our Quinquennial Inspection took place. The detailed report brought news of repairs both urgent immediately and within the next couple of years, in particular the need to re-roof the Lady Chapel. The amount of money involved made hearts sink at the prospect of securing funding for this. It will no doubt extend the pause to the Building Project regrettably agreed by the PCC because of all that covid has meant. During the year warning and danger notices were renewed in appropriate places, white strips were applied where there are dangerous surfaces and the usual Fire Inspection took place. Two Fire Extinguishers were replaced. The roof alarms were checked and the Boiler was serviced and repaired.

Eileen Baglin-Jones, Graham Clifton

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the PCC 2021 -2022

Covid-19:

The Covid-19 Pandemic continues to cause significant difficulties and uncertainty for parish life. A reduction in services and attendance, events and capacity, continues to leave a negative impact on Church finances.

Whilst church funds have been protected somewhat through the continued support of a small number of regular donations, the PCC elected to freeze Parish Share payments until such time the Church finances recovered.

Financial Review:

The church is an accepted charity.

The PCC has a range of funds that it administers:

General fund – This fund is an unrestricted fund, and as such may be spent on anything within the aims and objectives of the PCC. General funds are held in an HSBC main account for day to day running costs. **(HSBC A)**

Designated funds – these are sums of money from unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the PCC for specific purposes. They remain unrestricted funds, since the PCC has the power to reverse its decision and “undesignate” them, returning the sums held to the general fund. This fund is currently held in an HSBC account. **(HSBC B)**

Restricted funds – these are sums given for a specific purpose and may only be spent on that purpose. This might be money raised for a short-term project, or money provided for specific items. Currently the PCC has a restricted fund account with CCLA, specifically for the purpose of the proposed refurbishment of St Peter and St Paul’s Church in Steeple Aston. **(CCLA)**

Name of Fund	Purpose of Funds	Source of Income	Balance (As of 19 th January 2022)	Interest rate
HSBC A	Day to Day running costs *No interest payable on this account	Services, Donations, Weddings, Funerals, Diocese	£7,757.03	0%
HSBC B	Long term savings and contingency monies *0.2%pa interest payable on this account	Funded from 'HSBC A' main	£9,409.45	0.2%
CCLA	Building fund, provision for refurbishment of Church main building only	Donations	£2,052.77	0.75%
Total liquid cash			£19,116	

Parish Share:

The May 2021 PCC, recommended to freeze the Parish Share contributions until further notice.

The primary driver for this was that the Church funds (HSBC A), were becoming critically low. During April '21, funds were dangerously low, circa £3,000. It was required to transfer £3,000 from the reserves account (HSBC B), to meet obligations.

Whilst Parish Share contributions were frozen, the Church account was able to recover back to nominal levels, meaning that we were able to transfer back to the reserve account the full £3,000 in September '21.

An agreement was reached at the November 2021 PCC meeting to pay an interim contribution of £10,000. Continued contributions will be considered in future PCC meetings to assess whether further payments can be made when suitable. This was paid and reflected in our accounts in January 2021 (Cheque was sent in December but deposited by ODB in January, this will show in the 2022 accounts).

Between January 2021 and May 2021, we paid a total of £11,297.98 for the Parish Share. The £10,000 will contribute towards the 2022 allocation. This compares to the £27,383.40 that was paid in 2020 (which was a full years' worth).

Going forward, due to ongoing restrictions and a reduction in fund raising activity, continuing the full Parish Share payment is not possible still. Over a 3-month rolling average, our income is circa £2,200, whilst expenses are £870, leaving £1,400. The Treasurer recommends that once Church funds recover to a nominal level £9K, we should start regular Parish Share payments between £500-£1,000 per month and assess on a quarterly basis.

Receipts:

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £41,1665

The designated fund account received no income during this period.

Income remains below prior years where we would have anticipated income to have been excess of £50,000, we therefore remain down by 20%. Income is slightly more from the previous year.

Service income is slightly down by £100 over the year. Again, due to Covid, this has resulted in a reduction in services and service takings.

Income includes a £3,000 transfer from the reserved funds.

A small amount was received in Gift Aid for this year (£250).

Key Points:

Standing Orders for 2021 have dropped significantly from £4,600 (2020) to £3,400 (2021), a £1,200 drop, however Just Giving Scheme has increased by £1,100.

We are fortunate to have started to receive a monthly donation of £250, which makes up for the last income.

There are monies owed to the Church from:

Gift Aid* - £

Tackley** - £1,155

North Aston** - 204

* Submitted January 2022

** Ongoing chasing with respective treasurers

Building Account:

Due to Covid-19 restrictions and the burden placed on our budgets, the PCC decided to place all building project work and related fundraising on hold for the period.

Payments:

Total payments from unrestricted funds were £39,556, this is in line with the previous year's expenditure.

We were able to pay £11,297 of our 2021 circa £27,000 Parish Share commitment, as of timings, the £10,000 recently submitted by Church will go towards the 2022 allocation.

Utility costs for 2021 were down compared to 2020 (£1,042 from £1,418)

Reserves Policy:

Reserves are defined as that part of the PCC's income that is freely available. This would include any designated funds held by the PCC but excludes the PCC's restricted and endowment funds and income which can only be realised by selling fixed assets held for PCC's use.

Due to the continued situation of Covid-19, it was deemed expedient to transfer £3,000 to the main day to day account. Due to reduced income and continued expenditure, the day-to-day account was running low. Efforts were made to reduce expenditure and it was agreed by the PCC to freeze Parish Share payments. This was actioned and the nominal account recovered to the extent that the £3,000 was able to be repaid back into the reserves account. No further use of the reserves account was used for the year nor is expected going forward.

General / Designated fund:

The PCC does not intend to build up large reserves. To minimise the risk of being unable to meet financial obligations as they fall due, including full payment of the Diocese funding and meeting its month to month running costs, the PCC aims to hold sufficient liquid general fund resources to meet 2 months' running costs within the General Fund.

Restricted funds:

The PCC does not plan to hold significant restricted funds and the PCC will seek to use the restricted funds to support the general activities of the church, within the restrictions placed on those funds.

Where special needs arise, the PCC will instigate fundraising activities and appeals to meet that need.

Financial Statements for the Year Ended 19th January 2021

Receipts and Payments Accounts

Receipts	2021			2020	
Opening Balance		£ 7,665			£ 9,739
Stewardship Income	£4,000				
Standing Orders	£3,438			£ 4,163	
Collections	£1503.			£ 1,744	
Special Collections				£ 50	
Pew Envelopes	-			£ -	
Free Will Offering	-			£ -	
Parish Giving Scheme	£12,075			£ 9,349	
Parish Giving Gift Aid recovered	£250			£ 2,891	
Central Board of Finance Deposit Fund (Building Fund)	-			£ -	
Central Board of Finance Interest	-			£ 339	
Charities Trust Donation	£1,200			£ 1,200	
Donations	£2,579			£ 590	
Fees, (Weddings, Funerals etc.)	£3,369			£ 2,823	
Building Fund	-			£ -	
Fund raising	£4,236			£ 1,080	
Lent Project	£10			£ 75	
Gift Aid reclaim on standing orders and collections	-			£ 4,153	
Wall safe				£ -	
Grant, Parish Council for grass mowing	£1,110			£ 1,100	

Misc.				£ 6,355	
Reclaimed Rector's exp. From Tackley & N Aston	£173			£ 816	
Bell Project	£2,712				
Total receipts	£36,655			£36,728	

Notes:

- **Misc. includes, Fete monies**

Payments		2021		2020
Parish Share		11,289		£ 27,384
Insurance		3,716		£ 3,202
Charitable Giving		25		£ 1,060
Visiting Clergy		-		£ 71
Cost of Services		-		£ 683
Rector's Expenses for Benefice		1,166		£ 495
British Telecom		699		£ 745
Church Yard		1,850		£ 1,665
Miscellaneous		152		£ 565
Electricity		402		£ 620
Heating Oil		-		£ 244
Boiler maintenance		458		£ -
Five Year Inspection		160		£ 155
Fire security check		142		£ 78
Fete expenses / Events		317		£ 60
Lent Project		-		£ 250
S A Life adverts		57		£ 62
Castle water		-		£ 55
Building Architect Fees		-		£ 1,000
Roof alarm maintenance		717		£ 181
CCLI Licence		-		£ 237
Bank Charges		6		£ -
Cost of Services		155		£ -
Bank Transfer				£ -
Bell Project		4,754		£ -
Fabric repair		480		£ -
Total payments		£26,545		£ 38,812

Payments		2021		2020
Parish Share		11,289		£ 27,384
Insurance		3,716		£ 3,202
Charitable Giving		25		£ 1,060
Visiting Clergy		-		£ 71
Closing Balance		£17755		£ 7,665

Notes:

The above figures represent the income and outgoing from the General Fund (HSBC A).

A cheque for £199.25 was sent to the Royal British Legion in November 2021, however this has not been cashed by them yet. This will appear in 2022 accounts

CCLI licence renewal cheque has been sent, yet not showing in latest accounts £124

We have a credit of around £400 with our Electricity provider. SSE customers have moved across to OVO, our rates and conditions remain the same.

Designated Account

For the Designated Accounts (HSBC B), at the start of the financial year (20th January 2021), the balance was £9,408

Only 1 transfer of £3,000 was made to bolster the main account. This was repaid back to the account in September, therefore end of year balance is £9,409

Building Fund

Funds for the proposed Building Project are held in a restricted fund with CCLA. These funds are specifically to be used on Building Project related activities. As of the nature of the account, we are able to withdraw money to the Church general account, which will make payments for any works conducted.

At the start of the Financial year (20th January 2021), the Building Account balance was £2,051

No deposits or withdrawals were made throughout the year.

The end of year balance therefore stands at £2,052

Outstanding actions (as of 26th January '22)

1. Complete Gift Aid submission, at time of writing, current estimate is return of circa £1,500

2. Continue to chase North Aston and Tackey for their Rector contributions, can expect circa £1,400
3. Cancel Royal British Legion cheque and resubmit
4. Submit a cheque to Marys Meal for £55.59

Gareth John, January 2022.

As of 26th January Gareth John stood down as Treasurer and Graham Clifton is acting as treasurer until the 2022 AGM when it is hoped a new treasurer can be elected.

The 2021 accounts have been checked by Shirley Palmer and Graham Clifton and found to be correct although in some cases there is no paper trail or receipts.

The accounts have also been examined by David Bird, 1st March 2022.

Since taking over from Gareth I can confirm the following;

£10,000 Parish Share from 2021 now paid.

£191 paid to British Legion Appeal

££55.59 Paid to Mary's Meals from Christmas collection.

Gift Aid reclaim has been made.

The share of the Rector's expenses from Tackley and North Aston has been reclaimed.

We now need to try and increase the church presence in the parish and rebuild our congregation and financial giving if the church is going to survive.

Graham Clifton, 11th March 2022

Independent Examiner's Report to the members/trustees of St. Peters and St. Pauls Church, Steeple Aston, Parochial Church Council.

I report on the accounts for the year ended 19th January 2021.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent Examiner

As trustees of the charity, the members of the PCC are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;

- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the management committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

Particular matters which have come to my attention.

1. These are accurate account records.
2. Every cheque stub should be available and dated, it was difficult to follow the trail.
3. Not all receipts were available. These should be part of the inspection for items purchased by individuals, signed and dated.
4. The dates of PCC decisions on financial matters are needed to check whether payments have been started or stopped at the right time.
5. The wall safe donations are needed every month.
6. All monies owed either in or out should be repaid before the year end.
7. Miscellaneous fees should be explained,

Name of Independent Examiner, David Bird

Church Building Project

Financial Review May 2022.

A number of people have asked for an update and review of the finances relating to the Building Project.

The building project was started in 2015 looking at ways to improve church facilities, better heating, easier access, toilet, kitchen, more flexible space etc.

It was decided to keep all money relating to this project separate from the day to day running of the church. We had a small amount of money, £2677 in a CCLA account, this money was left over from the 2004 church repairs and redecorations.

It is fair to say the DAC have not been over helpful with the scheme which has resulted in higher architects fees, having to amend and re-submit plans many times.

The following money was given towards the Building Project

Personal pledges.	£27,555
Concerts	£5,413
Fund Raising	£838
Grants	£7,000
Donations	£4,358
Tax reclaim	£4,000
Interest	£133

Total income £51,914

Paid out	
Architect	£41,579
Concert Expenses	£352
Heating Survey	£1,305
VAT advice	£288
Quantity Surveyor	£1,465
Tower floor Survey	£1,433
Pew alterations	£2,345
Other surveys	£1,188

Total paid out £49,956

Balance in fund £2,018

Graham Clifton.

Tower Captain Report 2021

The year started with the continued lockdown. The church was closed to services so there was no Sunday ringing and no Tuesday practices. Tuesday practice nights finally restarted at the end of July. We were all pleased to get back to some sort of normality. I was pleased Jack and Lewis have returned, Lewis has made great progress over the last few weeks. Fiona McLoone has joined us and is now ringing on her own. Since his move to Steeple Aston Joe Burchell has returned to ringing and is a great addition to our team. It is pleasing the visitors who used to join us have returned, their help is greatly appreciated.

We held a tower BBQ in July and over twenty people attended in our garden. The Banbury Branch held a Saturday morning practice at Steeple followed by lunch in the Red Lion. This was very popular.

Malcolm tolled the tenor on the day HRH Prince Philip died. It was tolled again half muffled for 20 minutes on the day of his funeral.

Christmas ringing was curtailed this year due to fewer services, there were only 6 ringers on Christmas Day morning, and we also rang in the New Year again with drinks and nibbles in the tower.

Tower Keeper report

The big event this year was installing the replacement 3rd bell. On Friday evening 16th April Lawrence, Jack and I spent a couple of hours dismantling the old bell and putting up lifting gear. The next day we gathered again and were joined by Nick and Keith to open up floors and lower the old 3rd bell to the clock room. A small group gathered to witness the bell go up, Eileen CW kindly provided coffee and cakes, Nigel Francis came and took lots of photos.

The Rector blessed the bell and said a prayer. At 10am. the bell lifted up into the tower and installed. By 12noon all the floors were back in place and the bell was tried out. Unfortunately due to the lock down it would be a few weeks before we could ring the bell with all the other to hear how well it fitted in. Now the bell has been rung all agreed was worth the effort and the sound is so much better. The cost of this work was almost paid for from grants and donations, only £350 from the tower fund was needed to make up the short fall.

Graham Clifton, Tower Captain

Churchyard Report

Churchyard Working Parties were held in March and June when a small band of cheerful volunteers continued to keep the churchyard tidy. Quantities of ivy were removed from walls, the yews were trimmed and hedges were cut. A Silver Birch tree at the Fir Lane side of the old churchyard had died and had to be felled lest it caused danger by falling over the road. In September quantities of Honey Fungus appeared once again causing concern lest it spread to our neighbours in Canterbury House. Conflicting advice about how to deal with it led to much discussion and quotes were obtained for cutting down/grinding out tree stumps of previously felled trees and the large sycamore stump. To have all this work done would have been prohibitively expensive so it was eventually decided to have the four small stumps ground out, leaving the big sycamore to be monitored next year. We were very grateful to our neighbours from Canterbury House for sharing the cost of the work.

The Bier Shed was repainted and gullies and drains were cleared of accumulated leaf and dirt by brave souls – including checking gullies on the roof.

Nigel Prickett has continued to mow the grass in the churchyard and the extension churchyard for £185 a cut with no increase in his charges for 2021. He has been helpful in leaving designated wildflower areas uncut until late in the season when flowers have died.

Eileen Baglin-Jones

Church Flower Report

I took over organising the church flower rota in early summer when Edwina retired from having done a wonderful job for many many years.

This coincided with the church opening up for services after after Covid.

We have seven flower arrangers, some who have been involved for many years and quite a few “newbies” as four have asked to be retired from duties.

This Harvest Festival was a special one with nine village clubs and organisations being asked to decorate a window or area of the church with a display that incorporated the themes of thanksgiving and their particular interests. There were some magnificent displays, The Allotment Society, The book club, Bee Keepers being particularly impressive.

Afternoon tea served in the church brought many villagers out to admire the displays.

We have, sadly, been involved in two funerals for past long standing flower arrangers, absolutely beautiful spring flowers for Margaret Mason involved new and long standing members being involved.

We now have a couple of faux arrangements and potted plants that can be used to supplement seasonal flowers. We continue to arrange flowers for a two week cycle individually and come together for festivals.

Jane Stewart

Electoral Roll

We have 50 members on our Electoral Roll. Please contact Jeana (347237) if you wish to join.

Jeana Atkins

Children's Church

Due to the difficulty of children from different age groups, and different schools mixing together during COVID restrictions, we have not managed to restart 'Children's Church' this past year. In the summer several families attended the open air services in the churchyard, and a few families have continued to attend services since the Autumn. The Crib Service was a wonderful informal service with many families with children of all ages joining in the readings and bringing up the crib figures. Personally, I feel that I would like to step back from leading Children's Church, though I am very happy to support anyone who would like to restart a monthly children's church. It may be possible to use the Samuel Radcliffe building at school again, though I have not discussed this with them. I am hoping that we as a church community will be able to work with the school to host a 'BESPACE' prayer and reflection week at the school in the summer, as we have managed prior to COVID.

Rachel Marsden

Safeguarding Report

I have taken on this role and have been undergoing training and familiarising myself with Diocesan procedures. One safeguarding issue was raised and referred to the appropriate authorities.

Caroline Parsons

Sidespeople

There are 10 sidespeople who have contributed to the smooth running of our church services throughout the year. A big "thank you" to everyone on the rota, it is hoped you will continue for another year. We have welcomed several newcomers to our

church in the past year and if any of you would like to offer your services as a sidesperson, please contact Jeana Atkins (347237); you must have your name entered on the Electoral Roll to take on these duties.

Jeana Atkins

Church Cleaning

Ten industrious people regularly clean and polish the church, which is much appreciated. So thanks go out to: Martin and Ruth Dale, Chris Clarke, Diana Gardner, Roger Bradley, Caroline Parsons, Jenny S , Jeana Atkins, Janine Coaker and Mary Rushworth. A huge THANK YOU to you all. There is still room on the rota for more helpers, so please speak to Jeana (347237) if you are willing to give an hour or two of your time once every 6 weeks or so. JA

Chalice Bearers and Those Preparing For Holy Communion

Only one chalice bearer is available to assist the Priest at Holy Communion and there are now three on a rota to prepare for services. Many thanks to everyone for their help.

Jeana Atkins (347237)

Readers and Intercessors

Until June 27th there was no need for people to take part in services in this way. It continues to be difficult now to find readers and intercessors for every service - though so far we have not failed! These tasks fall to just a few willing members of the congregation who are asked rather frequently and sometimes it has been difficult to find someone to participate, partly due to the changing attitudes there seem to be to church attendance, For this reason the suggestion of a rota has not found favour – people often seem to decide whether to come to services at some point in the preceding week. Regular churchgoing habits have changed – perhaps all those lovely ‘Worship at Home’ videos have encouraged a more relaxed approach. We also have not been able to pause and chat so it has not been a sociable event. Let us hope to recruit more people to the reader/intercessor team in 2022.

EBJ

Organ / Music Report

This year has been a very quiet year for the organ with plans for concerts having to be shelved etc. because of Covid.

I am delighted to welcome back to Steeple Aston Nick and Heather Cleobury and in this context to express my gratitude that Nick has agreed to play the organ for services etc when he can. It is super to hear the organ played to its full potential. Many thanks.

The organ soldiers on as a good village church organ, probably better than most village church pipe organs in the quality and tone of its basic stops. From a mechanical point of view there is still an annoying whistle which is a leak of air on one stop. The tuner could not find where it was coming from. He also pointed out that the organ is due for a serious clean for which we would have to save up. This needs thought.

On another note the congregation are singing lustily each week - long may that last - and may I express my appreciation to all those who help me to know when I have reached the end of each hymn. The more verses there are the more grateful I am.

Martin Dale

Woodstock Deanery Synod Annual Report

Like 2020, 2021 was a very strange year. Zoom services and virtual meetings became commonplace across the Deanery. During the year, some services and gatherings were in church buildings but, generally speaking, life in the parishes has changed.

The synod met three times during the year, twice on zoom and once at St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock. All of the meetings began with an act of worship that helped us to focus on God and his work in our Deanery. At our first meeting the main topic was the parish share for 2022, more of that later. At our June meeting, Ollie Shaw, the youth worker at St Leonard's, Eynsham, spoke to the synod about 'reaching out to young people after coronavirus'. Members found this an interesting and encouraging presentation. In November, Jeremy Auld gave a presentation on 'Living in love and faith' in the hope that people would be encouraged to look at the materials, maybe join a study group and respond to the bishops' request to engage in the discernment process about the way forward. We also looked at the list of ten things that the diocese could do to make it easier for parishes to concentrate their efforts on spreading the news of God's love, rather than things like form filling. All

Deanery synod members were asked to consult with their parishes and the list sent to Bishop Gavin early in 2022 was a collation of these responses.

In relation to the parish share an amendment was agreed to the way in which the parish share is allocated between the benefices in the Deanery from 2022 onwards in order to change the effect that the high community profile score system has particularly on the rural parishes in the Deanery. It is anticipated that the allocation method may need amending again from 2023 as a revised diocesan scheme may be in place by then. During the year Deanery Mission grants were approved to Woodstock, the Barton benefice and the Wootton benefice.

There have been some comings and goings in our Deanery. Bishop Gavin, the new Bishop of Dorchester moved into the Deanery at the beginning of the year. Steve Stewart was instituted as rector of the Hanborough and Freeland churches in January and Ralph Williamson was instituted as rector of Stonesfield and Combe in May.

In June, Anthony Watkinson stepped down as Deanery synod secretary, and we would like to record our thanks to him for all his hard work. Maria Coonick was co-opted onto the synod as our new secretary at that point. 2021 was also the year that marked a change in our diocesan synod representatives. Reverend Jeremy Auld (Woodstock & Bladon) and Reverend Marcus Green (Steeple Aston, North Aston & Tackley) kindly agreed to represent the clergy, Marcus carrying on from the previous synod and Jeremy filling the gap left by David Tyler. Ollie Shaw (Eynsham) and Mike Holmes (Woodstock) agreed to represent the laity. Our thanks to Steve Young (Hanborough) and Susan Small (Steeple Barton) who preceded them.

March 2022

St Peter and St Paul Steeple Aston

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held in church on 12 July 2021

The Rev. Marcus Green welcomed everyone and the meeting started with Night Prayer.

Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Election of Churchwardens

Two nominations for churchwarden had been received: Eileen Baglin-Jones and Graham Clifton. They were both unanimously elected with acclaim

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Present: Eileen Baglin-Jones, Dorothy Clifton, Graham Clifton, Jeanette Cotterill, Martin Dale, Ruth Dale, Marcus Green, Shirley Palmer, John White

Apologies for absence: Malcolm Hensher, Gareth John, Caroline Parsons, David Stewart

1. Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 12 September 2020

These were unanimously received as a true record of that meeting.

2. Annual Reports

Due to the current circumstances regarding CV19, these were not read out at the meeting but circulated beforehand. MD asked that an addendum be added to the music report stating how much the provision of online music during the pandemic had been appreciated.

Those at the meeting were unanimous in receiving the reports.

MG drew attention to the current issues regarding finances, expressing gratitude to those who have continued to give. The fete has raised around £3000 and the Parish Giving Scheme has contributed to planned giving. There may need to be a push on giving. This has been difficult during the pandemic but will be looked at by the PCC.

EBJ stated that more volunteers were needed for helping with services. During the pandemic some core people have moved away and we have not had the opportunity to draw on new people. MG emphasised the need to continue to welcome and draw people in. GC suggested the need to include an item on the next PCC agenda on how to make the church grow and build it up again. This met with unanimous approval from those at the meeting. MG said that different approaches worked for different people, citing the examples of Alpha courses and the alternative approach of the “belonging” model drawing people in.

3. Election of members of the Parochial Church Council

This year, the three members of PCC elected in 2018 were standing again. Nominations had been received for Jeanette Cotterill, Shirley Palmer and David Stewart. In addition, Martin Dale was standing down from Deanery Synod but ready to continue on PCC. There were two additional spare places this year, as neither of the two PCC members elected in 2019 remain in those positions. JC, SP and DS were elected for the next three years and MD for the next year, taking one of the places vacated by the 2019 representatives. All were elected unanimously.

4. Deanery Synod representatives

There is now a space on Deanery Synod. EBJ will continue to represent the parish. No other volunteers were forthcoming.

5. Appointment of Sidespeople

Since last year, six people have left the sidespeople's rota. JW, JC and MD (when not playing the organ) were willing to join the list. The meeting agreed the election of the following sidespeople:

Jeana Atkins	Eileen Baglin-Jones
Roger Bradley	Heather Cleobury
Jeanette Cotterill	Martin Dale
Ruth Dale	Shirley Palmer
Caroline Parsons	John White
Lawrence White	

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts

TBC – we were not in a position to do this at this meeting.

7. AOB

DC suggested that illuminated scrolls might be given when people stand down after long service. MG approved of the idea.

We will be giving a card and flowers to Edwina to thank her for all that she has done organising church flowers.

MG thanked everyone for all they had contributed during the pandemic. There have been times for all of us when we have not been at our best but we have supported each other. He reminded those at the meeting that God is good and will see us through these days and that we should never underestimate the power of small kindnesses.

The next PCC meeting will be in September and MG will be sending out suggested dates.

The meeting closed with the grace.

St Peter and St Paul, Steeple Aston Annual Parochial Church Meeting

8 May 2022

Agenda for Meeting of Parishioners

Election of Churchwardens

Agenda for Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Apologies for absence

Minutes of Annual Meeting held on 12 July 2021

1. To consider:
 - a) An annual report of the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council and the activities of the parish generally (Churchwardens' and Secretary's reports)
 - b) The Financial Statements of the Parochial Church Council for the year ending 31 December 2021, independently examined
 - c) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the Church of the Parish
 - d) A report on the electoral roll since the last Annual Parochial Church meeting
 - e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
 - f) All other parochial reports
2. Election of one representative to the Parochial Church Council
3. (Election of one Deanery Synod representative, if needed)
4. Appointment of Sidespeople
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner of the Accounts
6. Any other business

Dates of next PCC Meetings 2022-23: tbc

Election of Officers at Annual Meeting

a note of explanation...

With an electoral roll of 50 members, we have only six elected members on our PCC. These are elected on a rolling basis - a third of the PCC is re-elected each year.

Our Electoral Roll has slightly decreased during the pandemic through various reasons, and we hope will soon recover, but while it is at this stage, and going into a vacancy, it does mean our PCC will be a little leaner, and our system of electing a third of the PCC each year needs a little adjusting. Because we elected three members last year, we only have one space up for election this year - as Martin Dale reached the end of his tenure. On behalf of all of us at St Peter & St Paul's, may I as Rector offer many thanks to Martin for all his service on the PCC. At the end of a term of office, any PCC member may stand for re-election or step down as they wish, and of course we would all be delighted for Martin to continue!

Of course, any member of the church electoral roll (who satisfies all the necessary guidelines) may stand for election, and if we have more candidates than places we will hold an election during the Annual Meeting. All candidates must have been nominated properly using the printed nomination forms available from the PCC secretary.

If we have more than one candidate and need to conduct an election, the process is as follows: Those present who are on the church electoral roll have up to three votes each. They may not vote more than once for any one candidate. They do not have to vote three times if they do not wish to. We vote by show of hands, unless a paper ballot is called for. Then everyone must sign the back of their papers. The electoral roll officer ensures that only those on the electoral roll are voting. If there is a tied result at the end of all this, the Rector has no casting vote (by statute not being a member of the electoral roll) - the final decision is taken by lot.

I hope this makes everything clear!

Marcus Green, Rector, St Peter and St Paul, Steeple Aston