

## 2023 Report and Accounts for the Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas Hardwicke

### **1) Aims and Purposes**

St Nicholas's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with the Priest-in-Charge, the Rev Richard Martin, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, liturgical, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the Church and grounds. Our parish is one of three parishes within a United Benefice (the other parishes being St John the Baptist Elmore and St Laurence Longney).

### **2) Objectives and activities**

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our Church and to become part of the worshipping community. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions as to how our services can attract the many different people who live there. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

When planning our activities, we bear in mind the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and the supplementary guidance on the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through

- worship and prayer, learning about the Christian faith, and developing their personal devotion and trust in Jesus
- provision of pastoral care for people in the parish.
- mission and outreach work in the community

We also try to help people live out their faith in their daily occupations. To facilitate this work we maintain the fabric of our Church and grounds.

**3) Achievements and Performance.** We have been able to maintain our routine of services without interruption. The serving of coffee after the Sunday service was resumed. 4 weddings, 1 renewal of wedding vows, 1 thanksgiving for marriage, 15 baptisms, 8 funerals and 2 celebration of life services have taken place in Church. In the Churchyard there were 7 burials and 13 interments of ashes. Our Benefice website, Facebook and A Church Near You pages are kept weekly updated, and we post on the Spotted Hunts Grove social media page. A monthly letter is published in Hardwicke Matters, along with adverts for special events.

**(a) Worship and prayer.** The 11am Sunday service and 9.30am Wednesday Holy Communion services were held each week. We continued holding our 11am Second Sunday (then moved to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday) Storyteller service in Hardwicke school, and this resulted in more children and families attending. In November the Remembrance service was again remarkably well supported.

**(b) The Church building and grounds.** The Church is listed Grade 1. The most recent Quinquennial Architect's inspection took place in 2022 and the report highlighted areas of work to be tackled, most manageable with volunteer labour, but the enlargement of the rainwater goods will require specialist contractors. Our faculty application for the re-ordering of the nave and baptistry has been paused while we obtain (at the DAC's request) an Options Appraisal and complete a Statement of Significance. These have been received (very generously funded by the Parish Council) and a PCC sub-committee formed to take this forward.

The bells were repaired and were swung for the first time on Remembrance Day. The eventual cost was £8000, but £6000 of this was covered by donations and grants – our thanks to all who contributed and to Justine for applying for the grants. Working parties have tackled routine tasks. An area of the Churchyard has been designated a wild space and is not being mown. Our thanks to Dale who keeps the rest of it in such excellent order. The graveyard has seen several new burials and interments of ashes.

**(c) Pastoral care** Home Communion and visits, and the monthly service in St Nicholas's Court and the Lawns continued. Longney and Elmore choir sang carols at the Lawns. Contact also has been maintained with people in pastoral need by phone. The Benefice prayer chain has been much in use, co-ordinated by Sarah Walters. The Tuesday craft group have supplied knitted and crocheted items for baptism and wedding families, and prayer shawls for the lonely sad or housebound. Some practical assistance was given to needy local families known to Hardwicke school, through the Fare share scheme, and in the winter months we collected and distributed sleeping bags and duvets. Sportily ran HAF holiday clubs in Hardwicke school. Pastoral care for bereaved families has been enhanced with several interments of cremated remains in the Churchyard.

**(d) Mission and evangelism.** We have maintained contact with local adults through monthly coffee mornings, some held in Church and others at Church house. The Sunday school usually has no children attending, and the Fusion youth group, extended for one year to recruit new members, has closed. However, our Nativity service attracted over 100 people. Our second (then third) Sunday service each month was held in Hardwicke school. This attracted good numbers, especially at Harvest, which was a Parade service, and when the school choir joined us in number. In December we had to move the service back to Church as the school hall was being repaired. Several members of the congregation are involved with Hardwicke Parochial Primary academy, as staff or governors, and Tim Fletcher runs after-school clubs and Holiday clubs there. Fortnightly assemblies have been held, and the Open the Book team visited once a term until July.

A monthly play and praise session in the Church, for pre-schoolers and their carers has proved encouragingly popular.

Assemblies were also held fortnightly in Hunts Grove school. Tim Fletcher, our Sportily "Faith and Sports" pioneer minister, took some of these, and volunteered in the school. He ran after-school clubs and a teenage 'hang-out' there weekly in term time, as well as organising weekly basketball sessions on the community play area. On December 17 a carol service, at which Bishop Rachel spoke, was held in the school hall. It attracted 60 local people. We have been running termly Messy Church sessions there, with a steadily increasing number of folk coming along. We are praying that a small group of Hunts Grove residents will begin to meet for prayer and to plan outreach, in 2024, under Tim's leadership.

We decided to tithe our giving to Jane Edwards, a BMS worker in Mozambique. She told us about her work during a service on 3rd December.

**(e) e) Co-operation within the Benefice.** The Ministry team met most months. Rev George Parfitt and our licensed Readers Pat Buckland, Judy Cheshire and Mike Williams, together with our licensed Leaders of Worship Neil Hollis and Doff Stone, took a full part in fulfilling the rota of leading and preaching, in their various styles. United Benefice services were held on all 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays.

- f) **Co-operation with local Clergy and Churches.** Collaboration with the new vicar of Quedgeley (Rev Mark Siddall) has been continued. He and Richard say Morning Prayer together twice a week, and offer chaplaincy at Severn Vale school fortnightly.

#### **4) Deanery Synod**

The Deanery Synod met 4 times this year, with Area Dean Rev'd Jo Pestell and assistants Rev'd. Sarah Todd and Rev'd. Richard Martin. Lay Chair Mrs. Mary Gould and assistant Mr. Andy Wilson and new Deanery Secretary Justine Sullivan took over in July from Sheila Bennett who had served nearly 9 years as secretary. The Deanery Strategic Plan is still a big topic with Rev'd. Richard Martin giving quarterly updates on our progress. Five chosen areas are:-

- 1) Deanery Finance and Buildings Project.
- 2) Youth Ministry.
- 3) Pioneering/ Mission/Outreach work.
- 4) Collaborative working.
- 5) Links between Cathedral and Deanery.

We had several Deanery Services around our area open for all to attend, and a choir to join if you wish. This year we have a Deanery Evensong at the Cathedral on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Look out for further details.

The first part of Deanery meetings has an invited guest speaker, anyone from deanery parishes is invited to attend especially if they have an interest in the topic to be discussed.

February Meeting: Speaker Rev'd. Canon Dr. Sandra Millar, recently appointed Director of Mission and Ministry for the Diocese of Gloucester, spoke to us about using our baptisms, weddings and funerals as stepping stones to growing faith. At the business meeting doubts were expressed as to whether some parishes could continue to fulfil the financial commitments over the next five years, we looked at collaborative ways of funding ministry.

May Meeting: We celebrated Deanery Eucharist at St Oswalds, Coney Hill and Dean Andrew joined us from the Cathedral. There was a buffet Social afterwards.

July Meeting: Andy Wilson and Jo Pestell helped us explore the different ways we are being church across our deanery. In conclusion, we found a lot of pioneering, outreach and mission going on which is wonderful, and is engaging with people who will never step inside our buildings, we need to continue and build on this.

November Meeting: Jodie Calcutt from Stroud who spoke about the collaboration across the Stroud parishes on life events, hall hire and other administration areas. Using a shared database they use Church Suite (several Gloucester Deanery churches are using this database). This has helped all their churches in the Benefice to be more productive and efficient. Great ideas for more collaboration in our deanery. It was agreed to start up a cycle of prayer for the Deanery and have a Deanery Prayer. The cycle of Prayer will start in January 2024.

All Parishes in the Deanery made their financial commitment for 2023.

**Justine Sullivan and Doff Stone, Deanery Synod Reps, Hardwicke, Elmore with Longney**

- 5) **Ecumenical relationships** Good relations have been maintained with Quedgeley Methodist Church and its minister Rev Dr John McNeill. He read a lesson at our Carol service. Our flower arrangers produced a thoughtful display for their Flower festival.
- 6) **Safeguarding:** The Parochial Church Council has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 to have due regard to House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Our Parish Safeguarding Officer is Anita Russan. No concerns were raised during the year. Training for volunteers to the required level is ongoing. Health and Safety inspections of our premises and grounds are carried out annually and Risk Assessments compiled for any special activity. PCC members have kept their training up to date, including the new Domestic Abuse module.
- 7) **General Data Protection Rules:** The Church aims to be fully compliant.
- 8) **Financial review: a verbal report will be given at the meeting.**

In December the vicar and Wendy produced a summary of our budget for 2024, showing that guaranteed expenditure exceeded guaranteed income by £800 per month. This was the focus of a sermon that encouraged us all to revisit our giving.

#### 9) **Volunteers**

We would like to thank all those who volunteer in any way to further the work of the church. In particular we would like to thank our Wardens Neil Hollis and Richard Flower, Anita Russan our Safeguarding Officer, Mark Walters our choir and music group leader, all those who provide floral displays for festivals, those who organise our community and fund-raising events, those who act as Sidespeople, read lessons and lead our intercessions, or lead our prayer ministry, Justine Sullivan our Secretary, and Sarah Walters who maintains our rotas and prayer lists. Also to Sandra Edwards who keeps the noticeboards up to date. A special thank you once again to Wendy Hollis our Treasurer.

#### 10) **Structure, governance and management**

The PCC is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the PCC Powers Measure. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church representation rules. The PCC membership consists of 3 ex-officio members, and up to six others elected at the APCM by those members of the congregation who are on the Electoral Roll. All those who attend our services are encouraged to join the electoral roll and to stand for election to the PCC.

PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding how PCC funds are to be spent.

#### **PCC Secretary's Report**

The PCC met 6 times this year. Mainly at Church House except for November when we met in Church. Our main focus has been re-ordering the church to make it both disable friendly and useful meeting place for the community.

January: Major fundraising started for the urgent works for the Bells started, we were unable to ring the bells, chimes only until the works were completed.

March: Finances looking okay. It was noticeable that the card machine was making a good impact and worth having. Our working party numbers dwindled, could be the weather, but still lots got

done – hedge trimming, and gutters cleaned. Sportily are making an impact in Huntsgrove and took part in the Huntsgrove Community Fun Day with the Church also having a stall. Bell Fundraising going good Gloucester and Bristol Bell Ringers Association agreed to give just over £2,000 on completion of works.

May: Easter Messy Church was very well attended. Two new governors Anita and Judy, who replaced Sarah Nicholson and Lorraine Adams. Woodworm discovered on the alter rails, this has been treated and professional help sought, it is being monitored. We received the Church's Statement of Significance - the organ is not significant along with the pews, only significant items are the Trye Chapel and the alter rails. The third Sunday Service at School is doing well with several new email sign-ups. Tim at Sportily continued his ministry in Huntsgrove and also forming links at Hardwicke school; and took a group of 13 young people to Tom Roberts Adventure Centre (Newent) on a residential.

July: We discussed what pioneering meant to us, as part of the Deanery Strategic Plan being put together – moving forward and reaching out the community, being brave, trying new things, giving people stepping stones into faith; already we have the School Service once a month on 3rd Sunday, presenting 'open the book' in schools, 'Praise & Play Tots once a month, Inviting youth organisations into services (Remembrance, Harvest and Mothering Sunday). The works on the bells started with a good proportion of money raised. Coffee mornings going well and outdoor working parties coincide with them. Tim at Sportily running a two-week holiday club at Hardwicke school; Messy Church continues with good attendance.

September: Options Appraisal – we need a kitchen and accessible toilet in the area where the water comes in. There is a lack of space required for storing tables and chairs, can this be incorporated into the plan. Agreed the Organ pipework and boxing to be moved to in front of the Try Chapel, could open some storage behind too. With the Try Chapel becoming a Historic Space. Coffee morning continues to work well both monetarily and a place for people to meet up for a chat. Tim at Sportily very busy over the summer with over 1000hours of sessions delivered across the network!

November: The bells were rung on Remembrance, nearly all the grants are in. Our Tithing to Jane in Mozambique (BMS) is finally sorted, the money goes directly to the project she is working. Financially we are okay, with increases to all bills we need more money coming in and planned in the diary once a quarter a big fundraiser and keep the coffee mornings.

Justine Sullivan , PCC Secretary

### **11) Administrative information**

St Nicholas's Church and grounds are situated on Pound Lane, GL2 4RP. It is part of the Benefice of Hardwicke and Elmore with Longney, in the Deanery of Gloucester City within the Archdeaconry of Gloucester in the Gloucester diocese, whose Bishop is the Rt Rev Rachel Trewick. The correspondence address is Church House, Cornfield Drive, Hardwicke, GL2 4QJ. The Benefice's website is [Benefice of Hardwicke and Elmore with Longney \(hardwicke-elmore-longney.church\)](http://hardwicke-elmore-longney.church)

PCC members who have served at any time from 1 January 2023 until this report was approved are

#### **Ex-Officio members:**

Churchwardens: Neil Hollis and Richard Flower  
Deanery Synod representative Justine Sullivan  
Licenced Reader: Judy Cheshire

### **Elected members**

Andrew Plater  
Caroline Dixon-Gladstone (to November 2023)  
Wendy Hollis (Treasurer)  
Mark Walters  
Jenny Bell  
Nick Denman  
Linda Cook

Approved by the PCC on 11 March 2024 and signed on their behalf by Rev Richard Martin (PCC Chairman)

### **Electoral Roll**

At the last APCM the church roll had its review and there were a total of 66 members on the church roll of whom 29 were non-residents.

The Electoral roll for this APCM stands at a total of 67 members of whom 38 are resident and 29 are non-resident.

Claire Trafford (retiring Electoral Roll officer)

### **Benefice Readers' report**

In their own idiosyncratic ways, or, as they like to put it, using their gifts to the full, your Readers played their part in the worship of the Benefice as well as being involved in worship at The Lawns and St Nicholas Court and in Open the Book at Longney and Hardwicke schools.

Pat Buckland, Judy Cheshire and Mike Williams

### **Hardwicke Parochial Primary Academy Ex-Officio Foundation Governors' Report**

We are pleased to report that we were able to begin the academic year with new classrooms and intervention rooms for our year 6 pupils, giving us extra space for our oldest children. The year 6 children have been engaged with the "School Beat" programme and were involved with the production of our school song – performed for the first time at the summer fete – and at the end of the summer term they gave an outstanding performance of "Matilda".

Our team of worship leaders have led our acts of worship very competently, without adult involvement, and have set an excellent example for our children to follow. "Sportily" - Christians in Sport have been regular visitors, helping children to understand that faith and belief are important in every aspect of their lives.

Following interviews in May, Miss Sharon Cale was appointed our Head Teacher and took up the post in September. The "Ofsted" Inspectors visited and after three-day inspection adjudged Hardwicke to be a Good School. Our thanks go to all the staff and pupils for their hard work in achieving this grade.

The annual SATS results proved to be in line with the predictions made by the staff; we commend the children for the progress made during the year.

Among the visitors to school this year we have welcomed our PCSO officers who have taken part in assemblies and have led workshops on their work in our wider community.

Children have visited The Lawns care home, visits which clearly delighted the residents. The Year 6 children enjoyed their residential course at Conover Hall in Shropshire.

Problems with the floor meant that we were unable to use the hall for our Christmas activities, a problem which was resolved during the holiday break.

The Revd. Ian Robb, Foundation Governor

### **BELL-TOWER REPORT 2023**

The bells were repaired successfully by Taylors, the firm that installed them. Generous grants from trusts, Hardwicke Parish Council and individuals meant the net cost to the PCC was around £2000. The restored bells were rung for the first time on Remembrance Sunday, and monthly practices have been held since, led by Sue Benyon, to who we are most grateful.

### **The Music Group (Worship Band) and Simply Singers**

Music Group – As mentioned for a number of years now, we could really do with a (rhythm) guitarist. If you know of someone who may be prepared to play once or twice a month, please have a word with them.

Simply Singers – Currently we practice after a Sunday morning service, for a quick run through of a particular song, as and when the need arises. Even if you don't wish to join the Simply Singers, you are more than welcome to join in any of the practices.

New members are always welcome, there is no 'audition' and there is no obligation to attend every service when the Simply Singers are singing (usually the Simply Worship services). If you like to sing and are interested in joining the singers, please come and see me or any of the Simply Singers.

School Choir - The school choir/singing group have joined us at the all age services we have held in the school, and this is greatly appreciated. As at the time of writing however, we have had to hold the all age services in church and the school choir have not been with us, but hopefully we will be back to normal once we are back in the school hall.

As always, my sincere thanks to all in the Music Group and the Simply Singers for their support and contribution to our worship.

Mark

## **OPEN THE BOOK**

We “performed” one every half-term in Hardwicke and Longney schools from January-July. Great fun, and well received by staff and students alike. Due to Marion’s accident we weren’t able to offer OTB in the autumn terms.

We’d love more team members! It’s just a chance to dress up and tell a Bible story in a child-friendly way.

Anita, Claire, Derek, Richard, Sarah

**FUSION YOUTH GROUP - APCM REPORT 2023** Our Church Youth Group for 11 -18 year olds has closed

## **CHURCH ROTA**

There has been very little change again in the organisation of our rota.

The duties on the church rota:

Sides-person: a chance to welcome everyone as they come into our church - give out hymn books, service sheets etc.

Reader: usually the Epistle of the day.

Prayers: the preparation of, and, leading us in our time of prayer during the service.

Sacristan: preparing the altar, checking/lighting candles and other small duties alongside this, before and after the service.

- and ! - Coffees/teas to be served after the service - speaks for itself !

As always though, this is the time to say THANK YOU SO MUCH to ALL who remain on this rota and give their time and support to St Nicholas Church.

My personal thanks also, again, to everyone for their patience when changes are made, often last minute – There are still very few on this rota now. If you feel you would like to/could join us on the team, however small you feel your commitment could be - once a month or less is fine (!), please get in touch.

We are more than happy to talk through anything first and support/help.

email: marknsarah1980@gmail.com - or phone/text: 07757944137

MANY thanks again - to EVERYONE.

- with my own continued prayers, Sarah

## **PRAYER SUPPORT GROUP / PRAYER-LINE**

'prayer is as simple, and as vital as breathing'

Our church prayer line is a real opportunity, to hold those we know, and those we don't, in our prayers, alongside many others.

We can all reach out in our Christian faith and link with others in prayer, whoever we are, wherever we are.

Praying for others, however close, or far away they are, even the other side of the world, can truly feel very humbling. The power of prayer often beyond words.

When, sometimes/often, we feel so helpless in what we can do to support/reach out, we can always PRAY.

Prayer requests are followed through on either: email: marknsarah1980@gmail.com or text, 07757944137. We can reach more than several friends very quickly.

-with my own prayers. Sarah

### **Tuesdays at 10.30am Prayers in action**

The group continues to meet at Pam Lewis' home, although we are now a growing group and will need more space in the future. (The church reordering will be needed!)

The group prays for the church, the parish including the schools, and the wider world. We pray for those who we know who are ill in whatever way and, we continue to hold before the Lord all areas we feel in need of prayer.

We continue to make the blankets and shawls with prayers to be given out to those in need known to the church members, this is part of a Prayer Shawl ministry to which we are all committed. Any surplus knitting is taken to The Lawns for use of staff and clients

We also continue to make the Baptism Squares and Wedding Hearts for the benefice. These are given out by Richard and George as they conduct the services.

This year our knitted Nativity set was given to another benefice church so the ladies completed a new set for St Nicholas although this proved a rather difficult task. However, I'm sure you all enjoyed the finished result in our decorations at Christmas.

The group have run (with Sarahs help) all the coffee mornings in the last year towards the church reordering and to open the church to the parish. Including the Advent event that did take a lot of time to set up and run. We also continue to stock the stall that is in the church for everyone to enjoy.

Finally we do have some time for socialising and we visited the Farm Shop in Eastington, had coffee at Highfield Garden Centre and an Afternoon Tea at Dobbies.

If anyone wants to know more about our group, the Prayer Shall Ministry or have things we could add to our prayer list please speak to one of the group in church.