



ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST ANDREW,
SERVING CHARVIL, SONNING AND SONNING EYE
SUNDAY 19 MAY 2024

Written Reports for the year ended 31 December 2023



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

St. Andrews Church, Sonning

19th May 2024 at 11.30am

A G E N D A

1. Opening prayers
2. Appointment of Secretary
3. Election of Churchwardens and Deputy Church Wardens
4. Apologies
5. Minutes of 2023 Annual Parochial Church Meeting
6. Matters arising from Minutes
7. Vicar's Report
8. Treasurer's Report and PCC Financial Statements
9. Churchwardens' Report and presentation of Terrier
10. Safeguarding Report
11. Election of members to the PCC
12. Electoral Roll
13. PCC Committee Reports
 - a) Buildings and Maintenance Committee
 - b) Social Committee
 - c) The Parish Magazine
14. Other Reports
 - a) Messy Church
 - b) Sunday Club
 - c) Alpha Course
 - d) Sunday at Six
 - e) STAY on Sunday
 - f) STAY on Monday
 - g) Wednesday at 8
 - h) Thursday at 8
 - i) STAY on Friday
 - j) Music at St. Andrew's
 - k) Rendezvous Lunch Club
 - l) Bell ringers
 - m) Friends of St. Andrew's Church
 - n) Stewardship
 - o) Giving outside the Parish
15. Appointment of independent examiner
16. Any other business
17. Closing prayers

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL (PCC)
OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF SONNING
For the year ended 31st December 2023
Incumbent: The Revd. Jamie Taylor,
The Vicarage, Thames Street, Sonning, RG4 6UR
Independent Examiner: Banks & Co, Newbury, Berkshire**

Aim and Purpose

To provide:

- Regular public worship that is open to all
- Sacred space for personal prayer and contemplation
- Pastoral work which includes visiting the sick and the bereaved
- The teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups
- The leadership of religious assemblies in schools
- The promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and meetings, and in the distribution of literature
- Promotion of the mission of the Church through provision of activities for all ages in our Parish
- Support of other charities in the UK and overseas

Objectives and Activities

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship in our parish and to become part of our parish community within Sonning, Sonning Eye and Charvil. The PCC vision is to:

- Serve better those who choose to worship with us and share a journey in faith
- Reach out and draw others to the knowledge and love of God
- Attend to the pastoral needs of those around us (As individuals and as an organisation)
- Preserve our Anglican heritage
- Engage with our local community and find new ways to serve it

When planning our activities for the year, the Incumbent and the PCC have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit and in particular the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship – Learning about the Gospel and developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus
- Mission and pastoral care – Giving to others and the provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish
- Buildings and Maintenance - To facilitate this work it is important that we maintain the fabric of our church
- Social – Arranging social events throughout the year

Administrative Information

The Parish of Sonning encompasses the thriving communities of Sonning, Sonning Eye and Charvil, located between Reading and Henley-on-Thames in a beautiful section of the Thames Valley. We have a growing congregation and are welcoming and uplifting, embracing the broad Anglican tradition.

The correspondence address is:

St Andrew's Church Office

Thames Street

Sonning

READING

Berkshire

RG4 6UR

The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006) and a charity registered with the Charity Commission. (Registered Charity Number: 1130763)

During the year to 31 December 2023, the following served the Parish:

Incumbent (and Chairman)	Revd. Jamie Taylor
Associate Vicar	Revd. Kate Toogood (resigned 29 October 2023)
Licensed Lay Minister	Bob Peters
Youth Minister	Chris West

Churchwardens	Liz Nelson Stuart Bowman
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Deputy Churchwardens	Sue Peters Simon Darvall Molly Woodley (Emeritus Deputy Warden)
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Treasurer	Jerry Wood
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Secretary	Hilary Rennie
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Other PCC Members (normally 3 year term)	Rachel Argent (resigned 28 May 2023) Indra Biddulph Helen Craig Heather Hexter Terence Hunt Ruth Jeffery Nicola Riley (appointed 28 May 2023) Jenny Sawyer Alison Smyly (re-appointed 28 May 2023) Kevin Wilson (appointed 28 May 2023)
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The PCC met on 4 occasions during the year and the average attendance at these meetings was 82%

COMMITTEES

The PCC operates through a number of committees, which meet between the full meetings of the PCC. These are:

Standing and Finance

This is the only committee required by law and has power to transact the business of the PCC between meetings, subject to any directions given by the Council. Members are the Incumbent, the Churchwardens, the Treasurer and the Secretary.

Buildings and Maintenance

This committee attends to matters relating to stewardship of the church buildings and fabric. Chairman: Terry Hunt

Mission and Pastoral

This committee attends to matters concerning external giving from the Parish. Chairman: Revd Jamie Taylor

Social

This committee is responsible for arranging social events.
Chairman: Sue Peters

The Parish Magazine

Delivered free to every house in the parish.

Editor: Bob Peters

Advertising: Harriet Nelson

Distribution: Gordon Nutbrown

ELECTORAL ROLL

At the APCM on 28th May 2023 there were 240 people on the Electoral Roll. The total number on the 2024 Electoral Roll is 242.

THE VICAR'S REPORT

I can't make comment on the first 4 months of 2023 as I was on compassionate leave. I well remember my return to duties, sitting in the congregation during Holy Week and then taking the service on Easter Day, which was an emotional and uplifting experience after a very bleak period. I reflected at the time how fortunate we all were that we had able wardens and deputies, a committed ministry team and, last but certainly not least, Hilary in the office. They all worked together to keep the 'show on the road', and I am immeasurably grateful.

It was wonderful to welcome Lord and Lady Carey once again for our special Coronation service in May. The music, under Hannah Towndrow, was a dream come true for me, with Zadok the Priest a particular highlight. We really are so blessed with the standard of music that is now being achieved. A new post was created at Hertford College, Oxford, especially for Hannah as Director of Music, and so she very understandably accepted it. I am very grateful to all she accomplished with us. The fact that Richard Meehan was free to takeover the week after she left was tremendous and I have been heartened with all he has so far brought to the role, not least the launch of our choral scholarships and the appointment of a junior organ scholar, in addition to Noah Toogood as the senior scholar.

The Revd Kate Toogood was appointed as Vicar of Earley St Peter's towards the end of the year, and we rightly gave her a fond farewell in October. Kate had been with us for 6 years and I valued her support and pastoral ministry. She touched many lives, from within the congregation, schools and wider community, and we look back with gratitude on her ministry among us. Another significant change was the appointment of Corinne Robertson as our children and family minister, and we welcomed her and Matt in December and it has been a delight to see her new ministry established. Alison Smyly has ably led our Sunday Club for some years, and I am so grateful to her for all she contributed. Corinne has now taken on this work and Messy Church as well. Much of her work, as with Westy's, is done behind the scenes, one to one in school mentoring, and I know how much this is appreciated by local headteachers, especially considering the mental health epidemic being suffered by teenagers.

When we were planning the building of the Ark in 2013, discussing its possible uses, one aspiration I voiced was for it to host some form of contemporary, informal worship service, reaching out to those not necessarily attracted to our more formal worship in church. I must confess to feeling a little foolish as I had absolutely no idea how any such service could ever be established here, and I knew I was not the person to

lead it. Well, thanks be to God, we now have Sunday at 6, and I am always encouraged to see a full Ark, to hear excellent music for worship and to hear relevant and thought-provoking talks. I counted 55 adults and 20 teenagers at the last one and most of the adults I don't yet know! I want to pay tribute to the team who have founded this work and who plan each session. Indeed, I am heartened that we have recovered so strongly from the Covid hiatus, and the recently published 2022 national church attendance statistics show that we are in the 95th percentile in 10 of the 11 categories. However, we take nothing for granted and will always prioritise projects such as Alpha which are successfully bringing people to Christ. I must say what a wonderful evening we had in October 2023 when the Revd Nicky Gumbel and his wife joined us to meet over 50 of our recent Alpha attendees and they then participated in a special Sunday at 6 in church with over 200 present. For this and so much besides, I express my gratitude to all those who serve God, in voluntary and paid capacities in our parish. May the Lord continue to bless all our work done in His name.

Jamie

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financial Review

The PCC ended the year with a total net expenditure (deficit) in funds of £54,668, compared to a total net deficit of £29,586 for the previous year. This was mainly due to a decrease in the value of our investments, which in keeping in with many other organisations, was caused by the current worldwide uncertainties.

Total income for the year was £314,242. There were grants received of £133,019, which included £113,000 from The Bull Inn Ecclesiastical Trust. Planned Giving increased over the prior year, although the net number of planned givers declined slightly over the year. One-off giving in 2023 was £22,739 much of which was directed to supporting youth work. Income from collections and fees was up due to the full return of services in place during the year. Investment Income of £12,613 was received, mostly from endowments for the Churchyard and St Andrew's building maintenance and interest deposits which increased with higher interest rates.

Expenditure relating to services, mission and running costs increased to £392,336 including £31,248 on repairs to the church building.

The Parish Share contribution increased to £95,795.

The cost of producing the Parish Magazine continues to be covered by the revenue from advertising and the cost of distribution continues to be funded from General Funds.

£4,862 was spent on noise reduction panels for the Ark.

Depreciation for the Ark, the Youth Minister's House and Equipment was £32,750.

Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to maintain a Reserves balance, which equates to at least three months normal Unrestricted payments (if possible) to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time. Approximately £60,000 has been held in a Designated General Reserve Fund for this. The Reserve increased in 2023 to £61,869, mainly due to an increase in the value of underlying investments. With the increase in expenditure in 2023, albeit including exceptional items for repairs, the Reserves figure is under review.

Jerry Wood - Honorary Treasurer

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

When compiling the annual report it is always surprising to realise what has been achieved over the previous twelve months; it also presents the opportunity not just to reflect on the previous year, but also an opportunity to look to the future.

So firstly, looking back, this year we have said goodbye to an amazing Head of Music and we thank Hannah for all she did for the development of musical praise at St Andrews. I, like many I am sure, thought she would be a hard act to follow, but Richard has taken up the mantle in true Sonning fashion and we are extremely grateful for how the choir – both junior and senior - continue to flourish. The services at both Christmas and Easter were outstanding, and a real testimony to the hard work of the choral team.

STAY, Sunday Club, Sunday at Six, Messy Sunday, Luncheon Club and the weekly Prayer Groups all continue to be reasons for celebration, with them serving both congregation and the wider community. The Alpha course is now an integral part of the year at St Andrews, and it was so pleasing to hear the wonderful feedback from Nicky Gumble following his visit in the autumn.

Nicky's key observation was how blessed we are at St Andrews to have such an amazing team – Jamie, Westy, Kate and Bob all supported by Hilary. I couldn't echo that better – an amazing team indeed.

Of course that team has evolved and we have seen our Associate Vicar, Kate Toogood, leave the parish after 6 years. She will be remembered for her great kindness, wonderful sermons (often with a bit of maths thrown

in too), the setting up of Messy Church and the regular Tuesday Morning Prayer.

We are all processing and feeling the loss of our Emeritus Warden Molly, she touched so many and will be greatly missed, thank you dear Molly for all you gave to St Andrew's.

As we look to the future, we were blessed when Corinne Robertson joined the parish team in December as Female Youth Worker; she hit the ground running and brings such a valuable new dimension to our youth work. It is truly uplifting to see so many teenagers from STAY and children from Sunday Club come in and join us for Communion at the end of the 10.30 Sunday service.

It is said in every report, but there are so many other people to thank who give service to St Andrews: the Welcome Team, Deputy Wardens, Pro Wardens, the Servers, Bell Ringers, Coffee Makers and those involved in the 'tidy up' days, again thank you all for helping make St Andrews the truly special place it is for us all to worship and contemplate.

Stuart Bowman and Liz Nelson - Churchwardens

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

St Andrews remains committed to Safeguarding Children, young people and vulnerable adults within its care and encourages a positive safeguarding environment. Safeguarding is an essential part of our core faith and an integral feature of Christian life in our parish. It remains a standing discussion item at all PCC meetings. The PCC takes seriously their duty of care to enable the protection of the vulnerable in the church community. As a church St Andrews works within Oxford Diocesan Safeguarding practice and policy guidelines.

We follow the safer recruitment guidelines, DBS guidance and safeguarding training. As a church we also sign up to the safeguarding Hub and Dashboard in order to review and keep updated on all of our practices. A safeguarding development plan has been reviewed and submitted to the diocese. The revised House of Bishop guidance is implemented in this plan. The PCC remains committed to enabling all staff visitors and congregation to feel safe with safeguarding being everyone's responsibility. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to prompting a safer culture and building good safeguarding practices in St Andrews.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer is Mrs. Nicola Riley who alongside the PCC continues to look at and work on developing areas in St Andrews local context and parish for improving safeguarding in the action plan.

There have been no safeguarding allegations or concerns reported since the last AGM.

Nicola Riley - Safeguarding Officer

BUILDINGS & MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

There were no major infestations of birds, bats, worms, beetles or insects. Careful inspection of worm activity has been maintained. No major outbreak has been found.

A number of minor electrical and plumbing issues have been rectified.

Tree work has been undertaken where necessary. The Deputy Warden was admonished for failure to comply with the Diocese's full paperwork in one case!

The flintwork of part of the Vicar's Vestry wall has been rebuilt. The lead roof valley above is to be replaced shortly. The associated rainwater services have been improved. The internal dampness has been and is being carefully monitored. The interior restoration will await a satisfactory moisture level. The Friends of St Andrew's has funded this significant project.

The internal lighting in the Tower has been brought up to current standards. It now has emergency standby and a very good level of illumination particularly on the spiral staircase.

The Bell ringers met the cost of the work in the Belfry and Ringing Room.

Work will start in May on the wall between the Lych Gate and the Church. The flintwork and some of the brickwork is in a parlous state. The Fire Station Trust has made a generous contribution towards the cost.

Future work is being planned on the Ground Water and Rainwater systems around the Church and on the electrical switch gear and protection circuits.

Our thanks are due to the Friends of St Andrew's, the Fire Station Trust and the Bellringers for their huge help in undertaking works.

Terry Hunt Deputy Warden

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

We have enjoyed providing homemade cakes for the afternoon tea after Choral Evensong, as always, we cater for special dietary needs – gluten free, dairy free and vegan. The Easter BBQ was a great success. Wine was served after the All Souls Service and Nine Lessons and Carols along with

the traditional mince pies. Sincere thanks to all who volunteer for the Coffee Rota, those who shop, help set up, serve and clear away for events – we couldn't do it without you!

Sue Peters

THE PARISH MAGAZINE

Hopefully for the readers of The Parish Magazine, it has continued to provide an entertaining, interesting, and useful read for all the Church members, visitors, and for the residents of Charvil, Sonning and Sonning Eye.

Behind the scenes there has been one major staff change following the gradual handing over of the management of the advertising from Gordon Nutbrown to Harriet Nelson at the end of 2023. Gordon is still playing an important part behind the scenes by managing the printing and distribution of the magazine and offering us the benefit of his extensive publishing business knowledge, therefore he remains an essential part of our team.

For the record, in 2023, the magazine retained the National Parish Magazine Awards title for being the overall best magazine of its kind in the country. It was our ninth national award since 2018 when we first entered the competition. While there are two independent award schemes for church magazines in the UK, we are not allowed to enter the other one because I am one of the judges!

Bob Peters

MESSY CHURCH

On the third Sunday of each month, we welcome families to join us for fun activities and learning, including craft making, teaching and songs, followed by a meal for the children and sometimes for the adults too! Our helpers at Messy Church this year have ranged from 14-year-olds to 90+ and each one of them helps to create the happy vibrant space for young children and their families to learn about Jesus. With this gentle welcoming introduction to St Andrew's, we are seeing families grow in confidence with their faith and joining with us as regular attendees at the 10.30am Sunday service and Sunday at Six.

Liz Nelson

SUNDAY CLUB

As I come to the end of my time leading Sunday Club it has been a real privilege to have this time on a Sunday morning to learn about and respond to God with the children, and often their parents too. While numbers have been small a committed number of children attend each session.

We have been using an online resource from Urban Saints, Energize, as a basis for our sessions. Over the year we have looked at the Psalms, Influences on our lives and how we respond to these, and the life of Jesus. Christmas and Easter are special points in the year marked by the Crib Service and making the Easter Garden, which went ahead as usual. A huge thank you to everyone involved in Sunday Club who so willingly give of their time and who have faithfully supported and encouraged me and this ministry; I am extremely grateful to them and without whom Sunday Club would not be possible.

Alison Smyly & The Sunday Club Team

ALPHA COURSE

The Alpha Team ran the third successful Alpha course in 2023. We met every Tuesday on zoom for 12 weeks, we watched the insightful and interesting alpha videos together, then discussed some questions afterwards. It is the perfect combination of comfort, ease and a relaxed environment for people to be in their own homes, ask any questions and not feel judged. We saw several people come to faith or renew their faith in Jesus. It has also meant people have made new friends and felt more at home in St Andrews church.

Chris West

SUNDAY AT SIX

Sunday at Six met, in the Ark, 11 times on the last Sunday of each month and in December we started the brand new 'Beers & Carols' at the Bull Pub. (We don't meet in August as so many people are away). We also had the privilege of hosting the founder of the Alpha Course, Nicky Gumbel and his wife Pippa at the October Sunday at Six service. The Sunday at Six service is a relaxed environment with modern worship songs, biblical teaching and space for prayer. All ages are welcome.

Chris West

STAY ON SUNDAY

Our bi-weekly Sunday group is always a highlight for many young people. We meet in the upper room of the Ark where we focus on our Christian faith. We watch videos, play games, read scripture, eat donuts and pray. We also welcome in guest speakers some weeks and we had Naomi from Open Doors come and speak to us about the secret church. In parts of the world it is completely illegal to be a Christian and if caught worshipping, you can be beaten up, thrown in jail or sometimes worse.

Chris West

STAY ON MONDAY

Our bi-weekly small group on Monday nights still meets in the young peoples homes. We get to hang out, play games, watch videos and read stories of how people connect with God across the world. We have used the STIR cards in 2023 and these have been so useful in creating a safe space for the young people to explore the Christian faith.

Chris West

WEDNESDAY AT EIGHT

Following on and being created from our second Alpha course, Wednesday at 8 continues every other Wednesday on zoom from 8-9pm. We have been watching the Bible Project videos on 'Books of the Bible Overviews'. These have been packed with fantastic insight, discussion points and angles on things that offer helpful guidance for discussion. We then discuss the videos afterwards and pray to finish. It is another great way to deepen friendships and feel part of the St Andrews church family.

Chris West

THURSDAY AT EIGHT

We follow a course to help steer our discussion (we have done The Creed and are just finishing off The Beatitudes). You don't need to know lots about the Bible to come along - the purpose is to explore God's word and think about how it applies to our daily lives. We ask questions and seek to know God's word better, learning from one another. There is an opportunity to share pray requests and pray together if you would like to (not mandatory).

The group is a wonderful support for its members and we have a group WhatsApp so that we can be there for each other practically and emotionally when needed during the week.

We meet in members homes currently Charvil, Woodley and Sonning depending on who is available to host. We regularly have between 8 and 12 people.

Thursday @ 8 is open to anyone from St Andrews, and if you would like more information please speak to either Ruth Jeffery or Helen Craig or you can email Helen on helen.craig50@gmail.com.

Helen Craig and Ruth Jeffery

STAY ON FRIDAY

Our weekly youth club in the Ark was very popular in 2023. Half way through the year we gave the young people a suggestion box, which they filled with some wonderful ideas. Go kart track, flood lights and boxing ring were amongst the more extravagant ones. Besides the impossible ideas we did have some great suggestions of new games, new board games, wide games, new tuck shop ideas and a basketball hoop. Lots of these we implemented and number went up as a result. STAY on Friday also feeds into our STAY for Holiday Activities, where we take groups of young people out on trips to trampoline parks, theme parks, cinemas, ice skating rinks, rock climbing walls, paddleboarding lakes and pottery painting workshops...to name just a few.

Chris West

MUSIC AT ST. ANDREW'S

The choir saw a change in leadership in October 2023, as I took over from Hannah Towndrow, who took a post at Oxford University. I have been very grateful for the support and goodwill I have encountered since taking over.

The two choirs continue to sing five regular services a month, supporting and enhancing worship of the church, as well as adding festive flair to the special services, such as the Carol Service and Remembrance.

Since taking over, I am pleased to have recruited more than 10 new full-time members, and several additional occasional singers. This, together with the Choral Scholarship programme has allowed us access to standard 4-voice and 5-voice music, thus greatly expanding the choir's repertoire.

The expanded repertoire has started the long-term project of replacing the sizeable portion of existing photocopied repertoire with official copies

of music, a plan which will take around 5 years to complete based on the existing library.

We have also been able to make links with young instrumentalists, developing working relationships with two university-age organists and developing the organ playing and experience our two organ scholars, both of whom achieved merits in their Grade VI, with the intention to now move them on to service music as soon as possible. We have also invited brass into our Carol Service and Easter Day service to give a suitably festive lift.

Our principal focus will now need to be to recruit and develop the singing of new children into the choir, as the current generation age out. To do this we have started a new scheme, "Intrepid Voices" which we hope will provide an excellent introduction to choral singing.

Richard Meehan - Director of Music

RENDEZVOUS LUNCH CLUB

Our twice monthly lunch club provides not only an enjoyable meal cooked by the fabulous Emma Saville and Serena Goodwin, but also a chance to catch up with old friends and meet new people. It always amazes me how often people attend the lunch club for the first time and are a little nervous about arriving on their own, who immediately spot someone they haven't seen for 30 years or more! It's a delight to see old school friends reunited and immediately pick up a friendship that started in the playground more than 60 years ago. I would like to thank everyone who helps out to make these lunches run so smoothly, particularly Thelma and Ian Hutton-Penman who diligently lay up the tables before each lunch. We have been particularly conscious of the cost of living crisis this year and have made the decision to keep the cost at £10 per person and thankfully Emma has been able to continue with great skill and inventive cooking to provide interesting and nutritious menu for us all to enjoy.

Liz Nelson

BELL RINGERS

We now have 13 members of the Oxford Diocesan Guild. The youngest is only 12 years old and learning very quickly. We ring regularly for the 10.30am Sunday morning service and some of us continue to support Wargrave who are short of ringers.

We follow a ringing progress scheme called 'Learning the Ropes' and one of our young ringers worked hard and passed levels 3, 4 and 5 during the year.

On Easter Saturday afternoon we again opened the tower for tours to see the ringing room and view from the roof.

On the 6th May we rang before and after the coronation of King Charles III. One of our ringers, Geoff Harvey also rang for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

The Tower inspection pointed out that we needed emergency lighting in the belfry, the ringing room and on the stairs. We are very pleased that Terry Hunt arranged for this to be installed.

Pam Elliston - Tower Captain

THE FRIENDS OF ST ANDREW'S CHURCH (FoStAC)

THE FRIENDS OF ST ANDREW'S CHURCH (FoStAC) FoStAC exists as a separate registered charity (number 1101944) to support the fabric of our beautiful St. Andrew's Church building by making grants to St. Andrew's Church PCC for specific projects.

In 2023 we granted over £13,300 to fund the works to the vestry wall repairs (see March 2024 edition of The Parish Magazine for a full explanation and picture). Our income for 2023 was under £12,000, so after administrative expenses, we made a loss for the year and had to draw upon our limited reserves. Since FoStAC started in 2003, we have in total made grants of well over £400k, and including our current cash assets, have raised over half a million pounds for the benefit of St. Andrew's Church.

FoStAC raises these funds primarily via a combination of (1) regular donors – a big thank you to all those who donated during 2023, and (2) fundraising community events. Additionally, in some years although not in 2023 we (3) receive grants from other local charities for specific projects, which in recent years have included our funding of replacement heating and lighting systems in St. Andrew's Church. These were well timed given energy price increases since 2022. Lastly, we (4) receive legacies from time to time, including one in 2023.

For FoStAC events in 2023, March saw our AGM and accompanying Quiz Night hosted by our ongoing Honorary Secretary Sally Wilson – a very entertaining evening for all. In July we held a very successful Garden Tea Party by our kind hosts Jill & Richard Brighton. In September we held a stall at the 2023 Sonning Show and then Trustee Bob Hine arranged our very enjoyable first curry night in The Village Hamper on the High Street in Sonning in December. Trustee Keith Hawkins' production of our Christmas Card design was widely acclaimed and led to a sell-out. Beyond fundraising, we also coordinated the Annual Church Clean in October before the seasons of Remembrance and Advent.

I am very grateful to Trustees Ian McCann and Rosemarie Rixon for their work on our new FoStAC website – www.fostac.org – with allied ‘QR Code’



being used to now help market our events. In parallel, our ongoing Honorary Treasurer Keith Nichols has done sterling work in supporting FoStAC’s embracing of SumUp card payment technology and actively managed us to having online charity current account access.

Beyond my thankfulness for such a dedicated and talented team of Trustees, I am also very grateful to all those of you who support us through regularly donating or supporting our events (or both). I warmly encourage you to participate in our future events or support us financially (even £10 a month adds up very welcomingly for FoStAC across its membership base with Gift Aid) – details on our website. Further detail on FoStAC’s activities in 2023 are in our Annual Report. If you would like a copy, please contact a Trustee or FoStAC via our website. I conclude with the words of a visitor from Western Australia on 29 December 2023 in the comments book for St. Andrew’s Church, which neatly sums up the purpose of FoStAC: “This is a beautiful church, and you can really feel God’s presence here. Thank you for taking such good care of it here!”

Magnus Smyly - Chairman

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Planned giving increased over the prior year, although the net number of planned givers declined slightly over the year.

Cash giving at services has declined as givers switch to standing orders or use the contactless terminal, which, despite some issues from time to time, has proved a worthwhile addition to our ways of giving. We continue to encourage people to use standing order as the preferred method of giving as this provides the treasurer with a better level of certainty when forecasting our income and involves less work for those doing the weekly bankings.

Also if you are able to give under Gift Aid as a UK tax payer this increases the value of your gift by 25% as we are able to claim the relevant tax from HMRC.

If anyone would like a standing order form or a gift aid form to complete please e-mail me at treasurer@sonningparish.org.

Thank you for your continued support throughout the year.

Jerry Wood - Treasurer and Stewardship Co-ordinator

THE PARISH OF SONNING - Giving outside the Parish 2024

It was agreed at the PCC on 18 March 2024 that the list of recipients presented to that meeting would be supported for up to five years. A range of areas are covered, including Christian outreach, children and families and homelessness. The PCC is also committed to supporting the worldwide church and in view of the continuing situation in the Middle East we are supporting Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRRME), a UK based Christian charity which aims to rebuild lives and restore hope in the Middle East. We are also supporting for the first time a charity in Sierra Leone which helps street children in Free Town and provides medical facilities in this politically unstable country.

At the same time, it was agreed to maintain a small reserve, from which specific requests might be met during the year.

Donations made during 2023 were as follows:

Parish and local	£
Woodley Food bank	1,000
Yeldall Christian Centre	1,000
Sonning School and School House Trust	1,500
Sub total	3,500
Wider/local	
Berkshire Clergy Charity	1,000
Salvation Army	750
Faith Christian Group	750
Parents & Children Together (PACT)	750
Christian Community Action (CCA)	750
Sub total	4,000
International	
Karun Orphanage	2,000
St George's Foundation , Sierra Leone	1,500
Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRRME)	1,500
Sub total	5,000
TOTAL	12,500



THE CHURCH OF ST ANDREW, SERVING
CHARVIL, SONNING AND SONNING EYE