PARISH OF ABINGDON

ANNUAL REPORT

For year ending 31st December 2012

(As required by Church Accounting Regulations 2006)

Church Reports

Fabric Reports
# PARISH OF ABINGDON

**Annual Report, Fabric Reports and Accounts**

for year ending 31st December 2012

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PARISH OF ABINGDON  
Annual Report  
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2012  
(As required by Church Accounting Regulations 2006) 

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION 
The Parish of Abingdon is situated in the town of Abingdon, Oxfordshire. It is part of the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is:  
The Hon Secretary, Abingdon PCC  
c/o The Church Centre  
St Helen's Court  
ABINGDON OX14 5BS  

PCC members who have served from 1st January 2012 until the date this report and the financial statements were approved are: 

Team clergy:  
The Revd Dr E C Miller  
The Revd T Davis  
The Revd P Smith  
The Revd K Dunnett  

Stipendiary clergy:  
The Revd J Patel  

Non-stipendiary clergy:  
The Revd J Baun  
The Revd T Hewes  
The Revd L Hodges [to APCM 2012]  
The Revd S Steer [from June 2012]  
The Revd SokHan Yong  

Licensed Lay Ministers’ representative:  
Dr D Lever  

Churchwardens:  
Mrs C Bowman [to APCM 2012]  
Mrs J Hercus [to APCM 2012]  
Mrs E Duckett [from APCM 2012]  
Mr L King [from APCM 2012]  
Miss M Horton  
Mr S L Thomas [to APCM 2012]  
Mrs S Scott [from APCM 2012]  
Mrs E Hallas  
Mr G Currey  
Dr A D Turner  
Mrs J Gordon  

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:  
Mr A D Dent [to APCM 2012]  
Mrs J Sutton [to APCM 2012]  
Mr G Cook [from APCM 2012]  

Diocesan Synod:  
No representatives  

Elected PCC members:  
Mr J Alcock [to APCM 2012]  
Mr A Harper [from APCM 2012]  
Mrs J Corps  
Mr P Henderson  
Mr B Jeapes  
Mrs O Warburton  
Mrs A Moss  
Mrs H Clare  
Mr J T Enticott  
Mr D Gatenby [to Jan 2012]  
Mr I A S Carvel  

Co-opted  
Mrs V Coombs  

Officers:  
Chairman The Revd Dr E C Miller  
Vice Chairman Mrs J Corps  
Secretary Mrs V Coombs  
Treasurer Dr A R Birks
Auditors: Wenn Townsend
Victoria House

10 Broad Street
ABINGDON OX14 3LH
STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The present Parish of Abingdon was formed in 1989 by the union of the ancient parishes of Abingdon St Helen and Abingdon St Nicolas. It operates as a Team Ministry, with four District Churches (St Helen, St Nicolas, St Michael and All Angels, and Christ Church which operates on two sites - Northcourt Road and Long Furlong). These are served by a Team Rector, two Team Vicars and an Associate Vicar.

Abingdon has a Local Ecumenical Project—the Church in Abingdon (CiA)—to which all the Anglican churches belong. The Peachcroft Ecumenical Christian Centre (sponsored by the Baptist, URC, Methodist and Anglican churches) is currently staffed from September 2008 by a Methodist Minister, the Revd Peter Bennett. The Revd Peter Bennett is also responsible for All Saints Methodist and Milton Methodist Churches. The minister is invited to attend PCC meetings. The Peachcroft Christian Centre is represented on, but is independent of, the PCC, and is not included in the financial statements in this report.

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC was formally registered with the Charity Commission on 27 May 2009.

Lay members of the PCC are appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Church Representation Rules, as originally authorized as Schedule 3 to the Synodical Government Measure 1969 and subsequently amended by the General Synod. All eligible church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

In the light of the Synodical Government Amendment Measure 2003, the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in April 2004 agreed to increase the number of lay representatives on the PCC by one, bringing the total to 15. This change took effect in April 2005. The Christ Church Annual Church Meeting may nominate a member of the Long Furlong congregation for this position. The number of lay representatives to Deanery Synod was reduced from 12 to 11 with effect from May 2005 and further reduced to 10 in 2008.

In addition to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the one parish, there are four District Church Councils (DCCs). The PCC has delegated to the four DCCs responsibility for detailed implementation of most of its functions, as permitted by a Scheme approved by the Bishop. It is therefore able to concentrate on those matters which cannot be delegated, or are of common concern. It has only two committees:

The Standing Committee (comprising the team clergy, church wardens, the secretary, the treasurer, the vice-chairman, the Licensed Lay Ministers’ representative and a representative from the Peachcroft Christian Centre) has power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC. It normally meets between meetings of the full PCC.

The Finance Committee (comprising the Parish Treasurer and the Treasurers of the four DCCs) oversees the financial activities of the parish, and prepares the annual budget and financial statements for the parish. It meets as required. The budget and financial statements are approved by the PCC after approval by individual DCCs.

PCC members (and DCC members) are encouraged to attend training sessions as appropriate. Most often these are courses organised by the Diocese of Oxford.

The PCC is exposed to risks associated with buildings, finances and availability of volunteer effort.

Dealing with the secular aspects first: buildings are insured and regularly inspected, finances are managed by the parish treasurer, and DCC treasurers and volunteers are constantly sought to carry
the administrative burden of the PCC and DCCs. The maintenance of ancient buildings is a heavy responsibility for the PCC, but this is not unusual in the Church of England. Health and Safety, Child Protection and other pertinent legislation is adhered to, and there are policies in place to this effect. DCCs operate within a budget and financial envelope determined by their annual income and reserves and approved by the PCC. Each church has an annual stewardship programme to invite donors to respond to the income targets. Special appeals are launched for special projects (typically capital projects) as appropriate. To say “The Lord will provide” may not be an acceptable approach to financial risk management in the secular world; but seeking the Will of God through constant prayer and responding to His Will moment by moment are key instruments by which the PCC manages risk in labour and financial matters.

PROPERTY

The Parish owns one house (33 Mattock Way) designated for assistant clergy, occupied by a curate at Christ Church. One house (69 Northcourt Road) was occupied by the Team Vicar of Christ Church under an agreement with the Diocese. The sale of this house to the Diocese of Oxford was approved by the PCC in July 2011 and the sale was completed in January 2012.

The Parish also has the St Helen’s Church Centre, attached to the Rectory. An additional house was purchased during 2004 (34 Geoffrey Barbour Road), with funds raised by Christ Church. This house is occupied by the youth worker at Christ Church. The Parish also owns the Christ Church Tithe Barn site, and the Dairy Yard at Christ Church; the latter was acquired by the Parish on 5th January 2002. A major project to renovate the barns on the Dairy Yard site commenced in March 2012 and will continue into early 2013.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Under the PCC (Powers) Measure 1956, the PCC is required to co-operate with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Each DCC is similarly required to co-operate with the minister in charge of the district church.

The following Vision Statement was agreed by the PCC on 22nd November 2000.

“A single unified parish with a Team Ministry in which clergy and laity work together to serve interdependent congregations, within an active ecumenical organisation where:

- The Gospel of Christ is celebrated through worship and fellowship, with individual congregations providing a spectrum of traditions
- The life of the Church is built up through teaching, preaching, evangelism, pastoral care and ecumenical co-operation
- God's love is made known in mission and service to the community and society as a whole.”

The Team Ministry operates as two clusters, the Central Cluster comprising St Helen’s, St Nicolas’ and St Michael’s, and the Northern Cluster comprising Christ Church (on Northcourt Road and Long Furlong).

Since the autumn of 2007, at the prompting of the Bishop of Reading and the Archdeacon of Berkshire, the Parish has embarked upon a 'Team Consultation' to explore alternative structural arrangements for the two 'clusters' of the Parish. Substantial discussion on this matter was concluded in 2011.
The following objectives for the Team Rector appeared in the Parish Profile agreed by the PCC in November 2005.

- In liaison and collaboration with the Church in Abingdon, to refresh and progress the strategy for the development of a Christian presence in south Abingdon.
- To encourage, enable and release lay leadership and ministry to enable the Parish to be better equipped to respond to the changing patterns of stipendiary ministry.
- To continue to develop joint working within the two clusters of churches, and where appropriate across the team, to ensure we use our resources effectively in the propagation of the gospel.

The activities undertaken to enable the PCC to achieve these objectives are described in the Review of the Year.

Unsurprisingly the PCC is heavily dependent upon the contribution of volunteers to drive forward the mission of the church and the Kingdom of God.

The PCC delegates to DCCs the matter of policy for making grants and donations from their income. The financial statements record donations made during the reporting year.

Public Benefit

The PCC is aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in "The Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit" and have regard to it in their administration of the Parish. The PCC believes that, by fulfilling its responsibility to work together with the incumbent in the Parish and co-operate in all matters of concern and importance for the promotion of the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical, it provides a benefit to the public by:

- providing resources and facilities for public worship, pastoral care and spiritual, moral and intellectual development, both for its members and for anyone who wishes to benefit from what the Church offers;
- promoting Christian values, and service by members of the Churches in the Parish to their communities, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Church Attendance

There is a Parish Electoral Roll Officer, but each DCC maintains a section of the Electoral Roll. Numbers on the Electoral Roll when the roll was updated in March 2012 are given below (numbers at the corresponding time in 2011 are shown in brackets). Total names on Roll: 990 (950) Christ Church 523 (494); St Helen's 295 (280); St Michael's 87 (93); St Nicolas' 85 (83). There were an additional 35 (36) names on the Roll at Peachcroft.

The average Sunday attendance (16+) during October 2012 (figures for 2011 in brackets) amounted to 643 (609): Christ Church 410 (388); St Helen's 140 (135); St Michael's 50 (46); St Nicolas' 43 (40).
REVIEW OF THE YEAR

General

The full PCC met six times during the calendar year, with an average level of attendance of approximately 53%. Routine business has included reports from churches, the Church in Abingdon, and the Deanery Synod.

The main topic for discussion during the year has been the proposal to restructure the Parish of Abingdon into two separate parishes.

The first meeting of the year in January did further work to review and amend the documents detailing the principles and practicalities of the Parish reorganisation and considered the likely timescale for implementation.

A proposed Protocol document setting out the practical working arrangements that would need to be adopted following a reorganisation of the Parish was reviewed again at the March meeting to ensure that it was ready for presentation at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. The draft accounts were presented, as were the Terriers and Log Books of the member churches.

The PCC meeting in April was held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of Parishioners (election of churchwardens) and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (Electoral Roll update, elections to the Deanery Synod and to the PCC, presentation of the Accounts for 2011, to receive and approve the Annual report for 2011). The proposal to restructure the Parish was presented to the meeting. The Team Rector summarised the four-year process of discussion and debate that had been gone through to reach this point and concluded that the Parish was now ready to go through with the proposed changes. After discussion, the PCC approved the motion: “The PCC advocates the division of the parish of Abingdon on the basis of the published protocol and related documents and asks the Deanery of Abingdon, the Archdeacon of Berkshire and the Oxford Diocese to take this forward without delay”

The June meeting of the PCC elected officers and appointed the Standing Committee. The meeting received an update on progress with the Parish re-organisation and also authorised the Chairman to write to our neighbouring Parishes with a view to discussing resolving anomalies in the external Parish boundary.

The September meeting was kept updated on progress with the Parish reorganisation, on external boundary discussions and agreed that the new parishes would be known as the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames and the Parish of North Abingdon.

At the final meeting of the year in November, the PCC was informed of the provisional outturn forecasts for 2011 and approved the budget for 2012.
Team Rector's Report

The Parish of Abingdon continues to be a thriving context of Anglican Christian life, worship and witness. Concerns about the Church of England’s ‘credibility’ voiced after the autumn’s General Synod does not seem so in-touch with the local reality as I experience it in Abingdon. Of course we live in a society that is curiously allergic to organized religion, but if Christmas attendance is anything to go by, the Parish remains a place where an impressive number of people feel they can come and make contact, explore, and, as led by the Spirit, commit and grow. I am sure the day-to-day camaraderie of the Church-in-Abingdon has, over the years, made a big difference since the sheer ‘critical mass’ of committed Christians together gives us a profile and strength that we would not otherwise have. All of us gain by that in obvious and in hidden ways.

As the reports of the congregations elsewhere in this report show, our churches, plants, and projects are going and growing in many ways. In some cases it is numerical, in other cases it is inward, less quantifiable but equally—maybe more—significant. Perhaps most important for us all is a two-fold focus on, first, knowledge of and fidelity to the Scriptures and the Christian past from which we have received what we believe and how we practice it, and, second, a sensitive, reasoned and creative flexibility to the challenges of the present and future. An Edwardian Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral once remarked, “Whoever marries the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower”. We should keep that in mind as we try to discern our posture, role, and methods amid the ‘changes and chances of this world’.

That is especially true when parishes and congregations embrace Mission Action Planning (‘MAP’), which is being encouraged from the national and diocesan levels. At best it is about being intentional, focused and accountability in shaping a congregation’s pastoral ministry and mission; at worst it can be yet another hoop, more justification to talk, keep one’s head in front of a screen, or go to meetings and conferences—little of which, in my view, enhances the visible, person-to-person engagement which is the heart of being a parish priest and an effective lay witness in the world.

It is clear though that all our congregations need to be good stewards of their human, material, and spiritual and financial resources, so the ‘MAP mentality’ can be a help in sharpening that good stewardship. Mike Chew and Mark Ireland’s book Mission Action Planning: A Vision-Centred Approach (SPCK, 2009) may be a resource worth passing around the Parish’s lay leadership if one feels out-of-touch with this.

The Parish continues to play its part in the Abingdon Deanery, of which it includes about 85% of the deanery membership. At time of writing we have no Area Dean; in any case, it remains to be seen how our Deanery Cluster mission plan will evolve under that new leadership when it comes. Marion Haynes (Peachcroft) diligently calls wardens together as part of her Cluster Co-ordinator role, and those who attend appreciate this. At the very least it helps with the spread of communication and with the wardens’ awareness of the life of the other congregations. Encouragement and help in breaking out of our own little (or big) worlds is always welcome.

Clergy contacts are, alas, less regular, and I think we must accept that status quo as a harbinger of the future. Occasional get-togethers take place, but the expectation that the CiA Staff meetings would be the occasions of such togetherness (a view shared with me upon my arrival in Abingdon seven years ago) has never proved true and seems even less so now. I myself have found it hard to be a regular participant in CiA monthly Staff meetings over the past year, so I by no means hold myself up as a model. Still, for the Anglican clergy across the current Parish the fact remains that
we take little or no time for joint meeting. So the sense of togetherness within the Parish has relied largely on the good spirit and commitment of the Anglican laity. Well done, and long may it last!

All of the congregations have used the past year to adjust and renew ‘safeguarding’ protocols as developed by the church at the national and diocesan levels. Thanks to Roland Knight for heading the Parish ‘team’ that cares for this matter throughout the congregations. I am always impressed by the quiet efficiency with which it happens year on year.

Last year’s APCM expressed its over-whelming support for the multiplication of our Parish of Abingdon. After further work through the summer and with much appreciated in-put from Howard Cattermole at the Diocese, the proposal with suitable adjustments was formulated into a draft Pastoral Measure for the creation of two entities, ‘The Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames’ (St. Helen, St Nicolas, and St. Michael & All Angels) and ‘The Parish of North Abingdon’ (Christ Church with Long Furlong). North Abingdon Parish will include within its boundary the Peachcroft Christian Centre that plans to become a Conventional District, a status which would finally give to Peachcroft full and regular voice and accountability in the CoE’s representational set-up.

The PCC expressed its hope that we might re-draw peripheral boundaries with neighbouring parishes—all as a single act to rationalize ministry and mission within sensible geographical areas. I spent a good deal of time on this in the autumn—again with much support from Howard Cattermole—, and asked for written responses from our neighbours; where they did not wish to engage the matter, I asked for reasons why so that we might have a deposit of views to take into account in future. Sadly, I have to report that by year-end I had received no written responses from any of the PCCs approached, and one telephone responses saying “No thanks”. I remain unimpressed by that, and as a sign of the mutual relations and courtesy between deanery congregations it is worrying. But there we are, so that our proposal goes forward with the same odd and aimless boundaries we have had for years.

So, where is all that now? The Diocese reckoned that, any objections to our parish plans in the consultation stage aside, it would come into effect sometime early or mid-summer 2013. From that point our ‘Protocol’, so assiduously negotiated over months, would come into effect. It would remain for Peachcroft to work-out its arrangements both with the Diocese and with Christ Church; the latter’s new ‘Vicar’ would serve on their governing body ex officio (as the Team Rector has done hitherto). Five years of diligent work by the Standing Committee and me would be completed, and a new phase in the history of Abingdon’s religious life will begin. My prayer and intention is that it would be a phase of continued growth and greater health within and between the congregations that will make up the two parishes. I hope that is your prayer and resolve too.

The completion of the renovation of the County Hall and of the Precinct gives a sense of renewal in Abingdon’s town centre. New High Street shops have opened. Before Christmas newcomers moved into the Old Gaol; new opportunities for welcome are at the doorstep of the churches in the centre. Northcourt Road continues to grow and ‘densify’ with housing. We all have work to do. Plenty to keep us all occupied in our own ‘patches’.

Our parish’s wardens have been dutiful in their work; I appreciate their commitment, perseverance, and common sense. They are vital to our common life.

As this is the last time that I will address an APCM of this constituency, I want to say that I have enjoyed the working relationship with the lay leadership from the north of the parish. In so doing I want to single out Wardens Janice Gordon, Andrew Turner, and PCC Vice-Chair Jenny Corps. Their commitment has been solid, their contributions substantial, and their reliability and goodwill evident throughout. I hope they will continue to provide that quality of leadership as the Parish of
North Abingdon spreads its wings and takes flight on its own. To their clergy I wish every blessing as they embrace the Church of England’s ‘parish system’.

The smaller Team Ministry, which will continue in the centre, has a good momentum of working relationships already. But the second half of 2013 will involve a new phase of work among ourselves, and that will doubtless take us into 2014. It will be an exciting time for us as we develop further our ways of working, and as we fashion more complementary and compatible forms of governance, ministry and mission throughout the ‘Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames’. When I return from sabbatical leave I will be on the brink of a “new job” here in Abingdon, and I look forward to that.

It remains, then, to thank the PCC for its work over the year, and to single out for appreciation our careful Treasurer, Andrew Birks, and our efficient and gracious Secretary, Valerie Coombs for their invaluable contribution in making the ‘ship of state’s’ course smooth. I thank Fr Paul Smith for his priestly fellowship as a colleague in the ‘central cluster’. From those in the Parish of North Abingdon—or indeed anywhere in the Parish—who have either felt offended and unhappy, or have somehow suffered, from my leadership as Team Rector of the Parish of Abingdon in this last phase of its existence, I beg pardon as we all start anew.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev’d Dr Charles Miller, Team Rector of Abingdon
PARISH OF ABINGDON
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2012

Parish Church of St. Helen

Report by Margaret Horton and Susan Scott, Churchwardens

Worship

Over the year our new pattern of Sunday worship has been embedded and taken root. On the first Sunday of each month, Faith Forums at 9.15am for adults and for young people have now become well established, as has the delicious breakfast which precedes it. Our Eucharist that day is slightly shortened in form and the aim is to include the participation of more, younger people where possible. On the second Sunday of each month, there is a non eucharistic service of 'Morning Praise' at 9.15am which offers more accessible worship for those who may not be so much at home with the eucharist but wish their children to be baptised and are on the 'Journey into Christ' course. It is only 30-40 minutes long and now has a good following of young families who also appreciate the opportunity for fellowship over coffee afterwards.

Our evening worship is also well established now at 5.30pm throughout the year. Choral evensong continues on the third Sunday of the month, often preceded by tea and music. A simple Eucharist (1st Sunday), Taize worship (2nd Sunday), and a service for wholeness and healing (4th Sunday) continue on the other Sunday evenings. On the fifth Sunday, a BCP Eucharist with music was introduced in 2012. Thanks must go to our organist and choirmaster, Christopher Fletcher-Campbell for training the choir and helping St. Helen's to maintain a high standard of music. Each service has a regular following, often of people who are not regulars at the morning Eucharists.

Our Junior Church group goes from strength to strength with 12 to 15 regulars in the 3-8 age group, often supplemented by visiting children. Once again, Rachel Shearer organised some great events for the Babes and Toddlers' families at Easter and at Christmas; it would hardly be Christmas these days without the visit of our sponsored donkey, Pollyanne, or one of her stablemates.

We held storytelling and craft events around the Jesse tree in Advent and more events are planned for Mothering Sunday this year. Lots of the younger end of the congregation helped to make the Christingles and also attended the family tea marking Epiphany in January.

Christmas was a very busy time with thousands coming through our doors; Larkmead, the Manor, Abingdon and Abingdon Prep schools all held carol services in the church while our own carol service, Christingle service and midnight and Christmas day services saw the church packed yet again. We may read in the press that the church is dying but at least in Abingdon we can be grateful for signs of growth.

We continue to say morning and evening prayer at 9.10am and 5.10pm every weekday. Thanks are due to the many members of the congregation who help to maintain this act of witness and prayer for the people of Abingdon.

As ever, many couples chose to have their weddings at St. Helen’s and our thanks goes to the Revd. Tim Hewes for his work with the couples as they prepare for marriage and his continued contact with them after their marriages, too. Many children were brought to baptism and it was good on occasion to share in their baptism at the Sunday morning service.

We have been blessed as ever with a wonderful range of preachers including the 'home team' of Charles, Tim, Jane and Sokhan. It has been good to welcome the Revd. John Coombs as quite a regular on Sunday mornings. Two of our honorary clergy, Canon John Barton and Preb. John Wesson have not been in the best of health this year; we have missed them and we wish them renewed strength and health in 2013.
Mission and spiritual growth

With the new Sunday pattern of worship established, the DCC this year has turned its attention to strategic planning for the next 5 to 10 years. With the knowledge of a substantial legacy behind us it is an opportunity to stand back and consider where we are, what our aims are and how we can best achieve them. With this in mind we have started to look at 'where we are' – our strengths and weaknesses, our congregation and recent changes. One point that has emerged is that we are getting younger! As the generation who moved to Abingdon in the expansion of the 1950s and 1960s sadly pass away there has been quite a change in faces and in generations; a third of those on our Electoral roll have joined since 2007 and quite a proportion of those are in their thirties. Over the coming year we intend to take this planning further so that we can forge a church fit for purpose, ready and capable of spreading God's word and his love to those around us.

House groups continue to be well supported, as is the Tuesday afternoon study group, 'Desiring Life'. Tim Hewes has continued his work with the bereavement support group, the healing ministry and, in 2012, as assistant army chaplain to Dalton barracks.

Our monthly publication, the 'Window' continues to enjoy a wide circulation both amongst the congregation and amongst a much wider cross section of south Abingdon households. (500 copies are printed and distributed each month). Our thanks go to the Revd. Jane Baun who has continued its editorship.

A number of St. Helen's members have enjoyed 'Cursillo' weekends away and some are now involved in running them.

The Revd. Sokhan Yong has been running a follow up course, 'Face to face' for those who attended the previous Alpha course.

The Faith forums on Sunday mornings now have regular followings. The adult group enjoyed some very interesting and varied talks on the theme of Africa over the autumn.

Social and welcome

We continue to be indebted to Susan Scott and her 'ministry of welcome'. Lunches for newcomers have been held every few months, giving such folk a chance to get to know others and to learn a bit more about the goings on at St. Helens.

The new Sunday services have entailed further hospitality with a breakfast bar available before the Faith Forums and refreshments offered after the Morning Praise service as well as coffee and refreshments for those who attend the 8.00am Communion once a month. Third Sunday afternoon teas have been well supported and the quality of the music on offer beforehand has been high. A number of events (concerts, teas and lunches) have been organised by some of our young people as they raise money for charity.

In May, many church members enjoyed a visit to Shropshire, visiting a number of churches, historic houses and, rumour has it, the Rector's ancestral home!

2012 being Olympic year, the central churches held their very own Olympics in Albert Park. The afternoon stayed dry (almost) and great fun was had by all. Events ranged from the 'parent and child piggy back race' to 'football dribbling for ladies of a certain age'. A podium, medals and national anthems added just the right finishing touches.

In the autumn we held another harvest barn dance which again was well supported.
PARISH OF ABINGDON
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2012

We opened the church from Easter to September and, as ever, it was a privilege and pleasure to welcome the thousands of visitors who dropped in. Some were local people, seeking a moment of quiet and contemplation, others had come from half way round the world but it was good that all could be welcomed and could enjoy the beauty and atmosphere of the church. It was also wonderful to be able to greet groups of children from a number of local schools including Caldecott, Thameside, St. Helen and St. Katherine, Abingdon and John Mason when they came for visits, and the Abingdon primary schools association for their concert in December.

Throughout the year, the Friends of St. Helen (FOSH) have continued to meet for lectures and other social events; their contribution towards the upkeep of the fabric of such a large and historic building is invaluable.

Special events

St. Helen's has played host to a number of events over the year, from concerts to large scale services. ADMS have put on two fine concerts in the church and smaller scale performances were also given by instrumentalists and singers.

In June we welcomed the Mayor and Council to a service marking the Queen's diamond jubilee, followed by a rather wet street party.

November saw two large services with a packed church for Remembrance Sunday and then later in the month, 4 Logistic Support Regiment from Dalton Barracks held their big home coming service at St. Helen's.

We are hoping that more people will come to appreciate the history and heritage of the church as we become a point of interest on two schemes planned to encourage visitors to follow a tourist trail or guided walks around Abingdon. The plans for our own archives have also moved forward following a visit and report containing useful advice from a professional archivist.

With more and more activities and events taking place, I would like to thank Linda Barker, our Administrator, and the many people who give of their time as vergers, stewards, sidesmen, 'door openers' etc. for enabling such events to take place.
Christ Church, Long Furlong and Northcourt Road  
Report by Janice Gordon and Andrew Turner, Churchwardens

Ministry

Both congregations at Christ Church Northcourt Road and Long Furlong have continued to grow numerically – as evidenced by the increase in the Electoral Roll to 412 (NCR) and 112 (LF) in April 2012.

Preaching and teaching at Sunday services has been focused on Biblical themes, summarized below. We encourage lay members in biblical leadership skills and they were involved in preaching at approximately 60% of services at Long Furlong and 40% at Northcourt Road during the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Evening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>James; Heroes of Faith</td>
<td>Real Words Real Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Living Pentecost; 2 Chronicles 7: 14;</td>
<td>Acts of the Spirit;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Characters in Mark</td>
<td>Letters to the Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>Beautiful Lives</td>
<td>Names of God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to our preachers and service leaders, week by week we are so grateful to our worship teams / sound engineers, data projectionists, welcome teams and coffee teams who make our Sunday worship experience so rich, as well as the faithful service of those who lead our children’s and youth groups.

Of special note, the Bishop of Reading confirmed eight adults at the 6.30pm service on 26th February. Rev Dr Will Donaldson (Wycliffe Hall, Oxford) led a Lent Course focused on the theme of “Word and Spirit”. Both sites were full to capacity for the Christmas Toy services, Christingles and Carol Services throughout the Christmas period. We were delighted to be able to share publicity for the various Christmas events with Peachcroft Christian Centre and All Saints in the north of the town.

Looking back over the year, there has been a growing focus on prayer. There are ongoing ministries of Pastoral and Intercessory Prayer, Prayer Ministry at Communion Services and the regular “Hungry for God” evenings of worship, listening prayer and sharing of scripture and prophetic words. At Long Furlong, a “Liquid Prayer” Event on 14th March gave a wide range of ways of engaging in prayer. This was followed by a Prayer focus on 15th July during the Sunday morning service – with options of traditional sermon/prayers, a prayer walk or “Listening to God” prayer. Finally on 27th November we used the Lord’s Prayer in a series of prayer stations, group Ignatian prayer and open group prayer to explore further how to engage with God in prayer. There has also been a significant growth in school prayer support for Larkmead, St Helen’s and Abingdon School as well as a Desire Parents’ prayer group. Prayer spaces were also established in St Nicolas School.

Following the Bible Alive 50th anniversary continuous reading of the entire Bible in September 2011, we were encouraged individually to read through the bible in a year – with suggested daily passages and guides.
A key part of creating a sense of belonging and supporting our discipleship is through our 26 Life Groups across both sites. After a Missional Community Taster day on 4th February at Philadelphia Church, Sheffield, a learning community was initiated to explore whether this model of growth and outreach, (creating an interface between faith and community, focusing on specific people, groups or interests), might be suitable for Christ Church. Since then, three missional communities - Outnumbered (reaching parents of teenagers), Work out (reaching working people through working people) and Brunch (for 20s and 30s) - have been launched.

A vital resource for us has been the New Wine network – which organizes a number of day conferences and training events, as well as the summer conferences -- to which over 200 church members went for a week of fellowship, worship, teaching, training and service at Shepton Mallet in August.

In addition, there is a wide range of other groups meeting regularly - including children, youth, uniformed organizations, Oasis and Fusion for women, M2M and MWM for men, 51 Fellowship for seniors, Inspire for 18-30s and LINK – for parents/carers and toddlers.

As part of looking ahead to the restructuring of the Parish of Abingdon, the DCC endorsed the proposal to PCC on 30/1/2012. At the APCM on 30th April, the PCC subsequently approved the scheme for forwarding to the Archdeaconry Pastoral Committee, who has since circulated it for comment by interested parties. A motion that “Christ Church, Northcourt Road remain in its current status of Dedicated Parish Centre of Worship” was supported unanimously by the DCC on 22/10/12.

**Finances**

The accounts for 2012 show a small deficit of £3,719. However, this includes over £25,000 of urgent repair work that was identified after the budget had been set, so actually represents a good outcome. We thank God for His continued provision and the generosity of the congregation. As part of our communal giving we were able to donate £57,500 to our eight mission partners around the world and support six special projects. The DCC passed a formal motion defining our reserves policy as aiming to maintain a minimum of two months expenditure.

**Buildings**

Work on the Redevelopment of the Barns adjacent to the Church was delayed by nesting bats until March. After completing the building work and internal decoration, the builders left in January 2013. We wish to thank them and the Barns committee (and especially Jenny Corps as project manager) for masterminding such a brilliant transformation, and trust that many in our community will visit and enjoy its facilities, and that God will use the buildings as a means of reaching out with the good news of Jesus.

A Gift Week-end was held in May 2012, when £190k of new donations and £150k of interest-free loans were pledged to enable the completion of this phase of the building project. We were pleased to appoint Sarah Grange as the Barns coffee shop manager in November and she started work in January 2013. As part of raising money for the Barns Redevelopment, we were able to make a Tithe donation of £21,000, giving £6,000 each to the Balsam Family Project, Worth Unlimited, and Kichengani (water sacks project) and £1,500 to Gatehouse and the Abingdon Passion Play.

A number of "taster sessions" were also staged during November for identifying and training potential volunteers to work in the coffee shop, in advance of the opening in spring 2013.
Outreach

A number of courses were offered to help people explore the Christian faith e.g. START in January and February; “The Jesus Lifestyle” in January and November (primarily for over 50s) as well as courses for parenting of children and teenagers in May and October. Services were also taken by small groups at the Abingdon Court Care Home and Fountain Court, as a way of sharing God’s love.

Holiday clubs on Good Friday, the week-long “On your Marks” in August, a Light Party on 4th November and “Time Out for Christmas” on 16th December were fun ways of reaching children and families with the good news of Jesus. In October after the Uniformed Parade Service at Long Furlong, we had a Bring and Share community lunch – with bouncy castle, sports, and crafts fun for the children.

International Lunches were held in January, March, May, October and December, to reach out to those from overseas in our community – especially students. There was also a popular event in the Amey Hall in November organized by M2M starring the Christian comedian and illusionist John Archer.

Primary school assemblies were led in Rush Common, Dunmore and Long Furlong schools before Christmas. The Samaritans Purse Operation Christmas Child was also run as usual before Christmas – with the foyer at Northcourt Road piled high with Shoe Box gifts for children.

Activities, Community Events and Service

There are a number of regular events such as LF Football (Monday nights); Coffee Break (Tuesday mornings); Singing Circle for parents/carers and toddlers (Thursday mornings), Friendly Cuppa (Wednesday afternoons), LINK for parents/carers and toddlers (alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays), Curry Nights, Gents Who Lunch, Prime Time walks, table tennis, cream teas and Coffee, Cake and Chat (monthly).

A number of special events organized during the year included “Time Out for Marriage” in February, a Marriage Preparation course in May, an Oasis Women’s Day in March and a Quiet Day in June and, despite the weather, the Long Furlong Camping Weekend in early July. Other specific events included an “Olympic Torch Breakfast” at Northcourt Road on 10th June where over 500 free breakfasts were consumed and many conversations shared. We supported the Long Furlong Community Association in hosting a “Big Picnic” on Monday 4th June to celebrate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, as well as a number of street parties hosted by church members. The annual Prime Time activity week was held in August. At Long Furlong we also supported a Swap Shop, as well as helping with a litter pick around the estate and supporting the Scouts with their Firework display in November.

The Father's Table group of ministries, including Foodbank, continues to make a positive, direct contribution to responding to the needs of our local community and beyond, through practical acts of love, compassion and service, shown to all.

A number of charity concerts were also given throughout the year to support local charities including Archway, MAI and providing funding for healthcare for an international child, Gulshat.

Staff

The staff team of Tim Davis, Keith Dunnett, Jit Patel, Val Challis, Ros Steel, Sarah Fry, Matt Luscombe, Matt Beer, Sandra Hodgetts and Christine Talbot was joined by Simon Steer (Chaplain at Abingdon School) and Lizzie Shipman (Parish Assistant) over the summer.
Tim also served as a member of a team in giving an intensive fortnight of training and ministry in Tanzania, as part of rolling out the “Rooted in Jesus” discipleship training course with ReSource.

**Conclusion**

We want to thank all of our staff team, the leaders of our ministry teams, those who preach and lead services, our cleaning staff, the network of volunteers who help as unsung heroes in so many ways and the members and officers of the DCC for their dedicated service and ask that you continue to pray for, support and encourage them during 2013.
St Michael and All Angels

Report by Eileen Duckett and Laurence King, Churchwardens

2012 will be remembered as a year of change and faithfulness where a lot has happened and where many people took part in the life of St Michael’s.

Our Building

During the year we gradually saw new ways of using our building. One of the inspiring initiatives that began at the beginning of the year was ‘Silent Reflections’, a new monthly event led by Sue Sheppy, assisted by Eileen Duckett and Helen Owen. This monthly event has attracted many from within our congregation – and from other churches within the CiA – to take some time apart to reflect and deepen their faith together, using all the church affords us in terms of its space, including the Labyrinth. The initiative has been so successful that it has planned to move on into 2013 and for that we are grateful to the vision of Sue Sheppy.

We celebrated our Patronal Festival with the Parish Mass on Sunday 30th September at which we welcomed Fr Michael Smith, Vicar of the Cookhams. After the Mass around sixty people sat down to a two-course lunch in the centre aisle of the church. This was the first time such an event had taken place. It was a joyful, family occasion proving that this was another way in which the building could be used creatively. Our festivities for the Patronal Festival began on the Friday evening with a very successful concert at which the pupils from St Nicolas School performed, and at which the new Grand Piano – on loan from Mr Joseph Taylor – was used for the first time.

Our Worship

There were one hundred and eighty services of all sorts during the year of which sixty seven were sung. Because of declining attendance the last regular Evening Prayer service on a Sunday was held on the seventh Sunday of Easter

There are normally two services during the week: Sung Mass at 09.30 on a Sunday with a Family Mass on the first Sunday of the month and a Said Mass at 12.30 on a Thursday.

Various significant liturgical days were marked with appropriate ceremonies.

Lent commenced with a corporate Sung Mass on Ash Wednesday with the Imposition of Ashes.

Mass and meditations at the Stations of the Cross took place on each Wednesday during Lent and in Holy Week Mass was said on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

On Maundy Thursday Fr Paul led the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, Stripping of the Altar and Watch of the Passion. Compline was said by Carol Bowman at midnight.

On the morning of Good Friday Jennifer Small led a Children’s Liturgy; this was followed by the Liturgy of the Passion led by Fr Paul.

On Good Friday evening there was a performance by Abbey Strings of the Seven Last Words of our Saviour on the Cross set to music by the composer Joseph Haydn, with meditations led by Fr Paul and the Revd Dr Michael Beasley the Diocese of Oxford’s Director of Mission. Forty four members of the congregation attended this moving and inspiring occasion.

The Lighting of the New Fire and Easter Vigil was celebrated on Holy Saturday by Fr Paul who also led The Sung Mass of the Resurrection on Easter Day.

Our Christmas celebrations commenced with a very lively Children’s Crib Service led by Carol Bowman and attended by sixty children of all ages (Forty five of which were adult). The Service of
Nine Lessons and Carols at 18.30 on Christmas Eve saw a full Church with a congregation of over two hundred. This was followed by Midnight Mass and Sung Mass on Christmas Morning.

**Our Family**

We have come to see St Michael’s as a vibrant and loving community of people. One of the most difficult times in a community is when we have to bid farewell to those we have loved and have given us so much. It was with great sadness that we recorded the deaths of two very long standing members of our congregation: Hugh Ashton and Tom Dowling. We miss both Hugh and Tom deeply, but give thanks for their lives of Christian witness and service and pray that they may rest in peace.

**Our Mission and Spiritual Growth**

In the life of an ecclesiastical community it can be a strong temptation to look for those things that are not going as well as one would hope, but all the good things we do and have achieved in the last year, and the family we have become should encourage us. It is tempting to be weighed down by the burdens of financial constraint and anxiety, for example; the decline in numbers locally and throughout the wider Church of England; the fact that a lot of our young people have other commitments on Sundays; and so on. If we look through a wider lens, we are given a greater and truer perspective. Firstly, that ‘wider lens’ frees us from our narrow-minded parochialism which leads to doom (and gloom!). Secondly, that ‘wider lens’ helps us, most importantly, to discern the signs of God’s presence among us and challenges us to go forward in faith hand in hand with the Christ who never leaves us or fails us.

It is hoped that in 2013 we shall continue to live our common life by making opportunities to spend more time together and deepen relationships with each other. Fr Paul hopes that we shall find more opportunities to meet to celebrate the Eucharist together which is at the centre of our life. It is also hoped that we may learn more about the riches of our tradition so that some of the things we do in church, of which we may be unsure, - or even a little ‘suspicious’! – may enable us to worship Almighty God in a new and deeper way.

Finally, Fr Paul is convinced that it is only through our worship that we are able to get into touch more with the vision God has for our life together. It is God’s vision that he wants us to find ways of exploring together and implementing from now on. How we achieve that is through the hard work of listening and praying.

We wish to thank all those who contribute in whatever way to our community and in particular Fr Paul; every contribution is deeply appreciated and valued.

As we continue to walk in the way of Christ please pray for Fr Paul as he does for us.
Parish Church of St. Nicolas

Report by Geoffrey Currey and Eluned Hallas, Churchwardens

Services:

We continued our pattern of services throughout the year. Our main Sunday Services at 11am offer a regular mix of the more traditional sung Morning Prayer, Holy Communion Services and a less formal Family Service. It has been a delight to see our young adults playing an increasing role in leading worship at our Family Services over the year and we hope this will continue to grow.

A short lay led said service of Morning Prayer is held each Friday, and attracts a small but thoughtful congregation. In alternate months we also host a parish communion at 8.00am.

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we hosted a daily lunchtime prayer slot led by ecumenical ministers from the Church in Abingdon. We hope this will become a regular contribution to the Church in Abingdon calendar.

On Good Friday the sombre Ante-Communion Service which has become traditional at St Nicolas, was followed by our hosting of the Church-in-Abingdon Service as the culmination of the CiA procession of witness through the town. A welcome juxtaposition of services offering two different but equally moving opportunities to reflect on the Easter message.

We have been fortunate to have many visiting priests assisting in our worship, and are most grateful for their careful and loving contribution to our services, and for their ministry to members of our congregation who are no longer able to attend Church.

Activities

We are delighted to have been able to open the Church for at least part of each day, through the work of our Verger Jim Barker, and the support of other members of the congregation. We welcome a wide range of visitors – some regular, some just passing through – and are able to offer a place of quiet reflection and prayer, a historic building, or a listening ear and refreshment as needed. We feel our open door is physical expression of God’s openness to all and an important part of our work of mission and outreach.

We are fortunate in our central position in Abingdon and that our size is suited to small concerts / events. Thus we have been able to host some wonderful concerts throughout the year, which included a regular monthly series on Sunday afternoons, a Swedish choir, and young musicians with an impressive range of talent which they shared for our enjoyment on an August Saturday evening. We welcomed an art exhibition by Abingdon Artists again, and the Friends of Abingdon Hospital chose St Nicolas’ as the venue for their first exhibition.

It is good to be able to offer the facilities of St Nic’s to events in the Market Square such as the CiA Pentecost Party, and, working with friends from St Helen’s, to open the Church for refreshments (and a place to sit down) as the Olympic Torch passed through Abingdon. We were also surprised to be asked to allow a camera on top of the tower to film the Bun Throwing for the Diamond Jubilee. After some hurried H&S consultations we said yes, but the camera men and their ‘minder’ had to stay on the swaying tower in the pouring rain during the whole of the event – being unable to return to the ground until the bells had been rung down.

As usual we took part in the Heritage Open Day in September, when we welcomed both visitors looking at the display material relating to our mediaeval church and others taking part in the fund-raising Ride-and-Stride event organized by the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust.
PARISH OF ABINGDON
Annual Report (continued)
FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2012

In December we were open all day for the Extravaganza run by the Abingdon Chamber of Commerce. With the support of local musicians, Guides, All Saints Messy Church and friends from the Church in Abingdon we were able to host a day of music, children’s craft and refreshments and have available information on Messy Church and Christmas Services in Abingdon, and other CiA projects. The day finished with a Service of Evensong.

In conjunction with friends at All Saints, and the support of local independent retailers in Abingdon, we were able to run a ‘Messy Nativity’ activity in Abingdon in the run up to Christmas. We hope that this will have reminded participants of the Christian message of Christmas. Also, in December we hosted a carol service for the Bible-Reading fellowship whose headquarters are here in Abingdon.

Members of the congregation came up with some innovative fundraising ideas during the year. So the usual Market place Sale (July) and Tabletop Sale (December) were augmented by a Balloon release (June) – where the furthest recorded balloon reached Sweden - and an evening of Portuguese wines and food (September). Our thanks to all the many people who worked so hard to make these events both fun and financially successful.

The DCC

The Church Council held seven scheduled meetings in the year. Much of our time was taken with fabric matters reported elsewhere, and it is good that the end is in sight for some of these issues. One non-fabric item of significance was the purchase of a set of new hymn books for regular use in church services. After considerable deliberation it was decided that Common Praise best suited our present needs, and it duly replaced Hymns Old and New which we had used for some fifteen years. We are now enjoying the opportunity to explore many hymns of which we were unaware, although we still find ourselves looking in vain for some old favourites.

We were also able to give time to consideration of the Church’s wider mission – to congregation members and visitors. Following on from this, it is exciting to be able to report that a Congregation Day – led by the Revd Michael Beasley, the Diocesan Director of Mission – is planned for later in 2013.

Finally we would like to thank everyone, ordained and lay, who has helped in the ministry and outreach of St Nicolas’ during the year, and has supported us so generously with their prayers and actions.
Peachcroft Christian Centre

2012 continued the development of our ministries and the number of people attending the services has continued to grow. We have had several new members and regular attendees - some are people who have recently moved to the area but others some are local residents who have responded to invitations and contacts through our varied ministries such as Café Eden, STOP mother & toddler groups, Over 55s, Youth Cafés etc. As well as our morning services, of which at least one each month is all age worship, we continue to hold monthly evening services mainly Worship led but occasionally with a reflective format. The Easter and Christmas services, including the Christingle service, were well-attended.

Chris Matthewman who was recruited as our Youth Pastor towards the end of 2011 has been developing his ministry with the Young People particularly with the oldest Sunday School group which has been renamed from Munchers to Extreme, but as is common with this age food continues to play an important part. The group now has a stronger identity within the church and it is good to see strong friendships and mutual support developing. They along with other members of Sunday Club (our name covering all Sunday School groups) take active roles in the All Age Worship services. We continue to use the NEACA Hall to accommodate some of these groups. The building continues to be well-used. The Monday morning STOP parent & toddler group continues to be well-attended, and in the Autumn we were able to restart a weekly second STOP session, this time on a Friday. On Tuesday & Saturday mornings our community café, Café Eden, welcomes members of the local community of all ages. The Christian Centre is also used as venue for meetings by community support organisations including the National Blood Transfusion Service.

The Building Tithe Fund which we started in 2010 with an aim of raising £60,000, 10% of the cost of the Building Project, for distribution to local, national and International outreach initiatives continues and by the end of 2012 we had raised and distributed £42,500 over 70% of the target.

In November we held another Church Weekend at Rock UK’s Frontier Centre in Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire but amended the format so that we started with Breakfast on the Saturday and finished on Sunday Afternoon. This pattern was well received as it both reduced cost and removed the problems of travelling to the centre on a Friday evening.

Ministerial supervision of Peachcroft Christian Centre is currently provided by Peter Bennett who came to Peachcroft in 2008 as a Methodist minister with a Five year appointment. It is normal practice for these appointments to be reviewed in the 4th year so preparations can be made for any change. We are pleased to report that following the review Peter requested that his appointment be extended by 2 years to the end of August 2015, this has been accepted.
Ecumenical Activities -- The Church in Abingdon

Report by John Enticott

Task groups and associated projects

The CiA has a number of Task groups which concentrate on specific areas of cooperation:

- Christian Aid organised many activities, including carol singing in the market square, a New Year sponsored walk, a market square sale, the house-to-house collection in Christian Aid Week, themed evenings and much more.
- The Town Twinning group continue to build links between the churches of our twin towns.
- The Bereavement support Group launched another course, following on from the annual bereavement service.
- The Town Centre Chaplaincy team now has only two functioning chaplains and is no longer fully operational. The scheme is ready to be revived should further chaplains come forward.
- The Welcome to Abingdon initiative has changed and now aims to support and provide resources for welcoming teams in the various congregations.
- The weekly Christian Forum column in the Herald series of newspapers has continued under the direction of Ann Marie Lanham - a new volunteer coordinator is needed.
- Abingdon Street Pastors has continued to care for, listen to and help people out in Abingdon town centre late at night, running shifts from 10 pm on Friday to 1.30 am on Saturday every week.
- The DESIRE network of youth and schools workers has continued to work in Abingdon secondary schools and to host youth worship events.

United activities 2012

January
The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was marked by three events: the Annual Quiz hosted by Abingdon Baptist Church; a United Service at Trinity Church; and a revival of Midday Prayers at St Nics throughout the week.

Feb/March
Lent Lectures were held at All Saints with guest speaker David Winter. The Women’s World Day of Prayer was marked with a service at Trinity.

April
On Good Friday, procession through the town followed by a service in St Nicolas Church led by Peter Bennett. Sunrise service on Easter Sunday at Wittenham Clumps. Easter Experience took place at Trinity.

May
Over Christian Aid week, events included a Christian Aid Service at Peachcroft Christian Centre. Over Pentecost weekend, a family fun day was held in the Market Square on the Saturday, marking the birthday of the church with such activities as a bouncy castle, craft, storytelling, face painting and the distribution of free cake.

June
Various churches hosted tables at the big street party in the town centre and the Salvation Army opened its doors to celebrate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.

July
Year 6 children in Abingdon primary schools received an *Its Your Move* book from one of the CiA member churches.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>The usual launch event for Alpha in Abingdon was deferred until January 2013 when three churches will be running courses. A successful course was run by Peachcroft CC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>The Annual Celebration was held at St Helen’s with speakers from Archway and Christian listeners under the theme of ‘Christian listeners and good neighbours’. Richard Bittleston led the Michaelmas fair service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>The Annual Bereavement Service was organised in conjunction with local funeral directors. It was held at St Michael’s and was led by Paul Smith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Several activities, including short concerts, children’s crafts, various stalls, task groups displays, refreshments. Messy Trail, were hosted at St Nicolas Church as part of the Abingdon Extravaganza.</td>
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Abingdon Deanery Synod

The Abingdon Deanery Synod occupies the lowest tier of Synodical Government in the Church of England; the others are the Diocesan and General Synods. It typically meets four times in each year, and during 2012 it met on February 9, May 24, September 20 and November 29.

The February meeting included extensive discussion of financial matters including the Deanery Budget and policy regarding share rebates, but the latter part of the meeting was devoted to issues relating to children and young people. It was addressed by three speakers who work with young people; Revd. Janet Taft (Chaplain, School of St. Helen and St. Katharine), Revd Tim Mullins (Chaplain, Radley College) and Henry Joines (Youth Worker, Cumnor), and substantial discussion followed.

The May meeting was addressed by Revd Helen Kendrick (Sutton Courtenay with Appleford) on the subject of 'Pastoral Care Networks' and including excerpts from the Diocesan training DVD 'Reaching Out'. This is a training resource which can be used within Parishes to aid discussion and improvement of pastoral approaches. Very entertaining material provoked useful discussion.

The meeting in September was dominated by presentations and discussion on financial matters, most importantly Parish Stewardship, and PCC treasurers had been invited to attend the meeting and participate in these discussions. The meeting heard presentations on the TRIO approach used annually by Marcham, and on experiences of a more elaborate quinquennial campaign. Another presentation described the operation of the 'Friends' scheme at Sutton Courtenay, which has contributed £142,000 to their funds since it was set up in 1986.

The November meeting was addressed by the Revd Canon John Rees, the Registrar of the Oxford Diocese, who gave a most interesting talk describing the varied legal issues that occupy the Diocesan Registrar's office, ranging from Faculty Issues to Schools, and also his work as a Legal Advisor to the General Synod. More mundane business of the meeting returned to financial issues, as the meeting ratified the Parish Share allocation formula for 2013, and heard a preliminary presentation from the Deanery Treasurer on the revised Diocesan share formula for 2014, our response to which is likely to be a significant issue for the coming year.
St Nicolas C of E School

Report by Eluned Hallas, Foundation Governor

St Nicolas is a successful primary school, larger than the average with a full pupil roll of some 430 pupils aged from 4+ to 11+, and some 50+ staff. There are currently three Foundation Governors appointed by the Diocese, including Revd Paul Smith, Team Vicar at St Nicolas’ Church.

There is an active parents’ prayer group and prayer requests are invited, and received, from parents and staff. The school has good links with several local Churches and Ministers, and others, come into school to take assemblies and work with the children. Whole school and class assemblies are a very important part of the school day. There are whole school church services on St Nicolas Day (Trinity Church), at Easter (St Michael’s) and at the end of the school year (St Helen’s). Children in year 6, and staff leaving at the end of the summer term, receive a candle at this last service – encouraging them to be a shining light in their future careers. Classes also visit other churches in Abingdon as part of their curriculum learning. All children new in school at the end of the summer term receive a bible through a donation from a local benefactor.

The school received a very positive SIAS report, especially regarding the distinctive nature of St Nicolas as a church school. However, following the disappointing OFSTED Report in November 2011, 2012 has been a year of steady consolidation and progress as the school looks forward to a repeat inspection – probably during 2013. The great majority of pupils made good progress in 2012 and performance at KS1 and KS2 improved on that of 2011. Staff and governors are keen to ensure that improvement continues and governors meetings continue to concentrate on pupil achievement, teaching quality and gathering evidence of improvement.

The school aims to provide a broad education beyond the core subjects and offers pupils the opportunity to take part in a range of activities that suit their interests and provide ways to experience success. As well as music, drama and art in the classrooms, the school runs a wide and very popular range of after school clubs. Highlights of the year included the choir singing in a concert at Christchurch College, the whole school taking part in Oxfordshire’s Artsweek, and successes in the county schools athletics and rugby competitions. It is good to report that when pupils take part in outside events the school gets very positive comments about how motivated and well behaved the pupils are. Other successful events and changes have been:

- Community Day in the Foundation Stage,
- A sharing skills day involving parents and the wider community who shared their own skills with classes of children,
- Improvements to the Early Years outside space,
- New schools meals provision which gives school more control over menus and increases the amount of local fresh food used in the meals,
- The introduction of a breakfast club for vulnerable children,
- Increased sized all weather sports and play area which provide greater opportunities for sports and effective play,
- Greater support for parents of children with SEN by the introduction of a Special Educational Need’s Parents Forum meeting 6x a year.
With the help of the Desire Group and other volunteers the Prayer Space week was successfully repeated twice during the year. All children were able to participate and many returned voluntarily in their lunch times to explore aspects of quiet prayer. The school’s experience is being used as a model for other local initiatives. Plans to make greater use of the school site include a wildlife area, outside story telling corner and a prayer garden.
The main fabric project for 2012 was the installation of the North Porch toilets, completed at the beginning of March. There had been delays in starting the work because of complications with the route for the toilet drain. The preferred route to the manhole in the road turned out to be impracticable; the alternative route under the path to the Church Centre carried a greater risk of additional cost and delay due to archaeology. Fortunately, there were not any significant finds during the excavation of the drain trench. A small number of disarticulated human bones were collected and reburied after a short prayer ceremony, before the trench was backfilled.

At the same time as the toilet installation work, the contractor undertook the replacement of cracked floor tiles over the main body of the church. The cracks had occurred around expansion joints, where the unsupported edges of the ceramic tiles were unable to take the weight of the heavy chair trolleys. The flexible mastic from the expansion joints has been replaced with solid grouting in all areas of the floor where the trolleys need access. There has not been any recurrence of cracking of the tile edges.

The contract for the regular maintenance of the church roof rainwater system started in February. The contractors Hawkins & Riveiros have visited four times during the year, clearing gulleys, gutters, downpipes and drains. Additional work on the roof has been undertaken during these visits: repairs to lead, replacement of loose pointing and cracked roof tiles. The maintenance has been effective in preventing rainwater penetration, allowing stonework and plaster to dry out over the year. Dampness measurements during the 2012 Quinquennial Inspection confirm that most of the walls are now sufficiently dry for redecoration to go ahead. The priority will be walls where plaster and paintwork have been damaged by water penetration in the past.

There has been progress in the planning for the new church sound system. The proposal is to install nine loudspeakers in total, with six located on the columns around the central Nave platform, two in the South Aisle and one in the Baptistry. The church architect Jeremy Bell made recommendations relating to the original version of the sound system proposal, with the intention of reducing the visibility of the loudspeaker wiring. The proposal has been updated accordingly and faculty approval is now in place.

Other fabric work has included:

- the painting of the walls and ceiling of the Exchequer Room;
- the upgrade of the PIR sensors and cameras for the church roof security system;
- the replacement of the earth rod for the tower lightning conductor.
Northcourt Road Site

The church buildings spread over a large site and we seek to maximise the use of rooms throughout our premises on Northcourt Road, both for regular and occasional individual and community groups, as well as church groups. The premises are a valuable community asset and rental charges, when appropriate, contribute to our financial revenue.

The upkeep of the large Dairy Yard site on Northcourt Road requires continual repairs and maintenance, including the Tithe Barn (church), leading to the main hall, coffee lounge and upper room; Barns 1 and 2 (newly completed in January 2013), Barns 3 and 4, still in constant use with minor upgrading, and the Corner Suite.

The Barns Project Development Team has continued to work with architects and contractors on the “Opening the Doors” initiative throughout 2012 and the beautiful Barns 1 and 2 have just been completed in January 2013. Barn 1 will be opening as a cafe and the large, multi-purpose open space in Barn 2 will be used flexibly to enhance the connection between church and community in North Abingdon.

The Buildings Maintenance Coordinating Group has continued throughout 2012 to oversee and manage the upkeep and maintenance of the church site at Northcourt Road and other properties for which Christ Church is responsible in Mattock Way and Geoffrey Barbour Road. The group ensures the safe and efficient management and day to day running of the Northcourt Road site including regular testing of electrical equipment, fire extinguishers, boilers etc.

The group meets regularly to review, discuss and prioritise any work or repairs that need to be undertaken, or any purchases that may be required to maintain the site and properties to a satisfactory standard. They also have responsibility for ensuring that repairs and suggestions noted in the Diocesan Quinquennial Review are prioritised, costed and undertaken as appropriate. Budget guidelines are supplied by the Treasurer, who attends meetings.

Works undertaken this year include:

Church site: Full asbestos survey undertaken, asbestos removed from office
Full electrical inspection undertaken
Upgrade to electricals in main building
Flue in boiler room fixed due to vandalism
Condensate pipe for boiler fixed
Upper Room roof recovered
WCs in Barn 4 changed; new cistern installed and urinal fitted in men’s toilet
Repairs to Entrance Hall roof undertaken due to leakages
Rotting wood window frames replaced
Ongoing redecoration of Corner Suite (by volunteers)

Mattock Way and Geoffrey Barbour Road:
Boilers serviced and repaired
Light fittings and tiles replaced in bathroom; wall repaired
Radiators and immersion heater repaired
Long Furlong

Long Furlong Primary School continues to be used as an established place of worship every Sunday; although with increasing numbers we are rapidly approaching the capacity of the hall. In addition, we are able to use the school for additional courses or events on weekdays. The children’s work, Godzkidz, takes place in the nearby Community Centre. Teams of volunteers ensure that both buildings are prepared and cleared for each service and event. Both places are also used for associated activities, including such events as Easter Holiday Club, the Big Picnic (in collaboration with the Long Furlong Community Association) held in June to celebrate the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, the Light Party (offered as a proper alternative to Halloween) and Time Out for Christmas; plus a Christingle service, community Swap Shop events and Bring and Share lunches. We are currently in the process of renegotiating the hire agreement with LF Primary School, at their request.
2012 has been a relatively straightforward and routine year for building maintenance and repairs to the church fabric. This was as a consequence of 2011 being a particularly busy year with the replacement of the flat surface of the choir vestry roof and other urgent and extensive roof repairs being completed in the early part of 2012.

Fortunately this work ensured the completion of much of the immediate priority repair and maintenance issues highlighted in the quinquennial inspection report received from Robert Montgomery Architects in November 2011. A contractor has been invited to quote for the completion of the priority works highlighted by this inspection and they will now be completed in 2013.

In July Joseph Taylor successfully delivered the long awaited loan grand piano. It has been an excellent addition to the music in church and has been put to good use during services and at a number of concerts.

During the year it became apparent that there was a growing requirement for a dishwasher as an addition to our already excellent kitchen facilities. In particular the St Michael’s Lunch Club now regularly serves forty lunches a month. If we are to successfully promote the use of the church and its facilities for more community events this will become a prerequisite for anyone wishing to use the church for functions that involve refreshments. The DCC approved the purchase and installation of a semi-commercial dishwasher. We have to thank Ray Duckett for making the alterations to the kitchen furniture to accommodate the dishwasher.

In anticipation of a lunch for sixty people to be held in church to celebrate our Patronal festival the Standing Committee agreed the purchase of additional crockery for the kitchen. Both purchases have proved to be a valuable addition to our facilities.

To complete the work first started as part of phase one of our reordering an order has been placed with Haywood Landscapes Ltd the “Labyrinth Company to install our labyrinth inscription plaque. The inscription is from Isaiah 43 beginning “Don’t be afraid, for I have redeemed you…..

Work has been completed by our regular locksmith to make changes to the locks on the Sacristy door in order to allow Fr Paul access when required. He also replaced the broken floor bolt on the west door and has provided a digital key box to improve the security of our keys.

The organ was tuned in December by the organ builders Peter Collins of Melton Mowbray ready for Christmas and was reported to be in good order and the boiler and heating system was serviced in October ready for the winter.

The church garden looked splendid throughout the year and our grateful thanks go to those who contributed plants, time and effort to its upkeep.
Parish Church of St Nicolas

Report by Geoffrey Currey, Churchwarden

It has been a frustrating year in most respects as far as the fabric is concerned.

The frustration arises from failure to achieve any of the three major items on our agenda for the year, namely a new nave altar, changes to the west door to achieve equal access, and new panels for the Blacknall Aisle. Taking these in turn, we invited designs for a nave altar from two local craftsmen and accepted the outline proposals from Nicholas Mynheer. We are now discussing the details of the descriptive motifs, which means that we are almost ready to commission the work.

To achieve equal access, our initial expectation that we would be able to use the south gate and south door proved impractical so we are now looking at access via the west doors. We have approached two companies who supply automatic opening mechanisms. Our requirements seem to be unusually complex, and their quotes are even more complex, so we are still unable to establish whether any of their proposals meet our needs adequately.

As for the Blacknall panels, we have quotations from two companies and it should be a straightforward matter to get diocesan approval and to go ahead with the installation. The designs consist of panels which are similar to the existing ones in the woodwork behind the high altar, although the new ones will not be quite as high. They will finish at the level of the stone window sill.

On a more positive note, we have had maintenance work carried out by our local firm, Whites of Appleton, on the bells. The worn sliders and running boards on the bells have been replaced and a sound chute fitted to make the treble bell audible in the ringing chamber. The cost was largely met by grants from the Town and the Oxford Diocesan Guild of ringers together with donations both in time and cash from the local ringers. Particular thanks are due to the four volunteers who removed the old fittings and replaced the new ones. We had the electrical system checked as required every five years, and necessary work carried out which arose from that. Again, particular thanks are due to one of our congregation who used his professional expertise to ensure that the safety checks were comprehensive, and that the ensuing report met our requirements. We have had fourteen individually small jobs carried out which arose from the November 2011 Quinquennial Inspection, at a cost of just under £2500, and the South Gate has been given a face-lift with a new clean sheet of polycarbonate and re-painting of the metalwork.
The Annual Report and Treasurer’s Report were approved by the Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Abingdon on 15th April 2013 and signed on its behalf by

Mrs J M Corps
Vice-Chair
TREASURER'S REPORT ON CONSOLIDATED CHURCH ACCOUNTS FOR 2012

Andrew R. Birks
Treasurer
15 April 2013
STATEMENT OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PCC

We are required under charity law to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements we are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make reasonable and prudent judgements and estimates;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in operation.

We are also responsible for:

- keeping proper accounting records;
- safeguarding the charity’s assets;
- taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud.