

St Lawrence Towcester

Reports of
Church Groups, Activities
and Ministers

for the

Annual Parochial Church
Meeting

Sunday 15th May 2022

10:45am

Chantry Committee

At the end of another disrupted year we are happy to say that the Chantry House, once again, managed to end the year with its bank account in the black.

After some discussion and research, we have replaced the stair life with a new one purchased from and fitted by Acorn Stairlifts. There have been no other -major building or maintenance projects but, with the help of contractors and volunteers, we have continued to keep the house and garden in a very reasonable condition. A pattern of Friday and Saturday coffee mornings has finally begun again and bookings are once again starting to pick up. To this end, we have worked carefully on a new leaflet to advertise the facilities that we offer in the heart of our community and these are now available to the general public.

Currently discussions are taking place looking to apply for some funding to complete essential work on the building in the near future. We are also part of a larger study that is researching the feasibility of heading into the future with a cleaner, more sustainable, and hopefully netter value, way of providing energy for the building. I hope more news will follow on both of these items. Please pray that the clergy, churchwardens and committee continue to move forward in a positive way with these discussions.

Unfortunately, and in conclusion, I have to report that we have lost 2 long standing members of the committee. Much of the 'in-house' maintenance has been done over many years by John Godwin - he has decided to make the most of his retirement and step back from working actively on the committee. We will miss the sense of humour that he brought to our meetings and importantly his skills and the knowledge that he has shared with us over the years. After several decades of commitment and work, our Treasurer, Brian Manning, has also retired from his role. He had been the treasurer for more than 20 years and has managed our finances and accounts over that time with meticulous attention but has always maintained that we have a duty of care to look after the wonderful asset that we are charged with keeping for the community now and into the future. We thank them both for all that they are and have done for the Chantry House.

We as a committee have welcomed John Fowler as new member and Pere Morris as our treasurer as well as the PCC's. I trust that you will support them and the rest of the committee as we look and plan ahead.

Isobel Gilbert - Chair

Fabric Committee

The Fabric Committee has been unable to meet during the past year due to the lockdowns resulting from the Covid 19 Pandemic. However, the 2021 Quinquennial Survey was undertaken in June 2021.

This was carried by our architect Adrian Ringrose from Stimpson, Walton, Bond and his report was received in September. He commended the PCC for all the repairs which had been carried out since the last Quinquennial. The South Porch fire damage was unfortunate, but the repairs were well executed.

1. A Schedule of Works was drawn up, based on this report, outlining the work to be done during this Quinquennial, which includes:-

a) Roof Repairs to the Tower, Nave and South Aisle Roofs.

i) These are mainly in the Priority 1 category, needing urgent attention, and these will be carried out first.

ii) An additional item (not in the QQ Report) was reported by the bell ringers. The cracks in the mortar under the cladding needed to be repaired first, before the emergency fire escape steps, leading from the tower to the church roof, are repaired by the bell ringers.

b) Stonework Repairs

There are 4 items listed in Priorities 1 and 2 which require urgent attention.

The rest of the stonework repairs are in Priority 3 which can be carried out at the same time, if funding is available, but they can be done within the next 5 years.

c) Rainwater Goods, Repair and Maintenance.

There are 5 items in Priorities 1 and 2 which require urgent attention. Most of these require removal of debris and monitoring. The other 3 items in Priority 3 can be done within the next 5 years.

d) Other Work Required

Priorities 1 and 2. Plant growth removal from walls could be carried out by stonemasons at higher level and by volunteers at lower levels. Basement and car park areas could also be managed by volunteers.

Adjustment of the South Porch inner doors and resetting of the Herringbone wood blocks need attention.

Other items in priorities 3 and 4 are not urgent and can be done within the next 5 years.

e) The Churchyard and Boundary Wall are the responsibility of the Towcester Town Council and the recommendations in the QQ Report have been forwarded to them.

2. The Quinquennial Repair Works can all be carried out under an Archdeacon's Licence.

3. Contractors have been approached and asked to submit tenders for the roof and stonework repairs. However, due to the pandemic we are still waiting for some replies.

4. We shall approach the Hicks Charity and the Combined Charities, to ask if they will be willing to contribute towards the cost of the Quinquennial Repairs.

5. Depending on the level of funding available, we shall carry out the repairs, giving priority to the roof repairs. If further funding is required, then we shall have to undertake fundraising events during the next 5 years.

Kate Saul Fabric Committee

Reader's Report

Report for APCM from John Booth

I said in my report last year that 2021 had been a very strange year with regard to the way we have had to do church and conduct other meetings.

Zoom remains a very integral part of the way that we do things. But things have been a little more like normal this year and the trend is further to that normality.

During the year I have continued to do the things that I have done since arriving in the benefice, ten years ago now.

I attend the Zoom services on Sunday morning either to lead or participate. I take (in other churches in the benefice) or help with services in St Lawrence church when that is appropriate.

I attend in order to participate in or lead Morning Prayer on Zoom twice a week and also have enjoyed being part of Compline during Advent and Lent, again on Zoom.

I continue taking services at Ridgway House once a month with John Smith and Christine Williams. I have also continued to take some funerals, and have acted as vergers for some others as well as some baptisms.

Leading a Bible Study group continues as an important and enjoyable part of my life.

I intend to be re-licensed as a reader in October and look forward to more years being privileged to be a part of God's work here in Towcester and the Tove benefice.

Report for APCM from Chris Hammett

This note sets out the work I've done over the last twelve months as a Reader in the Tove Benefice.

Worship

- In an average month, I write one reflection and lead two Sunday services (one on Zoom and one in church). I attend Morning Prayer most weekdays and lead the service once a week.
- During Lent and Advent I supported Angela during Compline, and assisted during the Lent course. I supported the Greens Norton Easter trail (as the Easter Bunny).
- Occasional verging at funerals/ baptisms.

Church governance

- I am part of the Ministry team and attend PCC meetings at St Barts.
- I chair a quarterly meeting of Benefice treasurers.
- I am Treasurer of the Peterborough Diocese Readers Association and attend quarterly meetings of their Governing Body.

Other community activities

- Trustee for Renew 169 in Towcester.
- Trustee of Friends of Greens Norton School ("FROGS").
- Moderator for the Greens Norton Community Facebook page.

Chris Hammett

Churchwardens Report

This has been another strange year of navigating government guidelines and ensuring the safety, wellbeing and support is given to our parishioners.

In truth, this has to be the year of thank you to many individuals who have enabled the life of St. Lawrence to continue with challenges continually faced and overcome, not least sudden health issues that complicated all activities and Services. There are many who behind the scenes have worked tirelessly to this end but there are also those who need a special mention.

The financial challenge of reaching our Parish Share has been a constant concern and the guidance of the Treasurer has helped focus our attention on fundraising and Steve Challen rose to the plate and masterminded a phenomenal plan of activities to raise the necessary funds for this requirement. Throughout the year Steve has led a very committed and motivated team who achieved the financial success. A huge amount of work and effort was put into this project and our very grateful thanks to Steve for all he did/does. Steve was also behind the recent Ukraine emergency programme of donations sent to Poland and all done with enthusiasm and great humour.

Claire Reetz has continued to work with enthusiasm and energy throughout the year for the Ministry with Children and Families and achieved recognition for her under 5s work with the National Institute for Christian Education Research (NICER) and their research Faith in the Nexus. Other highlights this year were the Christmas Tree Festival which contributed to our fundraising efforts as well as encouraging number entering the Church throughout December and enjoying that fabulous spectacle.

Kate Saul has chaired the Fabric Committee for many years and all her hard work co-ordinating the Quinquennial Inspection in June made for a very smooth inspection albeit with a considerable list of repairs and improvements to be addressed with a number of priorities receiving immediate attention.

Jenny Lunn overcame huge obstacles to ensure those who in the past have enjoyed The Chantry Christmas lunch, were able to receive Christmas lunch delivered to their homes. No small challenge but very well received by those who enjoy that offer of friendship.

Our Ministry team is of course at the heart of all that happens at St. Lawrence and despite health issues that affected some of the team during the year, with the robust leadership of our Rector nothing was insurmountable and together with the ordination of Revd Angela Hammett in June, services have been conducted throughout the year albeit on a smaller scale but the Church remains open and attendance numbers have been encouraging.

In February 2021, the Church of England's General Synod set new targets for all parts of the church to work to become carbon net zero by 2030. During the year the Tove Benefice submitted a detailed application to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs for a £40,000 grant out of the Rural Communities Energy Fund (RCEF). Funding was sought for a Stage One RCEF grant to engage consultants to carry out a feasibility study to upgrade energy sources to renewable energy. The main output will be an outline specification that will be used as the basis for a Stage Two RCEF grant application.

Guided by the outcomes of the feasibility study, the technologies or combinations of technologies that seem attractive to us are: the use of listed building roofs for solar panels; low-temperature heating elements in pews; wind turbines; underfloor heating and possibly ground sources heat pumps. The desired outcome is to become carbon neutral across the benefice. The Stage One RCEF application was successful and in early 2022, the Benefice's Consultants carried out inspections of all the Churches in our Benefice and we await their report.

Whilst this report relates to activity in the parish for 2021 it would be remiss of me to not mention Revd. Lulu Pelly recent letter about her stepping back (retiring) as an Assistant Priest in the benefice from the end of May following her 70th Birthday. She has decided to take 6 months off to consider whether she will take up the PTO Licence in December. Lulu has been such a strong and gracious member of the Ministry Team and will be missed by us all but quite rightly, it is time for her and her family to have more time together.

Elizabeth Manning
Churchwarden

St. Lawrence's PCC report on proceedings

During the year we have held four meetings, all of them using the "Zoom" application (although some discussion took place regarding the relative merits of "Zoom" and in-person meetings). Our attendance has averaged at 11 persons out of a possible 16 (The 16 reducing to 15 following the "stepping-down" of Mary Blanchard).

Our greatest challenge has been a financial one, resulting from the greatly reduced income from collections due to the pandemic. However, this problem was alleviated by a sterling financial result from the Vicarage Open Day. (The PCC passed a vote of thanks to Steve Challen for organising that event).

The price of gas has been a major worry throughout the year, knowing that our gas supply contract was to expire on 27/3/22. This led to the decision to turn the "boiler" off on 27/3/22. Fortunately, our Treasurer was able to secure a 6 month "holding" gas contract from our gas supplier; we await with trepidation to learn the gas price in late September 2022.

At our meeting on 28/4/22 we received a presentation from Roger Mears Architects and their sub-contractor regarding the future means of heating St. Lawrence's church. (It should be borne in mind that from the energy solutions aspect, St. Lawrence's, Chantry House, and the Vicarage are seen as a combined group). This presentation was only the first stage of what will be a long road to getting an energy-efficient solution to heating our buildings.

During 2021 our 5-yearly inspection of the church fabric took place, and the ensuing report highlighted the need for urgent roof repairs. Our efforts to find contractors to perform these repairs have met with little success. (All contractors seem to be too busy to even quote for the work).

Finally, the efforts of Claire Reetz and her team in the Children and Families area of ministry have been recognised with high praise.
Paul Bestwick, PCC Secretary

Licenced Lay Minister

Due to Covid restrictions the year wasn't as busy as it would have been in normal times, but once getting able to visit with strict instructions of facemask and hand cleanser I was able to visit people again. Leeson Court struggled through times of change, and I spent time there extra

I was thrilled to be given the opportunity to share a Remembrance service at Brook House as well as Leeson court – which was very poignant to residents in both places.

Mary Blanchard

Servers Report

There are only two servers namely Melanie and myself. I have contacted possible additions and asked twice before Christmas during 9.30 service all without success.

I haven't found anyone for Crucifer either.

With regards to ordering candles sacraments etc, since 2019. I have replaced Baptism candle, Advent set for Christmas, Palm crosses, 3 boxes of Baptised persons candles. We still have plenty of wafers and wine for communion.

This is all I am able to report.

Chris Williams

Churches Together in Towcester (CTT)

Churches Together in Towcester continue to meet bi-monthly, currently still meeting on line. Members of the clergy and leadership team from each church make every effort to attend and the meetings are well attended.

I took on the chair for the second year running in September 2021. It has been great to work with all churches in Towcester and surrounding villages in this way. The commitment to this group is strong, I feel well supported as chair and the group are encouraging and we all are like minded in our purpose within the town.

The committee have met online for the past year, and we have still been able to hear from different ventures we support, such as the Renew169 and the Foodbank. We have received updates from both of these so we are all well informed as to what is happening. Other areas we have not been able to continue with at the current times due to Covid, such as visiting scheme and welcome cakes. We plan to update our welcome card in the Autumn and to deliver this to as many of the new houses as we can, which will share the information about all the churches and our contact details.

Last Summer, Claire Reetz and myself managed to deliver the Year 6 transition project to the local Primary Schools which was well received and we are already booking dates to do this in July this year.

Carols on the square was able to take place in person this year and it was well attended. It was lovely for the churches to all take part in leading different sections of the service and wonderful to have young people from the schools to help with the readings. Thank you to everyone who helped with this and made it possible.

Chris Williams led the World Day of Prayer this year, which was well attended and very successful. Thank you to her for leading this at St Lawrence Church. It was good to see people from the different congregations taking part.

Good Friday service this year went well. It was jointly led by a number of the leaders from St Lawrence and Tove Valley Baptist Fellowship. The service was well attended and it was good to be able to witness to the town as we carried the cross through the High Street and up Bury Mount. Thank you to all those who helped with this, and served drinks and hot cross buns after! Thank you also for the donations of the food.

Our regular meetings have also been an opportunity for us to build relationships with each other and between the churches. It has been a space where we have been able to share prayer requests and be honest with each other. I think that we all find these meetings supportive.

My thanks also go to Carol Lucas who keeps me in order and reminds me what I need to do, thank you Carol.

Melanie CTT

Mothers' Union

During the Covid Pandemic Tove Benefice Mothers' Union members kept in touch with each other via Zoom. We recommenced our face to face meetings with a Mary Sumner Day Afternoon Tea in the Chantry House in August. We have since then held monthly meetings and enjoyed speakers, discussions and fellowship at

St Bartholomew's Greens Norton and in the Chantry House in Towcester.

We currently have 12 members and continue to support the work of MU both here in the UK and worldwide as it seeks to improve the lives of families. We were all saddened by the sudden death of Beth Maitland who was an active member of our group.

We meet monthly on Tuesday mornings in the Chantry House Towcester or Thursday afternoons at Greens Norton and would welcome anyone who would like to come along. If you would like more information please approach either Ann Lawrence or Christine Booth.

Carol Johnson

Child and Families Worker

The pandemic continued to have a huge effect on children and families' ministry in 2021. Changing guidance meant that we continuously needed to adapt our practise and has meant that we were not able to continue with our work in the Benefice and in the community in the usual ways. We have, however, found new ways of being church and will continue some of these types of events into this year and beyond. Towards the end of the year, we began to see numbers slowly increase in all areas and returned to being able to visit our primary schools. My thanks go to both my committee and to those who support events and regular groups. Your support and commitment have meant that we have been able to care for our local families through a difficult time.

CMS/ TRAINING

At the end of 2021 I had completed the first term of my third year at college. I look forward to graduating in the summer of 2023.

BENEFICE WORK SCHOOLS

I am delighted to now be going back into each of our primary schools each week. In Greens Norton I have supported prayer space, led a lunchtime worship group and provided regular Collective Worship for Key Stage One children. I am still a foundation governor at the school which involves regular training, meetings and monitoring of areas such as Collective Worship and R.E. In Towcester, I have led prayer space for the whole school and have been working with the Collective Worship Ambassadors. We have returned to welcoming a year group to Family Service each month and I go in to work with the children in preparation for this.

PRESCHOOL GROUPS

Toddler groups have seen a rise in numbers this year both in Greens Norton and Towcester. In Towcester we will be returning to 'Little Sprouts' explore during the summer months where children are encouraged to explore God's beautiful world around them. We have been asked to take part in a national research project on faith in small children by the team who created the report 'Faith in the Nexus'. We will be one of 5 settings who will be visited regularly by the researchers to explore the importance of toddler groups over the next year.

SERVICES

Attendance for Family Service in Towcester is steadily increasing and we are now welcoming our marriage and baptism families regularly. We continue to seek to find more ways of welcoming more children in Greens Norton and I am a part of a worship team who plan these services together.

OTHER CHURCH EVENTS

This year we have been able to run both Baptism preparation and Marriage preparation on zoom. We have been encouraged to see many of these families regularly coming to Family Service.

The Towcester fete was a huge success and raised much needed money for St. Lawrence. We also held an Olympics themed trail and a Christmas tree festival last year which welcomed many of our families to learn about the true meaning of Christmas.

In Greens Norton, I supported the Christmas craft event run by the friends of Greens Norton school and am now a part of the committee to plan other fundraising events such as the village fete. In Bradden we have had two successful "Messy Church" events and in Easton Neston we ran another Easter trail which was well attended.

CHURCHES TOGETHER

I worked with Mel Whitlock to run "It's your move" sessions for year 6 children in both Towcester Primary schools and Greens Norton Primary School.

DEANERY/ DIOCESE INVOLVEMENT

I continue to be a part of both Deanery Synod and Greater Chapter meetings as well as receiving monthly training days from the Diocese. As my college work comes to a close, I will begin to work more in other churches in the Deanery.

FUNDING (BILL BLYTH)

In December of last year, we invited our current donors to renew for a further 3 years. I am delighted that nearly all have either confirmed their renewal or continued to make their monthly donations. We have had a further 3 donors and as a result our monthly income has remained constant. This is a most

encouraging result and demonstrates the strength of commitment to the project from St Lawrence and St Bartholomew's parishioners. The result is that our bank balance at the end of the year stood at just over £22,000 which will enable us to support Claire financially for the next 3 years. We continue to seek grant opportunities and other means of securing her employment longer term. A set of accounts for the project is attached.

Report from Revd Lulu Pelly, Assistant Priest

I think this is my last report as Assistant Priest in the Tove Benefice as I take 6 months off from the end of May. This last year has been busy as ever and more complicated as we juggle with meeting constraints of living with Covid 19 in the community. Both Paula and Claire have been hugely proactive in providing the necessary Risk Assessments and for that I am grateful as governance is not one of my preferred activities or skills! It has been good to be part of a supportive Ministry Team as we seek to do God's will in our communities, listening to new ideas and praying together. Sharing in services across the Benefice always provides the joy of seeing one another and good fellowship.

Occasional offices. It has been a joy to be able to baptise children once again and discuss the meaning of life in Christ with their parents and godparents in person or on Zoom and the services are always a privilege to lead. Sometimes we have managed without music but still managed to sing and have meaningful worship. I am grateful to those who are able to act as vergers and welcome people to our churches. Likewise, funeral services have been a privilege. I have conducted 8 in 2022 and 15 since April 2021. I have conducted 15 weddings in the Benefice and Deanery

Towcester foodbank. I have been a Trustee since we began in October 2012 and I am now happy to give up my place as there is a hugely competent Board of 8 Trustees in place. Carol Lucas has kindly agreed to maintain the Church/CTT link with the foodbank. The foodbank continues to support those in crisis and now provides weekly CAB support to clients. The Church support continues to be essential to the function of the foodbank and for that we are very grateful.

Churches Together in Towcester - our ecumenical partnership continues to be an important part of our ministry and with oversight of the foodbank and the Renew Wellbeing Café as well as our joint services and pastoral care.

St John Ambulance Chaplaincy Organising three Services for the County last year was a privilege, the closure of the Leicester/Rutland/ Northampton alliance, the Awards Service and the Carol Service. More time will be spent this year I hope visiting the training centres as well as planning services. My Investiture at the Priory Church of St John Clerkenwell is on 20th April

Fund Raising

It has been fun to help Steve Challen and his team with various projects in the last year and I heartily congratulate them all on their hard work and making the

Church visible in both Towcester and in people's minds as well as raising the necessary funds.

Finally, I thank you for your patience with me as we strive to do God's work. Working with you all has been a privilege and full of unexpected encounters.

Revd. Lulu Pelly, Assistant Priest Tove Benefice

Report from Revd Paula Challen, Rector

This is my third APCM report as Rector. 2021 was a year in which we continued to live within the constraints of COVID. Once again as a benefice we found new and adapted ways in which we could continue to be church and community. I finished off my 2020 report by mentioning that the Church of England had launched its Vision for 2020s. The focus is how we are "Christ centred and Jesus shaped" communities, that offer a simpler, humbler, bolder church to meet the needs of those we serve in our parishes. The 3 focus strands, which sit alongside the 5 Marks of Mission, are:

1. a church of missionary disciples: through prayer, worship and scripture
2. a church where mixed ecology is the norm: through parish, chaplaincy, Fresh Expressions, digital and church planting
3. a younger and more diverse church: multigenerational, all age and looking like the community we serve

This is not anything radical and different from the mission statement I picked up from St Bartholomew's Church dated 2007 which read "To know Christ, To show Christ, To share Christ" with similar strands about: worship and fellowship; living out the gospel message of welcome and reconciliation; and serve the community, especially those in need. However, it wasn't until 2020 when I was clearing the notice board that I realised that there was a Mission Statement... I came to the benefice in June 2014!

Moving forward I want us all to know and hold onto this vision of being "Christ centred and Jesus shaped" and as we come out of the last few years' challenges, we will be considering what simpler, humbler and bolder looks like for our parishes and for our benefice.

Throughout 2021 I took part in a leadership course, run by CPAS (Church Pastoral Aid Society). The course looked at different aspects of leadership. Through group discussion, personal reflection and conversation with a mentor we were encouraged to think about our own leadership style and how we need to develop patterns of working that are sustainable and enabling. I have just started meeting with a member of our benefice who has management consultant background to work on my personal areas for development and then how we work together as a benefice.

Clergy

Despite the difficult year for the ministry, the clergy have worked tirelessly to adapt and deliver. Revd Lulu and Revd Angela have written their own reports where you can read all that they have been involved in.

In case you have ever wondered what I do within the benefice there are many roles I undertake or share with my colleagues. Here is just a taster:

- Daily Prayer
- Leading worship including in church and online including preparation for preaching
- Planning & leading monthly services in Towcester and Greens Norton with the Family Worship Team
- Pastoral Ministry including visiting our residential and nursing homes & people in their homes
- Conducting Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals and the pastoral care that accompanies this
- Supporting and leading on Baptism Preparation (monthly) and Marriage Preparation (annually)
- Chairing PCCs, Ministry Team, and Churchwarden Meetings
- Attending and supporting subcommittee like: Benefice Treasurers', Children and Families Committee, Chantry House
- Being Governors of Towcester Primary and Sponne School
- Leading Worship / Assemblies for our four local primary schools in church, online and in school
- Support Little Sprouts and Tots Own
- Serving as Trustees for local charities including: Sponne and Bickerstaffe (Moorfields Alms Houses), Richard Hicks, Towcester Combined Charity
- Securing charitable donations to bridge sizeable income gaps
- Assist with Grant applications as part of a team (like RCEF and Children and Families Worker)
- Supporting those exploring and training for Lay and Ordained Ministry
- Participating in the training and supervision of Curates
- Undertaking personal study and Spiritual Direction
- Supporting community outreach and mission
- Attending Parish Events
- Ensuring our churches were compliant with regulations with regard to Covid 19 pandemic risk, producing and regularly updating Covid Secure Risk Assessments and Protocols.
- Supporting Benefice Safeguarding Officer (BSO) and Deputy Benefice Safeguarding Officer (DBOS) in making sure we are complying with safeguarding requirements
- Carrying out the considerable administrative duties which go with 5 churches, often taking
- the lead to deal with new benefice issues or crisis – of which there have been many.

Lay Minister and Officers

The Ministry Team consists of clergy, licensed lay ministers and our Children and Families Worker. We continue to meet monthly.

John Booth and Chris Hammett regularly lead worship both in church and on zoom. Mary Blanchard in 2020 continued her pastoral ministry, mainly through

telephone calls and the occasional visiting. Jane Small has been waiting for a hip operation and been out of action. Dawn Valentine changed jobs and is now at Brook House where she continues her role as Parish Evangelist. Claire Reetz is continuing to undertake her course with CMS (Church Missionary Society). She works closely with our church schools and has been recognised nationally for her work with under 5s.

Jaki Howard was licensed as a Lay Minister in September and is starting to help in leading worship alongside her work as a nurse.

Jane Jakes is still in training and will be undertaking a third year of training to be a Lay Reader.

In the Benefice Office Rona Cambray has continued to provide Office Manager support. During Autumn of 2021 Ruth Shepherd stepped down from her Admin Assistant role and we appointed Louisa Nasr. A special thank you to them all as the front face of the churches who handle enquiries, administration, and printing across the benefice.

The churchwardens in 4 parishes continued to serve for 2021. During 2021 we added a churchwarden and a deputy warden to Towcester meaning we have a full complement. I am immensely grateful to those who undertake this responsibility, and those who enable the day to day running of our churches including those serving on the PCCs, some in more visible ways and others more hidden but no less vital.

Worship

The year started with another lockdown, but we were able to celebrate Easter together. As and when we could we made incremental steps in our return to in-church worship whilst continuing our weekly zoom service. I know the speed at which we moved was frustrating for some. These steps were made in order to not over stretch our ministry team.

During 2021 we have been developing a team who lead Family Worship across the benefice. This means that the same service is shared in both St Lawrence and St Bartholomew on different weekends. The service is adapted to meet the needs of a particular context, and does encourage a supportive and collaborative approach.

Outside of Sunday worship, there were so many additional elements that needed to be considered. Throughout the lockdowns of 2020 & 2021 we continued to lead funerals. As we headed towards summer 2021 we were able to offer weddings, albeit within the latest restrictions. This was really hard on couples and on the clergy as we worked within the latest guidance and sometimes had to say 'no' to some requests. One example would be two weddings which were a week apart – one we were not able to sing for, the following weekend we were. Baptisms were restricted for much of 2021, and this is having an impact on 2022 as we have had a significant number of requests already.

Remembrance Season saw us make outdoor provision because we had to have a lower capacity in churches. Although these were not required due to smaller congregations, there were a number of people who stopped and listened as the service was broadcast through loud speakers. This is something we would look at doing again.

Christmas saw rising infection rates and the risk of more restrictions or even another lockdown. Thankfully we were able to offer all the services that we had planned for December. Although numbers were about 50% down on previous years, we received a number of messages from people who were unable to attend and who thanked us for making it possible for those who wanted to and could attend. To know that worship was taking place provided people with a sense of comfort that things were slowly returning to normal (or rather a new normal).

Learning and Prayer

Throughout the year John Booth has led a Bible Study group which has continued to meet via zoom. We also offer Morning Prayer via zoom Monday to Saturday at 9am.

During Lent John, supported by Chris Hammett, lead a group focusing on Hannah Steele's book Living his Story, again via zoom. Revd Angela, supported by a number of others, lead two in-person new disciples' courses in September called Taste and See.

Towards the later part of 2021 the Wednesday afternoon Prayer Group, which meets at Greens Norton, restarted.

During Advent Revd Angela lead Reflection and Compline each evening, for which there was a consistent group who attended.

Occasional Offices

During 2021 the clergy and lay ministers officiated at 19 baptisms, 14 weddings, and 40 funerals. Compared to 2020: 7 baptisms, 2 weddings, 33 funerals; and 2019: 31 baptisms, 12 weddings, 23 funerals.

Pastoral Care

Much of this work goes unnoticed, and rightly so, but should not be unaccounted for. This should not be something that just the clergy do, but something that we all share in. The pastoral telephone tree that we set up at the beginning of 2020 was a really important connection for those who were isolated, but we shouldn't stop keeping in touch with one another. If you've stopped calling your five can I ask you to try again? See how they are getting on, and if they have not yet returned to church perhaps you could ask whether they would now feel comfortable returning to church on a regular basis. If the response is no, perhaps you could ask how we might be able to help them. During 2021 we have returned to taking services in our local residential and nursing homes. On a monthly basis we visit Leeson Court, Ridgway House, The Lakes and Duncote Hall, and from Easter 2022 we will begin visiting Brook House.

Buildings

Behind the scenes I and all PCCs have needed the support of the Diocesan Registrar in order to rectify and investigate some administration anomalies. Many of you will be aware that two sections of churchyard wall collapsed in Greens Norton. Whilst on the surface it may appear that nothing much has happened, a significant amount of my time and that of Standing Committee

members has been spent to ascertain where the ownership and responsibility to repair lies. The implications of which are significant.

All churches have now had their Quinquennial Inspections and are progressing with the actions in priority of order. Easton Neston and Bradden have nearly completed all their tasks. Towcester and Greens Norton are in the process of working through their reports to prioritise and to obtain quotes for works required.

As you will read in your Churchwardens' report, during 2021 we applied for a grant from Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF). This application and timing was in response to the General Synod setting new targets for all parts of the church to work towards becoming carbon 'net zero' by 2030. The first report from the consultants has been received early April 2022 and will be shared with PCCs and disseminated down to parishes during the year.

Finances

2021 started with significant deficit budgets in 3 out of 4 parishes - the ongoing financial impact of COVID loomed large. Thanks to some significant fundraising efforts, some received charitable giving and unexpected donations, we end the year better than we had predicted - thank you to everyone for your support.

2022 is also not going to be easy, due this time to our direct increased energy costs, and the impact of the energy and food crisis for so many across our communities.

Whilst we saw some amazing fundraising figures last year we can't expect similar amounts this year. In 2021 there were limited places for people to go and therefore we were fortunate that we tapped into this opportunity and people chose to join us. They also helped us to raise the profile of the church. This year there are far more events taking place and there are lots of other events people can do too.

The need for a constant stewardship drive is ever present, not forgetting the time and talents people already give to the running of our churches. I feel we all need to be more awakened to the yearly shortfalls that now regularly need to be bridged. We also need to be much more strategic about how we make best use of the assets we have, or not, as the business case may lead. We likewise need to educate people better about how our finances work and how we are funded.

Looking forward

As we journey into 2022, our parishes face significant challenges. We know that we are struggling across the churches for volunteers, struggling to fill legally required roles on PCCs, and in some cases are struggling to encourage congregations to return regularly to worship. Whilst we have made some steps in people moving over to bank transfer regular giving, we still face financial shortfalls. The increase in fuel costs will also have an impact on both our income (what people can afford to give) and our expenditure (rising costs impacting us).

In spite of the continuing challenges that face us, I continue to be heartened by:

- the encouraging signs of people wanting to explore what it means to be a Christian

- the continuing developments of our work with schools and families
- the improvements in communication
- the raising of the churches profile within our communities by undertaking new and responsive initiatives
- the across-benefice working within committees and PCCs
- the commitment from the ministry team to explore and discern where and to what God is calling us

Finally, I would like to say thank you to the Ministry Team, Benefice Office staff, Churchwardens and PCC members for the care and support they continue to show me. I am excited about the future and believe that God does indeed have a plan for the churches and communities of the Tove Benefice.

Treasurer's Report for the APCM 2022

1. Having started the 2021 financial year with a budget deficit of £12,000, it is with relief and gratitude to those that have supported the Church throughout the year that I am able to present final accounts showing a General Fund (Unrestricted) surplus of £1827.50.

2. This year end result has been possible without failing to achieve the PCC's priorities. The Parish Share of £63,265 was paid in full and on time; the amount held in reserve was maintained and in line with the PCC approved Policy; and all commitments paid on time.

3. The 2021 accounts are attached. A few changes have been made in the presentation of the details, hopefully making them easier to follow with notes used to provide additional explanation to key features of the accounts.

4. Although the accounts reveal a positive outcome, such a position would not have been possible without:

- The financial support from the Richard Hicks charity, donating £29161 towards the Parish Share;
- Combined Charities contributing £2900 towards the running costs of the Church;
- Highly successful fund-raising activities, which surpassed all expectations; and
- The generosity of people from the Church and local communities.

5. It is not possible to comment on the financial year without making a reference to the impact COVID has had on the activities of the Church and, therefore, the ability to raise funds. The last two years have been difficult and financially challenging.

6. And when we thought the financial strain might just be coming to an end, we find ourselves confronted by another significant financial challenge. The timing of the Church's gas contract ending could not have been worse. The previous deal terminated on 27th March, 2022, leaving us with the best quotation for continuance of supply being almost 700% higher than the previous one.

7. Two technical points I should bring to your attention are that for the first time in many years, the accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis (not accruals) and the values of assets in the balance sheet have been amended to reflect the benefit they brought at the time the gift (legacy) was made. These changes have been made for two reasons:

- To make them simpler to follow;
- and make sure we follow all accounting rules and Charities Act 2011 requirements.

8. The accounts have been reviewed in detail by the PCC's Finance Committee and, as you can see, have been subject to a review by the Independent Examiner, who found no points to raise.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST LAWRENCE TOWCESTER
Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2021

<u>Receipts and Payments Accounts</u>					
	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Designated £	TOTAL £
RECEIPTS					
Voluntary Receipts					
Planned Giving		32453.00			
Collections at Services		452.70			
All other giving/voluntary receipts	6	42307.79	5298.07		
Gift Aid Recovered		10428.50			
		85641.99			
Activities for Generating Funds	7	6995.52			
Investment Income	8	0.20		9123.12	
Church Activities	9	4139.00			
Total Receipts		96776.71	5298.07	9123.12	111197.90
PAYMENTS					
Church Activities					
Diocesan Parish Contribution		(63264.96)			
Clergy and staffing costs		(1148.25)			
Church running expenses	10	(30154.27)	(3377.85)		
Church Centre Running Costs	11			(4490.61)	
Mission giving and donations		(221.00)			
		(160.73)			
Cost of Fundraising					
Total Payments		(94949.21)	(3377.85)	(4490.61)	(102817.67)
Change on year Surplus/(Deficit)		1827.50	1920.22	4632.51	8380.23
Adjust for 2020 Accruals		7144.04			7144.04
Total movement in receipts and payments					15524.27
Cash at bank and in hand at 1 January	4	17363.94	11868.29	4394.35	33626.58
Cash at bank and in hand 31 December	4	26335.48	13788.51	9026.85	49150.84

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 December 2021

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Designated £	TOTAL £
Cash Funds					
Bank Current Accounts		25970.46	13788.51	8287.25	48046.22
Deposit Funds (CCLA/COIF)		365.02		385.98	751.00
Cash				334.36	334.36
Other				19.26	19.26
Total Cash Funds	5	26335.48	13788.51	9026.85	49150.84
Investment Assets					
Shares in Tradecraft	6	532.50			532.50
42 St Lawrence Road South	8			23000.00	23000.00
Total Investment Assets		532.50		23000.00	23532.50
Assets retained for Church Use					
The Chantry	11			60000.00	60000.00
Total Assets for Church Use					

Notes

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts and Payments basis. Previous years' financial statements have been prepared under an accruals accounting method.
2. It is the first year that a full integration of the financial statements of the Chantry Committee and the Ringers Bell Maintenance Fund has been done. Going forward, accounting for all funds will be done on a receipts and payments basis.
3. For reasons described in Notes 1. and 2. above, a meaningful comparison with earlier years cannot be drawn, hence figures for 2020 have not been included in the financial statements.

Notes

4. The movement in Restricted and Designated funds during the year were:

	Balance b/f £	Receipts £	Payments £	Balance c/f £
Restricted				
Christmas Lunch - Isolation	675.38	1000.00		1675.38
Towcester "Little Sprouts"	911.98		(199.05)	712.93
Altar Cloth	924.47	126.00	(1050.00)	0.47
Fabric Fund	8279.66	312.00	(960.00)	7631.66
Ringers Bell Maintenance	1076.80	2691.27		3768.07
Total Restricted	11868.29	4129.27	(2209.05)	13788.51
Designated				
St Lawrence	2375.16			2375.16
Chantry Committee	2019.30	12905.01	(8272.62)	6651.69
Total Designated	4394.46	12905.01	(8272.62)	9026.85

5. Details of Cash Funds are:

	31/12/2021 £	01/01/2021 £	Movement £
Lloyds Bank	38916.06	30715.77	8200.29
HSBC - Ringers Bell Maintenance	3768.07	1076.80	2691.27
HSBC - Chantry Committee	5912.09	1613.66	4298.43
Cash	334.37	14.36	320.01
CCLA (St Lawrence)	365.02	364.82	0.20
COIF (Chantry Committee)	385.98	385.86	0.12
Credit Balance - Opus (Gas)	49681.59	34171.27	15510.32
	19.26	5.31	13.95
	49700.85	34176.58	15524.27
Balance held for Wildlife Trust	(550.00)	(550.00)	0.00
Total cash at bank and in hand	49150.85	33626.58	15524.27

6. All other giving and voluntary receipts:

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £
Hicks Charity	29161.00	
Combined Charities	2900.00	
Donations	10246.79	5298.07
Total	42307.79	5298.07

7. Activities for Generating Income:		
Open gardens and Fete	2555.47	
Grand Draw	1206.00	
Concerts	462.49	
Sale of Prints and other items	527.00	
Magazine and copying	406.00	
Events	1578.35	
Other	260.21	
Total	6995.52	
8. Investment Income:		
Rental income from property	10635.00	
less costs	(1512.00)	
plus returns on deposits	0.32	(20p Unrestricted; 12p Designated)
Total	9123.32	
9. Church Activities		
Wedding Fees	2607.00	
Funeral Fees	1532.00	
Total	4139.00	
10. Church Running Expenses		
Utilities and Insurance	6586.26	
Cleaning and Maintenance	4088.74	
Cost of Upkeep	203.62	
Organist and Choir	300	
Licences	487.56	
Miscellaneous	375.48	
Office costs	24384.61	
	36426.27	
less other Parish contributions	(6272.00)	
Total	30154.27	

11. This represents the net cost, after room hire receipts are deducted, of the Chantry. The Chantry was bequeathed in a Will dated December 1982. The Will left a house, the Chantry and a sum of money. In 1985 proposals were agreed to convert the house into a centre for the Church to accommodate the office and a community meeting place. The funds were used to purchase a house, initially for a Curate; the house is now used as an investment property with the surplus of rentals accounted for as Designated Funds: "only for the purpose decided by the PCC". Both assets are shown in the balance sheet at the best estimate value at the time the gift (bequest) was made. Both fixed assets are retained for Church use.



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

**The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
St Lawrence, Towcester**

On accounts for the year
ended

31st December 2021

Charity no
(if any)

1130077

Set out on pages

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention ~~(other than that disclosed below *)~~

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

24/1/22

Name:

Brian W J Manning

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body**

**Inst. of Bankers (AIB)
Retired Bank Director**

Address:

32 Benham Rd, Greens Norton, Towcester, Northants, NN12 8DB



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of
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ended

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Signed:

Date:

24/1/22

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Brian W J Manning

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body

Inst. of Bankers (AIB)
Retired Bank Director

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32 Benham Rd, Greens Norton, Towcester, Northants, NN12 8DB