



**Annual Report and Financial Statements of the
Parochial Church Council**

for the Year ended 31 December 2024

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council

The trustees of the Parochial Church Council of St Nicholas', Marston (the members of the PCC) present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Incumbent

The Revd Elizabeth (Skye) Denno

Charitable Status

All Parochial Church Councils in the Church of England are recognized as charities by the Charity Commission; PCCs such as ours, with a gross income over £100,000, are required to register with the Commission. The members of the PCC are the trustees of the charity.

Registered Charity Number 1138507

Legal Name of the Charity

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Nicholas Marston

Working Names of the Charity St Nicholas' PCC
PCC (of) St Nicholas, Marston

Address of the Charity

The Vicarage, Elsfield Road, Marston Oxford OX3 0PR

Independent Examiner

Mr Gerald Prickett, 6 Elsfield Road, Oxford OX3 0PR

Bankers

The Cooperative Bank, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester.

Officers

Incumbent (Vicar)	Revd Skye Denno
Associate Priest	Revd Andy Gosler
Permission to Officiate (PTO)	Revd Stephanie Bullock
Licensed Lay Ministers	David Cranston
	Joel Denno
	Neil Barker
Churchwardens	Judith Piggott
	Jan Lawrie
PCC Chair	Skye Denno
PCC Secretary	Debbie Bailey
PCC Treasurer	Eileen Palayiwa

Representatives on Cowley Deanery Synod

Skye Denno
Isabel Fenton
Millius Palayiwa

The clergy are members of Deanery Synod *ex officio*; the other members are elected to serve until April 2025.

Members of the PCC

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules, members of the PCC are either elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, are co-opted by the PCC, or are members of the PCC *ex officio*.

The following served as members of the PCC during the calendar year 2024:

Helen Barker (to April 24)	Duncan Hatfield	Emily Meredith
Ginny Ross (from April 24)	Tessa Hennessy	Eileen Palayiwa
Maureen Davis	Jan Lawrie	Millius Palayiwa
Skye Denno	Judith Piggott	Isabel Fenton
James Lawrie	Ian Ross	Jackie Whittaker

Elected PCC members serve for three-year terms. The current terms of office of the elected PCC members are as follows:

Serving until 2025	Serving until 2026	Serving until 2027
Eileen Palayiwa	Maureen Davis	Duncan Hatfield
Ian Ross	Tessa Hennessy	Emily Meredith
	Jackie Whittaker	Ginny Ross
		James Lawrie

Objectives and Governance

The parish of St Nicholas, Marston, is one of the parishes in the Deanery of Cowley, within the Diocese of Oxford. It shares a joint benefice with the separate parish of St Thomas of Canterbury, Elsfield.

The Parochial Church Council ('the PCC') is governed by the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure (1956) as amended, and by the current version (2011) of the Church Representation Rules. Its responsibilities include that of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical.

The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our parish community at St Nicholas'. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament.

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

Worship and prayer; learning about the Gospel; and developing knowledge of and trust in Jesus Christ.

Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.

Missionary activity and outreach work.

Facilitating this work depends on the voluntary work of many people, and the PCC very much appreciates their service to the church and to the local community. The incumbent receives a stipend paid by the Diocese. No other trustees are paid for their services.

A connected charity is Marston Church Properties Ltd ('MCP'), which is both a registered charity, no. 1085739, and a company limited by guarantee. Three of the five directors of MCP are members of the PCC, and the vicar is the chair of the company by virtue of her incumbency.

Vicar's Report

Philippians 4:v4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Dear Friends, I write this report with a grateful heart and one that rejoices in God. As I look back over 2024, I can see all that is good and that has been done to ensure we remain steadfast in faith and committed to serving our community. Our theme, if you remember for past year was patience, recognising that we as a church have a tendency to rush along, creating new services and projects which is exciting and keeps us on our toes but also means we don't always give time to hear God, or even our own needs creating a feeling of being a bit overstretched with resources and time. I felt we need to give to patience - which at times wasn't easy.

The year started with us saying goodbye to two couples who had been attending St Nicholas for many years and who served in a variety of roles. Both couples moved away from Oxford and we sent them out with prayer and cake, it's been wonderful to hear their good news. St Nicholas is a diverse, friendly church family and we give time to rejoice with all that is good, hearing exciting news of the birth of a grandchild and celebrating reaching a new milestone, a big birthday or reaching retirement! But we also try to share the pain of illness and loss together, this year we have celebrated the lives of Jenny Wren, Ernie Merritt, Philip Hosier, Jan Sanders, Lucy Moss, Ann Bailey, Bruce Wells, Bernard Masterman and Ian Fergusson all known to the church, but there were others known in the wider Community, may they rest in peace and rise in Glory!

I am so grateful for the gift of each person and the different abilities, insights and wisdom you all bring. We need each other, to know when we must step back and rest, but also to know and be nudged when we can step forward. I must now move on to saying a big thank you to everyone involved in the life and ministry of St Nicholas'. There are as many 'back stage' roles as well as those public facing ministries and it is good and right to acknowledge this. Underpinning our acts of service is the hope that lives can and are changed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Rather like the small boy who offered his small packed lunch of bread and fish to Jesus and his disciples and fed 5,000 people, we have hope that Jesus takes our acts of service blesses them and shares them in building up the Kingdom of God in this place.

It's hard to know where to begin with thanks but I will begin with our churchwardens, Jan Lawrie and Judith Piggott who together care for the fabric of this beautiful building, making sure she is still standing and that our worship services run smoothly. I am also grateful for their care and support of me, making sure I keep standing! Our PCC does sterling work, committing to meetings and many taking on further roles, Eileen Palayiwa in 2024 took on the Treasurer role after Geoff left. Along with her Treasurer roles she is also our Pastoral care Officer. Eileen will continue as Treasurer until the end of 2025 when Jane Burd will take over the role, thank you to you both. Jane has been acting as co-treasurer. Pastoral care is a very important aspect of ministry and church life. I am so thankful we have a Prayer & Care network - thank you to all the leaders and, with Eileen, overseeing this with me.

Thanks, must also go to Neil Barker our director of music and John Collier our assistant organist. Our altogethor service, every first Sunday of the month, has the biggest attendance and is led by Neil with a worship band, thanks to all our musicians as well as our choir members. Music has always been an important part of worship at St Nicholas and will continue to be into the coming year. Do consider joining the choir or music team, new members are always welcome! Thinking of music and worship I want to say thank you to our bell ringers who remind the community when services are happening and ring-in the presence of God! Other roles behind the scenes to give thanks too are our wonderful flower arrangers, cleaner who make sure this space is tidy and the many folk who run and help services and events during the week, coffee pot, Lunch club, toddlers Group, Pulse. Our annual report will have reports from all our community groups. Debbie Bailey has continued to be our parish administrator, ensuring the church hall is booked and managing the phones and visitors with care and a listening ear.

It is a joy to serve the Benefice, especially working alongside a great ministry team, thank you Andy Gosler and Stephanie Bullock as fellow priests, Joel Denno, Neil Barker and David Cranston our LLM's. Helen Norman our Family and Children Minister who has developed our links with our local schools starting an after-school mindfulness club. Colin Harris is our Sacristan and is often on duty most Sundays. At present we only have Colin and Adam serving as Sacristan. If anyone would like to be a server, please speak to me or Colin, training can be given. Millius Palayiwa has been the parish Safe-guarding lead for many years - since the role started! Over the last few years, he has taken on roles to support not only the deanery but also Oxford Dioceses as a whole. From our APCM this year in 2025 he will be stepping down and I am very grateful for his many years of service. Millius is willing to give a hand-over to next person called or encourage to take on this vital role within the Benefice. Please speak to him or me if you are interested. Other offers of thanks are to those who lead our alternative worship services; Green Church, Messy church and Celtic Services. Our worship pattern has been more stable for folk to remember with a 10am service every week, Green church has begun again with the next Green Church service being Mothering Sunday.

Every week we see new faces arrive at morning worship, some of whom it will be the first time coming to a place of worship, for many of us regular now means once a month this of course brings challenges to smaller church like ours. It is harder to find people who are willing or able to commit to even being on a rota just once a month. Judith and I are wondering if job sharing is more possible, sharing with another two people so you only have to be on a rota once every two months. I am finding the 'bread and butter' roles on Sunday morning at 10am very hard to fulfil. I am grateful for the those who do led our prayers, read Bible readings, server for communion and give welcome at the door as folk arrive, but if we need more help to ensure our worship service at 10am continues. Please pray and speak to me or Judith if you can help or have ideas as to how we can move forward.

Along with Patience - prayer has been at the heart of everything we do and surrounding not just our services and acts of worship but our groups and events too. It would be good to have a group of praying people willing to meet with me during the week for morning or evening prayer.

Looking ahead I am being drawn to the verse in Romans 12:12 *Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer*. There have been many green shoots in 2024 with new people joining St Nicholas which brings me much rejoicing but there are also challenges within our wider world and within the Church of England which I believe brings a level of fear and anxiety into our community. Given time to voice these concerns is important but also creating spaces to pray with intention for real change and knowing where we need to focus our energy and time. We need to pray for wisdom as we nurture these green shoots; patience is still required as we wait to see what emerges from all our engagement with families and children over the years: this will take time. New green shoots can be fragile: they are easy not to recognise and easy to step on. We are a church that likes our one-off events and services, but sometimes struggles to sit with the regular, mundane, every-Sunday stuff. Can we do the one-off big things without the regular Sunday worship? What makes us church and why is that important to us?

A few questions for us to ponder in 2025. Certainly, we can all agree it is never quiet here in Old Marston and we have much to rejoice and pray for! Blessing and thanks, Skye. *Skye Denno*

Deanery Synod Report

The synod met four times during the year, three in-person and one on Zoom. There was no joint meeting with the Oxford Deanery synod in 2024. Discussion have mainly been about future **financial** challenges facing the deanery. Synod spent a great deal of time discussion the revision of the Deanery synod formula for parish shares. A small group of people has met 3 times to look at the formula and to suggest improvements. This is on-going work and it is hope that it will be completed during 2025. When that stage is reached, a report with recommendations will be presented to synod for discussion and approval.

Discipleship, Together, Children, Youth and Family work has been on the agenda and discussed at all meetings. A group of those working with, Youth and Family, Children and Families and Schools was formed and has met on at least 3 occasions. Its purpose was to map what was already happening, consider our strengths and look at possible next steps that we could take to strengthen what is already happening in parishes. This is a major mission emphasis for both the Diocese and Deanery.

A major project in the Deanery has been the "Seeds of Hope Cowley South" (SHOCS). This is a bid by five parishes of Blackbird Leys, Cowley, Iffley, Littlemore and Sandford -on-Thames to shift their local mission for CYP ministry by developing a collaborative strategy. This has now been submitted as part of a bigger Diocesan bid for CYP work. This work will only go ahead if the Diocesan bid is successful. A decision will be made in March 2025.

Discussions on **Living in Love & Faith** (LLF) continue as they do at national level.

People There were a number of changes during the year. **Revd Martha Weatherill** was licensed at St Mary & St John in September. **Revd Paul Niemiec** was licensed to All Saints Headington in July. **Revd Clare Hayns** is now at Iffley church.

There are vacancies at Headington, St Andrews and at Holy Trinity, Quarry, Headington and Blackbird Leys.

The long-standing Deanery Lay chair, **Dr Tony Phelan** stepped down towards the end of the year and **Millius Palayiwa** was elected to replace him.

St Nicholas Church's representatives on the Deanery Synod are Millius Palayiwa (who is also Lay Chair and, on the Deanery, Standing Committee) and Isabel Fenton (who is also the Deanery Synod Minute Secretary).

Statistics The Deanery consists of 14 parishes, with 12 clergy serving a population of 104,650. *Millius Palayiwa*

Diocesan Synod Report

Diocesan synod meetings have continued to be online, with one in-person meeting during the year. Towards the end of the year, the Diocesan synod met in very sombre moods following the release of the **Makin Review** that led to the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This has shocked the church of England, and the repercussions will be long term and at present unknown.

Children & Young People are the major priority for the diocese and a great deal of time and effort is being put into developing that.

Discussions about Living in Love and Faith have continued. Environment and climate concerns are always on the agenda, as reports on mission, children and family work and schools and education. Reports from General Synod are received at one of the meetings.

The Diocese has a UKME Oversight Group (United Kingdom Minority Ethnic) that was set up following the Archbishops' Reports: **From Lament to Action** and the **Commission on Racial Equality** has been wound up in the light of the formation of a new **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee!** Millius was on the UKME group and will be on the new committee when it is formed in March 2025.

Statistics. The Diocese serves 2.5 million people. There are 808 churches with 54,600 worshippers, 60,000 children, 284 church schools, 180+ youth, children and families' workers, 1,200 clergy and 110 LLMs. *Millius Palayiwa*

Elsfield

2024 allowed us, as a PCC and as a village, to continue reinforcing the values of community both socially and spiritually.

It was with great joy that we welcomed our newest member of the village, a baby girl born on the 22nd December who. Since then, she has been a regular attendee at Sunday services and Friday morning prayers, albeit wrapped up and carried in a sling.

Whilst we typically hold only one service each month, we continue to celebrate an array of formats to suit everyone – matins, common worship, holy communion, evensong (including our popular Hymns and Pimm's in June) and celebrations at Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and Christmas. In addition, our evening compline services, held every Thursday during Lent, provide a welcome period for quiet contemplation, reflection and prayer.

We particularly enjoyed hosting 36 friends from Elsfield and Marston to our Maundy Thursday fish 'n' chip supper with informal communion. This has always been a joyous occasion with plenty of conversations as well as songs and poems.

Our village community calendar includes the inter-village wine tasting competition on the first Saturday in February, bring-and-share Harvest supper, the Christmas fair and carols around the Christmas tree.

Whilst we are a small village, we bring people together when we can in the hope that, over time, we will build a stronger, supportive and more committed community. *James Plunkett*

Committees and Working Groups

The PCC operates with committees and working groups, which meet and report to it as appropriate. Participation in these groups is open to all church members.

Standing Committee

Elected annually, this comprises the Vicar, churchwardens, treasurer and such other members as the PCC agrees. It exists to conduct essential business between full meetings of the PCC.

Pastoral Care - Prayer and Support Network

Our prayer and care groups help to ensure that all those who wish to, stay connected with the church. There are nine groups and the leaders keep in contact with their members in whatever way each member would prefer. Group members know that they have a point of contact should they need anything and leaders will try to give them information on sources of help. Leaders will inform Skye if anyone would like her to visit. All group members are encouraged to pray for each other. *Eileen Palayiwa*

Communications

A year since my last report on the Marston Times and I'm pleased to record that the format continues to satisfy our readership.

We include a mix of regular features (What to Quote, Nature Notes and What to Cook), headed by a front-page piece, usually but not always written by Skye. St Nicholas' own timetable of services, with extra information about particular events, particularly at Christmas and Easter, receive a wide audience. Practical, month by month reminders about meetings (Coffee Pot, Lunch Club, the WI) also appear.

Roy Peach and Tim Cann send me a report on bell ringing and parish council meetings with almost no nagging! Even the back page listings are consulted by the readership.

I believe printing a quarterly, 8-page edition works well, though in these days of instant digital information some suppliers of copy need to understand that the December edition has to go to print by the third week in November.

Finally, a shout-out to Colin Harris and his loyal band of deliverers: he is always look for new volunteers. *Jan Lawrie*

Website

The website has a new look to make it easier to navigate. In addition, there is now an accessibility feature to make it easier for visitors to find the information that they are looking for. It is the place to find the latest news and events, pictures, church history, information about everything we do and about us.

The church hall and St Thomas Church are represented on the website. Some people have come to St Nicholas because of the website. You can download service programmes, the Marston Times and flyers for events.

Our Facebook page has over 2500 followers with the numbers increasing. The page is regularly updated and has information about all events and activities and links to specific items on website. I regularly post a picture from our archives which is very popular.

If you have any news, pictures, history, information related to St Nicholas Church then please do send it to me. If you have any thoughts on our website or Facebook page then please let me know. Likewise, if any information is incorrect, out of date or just needs amending then please do let me know. *Duncan Hatfield*

Churches Together

St Nicholas is a member of Churches Together in Marston and Northway (CTMN). Our representatives during 2024 were Skye Denno, Maureen Davis, Neil Barker and Helen Meredith. Joint events run by CTMN include a monthly dementia-friendly service 'This is the day', ecumenical 'Thursday together fellowship' and Advent and Lent study groups. Some of the member churches are struggling to be as involved as in the past and Rivers of Life Church have terminated their membership. St Nicholas hosted the joint 2024 World Day of Prayer service, which was organised by Maureen Davis and was very well attended. Preparations are underway for the 2025 'Love Marston, Love Life' event which will be held at Mortimer Hall Park on Sunday 21st June. *Helen Meredith*

Review of the Year

Church attendance

The completely new electoral roll will be presented at the APCM. Last year the roll presented at the annual meeting in April 2024 contained 114 names of which 45 were non-resident.

Attendance at Sunday services during October 2024 was as follows:

	In church	Online views
October 6th	129	34
October 13th	63	No online
October 20th	78	No online
October 27th	86	No online
Average	89	34

The equipment for online viewing was not working for most of October.

Comparison with Sunday Services in October 2023

	In church	Online views
October 1st	22	33
October 8th	105	20
October 15th	17	No online
October 22nd	58	20
October 29th	112	No online
Average	63	24

Statistics for occasional offices: baptisms, weddings, and funerals

Baptisms.	There were 0 baptisms (2023:5)
Confirmations.	There were 0 confirmations (2023:6)
Weddings.	There was 1 wedding. (2023:3)
Funerals.	The clergy conducted 18 funeral services. (2023:12)

Ministry Team

The team is led by Revd Skye Denno and assisted by Revd Stephanie Bullock (PTO) and Revd Andy Gosler (Associate Priest).

Preaching was shared with licensed lay ministers David Cranston, Joel Denno, Neil Barker. Neil Barker continued to serve as Director of Music, Organist and Choir Master and to lead our informal cafe services.

Debbie Bailey continues as Parish Administrator.

Helen Norman continues as Children and Family Minister.

Music

We have had another good year of musicmaking. We have been able to consolidate our Junior Choir with more young singers joining. Our choirs have continued to sing at a number of RSCM (Royal School of Church Music) events organised by Helen Meredith.

I have also particularly appreciated this year the support of Sophie and Adam Meredith with the training up and support of the Junior Choir. Also, Jane Burd's musical support with the SATB Choir, particularly at our Music for a Summer Evening concert.

A more recent highlight for our SATB Choir and friends was to sing at the Nine Lessons & Carols Christmas service which was well attended and appreciated.

Once again, we were grateful for the support of Old Marston Parish Council with a grant of £300 towards musical support and resources for our Junior Choir.

Neil Barker

Children and Family Minister

The year in St Nicholas as Children and Family Minister in May 2023 seems to have passed in a flash and connections have been established across groups and in the wider community. I find myself recognised across the parish and for some children am introduced to their parents as the lady who comes with 'Open the book', for others as a friendly face at toddlers, one of the fun days helpers or as someone who visits St Nicholas school weekly to lead a mindfulness group. A leader at holiday club or as someone they saw at the front of church during a carol concert or crib service.

Connections continue to grow in the wider community as with Skye and a team from scouts helped, we led the annual scout service on standing up to peer pressure and be firm in what you believe using a story from the book of Daniel in which a collection was also made to children in need which was attended by more than 60 young people and families. Later in November I led an act of

remembrance for the various scouting groups in Marston where poppies were laid at the war memorial in the church yard.

Ginny and I have attended training for 'Open the book' (in person and online) with the bible society and have greatly enjoyed bringing the bible to life with Skye, Sam, Ginny and Joel at St Nicholas school. We have had a yearly timetable for this and visit every half term plus Christmas and Easter, where we and a group of children dress up and re tell a bible story linked to the school value of the half term which includes four Makaton signs. The children greatly enjoy getting involved and this year we now include a start and end song as well as the chance for prayer and reflection led by a member of the clergy.

In February I attended a retreat with the Diocese in Cuddesdon which allowed me time to consider my role and purpose within the parish as well as share ideas on vision with likeminded individuals. This also enabled me to make links with other parishes within Oxford Diocese. Pulse has already enjoyed a visit from a fellow youth and children's minister from Witney, to talk about the diocesan youth camp 'Amplify' in July, which the diocese says is an 'an opportunity to find adventure and deepen faith through worship, small groups and fellowship, along with lots of activities and food, to have a voice and ... grow together in faith and discipleship'. More than six young people are interested in going which is great as only one member of Pulse attended last year.

Connections with Montessori Forest School in Elsfield have continued with visits to the school in the summer term sharing a craft and bible story using costumes and dramatic retelling followed by a discussion or craft. I was fortunate to represent the church and welcome the audience at the Montessori school Christmas show which was attended by many students and families. In the Autumn I attended the Harvest supper and helped lead the Harvest Festival service at Elsfield with Andy where members of the congregation and children took part in the intercessions.

Since September 2024 Marget Harding and I have led a weekly mindfulness club at St Nicholas Primary school with children aged 4-11. This is based on the diocesan scheme 'Space makers' which is based on Ignatius spirituality looking at noticing, reflecting, blessing, dwelling and flourishing. There is a weekly mediation, getting to know your games, encouragement 'to be' during the week as well as a sensory craft which includes smelly playdough, slime, eating different foods, listening to birdsong, creating emotion faces from natural materials, a calming jar as well as painting drawing, stone decorating, modelling with clay, printing and eating pizza. *Helen Norman*

Mission in the Parish

Messy Church

Messy Church continues to meet monthly in the church hall. We have a regular group of families (some with 3 generations) who come along plus many others who visit occasionally. We have shared excellent breakfasts, lots of interesting crafts, bible stories, songs (and dances) and stories from our church family. We love it when the congregation in the church comes across to join us for coffee, at the end of their service. It is a joy to share these times together.

Jane Burd

Baby and Toddler Group

Baby and toddler groups continues to have steady numbers of parents, carers and grandparents attend. We have lost some members as their children have started school or begun to attend a nursery and pre-school but have enjoyed new members including newborn babies, first time mums as well as welcoming back childminders or parents with second or third siblings.

Felicity continues to lead the circle time and singing sessions and has brought her guitar for Christmas carols as well as encouraging us to sing some nursery rhymes in rounds or harmonies! Joel North stepped back from helping in the summer and a couple of grandparents, Wendy and Phil and Heather have stepped in to help set up in the morning as well as tidy and clean up at the end of sessions.

Each week is themed with a relevant craft and sometimes songs and Margaret Harding brings her excellent playdough and expertise in craft activities which are displayed on the board in the church hall. In the summer the toddler group ran a session out of the Mortimer recreation ground, at Christmas we had a Christmas party attended by a real-life St Nicholas bringing gifts and Christmas stories and at Easter we will have an Easter party with Easter crafts and Easter stories.

In the notices section of the singing session, families are invited to Messy Church, family services, carol concerts as well as green church and holiday club, all of which have seen members of the toddler group attend. A lent soup lunch was run in March 2024 and will be run next week, thank you to the soup makers!

Helen Norman

Energy - Junior Church

Junior Church was relaunched during advent 2023 on the second and fourth Sundays of the month and we currently average 4-6 children. The children gather at the beginning of the service to collect candles and the children's bible, to be sent to their activity in the vestry via a prayer said with the congregation. Activities are linked to the lectionary and the children return to the service at the peace and will sometimes share their craft with the congregation at the end of the service. We are still struggling to have consistent or regular attendance at this, but numbers have been boosted by our curate Sam and Kirsty three children. Many thanks go to Harvey, Helen Barker and Margaret who make this happen each week.

During the first Sunday of the month a children's activity is linked to the service at the children's area at a table at the back of church near the font or at the front, where children's books and toys can also be found. During the first Sunday of the month children and young people are also often involved in the intercessions as well as more recently helping serve as acolytes or bringing the elements to the altar. *Helen Norman*

Fun days

We have had extremely busy fun days both last March in the Spring and in the Autumn, both supported by large grants. Each day was attended by well over two hundred people which included large numbers of children and young people and their families. The scouts and local playgroup helped and ran activities, and we included story time and Easter egg hunts in the church and church yard. The atmosphere at these events was really good, with a great sense of community. Fun crafts which were a mixture of secular and religious, eco activities such as spring or autumn bulb planting and pumpkin carving, face painting and games. For many people they entered the church for the first time for singing and stories as well as enjoying the hospitality of excellent food and drinks at the café and many commented on the community atmosphere. These days could not have been run without the generosity of numerous volunteers in baking, serving, leading crafts and games or preparing and tidying away the hall.

Helen Norman

Holiday Club

In the summer 2024 a one-day holiday club was run entitled 'God and Science' and was attended by 22 children. This was a fun packed day that included worship in the church, games in a garden, craft, art, science experiments, pizza lunch, cardboard box bridge making lots of healthy snacks and talks. This was much enjoyed by volunteers and children and many parents asked for another one to be run soon or 'more days next time'.

A day like this involves considerable planning and effort as well as resources and we benefitted from volunteers from other churches and teens from Pulse helping. It is hoped that summer 2025 will see a return of Holiday Club which has perhaps less content and intensity but still lots of fun and allowing young people to discover more about God. *Helen Norman*

Coffee Pot

Coffee Pot has continued to be popular with 30-40 people attending most months. We provide hot drinks and savoury and sweet refreshments. Each month we have a short "Thought for the day" which is given by a member of the team. Coffee Pot provides an opportunity for people who might otherwise be isolated to meet and make friends. We like to welcome newcomers.

Unfortunately, there are some people who are unable to attend but can't because of disability and /or lack of transport so we are always glad of offers to help with this. We now have a wheelchair available which can be used to help transport people from cars into the hall.

We have an excellent team of helpers who provide the refreshments and try to ensure that everyone feels welcome. There is always a very happy atmosphere in the hall! *Eileen Palayiwa*

Lunch Club

Lunch Club, which meets on the last Friday of each month, has again thrived this year with growing numbers. Most months the numbers exceed 45 people present. The feedback from attendees has been very positive.

As we cannot hold a Lunch Club in December (as it would fall between Christmas and New Year), we had once more a New Year meal at the Victoria Arms (on 2nd January 2025). This is sponsored by Victoria Arms and OMTC but organised by St Nicholas. This year 55 people were present. *Judith Piggott*

Pulse Youth Group

Every second and fourth Saturday in the church hall we run a youth group for young people 11+. We have been 12 and 20 young people attending each week. We have a 15 minute 'God Slot' at the beginning of each session where we discuss and read a bible passage related to the Christian season or Sunday readings and have run 'Prayer and pizza' extra sessions during lent and advent as well as shared meals and BBQ's. Our sessions always include fizzy drinks, crisps and sweets as well as a food of the week which might be popcorn, toast, toasties, chocolate fountain or S'mores.

Each week is themed and have included, games, baking and cooking, a film night, a talk from a visiting speaker, ice and snow, cookies or art. A firm favourite is a walking meal where we wander the parish and visit prearranged homes for each course of a meal as well as a summer walk. This year we walked to St Thomas, Elsfield and had a fish and chip supper before walking back to St Nicholas.

Joel Denno, Brian North and Helen Norman run the group at present with Skye Denno and Luke Norman. Youth group is a fun couple of hours each month and we would love more volunteers to help run sessions or suggest ideas or host the walking meal. *Helen Norman*

Mission in the World

Divya Shanthi Mission Support

DSMS continued to support the work of Divya Shanthi Christian Association and Trust in Bangalore, India until February 2024. In early March 2024 the trustees of DSMS were informed that Divya Shanthi had been refused permission to extend their FCRA account by the Indian Government. The FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) account is the only permitted route for receiving overseas donations.

We were also informed that that the last two payments made by DSMS (totalling £32,000) were frozen in Divya Shanthi's FCRA account and that the process of getting these funds released would be a lengthy one.

The trustees filed a report with the Charity Commission to tell them about the situation and asked donors not to send any further donations to DSMS.

Despite efforts to get the funds released, the money remains frozen at the time of writing, though some interest has been paid to Divya Shanthi. We await further updates from Divya Shanthi and remain hopeful that the Indian government will release the money to Divya Shanthi.

In the meantime, DSMS remains dormant and unable to accept donations. Our church continues to support the work of Divya Shanthi in prayer.

Tessa Hennessy

Church Mission Society

We continue to support Andy and Kati Walsh in Brazil. They visited us while on furlough in June and we had a live video link up in church with them in November. They continue to develop their prison ministry work and also to support the ministry of a local church. Updates have also been made available in Church. *Neil Barker*

Church Fabric

As reported in the 2023 Annual Report, the Faculty granted for the removal of certain pews and carpet was extended to April 2025 while we considered whether we purchase the chairs for the area around the font. A decision had not been made by end December 2024 but will be taken to the January 2025 PCC with a recommendation to buy 10 chairs.

We are still monitoring the heating, trying to find the right balance of warmth against costs.

During this year we have had a number of acts of vandalism in the church and were forced to lock the church outside service times. This led to a decision to install CCTV inside and outside the church. Quotes were received and a List B application was submitted to the Archdeacon in December 2024.

Judith Piggott and Jan Lawrie

Safeguarding

No safeguarding issues or concerns have been reported during the year. We are up to date with our DBS checks for all those who needed to be checked. At my last count, 25 enhanced, and 1 ordinary DBS certificates had been issued. We held a well-attended “Re-fresher-Training” in September. There was positive feedback on that.

The major issue towards the end of the year was the release of the **Makin Review**. The result is that it has created more than double the amount of work

for the Safeguarding Team at Church House and for Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO). The Safeguarding Team has seen a huge increase in enquiries from clergy, parishioners and ordinary members of the public worried as to whether there is something they should have reported etc! It has created a tremendous amount of work, worry and fear. A few PSOs have resigned as a result. No numbers have been given yet.

The mood amongst PSOs is that of anger, disbelief, feelings of betrayal and annoyance at the undoing and destruction of the good work they had been doing in the parishes. The feeling is that there is **excellent work being done at parish level** and that the Review has shown that **we have been let down at the top!**

The **Review** together with the Prof Jay Report, has thrown up a great deal of confusion as to the future direction of Safeguarding work in the church. The recommendation that Safeguarding should be independent from the church is still to be debated at General Synod level.

We have kept abreast with, as much as we could, with safeguarding issues. A main and emerging concern diocesan wide, has been the rise of “financial scam” targeting the elderly and vulnerable. This seems to be a growing phenomenon.

Millius continued to be on the Diocesan PSO Working Group that advises on PSO guidelines and working.

More and more work and materials seem to be coming up all the time with the introduction of using “dashboards” etc!

People The Safeguarding Team at church house consists of 7 people. **Erica Hegg** who was our Area Safeguarding Adviser is now responsible for Dorchester and was replaced in September by **Sophie Harrold** (who happens to have some connection with St Nicholas, having been christened here and both her grandparents buried in the church yard.)

Millius has established a good working relationship with all the Area Advisers and the Head of Safeguarding. *Millius Palayiwa*

Financial Report

Receipts

At the beginning of the year we expected a very large drop in planned giving but in fact this drop was only 3.5%. This was due to a very good response to our "Giving Sunday in May". A number of people increased their regular giving and we have also gained new regular givers. We encouraged people to change over to the Parish Giving Scheme which reduces the administrative burden on the treasurer and also gives the (optional) opportunity to also increase donations in line with inflation each year. In December 2024, approximately 75% of our regular giving came through the Parish Giving Scheme and approximately 50% of the givers have opted in to inflationary increases.

We also had a number of one-off donations amounting to £8,700. Grant income increased due to a donation from the Workmen's Hall Trust when it ceased operation and additional grants from Old Marston Parish Council.

Overall there was a 14% increase in income.

Payments

The Parish share fell by 3.5% but other charitable donations rose by 16%, partly due to special collections.

Running costs increased by almost 50%. However the cross charge to Marston Church Properties for cleaning and administrative services was not made until Jan 2025. If this had been done in year the increase would have been 25% and this was largely due to increased utility costs and the costs of gardening.

Ministry and Mission costs rose as the Children and Families Minister was in post for the whole year.

Investments.

The value of our CBF investments rose by £1994 due to increases in the stock market in 2024.

Looking Ahead

At the end of 2024 we had a surplus of over £9000 of income over expenditure which was very pleasing when we had expected a significant deficit. Many thanks are due to all our supporters.

Although the surplus means that we start the year on a firm basis, we need to be aware that much of the income in 2024 will not be repeated in 2025 so we need to keep up our fund-raising efforts if we are to continue to be active in all the current areas.

We hope that we may have a curate in 2025 and if so, will have to contribute to housing costs. We therefore project that in 2025 we will have a deficit of expenditure over income. *Eileen Palayiwa*

Independent Examiner's Report

I report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended December 31, 2024, which are set out in the following 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(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as 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 next statement.

Independent Examiners Statement

Examiner's unqualified report for a non-company charity preparing receipts and payments accounts with a gross income of £250,000 or less in the financial year

I report in respect of my examination of the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2024, which are set out in the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the St Nicholas, Old Marston PCC. I have carried it out under section 145 of the 2011 Charities Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

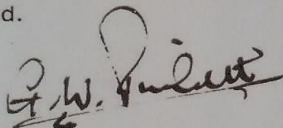
Independent examiner's statement:

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act;
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Name: Gerald Prickett
C Eng MICE

Address: 6, Elsfield Road, Old Marston, Oxford OX3 0PR

Date: 4th March 2025

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON						
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024						
Receipts & Payments						
2023	RECEIPTS	Note	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Designated funds	Total
£			£	£	£	£
	Voluntary Receipts					
62,347	Planned giving*		58,968	1,175	0	60,143
12,968	Reclaimed from HMRC	3	17,677			17,677
1,727	Loose cash collections		3,671			3,671.00
7,029	Donations		12,880	120		13,000.00
1,000	Legacy		1,000			1,000.00
105	Sunday morning coffee		161			161
499	Wall safe		382			382
0	Junior Church					
81	Sundries		8			8
10,329	Grants	4	8,528	8,700	750	17,977
	Events		964	112		1,076
96,084			104,239	9,582	750	115,095
	Other Receipts					
7,258	Fees (net)	5	8,298			8,298
3,311	Interest & investment income		3,311			3,311
9,396	Rent			9,912		9,912
959	Marston Times	6		890	117	1,007
(11)	Lunch Club(nett)	7	152	(24)		128
20,913			11,761	10,778	117	22,656
116,997	Total receipts before transfers		116,000	20,360	867	137,751
0	Transfers (nett)		0		0	0
116,997	Total receipts after transfers		116,000	20,360	867	137,751
The Notes are an integral part of these financial statements.						
*	Includes Parish Giving 22,644					

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON						
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024						
Receipts & Payments (continued)						
2023	PAYMENTS	Note	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Designated funds	Total
£			£	£	£	£
	Payments outside the Parish					
53,396	Parish share		51,482			51,482
6,721	Other charitable donations	8	5,906		1,908	7,813
60,117			57,388	0	1,908	59,295
	Church running expenses					
6,065	Utilities		11,999			11,999
3,490	Insurance		3,727			3,727
2,926	Maintenance		2,355	1,308		3,663
1,671	Cleaning (net)	9	4,440			4,440
1,301	Cost of services		1,623			1,623
221	Messy Church		114	84		198
4,269	Organists		4,381			4,381
308	Choir (including Junior Choir)					0
3,450	Gardening			4,650		4,650
23,702			28,639	6,042	0	34,681
	Ministry in the Parish					
2,597	Clergy expenses		1,381			1,381
82	Junior Church					0
661	Youth Work		340			340
696	Eco Hub			53		53
2,184	Mission within the Parish	10	1,427	380		1,807
11,062	Family Minister			16,042		16,042
17,282			3,148	16,475	0	19,623
	Fabric					
0	Memorial Garden			0		0
882	Equipment			2,241		2,241
0	Rewiring project					0
0	Quinquennial repairs					0
0	Inspection			250		250
35,898	Church flooring and seating					0
36,780			0	2,491	0	2,491
	Other Expenditure					
6,433	Administration	11	9,684			9,684
46	Bank charges				0	0
1,688	Marston Times	6	1,017			1,017
967	Maintenance of 1B Mill Lane				967	967
500	Flowers		79			79
9,633			10,780	0	967	11,747
147,515	Total payments before transfers		99,955	25,008	2,875	127,837
0	Transfers (nett)		0		0	0
147,515	Total payments after transfers		99,955	25,008	2,875	127,837
-30,469	Surplus / Deficit		16,045	(4,648)	(2,008)	9,389
131,743	Balance b/f at January 1		44,143	45,008	42,591	131,743
9,715	Change in value of investments				9,715	9,715
110,989	Balance c/f at December 31		60,188	40,360	50,299	150,847

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON							
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024							
Summary of Funds							
Fund	Fund type	31 Dec 20	Net Receipts	Net Payments	Uncleared payments	Change in investments	31 Dec 20
General	Unrestricted	45,164	126190.86	112,758			58,597
Flowers	Restricted	1	337.00	79			259
Choir	Restricted	(0)	350.00	204			146
Choir Treats	Restricted	30	0.00	0			30
Fabric	Designated	20,251	0.00	0		1,792	22,044
Fabric	Restricted	(34)	650.00	2,483			(1,867)
Bells	Restricted	15,680	0.00	1,234		202	14,648
Memorial Garden	Restricted	146	700.00	4,725			(3,879)
Projection system	Restricted	0	0.00	0			0
Marston Times	Designated	(372)	890.00	678			(159)
Marston Times	Restricted	0	0.00	0			0
Charity	Restricted	(110)	1216.75	1,720			(613)
1B Mill Lane	Designated	7,887	9912.00	459			17,340
Youth Work	Restricted	704	0.00	243			461
Music Events	Designated	154	365.00	436			83
Messy Church	Restricted	52	21.50	78			(4)
Eco Hub	Restricted	631	0.00	53			578
Lunch Club	Designated	449	112.00	100			461
Family Minister	Restricted	20,211	8700.04	15,330			13,581
Fun Day	Restricted	98	504.50	340			262
Warm Spaces	Restricted	0	210.00	0			210
Sabbatical	Restricted	0	0.00	0			0
			0.00	0			
Total		110,941	150,160	140,918		1,994	122,177
Summary of Accounts							
Account		31 Dec 2023	Net Receipts	Net Payments	Uncleared payments	Change in Investments	31 Dec 2024
Coop current a/c General		13,274	160,160	150,918			22,517
CBF investment a/c Fabric		97,666	10,000	10,000		1,994	99,661
Total		110,941	170,160	160,918	0	1,994	122,178

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON					
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024					
Statement of Overall Assets & Liabilities					
31 Dec 2023				Expendable	31 Dec 2024
£				Funds	£
		Monetary Assets			
13,274		Bank Current A/cc		22,517	22517.00
97,666		CBF Investment A/cc		99,661	99661.00
110,941		Total		122,178	122,178
		Other Assets			
295,649		Freehold house at 1B Mill Lane (insured value)			295,649
295,649		Total			295649
Signed:					
Elizabeth Denno (Chair)			Eileen Palayiwa(Treasurer)		

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON	
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024	
Notes to the Accounts	
1. Basis of Preparation	
(a) The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006, the Charities Act 2011, together with applicable accounting standards.	
(b) The accounts are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis, as permitted when the annual income is less than £250,000.	
(c) The financial statements include all transactions, assets, and liabilities for which the PCC is responsible in law. They do not include the accounts of church groups that owe their main affiliation to another body, nor of those that are informal gatherings of church members.	
2. Accounting Policies	
(a) The funds of a charity, under charity law, have to be categorized in one of three ways.	
Unrestricted funds: these contain money that can be spent in any way the PCC chooses (within general charity law)	
Designated funds: these contain money that the PCC has allocated to a specific purpose. They include funds designated for maintenance of church property. Money in a designated fund can be undesignated by a subsequent decision of the PCC.	
Restricted funds: these contain money that has been given for a purpose specified by the donor. Such money can only be spent on the specified purpose (within the overall objectives of the PCC), or else returned to the donor.	
(b) The PCC uses a number of bank accounts and investment funds	
General Account: This holds current funds, including General (unrestricted), Designated and Restricted Funds. The PCC holds a current account with the Cooperative Bank	
Investment Accounts. Reserves are held in the CBF Church of England Investment Fund administered by CCLA Investment Management Ltd. During 2023 the "Bells Fund" and "Fabric Fund" accounts were consolidated into a single account.	
Investments are valued at the basic value (between bid price and offer price) on 31 December.	
(c) Fixed assets	
Consecrated land and buildings and benefice property are not included in the accounts.	
Movable church furnishings which are held by the vicar and churchwardens on trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal are listed in the church's inventory. Such assets are not included in the financial statements.	
The freehold property at 1B Mill Lane belongs to the PCC, with the deeds held on its behalf by the Diocese. It is included in the statement of overall assets and liabilities at its insured value.	

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON									
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024									
Note 3	Money reclaimed from HMRC								
	2023							2024	
	£	RECEIPTS						£	
	12,065	Income tax reclaimed on Gift Aid donations						16,990	
	903	Money claimed under GASDS						687	
	12,968							17,677	
Note 4	Grants								
	2023							2024	
	£	RECEIPTS						£	
	300	Old Marston Parish Council (for Marston Times)						500	
	0	Old Marston Parish Council (for Choir)						350	
	1,000	Old Marston Parish Council (for Cycle Racks)						0	
	92	Old Marston Parish Council (for Bell Ropes)						0	
	400	Old Marston Parish Council (for Fun Days)						400	
		Old Marston Parish Council for Youth Work						350	
		Old Marston Parish Council for Messy Church						350	
		Old Marston Parish Council for CCTV						500	
		Old Marston Parish Council for Toddler Group						350	
	300	Brett's Trust (for Youth Work)						0	
	230	Oxfordshire Historic Churches (for Church Fabric)						325	
	500	Oxford City Council (for Earth Day/Eco Hub)						0	
	0	Oxford City Council (for Warm Spaces)						0	
	874	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (for Warm Spaces)						0	
	5,733	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (for Family Minister)						7,983	
	1,000	Gladiator Trust (for Carpets/Fabric)						0	
	200	Old Marston Charities (for Coffee Pot/Lunch Club)						0	
	10,629							11,108	
Note 5	Parochial Fees: Receipts & Payments								
	2023							2024	
	£	RECEIPTS						£	
Statutory	9,350	Total fees (Statutory+Additional)						11,292	
Additiona	2,109							0	
	11,459							11,292	
		PAYMENTS							
	2,905	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance						2,764	
	1,296	Others (clergy, organist, flowers, choir, bells, verger)						146	
	4,201							2,910	
	7,258	Surplus / (Deficit)						8,382	

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON									
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024									

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON							
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024							
Note 8	2023		Other Charitable donations		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	£				£	£	£
			Overseas & worldwide				
	1,500		Church Mission Society		1,500		1,500
	3,865		Divya Shanthi		0	0	0
	1,094		Christian Aid		2,122		2,122
	0		Patchwork Support Trust		1,000		1,000
	0		Water Aid		531		531
	0		Medecins Sans Frontiers		189		189
	6,459				5,342	0	5,342
			National				
	0		Scripture Gift Mission				0
	0		Inclusive Church Network		100		100
	0		Children in Need		283		283
	0				383	0	383
			Local				
	0		Oxford Churches Debt Centre				0
	0		Aspire		188		188
	0		Restore				0
	263		Asylum Welcome		2000		2,000
	0		St Nicholas the Wonderworker				0
	0		Oxford Hospitals Charity				0
	0		SOFEA				0
	263				2,188	0	2,188
	6,721		Total		7,913	0	7,913

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST NICHOLAS MARSTON						
Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 Dec 2024						
Note 9	Cleaning: Receipts and Payments					
2023						
						2,024
£	RECEIPTS					
2,507	Marston Church Properties (salary contribution)					0*
<u>2,507</u>						
	PAYMENTS					
4,178	Salaries and fees					4,440
0	Materials					0
4,178						
<u>1,671</u>	Net payments					4,440
	The PCC employs a Cleaner and supplies cleaning services to Marston Church Properties at cost.					
Note 10	Mission within the Parish					
2023						2,024
£	PAYMENTS					
204	Advertising and printing					
1,035	Fun Days (includes materials etc 2024)					1,236
448	Music events					40
498	Other expenses					531
<u>2,184</u>						1,807
Note 11	Administration: Receipts and Payments					
2023						2,024
£	RECEIPTS					
2,505	Marston Church Properties (salary contribution)					0*
<u>2,505</u>						
	PAYMENTS					
7,514	Salaries					7,979
268	Licence and other fees					242
805	Photocopier					1,368
0	Bank card reader (net of refund)					0
350	Other					93
8,938						
<u>6,433</u>	Net payments					9,682
	*The PCC employs a Parish Administrator and supplies administration services to Marston Church Properties at cost.2024 Invoices sent and Paid Jan 25					