

St Nicholas with St Mary,
Strood

**ANNUAL REPORT
and
ACCOUNTS
For 2022**

St. Nicholas with St. Mary Strood ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Parochial Name: St. Nicholas with St. Mary, Strood
Postal Address: High Street, Strood, Rochester, Kent
ME2 4TR
Correspondence: The Vicar
Address: 18 Honeypot Close, Strood, Rochester,
Kent ME2 3DU

Parochial Church Council Members for 2022

<i>Rev. David Green</i>	<i>(Chairman)</i>
<i>Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr</i>	<i>(Pioneer Minister)</i>
<i>Rob Foxwell</i>	<i>(LLM)</i>
<i>Elaine Ford</i>	<i>(Church Warden)</i>
<i>Ken Reynolds</i>	<i>(Church Warden)</i>
<i>Sarah Wilkinson</i>	<i>(From APCM 2022 for three years Deanery Synod Rep from 2020)</i>
<i>Will Childs</i>	<i>(From APCM 2020 for two years Deanery Synod from Rep 2020)</i>
<i>Sue Marrable</i>	<i>(From APCM 2020 for three years)</i>
<i>Robert James</i>	<i>(From APCM 2020 for three years)</i>
<i>Yvonne Harris</i>	<i>(From APCM 2021 for three years)</i>
<i>Jade Goodwin</i>	<i>(From APCM 2021 for three years)</i>
<i>Jeff Whiteley</i>	<i>(From APCM 2021 for three years)</i>
<i>Olu Odumosa</i>	<i>(From APCM 2022 for three years)</i>
<i>Maggie Glover</i>	<i>(From APCM 2022 for three years)</i>
<i>Andy Vince</i>	<i>(From APCM 2022 for three years)</i>
<i>Robert Foxwell</i>	<i>(Stood down APCM 2022)</i>
<i>Ube Casely-Hayford</i>	<i>(Stood down APCM 2022)</i>

Number on Electoral Roll: 107
Independent Examiner: Mr G Viggers
Bankers: Barclays Bank, Chatham
Registered charity no.: 1138948

AIMS AND PURPOSES

St Nicholas Church, Strood is a place of worship. We at St. Nicholas with St. Mary seek to fulfil our calling as followers of Jesus Christ. Our primary object is the promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. The Parochial Church Council cooperates with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. We do this in many and varied ways, as the reports below will illustrate. In these ways we witness to the love of God shown to us in our lives and would draw others also into the life of discipleship. This witness is not simply a matter of words, but includes practical service to one another and to the wider world, starting from the knowledge that all are loved by God and precious in His sight. We believe that this journey of faith is important for others to find. We also believe that Jesus is in our midst and therefore we seek to serve one another and the Jesus within and amongst us.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

We continue to develop a vision of 'welcome'.

In pursuance of this mission during the year we have:

1. Continued to look at the facilities of the church buildings and to move forward in improving them for future and current users.
2. Continued to make preparations for enabling the Worship area of the church be made more available for the onward mission of the church.
3. We continue to aim at implementing the Church of England's Five Marks of Mission:
 - 1 Enabling our church to be mission-minded.
 2. Helping children, young people and adults live out everyday faith in Jesus.
 3. Supporting loving service in local communities.
 4. Encouraging and responding to the prophetic voice of justice and peace.
 5. Protecting creation's life for future generations.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

At the centre of our church life is the Sunday services. The live-streaming of the 10:30am Service is a blessing and remains a valuable way for people to worship at home, particularly for those who cannot physically attend church, but also for those who still feel vulnerable and do not want to take risks as Covid-19 is still very much with us. The email group of over 70 people, has continued to be a valuable medium for keeping people in contact with the St Nicholas community and the weekly Rochester Diocesan Digest, which the group receives, keeps people linked to the wider Church and provides much useful information about the Diocese. It also gives links to courses and seminars to further members' Christian Faith and informs people of issues within the Church of England and beyond. We were also active in keeping in touch with those who were not online.

When considering our achievements and the mission of the church we would like to thank particularly The Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr, our Pioneer Minister, for her vision and active service, her initiative and technical help; to Sue Marrable, our Parish Administrator, for her tireless and efficient work in maintaining and increasing the smooth running of the church, and for her technical expertise; to Ken Reynolds and Elaine Ford as once again being superb Church Wardens, with Ken also leading our music; to Sue Davis, who has been so helpful in steering our finances and keeping us up-to-date with Diocesan directives, and to all the members of the PCC. We now have a Ministry Team, which meets every week, either by Zoom or personally, and this has been a vital source of inspiration and ensures that the mission of the church remains at the centre of our church life and vision on a regular basis.

Average weekly attendance:	55, plus those who worship online
Baptisms:	16
Confirmations:	0
Reaffirmation of Faith:	0

FINANCIAL REVIEW

During the year, PCC general income decreased by £342,482 (2022 £88,553, 2021 £431,035) mostly due to a legacy of £353,494 in 2021. This is slightly offset by an increase in fees of £1,564, an increase of hall rental income of £2,966 and a increase in car park income of £1,059, Grants of £11,705 from Medway Council £1,943 for hampers, and £3,946 energy support. The Diocese gave a grant of £600 for the Warm Space.

General expenditure increased by £11,154 (2022 £124,291, 2021 £113,137) mostly due to a reduction in parish offer of £32,000 due to the legacies in 2021, an increase on car park/grounds spend of £12,800 and £22,015 increase on repairs.

Total cash and balances held in bank accounts at the end of 2022 stood at £552,546 (2021 £551,148).

It is the policy of the PCC to spend reserves under its stewardship to deliver its vision for the future and the PCC continues to discuss the best ways to use its funds to meet God's purpose for the parish of Strood and the wider community.

Of the total cash resources of £522,546 at the end of 2022, £31,926 (2021 £29,216) was held in funds designated for the repair of the church, the installation of a lift to the upper hall

and the music fund. £10,867 (2021 £8,073) was held in various restricted funds.

This year income has continued to return towards pre pandemic levels. In 2022 income from hall rental, car park and fundraising events increased by 24% on 2021 levels and is almost back to 2019 levels. This income contributed to 55% of general income this year.

We thank God that despite the difficult economic climate, St Nicholas is managing to make ends meet and has been able to make significant improvements to the church and grounds in recent years as a result of the reserves entrusted to it. We pray for guidance in directing resources to best serve His purpose.

Policy Statements

Liquidity

It is the policy of the PCC to generally maintain unrestricted funds, which are the free reserves of the charity, at a level which equates to approximately three months unrestricted expenditure. This provides sufficient funds to cover management, administration and support costs, and to respond to emergency expenditure and applications for grants that arise from time to time.

Risk Management

The church insurance is reviewed on a regular basis.

Cheques are signed by two signatories.

A child protection policy is in place.

Any potential hazards which come to the PCC's attention are dealt with as soon as possible.

SAFEGUARDING

At the first meeting of a new PCC the House of Bishops' 'Promoting a Safer Church: Safeguarding Policy Statement' is read out and formally adopted by the PCC. A Parish Safeguarding Officer is appointed and details of those to contact if there are any concerns are displayed in church. The PCC adopts the Safeguarding Policy of the Church of England.

AWAY GIVING

We gave to the following charities in 2022:

Crisis, Raising Youth, Medway Night Shelter, The Children's Society, Poverty & Hope Appeal, Friends of Kent Churches, Friends of Rochester Cathedral, Christian Aid.

In March we organized the collection and delivery of clothing and essential items for Ukraine. This was supported by the local community and we were able to deliver a van load to the distribution centre.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORK

See Fresh Expressions.

CHIT CHAT GROUP

This informal group meets as a Home Group once a month.

COFFEE SHOP

We were able to restart Coffee Shop in February 2022. It has a small number of regular customers who enjoy being able to purchase refreshments at a reasonable price and the chance to socialise.

CHRISTMAS HAMPERS / COMMUNITY LARDER

At Christmas Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr, in collaboration with local schools, was able to provide over 100 hampers to help those families most in need. Thank you to all who helped contribute financially, with items or with time helping pack or deliver the hampers.

We were approached by families in need who required more than the local Foodbank was able to provide. Thanks to a generous grant from Medway council we have been able to support several families regularly with food and hygiene products.

DEANERY SYNOD

Deanery Synod Report 2022

St Francis, Strood entered into interregnum following the appointment of the Reverend Sharon Copestake as Archdeacon of Tonbridge.

A Living in Love and Faith Course for Deanery Synod members was held by Zoom in January 2022, led by the Rev Canon Jane Winter, Assistant Director of Formation and Ministry.

At the February meeting, Hilda Woolmington, Lay Chair, announced that, following consultation, a pastoral reorganisation had been agreed whereby the Strood Deanery boundaries would be more closely aligned with civil

boundaries. The Parish of Higham was therefore transferred to Gravesend Deanery – the Vicar of Higham also being Priest-in-Charge of Perry Street (Gravesend Deanery). The Rev Christine Allen was appointed Priest-in-Charge at Grain with Stoke on 13th March and the Rev Andy Hobbs, Priest-in-Charge of St Helen's Cliffe was to move to Birmingham celebrating his last service at St Helen's on Palm Sunday.

Hilda welcomed Liz Mullins, Generous Giving Adviser for the Diocese of Rochester. Liz gave an informative presentation on Encouraging Generosity and outlined the Diocesan Parish Giving scheme.

Reverend Mark Borley, Vicar of Hoo, (host church) shared lessons and experiences from the parish of St Werburgh Hoo.

On 21 May the Reverend Dr Mark Borley was commissioned as Area Dean of Strood.

At the June meeting Mark Borley welcomed Magali van der Merwe, Diocesan Lead Community Engagement and Social Action Adviser. Magali shared the vision of CESA (Community Engagement and Social Action Team), outlining 3 areas of their work: Poverty and Deprivation (including the work of Foodbanks and Community Larders; Wellbeing (including Dementia Cafes, Healthy Walks Programmes, Community Hubs); and Immigration and Refugees (highlighting the work with partnerships supporting Ukrainian refugees.)

The Rev Nicholas Cooper (host church) shared some observations and experiences of church life post-Covid in the parish of Frindsbury with Upnor and Chattenden. The Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr, Pioneer Minister for Strood Cluster, shared reflections of schools work and children and family work post pandemic.

The October meeting was an opportunity to join with the Deaneries of Medway to meet with the new Bishop of Rochester, the Right Reverend Dr Jonathan Gibbs

In November, due to health reasons, the Rev Dr Mark Borley stood down as Area Dean of Strood.

In December it was announced that the Rev Nicholas Cooper was to be commissioned as Area Dean of Strood on 20 February 2023.

Sue Jones, Strood Deanery Secretary

February 2023

ELECTORAL ROLL

Number of people living within the parish	57
Number of people living outside the parish	50
Number of women	75
Number of men	32
Total	107

FABRIC REPORT

The Re-Ordering Project is finally getting to the tendering stage with contractors visiting the church in early 2023. Behind the scenes the work continued. One major project that was completed was the replacement of the benches in the church grounds as the old ones were askew and falling apart. We also had railings installed on the steep slope from Gun Lane to give people something to hold on to. Grateful thanks to funding for the benches and railings from a Section 106 contribution required from the Temple Waterfront development by Redrow Homes for community use. Councillors Hubbard and Buckwell supported our project and put us in touch with Jill King of the planning office at Medway Council. We also upgraded the Lightning Protection System

to comply with the latest regulations. There was the usual running repairs to the plumbing and electrics, also substantial repairs to the roof. We purchased a Defibrillator with an outdoor lockable cabinet and a Bleed Kit for use by anyone in the vicinity needing them.

Elaine Ford

FRESH EXPRESSIONS

Children and families:

Over the last year our contact with children and families has really continued to blossom and flourish.

Sunday school:

Although children and families are welcome every Sunday and activities are provided for them, On the first Sunday of the month we hold Sunday school and especially invite families to come along that week. Thanks to the committed help of Janet Hughes, Jade Goodwin and Vickie Desai we are able to welcome children of all ages into the hall to hear the Bible reading in an age appropriate way, have a game or activity relating to the theme and some craft activity for the children to take home to remind them through the month . We've also been helping them learn to pray together in different creative ways.

Through this we have been able to prepare 7 children to receive communion before confirmation (in 2023) following a 6 week course and two older children to confirmation.

Families@3:

On the third Sunday of the month we hold Families@3 in the afternoon. This involves craft activities and challenges in the hall followed by a time in church of games, a Bible story, an interactive song and creative prayers. We conclude our time together with refreshments back in the hall.

It has been a real joy to welcome families to these events and have seen baptism families and some from the toddler group coming along regularly. A special thank you to Janet Hughes, Jeff Whiteley and Rev David Green for their continued help and support .

Toddler and Chat

The numbers for the Thursday toddler group continue to be good, with many regulars in attendance as well as frequent newcomers attending.

The group is a safe space for parents, grandparents and carers to come along, meet others and for the children to play. The highlight is definitely the singing at the end. Thanks to Sue Marrable, Jeff Whiteley and Janet Hughes for their great commitment to the group but also for setting up and tidying up every week!

Schools:

Since Covid we have managed to build up some good contacts with the schools. We did harvest and Christmas assemblies at All Faiths and Gordon school and also do termly assemblies for both KS1 and KS2 at Gordon school. We've also been invited into the schools to conduct R.E. lessons.

The schools have also been immensely generous in donating to our community larder over the year and especially supporting the Christmas hampers.

Rev David, Ken Reynolds, Brian Davies and Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr continue to conduct weekly assemblies at St Nicholas Infant school. We have also been invited into several school production performances and welcomed the school to church for their Christmas service and Christingle. David and Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr also had the pleasure of teaching an RE lesson to Reception class about baptism.

HALL GROUP

The Church has two halls and the Swain Vestry for the use of both the congregation and outside groups, for social and fund-raising events. The Upper Hall was used by a Playgroup on weekdays all year and Rainbows one night a week. Towards the end of the year a Street Dance group began to use the Upper Hall to rehearse and a Ballet class for young children began to use the hall on Saturday mornings. The Lower Hall was used by GA, AA, The Phoenix Art Group, Garden Club, Compassionate Friends, Friends of Medway Archives, CA, Strood Fellowship and Floral Art. A church run Parent Toddler used the Lower Hall too.

The Swain Vestry was used by the church, Friends of Rede Common and Kent Family History for meetings. Towards the end of the year Compassionate Friends began to hold a monthly Sunday afternoon meeting to support bereaved families. Raising Youth continue to be based on site, using the Swain Vestry as an office. The Lower Hall was available for children's parties Saturday and Sunday afternoons and hired for this about once a month.

MAGAZINE GROUP

The magazine editorial group, comprising of five people, made decisions by email during 2022.

MUSIC REPORT 2022

As we continued to recover from the limitations of Covid, our musical tradition was able to be reinstated and take its place in helping with our worship.

I would like to thank the choir for their continuing support and contribution throughout the year and also to welcome our new members.

One problem that has become more noticeable during the course of the year is the declining state of our organ. It dates from 1859 and was last renovated in 1984. It is now beginning to show serious signs of wear. Some of the thin leather items which control the key action and stops are leaking, making them slow and noisy. Our organ builder has prepared a plan of what is needed and so, I hope that soon we will be able to have the work done and return the organ to good playing order.

Ken Reynolds

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The full Council met six times during 2022. The meeting in January was held by Zoom. The APCM was held in April. The Standing Committee met weekly via Zoom or in person and the rest of the PCC were consulted, when necessary, via email. At the start of 2022 there were five ex-officio members of the Council and eight elected members. Average attendance at meetings was 82%.

Our financial advisor, Sue Davis attended the meeting in March to answer any questions about the financial report for the APCM.

At the first meeting after the APCM, in May 2022, Sue Marrable was appointed as Secretary to the PCC. Ube Casely-Hayford was appointed as Safeguarding Officer and The PCC accepted the Safeguarding Statements of the Church of England House of Bishops. Jeff Whiteley was appointed Treasurer.

Rev David Green, Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr, Jeff Whiteley, Elaine Ford, Ken Reynolds, Sarah Wilkinson, Sue Marrable and Sue Davis (Financial Advisor) were appointed to form the Standing Committee.

Financial reports prepared by Sue Davis, our financial advisor, were considered and approved at each meeting.

SAFEGUARDING

During 2022, all DBS checks for PCC members were approved. Volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults also had their DBS checks approved. Basic online training courses for Safeguarding have been completed by - Rev David, PCC members, church wardens and relevant church members including Sue Marrable and myself. Sue Marrable has digital copies of completed courses. Sue Marrable and I continue to work together to ensure that as a church we keep up with relevant updated documents for Safeguarding. Sue Marrable completed several online courses on Safeguarding.

A confidential disclosure was made by Rev Sue Vallente-Kerr with regard to a family.

We continue to use the diocesan dashboard to update relevant documents. Sue Marrable regularly updates our website. Sue Marrable ensures that all PCC members receive the Safeguarding bulletins from the Diocese.

Ube Casely-Hayford Safeguarding officer
26th February 2023

SOCIAL AND GENERAL FUND-RAISING GROUP

Aims:

To provide the social links within our Church and to extend these to the local community.

To encourage and involve the congregation to be part of fund-raising events of our Church.

Objectives:

SOCIAL

To try to target all ages within our Church and community.

FUNDRAISING

To use a variety of events to encourage wide participation and interest.

In 2022 we held Book sales, Jumble Sales, Boot Fairs, a Summer Fete and a Christmas Bazaar which were very successful. The Summer Fete was a Community event with local organisations invited to have stalls to promote what they do. The Christmas Bazaar was very well attended. We had a Harvest Supper which included Country Dancing and a Beetle Drive.

STANDING AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Aims:

To meet prior to each PCC meeting and to think through the Agenda for that meeting, making any necessary recommendations to the PCC. The Committee also makes interim decisions for the PCC when that is appropriate.

To work with the Accounts Adviser, who prepares the accounts for us and gives us advice as to our financial position.

The Standing Committee met weekly via Zoom during 2022 and for a monthly face-to-face meeting.

WARM SPACE

In December 2022 we began to open the Swain Vestry as a Warm Space on Mondays. Initially we wanted to open all day but didn't have enough volunteers to do so. Take up of the Space was slow to begin with.

WORSHIP GROUP

The aim of the worship Group is to be a forum for discussion on every aspect of worship in our church. This includes consideration of the services we provide now, reviewing those which have taken place since the group last met and also, looking ahead, putting forward ideas for the future. The group is useful also in discussing any feedback about services from the congregation. We met regularly throughout the year.

The Annual Report was accepted at the APCM held on Sunday 23rd April 2023

Rev David Green (Incumbent)



Independent Examiner's Report to the PCC of St Nicholas with St Mary, Strood

This Report on the accounts of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2022, which are set out in this annual report, is in respect of an examination carried out under Regulation 3(3) of the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 ("the Regulations") and section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

Respective responsibilities of the PCC and the examiner

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider the audit requirement of Regulation 3(3) of section 144(2) of the Act do not apply. It is my responsibility to issue this report on those accounts in accordance with the Regulations.

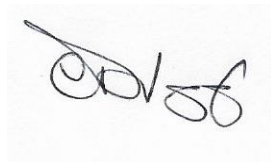
Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act and to be found in the Church guidance, 2006 edition, issued by the Finance Division of the Archbishops' Council. That examination includes review of the accounting record kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering 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 I do not express an opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (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 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the Act and the Regulations, 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.



Date: 21 April 2023

Mr Gordon Viggers FCA
74 Woodstock Road
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME10 4HN

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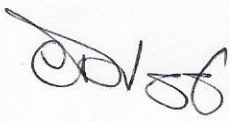
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