

## **2024 ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE CHARITY COMMISSION**

### **Aims and purposes**

St Nicholas Allington Parochial Church Council (the PCC) has the responsibility of co-operating with our joint priest-in-charge in promoting the whole mission of the church – pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also responsible for maintaining the church building, halls and church grounds (but not the Rectory which is the responsibility of the Diocese).

### **Objectives and activities**

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, we have considered the Commission's guidance on public benefit, and particularly the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. 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 their knowledge and trust in Jesus through a range of formal and informal worship, with and without communion. The church is committed to providing the Church of England 'occasional offices' of baptism, marriage and funerals.
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish.
- Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work, it is important that we maintain the fabric of the Church of St. Nicholas and the Church Halls.

The PCC has complied with Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops guidance on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults).

### **Achievements and Performance**

St Nicholas Church is currently in interregnum whilst the PCC seeks a new priest-in-charge following the retirement of the previous incumbent, Rev Chris Lavender, in February 2023. The churchwardens assisted by a core 'Hub Team', reporting to the PCC, have been undertaking the day-to-day tasks normally carried out by the priest-in-charge, with the support of the Archdeacon and Area Dean.

#### *Worship and Prayer*

The PCC is keen to offer a range of services during the week and over the course of the year that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. For example, a range of worship services from Morning Worship, Holy Communion and informal worship at Oasis Communion and Oasis with contemporary worship songs. Our online worship presence on Facebook remains popular and this will continue.

Attendance at worship and social activities has generally reached pre-pandemic levels, especially at the Christmas services. Hire of the halls has also recovered and income has returned to acceptable levels. We continue to see generosity from the community for the stock of items that we manage to help supply the local Foodbank and other causes.

All are welcome to attend our regular services. The average weekly attendance, counted during October 2023, was 73, but this number increased at festivals including Christmas. Guide and Scout organisations continue to hold Parade Services in the church two or three times a year. We endeavour to make our services easy for visitors to follow using Power Point projection, enlarged texts, or printed out in short booklets. The church sound system helps all visitors, as well as the hearing-impaired.

At present there are 123 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll. Two names were added during the year and five were removed either through death or because they moved away from the parish.

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. Through baptism we thank God for the gift of life, and through funeral services friends and family express their grief and give thanks for the life which is now complete in this world and to commend the person into God's keeping. We have celebrated seven baptisms in church. Five funerals were conducted this year, which is fewer than previous years due to the church being without a priest-in-charge. No weddings were conducted, which is not unusual given the church is a modern building.

Fiona Higgs, Children, the Families & Schools Minister has continued a Chaplaincy role within our local primary schools and leads assemblies, supports classrooms and the staff. She has formed strong relationships with the schools and continued to provide the "Explorers" after school clubs at Allington and Palace Wood Primary Schools throughout the year.

St Nicholas has an active Mothers' Union group with monthly Holy Communion services. We also run St Nicholas' Fellowship, a social group for the elderly. Residential Homes are visited, and services conducted there.

#### *Deanery Synod*

Two members of the PCC sit on the deanery synod. This provides the PCC with an important link between the parish and the wider structures of the church. The focus of the deanery is to bring about growth through a number of initiatives known as the Maidstone Mission Mosaic but also to provide an opportunity for churches to network and be more outward looking and missional.

#### *The Church and Church Halls*

St Nicholas is open every day to our community for private prayer and is used on a regular basis.

Our present church, consecrated in 1975, is a square building mainly, recently re-ordered by the replacement of pews with chairs. The church space is used for worship every Sunday and one Wednesday per month and at other times as required. It is also used for PCC Meetings, a weekly prayer group, a monthly meeting of mums and babes and other groups, and for appropriate community activities. To one side are the clergy vestry, the Parish Office, which is used three mornings a week, and three toilets, one with disabled access. The church has kitchen facilities in the main body of the church.

There are two church halls in a building adjacent to the church that provide facilities to many local groups and businesses. These halls have a kitchen and toilet facilities, including a baby change and disabled toilets. Both church and halls have disabled access.

A wide range of social and fund-raising events are held throughout the year that are open to the larger community. The Christmas Market draws many people into our buildings and is supported by a number of small local businesses. This year we held another Christmas Tree Festival which was supported by several local groups and organisations as well as church groups. The event which was open for three days attracted a good number of people from across the community.

Communication of the life and events at St Nicholas is maintained through the weekly newsletter, via the St Nicholas website, our Facebook group and page, and on the church noticeboard. These are a vital means of not just keeping people within the church informed but also a way of reaching out to the wider community.

The St Nicholas Sunday Lunch Club, working to the stringent health and safety requirements with a 5\* food hygiene rating, allowed us to continue the old people's luncheon club during the year with on average 45

people regularly attending. However, with the organising team stepping down at the end of the year after several years' service, it was decided to have a review of the future for this group.

Each Tuesday a Community Café takes place in St Nicholas Church. This is run by a team of volunteers and is registered with Maidstone Borough Council. It is attended by up to 75 people each week and is clearly valued by many who come as a place to meet and make friends. Some who come are recently bereaved, others are new to the area, and for many it is a place of warmth and welcome.

During the week the hall is used by many local groups and organisations including a mother and toddlers' group on Tuesdays. We run a monthly Mum & Babies group in the church which has led to a Faith Explorers group led by our Children, Families & Schools Minister. Throughout the year the youth group, JAHFA, have met regularly.

Our church halls offer valuable meeting places for a wide variety of community and commercial activities, including the numerous branches of the Guide and Scout organisations. The halls are booked frequently for private bookings by local residents.

Income from hall hire is strong and the church building is also being used more as a space for hire to the community.

#### **Pastoral Care**

Some members of our parish are unable to attend church due to sickness or age. Prayer and pastoral work has continued through a very supportive network within the congregation. The Prayer and Pastoral Care co-ordinator maintains ongoing contact with many members of the congregation, particularly the elderly. Care Home ministry is provided through the Anna Chaplaincy network that draws from all denominations across the town and visits most care homes once a month.

#### **Mission and Evangelism**

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. St Nicholas gives monthly to a range of charities both local and abroad including Alongside Africa.

St Nicholas provides a weekly online service via Facebook and the church website to over 250 people, the majority of whom do not regularly connect with St Nicholas in other ways.

The weekly newsletter update is emailed to approximately 200 people and paper copies are available for those who are not on the internet.

We maintain a significant presence in the Primary Schools, which are non-church, through the work of our Children's, Families & Schools Minister.

#### **Ecumenical Relationships**

The church is a member of Churches Together in Maidstone. Our previous incumbent attended Leaders Breakfasts that are held each month and involve all Christian denominations from across the town. Once a new priest-in-charge is appointed this will continue to be supported.

#### **Financial Review**

Finances are healthy with good reserves, although there are indications of potential challenges ahead. At the end of the year there was a surplus of income over expenditure, although this was lower than previous years. Total income for the year amounted to £128,551 (2022 - £131,284) of which £486 related to restricted income. There was a net surplus for the year of £9,886 (2022 - £16,887 surplus), of which £6,330 related to general

funds. At the year-end unrestricted funds totalled £106,262 (2022 - £94,932) of which £42,143 is held in designated funds.

The condition of the fabric of the church and halls are thankfully sound, and no substantial items have been highlighted as needing urgent repair. Our halls remain popular with hirers and provide a valuable source of income.

### **Reserves Policy**

During the year the PCC approved a resolution to maintain reserves to a level of three months of annual expenditure, as opposed to six months. This is to allow for future investment on new mission and development initiatives once a new priest-in-charge has been appointed.

The building reserve of £20,000 is designated for possible roof repairs needed in the future.

### **Volunteers**

We would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community it is. There are many people actively involved in worship and prayer, pastoral work, leading or contributing on a working group or simply helping out on a rota. A huge thank you to everyone contributing to the life within the parish at St Nicholas in this way.

### **Structure, governance and management**

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St. Nicholas the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our priest-in-charge), churchwardens and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. All those who attend our services, the members of our congregation, are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent. New members receive initial training into the workings of the PCC.

The full PCC met eight times during the year with an average level of attendance of 74%. Given its wide responsibilities the PCC has several committees each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life. These committees, which include worship, social, halls, fabric and finance, are all responsible to the PCC and report back to it regularly with minutes of their decisions being received by the full PCC and discussed as necessary.

### **Administrative information**

St. Nicholas Church is situated on Poplar Grove, Allington, Maidstone. It is part of the Diocese of Canterbury within the Church of England. The parish is legally known as the Parish of St Nicholas, Allington with St Peter, Maidstone. Roughly it stretches at its western edge from the railway, either side of the London Road, toward the town centre down to the river and Lockmeadow. The river end of the parish is the area which formerly came under the previous St Peter's Church, no longer in use. The running of the parish comes under two Churchwardens and the Parochial Church Council or PCC. Ministry and worship comes under a Priest-in-Charge and a Children's and Families Minister.

The correspondence address is The Parish Office, Poplar Grove, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0DE. The PCC is a body corporate (PCC Powers Measure 1956, Church Representation Rules 2006) and a charity registered with the Charity Commission.

PCC members who have served at any time from 1st January 2023 until the date this report was approved are:



Incumbent: Rev. Christopher Lavender (Chairman) – **retired 22 February 2023**

Churchwardens: Dr Nigel Smetham, Mrs Jenny Stone

Children, Families & Schools Minister: Mrs Fiona Higgs

Elected members:

Mrs Sarah Lavender – representative on Deanery Synod – **left 22 February 2023**

Ms Helen Rogers - Treasurer

Ms Emily Stone - Secretary

Mr Michael Froude

Mrs Gill Waite

Ms June Bagshaw

Mrs Gill Poole

Mrs Martina Tidball

Mrs Nicola Tulip

Mr David Salvage

Ms Jacqueline Wilkinson

Ms Ruth Brind

Mrs Angela Redford

Mr Seb Lincoln

Approved by the PCC and signed on their behalf by Nigel Smetham (PCC Vice-Chair – Parish in vacancy)

**ALLINGTON P C C**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**  
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT**

	Notes	2023				2022
		General fund	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		£	£	£	£	£
Voluntary Receipts						
Regular Giving						
Pledged giving		42837			42837	44775
Income tax recovered		12530			12530	12255
Collections in church		4907			4907	8238
		60274			60274	65267
Other voluntary receipts	3a	4217		0	4217	2383
Activities for generating funds	3b	4684			4684	5018
Receipts from Church activities	3c	57819		486	58305	58358
Interest on Deposits		1071			1071	258
		128065	0	486	128551	131284
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		£	£	£	£	£
Church activities						
Diocesan Parish Share		54547			54547	54604
Other Payments	3d	62188		1930	64118	59793
		116735		1930	118665	114397
Surplus/(deficit) before transfers		11330	0	-1444	9886	16887
Transfers between funds		-5000	5000			
Surplus/(deficit) for year after transfers		6330	5000	-1444	9886	16887
Cash Balances at 01/01/23		57789	37143	2049	96981	
Cash Balances at 31/12/23		64119	42143	605	106867	

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities**

	2023				2022
	General fund	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
<b>Cash Funds</b>					
Bank Current Account	35351			35351	36667
CBF Deposit Fund		11511	605	12116	11739
Reserve Account	28579	30632		59211	48515
Goodbox	129			129	0
Cash	60			60	60
	64119	42143	605	106867	96981
<b>Other Monetary Assets</b>					
Gift Aid Tax recoverable				0	2961
Paye	863			863	0
Halls lettings due	1915			1915	1129
	2778			2778	4090
<b>Liabilities</b>					
Deposits					200
Pension payment	657			657	568
Creditor				0	276
Payments to diocese					1154
Amounts collected for Charity Appeals	9			9	9
	666	0	0	666	2207

Approved by the PCC on 18/3/24 and signed on their behalf by:

.....signed.....  
 Dr Nigel Smart (PCC Chairman) and Mrs Helen Rogers (PCC Treasurer during 2023)

## NOTES

1. Fixed Assets retained for church use are written-off in the year of purchase.

The two church halls previously shown in restricted fixed assets have an insured value of approximately £2,600,000.

2. The movement in designated and restricted funds during the year were:

	Balance b/f	Receipts	Payments	Transfers	Balance
Designated: Building fund	15000			5000	20000
Bequest fund (unrestricted)	22143				22143
	37143	0	0	5000	42143
Sunday Lunch Club	410	486	724		172
Fellowship	430		6		424
Halls Deposit	200		200		0
Heating Grant	1000		1000		0
Special charity appeals	9				9
	2049	486	1930	0	605

3. Receipts and Payments analysis

a. Other voluntary receipts

	General fund	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	2022 Total funds
Donations	4217			4217	2383
Charitable Donations				0	0
	4217	0	0	4217	2383

b. Activities for generating funds

	General fund	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	2022 Total funds
Fund Raising	4684			4684	5018
	4684		0	4684	5018

c. Receipts from Church activities

	General fund	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	2022 Total funds
Fees					1086
Halls Income	57819			57819	53761
Sunday Lunch Club			486	486	1159
Flag pole					1152
Heating Grant					1000
Halls deposit					200
	57819		486	58305	58358

### 3. Receipts and Payments analysis ctd

#### d. Church activities - payments

Charitable payments  
Overseas  
Christian Relief and Development  
Home Mission

Clergy expenses  
Fees  
Church running expenses  
Halls running expenses  
Salaries, wages and honoraria  
Administration expenses  
Youth Work  
Fundraising  
Sunday Lunch Club  
Fellowship  
Sundries  
Halls Deposit

2023				2022
General fund	Designated funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
1000			1000	1100
2400			2400	300
400			400	545
3800		0	3800	1945
			0	0
416			416	416
8161		1000	9161	8237
19402			19402	23910
26373			26373	20836
3480			3480	3037
138			138	465
391			391	635
		724	724	728
		6	6	0
27			27	0
		200	200	0
62188	0	1930	64118	60209

4. The expenses paid to clergy may include a small immaterial proportion, which relates to their function as PCC members. No other payments were made to PCC members.

# Gemma Sturley

CIMA Chartered Accountant

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## **Independent examiner's report to Allington PCC**

I have completed my examination of the accounts of Allington PCC for the year ended 31 December 2023.

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 charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
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 this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Gemma Sturley  
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)

33 Larking Drive, Allington ME16 0UT

28th March 2024