

Vale and Cotswold Edge Team

St Peter and St Paul

Blockley with Aston Magna

Annual Accounts 2024

Independent Examiner's Report

To the members and trustees of the Parochial Church Council of Blockley with Aston Magna.

This report on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with section 145 of the Charities Act 2011.

Respective responsibilities of the trustees of the charity and the examiner

The trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements. The trustees consider that an audit is not required under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed.

It is the examiner's responsibility to

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- Follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- To state whether particular matters have come to the Examiner's attention.

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. That examination includes a review of the accounting records and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeking explanations 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 audit 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

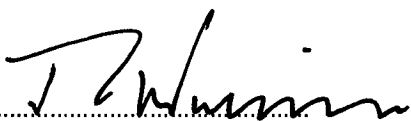
* to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act, and

* to prepare financial statements, which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the Act

have not been met; or

- 2) To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed.....



Name John Wilkinson

Date.....

15/04/2025.

Address Croft House
Station Road
Chipping Campden
GL55 6HY

ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH, BLOCKLEY WITH ASTON MAGNA
RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

Notes	Unrestricted		Restricted	2024	2023
	General Funds	Designated Funds		TOTAL	TOTAL
INCOME					
Giving					
Parish Giving Scheme	25,378			25,378	26,237
Other giving and donations	13,351		250	13,601	13,117
Tax recovered through Gift Aid	6,036			6,036	5,875
Church activities					
Father Brown income from BBC	18,865			18,865	11,640
The Voice - subscriptions & donations		6,468		6,468	5,197
- advertising		3,678		3,678	2,973
Legacies					
Parochial Fees income	5,905			5,905	4,860
Concerts in church	807			807	600
Sundry income	1,253			1,253	5,179
Investment income					
Interest & investment income	912	727	921	2,560	2,074
Income from extraordinary activities					
Grant re VAT refund				-	7,849
Donations for reordering			28,608	28,608	
Fund raising events for reordering			4,086	4,086	
Donations from the Brownes	145			145	430
Non-recurring grants	758		3,312	4,070	
Special collections			627	627	1,770
Total incoming resources	73,410	10,873	37,804	122,087	87,801
EXPENDITURE					
Outward Giving					
Donations	(3,542)		(627)	(4,169)	(4,229)
Running expenses					
Parish Share	(35,711)			(35,711)	(33,375)
Minor repairs & routine maintenance	(4,580)		(3,312)	(7,892)	(4,298)
Clergy expenses	(2,023)			(2,023)	(3,009)
Vicarage expenses	(461)			(461)	
Visiting Clergy - fees & expenses	(101)			(101)	
Heating & lighting	(3,864)			(3,864)	(4,535)
The Voice costs		(7,950)		(7,950)	(5,542)
Father Brown costs	(1,845)			(1,845)	(600)
Insurance	(2,896)			(2,896)	(2,686)
Altar supplies	(280)			(280)	(506)
Music costs	(372)			(372)	(180)
Administration costs	(2,108)			(2,108)	(1,255)
Flowers	-			-	(308)
Youth work costs	(1,817)			(1,817)	(1,817)
Sundry costs	(4,724)			(4,724)	(4,287)
	(64,324)	(7,950)	(3,939)	(76,213)	(66,627)
Extraordinary expenditure					
Reordering project			(14,946)	(14,946)	(80,935)
Total resources expended	(64,324)	(7,950)	(18,885)	(91,159)	(147,562)
(Deficit)/surplus before gains & losses					
Transfers between funds	9,086	2,923	18,919	30,928	(59,761)
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before gains	(500)		500		
Gains/(Losses) on investment assets- unrealised	8,586	2,923	19,419	30,928	(59,761)
Net movement in funds	1,003	799	1,013	2,815	6,848
Funds brought forward at 1 January 2024	60,578	52,418	50,638	163,634	216,547
Funds carried forward at 31 December 2024	£70,167	£56,140	£71,070	£197,377	£163,634

continued

ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH, BLOCKLEY WITH ASTON MAGNA
RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024
(CONTINUED)


2024	2023
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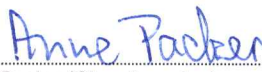
Total funds are represented by:

Lloyds Treasurers' account
Lloyds Instant Saver
Lloyds re Voice
Lloyds re Reordering
CBF Investment Fund (accumulated income units) at Market Value.
CBF Investment Fund (income units) at Market Value.
United Trust Bank
Unbanked cash and cheques at 31st December

17,092	6,744
22,203	31,412
5,974	3,578
25,895	-
49,443	47,041
18,475	18,062
56,901	55,212
1,394	1,585
£197,377	£163,634

Accounts approved at a meeting of the Parochial Church Council on 18th March, 2025.


Sarah Brazier (Churchwarden)


Anne Packer (Churchwarden)


Philip Gee (Treasurer)

ST PETER & ST PAUL CHURCH, BLOCKLEY WITH ASTON MAGNA

Notes to the Receipts & Payments Account for the year ended 31 December 2024

1. The accounts have been prepared on the Receipts & Payments basis and are in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006.
2. After the financial activity during 2024, the detailed allocation of funds at 31st December, 2024 is:

Restricted Funds:

Chancel	33,168	
Robinson Organ (see note below)	7,949	
Bells	1,161	
Reordering	<u>28,792</u>	71,070

Designated Funds:

Future refurbishment work	50,205	
The Voice	<u>5,935</u>	56,140

Unrestricted Funds 70,167

£197,377

Note:

Each year £500 is credited to the Organ Fund. This is a donation from Doreen Robinson in lieu of notional payments that she would receive for playing the organ in regular services.

Vale and Cotswold Edge Benefice

St Peter and St Paul, Blockley

Annual Report for 2024

to be held in church at 10.45am on 11 May 2025



Figure 1 The Northern Lights by Adrian Beney

Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2025

Those present and apologies for absence

Approval of minutes of 2024 AMP (below)

Election of Church Wardens

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Those present and apologies for absence

Approval of minutes of 2024 APCM (below)

Annual Report (attached)

Treasurer's Report (attached)

Elections to PCC

Appointment of PCC vice-chair, PCC Secretary, PCC Treasurer, Independent Examiner, Electoral Roll Officer and any co-options

Minutes of the 2024 AMP and APCM
28th April 2024 in SS Peter and Paul, Blockley
Following the morning service

Annual Meeting of Parishioners

Present: The Revd Canon Dana Delap (Vicar), [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Charles Masheder (Secretary).

Apologies received from [REDACTED]

1. **The minutes from the last meeting (14th May 2023)** were unanimously accepted and signed.
 2. **Election of Church Wardens**
 - [REDACTED], proposed by [REDACTED] seconded by [REDACTED].
 - [REDACTED]; proposed by [REDACTED], seconded by [REDACTED].
 - Both were duly elected, none against. Dana thanked Sarah and Anne for all their service and support to her and to the Church, during the past year, with its various challenges.
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Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. **Those present and apologies for absence** - as above.
2. **Approval of minutes of 14th May 2023 APCM** – were proposed by [REDACTED] and seconded by [REDACTED]. All agreed and they were signed.
3. **Treasurer's Report.** Philip Gee presented the accounts (previously circulated) which had been approved by PCC on March 5th, subject to being agreed by the Examiner, which had now happened. There was a surplus on the General fund of £8,909 this was the result of three items:
 - (a) An increase in income from the BBC (Father Brown) from £5,300 to £11,640;
 - (b) Last year's figures included £6,166 for churchyard lighting;
 - (c) No deficit on The Voice following its re-launch.Expenditure on the reordering project amounted to £80935. The VAT reclaim (Listed Places of Worship scheme) was £7,849. The funds held in the bank and investments accounts totalled £163,634. The Vicar expressed her and the PCC's gratitude to Philip was all his work as Treasurer and the meeting gave him a round of applause.
4. **The Annual Report.** Dana introducing the report, highlighted various aspects.
5. **Electoral Roll Report** - there are 80 people currently on the electoral roll. 4 names have been removed, which represents 9 new members since the APCM of 2023.

Proceedings of the PCC – particularly Safeguarding and the Reordering and Fund-raising.

Children's work - particularly Open the Book and other work with the School and the new Junior Church of the Third Sunday of each month.

Safeguarding – The Appointment of Hannah Webb as the Parish Safeguarding Officer with thanks to Carol Willott for her past work. Also the important need for PCC members and others to have the right level of training.
6. **Vicar's report** – Dana mentioned the considerable input from the Alpha course and subsequent Baptisms and Confirmations. She also spoke of the importance at this stage of the fund-raising for the Reordering Scheme and thanked [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for their work with this. She mentioned that [REDACTED] had taken on the role of Lead

Support for those involved in pastoral ministry across the three parishes. She also thanked Sarah Luff for her role with Children's Work and Open Door. Finally she warmly thanked everyone for the part they play within the life of our Church, whatever that part may be.

██████████ and ██████████ thanked Dana on behalf of the Church for her leadership, even with her present health issues.

7. **Elections:** Synod Rep: ██████████ was proposed by ██████████ and seconded by ██████████ and was duly elected. PCC Members: **Derek Luff** was proposed by ██████████ and seconded by ██████████ and **Laura Bradley** was proposed by ██████████ and seconded by ██████████. Both were duly elected to the two vacancies. **Deputy Wardens** are now ██████████.
8. **Appointments:** ██████████ was appointed as Vice-Chair; **Charles Masheder** as PCC Secretary and **Philip Gee** as PCC Treasurer, who explained that he handles no cash and the Wardens or others do the counting and always in pairs. **John Wilkinson** was proposed as Independent Examiner by ██████████ and seconded by ██████████. All agreed. **Charles Masheder** was also co-opted on to the PCC. **Laura Bradley** offered to serve as Electoral Roll Officer, to be supported by ██████████ with the total revision to start at the beginning of 2025.
9. Dana ended the meeting with thanks to the many who serve.

Blockley Annual Reports

Electoral Roll Report

In 2024, there were 80 people on Blockley Church electoral roll. The Church of England's rules require all its parishes to renew the full roll completely every six years. In other years, it is simply updated. 2025 is such a year and letters and forms have been distributed to those previously on the roll except in obvious circumstances, such as a move away. Other people have been given such forms and the number now for the 2025 APCM is 61. We are still looking for someone to take on this responsibility for the future. (Very simple until 2031!) Being on the electoral roll entitles people to vote in the Annual Church Meetings, and to become office holders, such as members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

Charles Masheder

Churchwardens' Report

We have a busy and positive year in and around Blockley Church to reflect on. From mid-November to March, most church services have been in the Jubilee Hall, as the church is very cold. The exceptions have been the major and joyous Christmas services, when the church was full to capacity, and also baptisms and funerals, whilst the monthly evening services have been in the Little Village Hall. We have enjoyed the warmth over the winter and congregation numbers have held up well. Now that spring is here it is even better to be back in church for services every week.

The new Junior Church every third Sunday of the month is now well established; the Open Door service every first Sunday of the month which also has a focus on children and young people is thriving; and it is excellent that there are children in church services almost every Sunday of the year.

Thanks to the fund raising group chaired by ██████████ we are making progress with our major church heating and re-ordering project as fast as we can – it is reliant on the requirements set by grant giving bodies (in particular the Heritage Fund of the National Lottery), and on local fundraising. Last year we reported that planning and Diocesan permissions were in place. Since then we have made a successful 'Expression of Interest' application to the Heritage Fund for a grant in their 'large' category, of over £250,000. We got this good news just before Christmas, and it followed a useful meeting with their team in Exeter in October. The fundraising group, on behalf of the PCC and congregation, are now working on a 'Stage1' application, for which HF have encouraged us to explore some additional items: work needed to conserve the East Window and additional heating options including air-source heat pumps and infra-red heaters. We hope to apply in May, together with an Activity Plan for three years linked to the capital works, which will encourage members of the local and school communities and other key audiences to learn more about the heritage in a variety of enjoyable ways. The application will go to the Heritage Fund Trustees, and we hope to have their reply by the end of

September. Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust have recently told us that they will give us £10,000, which is very welcome.

We had an excellent Candlemas party for Blockley, Bourton and Ebrington churches, moved this year from the Jubilee Hall to St George's Hall because we needed more space. It too was full to bursting with over 70 people enjoying a splendid home-cooked buffet, a tricky quiz from Dana and great musical entertainment from members of Longborough Opera Youth Chorus.

Last summer members of the three congregations enjoyed a tasty barbecue in the Vicarage garden, and we were delighted to share our hospitality then – also at the Candlemas party – with others who were on holiday, visiting Blockley for a day or two.

Father Brown stories continue to be a source of interest both to the village and to local visitors. Many fans come particularly to Blockley to see the church as a key location and to enjoy the local area. Locals and fans alike thoroughly enjoyed an 'Evening with Father Brown' in October in St George's Hall, with drinks, canapes, a sketch by Mark Williams and two of his actor colleagues and an opportunity for photos. The BBC will return again for filming this summer.

It is a privilege to be your Churchwardens and we are very aware that all of this vibrancy and development is enabled by the time and energy that so many volunteers contribute to the church community: more activities and names than we can list. Thank you all very much.

A few volunteers have recently stood down, to whom we are very grateful, and it would be lovely to welcome some new volunteers. A range of options are available and it's not a life sentence! So do get in touch with one of us or with Dana if you have some time regularly or from time to time that you'd be happy to use for church activities – we look forward to hearing from you.

We are all indebted to Dana in particular, as she looks after us all and leads the churches locally and beyond, while continuing to work through the implications of Long Covid, with the help of [REDACTED], and to the very valuable additional clergy resource we have locally in Charles Masheder, David Quin and others.

Sarah Brazier and Anne Packer, Churchwardens

Proceedings of the PCC in 2024

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) performed its duties, which include consulting together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish, promoting the whole mission of the Church in the parish: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical and maintaining its relationship with the Diocese. The following activities were of particular note in 2024: Safeguarding and Role Descriptions; the proposed Re-ordering Scheme and its funding, in particular from the Heritage Fund; Finance; Building Maintenance; charitable Giving; Parish and Benefice events.

Charles Masheder, PCC Secretary

Treasurer's report

The accounts for 2024 are in a document separate from the Annual Report. The accounts were approved and signed at the PCC meeting on 18th March, 2025. Our Independent Examiner, John Wilkinson, has completed his work and the accounts (see separate document) include his signed report dated 15th April, 2025 on page 2. I would like to draw your attention to the following points about the accounts:

As is shown near the bottom of page 3 (left hand column) there was a surplus on General Funds. This was £9,086 before adjusting for transfers between funds and the gains reflecting the increase in the market value of the two CBF investments. This was just a small increase on the General Fund surplus of £8,909 for 2023 despite an increase in income from the BBC for Father Brown filming of £7,225. It needs to be borne in mind that the level of income from the BBC is uncertain year on year and inevitably it will stop completely at some point in the future.

As can be seen from the Designated Funds column on page 3, the income from The Voice was again comfortably more than expenditure.

Expenditure continued on the reordering project during the year but, as is shown towards the foot of the Restricted column on page 3, this amounted £14,946 compared with £80,935 in 2023. This decrease in expenditure reflects the pause in work while an application for a substantial grant from the Heritage Fund is prepared.

As is shown in the income section of the Restricted column on page 3, donations for the reordering project totalled £28,608 and £4,086 was received from fundraising events. During the year

the PCC decided to open a separate account with Lloyds Bank to receive and hold large donations towards the reordering project. At 31st December, 2024 the balance on that account was £25,895 as shown in the list of bank and investment accounts on page 4. The funds held for the reordering project are listed on page 5 and totalled £78,997 at 31st December, 2024 – Restricted Funds £28,792, designated Funds £50,205. A full breakdown of the amounts held in Restricted, Designated and Unrestricted Funds is shown on page 5. Details of the funds held in bank and investment accounts are shown on page 4. At 31st December, 2024 these totalled £197,377. I am happy to answer any questions at the APCM on 11th May.

Philip Gee PCC Treasurer

Safeguarding Annual Report

During the last year we have been actively encouraging all member of the PCC and other church officers to complete the various levels of safeguarding training required. Liz Jones, church administrator, continues to organise DBS checks as needed.

The Parish Dashboard online site is used to record safeguarding tasks and shows areas that need improvement. The dashboard can be used to create an Action Plan for use at PCC meetings which allows members to clearly see which duties are fulfilled and which areas may be lacking. This plan also helps give the PCC members a clear list of their duties and the requirements needed to meet their safeguard responsibilities. We use the Church of England Safeguarding Training Portal for online safeguard training and training can also be completed in person for those who prefer face to face training.

Church Activity groups such as Home Group and Junior Church have completed Safeguarding risk assessments, and all activity group key members have the training completed and DBS checks. All groups have safeguarding in place.

The PCC is committed to the importance and necessity of good safeguarding procedures and training.

A Pastoral Support Group, co-ordinated by [REDACTED] and overseen by Dana, has been set up to give support to those whose roles include giving pastoral guidance to members of the church and community. This group meets 3 times a year and is proving to be very beneficial and is fulfilling its remit by preventing volunteers feeling isolated in their roles

Hannah Webb, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Church Re-ordering

Throughout 2024, work has continued preparing suitable applications to various funding bodies to achieve sufficient financial support to allow Reordering work to commence. That's a pretty bland and, indeed, fatuous statement, and gives absolutely no indication of the sheer effort that has had to be made by very few highly dedicated people to get us to where we are. As Chair of the Fund-raising committee, I do very little except tell others to get on with it – which is exactly what they have done, by and large very successfully.

A number of local people have pledged significant contributions towards our Reordering, for which we are very grateful indeed, and we have identified a range of Charitable Trusts who are able to support our kind of project. However, those efforts, by themselves, would never cover the Reordering cost and so our main activity has been centred on our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (HF) for a grant that would allow us to protect and enhance the Heritage of our church.

We had a "lightbulb moment" some months ago when we realised that, on the advice of HF amongst others, it would be far better were we to seek a much bigger grant than originally envisaged as, paradoxically, it would be no more difficult to apply for, would allow us to fund all aspects of the project, and might even get a quicker result. Thanks to the efforts of our small team – and the unstinting support of our consultant fund-raiser, Julia Holberry – the team has established good working relations with HF. Hence, we are hopeful of success, if not yet exactly confident. Having had our Expression of Interest endorsed by HF, we are now working to submit our Stage 1 Application in May of this year. This is no trivial exercise but essential if we are to achieve HF's support. Yes, HF is bureaucratic, and tedious in its demands, but it's handing out other peoples' money (in our case, we hope just short of £1M) and so needs to have confidence that we'll actually do what we promise in our application. All that means that the Reordering of our church is neither cheap, easy nor short-term, but I would ask

the congregation to bear with us as, unless we finish what we're doing, our church will inevitably fall into serious, and possibly terminal, decline. [REDACTED]

Open Door Multi-Generational Worship

The Open Door Worship, which takes place on the first Sunday of every month, continues to be successful. Numbers are always healthy and have remained so, with a good mix of adults without children and families with younger children. Ages therefore range from a few months old all the way up to octogenarians. A typical service has about 40 members of the congregation. Some people come to virtually every service, whilst others attend when they are just staying for a short time in the parish. The service always starts with fellowship, with people talking and enjoying breakfast (usually a bacon sandwich). At this time, there is often a craft or activity for both children and adults to get involved with, which is linked in some way to the theme of the service or the Bible passage. These activities have included: making bird feeders as part of a service on Creation, decorating fruit cut-outs for Galatians 'fruit of the Spirit' and invisible writing, as part of the passage in Exodus about coming face to face with God and his love shining out to us. The service usually involves some interactivity for both adults and children alike and has a warm, friendly and relaxed manner. It has remained a successful model of multi-generational worship for many years now and the congregation truly feels like a family; even when new people arrive for the first time, they leave feeling like they belong.

The services are led by Dana and me, with support from a group of trusted individuals who all use their varied gifts to bring the services to light. [REDACTED], accompanied by [REDACTED] incorporate live music, often including use of children or other adults, for the welcome and for the hymns/songs. [REDACTED], along with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], help Dana to develop the theme or Bible passage into a reflective, visually engaging service. Worship has included acting out Bible passages, Godly plays and themed stations around the church. Sometimes we go outside into nature and sometimes we reflect with art and craft or hand written collective prayers. Taking home a piece of craft or an illuminated star, homemade biscuit, bird feeder, etc., helps our church family to continue to reflect on the sermon beyond the Sunday morning. [REDACTED]

Junior Church Report for Blockley, Bourton on the Hill and Ebrington

Junior Church has now been happening for over a year at Blockley! We have continued to offer a session on the third Sunday of the month when school age children are invited to go out for their own bible story and related activities during the 9:30am communion service. These take place in the entrance hall when services are in the Jubilee Hall and in the Church Room next to the vicarage when services are in church. (We are looking forward to the day when we will be able to be in a room IN the church!) The children rejoin parents and carers for a blessing at the communion rail towards the end of the service. Our aim is to familiarize the children with stories and teaching from the bible, to celebrate and reassure each child of God's love and care for them and to help them feel that they belong and are valued in the church family.

This year the average age of the children attending is considerably younger than when we started these sessions and parents of younger preschool children have joined us with them. Aware of this we have tried to make the sessions more interactive and with a good variety of what we hope are enjoyable activities. Recently we have created the illusion of turning water into wine, made a junk model of the disciples' fishing boat, played games, made cakes with surprise fillings, planted seeds, along with traditional craft and colouring. If possible, our stories are taken from the readings set for the day in church, but sometimes we may take one from a nearby week which is more accessible for children. We choose a "memory verse" from our story or reading to focus on and use material and ideas from "Roots on the Web", a resource that produces ideas for All Age Worship and Children's work related to the lectionary, as our starting point.

The Junior Church leadership team is made up of [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is one of the mums who come out with her children and we are delighted that she has agreed to join us in what we are doing. It has meant that since the beginning of 2025, [REDACTED] has been able to step back to focus on other things whilst still being involved with the admin and prayer support for Junior Church. When we are in

the church room, we need more adults for safeguarding reasons and we are very grateful to those members of the congregation who have volunteered to help. Numbers of children are in single digits but some are now attending quite regularly and, in any case, every single child is precious to God and we feel that there should be something available for them on a regular basis. We are thankful for the encouragement we have received. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Youth and Children's Ministry in the VaCE Benefice

PROVERBS 22:6 "TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO; EVEN WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT"

Overview in Churches:

1st Sunday - TEN all age service St James Church – Amy
1st Sunday - Open Door - Blockley team
2nd Sunday - Muddy Church - Kate Irvin
3rd Sunday - Family service St James –Amy
3rd Sunday - Family service Willersey
3rd Sunday - Sunday school provision - Blockley team
4th Sunday of the month - Family service Mickleton - Amy

School work:

Bright Sparks after school club on going. Alternating termly throughout the schools across the VaCE Benefice.

CCS Mentoring KS3

TLG mentoring KS2

Collective worship St James and Ebrington school

Collective worship Mickleton school

Collective worship Honeybourne school

Collective worship Pebworth Church Visits, utilising the education departments Experience packs - Mickleton, Willersey, Pebworth, Honeybourne, St James & Ebrington school and Blockley
Supporting OTB team in Willersey and Pebworth with the view to develop an OTB team across the VaCE as other schools have expressed an interest. School led Service within each church across the VaCE team. Leadership to offer reflection/prayers. Toddlers - Kiddywinks nursery visits to St James Church

Looking forward into the new terms:

Prayer/mindfulness Spaces in school

Eco Church Experience for schools across the team.

Family activities/ supporting events in our community.

After school Youth outreach to CCS students.

Engage with church toddler groups to help build relationship with new families.

Family days.

Discipling the young people within our team. Through a church context. Encouraging young leaders.

Update: Since [REDACTED] left our team. We have been focusing on maintaining links and relationships with our schools and church families. We have had several encouraging conversations with potential replacements. However, they have led to a dead end for now. With an advert now circulating, we are ever hopeful the right candidate will join our team.

Youth gatherings across the team have been a challenge after several attempts at gathering them all together. We have yet to achieve a regular established youth group. A number of factors causing this outcome, one being a number of our young people attend different schools, with difference schooling hours, extracurricular activities taking precedent for many of our young people. After speaking to a few of the youth, the consensus is that they are happy volunteering and becoming young leaders in a church context. They enjoy our all age services and would

attend youth socials on an infrequent basis. We are looking at how to best disciple our young people in the context they enjoy and how we can provide a youth outreach after school for students at CCS.

Please continue to pray for the children and young people across the VaCE, their families and all those faithful serving the children and young people.

Open the Book

“Open the Book” takes place on Tuesday mornings at Blockley Primary School, in St. George’s Hall, with a team of storytellers who are members of the church community. The current team comprises [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and myself. We read and enact stories from the Bible, with the help of the children, from Reception Class upwards. “Open the Book” is a Bible Society initiative, and the Tuesday morning sessions are based on stories in a Children’s Bible specially produced by the Society. The latest version contains 90 stories, starting with Genesis and finishing with Revelation.

Each weekly session is planned to involve a number of children. Some stories provide opportunities for all Classes to take part; at other times a smaller number of children have speaking roles. There are often only a few minutes in which to rehearse! The Open the Book team provides costumes and props, and there is never a shortage of volunteers to take part. The School has a seemingly endless supply of talented, confident and enthusiastic young actors, and the Tuesday morning sessions are enjoyed not only by the children but also by the Open the Book team. We would very much welcome additional team members. There is no requirement to be an “actor” or to attend every Tuesday morning in the school year. Mandatory safeguarding checks are necessary. Open the Book does involve commitment; it is also very enjoyable and great fun.

None of this could happen without the support of the School and the team is very grateful to the Head Teacher, staff and pupils. [REDACTED]

Sacristans

There is currently a team of four sacristans: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and myself. Thanks to my colleagues’ unfailing efficiency, flexibility and good humour, the system has worked well over the past year.

On average each sacristan supports one or two services per month, but at some times of the year the church calendar and sacristans’ other commitments can make the rota a logistic challenge. Four sacristans really is a minimum number, and additional team members are needed. The role of sacristan is an interesting and important one, and the addition of one or two more would help to ensure that a sacristan is always available when needed.

The arrangement whereby Sunday services are currently held in the Jubilee Hall during Autumn and Winter rather than in church has presented the sacristans with some challenges, notably the need to transport the Eucharist silver to and from church. Despite this, all has gone smoothly to date. My thanks to Laurie, Catrina and Felicity for all that they do as sacristans. Their support is invaluable and greatly appreciated. [REDACTED]

Blockley Benefice Choir

Again, our thanks to all concerned for the warmth and comfort of Jubilee Hall for choir rehearsals and services during the winter months. We have, as always, enjoyed singing together and the friendship that this engenders and our numbers continue to rise. This year we have welcomed [REDACTED] – a much needed tenor to support [REDACTED] – and [REDACTED] into the soprano line. [REDACTED] continues to support us for all major services and events and [REDACTED] Keay-[REDACTED] helps out when he is able.

Socially, we have enjoyed a number of special occasions this year. In June we partook of a delicious tea at Charingworth Manor and in September we celebrated [REDACTED] 90th birthday in style. This was a tea party hosted at Sara and Garry’s beautiful home and garden and we managed to keep it all a big secret from [REDACTED] until she arrived, when we welcomed her with a rendering of “When Irish Eyes are smiling!” In the autumn we enjoyed a workshop/supper to start off our preparations for Christmas music.

We have sung at 2 funerals this year but sadly no weddings. As mentioned in the last report we sang “Olivet to Calvary” on Good Friday and this year (2025) we shall be singing Stainer’s “Crucifixion” on Saturday 12th April at Ebrington Church and on Good Friday at Blockley church.

Finally our grateful thanks and appreciation to Doreen for her leadership and encouragement.

Blockley Bell Ringers

2024 was another good year for Bellringing in Blockley. We had seven visiting teams we had last year, one of which rang a whole peal lasting 3 hours; there is only one booked this year. Otherwise, our 10 local ringers, without any help from our long term ringers from other towers, are not only safe, but fully competent to ring on our own.

Delightfully, we now have two ringers who have just begun to learn. We practice every Thursday evening from 7:30pm and ring on Sunday mornings, except the first in the month. Anyone who would like to have a go or just to see what we do is always welcome.

Some of us have been along to the Cheltenham and Gloucester ringing tours. These happen once a month, ringing in four or five towers, and making sure we have time for a good pub lunch.

The high light for us, though, was a trip on the Hedgehog bus to ring in Gloucester Cathedral. The circuitous route up to the ringing chamber was almost as fun as the ringing itself.

Mimi Stephens, Tower Captain

Home Group report

The last year has been a full and varied one for the home groups. We currently have around 27 people attending across three groups and I will include a little of the feedback we’ve recently collected. From January to April 2024, each group followed the Church of England’s Pilgrim Course on The Lord’s Prayer, which was generally agreed to be excellent. As one person wrote: ‘I believe this prayer is often said without really thinking about what the words actually mean. It was interesting to break it down and focus on each part and discuss our thoughts on the meaning of each phrase.’

From April through to October (with a summer break), the three groups met together in the Little Village Hall for a course about the whole Bible, which endeavoured to give an overview of its history, geography, structure and overall ‘story’. Comments included: ‘Good to follow the Old Testament stories and see how they link in with the New Testament;’ and ‘Great to deepen understanding of the Bible and be inspired to read the whole book.’

From October (through to this March), we used The Prayer Course, with a video each week presented by Pete Greig of the 24/7 Prayer Movement. This was again very positively received, with comments such as: ‘Very insightful and helpful. I learnt a lot. Have been praying more and more,’ and ‘Loved this course. It has really helped with my prayer life. Liked the format of video and discussion.’ In addition to what we’ve all been learning, I think everyone agrees that the home groups are equally important in strengthening friendship and fellowship, and in enabling us all to ‘encourage one another and build each other up’, as the Apostle Paul encourages us to do (1 Thess 5:11). Anyone is welcome to join. If you are interested, please just speak to Dana or one of the leaders to find out more.

Charitable Giving Report

The PCC has a policy of contributing annually to charities – generally 10 of these – which work locally, nationally or internationally. In 2024 the church contributed £300 to each. The charities chosen were: Buddy Bag Foundation; Power of Parenting; Replenished Life; Home Start Cotswolds; Christians Against Poverty; Medecins Sans Frontiers; Kidney Care; Bag Books; Campden Home Nursing; Gloucestershire Historic Churches’ Trust and our linked diocese of Tamale in Ghana.

For 2025 the chosen charities are (supporting local, national and international charities) Campden Nursing, Cotswolds Friends, Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust, North Cotswolds Food Bank, The Britain Nepal Medical Trust, The Children’s Society, Christian Aid, Church Missionary Society (for support for [redacted] and [redacted]), Keppelwray (supporting the work of [redacted]) and Diocese of Tamale, Ghana

Church Flowers

Our overall aim continues: To present beautiful, sustainable flower displays in Church during the months when the Church is used for services, (except Advent and Lent.) The return to Church in 2024 coincided with Holy Week and the celebration of Easter. The congregation contributed generously to the purchase of Easter lilies.

The Summer of 2024 was a hive of activity. As well as the regular services the church was booked for a number of weddings throughout the summer. Many of these were local couples or couples with strong associations with Blockley who really appreciated our philosophy of providing sustainable arrangements using locally grown flowers and foraged foliage. Generous allotment gardeners were very happy for some of their flowers to be used particularly for weddings and special celebrations.

When the congregation moved up to the Jubilee Hall for winter services, the decision was again taken not to have flowers. However, during Advent the re-usable advent ring with Advent colour LED candles were again used.

With Christmas services back in Church the Christmas flowers were a joy to do and made the Church feel loved once more. We were able to forage for fresh foliage and re-use our lovely silk flower collection. This year we also used additional decorations and lights we keep at home. As the flowers were silk and the greenery was all evergreen we were able to leave everything in place for the whole of January, only dismantling when the Christmas trees were taken down at Epiphany.

██████ and I love doing the flowers in Church. We get tremendous joy from the task. However, sadly, during the winter we have both had challenges in our personal lives. Neither of us want to give up doing the church flowers, but it does mean that we can no longer offer wedding flowers in the same way this summer.

We very much hope that some other members of the congregation and community may come forward to offer their help with simple flowers for the services. There will be no expectation of anything elaborate, but we do hope that garden flowers and local foliage will continue to be celebrated in a sustainable fashion. ██████████ and ██████████

The Voice Annual Report

Following the relaunch of the magazine at the beginning of 2023 last year was a year of consolidation. ██████████ retired as editor but remains a member of the editorial team and continues to edit the parish diary and the list of contacts for village organisations, which is such a valuable service. We said goodbye to ██████████, who since 2015 together with ██████████, had organised the wonderful team of volunteers who deliver the magazine. Taking over this task with ██████████ and ██████████, ██████████, also a member of the editorial team, brought his enthusiasm to the important role of collecting subscriptions. Later in the year ██████████ joined the team and has curated the local author's series. It is extraordinary how many authors have second houses or live in our area. ██████████ has done a great job in tracking them down.

We also welcomed our new editor Emily Wood who brought her enthusiasm and commitment to the magazine. It is no exaggeration to say that she transformed the layout and composition of the magazine, bringing a professional finish to the pages. Ebrington was added to our circulation area and covering that parish is now an important additional role. We continued to receive great support from Blockley Parish Council, both in terms of a generous grant and our own spot on the masthead of their web site for our digital edition. Since the launch in July 2023 it has received more than 12,000 views and helped us secure more advertising.

We have regular editorial meetings which encourage us to be more ambitious. In June we hosted at the Jubilee Hall an exhibition *Better Living in the Country*. The many visitors were impressed by just how many local organisations we have, helping us all to live life to the full. Opening the event together with his wife Julia was the Gloucestershire High Sheriff and Deputy Lieutenant Mark Hurrell. He was very generous of his time and has become a good friend to the magazine. The vision shown and shared at the exhibition has become a leitmotif for us and we try to express this in each edition. One success was to persuade the county council to include additional stops in Blockley for *The Robin* bookable community bus service.

At the end of 2024 we said a fond farewell to Emily who had secured a key role in a local secondary school leaving her with little time left for The Voice. We had four excellent applicants to replace her, any of whom would have been suitable, but we chose Margot Wharton. Living in Ebrington she has come back to the Cotswolds, where she grew up. One event early in 2025 needs to be reported here. The Gloucestershire High Sheriff Mark Hurrell has awarded a High Sheriff award to our former editor Emily Wood for her work as Editor for the Voice community magazine. The award was presented on Tuesday 18th March and is a huge tribute to Emily and her Voice team. One of the criteria for the award is to help make Gloucestershire a desirable and safe place to live, work and enjoy. Buoyed by this success under our new editor Margot Worton the Voice team will continue to deliver each edition a magazine worthy of this award.

■■■■■, *Chairman of the Editorial Team*

Blockley Handbells

As last year, our team of six ringers continues to practise regularly in the Church Room with the bells owned by the church, though in June we did play in *Church Gates* garden with ■■■■■ kind permission, the weather being clement; a few visitors to the village came and listened.

In December, we went over to Charlbury to entertain the folk at the Lunch Club there, and then, a few days later we rang at the Church Carol Service. So, we're not exactly busy, but are aiming to play not just for our own pleasure but to groups who would like to hear us and, if the weather allows, outside on occasions this year.

We are still keen to recruit one or two more people as, if any one of our present team is unable to ring, we are in difficulties. Most of us can't yet handle four bells at a time. Any new members would need to be able to read music.

■■■■■

Blockley, Bourton on the Hill and Ebrington Pastoral Support Group

The Pastoral Support Group meets three times a year with the aim of offering support to those who lead pastoral care in our communities. We have adopted a protocol for confidentiality and work together in accordance with this. The Pastoral Support Group are encouraged to have open and honest communication, within a safe and supportive environment, to discuss concerns and challenges, while upholding the ethical responsibility to protect the privacy and dignity of the people we support.

■■■■■

Cakes and Company

The year started well with our first meeting in February. It was lovely to be able to welcome our members back for tea after the Christmas period. The entertainment was a lively session of bingo. At our March meeting we welcomed the Blockley Handbells group where our members were able to sing along to a number of popular tunes. Our members do enjoy a good sing-a-long. In April great laughter rang through the Hall when Fourplay (side kick to the BAD Company) entertained us with some very funny verses and songs. They even brought some of their "groupies" with them. We had the largest group of people attending a Cakes & Company meeting in our history! Great fun was had by all.

In July we held our first Summer Lunch at the Jubilee Hall (Heritage Centre) -a delicious two course lunch with prosecco and fruit juice. This event was catered for us by ■■■■■ with the help of ■■■■■. After lunch we were entertained by Blockley Village School. It was a lovely way to wind up a wonderful lunch and afternoon. Once again, in August we held our annual Cake Sale in the Churchyard. Our team of ladies excelled themselves with a huge selection of cakes and savoury bakes. We raised an amazing £588 on the cake stall and £189 on the raffle. We opened the stall at 10.00 am and by 11.20 am we were sold out! The money from the sale will go towards our Summer lunch for our members and helpers in 2025.

In September Cakes & Company celebrated their 22nd birthday where we were entertained by Barry Jukes, a professional vocalist. We did wonder whether ■■■■■ would be able to entertain us as just before 3.00 pm we had a power cut, but ■■■■■ had it all under control as all his equipment was pre-charged. Thanks to ■■■■■ and ■■■■■ we were able to serve tea.

In December we held our Christmas Party, where we were delighted to present all our members with a small gift of a box of chocolates. We had a wonderful afternoon singing along to all the

old Christmas favourites lead by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] on the piano.

We'd like to thank everyone who graciously gave up their time to come and entertain us in 2024. We would also like to thank [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who made some delicious soups for Souper Monday, with the help of some of our team, they raised an amazing £288 which they donated to Cakes & Company. We'd also like to thank Blockley Parish Council for the grant which enabled [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to hire the hall and buy the ingredients for Souper Monday to happen. The team would also like to thank the PCC who very kindly covers the hire of the Little Village Hall for our meetings, which we greatly appreciate.

The bank balance as at 31st December, 2024 stands at £1742.28. which provides a sound foundation for 2025. The Blockley Parish Council accidentally paid £240 into our account for Souper Monday, this should have been paid directly to Sue Salmon. Cakes & Company have paid this amount to Mrs [REDACTED] which leaves our bank account at a healthy balance of £1502.28 for 2025. Philip Gee has provided an Independent Examiner's Report confirming that the Accounts are in order. Yvonne hugely appreciates the continued support she receives from the 'helpers' and thanks them very much for providing all the wonderful cakes etc. and for all their hard work. All the food provided for the afternoon tea and the annual cake stall is donated by these wonderful ladies.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Blockley Forum

The Forum is the monthly Wednesday lunchtime space where we discuss topical issues, after coffee, tea and biscuits. And this year saw no more topical issue than the June General Election, for which we held a Forum Hustings. All the candidates except Reform took part, heard and questioned by over 100 people from widely around (as many as the Gloucester Cathedral's hustings, we gather). It was expertly chaired by Charles Masheder, whose stopwatch and bell kept even the most eminent candidates in order. *'Thank you - it helped me make up my mind'* was the comment of a number of participants, after the session which had laid bare the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. So a useful service provided.

The Forum also received the customary annual report by Jon Bryan, Chair of the Blockley Parish Council. He gave a good and appreciated account of the work done by the Council, but went on to list the significant jobs not being fully done, because of the shortage of council members - his challenge, not yet risen to. At other Forums, the new Principal of Chipping Campden School, Gareth Burton, impressed all with his account of the good school he had inherited from John Sanderson, and also by his candour about the challenges of leading a school in today's world. Our own Stephanie Bevan reported on her published Coventry University research *Hidden Rural Hardship*, based on real-life evidence from the North Cotswolds. And just last month, Richard White, who manages the Northwick Park Business Park on behalf of the Parham Trust, shed fascinating light on the eighty companies on site, providing intriguing local services and 300 critical local jobs.

The Forum is now on a short sabbatical. We have planned to resume after the summer break. But there is an issue. *Everyone* tells me how good it is to have the Forum. That's good to hear – except that *the actual support* is patchy. For example, the Gloucestershire County Council's Cabinet Member travelled a long way to discuss the Council's plans for improving rural bus services – surely something that matters for a community like ours – yet his audience was barely into double figures. We cannot continue to ask busy people to give us their time, without enough actual participation. So - do we want the Forum to continue? Please tell me. And if so, I appreciate suggestions for subjects and people you would like the Forum to engage with.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Vicar's Report 2024

January started with a joint service for Plough Sunday at Ebrington. Epiphany was successfully wrapped into the service and a good number of people were able to attend. As usual, Ebrington's hospitality was warmly welcomed. The Epiphany party enjoyed excellent food organised by the Blockley wardens, and music from members of the Longborough Youth Chorus



In February, the clergy ran an excellent marriage preparation day. Our lives are hugely enriched by being part of the VaCE, and the leadership of Canon Craig Bishop. I was very ill with long covid for much of the first half of the year, and I relied on my church wardens, Peter, Anne, Sarah, Naomi and Philip, our retired clergy and readers, David, Charles, Peter, Nicholas, and Wayne among others and our Licenced Funeral minister, Angie. They sustain ministry in our churches. Thank you!

Professor Corrine Fowler came to lead a walk from Bourton to Seizoncote based on her book, *Our Island Stories*. This was well attended and still others gathered to hear her speak in church. Contested Heritage is an important issue for the Church of England, since a significant part of our wealth comes from slavery, and Corrine helped to put this in context. The three churches will all be looking at our monuments during the next 12 months to see if we need to offer interpretation.



In May, Bishop Rachel came to spend a weekend with us in the VaCE, and joined members of churches in Blockley, Bourton and Ebrington who have a particular pastoral ministry in safeguarding, and in discipling children and adults – [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Bourton on the Hill treated +Rachel to a flower festival with music, wonderfully arranged by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The bishop also spent time with wedding couples and young people and complimented the team on our active discipleship and mission.

The 80th anniversary of D Day was remembered in St James Chipping Campden, closely followed closely followed by our summer barbeque at Blockley Vicarage, which took place in sunshine in 2024.





An enormously successful Ride and Stride took place in September, organised by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. There were both striders and riders travelling from Ebrington to Bourton on the Hill via Blockley. Impressive sums were raised for the churches and for the Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust who continue to generously support work in our churches.



The usual team of strong and able men (and me!) put up the deanery tent for the Moreton Show, and the day received support for lay and ordained people from around the deanery. The day is attended by 20,000 visitors, and to have a church presence there is important. We value the support of the show and of the show chaplain, our own Revd David Quin.



And also in September, we celebrated [REDACTED] birthday and Dana's anniversary of her arrival in Blockley. We appreciate the excellent choir led by [REDACTED], who contribute so much to our weekly worship.



Junior Church took place every third Sunday in Blockley and continued to draw new families. Through this and Open Door, we have built new relationships with a generation of children and their families and carers. Second Sunday at Six and our home groups have offered introductions to faith and discipleship to 30+ people.



There is a strong sense of belonging in the church community, for which I am very thankful. 2025 brings the continuing challenges of fundraising for our conservation and development work, parties and gatherings, and the steady rhythm of Sunday Eucharists, as we delight in following the footsteps of Jesus.

