



Devizes ST John & ST Mary

Heart and Soul in the Centre of our Town

The Ecclesiastical Parish
of
St John with St Mary, Devizes

Annual Report 2022



Our Vision:

The Lord calls us to do justly, love mercy
and walk humbly with our God: Micah 6:8

Administrative information

St John's Church is situated in Long Street, Devizes. St Mary's Church is situated in New Park Street, Devizes. The parish is part of the Diocese of Salisbury within the Church of England. The correspondence address is: the Parish Office, The Parish Rooms, Long Street, Devizes SN10 1NP.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a registered charity No.1133990 and is made up of:

Incumbent: The Revd. Jonathan Poston

Assistant Curate: The Revd. Gerry Lynch

Churchwardens:

Jane Scorer Lay Vice-Chair

Bob Simpson

Mike McClelland

Representatives on the Deanery Synod:

Catherine Brown

Peter Crofts

David Evans

Elected members:

Judy Bridger

Becky Edgington - Treasurer

Martin Houghton

Alan Martin

Liz Overthrow - Secretary

Catherine Tarrant

Stephanie Williams

Co-opted member:

Chris Cox - Licensed Lay Minister

Parish Ministry

Rector: The Revd. Jonathan Poston (from November 2021)

Assistant Curate: The Revd. Gerry Lynch

Clergy with Permission to Officiate:

The Revd. Canon George Royle

The Revd. Robin Stephens

The Revd. Chris Burdon

Licensed Lay Minister with Permission to Officiate:

Chris Cox

Mark Harrison

Lay Pastoral Assistants:

Claire Arden

Catherine Brown

Bankers:

Lloyds Bank

The Market Place

Devizes

SN10 1JD

Auditors: J S Weeks

REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF DEVIZES, ST JOHN & ST MARY

AIM AND PURPOSES

St John & St Mary Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Jonathan Poston, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of St John's Church, St Mary's Church and St John's Parish Rooms.

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.
- 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 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 God.
 - 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 our parish churches and the parish rooms.

Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on free reserves (net current assets) which equates to at least three months' unrestricted payments.

It is our policy to invest the short-term investment fund balances with the CCLA Church of England Deposit Fund, and the remainder in the CCLA Church of England Investment Fund.

Structure, governance and management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England.

The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is a Registered Charity.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules.

At St John & St Mary the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our rector), the associate priest and the assistant curate, 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 / members of the 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.

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The Parochial Church Council met seven times during the year and the following topics were discussed:

Health and Safety policy updates

Safeguarding training

Churchyard maintenance including development of Reflection Area

Eco-church

Activities and events around the Diamond Jubilee

Creation of social area at the west end of St John's

Replacement of the organ in St John's

St Mary's development project

Planning for the Vision Day in November

Liz Overthrow

THE ELECTORAL ROLL

As ever, we have lost some friends throughout the year and gained some more. At 31 December 2022 there were 136 names on the Electoral Roll. As always, I would urge members of the congregation to ask if those sitting next to them each Sunday are on the Electoral Roll. If they are not on the roll, encourage them to see me and complete an application form. Forms will also be available in church.

Catherine Brown - Electoral Roll Officer

RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS

Jonathon Poston

CURATE'S REFLECTION

Gerry Lynch

SAFEGUARDING

The procedural changes and Covid-related disruption of recent years has been replaced by a steadier routine. The process of reducing the frequency of Data and Barring Service (DBS) checks from five to three years is continuing, and we are seeing more being triggered as the three-year point approaches. The online checking process usually works smoothly, which I appreciate as a Verifier when routinely asked to check people from other parishes.

As usual in these reports, it is worth mentioning that these sometimes-complex procedures help to create an environment that is safer for us all, so that the PCC complies with its duty to have "due regard" to the House of Bishops' guidance in relation to safeguarding. If you have a question about any aspect, by all means contact me.

Jerry King
Parish Safeguarding Officer

REPORT FROM BUILDING & GROUNDS SUB-COMMITTEE

St John's

Our project to install a new pipe organ has been restarted with a target date of 2025. We are in the process of appointing an organ builder and then we intend to seek a suitable redundant organ as a starting point. Much fundraising will be required

Parish Rooms – the sub-group responsible for overseeing the rooms and their use is not functioning in the absence of a volunteer to lead on this. Lettings are at a low level.

Quinquennial inspection – at the time of writing the inspection report is awaited

Once the organ project has been completed, perhaps we set ourselves a target of reordering the church in time for the 900th anniversary

Whilst functioning, the boiler(s) have continued to present problems through the winter. Hopefully these will have been resolved before the APCM

We hope to undertake a rebuild of the tower clock this year. It hasn't had a major overhaul for about half a century.

St Mary's

At the time of writing, 'Invitation to tender' documents have been issued to potential contractors in respect of quinquennial works. Thus, by the time of the APCM, we should be clearer about how this work will be done – and how much it will cost

The reordering project should flow on from the quinquennial work but financing the project remains challenging

The boiler has not been working over the winter months and as a consequence we have not been using the church at all for some while. Repairs are in hand.

Churchyards (Both)

Small but dedicated groups of volunteers continue to care for both churchyards. More volunteers always welcome. Community Payback have also assisted through the year with grass cutting and other works. We continue with the intention of developing 'living churchyards' and promoting bio-diversity. At St John's, we have finally progressed to a faculty application for a Reflection Area' in the south west corner of the

churchyard. Hopefully we will be able to progress this project during the current year.

Mike McClelland

Health & Safety

While the restrictions on our movements on socialising and on social distancing, seem a distant memory, it has been less than a year since we all breathed a sigh of relief when at last COVID restrictions were eased. Nevertheless, there are some among our congregation who still feel the need to take precautions by continuing to social distance and for some to wear masks. We continue to respect their wish.

For us all it has been a period of 'jab after jab' helping to provide each of us with some level of immunity against the return of COVID.....

.....except, I write the following, from personal experience. Sadly we know that COVID has a habit of reappearing just when we least expect it and I have known friends who have succumbed to the unexpected return of COVID! I would therefore urge everyone to take a COVID test should the well accepted symptoms be experienced - runny nose, loss of smell, fatigue etc. - and if positive, advise all those with whom you have been in recent contact, and remain isolated yourself 'till your test is clear.

Last year, the traditional early morning Ascension day tower climb by our choir members and others who cared to join them, was sadly cancelled. Despite having been climbed for decades, a fresh eye on health and particularly safety, was sufficient for me to review the risks involved. Since that time, a new 'Tower Climb' Risk Assessment has been approved by the PCC. The responsible lead on such occasions is the Director of Music who will brief all concerned in advance of the climb.

You will have realised that the South door of St John's Church is currently closed for services and will remain closed during the winter months - and at any other time the church wardens consider it necessary, to preserve

heating and to improve the comfort of all attending our church. Please be assured that while the south door will not be used, it will remain unlocked should the unlikely need arise to evacuate the building.

There have been no major Health & Safety issues this past year - I am grateful for that - after two years of risk assessments and enforced disciplines in place, to ensure our wellbeing. Nevertheless, I welcome any concerns you may have about the welfare and the safety of us all; you can be assured that any issues will be dealt with as soon as practically possible.

Finally, there have been no major changes to the St John's and St Mary's Health & Safety policies (an appendix has been added to the Working at Height section of both policies) nor have there been any changes to the St John's and St Mary's Fire Risk Assessments; your PCC reviewed and agreed them all in January. (Any necessary changes required during the year were contained in specific Risk Assessments – e.g. the Tower Climb)

Alan Martin

Spirituality Team

A review of the Spirituality Team remit concluded that the following responsibilities would be transferred to the 'Ministerial Team':

- The pattern of services and seasonal worship
- The musical and choral tradition within the parish.

With that in mind, the role of the spirituality team is to oversee and enhance occasions for spiritual engagement and expression within the parish, including:

- Opportunities for prayer, worship, and spiritual practice

- Opportunities for spiritual engagement during Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter
- The 'Reflection', Bible Study and Lectio Divina groups
- The development and progression of the parish as a 'Contemplative Community'
- Quiet days, retreats, and pilgrimages
- Courses, workshops, and developments related to Christian spirituality and practice.

The 'Reflection' group (3rd Tuesday of the month), the Lectio Divina group (4th Friday of the month), and the Bible Study group (weekly on Wednesdays) continue to meet. A leaflet explaining these groups has been produced and is available in St John's.

A quiet day was organised which took place on the 7th of May. The day was facilitated by Janet Robbins, a Benedictine oblate of the World Community for Christian Meditation, on the theme of 'Finding Stillness Within'.

A Lent course, entitled 'Our Bodies and Christ's Body', was led by Rev. Gerry Lynch.

The spirituality Team, together with several additional volunteers, will be taking forward one of the priority areas identified at the 'Vision and Planning Day' held on the 19th of November. We will be exploring 'Christian Meditation and the Christian Contemplative and Prayer Life' and subsequently submitting recommendations to the PCC.

Chris Cox

THE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The group continued to meet on Wednesday evenings at Casterbridge and its membership did not change during the year. We continued with our study of St Matthew's Gospel, with occasional forays into art history when we encountered episodes in the Gospel which had been interpreted by European artists. By the end of the year we had come to

the final chapters of the Gospel and were ready for a study of the Old Testament books of Samuel and their hero King David.

David Evans

Omnes Ad Unum - St. John's does...

During the year we were very busy with a variety of events including a very successful Platinum Jubilee Dinner held at the Town Hall followed by a Summer Fayre at Hillworth Park. We held a Book signing event for Sandra Howard and a concert organised by Cully Wilcoxon. These events were followed by a Michaelmas Fayre in the Corn Exchange and the Grand Christmas Draw leading up to the Christmas Tree Festival in the Church to conclude the year. A silent Auction was held during the end of the year and the results of this will be positive, when concluded in the New Year, and will be additional to the sums above.

Overall our cost were higher than normal because of the expenses of the Dinner but these were covered by the results of the evening and the accompanying Silent Auction which together raised nearly £6,000.

In conclusion we would like to thank all those who have helped and supported us during this successful year and look forward to working again with you in 2023. We are always looking for more helpers so please do consider giving us a hand. We are always grateful for any help. Please contact me.

Tim Lacy-Hulbert timlh72@yahoo.com
07970795581
Treasurer Omnes ad Unum

OMNES SUMMARY ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2022				
	Credits	Debits	Balance	
Jan-22			£3,651.43	Opening
Dec-22	£26,269.43	£18,288.14	£7,981.29	Closing

We paid out to Charities during the year.		
PCC ST JOHN		£2,925.00
FOOD BANK		£730.00
DOROTHY HOUSE		£2,725.00
OPPORTUNITY CENTRE		£725.00
JULIA'S HOUSE		£2,000.00
	TOTAL	£9,105.00

Post year end we shall be distributing a further

£7,300.00

CHOIR AND MUSIC

The challenges outlined in last year's report, by and large, remain the challenges facing not only St John's, but many parishes across the country. The COVID pandemic has continued to play a part in our operations, less from infections themselves, but the changes that the lockdowns and isolations put in place have not all reversed. Numbers in church have continued to decline, and recent reports on overall attendance in the Church of England continue to provide depressing reading. There are still no families and children in church. Recruitment of children still has not been possible, despite several attempts to visit schools to do so, they have continued to claim that disruption from COVID, and the recovery is still their main priority. The biggest challenge is the social and lifestyle changes that have continued to move forward. Whilst we have had a number of children start as "probationers" over the past year, they have not stayed, as in most cases their parents working hours and other commitments have meant that their attendance has been irregular.

My observation last year was that the historical links over the past 20 years with private schools in the area have all eroded. The last intake (not from private schools) was over 5 years ago, so we are increasingly reliant on a dwindling number of young people who are familiar with the music in church. As reported last year, there was also a large exodus of senior choristers – about 9 off to university, etc, before I took on the post as Director of Music, leaving a very large gap to fill. The gulf between the music we do in church and what happens (if and where does still happen!) in schools is now very wide. Music in schools is suffering its biggest threat for more than a generation. Take up of GCSE and especially A level has dwindled alarmingly, and there are many schools that simply don't offer this subject any more.

We have said farewell to a number of choristers in 2022. The hand over from Anna Hallett as Head Chorister, that was set up by my predecessor, took place in September, whereupon she decided to leave, to concentrate on her forthcoming A levels. Abi Wiltshire similarly left with A levels looming. We thank them both for their service over many years. Tessa Harrison took on the role of Head Chorister, and remains a much valued and audible asset to the choir, but she will also be moving on to higher education next year, leaving a big gap and role to fill. More positively, some of the next choristers moving into senior roles are now working towards their Silver Awards in 2023, and taking on the responsibility that brings. Many of our choir members come from sometimes quite considerable distances to sing, and as younger choristers leave, their parents (ie chauffeurs!) also leave. For others in the back row, age and health issues begin to become more significant. In the wider contexts mentioned above, this presents a major existential challenge for the choir looking ahead.

Despite this, the choir has continued to enjoy some very successful visits to sing at Cathedrals and other churches in the region. We began in January 2022 with a visit to Tewkesbury Abbey to sing Choral Evensong, which was much appreciated by the clergy there, who urged us to come

back soon to sing a full choral eucharist. In May we sang at Portsmouth Cathedral, an equally successful visit, and followed that in July singing at St Peter's Church, Marlborough for the annual celebration of St Peter and St Paul there. Then in the October half term we were at Wells Cathedral, which once again prompted an invitation to return.

Notable achievements the choir made in 2022 should be mentioned. In Holy Week the choir gave a liturgical performance of the The Passion of Christ by Arthur Somervell. He wrote this work in 1914, as an alternative to Stainer's The Crucifixion, from 1887, which had spawned countless similar cantatas suitable for church choirs. Hence it is subtitled "An Oratorio for Church use", but in spirit more closely follows the models of the Bach Passions. The narrative is principally told by the Evangelist and Jesus, these roles were admirably accomplished by James Carey and Stephen Bradley, with other solos taken by Anna Hallett, Tessa Harrison, Stephanie Williams and Mark Harrison. I understand this is the first occasion when the choir has sung a full work through in its entirety, and mention should also be made of our thanks to Dominic Irving for accompanying. We also enjoyed the weddings of Jessica Brown to Riley Snyder in July, and Stephanie Williams to James Carey in September – on both occasions a delightful feast of singing. We wish both couples a long and happy life together.

There has been some movement on the long awaited (20 years?) replacement of the "temporary" Makin digital organ with a suitable pipe organ. The plan is to instal a suitable instrument from a redundant church (sadly, as churches continue to close, many are available). However, the peculiar logistics of space and acoustics at St John's present a number of challenges. The present unsatisfactory placing of speakers for the different divisions of the organ scattered about the church, and the console isolated with no useful audio or visual communication with what is going on in the choir and with the liturgy has to be solved. A number of organ builders/restorers have been identified, and tenders for the work will be invited during the course of

2023. It will then take another year or two both to raise the funds, and for the work to be carried out.

Graham Coatman
Director of Music

FAIR TRADE

Following Covid restrictions, we were able to restart the Fair Trade stall on the first Sunday in May and have continued since then - thank you to all those who generously support us. We also had a stall at the Creationtide talks in September and at the Omnes Michaelmas Fair in October.

The sad news is that Traidcraft, our wholesale supplier, went into administration in January and it is uncertain whether we shall be able to continue to access supplies for the stall. We have plenty of stock for the immediate future and will continue the stall for as long as we can.

Judy Bridger and Trudy Fisher

THE FLOWER GUILD

The Flower Guild still has thirteen Flower Arrangers with Julie Gilmore helping at Harvest Time. Kate Walling has agreed to join the team. I would like to thank them for their skill in arranging the flowers in church during the year except during Lent and Advent.

Sue King, Valerie Prior, and Claire Blyth represented the Church staging three designs at Salisbury Flower Festival last year.

The Flower Guild is most grateful for the donations that have been given during the year which help to pay for the flowers, If anyone wishes to remember a special occasion with a flower arrangement in Church or give a donation please contact me, as the Flower Guild relies on donations to fund the flowers.

Heather Blyth

THE BELLS AND BELLRINGERS

It has been a year of change for the band. In May we held our first band meeting where we decided to spread the load of managing the tower by splitting the roles and responsibilities involved, across a committee of people. After many successful years as Captain, Liz Merritt stepped down though I'm pleased to say she is continuing to regularly ring with us and is now able to spend more time with her family which now includes three young grandchildren. After being involved with the tower for many years in many roles, Richard Heath took on the Captaincy. Life events took over though and having moved house to Calne it was no longer practical for him to continue as Captain. So, we held our first AGM in January which led to me taking over the reins.

I moved to Devizes in July 2021 and was made very welcome by the ringers at St. John's and other towers in the Devizes area. I have been visually impaired since the age of about 6 and started to learn to ring at the age of 12 but, it has not deterred me from ringing church bells. I have been a bell ringer for 59 years in March and it's one of those hobbies where there is always something new to learn.

Last year we had three beginners and they progressed so well they were able to take part in the Guild Novice Striking Competition 2022. I'm delighted to say they won! While they received the 'trophy' (an engraved wooden hanging bell), they were presented with their official certificates at our AGM, and we were pleased to have Gerry Lynch there to present them.

With all the changes in the band we're aware our links to the church are not as strong as they were and so having Gerry at our AGM was important to us and the value of his attendance was clear in the contributions he made to many of the discussions. We look forward to working together more going forwards.

As we see our learners develop, we're keen to see the next wave of learners come through and you may have heard of the call put out through the media for new learners to come forward so we can have more bells ringing for the Coronation. We are looking forward to marking the occasion in traditional fashion as we sadly did for the passing of our late Queen Elizabeth II. You definitely feel it when you ring for such important national events.

I have been ringing in Australia, New Zealand and Canada and have always been made very welcome. There is a world wide friendship in bell ringing where age is no barrier. Some people take to it like a duck to water while others can find it can take a little more time. If you would like to learn to ring, come along on a Thursday night from 7.30 initially, just to see how the bells are rung. If you are still interested at the end of the evening, then please do let us know. Most bellringers go to a watering house after ringing (not compulsory) where people can socialise.

David Powell, Tower Captain

Deanery Synod Report

In 2021 the Deanery Synod adopted a Strategic Plan. Accordingly, in 2022 much effort was put into developing the churches' links with young people. In June Steve Dewar of Wiltshire Youth for spoke to the Synod about his work with leadership teams and students in our schools. In November Bethany Kinderman , employed as a youth worker by St James Church Devizes, described her work with senior school students and appealed for volunteers to assist her in the work of helping the students to explore the Christian faith.

The Deanery continued to nurture its links with the diocese of Kaju Keji in South Sudan. Money was raised by the Seeds for Life appeal in order to help the people to rebuild their lives after so many had had to flee

from war and violence. Bishop Emmanuel visited the Deanery during the year and we were saddened to learn of his death in December.

As always, questions about the Parish Share were much discussed. Two thirds of the sum due from the parishes of the Deanery had been paid by November, but a number of parishes were in difficulty, partly because they had lost members during the pandemic.

Partly thanks to the efforts of Gerry Lynch, services for the Deanery were held during the year at Edington and Bishops Cannings. Attendance was good, which suggests that such services could have a future.

Towards the end of the year, Andrew Sinclair resigned as Rural Dean and our Rector Jonathan Poston took on the role.

David Evans

MOTHERS UNION

In January we had our Epiphany party and Quiz and our subscriptions were sent.

In February our Rector Jonathan Poston gave a lovely Holy Communion Service well attended .

In March we had a talk about New Zealand with flags and pictures by Juliet as her son lives there. Mary Edward Jones had visited in the past.. We went to Urchfont Lady Day Service.

In April Rev Gerry Lynch, who is a keen photographer, showed us photos of the city of Kiiv in Ukraine, very poignant at the present time. We held a collection for Ukraine and raised over £130, this was sent to the International Red Cross.

In May we talked of sowing and planting and potted up some marigold seedlings to be sold at the Omnes Hillworth Park fundraiser for people from Ukraine who have settled in the UK. the Spring gathering for the

MU Diocese was held at Market Lavington Hall, Juliet represented our group.

In June we had a lively discussion about Grandparents, being one and experiencing them as a child.

In July we had a talk from John Weller about fundraising for the Air Ambulance.

In August we remembered Mary Sumner Day at our lunch outing to the "Hourglass Pub" by the Canal.

In September we planted indoor bulb containers for our stall at the Michaelmas Fair to raise money for Children's Charities.

In October Jeannie Gye gave us an interesting illustrated talk about her needlework and art, she was interested in Orthodox Christian Icons. We attended the Autumn MU gathering and AGM at St Francis Salisbury. We raised £50 for MU and £50 for Omnes Charities by selling bulbs we prepared and flowers donated by M&S at the Michaelmas Fair.

In November we had our AGM and discussions, Pat Holtham agreed to become our Treasurer and was very much welcomed by everyone.

In December we had our Advent Reflections and raised over £60 for MU Overseas at our Christmas Stall.

We remember fondly Mary Dainty, Gwendoline Arlett and Rita Horsefield who died this year and were very long-standing members of MU.

Juliet Bazeley St John and St Mary MU Branch Leader