

ST MATTHEW'S
H A R W E L L

Annual Report 2023



Registered Charity No 1158861

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1. Introduction

This is the annual report of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for the Church of St Matthew's in Harwell, Oxfordshire. It covers the last financial accounting year, which was the calendar year ending 31 December 2022.

The primary aim of our church and its PCC is the promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England.

Specifically, our church vision, which was adopted during 2015, is:

'Growing God's church, wider, deeper and closer'

The details of what our church has been doing over the last year to further its vision are given in section 2.

This report was approved by the PCC at its meeting on 7 March 2023 and is signed on their behalf by the Vice-Chair of the PCC, Dr Antony Hughes, the post of Rector currently being vacant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Antony Hughes', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Signature

Date 7 March 2023

2. Review of the year – Benefice activities

Our church forms part of the Benefice of St Matthew's, Harwell with All Saints', Chilton. These two churches, in neighbouring villages, share a ministry team of one full time stipendiary member of clergy, two part time non-stipendiary ministers, five retired clergy with Permission to Officiate, two Licensed Lay Ministers with Permission to Officiate, and two authorised preachers. The churches also share three paid lay members of staff covering one full-time post (currently a job share) and one part-time post.

Some people from Harwell or St Matthew's attend and support church services, events and groups in Chilton or in All Saints' and vice versa – either regularly or occasionally. There are many other areas of sharing and co-operation between the two churches, such as safeguarding, engagement with world mission, and publicity and communications. For these reasons, the lives of our two church communities are somewhat intertwined and it is not always possible to delineate strictly between them in practice. This report therefore covers activities in both churches.

With the lifting of Covid restrictions in February, church life returned to something resembling pre-pandemic normality in 2022.

The other main backdrop to the year was that we were without a Rector from the end of March once Rev Dr Jonathan Mobey returned to being a GP. We ran a process to find a new Rector in the autumn but it was unsuccessful. We will try again in early 2023 and pray for the right outcome.

In the absence of a Rector, the churchwardens were responsible for running the churches. We are grateful to them for taking on all the extra work involved. Their task was made easier by the support of our volunteer leaders and preachers, and by our hard-working paid Administrator and Children & Families workers.

2.1 Worship services

Every Sunday we meet to worship God, hear His Word, pray together, and encourage one another. Our services range from the quiet, traditional ones - from the Book of Common Prayer - to contemporary, family-friendly ones.

Most services are organ- or piano-led. In addition, St Matthew's has an all-age orchestra, which in 2022 accompanied on average one service a month and at festivals such as Christmas and Easter. St Matthew's also has an occasional brass group. All Saints' has a small regular choir with additional members at festivals.

Following a trial of a modified service pattern during September-December 2021, we made further modifications in February 2022 to address concerns raised at a PCC away day in January. The new service pattern was designed to improve the integration of families and children with the rest of the

congregation at All Saints'. We then made a further change in September 2022. This was to simplify things such that St Matthew's has just one Sunday morning service start time of 10.30am and no separation of the 'Family Praise' and the 'Morning Worship' parts of the service.

We ceased the weekly online service in September 2022 which had been instigated during the pandemic. The need for it had reduced considerably with the relaxation of Government restrictions and the provision of in-person worship services throughout 2022.

Table 1 displays the revised service pattern across the benefice as of September 2022.

Revised service pattern as of September 2022		
Worship services	All Saints', Chilton	St Matthew's, Harwell
Sundays 8am	-	-
Sundays 9.30am	Morning Worship on 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays (BCP Morning Prayer on 2nd Sundays alternate months); Holy Communion on 1st and 3rd Sundays	-
Sundays 10.30am	Interactive Family Service in Village Hall on 2nd Sundays	Family Praise followed by Morning Worship on 1 st , 3 rd and 4 th Sundays Holy Communion on 2 nd Sundays and Family Communion on 5 th Sundays
Sundays 6pm	-	Evening Prayer on 1st and 3rd Sundays; BCP on 2nd and 5th Sundays; Holy Communion on 4th Sundays
Thursdays 11am	Holy Communion 2nd Thursdays	Holy Communion 4th Thursdays

Table 1: Revised service pattern

In February a **Christingle Service** was held in both churches. Christingles – symbolising God’s gifts and Jesus as the light of the world - were assembled by the congregation from an orange, red ribbon, four cocktail sticks with fruit and sweets and a candle.



Photo: Christingle Service; Steve Hale

In **Holy Week**, we held a service on Maundy Thursday at St Matthew’s and an Easter Saturday Vigil service at All Saints’. There was a morning service at both churches on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday, plus an evening service at St Matthew’s on Easter Sunday.

The **Stone Service** led by Rev Pam Rolls was held at Harwell Memorial Stone on Saturday 4th June, the closest Saturday to 5th June. It commemorates the RAF glider pilots leaving in 1944 to participate in the D Day landings in Normandy. It was attended by civilians, local groups and military personnel.

We held services at both All Saints’ and St Matthew’s on **Remembrance Sunday** in November, and shorter Acts of Remembrance in All Saints’ Church and at Harwell War Memorial on the High Street. The Children & Families worker organised an activity for primary school aged children in the village hall in each village during the Remembrance Sunday church service.



Photo: Rev Pam Rolls at Harwell Memorial Stone Service; Bob Girling

During **Advent** we held afternoon and evening 'carols by candlelight' services with mulled wine and mince pies at each church. The weather was bitterly cold and thankfully all these services could be held inside this year. There was a crib service in each church on 23rd/24th December. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day culminated in the traditional midnight communion and morning services at each church.



Photo: All Saints'; Steve Hale

2.2 Baptisms, weddings and funerals

Baptisms, weddings and funerals are important occasions, both in their own right and as pastoral opportunities. The number of these services can vary enormously from year to year because the absolute numbers are relatively small.

We can see from the data in Table 2 that the number of baptisms, weddings and funeral services in church held steady in 2022 following the lifting of Government restrictions related to the pandemic.

Each baptism involves at least one pastoral visit before the service and follow-up as appropriate. Most baptisms are for children of families who are not regular attenders at church.

Each wedding involves several meetings with the couples and a rehearsal, and much liaison and administration, including with the Church Administrator, organists and vergers/sides people. Most

wedding couples live locally, but some have a connection through family or having previously lived in the parishes.

Each funeral involves at least one meeting with the next of kin, liaison with the family, the Funeral Director, organists and vergers/sides people. Pastoral follow up is carried out by the officiating minister as appropriate.

	St Matthew's Harwell			All Saints' Chilton		
	2022	2021	2020	2022	2021	2020
Baptisms	7	7	1	3	0	0
Thanksgivings for a child	0	2	0	0	0	0
Weddings	3	4	0	2	2	0
Funerals in church	8	10	8	4	2	4
Thanksgiving services in church	1	0	0	4	0	0
Funerals at crematoria	4	3	4	0	3	0
Interments of ashes	0	1	2	4	3	1

Table 2: Number of baptisms, weddings and funerals

2.3 Prayer

Prayer is an essential part of the life of our churches.

Both churches maintain a list of individuals to pray for during the times of intercession in Sunday services.

Outside of formal worship services, and in addition to private prayer by individuals and in home groups, we have:

- A Benefice online weekly prayer meeting on Saturday mornings attended regularly by six people
- A Benefice Prayer Chain of 53 people which enables emergency and continuing prayer for anyone within the church or for issues known to church members

2.4 Bell-ringing

St Matthew's Church tower has eight bells, and All Saints' tower has six. Both churches have

enthusiastic bell ringing teams. The bells were rung on most Sundays in 2022, for weddings and some funerals. On other occasions peals and quarter peals were rung by the home or visiting bands. They were also rung for Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June and then again, muffled, to mark her death in September.

2.5 Youth and Families

Provision for youth and families is an aspect of the Benefice's work into which significant resources are invested. This reflects the acknowledged importance of reaching the young, not least in growing our churches.

Children & Families Worker (C&FW)

Alongside Sarah Barrett who continued in the role, Rev Brendan Bailey was appointed to job share with Sarah as of 1 January 2022. Eliza Wheaton, one of the St Matthew's churchwardens, took over as line manager for the C&FWs during the Rector vacancy.



Brendan stepped down in September 2022. Sarah has continued in the role with the PCC agreeing to pay her for additional hours worked while we review how and when to replace Brendan.

Children and Young People's Sunday groups

On Sundays we continue to offer an all-age service in Harwell or Chilton every Sunday morning.

On the first and third Sundays of the month, most families attend the 10.30am service at St Matthew's. We start with a time of praise and worship together as a congregation and then the children move into Kids Church (for primary school ages) or Pathfinders (for secondary school ages).

The content of Kids Church and Pathfinders



Photos: Chilton Interactive; Sarah Barrett

is based on what is being preached in the main service. This means that families all focus on the same Bible passage and broad theme.

On the second Sunday of the month, we hold the Chilton Interactive service in Chilton village hall. This offers an informal, cafe-style church where everyone stays together for the service. Most of the attendees are the core church families from Harwell and Chilton. They are joined by a few other families who only attend this Interactive service. Some of the congregation from the earlier 9.30am All Saints' church service join for coffee at the start. A few of them stay on for the Interactive service too.

On the fourth Sunday of the month, families are invited to attend an all-age service at their 'home' church in Harwell or Chilton.

A key learning point from the pandemic was the benefit of bringing our families from across the Benefice to worship together; they found it helpful to have a wider group of fellow-Christian parents, and by concentrating children's Sunday morning groups at St Matthew's, we have also been able to run fewer but better attended groups which are easier to staff.

Summer Holiday Club

2022 saw the return to a larger scale Holiday Club than was possible during the pandemic. This was held at Harwell Primary school for one week of August. The theme was 'Diary of a Disciple' which covers the whole of Luke's gospel – quite a challenge in one week!



Photos: Holiday Club - children arriving in their dens on the first day; Vicky Johnston

Approximately 80 children attended, including six of secondary school age. These older children helped in dens and with afternoon activities. They also led the drama and some of the games.

More than 40 adult volunteers served at Holiday Club. It would be impossible to run it without this level of commitment from church volunteers and others in the community.

Fledgelings

Fledgelings is a term time group for pre-school aged children and their parents/carers. It takes place each week in term time in both Harwell (in St Matthew's church) and in Chilton (in the Community Room on Chilton Field).

The group provides play and activities for the children and company and conversation for the adults. The sessions incorporate a 'See & Know' singing and story-time with an explicitly Christian curriculum.

The average weekly attendance (adults plus children) during 2022 was about 40 in Chilton and about 50 in Harwell. Both groups are supported by volunteers who help make refreshments and provide a warm welcome and support to the carers attending.



Photos: Fledgelings at Chilton; Sarah Barrett

Schools

Children & Families Worker, Sarah Barrett, continued to lead assemblies at both Harwell and Chilton Primary Schools during 2022. This included at Harvest and Advent. Sarah also continued to volunteer for the 'wellbeing group' at Harwell school from January to the end of the summer term. She is hoping to be able to restart this group soon.

We held Reflective (Prayer) spaces in a marquee at both Harwell and Chilton Primary schools across two weeks of the summer term. This was well supported by volunteers who led nearly 40 sessions and saw approximately 500 children. As requested by the schools we explored the values of resilience, respect and responsibility and the theme of friendship. Both schools have asked that we return in 2023.



Year 3 and 4 pupils from Chilton Primary School visited All Saints' Church. Children in the Reception class will do so in early 2023.

At Harwell Primary School, Sarah Barrett was invited to speak to Year 6 at Christmas about the significance of Christmas to Christians and to their leavers' assembly at the end of the school

year. At Chilton Primary School, Sarah was asked to teach an RE lesson to Year 5 and 6 pupils about prophecies made about Jesus and how they came to fruition. It has been great to be of support to the schools in these ways.



Photos: Reflective Spaces; Sarah Barrett

Community and Special Events for children and families

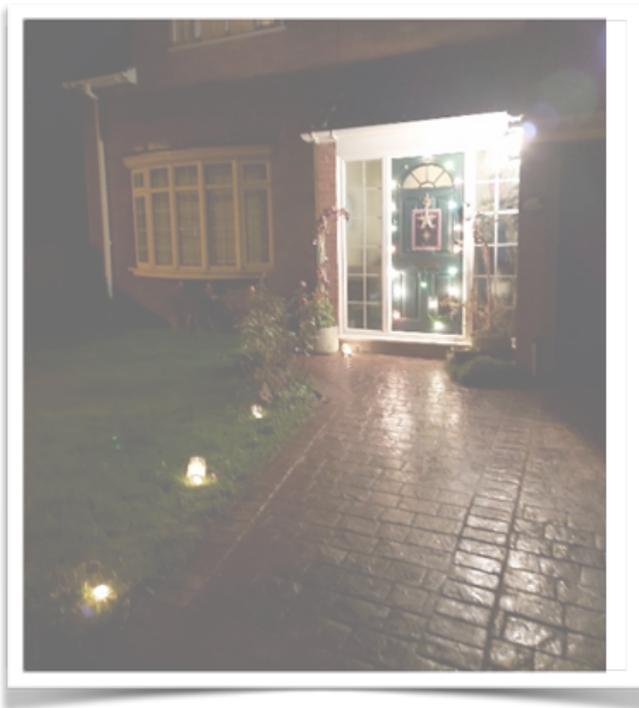
Looking for further opportunities to share the Gospel and to have a positive impact on the community, we continued to provide several special events during 2022.

We ran an **Easter trail** around both our villages which involved looking at posters displayed in people's windows. The trail finished in church where we had several 'Prayer Space' activities relating to Holy Week.

At the end of October we held a '**Light Party**' in St Matthew's church which was attended by most of our regular church families. We also extended the invitation to Didcot Ridgeway Community Church and to Didcot Baptist church. It was lovely to welcome families from other churches to this event and we hosted over 40 children in total.

In November, on **Remembrance Sunday**, we ran a session for children in the village hall in both Harwell and Chilton during the church service which followed each community's act of Remembrance.

In Chilton, the community's act of Remembrance was held in the church. Any children present, including Beavers and Cubs, were then invited to join a session in the village hall. This involved a game, songs, a brief talk, craft and prayer.



Photos: An Advent Door in Harwell;
Yvonne Sanderson

In Harwell, the community's act of Remembrance was held at the war memorial on the High Street. Children from Beavers, Cubs and Scouts plus regular attendees of Kids Church were then invited to the village hall for a brief talk, craft and prayer.

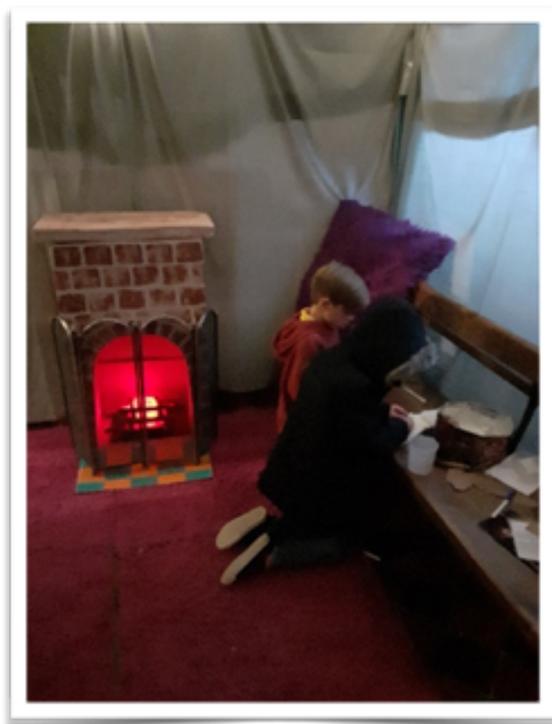
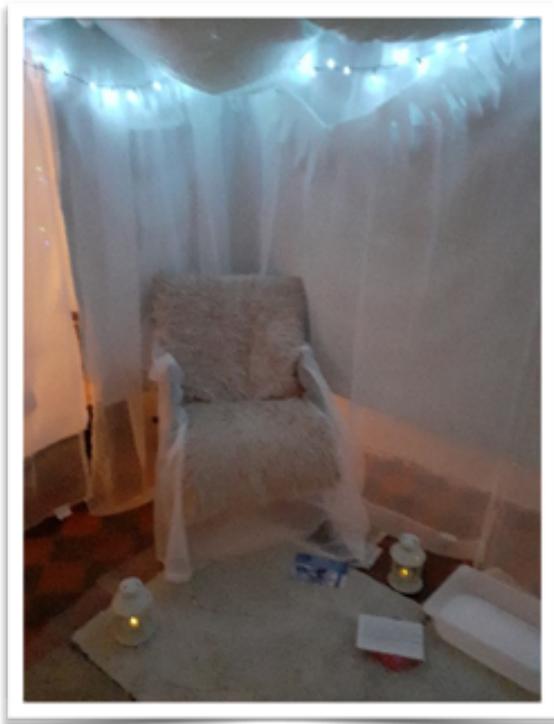
In December we ran '**Advent Doors**' as a way of hearing part of the Christmas story each day from a home in each village.

We held **Christmas tree decorating** sessions in each church. This was attended by approximately 40 people at each church. At Harwell the participants were mostly from Fledgelings families (babies and toddlers). In Chilton the attendees tended to be primary school aged children.



Photos: Christmas tree decorating in All Saints'; Sarah Barrett

We also set up Narnia-themed 'prayer spaces' in both churches to coincide with the Christmas tree decorating session. These spaces explored the themes of being unique, of friendship, saying sorry and asking for help. The one in St Matthew's was left up for a few extra days and was visited by members of the congregation after the Sunday service, by Fledgelings and by adults attending the community cafe.



Photos: Narnia-themed 'prayer spaces' in church; Sarah Barrett

As already mentioned in section 2.1, we held a **crib service and an afternoon carol service** aimed at children and families in both churches. The choir from the relevant village primary school was invited to sing at the afternoon carol services. This was very successful and was well received by the schools.

All Saints' crib service had slightly fewer attendees than in previous years but it was encouraging to see families attend who do not usually attend church and whose relationships were made through Fledgelings.

Youth: ECHO and YF

'ECHO-cannot be contained' is the working name of the Greater Didcot Christian Children and Youth Work Trust. The Trust is an ecumenical working partnership of six local churches. It reaches out to youth attending the four secondary schools in Greater Didcot and Year 6 pupils in 14 feeder primary schools.

The Trust was founded by our benefice in 2021 as a Christian response to the high levels of social isolation and loneliness observed in secondary school aged young people and a strong shared desire to see young people introduced to the Christian faith. Its activities are shaped by a young persons' shaping group. The Trust has opened a twice weekly after-school youth cafe and after-school sports club to provide opportunities for young people to meet with their peers in a social setting. It aims to improve their mental health, fitness and overall wellbeing. Added to this is a Christian discipleship hub and termly youth worship events.

Six youth worship events were held during 2022, two of which were hosted at St Matthew's. The youth cafe runs in the Hub at Didcot Baptist Church every Thursday. Soul Sports has been running for three terms at St Birinus School and the first 'ECHO explore' (continuing the Christmas celebrations and exploring what Christians believe) started in January 2023.

Several young people from our churches have attended various of these ECHO events. It is an exciting initiative to be part of and support.

We ran our first **YF** (youth fellowship) session in November 2022 at St Matthew's church hall after a gap of two years during the pandemic. We are planning to run fortnightly YF sessions on Sunday evenings from the beginning of 2023.

2.6 Evangelism & Discipleship

Our churches seek to fulfil the Great Commission to make disciples through loving service, evangelism and discipleship – sharing the good news of Jesus in word and deed and helping individuals to grow in faith. This is done through our worship services but also through other groups and activities.

Nine people participated in the **Alpha Course** which took place in person this year, starting at the end of January through to Easter. The Holy Spirit Day was held in the Centre for Reflection in Aston Tirrold, which was a key experience on the personal faith journey of many of the participants, who are all now more actively involved in church, for example joining a Home Group.



Twenty-four members of our congregations took part in the **Living in Love and Faith Course** produced by the Church of England to enable churches across the country to participate in a process of learning and praying together as part of discerning a way forward in relation to matters of

identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. The four sessions covered a spectrum of different views, but the general consensus was that it had been most helpful to hear the perspectives of the variety of people whose different situations were presented in the short films provided. The participants did not always agree but listened respectfully to each other which enabled safe and sensitive conversations.

Home Groups continue to be important for growing in the faith of Christ, developing relationships, sharing views, and learning from one another, as well as trusting and supporting one another. Rev Jean Barton is responsible for encouraging and supporting the Home Groups and Elaine Shrimpton is now assisting her. They hope to increase awareness of Home Groups and encourage more to join by providing information via the projected news slides at the beginning of Sunday services.

During 2022, about 52 people met regularly face to face in Home Groups to study the Bible. There are six groups covering all ages, from parents with toddlers to those who are retired. There are a mix of evening and daytime groups with four of the groups having members from both Churches. Three groups have recently studied 'Bold I Approach' about prayer.

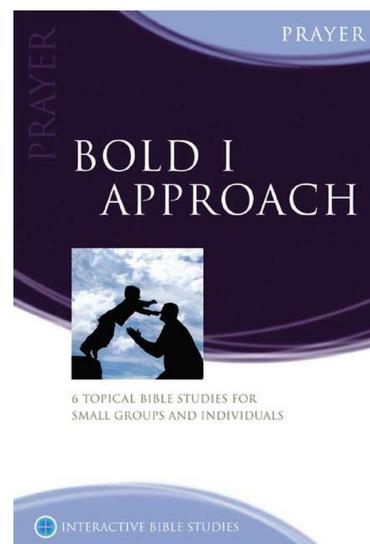


Image: Home Group course book

Our churches part-fund the Didcot and Wallingford Area **CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Debt Centre** which was set up in January 2015 to cover just Wallingford and expanded to Didcot in January 2017. The Centre's formal aims are:

- The relief of poverty by providing a debt counselling and debt management service
- The advancement of Christianity in Didcot, Wallingford and the surrounding area.

The Centre employs a Centre Manager and two part time Debt Coaches who between them are currently able to take on four new clients each month, supported by an employed administrator and by church members who befriend and support the client families.

This year was more typical, and the Centre was able to get back up to a consistent 2-3 referrals per month, totaling 38 new referrals across the year with seven clients becoming debt free. At the end of 2022 there were 48 families on the books – in set-up, on debt plans or going through insolvency. These numbers are all up on the previous year.



The Debt Centre is very blessed to have 45 volunteers helping and supporting the clients in so many ways including FareShare deliveries as well as prayer. Clients are also blessed with items of furniture, white goods and bikes.



Photo: Chilton August Charity Market in aid of CAP Debt Centre; Liz Roberts

The social events held for clients included a summer BBQ at St Matthew's and a Film and Pizza evening in December hosted by Wallingford Ridgeway Community Church. Gifts were delivered on Valentine's Day and at Easter. At Christmas, the usual deliveries of hampers to the clients and their families are always well received and a chance to show God's love for them.

Enormous thanks are due to the Charity Market in Chilton, who held their August Market to raise funds for the local Debt

Centre. As well as raising awareness of the cause, an amazing £903 was donated to the Debt Centre to help All Saints' contribution to its annual commitment of funding.

A highly committed team of trained Money Coaches in our churches continue to offer the **CAP Money Course**. There was one online course with only one attendee. No one signed up for the

student course in 2022, so it will be advertised earlier in 2023. The coaches were pleased to be able to offer their first in-person course since the pandemic on a Saturday morning at Didcot Baptist Church in October. Four delegates completed the course.

2.7 Pastoral Care

The **Pastoral Care teams** (and many individual members of our churches) visit parishioners in their homes and offer a loving Christian presence and a listening ear to those who are ill, bereaved or who feel lonely. Oversight of pastoral care in the Benefice is the responsibility of Rev Pam Rolls.

There is a pastoral care team in each parish. In Chilton, the team now operates under the leadership of Dr Pat Moseley who took over from Mrs Audrey Slater in 2022. Our thanks go to Audrey for her faithful and diligent service over many years; we are very glad that Audrey continues to serve in the team. In Harwell, the team has become very small, and we are still prayerfully and carefully seeking a new leader for it. It is hoped that a candidate will be appointed soon and that other team members will be recruited.

Funerals provide special opportunities for ministering to our parishioners. Funeral ministry is usually carried out by our clergy or by licensed or approved lay leaders, with follow-up visits to bereaved families taking place wherever possible.



Home Communion are normally taken four times a year to parishioners who are not very mobile – Easter, summer, Harvest and Christmas. During 2022 this ministry was reduced as several recipients died or moved into care. Our Churches are also part of a team of ministers who take communion to the new care home, Alma Barn Lodge, in Harwell Parish.

Generation Gold services, initiated by Rev Jan Radford and Rev Pam Rolls in 2015, were continued in 2022. Our theme for the year was 'Birds from the Bible' and we reflected on different birds at our quarterly services – including doves, eagles, ravens and robins (although the latter do not actually feature in the Bible!).



At our September meeting in Chilton Village Hall we enjoyed a wonderful fish and chip lunch supplied by 'Village Fish and Chips' who provided delicious food and showed an interest in our meetings and themes. We are very grateful to a willing band of helpers who assisted with delivering invitations, catering, and playing the piano and organ, and to the generous people whose donations made our special treats and reverse collections possible.

Plans are now in hand for Generation Gold for 2023 where we will be reflecting on 'The homes that Jesus visited'.

Both our Churches have continued to collect non-perishable food for **Didcot Emergency Foodbank** throughout the year, with a special collection in both churches at Harvest time. During 2022 the need for the Foodbank became more crucial as households struggled with the cost-of-living crisis.

2.8 Social and Community

Our churches host various social events for the benefit and care of the church and wider community.



Photo: Foodbank collection; Deborah Evans

The **All Saints' Women's Group** in Chilton offers evening fellowship. It serves both parishes and invites speakers on a wide variety of subjects. The group met through the year on the second Tuesday of the month in person, when possible, or otherwise on Zoom. They have covered a wide range of topics from 'What happens to our waste' a very informative talk by our local Waste and Recycling Officer, to 'Archway' the Oxford and Abingdon Charity which supports people with acute loneliness, learning about 'Changi Quilts', watching a presentation of amazing photographs of

Winchester Cathedral, and hearing about the life and family of Anne Frank. In April Rev Brendan Bailey spoke about his Christian Faith and in May they 'Carried on Cruising' with Carol Pigott. The Zoom meetings covered sharing tips on plants and volunteering. In December they enjoyed readings on the theme of 'Oxfordshire Christmases', singing carols and eating festive food.



Photo: Monthly Charity Market on Crafts End Green; Bob Girling

The group have continued to hold the monthly Charity Markets, raising a total of £11,736 over the year, sometimes in very difficult conditions, with cold gusty winds and rain and in the height of summer seeking shade from the blistering sun. They have been so well supported by their members both in Chilton and Harwell and very loyal friends in the village. Charities they have helped in 2022 are 'The Porch', Ovarian Cancer Awareness, DEC Ukrainian Appeal, CAP, Brain Tumour Research, Hamlin Fistula UK, Prostate Cancer, Seesaw, Young Dementia UK, the Oncology Unit at the Churchill Hospital and through their combined market and plant sale, Christian Aid.

In November the Women's Group celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a lunch in the Village Hall, attended by 40 members and guests. There was much to celebrate, remembering their beginnings as a Young Wives Group, changing as seemed appropriate with time to Wives Group and then later, to be inclusive, to All Saints' Women's Group. At present they are considering yet another change to perhaps 'All Saints' Tuesday Group' as they welcome their first men as members. In 1972 the annual subscription was just 15p, rising to 25p six years later. In 2023 it stands at £10. They welcome new members to join.

Following its trial in December 2021, the **Church Community Cafe** continues to run in St Matthew's on the first Thursday of the month, between 10.00am and 12.00 noon. There is a regular attendance by 15 people who enjoy meeting together over a cup of tea or coffee.



Photo: Church Community Cafe at St Matthew's; Deborah Evans

Oasis Cafe was launched in May 2022 as an opportunity for Chilton villagers to gather once a month for a coffee (or tea!) and a convivial chat in relaxed surroundings. The event is held in All Saints' church on the 3rd Saturday morning of each month, between 10.00am and 12.00 noon, and is free to all comers. At first a dozen or so people dropped in to take part but in successive gatherings numbers have risen to 30+ and discussions have ranged from village history to electric cars and steam engines.

The Harwell Helps Ukrainians Group was set up by Harwell village in 2022 to help the Ukrainian refugees who have moved to Harwell to flee the war in their country. St Matthew's church was made readily available to host English lessons and cafe afternoons where they could meet fellow Ukrainians and villagers. Just before Christmas, All Saints' church and St Matthew's church



Photo: Oasis Cafe at All Saints'; Pam Rolls



Photo: Collection of items for Ukraine; Steve Hale

hall were used to collect and sort items such as warm clothing, nonperishable food and toiletries to be sent to help those still in Ukraine. A lorry full of boxes was collected by the 'Support Ukraine UK' Charity.

2.9 World Mission

The World Mission Group seeks to promote the engagement of our churches with world mission and proposes to each PCC how each church could spend its World Mission budget.

They focus our World Mission financial support and prayer around the Anglican Five Marks of Mission. The Marks and the corresponding organisations are:

- 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom:** Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). The work of MAF enables mission workers to reach difficult and isolated places to share Christianity.
- 2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers:** Scripture Union (SU). Through Bible studies,

resources and camps SU aims to share the Christian faith and disciple children and young people in particular.

3. To respond to human need by loving service: The Leprosy Mission (TLM). TLM diagnoses, treats and offers specialist care such as reconstructive surgery, as well as rehabilitation programmes and health education in communities.

4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation. Chris and Suzy Wilson are Mission Partners for Church Mission Society (CMS) in Ethiopia.

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth. A Rocha, a Christian Conservation organisation who work in the UK and internationally.

The PCCs also continued to support financially a number of individual mission partners: in addition to Chris and Suzy Wilson, we also supported Endri and Dyshi Tabacu of The Light of the World church in Albania, and John Abu Bakker of Fellowship For Neighbours, India.

The four members of the World Mission group met together during 2022, sometimes over Zoom, but more recently in-person. The group would love more people to join it.

2.10 Staffing

Over the last five years or so, the Benefice has increased its investment in paid staff. Currently it funds two paid roles:

- A Benefice Administrator and PA to the Rector – 20 hours per week (see section below for more detail).
- A Children & Families Worker – working 40 hours per week (see section 2.5 for activities). This was a job share until September when Rev Brendan Bailey stepped down. We hope to recruit a replacement during 2023.

This investment reflects the following factors:

- The increasing administrative and communications workload
- The strategic decision that young children and their families should be a key area of focus for us.
- The gradual reduction in availability of volunteer time due to societal trends.

The employment of paid staff is a large responsibility – both financially and in managerial terms. In recognition of this, the Benefice established an Employment sub-committee of the Joint PCC in April 2017.

Administrative support

The benefice has a paid Administrator working 20 hours per week. A key focus of the role is

communications activity. There are also various records, documents, bookings and practical arrangements to organise.

The Administrator creates and prints service and notice sheets each week and the Ridgeway Broadsheet magazine 8 times each year; produces an Easter card and a Christmas card to promote special services and events; maintains the calendar, rotas and news items on the church website; posts to social media; manages St Matthew's Church Hall bookings, prepares various reports for the Diocese, Christian Copyright Licensing International, and the County Council; manages the office; and provides PA support to the Rector.



Image: the 2022 church Christmas card delivered to every home in the Benefice



Image: the 2022 church Easter card delivered to every home in the Benefice



Image: front page of the Broadsheet May 2022

During 2022, the focus of the Administrator's work shifted away from supporting the production of weekly online worship services, to materials to support in-person worship services.

3. Looking forward – key plans and challenges

Our immediate challenge in 2023 is to appoint a new Rector. We continue to pray that the right candidate will be prompted to apply. Once appointed, we will need to make plans so that they will feel really welcomed and can take up the reins of office smoothly.

In the meantime, our strategy of focusing growth on families and youth remains, alongside providing a ministry to people of all ages.

Raising and stewarding both human and financial resources is an ongoing challenge, but we are mindful that where we are following God's lead, He will provide the means for His work to be done.

The funding of the Church Administrator's role is a key issue which will need to be near the top of the new Rector's in-tray.

The pandemic has been replaced by the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis as the international backdrop to our lives. We must remain vigilant about the needs arising in our communities from these situations. We need to consider carefully any implications for how we deploy our time, energy, assets and finances.

We continue to be an outward-looking benefice and open to ecumenical collaboration with other churches. This will take on a particular focus as the building of the large 'Valley Park' housing development commences – quite possibly during 2023 (this is almost entirely within Harwell parish, but on the 'Didcot side' of the A34). The wider Wallingford Deanery, to which we belong, faces financial challenges. We will need to engage constructively with how these are best addressed.

4. Governance and structure

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure.

St Matthew's, Harwell and All Saints', Chilton each has its own PCC. Each PCC met four times during 2022 – all meetings were in person rather than on Zoom.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. The membership of the PCC consists of all clergy licensed to the Benefice, Churchwardens, Deanery Synod members and other lay members elected by those 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.

Given its wide responsibilities, the PCCs operate through several committees. Each committee deals with a particular aspect of parish life. The committees report back regularly at PCC meetings, with minutes of their meetings or their decisions and recommendations being received and discussed as necessary. The Rector is automatically a member of every committee.

Standing Committee

This is the only committee required by Church law. It meets or liaises occasionally when there are urgent decisions to be made between PCC meetings. It consists of the clergy, Churchwardens and the Treasurer plus the Vice-chair and the Secretary.

Combined PCC

For efficiency and convenience St Matthew's, Harwell PCC and All Saints', Chilton PCC regularly hold Combined PCC meetings, where members of the two PCCs come together to discuss matters that are common to both parishes. Meetings of the Joint PCC (see below) are held as part of Combined PCC meetings. As such, voting by Joint PCC members on any decisions required by the Joint PCC generally follows discussion by the Combined PCC. The Combined PCC met eight times during 2022, mostly on Zoom (four of these meetings were to do with the Rector vacancy process).

Joint PCC

The Pastoral Measure provides for a Joint PCC in addition to the separate PCCs of our two churches. It comprises the clergy, Churchwardens and the Treasurer plus the Vice-chair and the Secretary of each PCC.

The two PCCs can agree to place in the hands of the Joint PCC any matters involving both parishes. So far, the PCCs have delegated responsibility for the following matters to the Joint PCC:

- Safeguarding
- Staffing
- Data compliance.

Safeguarding

The Benefice complies fully with national and Church of England law on safeguarding. Each church has a Safeguarding Officer: Sue Greatbanks for St Matthew's and Judy Gold for All Saints'. Sue was newly appointed in June 2022 and has been undergoing training. Judy and Sue work collaboratively together across the benefice and as equals. This replaced the previous system where one Safeguarding Officer was deputy to the other. The Joint PCC reviews and approves the **Safeguarding Policy** annually.

Staffing

The Benefice **Employment Committee** is concerned with meeting the statutory regulations around employment, ensuring the performance assessment and development of staff employed by the PCCs is carried out, and recruitment procedures are correctly followed.

Data compliance

In 2022 we have continued to work to ensure that our churches are compliant with data governance legislation (GDPR).

5. Finance

Setting a budget and monitoring the income and expenditure of the church are key responsibilities of the PCC.

The **Finance Committee** oversees the finances of the PCC by monitoring income and expenditure, budgeting and reviewing the planned giving.

Financial position

The financial position of St Matthew's Church for 2022 was £24,917 better than budgeted. This is primarily due to receipt of a significant bequest and lower than budgeted expenditure on church maintenance, together with an increase of 8% in planned giving. This increase came with a corresponding increase in the tax recovered via Gift Aid.

St Matthew's participates in the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS). In 2022, PGS accounted for 58% of our planned giving receipts and 53% of planned giving donors.

Income in 2022 was £140,948. **Expenditure** in 2022 was £116,031.

We are grateful to all who continue to support the C&FW post. The restricted fund for this had a balance of £44,959 at the year end, which allows us to cover salaries and expenses for the coming year.

See Appendix 4 for a summary of income and expenditure for the years 2021 and 2022 and the budget for 2023.

Reserves policy

Reserves are held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow and to meet emergencies. It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on free reserves which equates to at least six months' unrestricted payments. In the case of St Matthew's Church this would be around £63,000 for 2023.

At 31 December 2022 the PCC held £91,688 in unrestricted reserves (£104,648 in designated funds less a negative balance of -£12,960 in the General fund).

6. Buildings

The PCC is charged with the care, maintenance and insurance of the church buildings, including St Matthew's Church Hall. The property and movable goods of the church are vested in the Churchwardens, who are also responsible for inspecting the fabric of the church and making an annual report (the Fabric Report) first to the PCC and then to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

The PCC is also concerned with developing our buildings to accommodate our own activities more effectively, and to enable us to connect better with and serve the wider community. A key aim is to have a main church building that is flexible, comfortable, and accessible, whilst maintaining and even enhancing its beauty.

St Matthew's church building

St Matthew's church is a Grade 1 listed building, parts of which date back to 1190. It is kept in a good state of repair by the **Buildings Committee** and other volunteers. Some of this work is maintenance and general repairs that continue in a very similar fashion year in year out. In addition, the church is cleaned regularly via a combination of a paid cleaner and a small faithful team of volunteers.

The Buildings Committee maintains an **Action List** of ongoing tasks. The Church Architect carried out the **Quinquennial Inspection** of the Church building in June 2021. The recommendations are being followed up and where relevant have been incorporated in the Action List. The overall condition of the church building is good and the Architect in his report commented '*It is clear... that the PCC take a great deal of care and pride in looking after the fabric of this Church*'.

The detailed Fabric Report by the Churchwardens is provided in a separate document.

The following are examples of work carried out during the last year.

- During the hot weather in the summer some ridge sections of the steel roof on the extension lifted because their nails became detached. This was repaired by the original roof installers in October 2022.
- The project to examine the feasibility of replacing the inner wooden porch door with glass doors was reviewed in the light of escalations of the likely costs beyond what could be provided by the earmarked legacy. There were also some technical issues including there being no acceptable solution for disposal or storage of the old wooden door. The PCC decided to put the project on hold and instead agreed that an alternative use of the legacy should be discussed with the benefactor's widow. As a result, a project to use the legacy to restore the three broken finial crosses on the church roof has been pursued.
- Options for reducing electricity usage have been examined, since costs are increasing. The largest cost is for heating. Management of the heating system, by using only the heaters

required for the part of the building actually in use, is now being done. The only scope for reducing heat losses that looks like a worthwhile financial investment at present is putting cavity wall insulation in the external walls of the church extension. This has now been done. Other possibilities such as secondary window glazing will be kept under review if electricity prices increase even further.

- The storage area behind the organ has been cleared and tidied with new shelving. Some stored items have been moved to the upstairs cupboard in the extension, where disposal of unwanted items has made extra space available. The new shelving behind the organ provides storage space for Fledgelings equipment that previously was in the vestry.

Examples of other work are in the Fabric Report.



Photo: Lifted ridge of extension roof,
August 2022; Tony Hughes



Photo: Remains of finial cross on South Transept roof;
Tony Hughes

The **Friends of St Matthew's** scheme to stimulate interest in the church building, and ultimately help to provide for the costs of keeping it in good order, has continued in 2022 through a Facebook page: www.facebook.com/HarwellChurchFriends

This is aimed particularly at descendants of the Harwell family lineage in the USA. The Facebook page has had a lot of visits and interest and consideration continues as to how this interest can be used to increase donations to help with the cost of maintenance of the church.

St Matthew's Church Hall

The Church Hall is located on the corner of The Park and Wellshead, approximately 100m south of the church. Its fabric is generally in good order; the surrounding grass and boundary hedges are cut when necessary.

Bookings are managed by the Church Administrator. In the absence of a Hall Manager, maintenance has been carried out by the Buildings Committee and Churchwardens. Plumbing repairs and repairs to the rainwater goods have now been completed. We are grateful for all those

who manage the Church Hall and help to keep it clean and tidy and in working order.

Over the years the Hall has been used by church groups and church-affiliated groups. Some further groups and individuals have also rented the Hall, which helps to offset the cost of its upkeep, though the costs have always exceeded the income by around £2,000 annually in recent years.

The aim of allowing the Hall to be used by non-church groups is to:

- Bring the broader community into contact with the church
- Defray the cost of running the Hall
- Provide an economic venue for church or church-affiliated groups.

The Hall has been used less than is ideal during 2022. The future of the Church Hall is being reviewed by the PCC, in particular whether it might be sold if surplus to requirements. This includes consideration of what might be done with the proceeds to enhance the church building to compensate for the reduction in facilities, or to otherwise advance the aims of the church. No decision has yet been reached. During 2022 the PCC received advice from solicitors who had been instructed to investigate what constraints, if any, might be imposed by the Charity Commissioners to any sale or change of use.

The income for the Hall in 2022 (not including any Scout cleaning contribution) was £1,760. Expenditure on maintenance, cleaning, utilities and insurance was £4,150.

Appendix 1: Administrative information

St Matthew's Church is situated on Church Lane, Harwell. It is part of the Wallingford Deanery in the Archdeaconry of Dorchester in the Diocese of Oxford within the Church of England.

The correspondence address is:

The Rectory

Church Lane

Harwell

Didcot

OX11 0EZ

Until 31 March 2022, the Rector was Rev Dr Jonathan Mobey. The post was vacant for the rest of the year.

The Independent Examiner of the PCC financial accounts is:

Mrs Jane Moreton

Harrow House

Burr Street

Harwell

Didcot

OX11 0DT

Appendix 2: St Matthew's church membership

The Electoral Roll is a list of those entitled to vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. It is also a crude indicator of church membership.

The Electoral Roll is maintained by Mike Pepper. At April 2022 the roll stood at 77 as compared with 73 in April 2021.

Appendix 3: St Matthew's PCC membership

During 2022, the membership of St Matthew's PCC has been:

Clergy

- Rev Dr Jonathan Mobey (the Incumbent) – until 31 March 2022
- Rev Pam Rolls (Associate Minister)
- Rev Janet Radford (Assistant Minister)

Churchwardens

- Eliza Wheaton
- Allan Macarthur

Elected Deanery Synod representatives

- Gordon Gill
- Sid Gale

Other elected representatives

- Tony Hughes (Vice-Chair)
- Jane Woolley (Secretary)
- Phill Johnston (Treasurer)
- Rebecca Lewis
- Liz Roberts – elected by PCC members in May 2022

Co-opted representatives

- Hazel Connelly¹ – in March 2022 and September 2022
- Tim Roberts – in November 2022

¹ Pre and then post the annual meeting

Appendix 4: Income and expenditure in 2021 and 2022 and budget for 2023

The full and independently examined Accounts for 2022 are published separately. They should be read in conjunction with this report.

	2021 (actual)	2022 (actual)	2023 (budget)
INCOME			
Envelopes/planned giving	49,160	57,994	58,000
Gift Aid recovered	11,636	16,100	14,000
VAT reclaimed (LPW grant)	869	-	-
Loose Alms	973	1,426	1,500
Grants	5,982	1,723	-
Donations/legacies/other	12,698	36,052	3,000
Fees	2,128	1,816	2,500
Church Hall income	1,147	1,760	2,000
Holiday Club	327	729	500
Interest	33	888	1,500
Transfers from Restricted / Designated funds			
Children & Families Worker fund	16,284	16,811	18,300
Administrator fund	11,550	6,932	11,000
Cilton Joint Account	(3,850)	(1,283)	-
Insurance Claim – roof repair	62	-	-
Major Repairs	720	-	-
Total income	109,720	140,948	112,300
EXPENDITURE			
Parish Share	48,204	47,477	47,959
Mission Giving	6,944	7,100	8,004
Joint PCC	34,955	37,472	39,983
Harwell PCC	19,978	23,982	31,210
Total expenditure	110,080	116,031	127,156
Surplus/Deficit	(361)	24,550	(14,856)

Fund Balances

There was a negative balance on the **General** fund at 31 December 2022 of **-£12,960**.

Designated funds (designated by the PCC for particular purposes but which could be otherwise spent if the PCC so decided) total **£104,648**.

Restricted funds (which can only be used for the purpose for which they were given) total **£67,711** including £44,959 for the C&FW post.

If you would like to see a copy of this Annual Report in large print, or discuss any parts of particular interest, please contact the Church Administrator on 01235 834256 or via our website:

www.harwellandchiltonchurches.org.uk