

# **St Paul and St Stephen Gloucester**

## **Annual report for 2021**

**Compiled May 2022**



# **Annual Report for 2021**

## **1. Church Management:**

Our vision

Vicar's report

Curate's report

Churchwarden's reports

Verger's report

Deanery synod report

PCC report

Electoral roll report

GDPR

Safeguarding report

## **2. Groups and activities**

Wild Worship

Messy Church

Little Angels

Remember and reflect [bereavement tea]

Thursday morning coffee

Church flowers

Church garden

## **3. House groups**

Thursday afternoon

Moveable housegroup

## **4. Other church users**

Gloucester Child Contact Centre

St Pauls C of E primary school

Sanctuary fellowship

Roma church

Link with GRH

## **5. Financial matters**

Fundraising: Winter Fayre

Charitable giving

Parish accounts for 2021

## **Our Vision**

Our vision is to be God's family, here in this part of Gloucester,  
faithful, loving and  
open to God, to one another and to the world.

As part of the Diocese of Gloucester, we also share the diocesan  
vision statement:

The logo for 'LIFE' is displayed in a stylized font. The letter 'L' is light blue, 'I' is yellow, 'F' is orange, and 'E' is pink.

We remain committed to our LIFE vision

**Leadership**

*Committed to transformation*

**imagination**

*Opening new paths to faith*

**faith**

*Living as adventurous followers of Jesus Christ*

**engagement**

*Living out Christ's love and hope*

# **ST PAUL AND ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021**

## **Vicar's Report April 2022:**

I am currently writing this report from my office in the heart of the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford. Therefore, I find myself looking back 16 months to the beginning of 2021. After everything that has happened in our lives individually and as a community it is hard to imagine those first three months where, once again, we were faced with a major lockdown.

This was the third such lockdown where restrictions on our movements were heavy. We were slightly more prepared with how to live these times now and some of the restrictions in March 2020 were now not in place for January 2021 but it was still hard. And when would it end? The hope on the horizon was the vaccination. It had first been given on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and there was encouraging news but many of us would have to wait many months before it became our turn to receive this life changing medication. In the meantime, fear was still a very visceral emotion, the church was shut once more although this time the clergy, were allowed into the building and so we were able to continue to live stream the services on YouTube. Heather and I continued to make statements such as 'we are not the BBC' whenever anything went wrong, which was frequent and inordinate amounts of time were spent trying to get many different aspects of technology to work.

As I write this 'Partygate' is very much in the headlines and whilst it seems very trivial compared to the war in the Ukraine the principle goes to the heart of how we choose to live our lives as Christians. During those long months at the beginning of 2021 when so many of us had lost so much from our health to seeing our families for one minute, let alone nine, the temptation was to bend the rules just a little bit. I know I felt it and I know I had many conversations with many different people who felt the same. However, in the end by supporting one another we made good decisions to remain obedient to the rules so as to love one another and to protect one another as much as possible. It wasn't easy but our faith is one of loving one another as we love ourselves and as Jesus has loved us.

I am writing this during the first week after Easter when the disciples were locked away in fear of the Jews and still trying to make sense of the things that had happened to them and to Jesus so quickly. Jesus appears to them. Locked doors and restrictions, fear, temptation and uncertainty are no barrier to Jesus. He is present with them then as he was present with us during those months and is present with us now. He speaks 'peace' into the room. Not in a way that means they should suddenly stop feeling all the things they are feeling. He speaks peace to us; not in a way that means we have to stop feeling all of the things we are feeling either but in a way that says, 'I am with you. Breathe the Spirit of God into your souls and be at peace with all of these emotions.'

The year continued with uncertainty and decisions that had to be made that had never even been contemplated let alone worked out before. How could we return to church safely?

Would the vaccinations mean different rules and restrictions? Could we receive wine as well as bread? Could we sit more closely? Which activities could we hesitantly begin again? In an ideal world and looking forward with hope what would our priorities be in September? Would we be back in church physically for Easter Day?

In the event, as tempting as it would have been to open the doors and be physically back in church on Easter Day we decided to postpone until Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April and then proceed with caution. Baptisms started again and we were blessed by many. As the weather got warmer so we were able to add in more and more things and tentatively began to plan for both Little Angels and Messy Church re-starting.

As July proceeded time seemed to fly away. My sabbatical during August, September and October was on the horizon and there was much to do before my desk looked even a little bit clear.

August 2<sup>nd</sup> arrived and I drove to St Beuno's retreat centre in North Wales for the first part of my sabbatical – the 30 day Ignatian exercises which required me to live in silence for those days. Many people thought this was the biggest joke out but in the end it turned out to be the biggest and most incredibly difficult but transformative time in my life. I returned to the noise and bustle of life in the second week of September and to the ordination of my son in Exeter Cathedral before embarking upon the second part of my sabbatical which was about processing the first part and making some changes to the way in which I lived out my faith.

During my sabbatical Heather, our curate, was given many different experiences that enabled her to develop and grow in her own ministry. I am very thankful for her ministry which enabled me to develop my own.

Little Angels did restart eventually in September but on a fortnightly basis before moving back to weekly sessions in November.

We also re-started Messy Church in September but by October this was once again not thought to be the safest path to be treading and it was decided to look at it on a month-by-month basis. We really hoped we could have done a Christmas themed Messy Church but this was not able to go ahead.

September also brought the tantalising hope that Heather and I might be able to return physically to St Paul's Church of England School and Linden Primary but unfortunately this was not to be the case with the rate of covid in primary schools hitting a new high. Instead, we continued to make the videos for the classes and to support the staff and children in a variety of ways. I remained as Chair of Governors and continued to attend meetings even whilst on sabbatical.

Returning to the parish at the beginning of November was a good time to return as we moved from All Souls into the Kingdom season in preparation for Advent. Church life was still very

fragile and each week seemed to bring another issue to consider in terms of safety especially with covid being so rife in our schools. People had returned for services but not everyone and not for every service. Maintaining communication in meaningful ways became even more important and my thanks go to all those who made regular phone calls and popped by for door step visits during this time. Our coffee morning on a Thursday began again giving much needed social time for those who attend and we began to serve coffee after the Sunday services again too.

Advent arrived with all the preparation for Christmas but still with a lot of uncertainty as



things were still fluid in terms of restrictions. We definitely expected to be in lockdown again for Christmas Day itself and so planned accordingly. We had an outdoor carol service from the pulpit and a Christingle service instead of the more chaotic crib service which enabled people to come to these services more safely. Instead of an Advent course we uploaded reflections each Sunday for people to listen to on our YouTube channel. Each of the reflections focused on one of the characters from the nativity – Mary,

Joseph, Angel Gabriel and the shepherds.

Christmas Eve arrived and the midnight service went ahead with a small but faithful congregation and then Christmas Day happened as well. It was a joy, having not been able to celebrate together in 2020, to do the things that we could do and to worship together.



2021 brought many changes – some we anticipated and others we did not. The biggest change for me personally was a new job. This meant I would leave parish ministry and go to work as a hospital chaplain in Oxford. After ten years in parish ministry and seven and a half years with St Paul and St Stephen I now find myself with a whole new type of parish. It is

demanding and distressing and yet amazing and wonderful and much of what I have learned at St Paul and St Stephen gives me the experience to step into this new space. My last Sunday was Epiphany Sunday and I was blessed to be able to preach and preside as well as to eat cake and drink prosecco with you afterwards. I pray for you all every day and I think of my time with you all as being God given. Each of you has been what Nadia Bolz-Weber would call an 'accidental saint' – someone who has brought unexpected gifts into my life. Each of you has been someone bearing the gifts of God and each of you has helped me to hold those gifts, accept them and wonder on the power of a God who brings life from death. It is the recognition, once again, that out of endings come beginnings and new life that means I know God is with me every step of the way but more importantly he is with every one of you and the whole community together.

As 2021 came to an end and we looked with renewed hope to a time of more freedom we looked to the light on the horizon. We still look to the light on the horizon and to the footsteps alongside our own in the journey of discipleship that ultimately leads us home. Church life may look uncertain and perhaps a little frightening at the moment but trust in the God who always leads us to new pastures. He is the Good Shepherd who rejoices over each one of you.

Rev Ruth Fitter



## **A Blessing**

### **Go Peaceful by Paul Field**

Go peaceful  
In gentleness  
Through the violence of these days  
Give freely  
Show tenderness  
In all your ways

Through darkness  
In troubled times  
Let holiness be your aim  
Seek wisdom  
Let faithfulness  
Burn like a flame

God speed you  
God lead you  
And keep you wrapped around his heart  
May you be known by love

Be righteous  
Speak truthfully  
In a world of greed and lies  
Show kindness  
See everyone  
Through heaven's eyes

God hold you  
Enfold you  
And keep you wrapped around his heart  
May you be known by love

God speed you  
God lead you  
And keep you wrapped around his heart

May you be known by love  
May you be known by love.





## Curate's Report for APCM 2021

2021 seems a long time ago already as I write this just after Easter in 2022. Things certainly look a lot different than they did this time last year! When I was putting together some statistics on attendance numbers I had to triple check that there were in fact only 3 people in church on Easter Sunday 2021 – the fact that we had been back out of the building under Covid restrictions until after Easter seemed a distant memory. As we faced our second Covid Easter we were better prepared than we were in 2020 and managed to at least try most things online and to create Holy Week Bags for us all to use at home – together even whilst apart.

Even once we were able to gather in the building again, this of course, was under strict Covid guidelines which continued to affect the way we did most things for the rest of the year. Many things remained online only for a good while and we gradually moved forwards through the year – it was with huge joy that we were able to return to baptisms (again!) and even to weddings! I was privileged to be able to preside at my first wedding in July 2020 albeit at St Katharine's, Matson rather than here at St Paul and Stephen's (all our own weddings having chosen to postpone).



Throughout 2021 as well as all the things you will have seen me at for St Paul and St Stephen's, I have continued my curacy training, compiling my portfolio, undertaken coaching training with the Diocese, been active with the diocesan vocations team as a vocations advisor and UKME advocate, gone on a 'virtual retreat' AND managed to go on an actual in-person curate training residential. I have also been involved with Gloucester Sanctuary Fellowship, the Gloucester to Cheltenham leg of the Eco-Pilgrimage Quiet Evenings in the Garden and of course, Wild Worship. It was also huge pleasure to welcome Steve Bullock to be with us as part of his ordination training and work with him for a few weeks – do please continue to pray for Steve as he prepares for his now fast-approaching ordination as deacon in June 2022.

Throughout the year both Ruth and I continued our involvement with both St Paul's and Linden schools – mostly online but sometimes even in person! It was a closely monitored situation as case numbers changed and school policies needed to be adhered to. It was a joy to be able to welcome both schools into church at various points towards the end of the year in one way or another. In other areas of children's work we successfully returned to Little Angels, almost starting again completely as all our existing children had grown up and gone to school – the arrival of the NHS baby clinic to the church building over lockdown no doubt helped to get us back off the ground by attracting new families.

Ruth's sabbatical from August to November was a major point in the year and we were all glad to have her back. I was grateful for the opportunities this time offered me to grow and develop my training – it was definitely helpful prior to Ruth's moving on to her new role in January 2022 and our moving into vacancy. I am immensely grateful for all her help and support in my time here.

The year ended with an almost normal Christmas – although we felt safer to move the carol service outdoors and to hold a Christingle and a socially distanced Come and See the Crib event instead of our usual Crib Service. The moment Ruth and I turned on the fairy lights in the stable really made my Christmas!

2021, although perhaps 'better' than 2020 was not easy for anyone. I would like to thank you all for your support throughout this time – for your patience through the many failed live streams and when things weren't as we would have liked them to be. I have been very mindful of a quote generally attributed to Sadhguru throughout this time, 'Our lives become beautiful not because we are perfect. Our lives become beautiful because we put our hearts into what we do.' He writes not from the Christian tradition, but it seems to me to be in keeping with offering our best to God, particularly our hearts, even when we know we're getting it wrong or falling short somehow – all any of us can do is do our best, and do it for God.

Rev Heather De Gruyther

### **Churchwarden's Fabric Report for 2021:**

I was appointed churchwarden in July 2021 along with Sister Cynthia Kerr. The Archdeacon's visitation service took place at St Oswald's Coney Hill in October 2021 and at this service we were admitted into office by the Archdeacon.

Each year the churchwardens present a report to the church on the church building and its contents and the maintenance work that has been done during the year.

2021 was far from being a normal year as we were out of the building from January-April and then were under strict Covid protocols until July. Covid risk assessments were carried out at different times as the situation changed.

Andy Palfreyman and Graham Brooks supervised the building at that time and necessary cleaning was carried out.

Now we are returning to normal:

The terrier and inventory have been completed and are an accurate record of articles belonging to the church.

Since the last check of the inventory we have 'lost' 20 brown plastic stacking chairs, but gained green/turquoise ones. We have also lost 2 pump flasks from the kitchen.

We purchased a candle stand to replace the one stolen in 2019 and Mary Rochford came for a prayer of dedication in memory of her husband, Eammon.

The usual pattern of care for church buildings is to carry out work recommended in a Quinquennial Inspection, Our last quinquennial inspection was October 2017 and as the name suggests is expected to take place every five years. The next inspection has been delayed by the pandemic and will take place in 2023.

We had a gutter inspection and clearance in April 2021 by Forrester Access which revealed problems down the north side of the building. This included leaky and missing sections of guttering and also open joints on the corners of quiet room resulting in water ingress and plaster falling off the walls into the room.

In October R S Stonemasons repointed the worst affected areas and the quiet room is currently drying out before replastering can be carried out.

The gutters were repaired and replaced by DJW Building Services at the end of the year.

The church log book records details of other work carried out in the church and its grounds:

The lightning conductor was tested

Water heater in toilet was replaced after failure of previous one.

The doors to the pink room had been left open for some months when the building was out of use and would no longer close. This was rectified by planing a small amount from the doors and they now are kept shut unless in use.

Church risk assessments have been completed as per insurance company requirements.

Our CCLI [Christian Copyright Licensing International] Licence was renewed in April.

Thank you to those who cared for our building during 2021. Going forward there is lots to do and I hope all can play their part in caring for our building, grounds and belongings as this place, the church of St Paul and St Stephen, is used for the glory of God , to share the good news of Jesus Christ in our community.

Ruth Parsons.

## **2021 Statistics for Mission**

The annual Mission Statistics have been completed and submitted to the Diocese.

The church is asked to give information on the average number of people attending services, the number of baptisms, weddings and funerals. This gives a picture of emerging mission issues and helps for forward planning.

In 2021 at St Paul and St Stephens: There were 18 baptisms, 4 weddings or wedding blessings and our clergy conducted 18 funerals [in church or at the crematorium]. Our average adult weekly attendance in October [in person and online] was 58 with 7 children.

Statistics are more than numbers and in 2021 some of our funerals were for beloved members of our church family.

We laid to rest Mike Parker, Margy Fitter, Ted Steele, Joyce Keable, Margaret Roberts and Graham Sheppard.

We give thanks for their lives and their faith, as we remember all that they brought to our lives and our church. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Ruth Parsons

### **Verger's report**

I like to talk to as many members of the congregation as possible and if they need anything I am always ready to help them. I walk around the church garden about twice a week, pick any litter and if the sun is out sit on the bench and look at all the lovely flowers. Quite often people walking by will say hello and say how beautiful the garden looks.

Graham Brooks

### **Deanery synod report 2021**

During 2021 the meetings were on Zoom until October which were good but it's difficult when there are a lot of people on it and I found it quite challenging; but they were very worthwhile keeping us in touch with local churches.

The year started with various questionnaires being filled in for our Deanery Strategic Plan by various members of the synod. These were forwarded on to the Deanery working party.

The meetings are always well attended by Clergy and lay of Gloucester. It's my privilege to represent St Paul and St. Stephen's at these meetings, thank you very much. If you need any more information please ask me when you see me in church.                      Graham Brooks

*Another member wrote:*

The meetings were held in March, May and October. A highlight from the meetings was a talk by Margaret Sheather, the Diocese advocate for the project *Living in Love and Faith*. The project covers areas of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. The purpose of the project is to increase our Christian understanding of what it means to be human and what it means to live together in faith and love as church.

The deadline for the Strategic Plan was extended so it will be worked on in the next year with the final draft being ready later in 2022.

This year also saw a new Diocesan Synod elected.

## **Report to the APCM of St Pauls & St Stephens PCC meetings in 2021.**

The PCC met 7 times during 2021. This is an overview of meetings.

At the beginning of the year the PCC members were Vicar Ruth Fitter, Curate Heather De Gruyther, Church Army and church warden Cynthia Kerr, Ruth Parsons, church warden from July 2021, Helen Scott, Graham Brooks Deanery Synod rep, Rachael Hawkins, Kiri Roberts Deanery Synod rep, Steve Roberts deputy chair until July 2021, Miriam Afortude, Beverley Evans, Anne Minchin.

At the APCM we gained Mavis Anderson, Julie Holder, Lynda Lundregan.

There were several departures, Kiri & Steve Roberts, Beverley Evans, Ruth Fitter, Cynthia Kerr.

Meetings took place in church and on zoom. Covid led us a merry dance, questioning when to open church, close it down, communion choreography, sanitising and mask protocols. We provided Lent packs for people at home in lockdown.

All the PCC have completed the Diocesan safeguarding course. Sue Matthews can no longer be the safeguarding officer due to family cares. Cynthia Kerr continued the role but when she left Pat Gifford agreed to take it on with Julie Holder. We are all responsible for safeguarding one another.

There is a separate treasurer's report. Our treasurer Chris Smith had to give up due to ill health. Our thanks go to him for all the work he has done over the years. Charles Minchin and Andy Winters have taken over. Income is down despite people's generosity. In February we decided to increase our charitable giving to 10% of our income to be a proper tithe. This is to be shared among an international charity, a national charity and a local one.

We discussed the Deanery Strategy Plan at the beginning of the year. We are aware that there has been a huge amount of extra housing in the parish that need to be ministered to. It is important that we are represented at the Deanery synod because the Diocesan plan is to lose one stipendiary post. We only have one rep' on DS at the moment. Collaborative working across the Deanery and ecumenically has only been talked about.

The building and grounds were considered. The plaster on the walls in the quiet room is collapsing due to damp. It needs taking down and reinstating but not until we are sure it is dry and work has been done to prevent water ingress. This will be funded by the Contact Centre group. We have inherited some plaques from St Stephens which will be hung once we have decided where and have a faculty. We now have a post box at the West door. This is primarily so we could apply for a post code so we can get Wi-Fi. It is GL1 5AH.

Vicar Ruth had an idea of getting gates made for all 3 gaps in the church garden wall to prevent small children running out on the road when we have outdoor activities. These could have been custom made and a memorial for covid. This was abandoned due to the cost.

Bees in the roof space at the west end of the church have apparently stung someone and investigations have been done about removing them. There are at least 2 colonies, honey bees and bumble bees which don't sting. They could all be killed to get rid but this is not an option we want to take.

*Other topics covered were:*

Children's work, Messy church, Little Angels, Light project, children in Sunday worship.

Vicar on sabbatical then departing and her successor.

Lone working policy – if you are alone in the church doing jobs let someone know!

Talked about issuing a newsletter to the community using willed money from a previous vicar of St Stephens specially for 'proclamation'.

There were many hours of discussion so this has left out details and probably some topics. All the PCC minutes are in the pink file in the hall room if you are interested.

Anne Minchin 29.04.2022.

### **Electoral roll report**

As of this APCM in May 2022 our electoral roll totals 86. There have been 3 additions to the roll this year and 16 names have been removed, due to deaths or people moving or telling us they have left the church.

Lynda Lundregan

### **General Data Protection Regulations**

As a church we are required to adhere to GDPR requirements. We ask permission to use personal information in certain circumstances so that people's rights are protected. In order to comply with GDPR we have and will continue to ensure that the information we hold is:

- Collected lawfully and for specific purposes.
- That information is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are used.
- That data is accurate and kept up to date.
- That data is kept securely and kept for no longer than is necessary.

### **Safeguarding Reports for 2021**

Safeguarding is the term used to describe the responsibility we all have as a community of people to work for the flourishing of others around us and to make sure everyone lives life in a safe and secure way which offers them wellbeing in every aspect of their lives.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone, not just a few people.

At the end of 2020 a series of new requirements for our churches safeguarding was forwarded to parish Safeguarding officers within the diocese. The new requirements affect practically each of us in the parish who undertake any role that involves a certain level of contact.

This means that in practice anyone who has any role within the parish must have training relevant to the level that the role meets. This includes children, young people and vulnerable adults or those in PCC governance roles in the life of the church. PCC members are in a position of governance and need to take the role seriously.

So, those in any volunteering role including those with any contact such as those on welcome, coffee providers etc need to undertake and complete successfully Basic Awareness Training even if they have been involved in the same role for many years. Staff team are required to undertake higher level Safeguarding Training through the Diocese.

DBS checks are now required every three years, reduced from 5 years under the new guidance.

During the year, particularly with Covid-19, I was not made aware of any safeguarding issues in the parish. This is unusual as there are usually 1-5 throughout any given year.

Cynthia Kerr

At St Paul & St Stephen's there are some people who have a greater responsibility for this aspect of our life together. Rev Ruth, as the Vicar had ultimate responsibility until she left, but she carried this responsibility alongside the rest of the clergy team, the PCC and particularly the nominated persons who were Sister Cynthia Kerr and Susan Matthews during 2021.

Sue stepped down due to family commitments and was replaced in the autumn by Julie Holder. If you have a concern about either a child or an adult and their wellbeing please talk in the first instance to Julie Holder or to Rev Pat Gifford who replaced Cynthia Kerr in early 2022.

Each parish is also supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

You are always at liberty to call the Diocesan Team on the following numbers or by email:

**Team:** 01452 835516

**Direct Dial:** 07401 197280

**Out of Hours:** 07944 680320

**Shared Inbox:** [safeguarding@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@glosdioc.org.uk)

To contact social care services in Gloucester you can call them on 01452 426565.



## Wild Worship

During 2021 we experimented with Wild Worship in order to be safer outside due to Covid risks and provide physical space for families with children to be able to move around freely although people of all ages were very welcome.

The dates and themes were:

July 4<sup>th</sup> – Midsummer

August 15<sup>th</sup> – Lammas

September 5<sup>th</sup> – Bugs

October 3<sup>rd</sup> – Harvest

November 14<sup>th</sup> - Closing Down

December 5<sup>th</sup> – Waiting

The format was similar each meeting with a gathering, informal sharing of a bible passage, an outdoor activity or exploration and prayers.

Most meetings were held in our rather wild garden but one activity (Bugs) transferred to the Church Garden as part of an open afternoon.

We closed the year by making Outdoor Christingles and reflectively walking an Advent Spiral as dusk fell at the darkest point of the year waiting for the Christingles to grow and the light to return.

Wild Worship has not restarted in 2022 due to my being out of parish on placement and now drawing towards the end of my curacy and preparing to move.



Rev Heather de Gryther

## **Messy Church in 2021**

Messy Church continued in 2021 as it had in 2020 with Messy Church At Home material sent out via email and Facebook.

We were very hopeful of meeting again in person in the autumn and did indeed manage one socially distanced session in October. But Omicron struck and the risk assessments judged messy church to be too much of a risk to meet face to face.

Please pray for all involved in messy church as we are uncertain about our next steps. Pray that we may know how and when to restart our Messy Church in person meetings.

Ruth Parsons May 2022

## **Little Angels in 2021**

Little Angels, our toddler group for preschool children and their carers, didn't meet until September in 2021 due to the pandemic. When we restarted, after in depth risk assessments, it was fortnightly initially but as the situation with Covid became easier we opened weekly from November. The day we meet has been changed to fit around other local groups and we are now in the church hall each Thursday between 1pm and 2.30pm during school term time.

When we started it was with a new group of 'pandemic' babies who had not been to groups before. The children we knew previously had grown up and were going to school or preschool. The group has matured quickly into a very friendly supportive gathering of maybe 5 or 6 families.

Each week we enjoy play, story, singing and eating together. The stories are from the Bible and some of the songs we sing are Christian songs. Our favourite in 2021 was definitely 'The Wiggle Song'.

Rev Heather and Ruth P. have led the group with help from Chris in the kitchen. The lack of other leaders has made it a struggle as Heather often has other commitments. Some of the parents are very helpful but going forward we pray that we might find 2 more leaders to make the group viable.

Ruth Parsons May 2022

## **Remember and Reflect**

During 2021 we changed the name of the Bereavement Tea to Remember and Reflect which seems to describe the meetings perfectly. We enjoy tea and cake and remember our loved ones who have died, some very recently and others some time ago.

We only managed two meetings due to Covid restrictions during the year and our numbers were small but nevertheless the friendly confidential atmosphere of our times together is special.

All are welcome; we meet bi-monthly usually on the third Sunday of the month at 3pm. Our remaining dates for this year are: 15 May, 17 July and 18 September.

Jan Wood

### **Thursday Morning Coffee**

This was restarted in a low key way in December with a few people staying for about half an hour after the Thursday Eucharist.

### **Church Flower Report**

Many ask why people put flowers in Church. Firstly flowers in Church or indeed outside are there to remind us of "Creation", creation of all things living, and that brings us to the "Resurrection" which in itself is actually re-creation, or made alive. If our Church is based on the belief of Resurrection then flowers should be used as often as possible as a reminder that we were all created beautiful in God's eyes and so we should make our Church an example of that beauty. A mixture of fresh and artificial flower arrangements are used to decorate the Altar area and windowsills in church.

Following the removal of some covid restrictions we have some pre-made pedestals using artificial flowers which we use so that the church does not look bare.

We are now a very, very small group of volunteers, some experienced and others with nothing but enthusiasm and we would welcome, encourage, assist and help anyone who would like to 'have a go'.

Julie Holder

### **Church Garden**

For most of the year, garden maintenance hinged on the monthly meetings of the 'Garden Gang'. This involved seven regular members and met on the third Thursday afternoon of each month. In the gaps between meetings individuals came in to keep the grass mowed and the borders weeded. Most of the borders contained well-established shrubs, in an attempt to minimise maintenance. The raised bed on the front lawn gave crops of onions, carrots and strawberries. The wildflower area, facing Parkend Road, erupted into a profusion of poppies.

**George Marchant**

## **Bible Study at Willy Beart's**

Covid restrictions and illness of members meant that we only held four meetings in 2021. These took place in October and November. Two of them considered the meaning of appropriate seasons of the church's year – All Saints & All Souls and Advent. The other two involved Gospel readings used in the Sunday lessons at that time – the Rich Young Ruler and the Calling of the Disciples.

For the rest of the year we tried to be patient, keep frustration at bay and keep in touch by telephone. We were deeply affected by the death of Ted Steele in May.

**George Marchant**

### **Moveable housegroup in 2021**

2021 started with a prolonged lockdown but by then we were Zoom experts! So for many weeks we met on Zoom once a week for Bible study, mainly in a lectio divina style. We used 2 x 40 minute Zoom sessions back to back in order to have time to exchange news and prayer requests as well as the Bible study. We joined the church Lent group during March but then continued week by week until the end of July.

One session in June we were joined by Steve Bullock who was on placement with the church. We helped him complete an assignment by listening to him speak about his life and journey of faith before offering feedback. It was a memorable evening as Steve inspired us with his story.

We also used What's App messaging to keep in touch with each other between meetings, until this became less necessary as the Covid situation eased in the summer.

In September the group was encouraged to join with the wider church in Wednesday Wondering in church. This provided a mixed and interesting variety of sessions finishing with Advent reflections before Christmas.

Ruth Parsons

## **Gloucester Child Contact Centre 2021**

Over the last year, to start with, we had seen a slow trickle of families using the Centre, which may have been the effects of Covid. We are now seeing a good flurry of new families using our Centre and are as busy as ever. Which is great news, to get back on track, with families being reintroduced to each other.

It was very sad news to see Ruth leave, she was absolutely wonderfully supportive of the Contact Centre and we will always be thankful for her involvement with us. We all wish her well and know it's a fabulous opportunity for her to pursue.

Thank you to Ruth P who has stepped in to be our contact and many thanks to you Ruth, for all your kind help so far, it is very much appreciated.

The Centre remains open fortnightly all day, with a session in the morning and one in the afternoon. The Centre often uses the 5th Saturday in the month to close for contact and concentrate on training volunteers or for holding events, like our Open Day on Saturday 30 April 2022.

Our Open Day is for awareness, so families know who we are, what we do and how we can support them. It will also, we hope, help attract new volunteers, having got busier and offering more avenues to families, it would help us tremendously. If you know of anyone who may be interested, please ask them to contact me :

[gloucesterchildcontactcentre@gmail.com](mailto:gloucesterchildcontactcentre@gmail.com)

We also have some funds to help with decorating the quiet room and I will update Ruth P, when we are able to meet.

Thank you, not only from the GCCC but also from all our users, I know they are extremely grateful, to see our door is open for them.

We know how fortunate we are, to have a very good relationship between the Church and together we have been able to support each other, through some very testing times over the last year. You have played an important part in continuing to see smiles on our families faces. Thank you.

Take care, stay safe and well

**Kind regards**

**Tammy**

**Coordinator**

**Gloucester Child Contact Centre**

**Tel: 07522 541 005**

**Charity No : 1057352**

**St Paul's Primary School report:**

Report requested and awaited

**Sanctuary Fellowship:**

Gloucester Sanctuary Fellowship, led by Bleddwyn Evans, which serves the marginalised in our community, meets outdoors most of the time. This autumn they sought sanctuary indoors with us on a Tuesday in the middle of the day. They intend to meet outside through the summer and may come to us again as the weather gets colder.

**Roma Church:**

Roma Church, led by Gordon Rae continues to meet in our church on a Sunday evening.

**Hospital Link**

2021 proved a very difficult year with regards to visiting patients in hospital. New rules are now in place. If you know of anyone from our congregation or parish who would like a visit from the Chaplains whilst in hospital you can contact them direct on 0300 422 6200 or contact Jan Wood (01452 678174) who will pass on the request on your behalf.

Jan Wood

**Fundraising in 2021: The Winter Fayre**

We had a lovely day in November, raising over £800 for church funds. Thanks to Julie Holder, family and friends for all the work beforehand and on the day.

**Charitable giving 2021**

The PCC agreed in 2020 that we should continue to support 3 charities. These currently are

- International charity: Christian Aid
- National charity: Rooftops
- Local Charity; The Long Table

We agreed to give 10% of our income and in January 2022 each was sent £1600.

The Long table have responded to their gift with thanks and telling us it will be used towards the Long Table project in Matson.

# St Paul & St Stephen's Receipts & Payments Accounts

for the year ended 31st December 2021

## Receipts

### Voluntary Receipts:

Planned giving  
Collections at Services  
All other giving/voluntary receipts  
Gift Aid recovered

### Activities for generating funds:

Investment income:

Church activities:

Total Receipts

Note	Unrestricted Fund £	Designated fund £	Restricted fund £	Total 2021 £	Funds 2020 £
	32,186			<b>32,186</b>	33,474
	4,420			<b>4,420</b>	2,605
5	19,373	-	-	<b>19,373</b>	2,833
4	5,357			<b>5,357</b>	5,635
	1,731	-	-	<b>1,731</b>	711
	1	-	122	<b>123</b>	173
	927	-	-	<b>927</b>	8,030
	<b>63,995</b>	-	<b>122</b>	<b>64,117</b>	<b>53,461</b>

## Payments

### Church activities:

Diocesan parish share contribution  
Clergy and Staffing costs  
Church running expenses  
Hall Running costs  
Mission giving and donations

### Costs of generating funds

### Total payments

### Excess of receipts over Payments

### Transfers between funds

### Cash at bank and in hand 1st January

### Cash at bank and in hand 31st December

	33,737			<b>33,737</b>	33,796
3				-	
	16,714	-	-	<b>16,714</b>	21,796
				-	
	5,729	-	-	<b>5,729</b>	
				-	
	<b>56,180</b>	-	-	<b>56,180</b>	<b>55,592</b>
	7,815	-	122	7,937	(2,131)
	7,815	-	122	7,937	(2,131)
	9,341	10,756	3,491	23,588	25,719
2	<b>17,156</b>	<b>10,756</b>	<b>3,613</b>	<b>31,525</b>	<b>23,588</b>

Notes to the accounts:

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the Receipts and Payments basis.
2. The "Restricted" fund is the church Roof Fund and is limited to expenditure on that project; the "Designated" Fund is allocated to that purpose by the PCC but that allocation can be reversed by PCC resolution.
3. "Clergy and Staffing costs" have not been listed separately in the 2021 accounts. Clergy expenses have been paid in full on claim.
4. Gift Aid has been recovered by the diocese on donations through the Parish Giving scheme. Some Gift Aid may be claimable by the PCC on funds directly gifted to the parish.
5. The "Covid Recovery Fund" donation of £12,000 (included in "all other giving/voluntary receipts" masks an effective deficit for the year of £2569. A deficit of this size is not sustainable in the long term. The possibilities of economies in expenditure are very limited, so efforts to achieve financial security must focus on giving.