

THE BENEFICE WITNEY



Year in Review 2019

ST MARY THE VIRGIN
Witney

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
Curbridge

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST
Hailey

HOLY TRINITY
Witney

ST. KENELM'S
Minster Lovell

Called to be a community
of mercy and kindness



RECTOR'S REPORT

My brothers and sisters,

In 2019 we continued to live out our vision 'Called to be a Community of Mercy and Kindness'. It is amazing to see some of what has happened in these pages. I hope that you will delight with me in sharing some of these stories and rejoice that God continues to be at work among us in so many and varied ways (Hebrews 1.1).

S Augustine once wrote '*Christ is not valued at all unless he is valued above all.*' As we see some of the many things that happen within our benefice, it is vital we also pause and take stock to ensure that Christ is valued above all. Sometimes this takes us out of our comfort zones and preference, which can be a painful process. However, if we remain rooted and grounded in Jesus (Colossians 2.7) then we will, as S Paul reminds us, 'overflow with thankfulness'.

In our benefice we see so many examples of sacrifice, generosity and teamwork. I want to thank all who make this benefice a place of thankfulness (the meaning of the word Eucharist) – and to all who work so hard: it is valued enormously.

Augustine wrote elsewhere that '*A Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot.*' As we pause to mark our last year and embark this Eastertide on being witnesses to the Risen Jesus through our common sacramental life – may we become ever more alleluias from head to foot and may Christ be valued above all.

Grace and Peace

Toby Wright

Rector of Witney & Vicar of Minster Lovell



CONTENTS

1. Vision Statement

2. Finance

2.1 Financial Summary for the Parish of Witney
St M, HT, Hailey

2.2 Financial Summary for the Parish of Minster Lovell

3. Review of the year

3.1 Witney Churchwardens' Report

3.2 Minster Lovell Churchwardens' Report

3.3 Witney PCC Report

3.4 Minster Lovell PCC Report

3.5 Fabric Reports

3.5.1 Saint Mary's

3.5.2 Holy Trinity

3.5.3 Hailey

3.5.4 Curbridge

3.5.5 Minster Lovell

3.6 Church Reports

3.6.1 Saint Mary's

3.6.2 Holy Trinity

3.6.3 Hailey

3.6.3.1 Friends of Hailey Church

3.6.4 Curbridge

3.6.5 Minster Lovell Church

3.7 Witney Deanery Synod Report

3.8 Safeguarding

3.9 Personal Discipleship Plans

3.10 Exploring Spirituality Programme

3.11 *Acorns* Parent and Toddler Group

3.12 Young Disciples

3.13 Doyennes

3.14 Seniors' Lunch Club

3.15 Hailey Village Lunch

3.16 Mothers' Union

3.17 Wholeness and Healing

3.18 Prayer Shawl Ministry

- 3.19 Schools Ministry
- 3.20 Residential Home Ministry
- 3.21 Witney Hospital Chaplaincy
- 3.22 Street Pastors
- 3.23 Late Night Café
- 3.24 Charitable Giving St M, HT, Hailey, ML
- 3.25 Christian Aid Week
- 3.26 Book Circle
- 3.27 Prayer Circle
- 3.28 Silent Prayer
- 3.29 Link with Bor in Växjö, Sweden



**Called to be a community
of mercy and kindness**

1. Vision Statement

Called to be a community of Mercy and Kindness

Our vision continues to be that we are Called to be community of Mercy and Kindness. John Donne when the dean S Paul's once spoke of God's mercy: 'We begin with that which is elder than our beginning, and shall outlive our end, the mercy of God... the names of first and last derogate from it, for first and last are but rags of time, and God's mercy hath no relation to time, no limitation in time, it is not first nor last, but eternal, everlasting.' . For mercy is a key word that indicates God's action towards us, and how we are to encounter one another and the world. Nothing in our witness can be lacking in mercy. As John Chrysostom reminds us, 'Mercy is the Queen of all virtues'

In 2019 we had a number of Strategic Initiatives, or Transformational Projects. We focused on 28 specific things. Of these, we completed 15, partly met 6 and haven't yet met 7. A lot happened and much has been done, especially as we took this on part way through the year!

There are 4 key areas which we continue to use to direct our ministry and mission:

- **DEVELOPING COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS: EQUIPPING EACH MEMBER TO BE AN AGENT OF GOD'S LOVE**
- **SOCIAL JUSTICE: DISCIPLES EQUIPPED TO LIVE OUT THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD: EXPECTANT AND WATCHFUL FOR THE SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE, THE KINGDOM IS REVEALED AMONG US**
- **INCLUSIVITY AND HOSPITALITY FOSTERING A JOYFUL GENEROSITY**

- TEACHING AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT A DEEP SACRAMENTAL LIFE WHICH FOSTERS AN ABILITY TO LINK LIFE EXPERIENCE, PAST, PERCEIVED PRESENT AND POSSIBLE FUTURE, TO THE STORY OF FAITH

God of mercy and kindness

Deliver us from every temptation to act with anything less

Than kindness towards those we encounter,

Speaking the truth in love.

Teach us afresh the way of true mercy

That heaps burning coals through deeds of loving kindness;

For it is your kindness, your mercy,

In which we trust and hope. Amen.



Young Disciples learning about HART

2. Finance

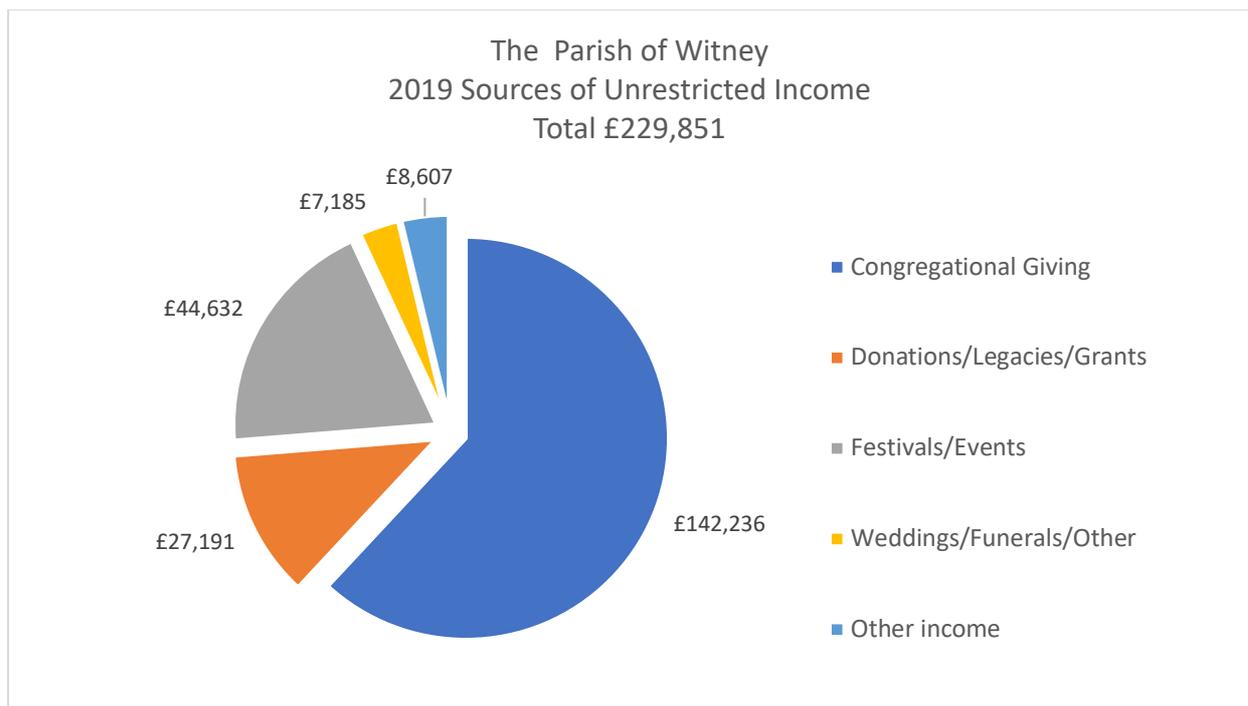
2.1 Financial Summary for the Parish of Witney

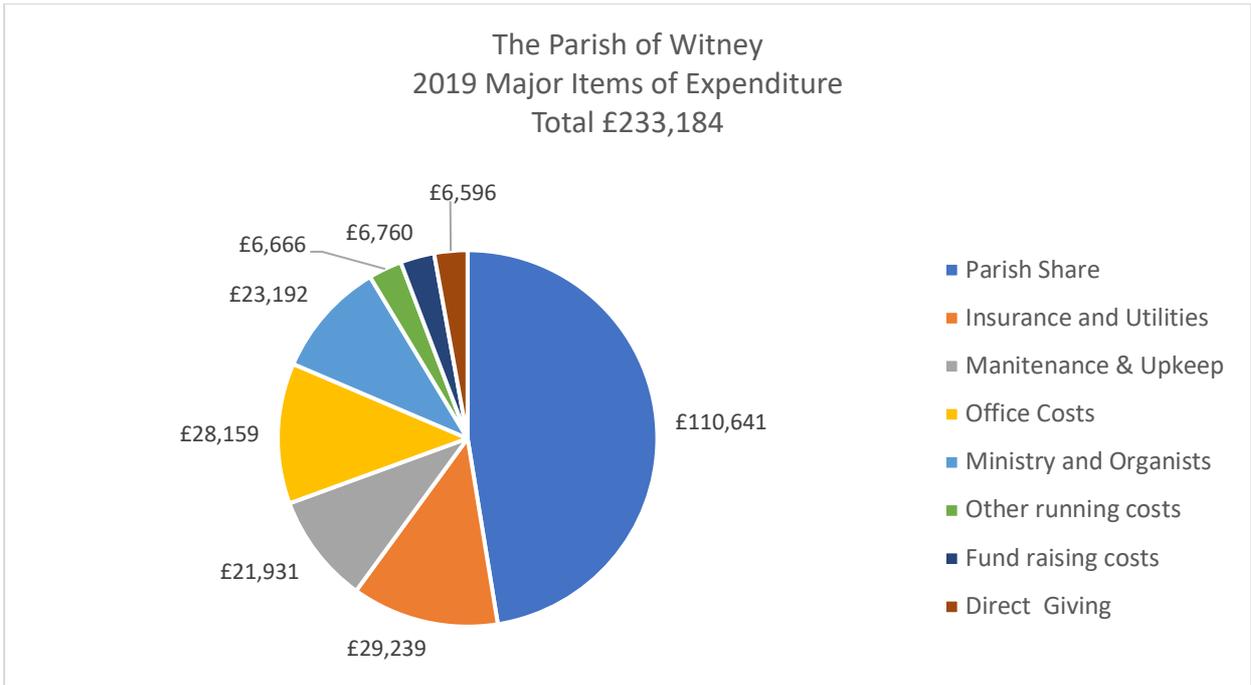
The 2019 Report and Accounts are published in full on our website. In summary, our total income for the year was £231,347 while total expenditure amounted to £254,292.

The 2019 deficit of £22,945 largely reflects the final expenditure on the renovations to the chancel roof at St Mary's. This element of the 2019 deficit was funded through the release of restricted funds which had been built up in previous years specifically for this project.

However, the core operating costs for the Parish as a whole were £233,184 (excluding the expenditure on development projects) while unrestricted income totaled £229,851 (again excluding exceptional income items and adjustments) resulting in a deficit of £3,333. This was covered by a release of funds from our General Reserve, which at the end of 2019 stood at £55,480, comfortably in excess of the amount required by our Reserves Policy.

The breakdown of unrestricted Income and Costs is shown in the diagrams below.





Costs in 2019 were well controlled, rising by 2.5% including the increase in our Parish Share contribution. However, excluding miscellaneous items, income for 2019 was down 3%, as a result of lower contributions from Festivals and Events, and the fact that we did not hold Gift Days in 2019 (which did take place during the previous year).

At the end of 2019, the Parish held total reserves of £77,632, of which £22,152 were restricted.

Overall, therefore the Parish ended 2019 in a relatively strong financial position, notwithstanding the small unrestricted funds deficit. We are extremely grateful to everyone who has given so generously, not only in terms of money, but also in time and talents to enable the Parish to continue its wide range of ministries throughout the year.

St Mary's ended the year with a bank balance of £18,706.94. This fulfils the requirement of the Reserves Policy.

Holy Trinity ended the year with a balance of £17,913.97. This fulfils the requirement of the Reserves Policy.

Hailey ended the year with a bank balance of £10,611. This fulfils the requirement of the Reserves Policy.

*Jeremy Lasman,
Witney PCC Treasurer*

2.2 Financial Summary for the Parish of Minster Lovell

We were able to pay our Parish Share in full, thanks to our regular congregation giving, our new “Friends of St Kenelm’s” and of course from Visitors, who visit the nearby “Ruins”.

As we are fortunate to have these Visitors, we decided to purchase a Donation Box in June 2019 which has proved to be a good investment. £4,300.00 donations received to December 2019 and we also acquired a Contactless Card machine which has produced £530.00 for the same period.

As at 31 December 2019 our accounts were as follows:

Current Account	£18,323
Restricted Funds	£18,000
Repair Fund	£ 5,729

Brenda Bennett,

Minster Lovell PCC Treasurer



3. Review of the year

3.1 Witney Churchwardens' Report

Our annual review always reflects the scale and breadth of the activities that take place across the Parish in any one year. During 2019, we continued to see growth in so many areas, with new initiatives and deepening engagement.

In particular, it was pleasing to see our links with Minster Lovell strengthen through joint services and events, a 'mixed' team of visitors to our link Parish in Sweden, and the establishment of a Benefice Council. The Exploring Spirituality Programme broadened its scope substantially, and the Young Disciples Group became firmly established as an integral part of our worshipping and teaching community.

It is truly a privilege to serve as Parish Wardens in such a lively and flourishing Christian Community. We could not do so without the love and support of the Ministry Team, the Deputy Wardens and the huge raft of willing volunteers. Huge thanks to all of you.

Jeremy Lasman & Kayleigh Lucas
Witney Churchwardens

3.2 Minster Lovell Churchwardens' Report

It has been a joy to welcome the Revd Hugh White, part of the Witney Ministry Team with special responsibility for St Kenelm's.

The Revd Ross Meikle continues his involvement with St Kenelm's School and we have been delighted to welcome the whole school to the church twice during the year. Ross, with Hugh, is maintaining and broadening our links with the school.

We welcomed Benefice members to Mass during Holy Week, and the wider village to our St Kenelm's Day service in July.

We continue to benefit from active support from the PCC members at St Kenelm's, and our regular church members.

Kirsty Strange & Judith Warwick
Minster Lovell Churchwardens

3.3 Witney PCC Report

The PCC is responsible for a lot of the admin involved in running the parish. In 2019 this included approving PCC and DCC budgets; monitoring the parish finances; appointing trusteeships and Foundation Governors for schools; and approving applications for faculties for work on our churches. In 2019 the PCC held five full meetings and an extraordinary finance meeting.

- The Bishop's Council approved a revised Team Instrument for the benefice.
- In line with the Church of England's *Promoting a Safer Church: Action Plan*, the PCC agreed new guidelines for undertaking risk assessments for any church based activity involving children or vulnerable adults.
- The PCC adopted a new Strategic Initiatives document of activities already happening, and outlining new initiatives.
- The 'Comms group' has continued working to improve communications. The *Benefice Bulletin* is now established for news from across the benefice and national church. Contact the Parish Office to receive it. The website has been revised to include more information at www.witneyparish.org.uk. The Twitter accounts have been rationalised and now tweeting @WitneyBenefice.
- The PCC reviewed and revised a range of policies to ensure compliance with Safeguarding requirements and GDPR and to improve the way the parish operates. All policies are available on the web site.

Kate Lockwood

Witney PCC Secretary

3.4 Minster Lovell PCC Report



The Revd Hugh White chairs the Church Council meetings, liaises for us with the Benefice events, and is guiding us with inspiration and sensitivity towards new events and services, and an outreach to the wider community in Minster Lovell, and to the many tourists who visit the church and the ruins.

Judith Warwick

Minster Lovell PCC Secretary

3.5 Fabric Reports

3.5.1 St Mary's Fabric Report

2019 saw a break from the major renovations in St Mary's. Nevertheless a number of significant improvements to the fabric of the building were progressed, including:

- Recarpeting of the existing carpeted areas within the Nave
- Improvements to wifi connectivity in the Winchester Room
- Replacement of the boiler that heats the Parish Office
- Replacement of the sound deck, to allow for a wider variety of sound inputs to our sound system
- Completion of the final snagging works for the Chancel Roof project
- Installation of a contactless donation point for a trial period
- Acquisition of a new donations box
- Implementation of card payment devices
- Acquisition of new mid height ladders

Faculties for the installation of comprehensive CCTV through the church and to acquire new 'overflow' chairs for use in the Church and the Winchester Room were submitted to the Diocese Advisory Committee and have been approved. A faculty to install wiring to provide a power socket and improved lighting around the inner North Door has been submitted and is still awaiting approval.

Under the auspices of the Inspiring Change project, a CGI video was produced to illustrate what the church might look like once the proposed changes to the interior had been implemented (including underfloor heating and new flooring). A small advisory group was formed, which proposed a number of next stage projects, as stepping stones to the major renovations:

- Major improvements to the interior of the Winchester Room, including the catering facilities
- Replacement of the exterior North doors with an automated glass door, to improve both aesthetics and importantly disabled access
- Replacement of external doors and windows in the Winchester Room, to improve security, aesthetics and, again to improve disabled access.
- Refurbishment of the toilet block to provide one extra cubicle incorporating disabled facilities

The Quinquennial report for the Church was completed, and its recommendations are in the process of being reviewed.

Finally various elements of routine maintenance and emergency repairs have been carried out.

Although this is a short summary, it represents a great deal of work, and I would like to express my thanks to all the faithful volunteers who have contributed so much of their time, energy and expertise to make it all happen.

Jeremy Lasman
Churchwarden

3.5.2 Holy Trinity Fabric Report

Anxiety continues over the proximity and size of the evergreens, in our churchyard, with little hope of reducing their number.

The stone pillars have suffered some erosion and the Town Council has made repairs but not to the standard required of the DAC. This has been reported back.

Holy Trinity is actively investigating a new north-facing roof; quotes have been obtained. It is planned that we investigate applying to trust funds. Sadly, minor repairs are required to the south side where individual tiles have been lost. (The south side roof was replaced in 1997.) It was decided that we should wait until the current trend in stormy weather has ceased before repairs are made.

Regular servicing has been carried out, as appropriate, during the year.

Charlotte Tremain

Deputy Warden

3.5.3 Hailey Fabric Report

Faculties: We applied for two faculties during the year: one (list B) for a replacement boiler, and one for the engraved stone to be sited by our Armistice Tree. Both these faculties have been granted. The boiler is in place and the stone is now being engraved.



Fabric: The church had its quinquennial survey this year. There were, fortunately, no awful surprises. Gutters were cleared and tiles replaced on the roof. An electrical survey was carried out and remedial work done. One boiler was replaced.

Churchyard: We received a grant from Hailey Parish Council for £1,000 towards the upkeep of the churchyard. There were two churchyard maintenance mornings when volunteers worked hard tidying and cutting back. Several trees have been attended to professionally, with the agreement of the diocese and the council. Wild flowers continue to proliferate and look so beautiful throughout the spring and summer months, and beyond.

Sue Drew & Elpie Lewis
Deputy Wardens

3.5.4 Curbridge Fabric Report

The fabric of the church is in good order. There's nothing new to report from Curbridge this year.

Christine Lever

3.5.5 Minster Lovell Fabric Report

Work on our side aisle roofs has been completed. We are now looking at the feasibility of extending and improving our very outdated cloakroom facilities, with the possibility of adding a kitchen/servery and small exhibition area.

We have had a new donations box, and a contactless machine installed.

Judith Warwick
Churchwarden



3.6.1 St Mary's Church Report



During the summer we held our usual festivals - the Beer Festival in April followed shortly afterwards with the Food and Drink Festival in May. We also saw the return of the Flower Festival in July. All drew in many people from Witney and surrounding areas and raised considerable amounts of money for the upkeep of our churches.

St Mary's continues to be a significant place of worship in Witney. We experience many visitors from all over the world and our congregations continue to grow throughout the year.

December is our busiest month. It includes many school carol services, some by candle light and also the Mayors carol service. Witney Wonderland also returned in support



of Joss Searchlight, a children's cancer charity. The event saw the church filled with Christmas Trees with a Christmas Fair and a Gala night.

On Christmas Eve nearly a hundred children attended a crib service in the afternoon. Also, the carol service at 6.00pm was well attended with a collection held for the Fire Fighters Charity.

Kayleigh Lucas

3.6.2 Holy Trinity Church Report



Charities & Outreach organised another Quiz and Pancake supper - a great success with all proceeds going to See Saw (Oxfordshire).

We rambled in the Oxfordshire countryside, with companions from St Mary's, on a beautiful March day.

On Holy Saturday, we welcomed Fr. Stephen Tucker who preached at the Easter Vigil.

Give it a Go Sunday: When many of the congregation volunteered to take on new and different roles at the Eucharist.

Messy Masses were held during the year, with children from Junior Church ably assisting Ness in the Eucharist.

'Miss Read Remembered' was produced twice, by the Redlynch players, in May.



Charities and Outreach barbecue was enjoyed in glorious sunshine with the proceeds going to Water Aid. On the same morning a plant, produce, jewellery and children's toy sale took place in church in aid of our fabric.

Ride & Stride, in aid of OHCT, was supported by walkers, sponsors and someone to welcome at HT. It was a beautiful day and many of the walkers enjoyed refreshment at Oktoberfest after the walk had ended.

October saw the 20th anniversary of Claire Titcomb's ordination to the priesthood, which was celebrated at Harvest Festival. Many of the family of Claire, and her late husband Roy, were present with Toby presiding at the Eucharist. An excellent Harvest lunch followed, with profits going to USPG.



On Remembrance Sunday, the choir, joined by singers from All Saints, Sutton Courtenay, sang Evensong marking the 75th anniversary of ending of World War II.

Cakes and preserves were sold in aid of The Children's Society, Christmas boxes were sent to deprived communities, in Eastern Europe, and a jolly wreath making session was held in December in aid of our fabric fund.

Large numbers of houses were leafleted, with our HT Christmas card – advertising Christmas services – the success of which was borne out by numbers attending over the Christmas period.

Nine Lessons and Carols, with HT choir slightly augmented by our much welcome visiting singers, was very well attended.

Holy Trinity is actively investigating a new north-facing roof and minor repairs to the south side.

We have warmly welcomed new members of the congregation during 2019.

We remember those whom we have loved and see no more. May their souls through the Mercy of God, Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory.

Charlotte Tremain & Dair Henderson
Deputy Wardens

3.6.3 Hailey Church Report

Hailey Church has had another a busy year. Our regular Sunday and Thursday services have been interspersed with “special” services and a variety of other activities.

Christingle Service: This was held on a January afternoon. Christingles were made and lit, creating a delightful scene of fascinated young faces. Money collected went to the Children’s Society.

Woodland Service: Ross inspired us to think about the environment and try to make some changes to our lifestyles.

Peace Service: This was held in the church this year.

Harvest Festival: This was followed by a brunch in church. All gifts of fresh produce went to Witney Day Centre, and other goods went to the Food Bank.

Middletown Grange: Services are held in the care home every fortnight, and, when possible, residents come to church on Thursdays, and they took an active part in our Carol Service

Ness in Hailey: Ness visits in Hailey on a regular basis, which is much appreciated.

Village Lunches: These continue to grow and we now regularly have 40/50 visitors which is great. The occasion is always much enjoyed by all, helpers and visitors alike.

Soup Lunches: These took place in various homes during Lent and raised £778 for Christian Aid.

Board Games Afternoons: A new venture.... These started during the summer, monthly on Wednesday afternoons. We have a great variety of games on offer, and enjoy the social aspect of the afternoon, and the cake!

A Quiet Place: The church is open every day, but on Thursday afternoons it is warm and lit, especially, for a time of quiet reflection for any visitors who call in, and the kitchen is available for hot drinks.

D Day Memorial Concert: Words and Music combined to make this a very special village occasion. Picnics were consumed, and the money raised went to Combat Stress.

Swedish Visitors: We had visitors from Sweden to see the church and learn about what goes on in Hailey.

Hailey Festival: The Friends of Hailey Church organised the Village Rounders match, held this year in September, due to rain in June; we had a stall at the village fete; and participated in the village scarecrow trail with Julie Andrews in residence in the churchyard.

Hailey School: The school came to the church for their Leavers service and the school carol service. They also visited the church with Ness to learn more about the church building and services.



Lights of Remembrance: On a damp November evening both the church and churchyard were filled with nightlight lanterns in memory of friends and family, and a tree of remembrance was decorated with names. Mulled wine and hot dogs were served, and very good conversations were had.

Christmas in Hailey: This year there were 4 cribs in the church, of varying sizes. The very large one at the back of the church was a new addition, created by several people, including residents at Middletown Grange, and was much admired.

The Hailey Carol Service attracted over 200 people, every seat was taken. It was a very lovely occasion to start the Christmas Season, and incorporated children's readings about kindness.

Thank you: A very big thank you to everyone who makes Hailey Church the special place that it is. Whatever you do it is important, and contributes to the whole.

Special thanks go to our sacristans, Sue, John and Robin, our organists, Jeremy, Barbara and Amalya, Kate our server, our sidesmen, readers, coffee makers, flower arrangers, and members of the DCC.

And a big thank you to all members of the clergy team who have visited and supported Hailey Church throughout the year.

RIP: We remember with great affection Alan Crawford and Yvonne Townsend, who died during the year. Their contributions to the life of Hailey Church were inestimable and we think of them with great gratitude for all they did for all of us, and for the village.

Elpie Lewis & Sue Drew
Deputy Churchwardens

3.6.3.1 Friends of Hailey Church

Our main fundraising activities have been the Rounders tournament on the playing field and the Concert in Church. Both of these were timed to be part of the Hailey Festival. The Rounders, however was rained off on both its main and reserve dates, but took place instead on the first Friday of September. It still turned out to be a good evening, although the final of the competition occurred in the twilight. We hope to return to the June date in 2020.

Instead of a Jazz concert, in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the 80th of the start of World War 2, a Variety Show was put on in church. It consisted of some humour, some songs and some poignant moments. We are grateful to many Hailey people for their input and enthusiastic support of the Show.

Our grants to the DCC have been to help with cleaning the floor, church running costs, the Remembrance Tree, Bibles for the Year 6 school leavers amongst other things. We have supported tree work in the church yard.

John Haskell

3.6.4 Curbridge Church Report

Two members have died, but we welcome two new regular worshippers. There were 4 baptisms but no funerals or weddings at Curbridge this year. We are grateful to the Priests who get up early and travel to the remotest corner of the Parish to preside at our Sunday Eucharists.

We received a group of visitors from our linked parish, Voxtorp in Sweden, who clearly felt at home in our little country church with its distinctive, colourful painted woodwork.

Curbridge hosted the Parish's Ash Wednesday Evening Service with a full choir and packed congregation. At our Harvest Festival the Young Disciples brought the symbols up to the altar and gave appropriate readings. For our Remembrance Sunday Service the church was dressed with scarlet poppies. The Young Disciples also led the prayers of intercession at our candlelit Village Carol Service.

Christine Lever

3.6.5 Minster Lovell Church

We have many visitors, attracted by the history and 'The Ruins' who often take the opportunity to pray, leave messages on our prayer board, and frequently comment in our Visitors Book on the quiet prayer-filled atmosphere within the church.

For details on how to become a Friend of St Kenelm's speak to Judith Warwick or Kirsty Strange.

3.7 Witney Deanery Synod Report

The Revd Toby Wright completed his extended term of office as Area Dean after six years. Mandy Studley, PA to the Area Dean, also stood down. The Revd Tess Kuin Lawton, who has already been serving as an Assistant Area Dean, has been appointed Area

Dean; she is assistant priest in the benefice of Bampton with Clanfield and is also Chaplain at Worcester College, Oxford.

The Deanery share was paid in full using some of the rebate from the previous year. Grants of up to £2,500 from the Diocese, funded from glebe income, were made available for mission.

There were talks and updates on:

- Personal Discipleship Plans (The Revd Tina Molyneux)
- Church planting and fresh expressions alongside parish ministry (The Revd Will Donaldson)
- Schools ministry (The Revd Tess Kuin Lawton)
- Using Witney Deanery Prayer-Space kit (Kirsty Morgan)

Helen Meyrick
Deanery Synod member

3.8 Safeguarding

We have continued safeguarding training during the year for anyone who needs it- we have included welcomers, servers, pastoral visitors, children's group workers, bell ringers and more. We now have over 80 people within the benefice with basic training. This will be an on-going process as new people join and other training needs refreshing, most basic level training is done in Witney.

Some safeguarding concerns have been raised and dealt with according to the policy and Diocesan guidelines.

We have updated and reviewed the policy which has been passed to the PCC for approval.

Alison Spicer
Parish Safeguarding Officer

3.9 Personal Discipleship Plans

Personal Discipleship Plans (PDPs) have been offered to all members of the benefice. So far we have over 30 people signed up and more are lining up. They are an opportunity to explore your own discipleship journey – that is your journey as a follower of Jesus. The process is very simple and is a framework to explore where you are with God, and how you might choose a few things to focus and develop on. You meet 1:1 with a mentor who helps you explore through the process and you agree a few points to go away and reflect on. Then a few months later you come back to check in on where you are. It's a great way of just reviewing where you are at with God and seeing where you might like to focus. For more information do be in touch!

Toby Wright (rector@witneyparish.org.uk)

3.10 Exploring Spirituality Programme

2019 was an excellent year for developing and expanding the Exploring Spirituality Programme following its inception in 2018. In no particular order, there have been quiet groups, lively groups, children's teaching, teenage discussions, adult study times and training, knitting, praying, eating, learning, playing and discerning. 'Every Christian is both teacher and student' (*Timothy Radcliffe, 'Alive in God' 2019 pg 143*) and as such we are all learning and walking the pilgrim way together! We're always open to new suggestions for spiritual exploration so please speak to Ness if there's something you'd like included in the future. Some groups are very popular so please do continue to contact the host to let them know you're wishing to attend.

Ness Whiffin

3.11 Acorns Parent and Toddler Group

Acorns Group have had a good year though numbers have not increased. The volunteers work very hard and we thank them for their commitment.

The adults who come to the group benefit in many ways, while the children have a great time. The Christmas party was a happy occasion, enjoyed by all. Flowers and a Huffkins voucher were given to Esther on her retirement from the Group

It was decided at the AGM in July after much discussion about the way forward, that the Group would close for the first half of the Spring Term 2020, while a new team was put in place led by Nick Reynolds.

3.12 Young Disciples

In 2019, the Young Disciples have experienced a broad range of activities and services, and have had visits to each of the five churches within the benefice as a part of their programme. Our focus has been primarily on different kinds of prayer and meditation. In September, we grew from 7 to 12 in number, including two from St Mary's, our first one from Holy Trinity, and two who come from Roman Catholic churches in the area. A prayer card was created by one of the Disciples, published and distributed to the benefice. Due to an increase in number, we relocated from the curate's house to the Winchester Room at St Mary's.



They have enjoyed creating puppet shows of stories from the Bible which have been used in their own worship services at the end of each term and at Revd Hugh White's licensing. For their Christmas service in 2019, one of the Young Disciples preached their first sermon. Others wrote their first collects and intercessions, led liturgy and read for the first time, and operated technology to aid worship.

As in 2018, the Young Disciples wrote Christmas cards which were distributed at the St Mary's Christmas lunch.

Activities have included: Collect writing; a study on the Lord's Prayer; prayer stations at St Mary's for Thy Kingdom Come and for Advent; a session on mental health inspired by +Steven; Bible studies; and preparation for their end of term services.

We have had a number of visitors who have contributed to our programme, including but not limited to:

Baroness Caroline Cox (HART)

Anne Taylor on Intercessions

Joy Hance, doing Prayer With Colour

Olly Shaw (Pioneer Deanery Youth Minister)

Michele Foot, talking about the trip to Sweden

The Young Disciples have also attended the following:

APCM worship (SM); Maundy Thursday (Hailey); Feast (SM);

Harvest (Curbridge); Advent Carol Service (Minster Lovell)

Christmas Carol service (Curbridge)

Ross Meikle

3.13 Doyennes

Doyennes is a group of ladies from across the parish who meet twice a month, once for coffee and once for an evening meal.

There is no "membership", and we welcome new faces to come along as and when they can. For coffee we meet at the Blanket Hall, alternating between Tuesday and Wednesday mornings on the first week of each month. Please contact Linda Taft on linda@witneyparish.org.uk for more information.

Doyennes is trying some different places to eat in the evening and has seen new people coming along; we've had some great evenings, getting to know each other better and eating some very tasty food! We meet in the third week of each month, alternating between Monday and Tuesday. Please contact Kate on katebanks2003@gmail.com for more information.

Kate Banks & Linda Taft

3.14 Seniors' Lunch Club

Lunch is provided on the fourth Wednesday of each month at St Mary's at 12 noon, following the 11am Eucharist, in the Winchester room. This is with mainly seniors in mind but is open to all. A two course lunch is served for £3 a head followed by a speaker. A whole variety of people have spoken including a visit from Witney waste collection, a talk on modern art and at Christmas, after a meal paid for by Witney Rotary club, Toby had everyone singing 'Twelve days of Christmas' with the actions! This regularly serves about 40 people and thanks to all who provide hot casseroles and desserts and those who set up and clear away. If anyone is free to help or provide transport it would be much appreciated.

Chris Howden

3.15 Hailey Village Lunch

The Village Lunch continues to thrive. It is organised by Hailey DCC and is held at the Village Hall on the third Wednesday of the month. We regularly welcome between 30 and 50 people, and at Christmas had over 60 people with us. We have not yet run out of food! It is a great, cheery community event bringing in people from all around the area, new friendships are made and good conversation is had by all. We have a raffle, and any profits from the event go to Hailey DCC to support the village church. We would like to say a big thank you to all the helpers who help on the day, to the people who prepare the food, and to those who set up and dismantle the hall.

Elpie Lewis

3.16 Mothers' Union

The branch has enjoyed another successful year and has been able to donate total of £206 towards four different M.U. projects which support families in various countries.

We made 49 blankets, 14 cardigans, and 29 hats for babies in SCBU and over 60 holding cross squares for the chaplains at the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital.

We have had various speakers who have spoken to members on our theme for last year which was Listening, Observing and Acting in Step with God. The highlight of the year was hosting the Area meeting when our new Diocesan President, Mrs Maureen Weston gave a talk, and this was followed by a cream tea.

New members are always welcome, please contact Barbara Eaton on 01993 704554 for further information.

Barbara Eaton
Branch Leader

3.17 Wholeness and Healing

Once a month on a Tuesday afternoon about 10-12 of us gather at Nick and Joy Hance's home for a simple service including a bible reading with our shared comments, a chance to share with the group our concerns about the world, the people around us and concerns about our own life (it is always possible to say pass!) summed up in a litany of prayer. Then we share with our neighbour things over the past few weeks for which we are thankful. Two of our number then lay hands on and pray for each member of the group and we finish with tea or coffee and biscuits. It lasts about one hour and fifteen minutes and everyone is welcome. Our thanks to Joy and Nick for their hospitality.

Tim Partridge

3.18 Prayer Shawl Ministry

The shawls are prayerfully knitted or crocheted for people needing support. The shawl makers meet together monthly on the first Thursday afternoon. They also work prayerfully at home. Completed shawls are blessed in the group, wrapped and gifted with a prayer card.

To join in this ministry, or if you know someone who would appreciate a shawl, please contact Joy Hance.

3.19 Schools Ministry

Collective Worship continues in many primary schools across the town: St Mary's Infant School, The Batt School, Hailey School, West Witney School, Witney Community School, St Kenelm's School in Minster Lovell.

St Mary's Church welcomed three primary schools in for Christmas services and concerts, and also strengthened its links with both Farmhouse nursery (with an Easter service, a harvest service, a Christmas service and a Christingle) and also with the Henry Box school welcoming most of the school over for assemblies at Easter. The Batt School had several visits for RE lessons.

St Kenelm's Church has been building its relationship with St Kenelm's School through governorship, gifts linked to the school's new vision, and increased church visits and clergy-led assemblies. The St Kenelm's Trust has been paramount in enabling the school to visit the church. The school received its SIAMS inspection in October, and received a Good rating (the gold standard under the framework).

There are governors represented at three schools across the town from across the churches, and members of congregations from across the benefice have helped with our ministry to schools through Prayer Spaces and through our Feast mission.

Ross Meikle

3.20 Residential Home Ministry

Holy Communion is celebrated once a month at Richmond Village, Fernleigh and St Mary's Mead. This ministry is primarily for those who are no longer able to attend church regularly on a Sunday, although anyone is welcome at these services. About 20 people are normally present at Richmond, 12 at Fernleigh and 8 at St Mary's Mead. The services are usually said, but at Richmond and Fernleigh we sing at the festivals – Christmas, Easter and Harvest.

There is also a Christian Fellowship Group at Fernleigh, which meets on Thursday mornings for Bible study and prayer, sometimes with a speaker. We are exploring the possibility of a similar group to meet once a fortnight at Richmond.

Members of the Pastoral Team also visit regularly and sometimes assist at the Communion Services.

Holy Communion is celebrated occasionally at Cedar Court on the dementia ward. There are an increased number of residents who have connections to St Mary's church.

Twice a month (first and third Thursdays), Holy Communion is celebrated at Middletown Grange, Hailey. This is a joint service with the church community and the relationship between the care home and the church is flourishing. Residents from Middletown Grange came to a number of Christmas services and contributed with readings. Pastoral relationships between the church and the residents are also strengthening.

Joy Hance & Ross Meikle

3.21 Witney Hospital Chaplaincy

I continue to visit the hospital every week, seeing the two wards on alternate weeks usually on Thursday afternoons. The hospital has seen the appointment of a new matron and the care given continues to be excellent. We are fortunate to have such a good community hospital in the town and I personally find my ministry there very rewarding – ministry on the frontline.

Mark Thomas

3.22 Street Pastors

2019 seems to have whizzed by and my overall impression was that Witney continues to be quieter than in previous years. The Police presence is organised on a traffic light system, so Bobbies on the beat can be rare but they generally appear quickly when called and really needed. There was a stabbing in Witney late in the year but this is an unusual event in the town. At present there are 10 street pastors from local churches but we continue to run recruitment events and pray for more Christians to join us. In 2019 we were able to cover 60% of Saturdays. Significant events have included helping a very distressed lady out of the river and calling an ambulance for her. An abandoned handbag was found with large amounts of cash, all of which were handed over to the Police. We are trying to reduce our carbon footprint and this has been achieved by replacing single use plastic bottles with reusable ones and compostable paper cups.

Our presence on the streets appears to be well received and generally much appreciated.

Jo Gribben

3.23 Late Night Café

Late Night Café (LNC) Report January 2020, under the auspices of Churches Together in Witney

There are currently thirteen members of the LNC team. We start with prayers with the street pastors in St Mary's Church, Church Green, and then set up on Market Square. We offer free hot drinks and an opportunity for conversation from 11.00 pm – 2.30 am, to anyone who is out in Witney, and are ready to be a welcoming presence, to listen and chat, and also to pray with people if they wish.

Lighting in the store room has been improved after our health & safety check, and chairs provided for team members & our customers, and a new gazebo bought. DBS checks are on-going.

I am grateful for the continued help members of Oxford Community Church and the Welcome Church, and the Street Pastors. However the reduction in our numbers because of changes in people's situations means that new offers of help are essential if we are to continue to go out regularly.

A new coordinator is needed from Easter 2020; until then, contact Rosemary Peirce with offers to help or for further details. on 01993 200103 or rosemary.peirce@ntlworld.com

3.24 Charitable Giving (Benefice 2019)

£778	Christian Aid from Lent Lunches
£177.28	USPG from Lent boxes
£262.85	Thames Valley Air Ambulance
£375.90	See Saw, Oxfordshire
£31.80	Cyclone Idai Disaster
£286.00	Water Aid
£775.00	Witney Day Care Centre
£305.00	Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust
£241.52	USPG from Harvest lunch
£94.30	Children's Society cakes and Preserves sale
£68.00	Salvation Army
£832.41	Open Doors
£845.07	HART
£206.20	The Fire Fighters Charity
£148.10	British Legion

A collection for the Children's Society from Hailey's Christingle Service

Collections for Homeless in Oxford from Minster Lovell's Christmas Services

Harvest gifts to Witney Day Centre and Witney Food Bank

Blankets knitted by a local group

In excess of 40 bags of dry and tinned goods for the Food Bank.

140 Christmas boxes to Eastern Europe

3 full carrier bags of hats, gloves and scarves taken to The Porch

Monthly collections of food and toiletries for The Besom

3.25 Christian Aid Week 2018

Holy Trinity and St Mary's both took the decision that, once again, they would only deliver an envelope with an attached message saying that we were not doing house to house collections. Details of alternative methods of giving were given on the notice, including a box at both churches where envelopes could be left. As a result, many more streets were able to be covered and about 3,500 envelopes were delivered.

Chris Riley

3.26 Book Circle

The Deanery Book Circle has had an enjoyable year. We meet on the third Tuesday each month at 2:30pm in the Winchester Room at St Mary's and at the January meeting we plan our programme for the year. Mostly we discuss the book chosen for the month but last year we selected some poetry for one month and some light hearted play reading for December. We also had an outing in August to Shorthampton church where we heard a talk about the building and later had tea and cake at Charlbury church. We are quite a small group and always welcome new members. Come to one and give it a try!

David Burton 01993 702433 or daburton@btinternet.com

3.27 Prayer Circle

There is a committed group of people across the Benefice ready to give time to pray for people and situations as they are requested. It is a privilege to be involved in this ministry so please feel free to contact the numbers on the Welcome Sheet at any time so that your concern can be shared with others and can be lifted to the Lord.

Esther Partridge

3.28 Silent Prayer

The Silent Prayer Group meets in St Mary's on Wednesdays at 4:30 for half an hour. The Group is made up of people from other churches as well as Anglican: Catholic, Methodist and Quakers. It is an opportunity to worship God in silence after a short appropriate reading, using a mantra to keep focussed. The time can pass very quickly.

We welcome anyone who would like to try this type of praying.

Esther Partridge

3.29 Link with Bor in Växjö, Sweden

On 11th March 2019 six of us from across the Benefice, including our leader Ness, set out to visit the Benefice of Voxtorp in the Diocese of Växjö. This is the Benefice in Sweden with whom we have a Covenant to grow in learning, understanding and friendship. We flew to Copenhagen and then took the train over the bridge to Malmo and on up to Alvesta. From there we caught a connection to Bor to be met by Ulrika, the parish priest, and members of the congregation. A welcome supper was laid on and we met our hosts for our four-night stay in the area.



Our programme included;

a) visits to three of the four churches in the Benefice - Gällaryd, Voxtorp and Tännö. We were impressed by their beauty and astounded by the facilities they have for all ages (young and

old), well-appointed kitchens and immaculate churchyards.

b) a day at a wetlands centre enjoying the Swedish countryside and wildlife

c) a wonderful trip to Växjö and the Cathedral which houses some beautiful works of art in glass. This day included a visit to the Diaconal Centre in Växjö where we heard of the social work they undertake in the city.

Back in Bor, we were introduced to a group of young people preparing for Confirmation (the prospect of a visit by Voxtorp young people to Witney in Holy Week 2020 is very exciting) and joined a service for the signing of the Covenant by Ulrika and Ness.

Wherever we went we were most warmly welcomed and treated to Fika (coffee/tea and cake). We came back with a better understanding of the church in Sweden - and with new friends!

Besides deepening its link with Voxtorp, Witney Benefice hosted groups from other parts of Växjö Diocese. In June the Växjö Diocese Church Buildings Committee visited all five churches of Witney Benefice to see how re-ordering work had been done or was being planned and the Växjö Cathedral Oratorio Choir sang a concert in St Mary's. Then in November the Göteryd-Pjätteryd-Halleryd Benefice sent a group to see how rural ministry and mission was conducted in the Witney Benefice as a means of reflecting on its own operations in Sweden. It is testimony to the success of the partnership with Voxtorp that Witney Benefice is open to welcoming other Växjö groups, thereby making a strong contribution to Oxford Diocese's relationship with Växjö Diocese and the Church of England's with the Swedish Church as a whole.

Michele Foot, Charlotte Tremain, Hugh White

**Called to be a community
of mercy and kindness**