

Electoral Roll – October 2020

The number of names on St Sampson's Church Electoral Roll is currently 77.

1 name has been added since the full revision in March 2019 and 9 names have been removed.

Clergy Report

This last period in the life of UTG has been rather like the Queen's "Annus horribilis" with disorientation and bewilderment for many people, not only due to the suspension followed by resignation of our incumbent Phil, but also because of the Covid 19 situation and lockdown.

Through the latter part of 2019 and through 2020 until now, many people have worked with commitment and resilience (with Archdeacon Christopher and Area Dean Alison on hand if we needed them) enabling our Upper Thames churches to fulfil their tasks of service to their communities as they can. Our full range of services was offered through to lockdown and we welcomed both Bishop Viv and Bishop Lee in December 2019 (Bishop Viv came twice) as well as Revd Oliver Ross and LLM Catherine Price from the Mission Area and Archdeacon Christopher.

Lockdown meant we could not go to church as we knew it, but we could be church, joining in with community-based support networks and each church setting up a pastoral care network and continuing the pastoral support for our congregations in this way would be of real benefit.

With churches closed, we offered services on our UTG YouTube channel and through Facebook; our Sunday and midweek worships have drawn in people who don't normally come to a church.

UTG is run almost entirely by volunteers and to every single person I say thank you for what you have done. Colleagues in the ministry team, Katy, Pauline, Pete and Suzi, have ensured Sunday services and occasional offices (when possible) have taken place, as well as shared leadership in UTG. Thank you also to our ministers with PTO, John, Anthony, Pam, David and Michael, and to Pauline and Barry for their expertise which enabled our online worships to be available.

The Church Wardens have been fantastic too, as have all members of our 4 PCCs. One of our UTG strengths is the many teams we have (often unseen and quietly getting on with the jobs they do) showing that God's gifts enable a wide variety of people to live out valuable ministries in our churches. All God's people are called to serve in the place where they find themselves and that certainly happens in UTG.

May 2020 brought a vacancy and the formation of our UTG transition team co-ordinated by Adina Grace (Cricklade) and Alison Beadle (Ashton Keynes). The team of licensed ministers and church wardens has put together the UTG parishes profile and we do say a big thank you to Adina and Alison for their work on this.

The latter part of 2019 left us with no parish administrator (which added admin into the mix that came my way) and I would like to thank Sarah Smith for her help (GDPR, website, emails sending, wedding couples). Since February Jane Templeton has been interim parish administrator and has proved invaluable. Thank you Jane.

In St Sampson's additional thanks goes to the team who lead Informal Worship - primarily Jo, Sarah and Matt - for not only holding things together, but also for leading and prayerfully thinking about what could be possible and making it happen. And the St Sampson's roof repair team have done an amazing job in organising much, seeking permissions and fundraising. The project starts now!

I think we all know that life has not been easy in this period, but God is good and to coin a phrase, we can "Let Go and Let God" lead us into the future that He has for us. Each person has played a part this year - "we can do no great things, only small things with great love". Thank you to everyone for doing exactly that.

Revd Shirley Danby
Associate Minister, Upper Thames Group of Parishes

Church Warden's Report

Please note: This report relates to 2019. As we all know, things have moved on since then, so I have added a brief report on our current situation in 2020.

After a period without church wardens, I returned to the role in April 2019. What a year it has been!

Rev Phil Bradley

Phil joined us in August 2014 and suffered two significant periods of sickness absence and, in August 2019, was suspended from duties. He resigned April 2020 and we wish him well for the future. The years of disruption and uncertainty have been incredibly challenging for us and it is worth noting that several worshippers and generous givers have left the church due to the situation. In the Benefice profile we mention that this has resulted in a lack of clear and consistent leadership over a number of years.

Vacancy

Once again, we find ourselves in a vacancy. Individuals have contributed to keeping St Sampson's church running in these uncertain times.

Across the Benefice, a Transition Team was formed following Phil's resignation, which is leading on the preparation of the paperwork for the recruitment of a new Priest in Charge. This will become the Benefice Council once the Benefice Profile, Job Spec and Person Spec have been approved by the Diocese.

Fabric and Contents

Barry Hammond (St Sampson's Building Manager) and I went through the inventory of the church contents prior to the Archdeacon's Triennial Inspection. Everything was present and correct. Barry will present a separate report on the fabric of the church excluding the roof project. We acknowledge and thank Barry for the tremendous dedication and amount of unpaid, voluntary work he has carried out on our behalf.

Archdeacon's Triennial Inspection

March saw the Archdeacon's Triennial Inspection at which Barry and I were present. We were reminded of Safeguarding requirements and the need to keep the burial register up to date. Otherwise everything was satisfactory.

Benefice Administrator

In August 2019 our Benefice Administrator went on long term sick leave and resigned in September 2020. In the interim Jane Templeton took on this paid position on a temporary basis and has provided admin support to the teams across the Benefice. Jane has been working from home and been able to do all that she would have done had she been in the office. Our thanks go to her.

Ministry Team

Across the Upper Thames Group, currently we have an associate minister, four LLMs under the age of 70, two retired ordained clergy with permission to officiate in the Bristol Diocese and three retired-age LLMs with permission to officiate. Until lockdown it was business as usual in St Sampson's. Thank you to all of them.

2020 Update

Covid

March 2020 saw a nationwide lockdown when all places of worship were required to be closed. While in lockdown we were frequently asked why the church was closed at a time when people wanted the strength and love of God, and access to the building which represents a place of tranquillity to people whether or not they share our Christian faith. We have been fortunate that, with the support of many of you, we were able to open our church as soon as we could; many others are not open even now. Thank you to all those who have made this possible. During lockdown, a group of people have been maintaining contact with our church family by phone, especially those who are vulnerable. As we did this we found we were reaching out to others in the wider community as well, and we continue to do so.

During this period, PCC and Transition Team meetings have been held via Zoom, so the business side has not been adversely affected, although we are aware that our usual level of communication amongst members of all our congregations has been sadly missed. Covid has resulted in a 'new normal' which we are all adjusting to and again thank you for accepting hand sanitising, face masks, social distancing, and cleaning.

Worship during Lockdown

One of our new norms is online worship, which has been provided weekly. These services have been much appreciated by those who have 'attended'. To the end of August, there were Zoom Thursday morning prayers. Morning prayers were said every day at 9am during the strict lockdown, led by home-based volunteers so we could all worship together in our own homes. Thank you to all those who facilitated these new ways of worship, especially Barry with his IT skills.

Vacancy

The Transition Team has developed a Benefice Profile which the Diocese is reviewing prior to publishing. We had hoped that this would be at the beginning of September but is taking longer than anticipated due to its length!! Initially, we were advised that due to Covid it was thought that many priests would not be looking to leave their current parishes. In the circumstances, however, we are now informed that this is not the case. Covid has caused an evaluating of current life and there is some movement. We can only wait and see what the outcome will be for St Sampson's and the Upper Thames Group (Benefice) as a whole

Adina Grace
Church Warden

Finance report

Please note: This report relates to 2019. As we all know, things have moved on since then, so I have added a brief report on our current financial situation in 2020.

2019 Key Financial Performance Figures

Main Account

In 2019 our expenditure was exceeding our income by £193. This was a blow as there was improvement in 2018.

- We ended the year with a surplus of £6,087 in the main account.
- We were able to meet our pledge for the year.
- The PCC agreed to a rise in the pledge for 2020 from £46,140 to £47,064
- While the balance appears relatively healthy, we still need to spend wisely and increase our income. The budget for 2020 shows a shortfall in funding of £8,202 but as donations to the main account for 2019 exceeded the budget by £9,000 the PCC was of a view that this was an acceptable risk.
- We joined the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) whereby individuals pay their financial gift to the scheme monthly and PGS claim the Gift Aid monthly on our behalf. PGS is run by the Diocese of Gloucester and is free to participating churches. Currently we have 18 people on the scheme.

No2 Account (Restricted)

- £11,224 was received from donations and fund raising towards the roof repairs bringing the total in the bank to £19,716 with an additional £2000 pledged by the Red Lion Charity once we start incurring costs.
- £6461 was spent on maintaining the fabric of the church; as a result, the fabric fund currently stands at £678, the lowest it has been for several years and a major concern for the coming year.

NB: Money in the No 2 Account is ring fenced and cannot be used for any other purpose than that for which it was given.

2020 Main Account Update

Although we suspect that we are not the only church in this situation, at the meeting on 24 June 2020 the PCC voted to suspend payment of its Parish Share; the decision was unanimous. The decision was not taken lightly but due to having insufficient funds, despite a stewardship campaign since lockdown began. The decision was prompted as, after our liabilities were deducted, we were left with £128 in the bank. Our monthly income is £187 less than our expenditure, which we have reduced as

far as practicable. It is worth noting that our situation has worsened partly as several generous givers have left the church due to the recent situation in the parish.

The PCC agreed to withhold the Parish Share until we have built up a reserve of £4,000 for contingencies, which include expenses incurred in recruiting a new vicar and utility bills for the vicarage should it remain empty during the winter. Once we have achieved that aim, we will resume contributing to our Parish Share by remitting all our spare monies. If and when our income attains its pre-lockdown level, we will endeavour to repay the shortfall. Even though we are holding services we are only slowly increasing our reserves and we won't know until later in the year how much we can pay to the Diocese towards the 2020 arrears.

The Diocese has asked for our Parish Share to remain at the 2020 level for 2021; this has yet to be discussed by the PCC.

We are currently looking into Contactless Giving in the church.

Adina Grace
Treasurer

Fabric report

Below is a list of works and services completed for St Sampson's church during 2020 so far:

14/01/20 Fire Risk Assessment, Fraser A Drummond	Dorset & Wilts Fire & Rescue Service
12/02/20 Tower power repair	J Butcher Electrical
11/03/20 Lightening Conductor Check	G&S Graham Rodgers
11/03/20 Commission Sustainability report	ARAP
15/05/20 Tower bat door repair	G&S Steeple jacks Ltd
26/05/20 Chancel window repair	CDL
27/05/20 Install Emergency Lighting	J Butcher Electrical
01/06/20 Emergency Lighting check	Building Manager
08/06/20 Fire Extinguishers Inspected	Avon Fire Extinguishers
08/06/20 Fire Extinguishers Inspected	Avon Extinguishers
17/08/20 PAT Testing	Len Ainsley
01/09/20 Roof Alarm system installed	CIA
30/09/20 Scaffold erected alongside South Transept.	Bakers Scaffold
05/10/20 Work started, roof repair South Transept	Smiths roofing
09/10/20 Tenders for North Transept, Nave and Lady Chapel posted	Arnold Bartosch Ltd

Barry Hammond

Buildings Manager

Roof Project Report

The roof of St Sampson's has leaked for many years and a subgroup of the PCC was formed in August 2019 to lead on this. We have been very fortunate in receiving monies to take this work forward through grants, fund raising and donations from individuals and community organisations. In 2020 we also received a legacy of £10,000. AllChurches Trust and Waylands Charity awarded us further funds which almost covered the cost to install a roof alarm which will protect our new lead roof once it is completed. We had several fund-raising activities arranged throughout 2020 which have not been able to go ahead, so our grateful thanks go to all those people and organisations who have given so generously of their time, talents and donations.

In 2019, we were given an indication of the likely cost of replacing the lead roofs which was £75,000. Through our architects, we began a tender process for the replacement of the south transept roof and the cost is a third of what we expected. As a result, it has been decided to issue tender documents for the remaining roofs to have a more realistic estimate of the cost for which we have to fundraise. We continue to apply for grants from grant bodies to raise sufficient funds to repair the remaining roofs next year.

Good News! Work started on the south transept roof at the beginning of October and is expected to take five weeks to complete.

Adina Grace
Roof Project Group

Safeguarding Report

One of the main requirements of the Parish Safeguarding Officer is to do DBS checks for anyone who has a role within the church. This includes Church Wardens, PCC Members, those leading services, working with children in a church setting and also those who do Open the Book in our schools. The applicants do these checks on line and I personally check their relevant documents. Since the last APCM in April 2019 nine checks have been carried out, these include the four churches in our benefice.

Each year it was a Diocesan requirement of each church to complete an audit form which was then sent to the Diocese. Last year the Diocese brought in another way of assessing the operational running of each church and this is now done with an online Dashboard. A substantial part of the Dashboard is to ascertain that the churches are complying with safeguarding issues. I manage the Dashboards for St Sampson's and Latton. A couple of people from each of these churches have access to the Dashboard so I liaise with them to obtain information needed to answer questions on the Dashboard. They are Shirley Danby and Jo Valpy for Cricklade and Phil Winfield for Latton. I am the person who is authorised to answer the questions and submit to the Diocese, which I do on a regular basis.

Another requirement is that people in various roles within the church complete specific training. All church wardens are required to do a Basic Awareness course (C0) and a Foundation Course (C1). These are done on line. Church Wardens and church leaders are also required to do Leadership training (C2). This course used to be done face to face but, because of COVID restrictions, is now done by Zoom. I keep a record of the training everyone has done.

In 2019 and early 2020 I attended three training days provided by the Diocese, including the Leadership Module, have done two on line sessions; (C0) and (C1). In recent weeks I have also participated in two Parish Safeguarding Officer Forums via Zoom.

Avril Fray
Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

PCC Report

The PCC has continued to meet regularly throughout the last 18 months and, like many organisations, has become used to conducting business through 'Zoom'. As Vice Chair, Katy Bell has led our meetings and our thanks to her for stepping into this role. There are currently 7 members, and Revd Shirley has also joined us, bringing clergy input and her valuable oversight across the Upper Thames Group. Thank you Shirley. Our thanks too go to Reanne Masters for serving on PCC as she has reached the end of her term of office. We now have several vacancies to elect new lay members to the PCC and hope to fill some of these at the Annual Meeting.

It has been an unsettling year for us all. As always though, we have aimed to work together to support our ministry team and discuss and make decisions on all aspects of church life. We always begin and end with prayer and try to keep God's leading at the centre.

Once again, our financial situation has caused much concern and we had to take the difficult decision to temporarily suspend Parish Share payments to the Diocese. With the significant drop in income during lockdown times, we simply did not have the money to pay. Things have improved though and we have been able to build up a small contingency fund and resume Parish Share payments once again.

Our Church Warden, Adina, has represented St Sampson's on the Transition Team as we go through this period of vacancy and look for a new incumbent and she has given regular updates to PCC throughout this process.

Safeguarding training for PCC members (and all church leaders) is ongoing and there will be further training opportunities in November and December via Zoom. We have also reviewed and updated our Safeguarding Policy.

We have been discussing the possibility of a youth worker, to be shared across the North Wilts Deanery, and Matt Smith keeps in touch with these discussions, giving input and feeding back to PCC.

The repairs to our church roof have been in the planning stages for a long time, but the last few months have seen much activity and PCC has approved several proposals along the way to enable this work to start. Very exciting! A big thank you to the building group who have worked hard to secure funding and make this happen.

Details of all discussions and decisions made can be found in the Minutes of the PCC meetings, which are available on the church website and displayed on the notice board in the church porch.

Jo Valpy
PCC Secretary

Current PCC members:

Katy Bell (Vice Chair), Adina Grace (Treasurer and Church Warden), Ruth Evans (co-opted Assistant Warden), Shirley Danby (Associate Minister), Matt Smith, Ian Wallis, Nigel Massey and Jo Valpy (last 4 names all elected laity).

Deanery Synod Report

Rev Alison Love was licensed in June as Area Dean following the appointment of Rev Christopher Bryan as Archdeacon. During this year she has introduced the idea of Good News stories from parishes across the Deanery to be presented at Synod.

Throughout the year we received updates on work on the Mission Area from Revd Oliver Ross and Catherine Price. The Mission Area Covenant was launched in June. Rt Revd Dr Lee Rayfield, Bishop of Swindon, spoke at the special service, which saw more than 70 people from across the 31 churches gather to commit to the vision. Agreement was reached with the Programme Board that a Lay Minister could take on the role of Mission Enabler. After advertisement and interview, Catherine Price was appointed to the role and took up her post on 2nd January 2020.

In **March**, Chris Priddy, Diocesan Head of Parish and External Relations came to talk about 'Making Disciples in your Parish'. He explained that in 2016 the Diocese discerned the vision around Creating Connections and asked each parish to see what it looked like for them, considering the three priorities in the strategy.

In 2017 a leaflet was produced describing six key practices for making disciples in your parish. Again, parishes were asked what they looked like in their areas. A Journey of Invitation provides a year planner and leaflets for each of the six activities. It is a resource to give us ideas of what to do during the year. He stressed we don't have to do it all – we could concentrate on a particular resource. Chris suggested various ways of keeping in touch with people. He finished with two thoughts. We tend to start with 'what are we not doing that we should be doing?' but we should think about what we have been doing that has been meaningful.

And Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) – Not what you need but what do you already have to do what you want to do? What has God given you to use? Where is God leading us?

The meeting in **June** heard from Simon Pugh Jones, Chair of the DAC. He explained that work to a secular building may need planning permission, possibly conservation area or listed building consent – for which you will need to apply to your local authority. For work on churches, it is simpler as you only need the permission of the Diocese, via the DAC. For anything more than day to day maintenance or minor improvements, the permission comes from the Diocesan Chancellor and is termed a faculty. Day to day works are covered by what is termed List B and permission is delegated to the Archdeacon. There are exceptions to the rules – when a parish proposes something that affects not only the ecclesiastical world but the secular world as well. But DAC will provide help and advice from the start. It is central to DAC's decision making process that a church is primarily about preaching the Good News of the Gospels and sharing God's love so they look at proposals with consideration of the missional aspects of the work. He then spoke on the need to make our churches more sustainable. This is central to our faith – one of the 5 Marks of Mission is to 'Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth'. The Church of England has pledged to decrease carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. The Bristol Diocese is registered to become an Eco Diocese and is encouraging parishes to take action to become

Eco Churches. He stressed for instance that DAC will consider letting a parish put solar panels on its roof.

In **October** Liz Townend, Diocesan Director of Education came to give a talk entitled 'An introduction to Education in the Diocese of Bristol and how you can contribute to 'life in all its fullness''. John 10.10 is the vision for education. It is deeply Christian and gives life in all its fullness. Schools should provide a broad and balanced curriculum, an ecology of education of wisdom knowledge and skills, hope and aspiration, community, dignity and respect. Bristol Diocese's strategy is Making Connections and Education strategy will be aligning with the Diocesan strategy. There are 15,000 young people in 72 schools. There is a new secondary school, The Deanery in Swindon, and 2 new primary schools being built. Collective worship and spiritual development is a statutory requirement and Diocesan Education support schools to develop this. Their work in school effectiveness engages and supports leadership and training especially succession planning. They intervene in vulnerable schools with pastoral and leadership support. Churches and schools can take part in the Church and school partnership award. The inspection framework is called SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) and schools are inspected every 5 years. The most important part of this is that there should be a school vision for children and adults to flourish.

Hilary Greene

Deanery Synod Secretary

North Wilts Mission Area (NWMA)

Background

1. The North Wilts Mission area (NWMA – pronounced *pneuma*, a Greek word used for the Holy Spirit) grew out of a Diocesan initiative begun in 2016, but has come into being over the last 18 months or so, building on the foundations laid within the Deanery by Deanery Chapter, Thrive and the Prayer Card. The lead incumbent for the Mission Area is the Revd Oliver Ross, Vicar of Malmesbury and Upper Avon.
2. An audit of what was already happening in benefices conducted in the early part of 2019 revealed just how much was already happening missionally at parish and benefice level. It seemed important to honour that as we moved into the Mission Area, and so many of those activities were captured and mapped into a “lattice” of potential missional networks.

Progress to Date

3. The first network to get underway has been the youth network Dynamo, which has already undertaken some joint activities. Additionally, Steve Wilkinson has offered to convene the Fresh Expressions network, and Catherine Price the Prayer and Spirituality network.
4. During 2019, progress was made towards a Covenant, which was signed by the Bishop, incumbents and congregation members at the Covenant Celebration in Brinkworth on 22 June 2019. Since then the Covenant board has been “on tour” round the Mission Area and more signatures have been added.
5. Four or five Prayer and Praise meetings have been held, although these are not especially well attended. In addition there have been regular reports from the Mission Area at Deanery Synod.
6. Catherine Price was appointed to a full time post as NWMA Mission Enabler on 1 January 2020. She had previously been working one day a week on a freelance basis as Operations Manager for the Mission Area.
7. Oliver and Catherine have visited five groups – Braydon Brook, Draycot, Gauzebrook, Upper Thames and Woodbridge – to speak at joint Benefice services about the Mission Area. Their message has been a simple one: we are more than a series of isolated congregations. Our total average weekly attendance, as recorded in the October returns, is around 1000 people. We need to build together the things

we are already doing, rather than adding new activities, and to look for the things we can do better together than separately.

8. In September, at the suggestion of a member of the Abbey congregations, the Wiltshire Historic Churches Trust "Ride and Stride" fundraising event was used as the basis of a "Prayer Cycle", with all 31 churches in the Mission Area visited and prayed for by at least two people, and a lesser number visited and prayed for by five or six people.
9. In October, our 2019-2020 Plan was agreed by the Strategic Programme Board.
10. In November, we organised our first NWMA Quiet Day at Harnhill Centre of Christian Healing near Cirencester. Following the NWMA Quiet Day, Catherine has extended the offer of membership of the Community of St Aldhelm beyond the Abbey congregations to the wider Mission Area as one way of helping to strengthen discipleship.
11. During Lent, we agreed to undertake an Eco-Church focus across the whole Mission Area. Much of the thought-leadership on this came from Draycot Benefice, who have been trail-blazers on Eco-Church. Oliver and Catherine attended a Climate Action Day organised by Malmesbury Town Council on 11 January. This attracted people from the villages as well as the town, and it is clear that this is an issue which is preoccupying many people at present. There seems to be a real opportunity for churches to engage with their communities around climate change issues and sustainability. It will be interesting to see whether there is any appetite amongst eco champions in different benefices to network together in the wake of the Lent initiative.
12. In February, the incumbents of Braydon Brook, Draycot and Woodbridge ran a joint Marriage Preparation course in the Goss Croft hall. Woodbridge Benefice provided lay facilitators for round-table discussions. This was well received by participants
13. The pandemic has disrupted some planned joint activities, but has also opened the door for collaboration. An Online Alpha course which began shortly after Easter attracted guests from both Malmesbury and Upper Avon and Woodbridge benefices. Going forward, we are looking at running a mixture of online and – where possible – face to face courses to strengthen discipleship and reach out to new people. We have also prepared some joint Online Services which are made available across the whole Mission Area.

14. For more information about the NWMA, or to join our mailing list, contact Catherine Price catherine@malmesburyabbey.com 07889 296214

Catherine Price, Mission Enabler