

**PARISH OF FARNBOROUGH**  
**ST. GILES THE ABBOT and ST. NICHOLAS**

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**  
**SUNDAY 11th MAY 2025 - 4.30 p.m.**

**OPENING PRAYERS**

May this meeting be in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us bless the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**READING: 2 Corinthians 4: 7-18**

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—'I believed, and so I spoke'—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

**PRAYERS**

**Leader:** O God, by your grace you have called us in this Diocese to a goodly fellowship of faith: bless our Bishops Jonathan and Simon, and other clergy, and all your people. Grant that your word may be truly preached and truly heard, your sacraments be faithfully administered and faithfully received. By your Spirit fashion our lives according to the example of your Son, and grant that we may show the power of your love to all among whom we live; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All:** **Amen.**

**Leader:** God our Father, graciously hallow with your blessing our Parish churches of St. Giles and St. Nicholas. May they be places where the sorrowing find comfort and the tempted strength; where the lonely find fellowship and the sinner forgiveness; where the faithful find grace, and all offer you a holy worship; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All:** **Amen.**

**Leader:** Almighty God, we pray for your blessing on all who share in the life and work of the churches of St. Giles and St. Nicholas: in the ministry of word and sacrament, in teaching and pastoral care, in service to the diocese, the community, and those in need, in ecumenical fellowship and co-operation. We pray for all members of the congregations, that in their varied callings they may advance your kingdom and bear witness to your love, shown in you Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

**Leader:** Almighty God, you have made us members of Christ and of his Church, and have taught us through him that it is more blessed to give than to receive: make us truly thankful for all your goodness; help us to deepen our commitment to you as stewards of our time, talents, and money; and guide us in all things to know and do your will, for the honour and glory of your name.

**All: Amen.**

**Leader:** Heavenly Father, assist us in our efforts to make contact with the homes and people of our parish by means of the Parish magazine, posters, leaflets, and other literature. Grant that our publicity may not be misleading, or unworthy, or trite, but may truly represent us as your people, and commend him who is our good news, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **ELECTION OF CHURCHWARDENS AND DEPUTIES**

Churchwardens	Andrew Bailey	(St. Giles)
	Claire Couldridge	(St. Nicholas)
Deputy Wardens	Peter Russell	) St. Giles - 8.00 a.m.
	Sue Rennie	) St. Giles - 10.00 a.m.
	Sally Attwood	) St. Giles - 11.15 a.m.
	Philip Lovelock	) St. Giles - 6.30 p.m.
	Sheila Munns	) St. Giles - Thursdays 10.00 a.m.
	Nick Jolliffe	) St. Nicholas

# **AGENDA**

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting** held at St. Nicholas on Sunday 28th April 2024, *(pages 4-6)*
3. **Matters arising**
4. **Reports**
  - (a) Electoral Roll, *(page 7)*
  - (b) Annual Report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council, *(pages 7-8)*
  - (c) Churchwardens' Reports including St. Giles Churchyard Report, *(pages 9-11)*
  - (d) The Parochial Church Council Consolidated Accounts for the year 2024 including Financial Statements for St. Giles the Abbot and St. Nicholas *(pages 12-15)*
5. **Safeguarding**
6. **St. Giles Centre**
7. **Election**

Members for the P.C.C.  
St. Giles **TWO** vacancies  
St. Nicholas **ONE** vacancy
8. **Appointment**

Independent Financial Examiner.
9. Goodbyes and Thank-you's.
10. **Any other business and date of next A.G.M. 2025.**

## **ADDITIONAL REPORTS**

Rector, *(pages 16-18)*  
Associate Rector including St. Nicholas Children's Report, *(pages 18-20)*  
St. Giles Music, *(page 20)*  
St. Giles Family & Children's Worker, *(pages 21-22)*  
St. Giles Safeguarding Report, *(pages 22-23)*  
St. Giles Flower Arrangers Report, *(page 23)*  
St. Giles Bell Ringers, *(page 24)*  
St. Giles Social Committee, *(pages 24-25)*  
Mothers' Union, *(pages 26-27)*  
St. Giles Website, *(page 28)*  
Friends of St. Giles, *(page 28)*  
Parish Magazine, *(pages 28-29)*

**The Accounts are on the Notice Boards of both Churches.**

## 2. MINUTES

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY 28th APRIL 2024

#### PARISH OF FARNBOROUGH ST.GILES THE ABBOT and ST. NICHOLAS

##### Vestry Meeting

1. Election of the Churchwardens and Deputy Wardens:  
Churchwardens Andrew Bailey (St. Giles)  
Claire Couldridge (St. Nicholas)  
Deputy Wardens Peter Russell ) St. Giles - 8.00 a.m.  
Sue Rennie ) St. Giles - 10.00 a.m.  
Sally Attwood ) St. Giles - 11.15 a.m.  
TBA ) St. Giles - 6.30 p.m.  
Sheila Munns ) St. Giles - Thursdays 10.00 a.m.  
Nick Jolliffe ) St. Nicholas

Thanks to Andrew and Claire for their continuance as Churchwardens.

Rector: Thanks to Andrew for his outstanding patience and diplomacy.

Vote of Confidence and thanks:

Proposed: Sally Attwood

Seconded: Sue Renee

Approved

Associate Rector: Thanks to Claire with particular regard to Stephen's Sabbatical last year.

Vote of Confidence and thanks:

Proposed: Valerie Blinks

Seconded: Stewart Hutson

Approved

Deputy Wardens are all continuing.

Associate Rector: thanks to Nick Jolliffe for returning.

Rector: To remember Janet Palmer who was a Deputy Warden at the 11.15 a.m. service at St. Giles for a number of years and is now poorly.

#### ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING SUNDAY 28th April 2024 - 4.30 p.m.

##### **PRESENT:**

The Revd. Matthew Hughes, The Revd. Stephen Broadie, Sylvia Addison, Roger Allard, Andrew Bailey, Lindsay Barnes, Valerie Blinks, Richard Butterworth, Mary Compton, Claire Couldridge, Irene Dancer, Carol Fryer, Geoffrey Harding, Julia Hoadley, Stewart Hutson, Gail Low, Sheila Munns, Sue Rennie, Eddie Roberts, Carol Stokes, David Stokes.

##### **Apologies for absence**

Paul Bailey, Valerie Bailey, Paul Barnes, Jayne Calvert, Rosemary Fordyce, Nick Jolliffe, Lynn and John Kelly, Gill Knapp, Alison and Nick Reynolds, Helen Roberts, Noreen Roberts, Sue Simpson, Jenny and Nick Wilkins.

2. **MINUTES**

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held at St. Nicholas on Sunday 14th May 2023.

Proposed: Sheila Munns

Seconded: Valerie Blinks

Approved.

3. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

4. **REPORTS**

(a) Electoral Roll.

(b) Annual Report on the proceedings of the Parochial Church Council

(c) Churchwardens' Reports including St. Giles Churchyard Report.

(d) The Parochial Church Council Consolidated Accounts for the year 2023 including Financial Statements for St. Giles the Abbot and St. Nicholas.

Hon. Treasurer, St. Giles, Carol Fryer: Most of the detail in the Reports. We held our own despite cost of living pressures

Rector: Income from funerals and weddings down. Standing orders help.

Hon Treasurer, St. Nicholas: Beginning of year it looked bad expecting a deficit but at the end had a surplus. This year looks much the same. Spring Fair raised over £2,300.

Adoption of the Accounts:

Proposed: Mary Compton

Seconded: Julia Hoadley

Thanks to Carol, Roger and the St. Giles and St. Nicholas Finance Teams:

Proposed: Sheila Munns

Seconded: Sally Attwood

Approved.

5. **SAFEGUARDING**

Irene Dancer, Parish Safeguarding Officer and Lead Recruiter: Safeguarding is a priority. We must protect the vulnerable and young. It is important all Church groups co-operate. We are nearly there but not quite.

There are new National Guidelines coming out and will be reviewed and incorporated.

Rector: Safeguarding has become increasingly complex. Must make sure we have required compliance. Thanks to Irene.

Associate Rector: Thanks to Irene

Thanks to Irene Dancer

Proposed: Carol Stokes

Seconded: Lindsay Barnes

Approved.

6. **ST. GILES CENTRE**

Moving forward. Continuing talks with Architect and builder. Complex process: problems of asbestos, renewing roof, electrical wiring, plumbing. Installing gas It will be a basic refurbishment with a modern accessible toilet including disabled use. Cost to be considered.

**7. ELECTIONS**

(a) Members for the Parochial Church Council:

St. Giles: Julia Hoadley  
Geoff Harding

St. Nicholas:

Diane Stiff (*N.B. Employed by St Nicholas*)

Accepted

Proposed: Sheila Munns

Seconded: Carol Stokes

Approved.

(b) Deanery Synod Members - vacancies for St. Giles and St. Nicholas

**8. APPOINTMENTS**

(a) Sidespeople

Vote of Thanks

Proposed: Julia Hoadley

Seconded: Sue Rennie

Approved.

(b) Independent Financial Examiner.

Chris Jones of Baxter's to continue

Proposed: Mary Compton

Seconded: Sheila Munns

Approved.

9. Goodbyes and Thank-you's.

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Eddie Roberts: Now that the Choir is well populated why were they not at all the Christmas Eve services and on Christmas morning?

Rector: Christmas Eve would be rectified this year. Christmas morning is more difficult in getting Choir members to that service.

Sally Attwood: How are Choir allocations made?

Rector: By Choir attendance. Three choral scholars: Two bass and one tenor. To allocate to a service would require other Choir members: sopranos and altos

Needs looking at. Mattins has diminished.

Andrew Bailey: There has been Choir losses since Covid

Sally Attwood: There are 40 in the Choir. It should be spread more evenly.

Sally made the point that 10% of Church funds are spent on music and that allocation should reflect this.

Rector: Fair point. First and Second Sundays Choir is at Evensong. Fourth Sunday Choir is at the 10.00 a.m. service.

Choir is funded from legacies, not from general funds.

Rector has 30 years experience and knows that congregations need good music; money well spent.

Eddie Roberts: Will take on the responsibility of being Treasurer for the Flower Arrangers. Taking over from Alison Reynolds.

**11. TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT AGM 2025**

*Tbc*

**12. CLOSING PRAYERS**

### 3. MATTERS ARISING

### 4. REPORTS

#### ELECTORAL ROLL

The figure for the Electoral Roll stands at 283 (St. Giles - 234, St. Nicholas - 49). Our Electoral Roll membership continues to offer a solid base for the ongoing life of the Parish.

#### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2024

#### ST. GILES THE ABBOT, FARNBOROUGH With ST. NICHOLAS, ORPINGTON

#### OBJECTIVES

The Parochial Church Council ("PCC") has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent, the Revd Matthew Hughes, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the Church Centre complexes of St. Giles at Church Road, Farnborough and St. Nicholas at Leamington Avenue, Orpington.

#### MEMBERSHIP

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting ("APCM") in accordance with Church Representation Rules. Members of the PCC who served from 29 May 2022 until the date that this report was approved by the PCC were: -

#### Ex-Officio:

<u>Rector</u>	The Revd. Matthew Hughes	Chairman	
<u>Associate Rector</u>	The Revd. Stephen Broadie		
<u>Assistant Priest</u>	Archdeacon Paul Wright		
<u>Reader</u>	Mrs. Chris Hallett		
<u>Wardens</u>	Mr. Andrew Bailey	until APCM 2026	St Giles
	Miss Clare Couldridge	until ACPM 2024	St Nicholas
<u>Verger</u>	Mr. Peter Russell		
<u>Deputy Wardens</u>	Mr. Peter Russell	Not on PCC	St Giles
	Mrs. Susan Rennie	Not on PCC	St Giles
	Mrs. Sheila Munns	Not on PCC	St Giles
	Miss Sally Attwood	Not on PCC	St Giles
	Mr. Philip Lovelock	Not on PCC	St Giles
	Mr. Nick Jolliffe	Not on PCC	St Nicholas

#### Elected:

<u>Hon. Secretary</u>			
<u>Hon. Treasurer</u>	Mr. Roger Allard		St. Nicholas
<u>Hon. Treasurer</u>	Mrs. Carol Fryer		St. Giles
<u>Gift Aid Secretary</u>	Mrs. Carol Fryer		

## Members

Mr. Stewart Hutson	until ACPM 2025	St Giles
Mrs. Gill Knapp	until ACPM 2025	St Giles
Mrs. Lynn Kelly	until ACPM 2025	St Giles
Mr. John Kelly	until ACPM 2025	St Giles
Mrs. Irene Dancer	until APCM 2024	St Giles
Mrs. Carol Stokes	until ACPM 2024	St Giles
Miss Julia Hoadley	until ACPM 2025	St Giles
Mr Alfie Beston	until ACPM 2025	St Giles
Mrs. Rosemary Fordyce	until ACPM 2025	St Nicholas
Mrs Jayne Calvert	until APCM 2024	St Nicholas
Mrs Adele Cooke	until APCM 2024	St Nicholas
Mrs Diane Stiff	until APCM 2024	St Nicholas

The United PCC met 2 during the year with an attendance of 65 per cent. In addition, the members representing St. Giles met 5 times (with an average attendance of 75 per cent) and those representing St. Nicholas met 6 times (average attendance 79.2 per cent).

## **COMMITTEES**

The PCC operates through a number of committees, which meet between meetings of the PCC:

- Standing & Finance Committee – this is the only committee required by law. It has the power to transact business of the PCC between PCC meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC
- St. Giles' Fabric Group
- St. Giles' Churchyard Group
- Ad hoc groups.

## **CHURCH ATTENDANCES**

There were 390 names on the Church Electoral Roll for the parish as at 31st December 2023.

As a Parish, we are available at times of birth, marriage and death. In 2024, the Parish and its ministry were involved in the following occasional offices: -

9 Baptisms

3 Weddings

28 Funeral services held in church followed by burial in the churchyard or Cremation

14 Funeral services held at a crematorium

39 Burials of ashes.

## **FINANCIAL RESULTS**

Aggregated parish income for the year was £334,142 (2022-£342,275) and aggregated resources used were £295,336 (2022-£281,614). Net incoming resources amounted to £38,806 (2021-£60,661). St. Giles recorded net incoming resources of £33,198 (2022-£52,330) and St. Nicholas recorded net incoming resources of £5,608 (2022-£8,331).

## **RESERVES POLICY**

It is the PCC policy to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds (less fixed assets) which equates approximately to six months unrestricted expenditure. This was achieved as at 31st December 2024.



## THE CHURCHWARDENS' REPORTS

### ST. GILES CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT INCLUDING CHURCHYARD REPORT

This is my third report for my second 'tour' as Churchwarden for St. Giles, something that I see as both a privilege and a great responsibility.

This has once more been another busy year at St. Giles.

As Churchwarden I continue to enjoy a good working relationship with Matthew. I believe that is part of my role to have a good relationship with the incumbent of St. Giles in order to advise and support him in the exercise of his ministry. The Churchwarden is there to bring to the Rector's attention any issues raised by the congregation, and to represent the interests of the Parish to him and the PCC. I enjoy working with Matthew and appreciate the mutually supporting roles that we share together.

In 2024 we again had a full set of services across the whole year, as we get back to the new 'normality'. The parish observed the seasons of Lent and Easter. At Easter we held the usual services on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday - both inside and outside the Church (where my brother once again was able to toast prestigious quantities of hot-cross buns for the congregations in the Churchyard). We held the full set of services for Harvest, the Pets Blessing and Remembrance Sunday, with lots of flowers (courtesy of the Flower Ladies) and singing (courtesy of the Choir).

This year at Christmas we once again just did the three Nativity services on Christmas Eve (compared to four in 2022). This appears to be worked well as we still have 'room in the inn' for everyone who wished to attend. Numbers in attendance were roughly the same as previous years, it also makes it easier to organise logistically. We also had the two Advent Carol services beforehand, the 'Midnight Mass' and the Epiphany Carol services in January.

We continue to enjoy a full calendar of Parish events. June saw the Parish Fete, which was well attended despite it pouring down with rain for most of the day. Despite that everybody enjoyed themselves (thanks in no small part to the small army of volunteers who helped organise it). We once more had a good range of individuals and organisation who contributed to the day to make it enjoyable for all. This is always an excellent opportunity where the wider Parish 'family' was able to get together and participate in an event outside the Church. The following month we had the Seaside Coach excursion to Broadstairs in July. The coach was full and once more I would like to thank Carol Fryer and her team in organising this and all the other events across the year.

In October we held our usual Churchyard Saturday Morning where members of the congregation of the Parish turn up with a whole array of gardening tools to scarify the grass, rake up the moss and seed the lawn. This year it was very well attended. This was followed up by a Deep Spring Clean in March 2025 where we worked on the insides of St. Giles, cleaning floors, pews and the monuments.

In terms of goods and ornaments we have purchased new items for both inside and outside the Church. We have obtained a new Altar cloth, together with a glass top for the Credence Table (to protect against spill damage). In addition, we have also purchased four new palm branches for Palm Sunday.

There was also an upgrade to the Church's security system. Outside we took the opportunity to re-tarmac the Lower Car Park, which brought to an end the increasing pothole problem there (both in number and size of the issues involved).

During 2024 we continued to undertake the rolling program of 'deep cleaning' within the Church. A common theme is checking on the use and distribution of storage space around the church, what is where and who is using it. This has been a recurring issue in previous years as we only have a finite resource in space, and we need to use it in the most efficient way.

As part of this, the Rector and Churchwarden worked on the North Aisle where there was a fungal buildup. It was treated with a 2-part treatment, which appears to be working. Further treatments will be applied in the future as and when necessary.

Following a theft of a few pounds worth of lead off the roof of the Choir Vestry, we have 'Smart Watered' the new lead to make it less desirable for criminals to steal it again.

I can report that all the Church's goods and ornaments are in a good state of repair.

Looking forward, the next major challenges will be the Quinquennial Inspection in May, and the refurbishment of the St. Giles Centre. I am confident that we will rise to the challenge, and that eventually we'll have a decent place for us to use for parish meetings and activities.

I am always grateful for my fellow Churchwardens/Verger and their total commitment and support over the last year. We would not be able to do what we do without their efforts. I thank them for their time and for the kind support they have shown me. As Churchwardens you have to do lots of things behind the scenes which the congregation do not always see. However, I do have to say that being a Churchwarden is a most satisfying undertaking, and I have enjoyed being one in 2024.

***Andrew Bailey***  
***St. Giles Churchwarden***

### **ST. GILES CHURCHYARD REPORT AS PART OF THE CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT**

A huge thank you to all our wonderful Churchyard volunteers who do a great deal to keep our Churchyard and Gardens of Remembrance areas looking so good. The regular planting of Spring bulbs and Summer bedding plants continues to make the Church grounds look stunning. All this is very much appreciated by the many hundreds of people who visit our Churchyard and walk through it each year.

Good work also continues on maintaining the Memorial Walls, repairing brickwork and cleaning up rubbish. Preventative measures are being taken against roosting pigeons whose presence above the Church's door is leaving it soiled.

St. Giles is due its Quinquennial inspection in May when we hope to be congratulated on the excellent state of our Church and grounds.

#### **Churchyard Usage**

There were 53 burials of all types during 2024, which is the second lowest in recent years; the highest being 90 in 2018. Of these 39 (74%) were in the Garden of Remembrance, the remaining 14 being in the Churchyard. These totals are both below long term yearly averages. Just four new adult graves were used, which is the lowest ever, and compares with the long term average of 12 per year, with a highest of 22 in 2020.

c235 grave spaces are available, excluding the area used for outdoor services, and a potential for small-scale infilling of spaces and paths. Based on long term annual usage this space should last c19.7 years but as the number of new graves required is usually now much lower than in previous years, the actual capacity in years is likely to be longer than this. No new child grave spaces were used. A further area for child graves has been reserved to be used once the current one is full.

The yearly use of plaques is 28.

Finally, many thanks to Martin Parsons our outgoing Chairman who has also had to step away from his overall membership of the Group. I am very grateful for all the hard work, guidance and leadership Martin has provided.

Thank you also to Eddie Bellamy for his faithful service to families with the memorial plaques; and to Nick Reynolds for his impeccable maintenance of our Burial registers and Churchyard records and running of our Church website.

***The Rector***

### **ST. NICHOLAS CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT**

It does not seem like a year since I wrote my last Report. There has been many changes at St. Nicholas, as there must be if we are to continue to grow and serve our community. We have said goodbye to a few of our older members, but have also welcomed a few new faces.

Many of our congregation have taken on new roles for which we are very grateful and will continue to support them in their efforts. We have also started new ventures and look forward to see how these develop. The first one is our 'Tea & Chat', which has been going for a year now which runs on Monday afternoon and provides company for those on their own - there is cake and refreshments, and games which has proved very popular. Because numbers were dropping at Messy Church we have now relaunched this as 'Croissants & Craft' which now takes place on the second Sunday of the month which includes a small service, a craft activity relating to a given story, and refreshments of croissants, coffee and other things. This has proved popular so far with our young families and others.

The Community Larder continues to prove a much needed resource for our community as well as all the groups that use our hall. As the year has progressed there have been a variety of new groups which have provided much needed income.

The services continue to hold their numbers, with new faces which is always encouraging.

As I write this Report, we are preparing for Easter with all its activities, our usual Passover Meal is already fully booked.

There are too many people to mention individually - St. Nicholas is a big family and we support and encourage one another in our varied roles.

My special thanks to Stephen, Nick and the PCC for their continued support.

***Claire Couldridge***  
***St. Nicholas Churchwarden***

## THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 2024, INCLUDING FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR ST. GILES THE ABBOT AND ST.NICHOLAS

### **ST. GILES THE ABBOT**

In 2024, we finished with a surplus of £27,239. Our total income was £234,862 which exceeded our total expenditure of £207,623. We continue to maintain our position in what has proved to be difficult times. Income continues to comfortably exceed expenditure. St Giles is supported by a strong range of donors and sponsors, both small and large, including the hard-working volunteers whose work allows us to limit expenditure. Donations and legacies from the past continue to provide security against future costs and emergencies we may be unable to avoid.

### **Income**

General giving is down on last year; cost of living pressures along with increased energy costs will have had their effect. We are lucky to have a solid core of donors who have St Giles high on their giving list. Small and large donations are always gratefully received.

We have, however, seen a decrease in giving via Gift Aid envelopes: £13,302 claimed in 2024 as opposed to £14,282 in 2023. We need to make sure that GA envelopes and pens are always available from the pews so we keep this momentum going. Even the smallest amount from a tax payer enables us to claim 25% of the donation directly from HMRC.

There is now very little income from letting the St Giles centre. The decision to renovate the Centre will allow a better standard of use for church activities and will allow us to offer the much needed and easily accessible toilet facilities to those using the Church. We are encouraging donations for the Centre renovation; dedicated envelopes with a GA option are helping and provide a steady trickle of funds. This may, however, affect the amount of general giving.

The Summer Fete proved a great success despite the rain and gives a focal point to the community aspect of St Giles. With continued support from sponsors and donors, as well as help from a hardy crew of volunteers, we raised £5,443.09. We are lucky to have so many people who are willing to give their time and energy to St Giles. Thanks to all those who supported us and came along and enjoyed the day.

The Wentworth property, a product of a past legacy, produced a rental income of £21,418, reduced by expenses of £7,181. This income provides a much-needed buffer against the cost of living pressures we are seeing. We are likely to see some increase in expenses as much needed repairs to the property are made in the coming year. The actual property itself offers St Giles financial security into the future. Although house prices are not increasing as steadily as previously seen, this is only a blip in a long term expectation.

We have seen a decrease in the number of funerals, which may be due to competition from other sources, and unfortunately a choice of having more secular services. In 2024 we had 10 Burials, 29 Cremations and 38 Burial of ashes. The number of weddings has also fallen, which seems to be part of a continuing trend; in 2025 we have to date weddings booked.

The number of plaques increased from 643 in 2023 to 692 in 2024, with 159 blank plaques. Many people remark on the appearance of the Remembrance Garden, and the churchyard team of volunteers do a great job in its upkeep.

## Expenditure

We try to keep firm control over expenditure, but cost of living increases are hard to balance especially those for heating. We are lucky to have good financial support from many givers.

The Diocesan share in 2024 was £70,600 as opposed to £67,948 in 2023. Our offer for 2025 being £70,600.

At the present time we have 3 choral scholarships, and 15 junior choristers who get paid depending on attendance. We have used the funds from the Tolman Fund and are using the Greenhalgh Fund to support this. A good deal of effort, including great leadership from our Choir Master has been put in to make the choir as good as it is. The support by the adult choir who are all volunteers is amazing.

Our church ministry has been re-enforced by the Ven. Dr. Paul Wright, retired Archdeacon, as Paul continues to bring a lot of experience and support to the life of St. Giles.

Utility bills have continued to rise. We ended a fixed rate contract in mid-2023 so saw the start of an upturn. Business rates do not seem to be coming down yet.

### Magazine fund

Advertising	£2,557	£1,507 L/year
Hard copy	£1,623	£4,244 L/year
Email	£59	£160 L/year
One off sales	£520	£373 L/year
Total Income	£7,536	£6,284 L/year
Total Expenditure	£6,822	£5,753 L/year
Profit	<b>£714</b>	<b>£531 L/year</b>

Funds held: £13,897

Magazine subscriptions for the hard copy held their own in 2024, with a small increase in one-off sales but email options declined. Advertising has increased thanks to Gill's hard work and has helped to prevent any losses.

In the past, the magazine has produced good profits and these are shown in the funds still held. We have a great editor, Gail Low, who continues to maintain the high standard of the Parish magazine. Renewals for 2025 are really slow with just 97 signed up to date. We have fewer subscribers for a number of reasons among which may be the changing viewing of the public. Reduced circulation makes it difficult to increase our advertising but Gill Knapp is doing an excellent job of fighting the trend.

The delivery team help to keep postal costs to a minimum by hand delivering the magazine each month. Thanks to Paul Barnes, Lee Bellamy, Nick and Jenny Wilkins, Eddie and Helen Roberts, Danielle Carle, Catriona Lee, Angela Leake, Pat.

The Magazine Fund holds £14,336 so a buffer for any losses. We need to review the future of the magazine in say 6 months; once we have a better idea of how many renewals we have. We need to decide whether there are sufficient subscribers to make the magazine worthwhile, or come up with a plan to increase circulation.

If we regard the magazine as part of our outreach the existing fund will last a while longer. We do, however, need to increase the number of subscribers and we should try to find someone with time on their hands to do this.

## Flower fund

Income	£4,110	£4,397 L/Year
Expenses	£2,692	£3,348 L/Year
Profit	£1,418	£1,049 L/Year

Funds held: £ 4,140

The flower fund remains self-funding. They have 2 fund raising projects per annum along with a variety of donations throughout the year. It is always nice to see the church beautifully decorated and thanks need to be given to our dedicated flower team.

## Funds

We have two types of funds: Designated which are allocated to certain areas but may be used for other purposes as needed and Restricted which are allocated by the donor or St Giles and may not be used for other purposes without permission.

We hold £216,452 (£211,809 L/year) in Designated funds to which for accounting purposes is added the Wentworth property at its initial valuation of £540,000. We hold £308,871 (£274,302 L/year) in restricted funds.

## Conclusion

The increase in the cost of living has affected both our income and our expenditure, but even so we have managed to hold a good position with income exceeding expenditure by a comfortable amount. Although funerals have reduced, the Remembrance Garden continues to provide a flow of income. Weddings have almost disappeared, probably due to pressures from other event providers and is unlikely to change.

During 2024 we raised a total of £1,700.68 for a variety of external charities.

We are lucky that we have loyal and generous supporters, both volunteers and donors.

The fund raising for the centre renovation will go on and consideration will need to be given to finding other sources of funds for this purpose.

Thanks must go to:

Linda Crisp and Mary Compton as part of the Financial Team

Eddie Bellamy as administrator of the Memorial Wall fund

Liz Diamond as Parish Secretary

Adele Cooke for office administration

Pam Stacey as Planned Giving Envelope Scheme Secretary

Lee Bellamy as insurance administrator

Chris Jones of Baxters, our External Examiners

**Carol Fryer**  
**Hon. Treasurer, St. Giles**

## ST.NICHOLAS

The original 2024 St Nicholas budget had figures of income £94150, expenditure £106700. The expenditure budget included Repair Fund contributions of £4200. Although these contributions are not expenditure, but a transfer between funds, I do show them as expenditure as a means to try and ensure that the contributions are actually made and the balances increase at least by that amount.

The original budget included a Pledged Offer of £44950 to the Diocese to cover the Ministry Costs and the St Nicholas share of the Benefice Cost. In view of our financial position we did not feel that we could make any contribution to the Wider Diocesan Mission Cost of £10238 in the Offer.

In the light of the financial position it was decided to make no charity donations until the position at 31 December 2024 was known. The budget included Mission Charity giving of £3750 and a donation to Welcare of £650.

At the year end expenditure exceeded income and there was a reduction in current assets of £6889 from £92374 at 31 December 2023 to £85485 at 31 December 2024. At the February 2025 meeting the St Nicholas PCC reviewed the position regarding charity donations and decided not to make any at that time in view of the year end deficit but to hold a fundraising event in the first half of 2025 for that purpose.

It would be fair to say that St Nicholas was facing an uncertain future with forecast deficits. A few years ago a consultant, a member of St Giles, carried out a review at St Giles and during the year the consultant did a similar exercise at St Nicholas, reviewing processes and procedures.

The most significant conclusion was that St Nicholas could no longer afford to retain the role of Church Administrator and Children and Family Worker and the postholders were made redundant in July and August respectively. Redundancy and related payments amounted to one off costs of £12888, offset of course by salary savings in the second half of the year. There will be a full year effect of these savings from 2025 onwards. One effect of the redundancy of the Children and Family Worker was that the Parent and Toddler Group ceased to run after the end of the summer term but it seems that new hall hirer(s) are providing something similar.

During the year we have invested in major improvements both to the Church Hall and Church House. The fencing between the Church Hall and Church House was renewed at a cost of £5100 with the funds for this being withdrawn from the Church Hall Repair Fund at the Diocese. Other improvements, the new office door (£1112), new locks (£425) and the redecoration of the Leamington Room (£1200) were financed from revenue. The fascias and soffits were replaced at Church House at a cost of £4560 financed by withdrawing funds from the Church House Repair Fund at the Diocese. These works brought to light problems with the drainage from the downpipes and the soakaways and these were renewed at a cost of £4200. These works were covered by the Church House insurance policy which paid out the sum of £4436 for the works.

Following the redundancy decisions, the St Nicholas PCC has felt that 2024 marks the low point in the St Nicholas finances. The approved 2025 budget of income £97500 and expenditure £93700 is in surplus by £3800 and with expenditure including the Repair Fund contributions of £4200 as is my usual practice, there could be an increase of £8000 in the Net Current Assets at the year end if there are no surprises in the year and outturn goes to plan.

With no Church Administrator who used to deal with the hall lettings, this work is now carried out by the firm, Praetorium, and the PCC are quietly confident that income will increase over the budget figure which could lead to further increases in balances at 31 December 2025 or give us the opportunity to start contributing again to the Wider Diocesan Mission as part of our Pledged Offer to the Diocese.

**Roger Allard**  
**Hon Treasurer, St Nicholas**

## 5. SAFEGUARDING

## 6. ST. GILES CENTRE

Redevelopment update.

## 7. ELECTIONS

**FOUR MEMBERS FOR THE ST. GILES P.C.C.  
ONE MEMBER FOR THE ST. NICHOLAS P.C.C.**

## 8. APPOINTMENT

### **INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL EXAMINER**

Acting under delegated powers (A.G.M. 2001) The P.C.C. appointed Mr. Christopher Jones, F.C.C.A., Baxter and Co. as independent examiner for the 2021 accounts.

The PCC recommends Mr. Jones's appointment for the year 2022 accounts and the A.G.M. is requested to approve this proposal.

## 9. GOODBYES AND THANK YOU'S.

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**To be notified at the beginning of the meeting.**

**Date and time of next A.G.M. 2026**

## ADDITIONAL REPORTS

### RECTOR'S REPORT

For me there is no other way to start my Annual Report then with a huge thank you to all of you who work so hard to make St. Giles the wonderful Church that it is. During Lent this year we had been looking at St. Paul's letter to the Colossians and it is clear from this letter that Paul worked with teams of people in the furtherance of the Gospel. For Paul his fellow helpers were not just volunteers, but *co workers* in the building up of the Kingdom. I cannot think of a better word to describe the many people who give of their time and skills to St. Giles as my *co-workers* in the Gospel of Christ.

There are too many people to mention everyone by name, but if you help in any way, big or small then please accept my sincere thanks for all you do. However, I would like to particularly mention all our Team Leaders and the following: our wonderful Church Warden Andrew and his Deputy Wardens. Andrew is such a support to me and many, our Treasurer Carol without whom St. Giles finances and social life would grind to a halt. Ralph for his inspiring leadership which provides a choir and music that uplifts us all. For Irene and the huge amount of time she puts into our Children's ministry and the vital work of Parish Safeguarding. For our Verger Peter who gives hours of his time across many areas of the Church's life much of it unseen but to the benefit of all of us.

Things for the Church of England continue to be challenging and I cannot remember a more precarious time for the ordinary parish church as the one we are going through now. Every year sees the Church of England and the Christian faith pushed further to the margins of society. Sadly St. Giles is not immune from these changes and challenges. People coming to us for weddings, baptisms and funerals decreases each year as more and more people identify as '*not religious*'. Patterns of church attendance continue to fluctuate. How we adjust to these new realities as a Church both nationally and locally will continue to shape the agenda for years to



come. In such circumstances it would be easy for a parish priest to become demoralised. However, I continue to have faith in the attractiveness of the Gospel message, the power of a loving church and the uplift that a good act of worship can still have upon people in times which seem increasingly stressful and devoid of real community and meaning. That is why one of my priorities will always be the music and choir at St. Giles. I have always believed that good music has an extraordinary ability to bring us closer to God whilst creating a wonderful experience for those who do find their way to our Church. I am very grateful to Clive and our organ scholar Tom for the part they play in the musical life of our Church. I am also very grateful to the wonderful PCC we have and the thoughtful way that they engage with the challenges and opportunities that St Giles faces.

So what will be our priorities for this coming year?

### **ST GILES CENTRE REFURBISHMENT**

This past year has seen us spend a lot of time preparing for the refurbishment of the Centre. Plans and drawings have been produced, Architects, Building Engineers, Building Regulators, Surveyors and Contractors have all been engaged. It has been a lengthy and expensive process but we are now finally in a position to move forward with the actual refurb. Four contractors have submitted quotes and it is looking like the work is going to be within the region of £200,000. This will be a significant sum of money for us to raise as a Parish, but I am confident that we will be equal to the task and with the help of grants and gifts we should get there. The plan will be to give ourselves a good year to fund raise with the refurb starting in Spring 2026.

The Centre has now reached a tipping point and its refurbishment is increasingly urgent. However, this is not only about the upkeep of a building, it is essentially about our mission and engagement with our community. One of the ways that we can face the challenges described above is to continue the focus on the social life of our Church. Having a nice, attractive, warm, welcoming building to meet in will do a great deal to build up friendships and sense of belonging which underpin church growth and membership. I am really looking forward to finally having a nice place to meet, a hall that is pleasant to sit in, a modern Parish Office, a kitchen that works, and finally a set of toilets that the congregation will have easy access to.

A full set of plans and drawings will be made available on the noticeboard at the back of the Church in due course. Thank you very much to everyone who has contributed so generously to this appeal to date.

### **OTHER PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES**

Going forward the following will continue to be of importance to me and our PCC.

#### **Finance**

With a decrease in weddings, baptisms and funerals and the continuous loss of many generous givers to St. Giles, church finances are increasingly under pressure. The Treasury Team and PCC are only too aware of the ongoing *cost of living crisis* and the pressure this places on people's personal finances. There will continue to be gentle reminders and encouragements for people to give to St. Giles especially through standing orders and Gift Aid. We have also purchased two card readers that will allow people to give by debit card as well.

#### **Volunteers**

One of the things which really marks St. Giles out is the amazing quantity and quality of our Church volunteers. Many, many people put in a serious amount of time to the life of our Church. Generally most of our teams are well supported. However,

recruiting and retaining volunteers in a society that is much more inward looking and individualistic is not easy. Spreading the word that volunteering is fun and good for mental well being is something that we can all do.

### **Children's work**

Attracting children and young people to our Sunday School and Church has become increasingly difficult. Modern life and the many activities available to children on a Sunday do not help. I will continue to work with Irene to maintain our outreach amongst the children of our Parish. A newly refurbished Centre will certainly be of help in this regard.

### **Charity work**

I continue, as many of you do, to be greatly exercised by the huge inequalities in our world and the awful sufferings of so many people. I will continue to make sure that we do all we can to help those who are poor and disadvantaged to remember them in our thoughts and prayers. I hope that we will continue to help my friend and colleague Fr Biliam. Your support means so much to him and his people.

### **In conclusion**

It remains a great privilege to be the Rector of Farnborough Benefice and I can only have this ministry amongst you through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the amazing support of my many co-workers in the Gospel. Please continue to pray for the life of our Church and for the many challenges that we face and also that we will make the most of the opportunities that are there as well.

**Matthew Hughes**  
**Rector of Farnborough Benefice**

## **ASSOCIATE RECTOR'S REPORT INCLUDING ST. NICHOLAS CHILDREN'S REPORT**

2024 was a year of beginnings and endings for St Nicholas Church. The Monday Tea, Cake and Chat group which was begun by Val Richardson at the start of the year went from strength to strength during the year and has now become a regular fixture in the St Nicholas week, providing an invaluable space for members of the community to gather and make connections, come rain or shine. The St Nicholas Community Larder continues to provide a vital service for the Community. While donations from supermarkets and wholesalers have diminished for all food banks connected to the TBB Food Hub, we were able to have a couple of successful fundraising events during the year, including a sponsored walk and a Community Quiz, which raised much-needed funds to enable us to supplement the donations given by local suppliers. This has been particularly necessary as we have seen the number of 'customers' referred to us by social services and the local authority increasing. As was outlined in some detail in an article I wrote for the Parish Magazine in September 2024, the PCC also had to make some very difficult decisions to address the ongoing financial challenges we had faced ever since the pandemic. The most difficult decisions were undoubtedly those to make two paid roles redundant, as was outlined in that magazine article. With that came some of the goodbyes I mentioned at the beginning of this report. We are incredibly grateful as a PCC for the years that both Catherine and Diane served in their different paid roles in the parish. While we sadly had to say goodbye to the Toddler Group that used to run on Wednesday mornings, and expressed our huge thanks to all the volunteers who had run this over the years, we were also able to welcome the new 'Baby Explorer' and 'Pop Up Play' groups for babies and toddlers respectively, who are now helping the church continue to be a welcoming space for parents with young children and babies every week. We are also incredibly grateful for the ways that Diane Stiff is continuing to serve in the parish, in her role as a Pastoral Assistant, visiting the sick,

and through her involvement with different activities in church. Despite the significant changes during 2024, many of the traditional St Nicholas activities nevertheless took place throughout the year, including a very successful holiday club, a 'Light and Bright' party with record-breaking attendance, and an over-subscribed Christingle Service. At the beginning of this year we launched a revamped family service on the 2nd Sunday of each month, naming it 'Croissants and Craft', and serving fresh pastries and providing inspiring craft for all ages. This new service has been very well attended, with many new faces, and some families who had never been to church before. We are looking forward now to our usual Passiontide events, including a Passover Meal, Good Friday Service (led by Diane) and Easter Activity Morning. Increasingly this year I have come to appreciate how much everything that happens at St Nicholas is dependent on the incredible number of people who volunteer in all sorts of ways. To mark this we were able to hold a 'Celebration of Volunteers' in the Autumn, where Matthew came to speak and we celebrated afterwards with a glass of bubbly and some champagne. While the last 12 months have been in many ways a time of significant change, we are now able to face the future on a more secure financial footing in particular, as for the first time since the pandemic we are no longer facing a deficit as a church.

As ever I owe a huge debt of gratitude to so many for their invaluable help at St Nicholas. In particular I would like to thank Claire Couldridge, our indefatigable Church Warden. I am particularly grateful to Claire considering the challenges she has faced this year following the loss of her mother, Beryl Couldridge, who was a faithful member of St Nicholas and a pillar of the community for decades. I would also like to thank Nick Jolliffe, who in fact has carried on being Deputy Warden, to Roger Allard and Richard Butterworth as treasurer and deputy treasurer. I must also thank our lay ministers at St Nicholas: Ian Gillies, our Reader with PTO, and Diane Stiff, our Pastoral Assistant, and with the late Rosemary Fordyce, Pastoral Assistant with PTO. Thank you also to Jayne Calvert, our pianist, MU leader and lead volunteer at the Larder, to Val Richardson and the tea and coffee team, to Jackie Mason, Margie Gillies and the flower team, and to everyone who helps at Just Babies. Thank you to Katie Spreadbury who continues to oversee our social media presence with such dedication. Thank you also to the many volunteers who have come forward in different ways over the past year to help with the children's work and the administration, giving up their free time. A number of times over the past year I have considered the famous passage from Ecclesiastes 3, looking at the different 'times and seasons' we go through. That passage does not hold back from naming some of the more challenging times we may have to go through. However, my prayer is that the coming year will be 'a time to heal... a time to build... a time to mend'.

***Stephen Broadie***  
***Associate Rector***

### **CHILDREN'S REPORT AS PART OF THE ASSOCIATE RECTOR'S REPORT**

As mentioned in the Associate Rector's report, 2024 proved to be a time of significant change for St Nicholas Church, as the PCC had to make the difficult decision in the summer to make two paid roles redundant, including the role of Children's and Families' worker. As a PCC we are incredibly grateful for the years that Diane Stiff gave to this paid role, and we are so glad that at the beginning of the summer Diane was able to run a successful holiday club 'Deep Sea Divers' that was very well attended and saw the side chapel turned into a prayer 'submarine'. Following the various changes, we are grateful that Diane is continuing to serve at St Nicholas in her role as Pastoral Assistant, and in helping out in the wider life of the church, including leading a reflective Good Friday service this year. As a result of the various changes at church, we have come increasingly now to rely on volunteers, and we are

incredibly grateful as a PCC to those volunteers who have been running Kids Club in particular. Since autumn 2024 Kids Club have been following teaching materials provided by Scripture Union, looking at the different creation accounts from Genesis, and then the opening chapters of the gospels, leading up to Christmas. In the new year we launched a new service, 'Croissants and Craft', in place of our monthly 'All Age Worship' service. Somehow through providing fresh pastries and a wide variety of crafts for all ages, we have been able to connect with a number of new families from our neighbourhood, seeing over 30 children attending the first service, bringing more than 30 adults with them. One family who come along to this new service have said that they have never attended church before, but they have now decided this is the faith they want their child to be raised with. Another mum who attends, who is new to church, said recently that after the second 'Croissants and Craft' service she went home and her daughter turned to her and said 'Mummy, I love Jesus!' Although some more time may be needed for the full 'catechesis' of these new members of our congregation, it has been encouraging to see these early signs of faith. We saw record attendance at our Light and Bright party in 2024, and we were really excited to welcome many members of the local Hong Kong/ Chinese community to this event, many of whom are connected to other Chinese congregations in the area. We also saw the highest attendance since the pandemic at our Christingle service in 2024, and enjoyed the spectacle of our very own 'human Christingle' (aka Michelle Felstead) in a bright orange blow up sumo suit along with assorted 'christingle' paraphernalia! The youth group 'Ignite' has continued to meet two or three times a month on Sunday mornings, and at least once a month on Sunday evenings. Most recently we have begun watching the new series of the 'Youth Alpha' videos which has been given a relaunch. We have also enjoyed youth social outings to the Pavilion Bowling Alley, Chelsfield Lakes 9 hole golf course and a fire pit with roasted marshmallows. The Just Babies group continues to provide a vital space of welcome and support for young parents and their babies, and in fact has been one of the key factors in drawing people along to the new 'Croissants and Craft' service. As ever, I am incredibly grateful to the wide variety of people who help in so many ways at St Nicholas Church with the various babies, children's and youth activities. None of what we do would now be possible without volunteers, so there is no doubt that you are our most valued resource. Although it has been a time of significant change and challenge, we pray that God will continue to lead and guide our children's and youth work going forward.

***Stephen Broadie  
Associate Rector***

### **ST. GILES MUSIC**

Our Church Choir continues to offer high quality music across a range of services both for special occasions within the Church's year and the normal weekly services. Membership of our Choir continues to fluctuate as new people join and others step down. Overall our Choir is in good heart and thriving under the excellent leadership of Ralph.

We have been so lucky to have the services of Alfie Beston as our organ scholar and we wish him all the best as he takes up his new role as organ scholar at Truro Cathedral. Tom Blew is not our new organ scholar and once again we are fortunate to have such a talented musician as part of our team.

The work involved in sustaining the Anglican choral tradition at St. Giles is considerable and I am enormously grateful to every member of our Choir, our Organist, musicians and above all our Director of Music, Ralph Barlow, for their hard work over the past year.

***The Rector***

## ST. GILES FAMILY & CHILDREN'S WORKER

A dedicated team of leaders continue to offer Sunday school sessions on a regular basis. The work is of a high standard and valued by families who attend, and the congregation, who receive immediate feedback. Colourful and informative displays are produced of the children's work. It is becoming increasingly difficult however, to attract and maintain attendance of children and young people, as we compete with other offers on a Sunday morning.

Junior Sunday School meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 9.50am. Our topics this past year have included work on 'Our Church,' a focus on 'Jesus: A real person, a real life' and currently, 'Jesus in Action' about how Jesus works in our lives.

Senior Sunday School meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays at 9.50am. We study the lectionary bible readings for that week and present the learning through craft, encouraging personal interpretation and reflection.

Youth Group meets on an occasional basis, meeting for discussion, followed by a meal at the Rectory on a Sunday evening.

Our children and young people are an important and integral part of our congregation. They serve on our reading rota at the 10am services and help by taking the offertory. We value their input.

The Easter Art Workshop encourages the children to think about the events leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The children prepare posters which are the focus for the Good Friday Family Service held in the churchyard.

Our Annual Children's Celebration Service is held in July and marks the end of the Sunday school year. A display of children's work, undertaken each term, is exhibited. All children and young people who attend church are thanked with either a book or small token of our appreciation.

Christmas Eve services are always well attended and last year was no exception. The Sunday school led service involved a focus on the word 'Nativity' and how the events of Christ's birth are reflected in our own, emphasising Jesus' humanity. The children donned their costumes and created a tableau. On Christmas Day, children brought their presents to church to show the congregation.

Some of our children and myself took part in the Holiday Club held at Nicholas. My thanks go to all those involved in organising this and making us feel so welcome.

The first Sunday of the month is when we hold our All-Age Worship service. There is no Sunday school, but families are encouraged to come along and join us for this family focused time of worship.

Our children's area at the back of church is well used by children and babies. Toys, books, colouring and drawing resources are always available. It is the first thing you see when entering the church and, as such, is a visual reminder of our welcome to children and that we strive to meet their needs. Parents are put at ease during services by reference to 'noisy silence.' It is our aim that no one should feel uncomfortable about bringing even their youngest to church at 10am on a Sunday morning.

I began this report by mentioning the challenges we face in competing for children's time on a Sunday morning. However, I know that children who are able to come along, enjoy what we have on offer and benefit from Christian teaching by those

committed to nurturing them. Furthermore, it is encouraging to see that attendance by families at our 'special' services such as Mothering Sunday, Christmas, Harvest Festival....remains strong. I think that we should be encouraged and uplifted by this.

Thank you to everyone involved in supporting our children and young people at St Giles Church. Leaders, parents, grandparents, carers.....we couldn't do it without you.

**Irene Dancer**  
**St. Giles Family & Children's Worker**

### ST. GILES SAFEGUARDING REPORT

I am required to report annually to the church AGM that our churches have adopted the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance. I also report that all church groups have been approved by the relevant PCCs.

Our own Parish Safeguarding Policy is updated regularly and approved by PCC's. Copies are located in both churches, in St Giles Centre and on the parish website.

Safeguarding is a regular item on the St Giles PCC agenda and included at all joint PCC meetings with St Nicholas. I have strong links with Stephen at St Nicholas and am grateful for his oversight and adherence to policy there.

As Lead Recruiter I can confirm that all those who are required to have a DBS check (which includes a police check) have done so. Both churches are up to date with this requirement. My thanks go to Jenny Wilkins at St Giles and Chris Deeks at St Nicholas for their support in achieving this.

This year has seen an increase in the roles required to undertake basic safeguarding training. At St Nicholas, in person group training has been offered to Foodbank workers and, at the time of writing, is being planned for those who volunteer at the 'Tea and Chat' sessions. At St Giles, I continue to encourage all choir members to undertake their training, including offering 1:1 sessions if beneficial. A document from the Diocese, interpreting the Church of England training matrix, has recently been sent out. It would appear that anyone working or volunteering in any capacity, will be required to undertake basic training. This goes beyond our current focus at both churches where we prioritise those who work with or alongside any of the vulnerable groups.

I have previously mentioned the Safeguarding dashboard that is used by many church PSO'S, including myself, to monitor progress in compliance with guidance. This has been reviewed and updated by the provider and is now in line with the new Safeguarding Standards that came into effect since my last report. A Safeguarding Hub is also being created and has been adopted by Rochester Diocese. It will focus on assisting parishes with their responsibilities around Safer Recruitment and People Management (for your information, this includes volunteers as well as paid workers.) Invitations will be sent out to parishes in due course to join the scheme.

This has been a difficult year for the Church of England in terms of Safeguarding and there have been many failures that need to be acknowledged and put right by the national church hierarchy. The Church of England Safeguarding Policy states that "Safeguarding is at the heart of our Christian faith.... Safeguarding means the action the church takes to promote a safer culture in all our churches..... The church will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all." At National level, this has not always been the case and when people have spoken 'truth to power' that truth has been ignored.

However, at parish level a great deal of excellent work is being done and positive outcomes achieved. But we must not be complacent. We must continue with this vital work and create a culture that we can be proud of in our parish. We have a special responsibility as disciples of the Gospel to implement those policies that will bring about such a culture. A culture of openness, honesty, listening, action, support and love.

**Irene Dancer**  
**Parish Safeguarding Officer/Lead Recruiter**

### ST. GILES FLOWER ARRANGERS REPORT

As well as our weekly flower displays, the church was beautifully decorated for Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Over 100 posies were made for Mothering Sunday.

#### **Organisation**

There are approximately four meetings a year with Matthew when we discuss previous events and advise on future commitments.

The four teams take turns in organising the festivals when occasional flower arrangers are welcomed to help. Lynn Taylor deals with all bookings for the Book of Remembrance and special requests and Elizabeth Harriss-Orr with wedding bookings.

Alison Reynolds relinquished the role of treasurer in the autumn after many years of exemplary help and we are very grateful to Eddie Roberts who has stepped in as our efficient keeper of accounts. Helen Roberts, as well as being a regular arranger, takes meticulous minutes. We are fortunate to have team leaders who will 'go the extra mile'.

#### **Recruitment**

We are pleased to have welcomed several promising new members and are always looking for new volunteers.

#### **Donations**

We continue to receive regular donations from the congregation for the main flower festivals, the Book of Remembrance and special requests for windows and pedestals.

#### **Costs**

The cost of fresh flowers varies with the season. For festivals and weddings we use a wholesale supplier. For most weeks we buy from supermarkets and occasionally a florist. To keep costs down we also make use of silk flowers when appropriate. We are fortunate that our members bring fresh foliage.

The budget for weekly flowers and festivals remains as low as can be managed and we have reduced the number of weekly arrangements to keep costs to a minimum. A budget for each festival is arranged with Matthew.

#### **Contact Details**

Our details are available via the Parish website and magazine which also display photos of the festival flowers.

**St. Giles Flower Arrangers**

## ST. GILES BELLRINGERS

In 2024 things have generally settled down after the disruption caused by Covid over previous years.

The bells have been rung almost every Sunday morning prior to the Family Service as long as there has been a competent person to take charge. Additionally, the bells are rung for practices approximately every other Monday evening, on most Tuesdays from 11.00am and for weddings and funerals upon request. Additionally, St Giles hosted a District ringing practice on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February.

Twenty eight quarter peals were rung in 2024 (27 in 2023), and eight peals (9 in 2023).

A plaque recording the 2021 augmentation and naming major donors has been provided by Taylor's bell foundry of Loughborough and been fixed under the window in the ringing chamber and is to be read in conjunction with the weights board which is situated on the wall nearby.

Andrew Mills of Taylor's has installed a new heavier clapper in the treble bell which has stopped the double clapping.

Sadly in May 2024 Bill Allaway, widower of Audrey who died two years previously, passed away. Bill was a regular Sunday service ringer until his health took a downturn. The ringers were represented at his funeral.

In order to maintain a healthy band of ringers and replace those no longer ringing it is necessary to recruit and teach new ringers and this was not possible during Covid. Pleasingly on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November we hosted an open evening for the Scouts and as a result of this we have a new learner who is doing very well.

Since bells were installed at St Giles in 2012 a number of our new ringers have rung quarter peals and I'm delighted and proud to report that one of our young ringers rang a full peal on 29<sup>th</sup> December. This was the first peal by a 'new' ringer who has learnt from scratch at St Giles. The peal took 2hrs and 48mins of non-stop ringing, a most commendable achievement.

As ever, thanks go to the members of the band who turn up regularly to ring.

***Nick Wilkins***

## ST. GILES SOCIAL COMMITTEE

St Giles tries to provide a welcoming atmosphere and it is important to encourage the wider community to become involved with their local church. Throughout the year we try to put on refreshments after services. This can diminish during the winter when it gets too cold for the volunteers to stand outside serving tea and coffee; and standing in the rain is just not on.

During the summer, we try to do this a couple of times a month, with cakes and biscuits. Mother's Day seems to be the first of the year's regular refreshments days, and a posy of daffodils adds to the day. Many people linger for a drink and a chat; keys for the Centre toilet are always to hand.

Refreshments are always served after the Thursday service, and all are welcome. Thanks to all those who regularly help: Marilyn Reeves, Linda Crisp, Carole White, Sheila Munns. Sue Rennie



After the evening services we offer wine, juice and snacks: an opportunity to hear our wonderful choir. This is increasingly popular when warmer weather encourages people out.

Coach trips are always well supported, and we have seen an increase in people coming who do not come to church on a regular basis. The year started with a trip to Brighton in April, followed by our annual trip to Broadstairs in July. A full coach and lovely weather; some people even swim. This year we tried the Canterbury market to end the year and it proved very successful, and a shorter journey.

The annual Fete in June is always well attended. It also proves to be the biggest fund raiser of the year. It takes a lot of work, but it's well worth it, and this year we raised £5,443.09. The pressure was eased by the generous sponsorship beforehand of the costs of setting up this event. The fete has changed over the years and now has a Garden Party atmosphere, with lots of tables and chairs encouraging people to sit and enjoy the great food, a wonderful glass of Pimms and the really excellent entertainment.

This would have been wonderful if it had not rained so heavily throughout the day. Our volunteers proved stalwart despite the rain and were only topped by the Rock Choir who threw down their umbrellas to sing joyfully in torrential rain.

So many people help at this event that it is almost impossible to list everyone, so erring on the side of caution, I can only say that this event would not take place without the unstinting help of sponsors, donors, entertainers and volunteers.

Planning is already under way for this year's fete on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June, so put the date in your diary. Look out for the requests for prizes, gazebos and help. Fingers crossed for good weather this year. It makes all the difference.

Harvest Supper incorporates a Barn Dance, with the Ian Petrie band providing the music and the calling; an opportunity to join in or just watch the antics of the dancers. We serve a two course meal which always goes down well. This is always a real family affair. We are getting together a band of regulars.

The year finishes with the refreshments in the Village Hall after the Nine Lessons & Carols service. Mince pies, sausage rolls and mulled wine for everyone to wish each other a Happy Christmas.

These events bring us together as a community, and we encourage those outside of the congregation to participate. Willing volunteers are the one key to successful social activities and we always seem to get the support we need, but of course we are always in need of more. So, a very big thank you to all those who give their time and energy to making these events work.

The other key to great social events is participants. We need your support; come along to events when you can, bring your family and friends; if you can't get there, please sponsor or donate. If you have the energy, get involved and help out.

***Carol Fryer***

## MOTHERS' UNION

Another year has gone by, and Mothers Union is still thriving in the parish of Farnborough!

In 1876, Mary Sumner, a clergyman's wife from Old Alresford, near Winchester, founded Mothers' Union, which started from hosting a small home- group meeting in the vicarage to support young mothers with small children in the parish where her husband George was the local vicar. In those days it was very unusual for women to start up any group, and even more unusual that Mary Sumner reached out to all the women in the parish, irrespective of their class.

Almost 150 years later, our beliefs and aims are still very relevant today. There are over 4 million Christian members in 84 countries in the world who belong to Mothers' Union.

Since Covid arrived in 2020, our monthly Monday evening meetings have again been held by zoom, which has proved very popular with our branch members, and has also enabled members from other branches, both near and far, to join in these Evening Prayers. Sharing faith and fellowship through prayer is very important to us all and underpins the work we do together in Christ 's name.

We have 28 members in the group, having sadly lost 2 very special members, Joyce Rackham and Beryl Couldridge, last year. We are very grateful for all the active years of service they gave to Farnborough Mothers' Union.

We follow the Church's year, and most of the prayers we use are taken from The Mothers' Union website, an excellent resource to share together.

This present month of April is entitled, 'Love Blooms'. The reflection says:

Love blooms all around us this month. We begin to see God's goodness as creation starts to bloom. Then as we approach Easter, we prepare our hearts to see God's love blooming from the tomb in joyous resurrection. Both are a reminder of God's extraordinary love, and serve as a call to action, to pass on both the planet, and the Gospel message for generations to come.

In December we again held our zoom service supporting the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence entitled, "No More 1 in 3", and lit candles in our homes to show solidarity with our friends who have sadly been affected, both in the UK and overseas. Many suffer in silence and are undetected in their wider community. Mothers' Union joins each year with other organisations from approximately 187 countries who participate in this campaign to raise awareness of, and call for, an end to gender- based violence in all forms and in all societies.

Our group is currently participating in this year's **Make a Mother's Day** campaign. The 2025 theme is entitled, "Give the gift of PEACE this Mothering Sunday." Our **Gift of Peace** can give families worldwide the chance to swap discord and tension to an atmosphere of support and positivity and are gifts that will empower women and girls around the world- giving them their voices, rights, and helping to turn the tide on gender inequality. So far, we have raised over £350 for this project.

Mothers' Union still supports the AFIA project, (Away From it All), funding holidays for families who wouldn't otherwise have a holiday. Unfortunately, we currently have no project managers in Rochester Diocese for AFIA.

Kate and Jocelyn ran this very successfully for 3 years, but felt it was time to hand it over to others. We pray that the right people will come forward in their place.

Again, this year, Farnborough Branch has been involved with the MU Prison Project, at Rochester men's prison.

We were asked to give prisoners filled toiletries bags for when they were released from prison. We have been able to provide another 20 bags this year, which were very gratefully received, and we are hoping to be able to provide more in the future. Each bag includes a card wishing them well, from Rochester Diocese Mothers' Union.

We have also provided prisoners with rucksacks which, again, were given to prisoners on their release from prison. Those not so lucky to get a rucksack, get their belongings given back to them in a black sack.

At Easter, all 750 inmates receive a chocolate Easter egg from Mothers' Union, and we have again supported this project. At Christmas, they all get a present of a pair of socks, and a Christmas card, which we were involved with as well. These small gifts of love help to make the prisoners feel loved and valued, whatever their crime.

Our afternoon meetings continue in person on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month at St. Nicholas Church, at 1.30 pm, where we sometimes have speakers, join in reflective services, or meet for prayer and fellowship with refreshments.

We are very pleased to be back worshipping at St. Giles Church once a month on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday morning 10am Communion Service, where we all share the Mothers' Union prayer together.

Many of our members continue to knit colourful squares, which are then sewn up into blankets, and distributed to people in need. Again, this past year, several baby cot blankets have been given to SCBU at the PRUH, along with cardigans, hats, booties, canula mitts for the pre- term and sickly babies needing care there.

Our new Worldwide President, Kathleen Snow, was Commissioned in St. Martin-in-the-Fields by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, last month, which was a very joyous occasion. I, and a couple of other members from our branch, had the pleasure of meeting Kathleen last week at Canterbury Cathedral and joined in the Eucharist in the crypt. The Celebrant was the Bishop of Dover, the Right Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin.

If you are interested in hearing more about the Mothers' Union, or coming along to our Farnborough branch, either by zoom on a Monday evening or in person on a Thursday afternoon please contact

Jayne Calvert on 07780664340 or by e mail at [jayne.calvert@hotmail.com](mailto:jayne.calvert@hotmail.com).

We are a very friendly group and would love to have some new members!

**Jayne Calvert**

## ST. GILES WEBSITE

### **Farnborough Parish website:**

[www.farnborough-kent-parish.org.uk](http://www.farnborough-kent-parish.org.uk)

The website has continued to provide information to parishioners and others about our church, its history, and events both past and upcoming.

As well as the regular services and events taking place during the year, the website this year posted many photos taken at our fate and garden party in June.

The website has around 100 pages, although this fluctuates during the year. The busiest months for access were May and August 2024. With over 300 visits per day.

Visits and pages accessed over the year were substantially higher than in 2023.

The website was moved to a different hosting company in November without incident or significant downtime.

Related websites:

### **Farnborough Village History**

[www.farnborough-kent-village.org.uk](http://www.farnborough-kent-village.org.uk)

### **Farnborough and the Railway**

[www.farnborough-kent-railways.org.uk](http://www.farnborough-kent-railways.org.uk)

**Nick Reynolds**  
***nickrstgiles@gmail.com***

## FRIENDS OF ST. GILES

The Friends of St. Giles is composed of Church members, villagers and those who have moved away. We support the Church in any way that we can.

Our annual fundraising Quiz at the Woodman was a very happy evening and raised £476.66.

The Committee meets regularly and we sometimes use Zoom to keep in touch with our financial advisor. We thank the Committee, and particularly Roger Alard our Treasurer and Sue Ellis our Secretary. Our AGM was held at the Chairman's house.

We have lost several of our very loyal members this year. We particularly miss Molly Richardson who was a long standing and very hard working member of our Committee. Others we miss are Barry Stead, Sheila Sturton, Charles McArdell and Evelyn Morgan.

The 250 Club is thriving. If you would like to be a member it costs £1 per annum and details are available from Sue Ellis on 07715 860504.

***Julia Hoadley, Chairman***

## PARISH MAGAZINE

Following on from my report in 2024, I was hoping to have some good news for you from the National Parish Magazine Awards but unfortunately they did not run in 2024 and are not running again this year, so we will all have to wait and see if they run again.

Due to a valiant effort by Gill Knapp we have managed to have regular advertisers and also a few new ones, which is good to see.

With regard to subscribers, to date in 2025, we have 112 (97 who receive hard copies and 15 by email). I am very grateful to the willing volunteers who deliver the magazines and to Paul who looks after the emailed ones. Our subscribers have dropped by 20% since last year and a total of almost 40% since 2022.

As I said last year, I would like to think that we could build back up to the 2022 level of subscribers in time, but it is definitely reliant on the magazine remaining relevant to its readers. I am very grateful to the regulars who provide interesting articles for the magazine, but there have been months where I have been struggling for content, even with their help. Again, it would be lovely if the congregation of St Nicholas could provide articles as well. This hopefully might increase the reach of the magazine when people see articles written by members of their congregation as well. I'm sure some of the articles published this year have brought back memories to people or provoked a response and it would be lovely for me to be able to print some of them. I can only create a magazine if people provide me with the content.

Throughout the year, I have received articles and adverts that unfortunately I have had to turn down, including two this week! This is only because they come from organisations wishing to publicise themselves or their events in Farnborough Hampshire!

Let's see what 2025 can bring! Hopefully more from Kent than Hampshire!

*Gail Low, Editor*

## 9. CLOSING PRAYER

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**