

# St Nicholas Church, Great Wilbraham

*Working together to be a Christian Community of Worship, Welcome and Care*

**Deanery of Fordham and Quy, Diocese of Ely  
Parochial Church Council  
Annual Report & Financial Statements  
For the year ended 31st December 2023**



## **Parochial Church Council 2023**

The following served as members of the PCC:

Incumbent: The Revd Alice Goodman

Licensed Lay Minister: Steve Mashford

Churchwarden: Lorna Carr

Treasurer: Jeremy Barnett

PCC Secretary: Lorna Carr

Representative on the Deanery Synod: Steve Mashford

Elected members: Gillian Humphrey (until 6.12.23), Allan Painter, Diana Raikes,  
Judy Hanmer, Jackie Beadsmoore

Benefice Safeguarding officer: Mary Kendall

## BACKGROUND

The Parochial Church Council is responsible for promoting the whole mission of the Anglican Church within the Parish of Great Wilbraham, encompassing all pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical aspects of the work of the Church. It is part of a Plurality with St Vigor's, Fulbourn, St John the Evangelist, Little Wilbraham and St George's, Six Mile Bottom. The PCC has maintenance responsibilities for the church building and churchyard area.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. The PCC meets at least 4 times a year but also operates through a number of groups or committees, which meet as required during the year, often as a result of issues raised at PCC meetings. These include the Standing Committee, (the only committee required by law with the power to transact the business of the PCC between its meetings, subject to any directions given by the PCC), a Fabric Committee, which is working together to organise structural repairs and general maintenance, (although this committee lacks a chair and the tasks normally fall to our Treasurer) and a Worship Group which works with Steve Mashford to run the Come and Join services. Committee reports are included in the Appendices.

## Update

St. Nicholas' Church has worked hard again this year providing a variety of regular services, special services, as well as reaching out to the local community in other ways. We held our August coffee mornings, mostly in the churchyard, refreshments after services, Soup Lunches, Wednesday Church and ran a joint Wilbraham Churches stall at the Food and Craft Fairs.



Revd Alice Goodman continues as our vicar working hard across the whole benefice with support from Steve Mashford our Licensed Lay Minister. We benefit hugely by having a pastoral assistant who was Ben Davidson until last summer when he left to return to academic studies. Emma Bourne has taken over the role with enthusiasm. We also have a benefice administrator, Sian Hornby. Each role is part time. We are extremely fortunate that Mary Kendall continues as the benefice Safeguarding Officer.

The first Sunday of the month Steve Mashford leads Come and Join, the third Sunday is Holy Communion both at 9.30am. Our organist Gill Humphrey is often accompanied by Nigel Start on his guitar. Wednesday morning Iona style worship has seen growing numbers this year as people share a reflective peaceful time together.

Wednesday Church is run fortnightly by Emma with support from Steve Mashford, Gill Humphrey, Denise Jackson and Lorna Carr. It has struggled to maintain good numbers with only 2 regular families attending. This seems to be due to after school clubs clashing with the time and will be reviewed.

Emma Bourne has lead Bible Study groups during the week. These have been greatly appreciated and very well attended with over 10 people most weeks. We held an Autumn Soup Lunch as well as a Lent Soup Lunch. Both were well attended with villagers and members of the different churches in the benefice. St. Nicholas' took part again in the Wilbrahams' Winter Wonder Weekend, with different houses, the Church, and businesses decorating a window for people to visit. This was organised by the school PTFA in aid of Jimmy's Night Shelter. Thank you to Helen Clarke who made the angels which hung in the church porch and Kathleen Dawson who made the stars. The whole church looked beautiful for Christmas - thank you to all the cleaning and flower teams. Christmas Eve's Lesson and Carols saw the church full to bursting with the community choir lead by our organist Gill Humphrey in great voice. On Christmas Day, Steve led a family service with Angels as the theme. Over Easter the usual Walk of Witness between the Wilbraham Churches takes place. Steve runs an Easter garden activity and on Easter Sunday there is a communion service with an egg hunt.



Close links are maintained with Great Wilbraham Church of England Primary School. Alice is a church governor and visits the school regularly as does Emma the pastoral assistant who runs a weekly lunch time group. Mothering Sunday posies were made in school again this year, organised by Di Raikes, Denise Jackson and Lorna Carr.

Home Communion is offered with Alice, Helen Clarke and Lorna Carr available for requests.

Cleaning the church and making sure there are fresh flowers is done by volunteers for which we are very grateful.



### Churchyard

The church yard is being well maintained by a group of volunteers. The new cutting regime has seen an increase in wild flowers. Dealing with the hay in late summer is proving very labour intensive but villagers helped cutting and raking. Nick Toovey has installed a series of Swift boxes along the north roof line of the nave and we are hoping they will be made use of this year. We are planning to apply for a silver conservation award this or next year to add to our bronze award.

Thank you to Judy Hanmer who continues to keep the flower bed next to the church porch looking beautiful all year round. She has recently made a herb bed on the other side of the porch as well.



The churchyard is now closed for burials but plenty of space remains for cremation plots. We see lots of visitors, fresh flowers are left regularly; over 100 graves had wreaths or flowers placed on them again this Christmas. We have had the church open on a daily basis from 9am to about 6pm - thanks to a small team of volunteers.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024/25**

There is so much a church can do in a village community to show that faith is as relevant today as it has ever been. Working together to be a community of worship, welcome and prayer, as our report states at the beginning, is what we are hoping to achieve. We do much to try to live out this statement by working with other village groups, inviting the community into church whenever possible, especially the school and parents. We are extremely lucky that we have an enthusiastic PCC and other church members who give their time. However, we are still a small and ageing group and wonder where those who will take over from us will come from. Alice, our vicar, is also working across four churches without the support of a curate. She is the first vicar of this benefice who has had to take on the role by herself for a long period of time.

Realistically we must just keep on keeping the church open with a variety of services – perhaps a few more quiet contemplative ones, where people can escape the pressures of modern living and find time to stop and think and be open to the power of God in their lives.

The PCC voted unanimously this year to make the church an Inclusive Church – a church which celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate. Hopefully the other churches in the benefice will do likewise.

We are hoping to gradually continue to improve the churchyard for the benefit of wildlife, working with Wilbraham school children and other village groups to help achieve this.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**

As a benefice we have a policy showing we are committed to valuing, listening to and respecting children, young people and vulnerable adults. This includes safe recruitment, supervision, training and DBS checks where applicable. The policy is available in Twelve and in each church. Our Safeguarding Officer is Mary Kendall.

### **Pastoral Assistant**

Emma co-ordinates the St Vigor's Sunday School and regularly runs sessions during the Sunday 11am Holy Communion. Due to the blessed increase of new choristers, the Sunday School now tries to split into Senior and Junior Sunday School on Choir Sundays, thereby providing nourishing ministry for between, on average, 5 and 15 children per week, between the ages of 2 and 16+. The age-divide is flexible but Junior Sunday School usually comprises children aged 2-8 years and Senior Sunday School is for children of upper primary and secondary age. In addition, Emma co-ordinates the lay ministry rota for St Vigor's, and this too has been blessed by an increase in the number of people discerning a call to read lessons and intercessions, act as sidespeople, and generally contribute to the life of the Body of Christ in St Vigor's. Emma also co-runs the Baby Dragons toddler group on Tuesdays, and leads Wednesday Church (for pre- and primary school aged children and their families) in Great Wilbraham every other Wednesday in school term-time. Emma also leads the Morning Office in church on Thursdays and the Iona worship on Wednesdays in Great Wilbraham. She undertakes parish visiting and Home Communion where appropriate, to the housebound, frail and elderly. She leads and preaches at an Evensong at Home Close every month or so. Emma wrote and led a study group on the Beatitudes in October-November 2023 and has just finished leading the Benefice Lent Group, looking at the Passion narrative in St John's Gospel. Both these study groups have been based in Gt Wilbraham and offered to the whole benefice.

## **Come and Join....**

Our 'Come and join.....' Worship services take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month at St Nicholas Great Wilbraham at 9.30 in church. If you join us and there is a sketch/ drama look out for one of our budding actors Nick, Nigel, Jeremy or Helen. Also after the service join us for a coffee, chat and a piece of cake. There is always something for you to takeaway from the service to remind you of the theme. We look forward welcoming you to 'Come and join' in 2024, and for you to share your story.

This service is led by Steve Mashford our Licensed Lay Minister and all are welcome to 'Come and join' our worship on the first Sunday of the month at 9.30.

## **Deanery Synod**

Our Rural Dean Canon Rev Eleanor Williams from Burwell, has recently accepted to carry on this role for the next three years. When the new Vicar for The Anglesey Group is in post later this year, we will have a full compliment of clergy in the Deanery with no vacancies. Following the work on the Deanery Development Plan, we are now looking at how we can take this forward beyond 2025. One of the areas being looked at is Schools in the Deanery. Currently information is being gathered and then to see where we go from there. Also in the Diocese of Ely with Ridley House College in Cambridge are running an on line course for an Authorised Chaplaincy Assistant to work in church schools. Finally I am pleased to report that a Deanery Treasurer has now been appointed.

## **Twelve**



Based in Fulbourn, Twelve is the Benefice's centre for administration, communication and outreach and provides office space for our parish assistant. The centre sells greetings cards, second-hand books, games, jigsaws and assorted items that have been donated. It also sells eco-friendly, plastic free cleaning fluids (eg: washing up liquid and laundry liquid), toiletries and other household products in an initiative

known as Twelve Green Bottles.

Twelve is staffed by a part time paid manager and a team of volunteers. Having a manager has made a huge difference. The shop is open more regularly, looks tidy, organised and well presented.

The Scrabble group has restarted fortnightly on Tuesday afternoons and French classes continue on Monday mornings when the shop is closed.

Alice holds a Vestry hour in Twelve some Saturday mornings.

Twelve also acts as a centre for community communication, displaying posters and flyers for future events. It also acts as a collection point for subscriptions for The Mill (the Fulbourn Parish magazine), as well as a sale and distribution point.

Twelve's aimed opening times are: Monday 1.30-4.30pm, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm, Saturday 9.30am - 12.30pm.

## **Facts and figures 2023**

The average attendance at the Sunday morning Come & Join services held at St Nicholas was 21 adults and 3 children. At our Communion service on the third Sunday it was 15 adults. More than 230 adults and 40 children attended our Christmas Eve and Day services.

Our mid-week service at 9.20am on Wednesday mornings has continued with, on average, six people attending. Our Wednesday after school service was held on a fortnightly basis from February to May. It restarted in November on a monthly basis.

During the year there were one baptism, no weddings, and five funerals. Three well-attended services were held for Great Wilbraham Primary School. An All Souls service was held on 2 November.

There are 39 church members on the St Nicholas Electoral Roll (2022-41).

The main points on the church finances in 2023, which are detailed in the Annual Accounts, are:

- We started the year with General Funds of £6 and ended with £898, having used £4,500 from the rental income of 5 Benstead End to ensure we settled all our costs.
- We continue to be grateful to church members for their financial support. £15,601 was donated in the year including Gift Aid tax recoveries and collections. Fees from weddings and funerals totalled £2,457 of which £475 was paid on to the Diocese.
- We paid the Ministry Share of £11,357, insurance of £2,904, heating and utility costs of £3,545. The joint expenses due to St Vigor's, Fulbourn and other costs totalling £2,408.
- We made three donations to charities from church funds-Christian Aid £557, Cogwheel Counselling £500 and the Great Wilbraham Anne Ward and Benstead Charities £700. The Coffee Mornings held in August raised £250 which was split between The Childrens Society and Little Wilbraham PCC.
- In addition to monetary support, as part of our Harvest Festival outreach, generous donations of food and household items were given to Jimmy's Night Shelter, having been donated by the Wilbrahams community.
- There were two fabric projects during the year. Stonework repairs were undertaken at the end of 2022 and early 2023, costing £16,756. This cost was funded by a generous grant from the St Nicholas Gt Wilbraham Trust, £10,000 and a VAT refund from the Listed Place of Worship Scheme, £2,793. The balance was paid from church funds.
- Glass and window repairs have been undertaken in three parts, costing £5,640 to date. These costs were funded by a grant of £1,350 from the St Nicholas Trust with the balance from church funds. Other repair and maintenance costs totalled £4,294.
- Costs of £553 were incurred to maintain the churchyard.
- The final part of the interest free loan obtained in 2016 to fund the kitchen, toilet and bell ringing platform was repaid in December 2023.

At 31 December 2023, we held funds of £10,130 in our Building Fund plus £1,936 in our Chancel Fund.

#### **Investment property-5 Benstead End, Great Wilbraham**

The property has been let throughout the year to the same tenant. In total the rental income in 2023 was £24,000. The major cost in the year was the installation of a new, upgraded oil tank, £4,370. Tree pollarding cost £1,572 and other annual costs were £1,295. We continue to be extremely grateful to Graham Clarke for his management of the property, free of charge, throughout the year.

#### **Fabric Committee report**

As detailed in our report last year, the priority for 2023 has continued to be carrying out the smaller repairs highlighted in the once every five years building review, the

Quinquennial, prepared for us by our architects, Archangel in 2020. The repairs fell into two categories, stonework, mainly on the exterior, and windows and glass.

The stonework repairs were undertaken during December 2022 and January 2023. This repair work has been completed and approved by the architects. A generous grant of £10,000 was received from the St Nicholas Trust to cover the majority of the cost.

Window and glass repairs have been carried out in three parts. The first and second parts have been completed. The third part is currently underway.

We have discussed with the architect the further repair work which should be undertaken in 2024, funds permitting. The current list of tasks is:

- Pointing repair work on the exterior of the south side of the Chancel; and
- Repainting all the gutters and downpipes.

We are hopeful that contracts for these two projects will be agreed shortly.

Once these two projects are completed it is anticipated that the follow up projects will be:

- Moss removal and installation of copper strips on the eaves of the Chancel; and
- Two windows on the south side of the Nave to be repaired.

It will be appreciated from the above summary that significant management work will be required over the next two years to progress these projects.

### **Great Wilbraham Guild of Change Ringers - Annual Report -2023**

At St Nicholas' we are blessed with a spacious, modern bell floor with a great view of the Nave – but not when we are concentrating on ringing our six bells! The bells themselves are not “difficult” to ring, ie they are relatively light and predictable: this makes our Tower attractive to visiting “Bands” of enthusiastic ringers from far and wide who regularly come to ring at St Nicholas'.

During 2023 we had a pool of nine local ringers – 4 from Great Wilbraham, three from Little W, 1 from SMB and one from Bottisham. We have had more than our fair share in 2023 of illness and accidents (not in the Tower, however!) but usually we can muster six of us to ring before services at St Nicholas'. During 2023 we also had one person learning to ring and, since the turn of the year, we have two more – very encouraging.

We do not take ourselves too seriously but, although we are mostly quite new to ringing, we are becoming more competent and are learning new “methods” and sequences of call changes to extend our repertoire. We are tutored by Louise Dobson: we are extremely grateful to her and to several experienced ringers who also come to support us and help us gain more confidence.

The highlight of 2023 was the opportunity to “Ring for the King.” on the day of his Coronation. Eleven of us participated in nationwide ringing on the day of the King's Coronation.

The low point, however, was the discovery of a potentially dangerous fault developing in the headstock from which our largest bell is hung. We lost the use of that bell at the end of the year and have since only been able to ring on five bells – but we hope to be back to full strength by Easter.

We are indebted to Paul Lambton as “Steeple Keeper” who regularly checks and adjusts the bells for us; and to our Tower Captain Peter Sims for his leadership of the Band.

We would love more absolute beginners to join us. If you are wondering, a sense of timing and rhythm, not physical strength, is the key – and the commitment is not great as we have “Come and give ringing a try” on any Thursday evening when we practise for 90 minutes with tuition from Louise Dobson:

## **St. Nicholas' Trust**

### **The St Nicholas Great Wilbraham Trust Chairman's Report for 2023/24**

The St Nicholas Great Wilbraham Trust is made up by five local trustees and the incumbent vicar. Also, two officers of the PCC (Warden & Treasurer) attend by special invitation, to ensure a continuing strong link between the trust & the PCC.

The trust's purpose is to "raise money for the preservation repair maintenance improvement upkeep beautification and restoration of the church and of any monument fitting fixture stained glass organ or bell in the church but excluding the church yard adjoining the church....and the monies shall be given to the PCC to spend on works specified by the trustees...".

During 2023 the trust agreed two donations to the PCC; first, a sum of £10,000 put towards the cost of £16,756 for stone-work repairs and, second, a sum of £1,350 towards the cost of window repairs, £5,640.

The fundraising activities comprised: raising money at Saturday Village Local Farm Markets and encouraging Gift Aid contributions towards both the general fund and the Legacy Capital Fund.

As at 31 December 2023 the trust's general fund amounted to a sum of £14,754 and the Legacy Capital Fund (comprising income bearing investments in stocks & shares) was valued at £223,828, a small reduction it's value of £228,323 twelve months previously, but in line with negative global market sentiments resulting from the War in Ukraine and spiralling energy costs and inflation. The target for the Legacy Capital Fund remains at £500,000 (ALL the capital must be protected in perpetuity), to produce a target income of £20,000 pa. Bearing in mind that over the past 12 years, the building has required in excess of £350,000s expenditure on repairs & improvements, which has averaged at a cost of almost £30,000 per year. So, even allowing for "one off" improvement costs such as the tower conversion (£135,000), our mission is to at least double the Legacy Capital Fund's existing protected capital to £500,000, in order to make sure that the building is preserved to a very high standard for all future generations. Over the calendar year 2023, the total income generated by the Legacy Capital Fund amounted to £10,924 (in 2022 it was £10,251).

For further information on how to contribute most efficiently, please call our treasurer, Tony Ryan, initially on 01223 880593 or email to [lyansan@btinternet.com](mailto:lyansan@btinternet.com)

Graham Clarke, chairman

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024