

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

2023 / 2024



St Nicolas, Great Bookham
Building Faith in the Community

INTRODUCTION

This Church Activities booklet is a celebration of the exciting things happening in the various groups at St Nicolas over the last year. We hope you find it interesting and encouraging to discover all that is going on in our church and that it will lead you to give thanks and pray for all the ongoing activities.

If having read a report you would like to join a group, or feel the Lord prompting you to start serving in that ministry, then why not step out in faith and see what happens? Any of the groups would love to hear from you and would welcome new members. Your first point of contact is the person named at the bottom of the report and you can get in touch with them via the parish office on email: office@stnicolasbookham.org.uk or phone: 01372 450709.

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ACTS PUPPETEERS

We have continued to have an active year visiting local schools. The group is made up of people from four local churches; the writer of our plays, a musician who writes the words and music especially for each play, and five puppeteers. Through the last year we have visited local infant and junior schools in Bookham, Fetcham, Effingham and Downside; going to each school once a term.

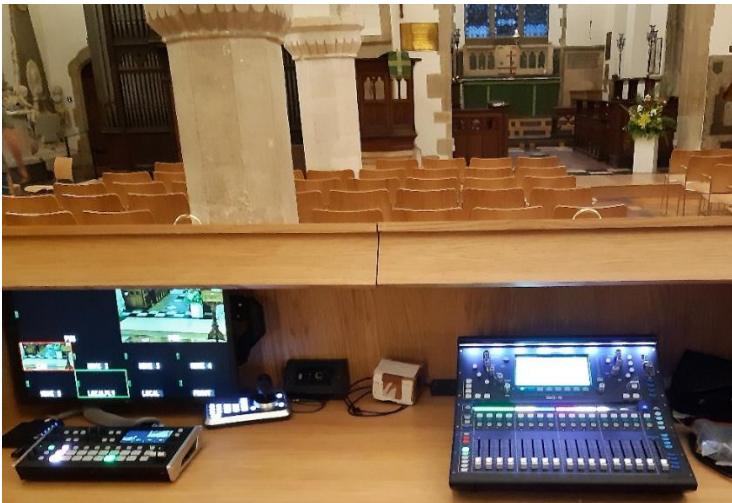
In the Summer Term 2023 our story was called “The Rejected Bricks”, based on a real story from 19th Century America. This was to show that we are all special and needed. In the Autumn Term 2023 we performed “The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus” and in the Spring Term 2024 we did “The Building of Noah’s Ark”. We also did a Nativity Play in one of the schools.

The plays always begin with an opening introduction, sometimes highlighting points to look out for in the story. At the end there is a short explanation. It is always a pleasure to visit the schools and to see how much the children enjoy the plays and having live music. We often hear the words “It’s the puppets!” going round.

Chloe Adie on behalf of the team

AV TEAM

I am delighted to say that our AV Upgrade Project was completed in Autumn 2023.



Since then, the operators have undergone initial training, and the subsequent familiarisation with new capabilities as they have been introduced. The technical team have also worked hard to tune the sound system to the different types of microphone, instrument, film and vocals (e.g. spoken word as opposed to singing).

The team pulled together amazingly well over the very busy period between Remembrance and Christmas – which also covered the very popular schools' services. All of the new facilities, including the 'digital snake', were put through their paces especially for Family Carols on Christmas Eve.

I am also pleased to report that we often get the encouragement of people who had previously struggled to hear clearly, now saying 'I heard every word today'. It's been quite a journey, and bit by bit we are learning to make progress. There will be a new round of training in 2024 on how the operators can use the advanced capabilities of the system to tune it dynamically in response to different speakers! To me that sounds like instant jeopardy – but once it is settled in and we have gained confidence, I am sure this will be a blessing for all.

One of the new capabilities is called PIP (Picture in Picture) which allows us to record the overhead projection inset into the camera view of a reader or preacher. This has made a very significant difference to our Editing Team who previously had to do this manually before putting our recordings on YouTube. While I would like to thank the whole team for their servant hearted contribution to worship at St Nicolas; I think a special thanks should go to:- the small Editing Team who have put in so many hours week by week to serve those who were unable to be at church in person; and the technical team who have nurtured the new system through its installation and teething troubles in those early months.

Let's give the AV Team the big round of applause and the encouragement that they deserve.

Thank you!

Chris Holloway

BARNABAS MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The Men's Fellowship of St Barnabas the Encourager. There have been a few changes during this year in the Barnabas Men's Fellowship group. We are now

meeting in the Pastoral Centre at 9:00am, discussing various topics of religious, social and general interest.

Many thanks to Chris Holloway who provided our breakfasts and has now handed over to David Wall, we are no longer having breakfasts but a light coffee and biscuits refreshment; thus, giving more time for socialising and discussion.

From the eighteen or more members, there are a number who are members of other churches. Each month a member may take a turn to present a thought for discussion.

The subjects discussed in 2023/24 have included: -

Contentment. Should we try to limit or control scientific advances that carry with them prospective dangers and how might we possibly do so? WOKE and other modern concepts that appear to try and change how we are supposed to think.

We discussed Blake's hymn Jerusalem and what it might mean? Also, the impact of increasing asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and the impact on the country and society. What the Churches response to this situation is currently. We discussed – those that have influenced our lives. We also discussed the start and progress of the wars in the middle east.

We have also had two very sociable breakfast meetings in the Vineries Garden Centre, our Christmas breakfast included wives and partners.

Our purpose is best described by - “Faith invites discussion, requires our exploration, embraces doubt, and sets all in the context of the faithfulness of God.”

David King

BEREAVEMENT TEAM

The team consists of Jean Forward (co-ordinator), Valerie Newman (until Nov 2023), Chloe Adie, Sylvia Solarski and Julia Watts. Throughout the year we write to the relatives of all who have died and whose funerals have been taken by our Clergy and Lay Ministers. We also enclose a leaflet giving details of the twice yearly Remembrance Services, plus an invitation to contact us for a chat or help, if these are needed. Within the parish these letters are delivered personally and often include a visit; those outside the parish are sent by post. During 2023 we sent 25 letters to next-of-kin, 15 of these were within the parish

and most included a visit. If needed, we will continue to give further support and encouragement.

All who have been bereaved are invited by letter to the next two Remembrance Services, held each year in April/May and October/November. Anyone who has been bereaved is most welcome to come to these, no matter how long ago a loved one died, or whether they lived locally. These services are well attended and are much appreciated by those who come. The names of all who are being remembered are noted down and read out, then there is the chance to light a candle. It is pleasing to notice that some who do not regularly attend church, continue to come and remember for quite some years. Afterwards refreshments are served in the Church Room, with the chance of a chat to a team member. Very many thanks to those who help by organising and serving the refreshments; also to the sacristy team for helping at the services, to Peter Lutton for coming to play the organ, and to John Adie for always coming along and helping us.

Visiting and supporting those who have been bereaved is not an easy task, and is often quite upsetting. I am so grateful to all who help in this way - please remember us in your prayers.

Jean Forward

BLOOM

Once or twice a term women from the church family, and their friends and neighbours, gather in the Pastoral Centre for a delicious breakfast and time to chat and get to know each other better. We try to make it a treat - fruit salad, cereals, pastries, toast, yoghurts and breakfast muffins are all available. Flowers on the tables and bunting across the room help to make it feel special.

Bloom was started to bring women of all ages together, to get to know each other better, support one another and hear something of the Christian message in a very accessible way. Each time we have a theme, and a speaker talks for just 10 minutes sharing something of their personal journey, faith and life experience. Over the past year we have thought about how we cope in the challenging times; at Christmas we heard about the work of the foodbank; and most recently we thought about friendship - but conversations range far and wide. We have also started supporting various projects to make a difference in our community and world. We brought Christmas goodies for the foodbank to distribute locally; we have supported a school in Zimbabwe through buying books and gifts, and also heard about the fairtrade movement and enjoyed

buying from Margaret's stall. There are usually a couple of discussion questions on the tables and often a take home bookmark or bible verse, sometimes a simple craft activity to make.

We have been blessed this year by the addition of Sue and Jan to the team, so that along with Ali, Celeste, Gill and Barbara we now have six of us to run the breakfasts. Younger or older, single or married, Christian or not, all women are welcome. Many of those who come are part of our extended church family, but we are really pleased that they feel able to bring along friends, neighbours, daughters, sisters and mothers. It's a very gentle introduction to the fellowship and friendship we enjoy in the church.

We would love to see more and more women join us. If you would like to come along to a Bloom breakfast then watch out for the advertisement in the weekly newsletter and book your place.

Barbara McDonald

CHOIR

The choir has had a successful year, despite the inescapable fact that we are all growing older. All its members have as usual made every effort to be there whenever possible. This has again meant that we have been able to provide a strong lead at every service we have been involved in. Though I have always enjoyed the routine of Sunday-by-Sunday services, the highlight for me was the Carol Service: I was very proud of the musical standard we were still able to achieve and the three Choral Evensongs were equally satisfying. At these latter events we were joined by a handful of singers from St Mary's, Fetcham, to whom I am very grateful. Even though not all the choir were available, we managed a creditable performance at a memorial service for a late parishoner. The family were so grateful that a present was made of funds for liquid refreshment before special services.

As my time at Bookham draws to a close, I wish to say once more that it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of singers, with very supportive clergy and with appreciative congregations.

Peter Lutton

CHURCHWARDENS AND CHURCH FABRIC REPORT

Having undertaken and completed major reordering works during 2022, it was appropriate to redecorate the entire church interior. This was carried out over several weeks in February 2023, during which time we continued to hold Sunday services in the church, with some imaginative use of the available space each week.

Later in the year a series of improvements to the AV system was made, including the installation of a new wooden cabinet to house the controls, as well as 3 strategically placed monitors for use by the ministry team, choir and servers during worship.

Other works of note during 2023:

- Replacing the disintegrating window blinds in the church room roof with new, electrically operated ones.
- Replacing the temporary step at the South door with a purpose made oak timber one in keeping with the other new fittings and furniture.
- Replacing a section of badly leaning brick wall in the Pastoral Centre with fencing. Also buttressing the remaining section.
- Erecting two swift boxes to the north elevation church eaves.
- Cleaning the War Memorial in the churchyard (paid for by the Bookham Residents Association).

Since the turn of the year, the broken drawers, work top and cupboards in the choir vestry were replaced with three new floor-to-ceiling storage cupboards, allowing better and more tidy use of space. In addition, a new oak cash donations box has been installed in the tower.

Other projects currently under consideration for 2024:

- The retiling and insulating of the new boiler house roof (previously known as the Sexton's shed).
- Re-roofing of the leaking gardeners shed.

The PCC would also like to upgrade and refurbish the toilets in the church room. This is a significant project, which will require substantial fundraising, though we have already secured a small grant from the Jane Austen Society of North America to get us started.

The churchwardens and other members of the PCC are very grateful to the volunteers making up the Fabric Committee who oversee all this work as well as carry out the more routine tasks. We would also like to thank two members of the congregation for their technical expertise and input to the AV project.

The PCC is thankful for the generous grants from the Friends that paid for the new organ humidifier and the repair to the bottom of the window above the organ pipes. We are also grateful for the continued support of Mole Valley District Council for the maintenance of the churchyard.

Joy Lord on behalf of the churchwardens

CHURCHYARD

The churchyard provides a peaceful area for many to sit and reminisce. On many occasions it becomes a source of information for people seeking details of family history.

The flowers in the churchyard herald the new year with the snowdrops and gradually we move towards spring with the crocuses, primroses and wood avens. All very beautiful. The area is maintained by a local contractor who is most careful with our flowers. The grass cutting and maintenance is paid for by a grant from MVDC. I would like to say that we keep the area trimmed to prevent tripping accidents which would occur with longer grass.

We do have a good group of helpers who take on responsibility for the areas requiring attention and for the removal of dead plant matter. I am very grateful for their help and for the work carried out by the ECO team. It is sad to lose our helpers due to ill health or sadly death but we are grateful for their help over the years.

There are rules sent out from the Diocese about what can be introduced into the churchyard. Please help us to follow these restrictions. The information is displayed in the churchyard.

Angela Stevens

CRAFT AND FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Numbers are down from what they were when it started when the Kneelers were being produced, and the group consists of ladies who have to be transported, so we are now meeting in homes, and the housebound ladies take it in turns to host the group of five of us. I do the transporting and organise where we go on a Monday morning.

The ladies all enjoy the company and getting out of their houses.

Chris Collins

DEANERY SYNOD

The Deanery Synod held three engaging and interesting meetings in 2023.

The first was a Zoom meeting held on the first day of March. Alison Moulden addressed the importance of working together to achieve net zero, and the place of Eco church in working towards this goal. She began with a brief history of climate change, including the IPCC warning in 2018 that any increase in climate warming had to be limited to 1½° above pre-industrial levels. At present, far from declining, emissions are increasing, meaning that we are on track for 4° increase by the end of the century. Alison reminded us that treasuring the earth is one of the church's Five Marks of Mission, and so she encouraged our churches to embrace the Eco Church Awards Framework. 56% of churches from Leatherhead Deanery had signed up at that time, and 31% had achieved awards. (NB St Nicolas currently has the silver award and is currently working towards the gold award.) In conclusion, Alison encouraged our churches to do three things: Join Eco Church; Use the Energy Footprint Tool, which enables churches to collect data to provide to our diocese; and create a zero plan to become net zero by 2030.

June's meeting was held here at St Nicolas Bookham and the main topic was Growing the Core: the strategic priority post-Covid. Our speaker was Richard Lloyd, then head of the Diocesan Mission Enabler team. Richard's presentation considered the encouragements and challenges derived from the first Parish Needs Process (PNP) and how this needs to evolve in this new cycle of the process to provide a stronger basis for the future which feeds into the Church Development Plan process with which we engage. The new cycle of the PNP will focus on investing in and building up the core to make resilient disciples united by the gospel, equipped to reach back and invigorate the congregation and reach out beyond. The presentation focused on looking at the level of engagement from core players through those who are committed to those who have only sporadic contact with the church; considering how to look at activities within the church, who is involved and to what degree and how effectively we use our gifts and time; and suggesting some areas to bring focus such as growing and developing the 'core' in order to bring those less involved into a greater level of commitment.

At the October meeting, held in Cobham, the main agenda item was Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RHSE) in schools. Our speaker was Jane Whittington, Schools Officer. Jane skilfully led us through the complex issues in this area explaining the legal and statutory requirements and how these were applied to different age groups (primary and secondary) in schools. Primary school requirements focus on the experience of the child in the

context of their family; the features of healthy relationships; and good behaviours. Secondary school requirements expand into thinking about being a potential partner or parent; good standards of behaviour for happy coexistence of individuals in families, among friends and within society; and teaching about sexual matters including safer sex, sexual health and sexuality in the context of relationships. She spoke of parents' rights to have their children excused from sex education in RSE but not from sex education as part of the national science curriculum. She also covered the need for schools to ensure that their teaching is sensitive and age appropriate when covering LGBT relationships and how this should be integrated into their RHSE studies rather than being standalone. She reiterated that the Diocesan Board of Education endorses the new RSE statutory guidance and encourages its school leaders, governors and clergy to embrace teaching of RSE in this context.

Heather Gerrard and Alan Jenkins

ECO TEAM

When Traidcraft ceased trading in January we decided to continue our monthly Fairtrade stall but focusing on Fairtrade products stocked by local supermarkets, starting with the Co-op and moving out to Tescos, Sainsburys and so on. It has been a very interesting and worthwhile exercise which continues. We held a Coffee Morning in Fairtrade Fortnight raising £244 for Transform Trade.



We held our 'Green Fair' in church in September. Our theme was "bringing together Green thinking in Bookham" and, jointly with Bookham Baptist Church Eco Team, we invited local groups and organisations who aim to

- Reduce (Plastic Free Bookham),
- Reuse (charity shops, crafters),
- Repair (bicycles, shoes) and
- Refill (48 various sized bottles were refilled on the day).

Other displays focussed on reducing water use, measuring carbon footprints and promoting our St Nicolas recycling opportunities. Over 180 people visited with many enjoying the wildlife gardening displays, the Pastoral Centre "Bug-ingham Palace" and walking the churchyard Tree Trail. Funds raised enabled us to twin our church room toilets with two in Uganda.

In the Harvest service, Living Faith section, the Eco Team suggested 5 lifestyle changes which could make a difference:

1. Eat 1 more meat-free meal a week
2. Time and limit showers to 4 minutes
3. Use beeswax wraps instead of clingfilm
4. Ensure your peanut butter is palm oil free/your garden compost is peat-free
5. Use soap-bars instead of plastic dispensers.

The reasons can be found in our follow-up article in the November magazine.

In the autumn we assisted a local councillor produce two Reduce/Reuse/Recycle Fashion Shows in St Nicolas where models (several from St Nicolas including the Eco Team) demonstrated the wonderful outfits that could be assembled from our local charity shops stock. These very successful events allowed us to promote our work too.

We contributed an Eco themed nativity scene to display at ‘The Spirit of Christmas’ event in December and erected the communal Christmas card trellis again.

Our “unusual recycling” collections continue:

- coins/currency collections for Guildford Cathedral,
- plastic milk bottle tops to benefit A-Rocha,
- binoculars for the RSPB,
- used postage stamps supporting Church of Scotland’s Stamp Mission,
- printer cartridges benefitting Transform Trade and
- postcards for Mission Aviation Fellowship.

A new initiative is recycling empty medicine blister packs for Terracycle.

Team Members meet regularly and are Jacqy Faull, Sarah Heafield, Fiona Jones, Val Lambert, Joy Lord and Zena Rose – please talk to us if you’d like to know more.

Margaret Hibbert and team

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

We have had an amazing year with our ministry to families and children. Some of the highlights are set out below.

Tots Alive. We have seen this group grow during the year. Parents and carers appreciate this space where they can meet others, have fun and learn about the gospel.

Glow. Our children's church has grown too, in numbers and knowledge about God. We have explored themes such as the armour of God, the early church and books of the bible.

Out into the community. We have organised several events this year including Easter family fun and Summer fun activities in the local parks. These were great opportunities to meet new people, offer a range of activities and share the gospel with our community. We have taken part in community events such as Village Day and Spirit of Christmas. Our Families' and Children's Minister has continued to offer **Rhyme**



Time at the library fortnightly. This is very well received by the families with young children in our wider community.

Schools. Each year we have increased our involvement with the local schools; they have come to the church for visits, special occasions like Harvest and Christingles, and we have gone into the schools for assemblies. We even had a year group come to the church to hear Eldred Clark talk about the Anglo-Saxon times. We are expecting to have a lot more involvement in 2024.

Uniformed groups. We have also had visits from Scouts and Guide groups. They enjoyed the activities we



provided, especially the scavenger hunts inside our church building and our garden.



We are very thankful to the wonderful team of helpers who make all these activities possible and would appreciate your prayers for all the exciting projects and events planned for 2024.

Celeste Rios

FLOWER ARRANGERS

The dedicated group continue to provide delightful arrangements whether it be for weddings, services of thanksgiving, Festivals, Mothering Sunday or the weekly services. We like to feel that the flowers give solace and / or support throughout the year.

It is most unfortunate that the price of flowers have increased in recent times but we try to keep costs down by using home grown foliage from our gardens. I would say that the wedding flowers are paid for by the family.

So please continue to enjoy the flowers as much as we enjoy arranging them. We certainly get a lot of pleasure from our sessions.

Angela Stevens

FOCUS ON PRAYER TEAM AND PRAYER STATIONS

This was the third year in which the Focus on Prayer team have displayed prayer stations in church. Aiming to enhance our welcome for everyone at St Nicolas, whether regular or occasional attenders or just visiting; for services, private prayer, events or any other reason, they provide a space for quiet prayer and reflection.

A regular series of prayer stations are now displayed in church throughout the year. Themes include Lent and Holy Week, Advent and Christmas as well as different seasons of the year. Our first station displayed in 2021 focuses on the Lord's Prayer, complementing the national 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative. A few lines introduce the meaning of each of the themes, accompanied by a prayer and complementary activity designed to engage people of all ages and abilities.

A new series focused on 'Fruit of the Spirit' was introduced in the Autumn of 2023 (pictured). This featured quotes from members of our congregation on what the different fruit of the spirit means to them. It also included a handmade book inscribed with prayers for each of the fruit of the spirit. A further new theme is currently being developed focusing on 'The I am Sayings of Jesus', which will be displayed later in 2024.

The displays invite people to take a few minutes to sit and reflect, contemplate and pray in different ways. This can be very helpful for those who may otherwise find it difficult to simply sit and pray. For example, plaiting a few strands of coloured wool, colouring a paper cross or writing in a hand-made miniature book to help mindfulness in prayer. People are also invited to write a prayer on topical shapes to hang on our prayer tree, which continues to be a popular option.

My thanks are extended to the Focus on Prayer Team, namely Julia Watts, Veronica Taylor and Carole Vaux for continuing to support and assist in the development of the prayer stations and also to Wendy Hoare, Zena Rose,



Janice Spencer-Skeen and Dawn Owers for their help with preparing different elements of the displays.

Vicki Dixon

FRIENDSHIP LUNCH

The Friendship Lunch Team continues to offer hospitality to people who otherwise may lunch on their own. A midday meal is provided 3 or 4 times a year in the Pastoral Centre with a menu including a substantial salad buffet followed by usually homemade desserts. Guests enjoy a welcome glass of sherry or fruit juice, and hot drinks are served at the end of the meal.

Unfortunately, the popular lunch now sees fewer attendees as some of our regular guests are no longer with us or have moved into care. New guests are made very welcome by our team and by our regular guests.

Our concern that a few new volunteers were needed to support our existing team has hopefully been resolved with new people coming forward to help. However, we always welcome new members to the team. As helpers we have very busy but very rewarding few hours as well as taking time to enjoy eating and socialising with our guests.

Sylvia SolarSKI for the Friendship Lunch Team

HEARING CHAMPION

During 2023 I have held 9 clinics and I have assisted with the maintenance of 42 hearing aids.

I seek to give support to hearing aid users by providing batteries, cleaning hearing aids, trouble shooting and changing tubes.

I hope I also provide a friendly welcome and an opportunity for a conversation. It's an opportunity for me to signpost people to our other local services.

The clinics are monthly and are held in the Meeting Place so the clients can also use the coffee shop facilities.

I have a set of regular user and also a few new clients.

It is a rewarding task and the users are very grateful not to have to travel further for assistance. Usually this would also necessitate leaving their hearing aid at the site and having to manage without them. Due to our geography, hearing aid users can obtain their hearing aids from Epsom, Guildford or

Specsavers, all of these services provide different hearing aids and different accessories. I need to use a bit of detective work to be sure I use the right equipment!

Hearing loss can be very isolating and research has highlighted that it contributes towards cognitive decline so I try to encourage clients to get used to their hearing aids and not leave them safely in a box.

Ali Sangwine

HOUSEGROUPS

I'm pleased to report that a new group has started in the last year, Emmaus, meeting fortnightly on Tuesday mornings, so there are now nine groups meeting regularly and at various times. Two meet in the morning, two in the afternoon and five in the evening; some meet weekly, others fortnightly or monthly. One of the groups meets for silent prayer, but all of the others follow studies based on the bible, often using one of the range of study guides which are available. About 60 people attend the various groups, and new members are always welcome, details are on the housegroup leaflet, available in the tower.

If you have never joined a housegroup, why not give it a try? It's quite alright to join on a trial basis, or to change groups if your first choice doesn't work for you; groups, and the individuals in them, vary and what helps one person might not help another. Fellowship and support are important aspects of all groups and the friendships formed with other members are strong and supportive. Most members agree that being part of a group is a tremendous help in the challenge of living out our faith in everyday life.

Jean Forward

INCLUSION AMBASSADOR



Hi I'm Zena and my role involves helping the Church Wardens and the PCC to develop our church as a welcoming, inclusive place.

I'm also here to encourage us all to think about new ways of doing things which help people with disabilities or other impairments take part in the life of St Nicolas. In the year 2023-24, I gave a presentation on sight impairment. There are 350,000 registered blind and partially sighted people in the UK. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the most common cause of sight loss.

I interviewed Amanda Rowlands, who is a Trustee of a major charity for blind people. She also has difficulty with sight herself and she told us how she uses IT to help with reading and writing.

We have also signed up to the Christian charity, Torch Trust, to help us find out more about supporting people with sight impairment.

In the coming year I hope to make a presentation on autism and neurodiversity.

Zena Rose, Inclusion Ambassador

MOTHERS' UNION

Mothers' Union (MU) is a global Christian movement working with people of all faiths and none to develop communities, strengthen families and advocate for change. We are active in 83 countries and work tirelessly to serve communities and build a future where everyone thrives. Ending violence, ending poverty, ending injustice. We are a praying community.

In the UK, MU are involved with help in prisons, refuges, and with abused families. We have as a group nationally been involved in a campaign against Domestic Violence. Modern Day Slavery: refugees involved in car washing, nail bars, some even as Au Pairs.

Abroad, MU are running literacy projects, teaching basic maths and language to women to enable them to run their own projects to help with family life.

In Bookham, we have an ageing group and unfortunately we are only a praying group, would you consider joining us to be either practically or prayerfully involved?

Chris Collins

OPENING AND CLOSING TEAM

There are many people in our congregation who quietly help behind the scenes at St Nicolas and the small team that opens and closes our church is one example.

St Nicolas church has been open to visitors almost every day during the past year. It was closed for a couple of weeks during the redecoration works early in 2022, due to health and safety reasons, but aside from that, people of all ages and walks of life have been able to visit. They come for a variety of reasons: some to light a candle in memory of a loved one; some to remember an event in their life – a wedding, baptism or funeral; some returning to visit the church that was part of their life when they lived in Bookham; some to appreciate the building or research their family history; and some simply to pray.

You may have noticed that the gates to the south porch are now routinely open, although entry is still via the west door. This has been done so that the church looks more welcoming and accessible when viewed from the village centre, and so that passers-by are not discouraged by the seemingly impenetrable bars of the Grille.

The Opening and Closing team make all this possible and the Churchwardens are very grateful for their help in this way.

Joy Lord on behalf of the churchwardens

OUTWARD GIVING

Through our outward giving, the church models good practice for Christians. In doing so collectively as a church, we are able to build links in ways that individuals may not be able to on their own.

Our regular giving is planned, with six charities being supported each year from 2022 to 2025. This helps them in their financial planning and for us to build meaningful relationships. We do not simply give financially. We support the

chosen charities in other ways, particularly prayer and to help raise awareness about their work. Our Parish Links for each charity help with this and we enjoy welcoming representatives who come to tell us about their work. We also benefit from a range of resources for worship made available by mission organisations.

Each year, we aspire to give 10% of each year's regular giving, including tax recovery, to charitable causes. Regular giving includes money received from standing orders, planned giving, cash placed in collection plates and envelopes, online giving and through cashless card transfers. It also includes Gift Aid recovered on donations. All contributions are very much appreciated.

The charities chosen represent a spread of local, national and international beneficiaries, with a focus on issues prioritised by our congregation, namely: relief of poverty and persecution; the Bible and discipleship; supporting people who are disadvantaged, oppressed or homeless; children and young people. They are also selected for their Christian ethos and good governance.

In 2023, St Nicolas Church gave the following sums to our chosen charities, amounting to £17,800.

Charity	Parish Links	Sum donated 2023
Bible Society	Alan & Suzie Jenkins	£3560
Christians Against Poverty (CAP)	Val Lomax & Catherine Clark	£3560
Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)	Val Lambert & Jenny Evans	£3560
Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)	Julia Watts & Sue White	£1780
Mission to Seafarers	John Adie & Eldred Clark	£1780

Oasis – Hadley Project (North London)	Gill Caldwell & Celeste Rios	£3560
TOTAL:		£17,800

St Nicolas also continues to support other charities in bespoke ways. In particular, through food donations to LeatherHEAD Start, fund raising and other activities for Fairtrade, The Meeting Place and Christian Aid, plus special toy collections for The Childrens Trust in Tadworth. We also help raise money for occasional special appeals.

You can find out more about each of the charities supported on our Outward Giving noticeboards in the Pastoral Centre and in church or on our website at <https://www.stnicolasbookham.org.uk/giving>.

Vicki Dixon, Outward Giving Coordinator

PASTORAL TEAM

The pastoral team has been busy as usual sharing the love of Jesus with those in need of a little support at a difficult time in their lives. Maybe bereavement, mental or physical illness, relationship and family worries, dementia or just increasing frailty with age. The pastoral team members visit both members of the congregation and others in the wider community on behalf of all of us at St Nicolas. They come alongside someone, listen to their concerns, offer friendship and comfort, pray with them or for them. Sometimes they point the way to other sources of help and advice. There have been many visits to individuals at home and in care homes or hospital, and regular phone calls help to keep in touch with others. Three of the team take home communion to some no longer able to get to church. Two are involved in welcoming and preparing families for the baptism of their child.

The team members also use their pastoral skills in many other church and community activities. Some are involved with Tuesday and Thursday coffee mornings, the Friendship Lunch, the Meeting Place and Community Fridge, the Anna Chaplaincy, Tots Alive and other children’s and families activities. With the increasing numbers of very elderly and frail in our congregation and in the community we are kept very busy.

We have seven pastoral assistants and visitors on the team: Ali Sangwine, Chris Bridges, Heather Gerrard, Jan Williamson, Margaret Hibbert, Sylvia Solarski and Valerie Lomax. All have received training from the diocese in pastoral care. We meet together every six weeks with Alan, Gill and Barbara from the ministry team, and Jean Forward representing the bereavement team, to support and encourage one another, to share news, (if appropriate of course) and to pray for each other and those we visit.

The team keep up to date with safeguarding training and attending other courses to continue learning and developing their skills. Two have completed the Building Blocks to Pastoral Care course run by the Association of Christians in Counselling and another the Spiritual Care Course run by the Anna Chaplaincy. Others have been to some of the Life Issues sessions run by a church in Godalming and the annual diocesan conference for pastoral visitors.

The pastoral team can be contacted via the parish office if you feel you, or someone you know, would benefit from a phone call or a visit.

Barbara McDonald

PCC

This is the principal governing committee and board of trustees at St. Nicolas. It works with the Rector to guide the church through its key plans and projects as well as its general operations. The PCC comprises the ordained clergy, the church wardens, Deanery Synod representatives and a number of elected members of our congregation. Together they are responsible for the overall wellbeing of the church members and the church buildings. The PCC also has a duty to promote the mission of the church within the wider community.

The committee is often involved in key decisions and members work together to oversee the many and varied areas in the church that need to run effectively and safely. Individuals are encouraged to lead oversight of one of these areas to enable the PCC to understand better any issues or points of interest, and to become a point of contact and support for the church family.

Joy Lord on behalf of the churchwardens

SACRISTAN TEAM

We are a small group of volunteers, made up of Acolytes (more commonly known as servers) and Chalice Assistants. Acolytes wear white robes called albs and Chalice Assistants wear cassocks. Some of us cover both roles.

Our most visible job is to assist the clergy at every service, whether it be for our regular congregation on Sundays and Thursdays, or for other church users such as at Weddings, Funerals and the twice yearly Memorial Service. We dress the altars, prepare the sacraments and ensure our ministers are equipped. We then clear away after the service, washing the silverware in hot soapy water. What you may not know is that we're also responsible for changing the altar colours in line with the Liturgical calendar and for laundering the linen items.

After all the various changes we had to make during the Covid pandemic, including the challenge of working alone, it has been good to resume normal serving duties.

It is a real privilege to serve in this way. Do speak to me if you'd like to join the team.

Joy Lord

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is a fundamental part of culture and practice at St Nicolas and is something to be celebrated. The PCC have Safeguarding as a standing agenda item at each of their meetings and receive a report from the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) when there is business to report. In recent months, there has been little or nothing to report to the PCC regarding safeguarding concerns but we all remain vigilant.

St Nicolas works in accordance with the guidance given by the Church of England and the PSO has completed all training in that regard.

The PCC has complied with its duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and clergy discipline measure 2016, to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

The PCC Safeguarding Lead is Anne Shears; the Parish Safeguarding Officer is Roland Martin; the DBS Recruiter and Verifier is Ruth Dyson.

The Parish Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed during the course of the last twelve months and is available on the Parish website. Additional reviews have taken place during the year, not least regarding safer recruitment practice.

Appropriate policies have been reviewed by the PCC and published more widely. All policies are reviewed in accordance with the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook which is well known to the Officers in the Church.

It is an expectation that members of the PCC – as well as Church Clergy and Officers – complete the relevant training and records are kept by the PSO. This expectation has been supported by the incumbent who reminds PCC members of the need to complete training if required.

Now that the Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance has been fully absorbed by the Church, the PCC Safeguarding Lead and the PSO insist that the policy is followed. There is still a risk that some leaders in the Church see the new processes as burdensome and bureaucratic but members of the PCC are well aware of the risk associated with not following guidance and policy. The PSO has offered to go through Dioceses training with a group of people in need of it which might facilitate easier access to the course.

The PSO has had only one safeguarding concern raised with him since the last APCM report. This situation did not meet a threshold to be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

St Nicolas must continue to retain strong focus on ensuring that safer recruitment processes are followed correctly now that so much work has been done in refining and embedding them.

Roland Martin, Parish Safeguarding Officer

THE MEETING PLACE



A place for all, time for all

The Meeting Place is a small local charity based in Bookham, set up in 2011 by members of the three local churches. Our aim is to offer a wide variety of activities that build up our community and make a positive difference in reducing isolation.

On Saturday mornings we run a Coffee Shop in Bookham Baptist Church Hall. This operates throughout the year and offers a warm welcome plus refreshments including cakes baked by The Grange Centre. The Community Fridge also runs “help yourself” tables on a Saturday morning at Bookham Baptist Church. The idea is that supermarkets donate the surplus food that would otherwise be wasted,

and the Community Fridge makes it available to anyone who can use it on Saturday, Tuesday and Friday mornings.

The Meeting Place also offers two services to support anyone experiencing Hearing loss – Lip Reading classes are taught on zoom by a professionally qualified teacher, and Ali, our Hearing Champion is available once a month at the Coffee Shop on Saturday mornings. The Hearing Champions service offers free (drop-in) support on the operation and maintenance of NHS hearing aids, as well as information and signposting to other services and equipment.

The Language Hub offers English lessons for anyone for whom English is not their first language. Classes run in term time and are organised in two groups - Beginners and Intermediate level.

Our Community Chaplaincy for older people aims to nurture and develop the spiritual lives of older people (whether they are living at home or in a care home) and their relatives, friends and carers. Our Anna Chaplain and the team of Anna Friends and volunteers organise a wide range of activities to celebrate and cherish those who have lived long and experienced much. Anna Chaplaincy is a national network licensed through the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF).

All these activities are intended to complement the offerings of local churches and in no sense compete with what is offered by them. We are very grateful that our churches work well together and are generous in their varied support of The Meeting Place's activities.

For more information about all our activities, please see our website <http://themeetingplace.org.uk> where you will also find contact details.

Margaret Hibbert

TUESDAY COFFEE

The past year has been very busy on the Tuesday Coffee front; we usually have between 15 to 20 people and from the minute folk arrive the conversation flows freely. On one occasion one of our guests said to me that he greatly looked forward to Tuesday mornings as the event was a highlight of his week, which was encouraging to hear.

The idea behind the Tuesday Coffee is not to make money, it is to foster relationships, help people to make new friends and generally enjoy the company of others in a warm, friendly atmosphere. The charge is minimal, 50p for tea or coffee, plus unlimited biscuits, and invariably people have a second

drink. Chocolate biscuits are the most popular and always disappear before anything else.

There are nine members of the Team, plus two reserves, and this works out at roughly one duty a month as we always have two 'on duty' each week, so it is not an onerous commitment, but it is very rewarding. The mornings are always busy either serving coffee, etc, or taking time to talk to our clients. Everyone is careful to look out for any guest who seems to be on their own and will then make a point of engaging them in conversation. Over the years many friendships have been formed.

The Tuesday Coffee is open to all, if you are in the village on a Tuesday morning please do come and join us, you may be assured of a very warm welcome.

Julia Watts

WELCOME TEAM - SIDESMEN, WELCOMERS AND REFRESHMENTS



When entering the church for a service, you are more than likely first welcomed by one of our 36 Sidesmen and Welcomers. Whether the 8am, 10am, Evensong, special services or perhaps a wedding or funeral, members of our teams will be there to greet and help. We are thankful for their dedication throughout the year and especially the flexibility and adjustments necessary during the reordering and redecoration of the church, since when we have enjoyed some stability with now familiar chair arrangements, use of the ramps and receiving communion at both the main altar and in the Slyfield Chapel.

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Romans 15:7)

Whether regulars, occasional or new to St Nicolas, all are warmly welcomed to join us for complimentary refreshments after 10am Sunday services and Thursday morning communion. We are thankful to all those on our weekly

teams and reserves who serve refreshments including freshly made filter coffee, a selection of teas, biscuits and occasional home-made cakes. We also try to use fairtrade products and to recycle waste wherever possible. The flexible area in the south aisle and church room each provide good spaces for catching up and making new acquaintances by many people each week.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35).

Vicki Dixon, Rota Coordinator for Sidesmen, Welcomers and Refreshment teams

YOUTH WORK

Leatherhead Youth Project (LYP) is a local charity passionate about helping young people. We offer innovative youth services in Leatherhead, Bookham and across Mole Valley, helping young people to be safe, happy and making positive changes in their lives.

BYouth is LYP’s youth café in Bookham which is open on Mondays and Fridays after school for local secondary aged young people. The aim of BYouth is to provide a safe, positive space for young people to meet friends, enjoy activities and get to know our youth workers. BYouth allows our team to build positive relationships with local young people and by doing so we can understand their needs and support them in other areas of their lives.

In 2023, 632 young people accessed LYP with 107 different young people attending BYouth throughout the year.

Every Monday evening during term time we provide a cooked meal for young people in Bookham, followed by games and a topic to explore. There are different topics each week with a focus on faith-based topics every other week. One highlight in 2023 was a local farm bringing small animals to the session and speaking on how animal care can be positive for our mental health.

Throughout 2023 our Young Leaders took responsibility for the kitchen every Friday during the youth café and did an amazing job preparing snacks for the whole group, including waffles, puff pastry treats and baguette pizzas. The Young Leaders also form our Youth Board in Bookham and have given insightful feedback on our projects, alongside getting involved in future planning.

Next Level worship nights run each month which are organised by LYP and hosted by the three Bookham Churches. Since September 2023 the theme has been “How can we live out our faith?”. Fish, the Christian Union at the Howard

of Effingham, is now co-led between LYP, Nathan at St. Mary's, Fetcham and Liz at Bookham Baptist.

Our Counselling and Emotional Well-Being team provide early intervention support through Mindworks Surrey referrals and local schools. In 2023, we offered sessions to 87 young people from 16 schools across Mole Valley.

Charis Jenkins joined the LYP team in September 2023 as the Bookham Sessional Worker.

During the last year, LYP also offered local young people the opportunity to engage with our primary to secondary transition support, trips, an Easter residential and our social action projects during each half term break.

Jenny Coffin, Leatherhead Youth Project, Bookham



Thank you to all
who contributed
to the 2023 / 2024
Church Activities
Booklet

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