



# **St Saviour's Oxton Church Annual Report 2021**

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## Vicar's Report

### Ukraine

Over the past three months, people across our European continent, and in many places beyond it, have watched with horror the tragedy in Ukraine.

It is hard to take in the shock that a major power is waging a war of aggression on the European mainland at this point in our history. Our prayers are with those who are suffering, who are losing their homes and livelihood, and especially their loved ones in this needless violence.

We are aware too of the potential for an escalation which could engulf the whole planet. So at this time one key priority for us as a Christian community must surely be praying for peace and doing what we can to address Ukrainian suffering in practical ways.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

People across the world continue to live, too, in the long shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking in 2021, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director General of the World Health Organization, noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected “each and every individual on the surface of the world”. He went on to say that, in his view, the pandemic has caused mass trauma on a larger scale than the Second World War. He believes that this trauma will “affect communities for many years to come.”

I don't know whether you will agree with this assessment. For me, it does appear to have merit.

Certainly, and without in any way detracting from the huge success of the UK's vaccination programme or the astonishing achievements of the National Health Service, we know that the pandemic itself continues to have an impact, as it is still sadly taking people's lives and devastating people's health for months on end.

Moreover, its medium term social and financial impacts are – I believe – only beginning to make their presence felt across society. Life has not returned to normal for many, many people; and consequently for businesses of all sorts, for charities, for churches, and across civil society.

### Suffering in our own lives

When we see so much suffering in the lives of others – whether they be Ukrainian mothers fleeing with their children, or medically vulnerable people living in countries which lack access to vaccines – we surely ought to give thanks for the blessings of living in a peaceful country with an outstanding medical infrastructure.

At the same time, there is absolutely a proper place for acknowledging the suffering in our own lives and in the lives of our family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues.

We might think of bereavements and health worries, the stress of having a terminal or life-limiting disease, the cares that come with age, the horror of discovering that a child is desperately unwell, loneliness, mental health problems, as well as the job insecurity and financial worries to which I have already alluded. We know that these and many other concerns affect people close to us. It is likely that some will be affecting you and me directly at this time.

So often – perhaps all the more in our online, networked society – human suffering stays largely hidden, and its relative invisibility adds to its weight.

## Nurturing kindness and calm

We can see in the lives of others – and perhaps if we are perceptive we might recognize within our own lives – the signs of long-term stress and often multiple forms of bereavements and losses.

We all recognize that, as fallen human beings, our ‘natural’ responses to stress can often be a mixture of anger, denial, panic, a sense that everything is up in the air, or a search for someone to blame. So a key question for us, as Christians, is how we can be kind to ourselves and to others, and how we can respond calmly and peacefully, finding our security in Christ.

Looking back over the past year, I feel privileged to serve a Christian community in which many people have responded to the trauma of this time with kindness and calm. As I reflected in a recent address to our PCC, these gifts of kindness and calm are beyond us as fallen people. But they are not beyond God and he will not fail to give them to us if we earnestly seek them.

In the past few days, I have returned again to St Paul's words in Chapter 8 of his Letter to the Romans:

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? [...] Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

[...] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Alongside the challenges of the past year, our nation this year gives thanks for the extraordinary service which Her Majesty has given here in the United Kingdom and to the peoples of the Commonwealth over the past 70 years of her Reign.

In our parish, we marked in two services in February the anniversary of The Queen's Accession. These services honoured the anniversary in simple ways which sought to find a balance between thanksgiving for the many blessings of The Queen's Reign and recognition that Accession Day is also the Anniversary of the death of King George VI.

In June, we look forward to celebrating at three events, and in different ways, The Queen's Jubilee. These three events will find their place among the celebrations of millions of people in different parts of the world.

We remember too that this past year has brought sadness and new challenges for The Queen, as she has lived with bereavement

following the death of Prince Philip in April of last year, and as she has suffered increasing mobility issues.

We remember Her Majesty in our prayers of thanksgiving and in our prayers that Almighty God will grant her strength to meet these challenges and joy in this Jubilee Year.

## Ministry in 2021-2022

The past year has seen considerable change in the leadership of our diocese.

In the time since of our last APCM, Bishop Mark has been enthroned in a particularly beautiful service in his Cathedral Church, and Bishop Julie and Bishop Sam have been consecrated for episcopal ministry and have taken up their new roles assisting +Mark in his ministry.

In our parish, too, we have been able to celebrate new beginnings.

Last summer, we were delighted to welcome the Torr family, as Revd Holly was ordained Deacon and took up her role here as an Assistant Curate. Holly's husband, the Revd Dr Steve Torr, who teaches ordinands at Emmanuel College, has also very kindly given time to contribute to our church's life.

Amy Davies, our Reader in training, is approaching the end of pre-licensing formation. I want to pay tribute to Amy for the way in which she has quietly got on with meeting the very considerable demands of the pre-licensing course, especially in the past year when she has been bereaved and when there have been many more demands on her time, not least here in church, than she might have expected.

We pray for Amy as she looks beyond the end of the course to the next steps in the apostolate to which God is calling her.

## **The Revd Dr Tina Dixon**

Very sadly, Revd Tina has in recent weeks learned that she is terminally ill and that (in her own words) time is short.

This news has been a shock and a great sadness for us all. As you are aware, Tina has been too ill to receive visitors in these weeks, but I know that she has been strengthened and comforted by the messages of love and support she has received.

I ask you to continue to pray for Revd Tina and for her family at this difficult time for them.

### **Risk assessments: looking back**

To return, if I may, to much more mundane matters, one of the challenges of the past few years for many of us – and certainly for clergy – has been the need to become much more adept in risk assessment and risk management.

Inevitably, the assessment of risk has a subjective element to it. And so it is natural that some of us will find the rate of change in these matters too fast and others will find it too slow.

I am grateful to all who have borne patiently with the process of change in our parish church and other buildings, and to all who have produced risk assessments for various parts of the life of our church community. I want to thank also our Health and Safety Advisor, Paul Airey, for the time, effort and expertise that he has given to these matters in the past year.

### **Risk Assessments: looking forward**

A further overarching risk assessment review is planned for the coming month, and I hope that in the coming months it will be

possible to introduce further easing of measures, including conversations with some management groups about how some more features of our church's life might be appropriately reanimated in a measured and stepwise fashion.

It is important that we are realistic about the rate of change which is possible. We do all want to see things looking more like they did, and it is natural to feel frustration and even concern. The truth is that things never go back, only ever forward, and the future never looks like the past.

To take just two examples, our churchwardens are finding that they cannot recruit people to hand out hymn books at the 9.15am service. And our Mothers' Union Branch cannot recruit anyone to make tea and toast for our toddlers' group. These facts give us perhaps a sign of the levels of caution which many people are still feeling.

So things will begin again in their own time; some things will begin differently; and other things will not begin again. In all of this, the most important truth is that the God who has blessed us in the past will bless us in the future – if only we will let him bless us in the ways he has planned for us.

## Worship

Over the past two years the ways in which we have worshipped together have changed by necessity and in unprecedented fashion.

During lockdowns, there were extended periods when churches were locked, and no-one was permitted to enter them. In most churches, worship in lockdown took place using social media such as Facebook or video conferencing platforms such as Zoom.

In our church, we opted for Facebook, and for programmable communication tools which allowed people to telephone a landline and hear a message each week.

These platforms have their limitations. Human beings are embodied, and seeing someone on a screen cannot replicate the experience of being in the same room as them. Moreover, some people were not confident interacting with these platforms, or lacked the means to do so.

In churches like ours, where the Eucharist holds a central place in our worship and spirituality, it is perhaps true that we felt particularly keenly the loss of embodied worship.

During the past year, we have been able once again to meet in church to worship God. We have been able to experience the joy of celebrating the Holy Communion together. Moreover, during 2021, the number of people whom the UK Government permitted to attend Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals has increased in a stepwise fashion.

All of this is positive and encouraging. At the same time, as many of us return to worship in Church, we have learned that there remains an appetite for worship resources which are available at home. We have responded to this by continuing to provide Morning Prayer online Monday to Friday and a podcast (available by telephone or via social media) each Sunday.

In response to a question raised at our PCC, I was delighted to report that metrics for our Facebook Page are most encouraging. For instance, in the week preceding our last PCC meeting, our Page's Engagement Rate (Likes + comments + shares + reactions / total number of followers) was 2.86%. The median engagement rate is 0.064%. Out of the top 25% of brands, the median engagement rate is 0.174%.

You will recall that we changed our pattern of Sunday services in the period prior to the first lockdown and that we arranged to review that pattern after a year. This review, which was delayed by the pandemic, has recently taken place. As a result of this review, the 9.15am and 10.45am services have remained as the key points in our

Sunday pattern. We note with sadness the ending of the 8.00am service on Sundays. We look forward to the launch of the new monthly service at St Andrew's Centre Noctorum.

## Thank you

In concluding, I wish to express particular thanks to a small number of people in our church community.

Firstly, I am grateful to all who have contributed to this report.

Thank you to our Churchwarden team – Tony Parsons, Judith Parry, and Janine Unwin – for all that they do.

Thank you also to those who have served as Stewards at our services in this difficult time of pandemic.

Lisa Kelly and then Amy Davies very kindly took on the role of Minute Taker over the past year, after we were not able to appoint a PCC Secretary, following Judith Parry's relinquishing of the role. We owe a debt of gratitude to Judith for the sterling ministry that she offered in this role, and to Lisa and Amy for their generosity in stepping into this role in the past year.

Thank you also to Nick Broad, who is passing on the PCC Treasurer baton at the forthcoming APCM, and to Jon Richardson who is picking up the baton. I am very grateful to Nick for all that he has given to this role.

Glyn Môn Hughes has recently stepped back from his role in leading our choir – although we are delighted that he continues to play the organ for us and to offer overall leadership to the music in our church. I am grateful for all that he has offered in leading our choir.

I am grateful also to Andrew Peckham who has stepped into this role on – at present – a temporary basis for the next three months, and to all who contribute to the musical life of our church in its rich variety.

As I reflect on the past year, I am grateful to all who offered support and kindness to me and my family in our bereavement towards the end of 2021, and more recently in this period when I have Long COVID.

I want to express my thanks also to my colleagues on the Parish Leadership Team for all that they do – and for the quiet way in which they have worked, at very considerable personal cost, to keep the impact of my absence and Revd Tina's to a minimum for our church community.

I am aware that I have left much unsaid in the paragraphs above. Inevitably, annual reports can reflect only a small proportion of the life of a church. If I have omitted to mention the part(s) of our church life with which you are particularly involved, please know that I am grateful for all that you do in the service of Christ and the Gospel.

As we look back over 2021, we see a year which has at times seemed overfilled with beginnings and endings, times of real joy, and times of great sadness. My heart returns to those who have blessed us all by meeting this demanding period with serene faith in God and a self-forgetful service of others.

In the life of our nation, I think again of Her Majesty The Queen, so often a calm presence, offering stability in tumultuous times.

One thinks too of others, closer to home, and also in the life our church community – people who have offered us kindness and calm on difficult days. May their reward be great in heaven.

*The Revd Dr J Kennedy*  
*5<sup>th</sup> May 2022*

# Churchwardens' Report

Well, as we moved forward this year we are learning to live with the pandemic and the many challenges and consequences faced.

As we come back to worship together face to face, we come to terms with the new order. Service patterns have been adjusted and adapted. It has been a pleasure, each Sunday over the year, to welcome back (old) friends we have not seen for several months and to see the congregation grow. On Easter Sunday this year, I counted seventy seven adults and children attending the new 10.45 All-Age Service.

The challenge is now with us to move forward together. If St Saviours' is to survive spiritually and financially, we have a great deal more to achieve. We need to see the numbers attending all services rising each week.

As committees come back to face to face meetings, we have many challenges, both financially and in recruiting new members. With a healthy social committee we should look to involve the new families attending the All-Age Family service. We need to develop a new social family outside the worship hour for the parents and children to feel they belong to and become part of a larger family team.

I have always thought that we need to make better use of our beautiful Church building. Often empty for six days a week. If we were a business this would not be viable. As committee members, we are managers of the finances and fabric and need to run at a profit to survive.

So we have many challenges ahead, exciting times.

I would like to thank everyone involved in keeping our Church alive. There are so many involved, doing their bit and giving hours of time. It does not go unnoticed.

And a very special word of thanks to Judith, my fellow warden, who has kept me, once again, on the straight and narrow path and to welcome Janine to our team.

Perhaps we should dwell on our Church colours of yellow and blue and look to the future with hope and pray for peace in the world.

*Tony Parsons*  
Churchwarden

## **PCC Report 2021**

The Annual Meeting of Parishioners and The Annual Parochial Church Meeting were held in May. Mr Anthony Parsons and Miss Judith Parry were elected Churchwardens. Miss Sue Gerrie as Electoral Roll Officer reported that the Electoral Roll has been revised and the number on the Electoral Roll for 2021 was 339 of which 105 were not resident in the parish.

Those elected to the PCC were Mrs Jen Biggs, Mr C Biggs, Mrs Caroline Hunt and Mr Harry Keown, all elected to serve for 3 years. Mrs J Biggs was elected to the Deanery Synod. Mr A Parsons was elected Vice Chairperson of the PCC. Mrs Sue Gerrie was elected Electoral Roll Officer and Mr Nick Broad as Treasurer. Miss Janine Unwin was elected as Deputy Churchwarden. The role of PCC Secretary remained vacant throughout the year. Mrs L Kelly and Mrs A Davies have acted as minute takers.

Due to changes of regulations relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, the PCC meetings, which had previously only met irregularly, resumed after the APCM in May. As such, PCC meetings were held in person during June and November 2021 and February and April 2022.

Meetings were delayed to November and February due to members of the Leadership Team being unable to attend due to illness. Mr Tony Parson acted as Vice-Chairperson of the PCC for meetings held in November 2021 and February 2022. The main business of the PCC meetings was the general running of the church and a full copy of the Church Accounts for 2021 is presented separately.

The following matters were discussed by the PCC at various times during the year:

- Sunday Service pattern- this has changed throughout the year and has included an exercise led by the Vicar in order to create a new pattern of services for the future.
- Updating of the Church Notice Board in the Church grounds.
- The role and value of on-line Morning Prayer.
- The need to replace the Church heating system. Mr Peter Gommon was invited to attend a meeting of the PCC. As a guest to the meeting, he explained the needs of the church as a consequence of Fabric Committee discussions and investigations.
- Replacement of windows and doors at St Andrews Church Centre.
- Considerations relating to the future of the Parish Magazine.
- Removal of a tree from the church grounds affected by storm damage.

No Standing Committee meetings took place throughout the year.

The PCC very much appreciated the ministry of the clergy and parish leadership team during yet another challenging year and their continuing response to the national public health emergency in providing on-line services, prayers and sermon podcasts by telephone and pastoral care to the parish community. In June, Revd Holly Torr was welcomed as newly ordained Curate to the

Leadership Team. We are grateful for her hard work, with that of Revd Elaine Bisson and Mrs Tracy Williams, Children's Worker in organising and leading services during periods of Leadership Team illness.

*Mrs Amy Davies  
Minute-taker, PCC*

## Safeguarding Report

Over the last year we have seen a very gradual and safe return to face to face worship and activities with our young people and their families. With what was an almost 2 year break we are now working as a safeguarding team to complete or renew DBS checks for those who volunteer to work with our young people. We are currently on track and are finding that the process is now very quickly and efficiently completed. Working with children and vulnerable adults is a very special ministry which requires patience, understanding, enthusiasm and comes with much responsibility. We should continue to pray for all our volunteers, young people and families within our Parish.

The PCC also takes its responsibility towards safeguarding our children and vulnerable adults very seriously. Creating a safe culture within our church community is guided by the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and procedures and a safeguarding report to the PCC is a standard item on the agenda for all PCC Meetings. As a Parish we adopt the safer recruiting guidance for all new appointments, DBS check all adults who are legally required to have

one and we have complied with the duty to have “due regard” to the House of Bishops’ guidance in relation to safeguarding.

*Jan Taylor*  
*Parish Safeguarding Coordinator*

## Finance Report

Taking into account all of the various challenges facing St Saviour's during 2021, our overall financial position remained in reasonable shape at the year-end. We have managed to keep our heads above water. The figures largely speak for themselves and it is not intended to summarise them here. However, it is important to note that our heads would not be above water were it not for the Government's furlough scheme, some expenditure reductions in relation to previous years (e.g. some substantial savings on photocopying), a slight tightening of belts, and (last but by no means least) the receipt of legacies kindly and generously left to us. The receipt of financial donations, however made, is of course always greatly appreciated and also helps to keep motivated those who give time to support the work of St Saviour's.

Looking forward, with rising energy costs and reduced numbers of people making regular financial donations, the pressures for 2022 and beyond will intensify. It is planned to set up an Income Generation committee and a separate Expenditure Review committee. If you would like to join either of these committees, or make any suggestions as to how we can improve our financial position we would very much like to hear from you.

Finally, I have to thank our Treasurer, Nick Broad, for all his wonderful and invaluable work. Not only has he worked very hard in keeping us afloat, but his magic touch has been fantastic.

*Geoff Chadwick  
Chair, Finance Committee*

## **Fabric Report**

### **Fabric Committee Report to the PCC from 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021 – 09<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

The committee met three times by Zoom, on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 28<sup>th</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> January.

#### **1.0 Church Architect**

Tony Barton obtained scaffolders and specialist masons who work for him regularly to repair the East Window. He provided a fee quotation for preparing an evaluation and preliminary design for a Zero Carbon heating proposal, with his heating engineer Bob Costello.

A copy of the Quinquennial report is always available in the Parish Office.

#### **2.00 Handrails at the Pulpit steps and the Lady Chapel steps**

The handrails are still currently with Cheshire Forge, and contact with the company has been inconclusive.

### **3.00 Tower parapets**

The parapets continue to be inspected and the tell-tales checked. The tell-tales and pointing are sound at present.

### **4.00 Quiet Garden and Churchyard trees**

At the request of PG, ecologist Hilary Ash (Wirral Wildlife Trust) prepared a report and proposal for developing and managing the Quiet garden and churchyard in an environmentally sound way. This needs to be adopted by the PCC, and become part of our Eco Church strategy.

### **5.00 East Window defects**

The repair, organised by Tony Barton and overseen by PG took place between 20 -22 October 2021. The window was in good repair and there was no sign of water ingress.

### **6.00 Means of Escape**

Paul Airey has been carrying out regular checks of the alarm system in St Saviour, The Parish Centre and St Andrews. The alarm and wiring serving the tower and vestry area of St Saviour had been prone to faults, but now following a programme of repairs and replacements overseen by AP is functioning well. The electrical board in the tower vestry has been boxed in by AP to PA's satisfaction.

### **7.00 External Flood Lights**

The lamps had been tripping out regularly, but Bernard Gattie has repaired the system and the fittings are working at the time of the report.

### **8.00 Routine Maintenance and Tests**

PAT tests, Fire extinguisher tests, fire alarm tests, and gutter cleaning have all been carried out.

## **9.00 Front three rows of pews**

The faculty to allow the removal of the three front rows of pews on the south and north side of the nave was approved, and these pews are being trialled in the Lady Chapel.

## **10.00 The Parish Centre**

The inner lobby doors which were binding have been adjusted and eased and are now working properly.

## **11.00 St Andrews Centre**

The adjacent site has had a new extension built by the Local Authority on the south boundary of St Andrews, which required a party wall notice and surveyor. Communication between the surveyor and St Andrews did not take place, which required a lot of time and effort from GC in particular to take care of the church's interests. Fortunately all the issues were resolved.

A boundary trip hazard and plants growing through the boundary fence were dealt with by AP, PA and Nick Broad.

## **12.00 The Choir Vestry Area.**

Following the installation of the protective wire mesh on the railings no more foxes have fallen into the area.

## **13.00 Central Heating System**

The boiler installation has been serviced and had new gas valves fitted, and has been working as effectively as it can. In the meantime the committee had decided not to spend any more money on repairs and to concentrate on selecting an effective carbon neutral way of making the congregation comfortable.

## **14.00 Heating, energy and renewable energy**

The committee has been reviewing and developing options for creating comfortable conditions for the congregation and clergy, all within the Church of England's aim of becoming carbon Neutral by 2030, and has obtained a fee quotation from the Church Architect and his heating engineer for developing proposals to achieve this. The PCC has approved their fees. However, because of all the Covid restrictions it has not been possible to discuss this significant development with the clergy team and church family. This is something that must be done before any more work is undertaken.

Actions we need to take:- These are currently being discussed.

### **1 Carbon Literacy**

As many members of the parish and clergy should take part in carbon literacy training, delivered by someone accredited to provide it.

Follow this link to find training;-

[www.facebook.com/ZeroCarbonLiverpool](https://www.facebook.com/ZeroCarbonLiverpool)

### **2 Developing a brief**

Parish members and clergy should work together to consider and discuss how their place of worship is used, how it could be used and how it might be made welcoming and attractive, and then set out the principles in the form of a brief that would help a consultant to understand their aims.

### **3 The Buildings**

Members of the parish and clergy should carry out an evaluation and survey of their church buildings, based on their own experience and knowledge, and existing quinquennial reports, and set out their ideas for

overcoming problems and defects that it presents and the opportunities it offers to be comfortable and sustainable.

#### **4 Technical Appraisal**

With a detailed brief professional advice could be sought. A professional advisor should be selected on the basis of their experience with historic buildings and knowledge of environmentally sound, sustainable practice, renewable energy and contemporary good practice. This will be hard to achieve. The cultural legacy of cheap fossil fuel has conditioned many consultants to be stuck with outmoded practices. In churches that are listed buildings the church architect will have an important role in making sure that any proposal will have the approval of the DAC.

#### **5 Outreach**

Projects that intend to meet the 2030 Zero Carbon target should consider sharing resources with other parishes that have embarked on the same course, and considering joint investments in sources of renewable energy.

### **15.00 The Environment and Eco Church**

Revd Joe and PG belong to Cool Places of Worship, a Wirral initiative which is run by Faiths4Change in which many places of worship share information on what they are doing to reduce their environmental impact. We are in the process of making an application to become an Eco Church. Chris Biggs has taken over the job of making our application.

### **16.00 Committee Membership**

We are continuing to look for new committee members to improve the age and gender balance and achieve a sustainable future for the committee. Andrew Thompson and Nick Porter

left in 2021, but we were joined by Jen and Chris Biggs, and Chris has taken over as our secretary.

*Peter Gommon, Tony Parsons,  
Chairmen, Fabric Committee  
3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022*

## Deanery Synod Report

Deanery Synod met in February 2020, and then did not meet again until February 2022.

This gap was occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*The Revd Dr J Kennedy  
Rural Dean of Birkenhead*