



Rector's Report for 2021 for the 2022 Annual Parochial Church Meeting

This report, which covers the period from 1 January – 31 December 2021, is my fifth report since being Licensed by Bishop Rachel, the Bishop of Gloucester, on 28 June 2017, as Rector of Willersey with Saintbury and Team Vicar in the Vale and Cotswold Edge Team.

During 2021, we continued to recover from the global Covid pandemic, with highs and lows along the way. As much as anything else, this recovery has been about the recovery of confidence – something that was, inevitably, severely dented during the various lockdowns and all the associated uncertainties of the way forward. I'm delighted that, just as many people made the transition in the early days of the pandemic from in-church services to online worship, the same has been true in reverse and I sense in many a growing confidence and ease in our being together once more in our church buildings. Once again, Ros and I made the difficult decision in 2021 to not hold Lent Lunches. I really hope that we can restart them in 2022. These simple lunches have become a popular part of the Lenten observance across the six parishes. We have also continued to suspend the Prayer and Fellowship Group, which used to meet at the Vicarage on the third Thursday of the month. Again, I hope these may be able to recommence during 2022.

There have been many moments of privilege in Willersey during 2021, all of which I give thanks for to God. I have baptised a number of children, officiated a numerous funeral and memorial services and Kevin and I both have conducted wedding services in St Peter's during the year. I have been greatly encouraged by the numbers attending our Wednesday service of Holy Communion. We are now routinely seeing the number of worshippers in double figures. Again, to God be the glory. Our Christingle service was a wonderful celebration and I'm thankful not just to everyone who came but to all of you made the service such a special occasion. Richard Stephens, the Director of Music and Organist at St James's Church, Chipping Campden, put on a wonderful organ recital for us in June, as part of our Patronal Festival celebrations. The Willersey Show was a tremendous success and really brought the community together. Finally, I am thankful to Mark Jackson and his team at Willersey Church of England Primary School. We have a superb working relationship with the School and this is something that we treasure and will continue to build on.

Before I finish, I want to offer some words of thanks. First, I want to offer my sincere thanks to many, including members of the Parochial Church Council for their commitment to the mission and ministry of the Church. I want, in particular, to pay tribute to Judith McNeill-Wilson, who continues to fulfil the role of Treasurer with great skill and commitment and, during 2021, confirmed that she is willing to fulfil the role on a substantive, rather than 'acting' basis. This was a huge encouragement to me. Thank you, Judith. Rachael Barker leads our Safeguarding work, drawing on the skill and experience that she has acquired from the safeguarding work that is part of her teaching role and I'm grateful to her for her willingness to serve in this important role.

It is good to have this opportunity each year to thank formally people who bless us in so many ways: To Tini Owens and those who ensure that the Church is beautifully decorated with flowers; to those who give time to clean and to polish the brass; who change the altar frontals and hangings; to those who greet those who attend services, read the lessons and help serve at Holy Communion services; to Richard Stephens, for continuing to record each week the hymns for our services; to those who, when circumstances allow, provide refreshments after our services; to Robert Chadburn,

our Tower Captain, Bob Topp our Steeple Keeper, and our wonderful Band of ringers; those who unlock and lock our church every day, so that it's beauty and tranquillity can be enjoyed by so many; and to all of you who do so much behind the scenes to make our Church such a special place to be, and to belong, I offer each of you my sincere and heartfelt thanks.

I am grateful to those who help by leading us in worship. At St Peter's, I want in particular to pay tribute to our Family Service Team – Jennie Bond, Gillian Beale, Pat Heming, Rachael Barker and Ken Spensley – for excellent work they do each month in readiness for our Family Service; and then to Robert McNeill-Wilson for leading services of Morning Prayer. Without all those who help lead worship, the service pattern across our six churches would look very different and so I offer my thanks to Kevin Grumball, David Silvester, Mark Taylor, Bridget Wade, Liz Spencer and to Rob. Mike Edwards, continues in his role as Benefice Secretary, providing invaluable support to all parishes and to me. I am grateful to Mike for so much – not just for all that he does, but for all that he is. I am thankful for the fellowship and friendship that I share with the Craig Bishop, our Team Rector, Dana Delap, my fellow Team Vicar, Kevin Grumball, our Associate Vicar, Mark Taylor, our Reader, and to my churchwardens, all partners in the mission and ministry of Christ's Church.

Finally, in my list of thanks, I want to acknowledge and give thanks for our Churchwarden, Rob. Here is a man who works tirelessly behind the scenes, as well as leading some of our services. I rejoice that Rob has been elected to serve as a member of the House of Laity on the General Synod of the Church of England. The views of our parish and the wider Vale & Cotswold Edge Team are now represented at the highest level of the Church's government. For all that Rob does in support of the Church, the community, of me, personally, and of us all, I thank him. Rob – you are an asset to Christ's Church and to our community. I would be lost without you being by my side and without your partnership in the mission and ministry of the Church.

Although not strictly part of 2021, I can't finish this report without saying what follows. My fifth report, it turns out, is also to be my final report as your Rector. Ros and I will move on in the summer after five wonderful years here. I have loved being part of this community. You have welcomed us into your hearts and into your homes. Every day, even the difficult days, has been a privilege, and I am going to miss you all more than words can say. Thank you for all that we have shared. These words, given by God to the prophet Jeremiah, came to mind as I reflect on the future. I hope you will hear them and take them to heart, because God loves this community and wants to bless it,

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

So, keep on keeping on. Above all else, keep on calling on God, coming to Him and praying to Him. Tell Him your heart's desire for this church and community. He will hear you. He will prosper you. That's not my promise. It's God's promise. It is my privilege to serve alongside you. I thank God for each one of you who make this community all that it is.

With love and prayers,

Scott

The Reverend Scott Watts MA
Rector of Willersey with Saintbury and Team Vicar