



St. Nicholas Church, Blundellsands



St Nicholas CE Primary School
Blundellsands

Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council
and of the Governors
for the year ended
31st December 2022

Reference and Administrative Information:

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Nicholas Blundellsands is a registered charity, Registration Number 1158819.

St Nicholas' Church is situated in Bridge Road, Blundellsands, Liverpool and is part of the Diocese of Liverpool within the Church of England. The official correspondence address is:

St Nicholas' Vicarage,
Nicholas Road,
Liverpool,
L23 6TS.

Safeguarding Statement:

St Nicholas' Church Blundellsands takes its duty and obligation to protect all extremely seriously. We have adopted the Church of England's robust procedures and national guidelines.

These can be found at: <http://churchofengland.org/safeguarding>

If you have any safeguarding concerns or issues on a safeguarding matter, useful information can be obtained at:

<http://wwwliverpool.anglican.org/safeguarding>

PCC Membership:

For the period 1st January 2022 until the date of the approval of this report, the following people served as members of the Parochial Church Council:

Ex-officio members:

Chair	Revd E Anderson
Lay Chair	Prof P Batey
Assistant Priest	Revd K Thornborough
Churchwarden	Mrs L Utley
Deanery Synod Representative	Prof P Batey
Deanery Synod Representative	Mr S Green

Co-opted members:

Hon Treasurer	Mrs E Sinker
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Elected Members:

Mrs G Enstone (PCC Secretary)

Miss A Dobie

Mr MJ Kilpatrick (until May 2022)

Mrs G Cain

Mrs M Bird

Mr P Warren (from May 2022)

Mrs R Doyle

Mr R Kenny (until May 2022)

Mr D Parkinson (from May 2022)

Mrs H Pennington (from May 2022)

The Revd E Anderson was appointed Incumbent by the Bishop of Liverpool (Patron of St Nicholas' and Diocesan Bishop) and is an ex-officio member of the PCC.

The Liverpool Diocesan Board of Finance acted as Custodian Trustee for the inalienable property of the church.

Bankers - Church:

Santander UK plc

Bootle

Merseyside

GIR OAA

Bankers - Governors:

Barclays Bank plc

337-339 Stanley Road

New Strand

Bootle

Merseyside

L20 3EB

Independent Examiner:

L Marr

9 Fewston Close

Bolton BL1 7BJ

Structure, Management and Governance:

St Nicholas' Blundellsands PCC is a body corporate and operates under the Parochial Church Powers 1956 and the Church Representation Rules.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All church members are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC.

Related Trusts:

St Nicholas' CE Primary School Blundellsands: Foundation Governors are Mr J Howell (Chair), Mrs G Cain (Vice chair), Revd E Anderson, Mr E Paling (until August 2022), Mrs G Enstone, Mrs N Wilson, Mr P Bonnett.

The PCC and its sub-committees:

During 2022 the PCC met 7 times, with an average attendance of 10.

The PCC operates 10 sub-committees (teams), which meet regularly and report back to the PCC: Standing Committee, which acts for the PCC when urgent matters arise and need decision or action between PCC meetings, (subject to subsequent ratification by the PCC), and also prepares for PCC meetings; Worship and Mission; Finance; Under-18 Ministry with Safeguarding; Building and Plant with Health and Safety; Social; Heritage; Restoration, Eco and Communications. Membership comprises:

Standing Committee: Incumbent, PCC Lay Chair, Churchwarden, Treasurer and PCC Secretary.

Worship and Mission: Mrs G Cain, Mrs G Enstone, Mrs M Bird, Mr D Parkinson (from May 2022). Co-opted members: Mrs J Batey, Mrs J Parkinson

Finance: Treasurer, Churchwarden, PCC Secretary (until May 2022), Revd K Thornborough (until May 2022), Prof P Batey, Mr M Kilpatrick (until May 2022). Co-opted members: Mr J Rankin, Mrs A Rankin (until May 2022), Mr N Scarborough.

Under-18 Ministry with safeguarding: Mrs L Utley, Mrs E Sinker (Parish Safeguarding Officer), Mr R Kenny (until May 2022)), Mr P Warren,(DBS Verifier). Co-opted members: Mrs L Martin, Mrs J Honess, Mrs C Creed.

Building and Plant with Health and Safety: Mr S Green, Miss A Dobie, Mrs R Doyle. Co-opted members: Mr P Levick, Mr C Rooney.

Social: Mr D Parkinson, Mrs H Pennington, Mrs L Jones, Mr D Phillips

Heritage: Prof P Batey, Mrs G Cain, Mr S Green, Mrs L Utley, Mrs G Enstone, Mrs M Bird (from May 2022). Co-opted members: Mrs J Batey

Restoration: Mr S Green, Prof P Batey, Mrs G Enstone. Co-opted members: Mr T Johnston, Mr M Kilpatrick (until May 2022)

Eco: Mr P Warren (from May 2022). Miss A Dobie, Mr S Green

Communications: Revd E Anderson, Mrs G Cain, Mrs G Enstone. Co-opted Chair Mrs J Batey

PCC members, both individually and collectively, receive training as and when deemed appropriate by the PCC. In past years this has included Churchwarden and Treasurer training, trustee responsibility, safeguarding, child-friendly church, health and safety, Parish Giving, Shared Ministry, sidespersons training and pastoral care. Members who are also Foundation Governors of St Nicholas' School regularly complete local authority governor training courses.

Risk Assessments and Policies:

The PCC has undertaken a programme of risk assessments to identify major risks.

Procedures have been put in place to manage those risks and minimise their impact on the life of the church. Areas of risk covered have included: finance, first aid provision, PAT testing, food hygiene, safeguarding and disclosure and barring. The Church's Health and Safety Policy is reviewed and updated by PCC annually, with Health and Safety checks carried out monthly. PCC also reviews the Safeguarding and Volunteer Policies yearly.

For fuller information regarding the financial risk assessment policy and trustee and patron payment, please see:

St Nicholas' Church Blundellsands and St Nicholas' School Blundellsands: Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council and of the Governors for the year ended 31st December 2022, published separately and available on St Nicholas' Church website <http://www.stnicholasblundellsands.org> Currently one patron, the office assistant, and one trustee, the hall bookings secretary, receive payment for their work for the church.

A safeguarding update is available below as part of the report of the Under 18 Ministry with Safeguarding team.

Electoral Roll:

ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT – APRIL 2023

Number on roll 2021/22 – 185

Number on roll at start of April 2023 recruitment – 173

New to ER April 2023 – 10

Current ER - 185

Objectives and Activities 2022:

The general functions of the PCC are stated within Section 2 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956. St Nicholas' PCC has the responsibility of jointly operating with the Incumbent in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. It also has maintenance responsibilities for the Church, a Grade 2 listed building, and for St Nicholas' School.

When planning our activities for the year, the PCC gave consideration to the **Charity Commission's guidance** on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance to charities concerned with the advancement of religion.

- **Regular public worship, open to all**
- **The provision of sacred space for personal prayer and contemplation**
- **Pastoral work, including visiting the sick, the elderly and the bereaved**
- **Teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups**
- **Taking of religious assemblies in local schools**
- **Provision of a youth club with a Christian ethos**
- **Promoting the whole mission of the church through provision of activities for senior citizens, parents, carers and toddlers and other special need groups**
- **Supporting other charities, at home and overseas**
- **Promoting links with our ecumenical partners in Churches Together in Blundellsands**
- **Reaching out to our local community in ways which make a positive difference to the lives of our neighbours**

For detailed information concerning the ways in which St Nicholas' Church has acted upon this guidance, please see below: Vicar's Report: Church Family life at St Nicholas'.

Achievements and Performance 2022:

As our Annual Report for 2021 showed, life at St Nicholas' remained disappointingly affected by fluctuations in national and local rates of Covid infection throughout that year. Nevertheless, valiant efforts to return to something approaching 'normality', although often subject to delays and last minute changes, did begin to bear fruit and, as 2022 progressed, the life of the church benefited particularly from the opportunities the constant interruptions had given us to take stock, review our mission priorities and plan for the future.

A major consequence of this process can be seen in the way our committee structure has been revised and extended. Sub committees have always played a central role in managing significant aspects of church life, from finance to children's work, and have always evolved to accommodate change. Now, under their new designation as 'teams', they have been reconstituted to encourage more members of our church to become involved in shaping our mission, particularly our role in our local community. Covid and the cost of living crisis have created a greater need than ever for the shared space, companionship and vital sense of cohesion that our church, located as it is, at

the heart of our local community, can provide. As the team reports below clearly show, all are equally engaged in their own ways in helping to meet that need.

In addition, we have created two new teams, Eco and Communication, each responding to distinctly contemporary challenges. The first of these will develop and pull together all the strands of St Nicholas' efforts to achieve Net Carbon Zero, helping to mitigate the horrifying consequences of the climate emergency which threatens the world our children will inherit. The second will likewise respond to urgent external and internal challenges. Not only must the lines of communication within our church work to draw us all equally into our shared life together, but we must also make the best use possible of all the means available to us to reach out to and offer strength and support to our neighbours .

Gill Enstone

Reports from the teams and uniformed organisations:

Worship and Mission, 2022 by Glenda Cain:

In 2022 we held several meetings, focusing on our main priorities - forward planning of special services and events and communicating these to our wider community.

The Festival of Prayer, held in July, was a success. People sent in prayers by email or on cards distributed locally and Beth received many positive comments. Church and local community organisations were invited to erect prayer stations around the church and these evoked a great deal of interest, particularly on the final Saturday, 23rd July, when the church was open to all.

In October and November several special services took place, including Harvest, Hope and Remembrance and Remembrance Sunday, which also celebrated the 70th Anniversary of the dedication of St Martin's Chapel, St Nicholas' memorial to the fallen of the Second World War. The theme was 'service and sacrifice'. The Confirmation service, also in November, focused discussion on plans for next year, when Beth hopes, with the assistance of a youth worker, to enable a youth group for Year 6 children to start up again, creating opportunities for those who wish to do so to begin preparation for Confirmation themselves. Also for children and young families, Family Picnic and Praise has continued successfully.

In November we began 'Soupa Thursdays', opening the church between 9am and 2pm to all members of the community who wish to find regular companionship combined with unlimited supplies of tea and toast, coffee and cake and, of course, hot soup and a roll.

With the exception of the Carol Service and Midnight Communion, all Christmas services took place in the hall, while we awaited the completion of

the installation of the new church heating system. In fact, the move back into church was not able to take place until the New Year, but the heating is now working well and services have returned to normal. St Barnabas' Chapel has also been cleared and can again be used for 8.30 am Communion.

Under 18 Ministry And Safeguarding 2022 by Lesley Utley:

In 2022/23 the position for the Under 18s Ministry with Safeguarding Team is one of growth and development.

Checks on leaders and volunteers through the Disclosure and Barring Service have been updated as required by Pete Warren, our verifier. There are currently 46 church members with DBS clearance including all members of PCC and thanks are due to Pete for his diligence.

No safeguarding incidents relating to children and young people have been reported to Liz Sinker, our Parish Safeguarding Officer and as a PCC we are most grateful to her for carrying out this important role on our behalf.

During the pandemic, groups for our children and young people were suspended. However there have been positive moves throughout the year as follows –

- **Church@School** – Church@School restarted in June 2022 with monthly services led by Keith and the team being held in the school hall. Two parents have recently volunteered to join the team which is a very positive outcome. We now welcome pre-school children and their families to services and feedback has been very positive.
- **Praise Picnics** – Praise Picnics have taken place twice each month since July 2022 and the menu of games, crafts, singing, Bible stories and prayer is proving very popular with families. Beth plans and leads the sessions.
- **Bridge** In March this year Bridge youth group was re-established by Beth with support from a local youth leader which is great news! A small group of Y6 students from St Nicholas' School have enjoyed activities, games and discussion. Although in its infancy there are high hopes for the future.
- **The Children's Corner** is available at every service and event, offering books, puzzles, crafts etc. Families make use of it during services and it is always lovely to hear a little buzz of activity.
- **Uniformed groups** Scouts, Cubs and Beavers have been welcomed at several services and were involved in a tree planting project in the church grounds. Guides and Rainbows were able to join in the Toy Service in December and all groups hope to be involved in services throughout the year when activities and commitments permit.

**Building and Plant with Health and Safety and Restoration reports
for 2022 APCM by Stephen Green:**

The hall heating system, the roof alarm and fire extinguishers were serviced.

The blockage in the church heating system was identified as crumbling masonry in the chimney stack. There was no feasibility of installing a liner to remedy this. A replacement heating solution was the only option. This required online faculty approval with the C of E mandate to consider a non fossil fuel option. This was discounted due to the exorbitant costs and lack of space. Catalyst Energy Ltd installed two energy efficient Ideal boilers in the plant room following the removal of the old system. The project has taken considerably longer than anticipated owing to the Diocesan approval process and the shortage of skilled reliable trades personnel.

Services took place in the halls during the project which may have given a financial benefit at a time of considerable outlay for the costs of the new system.

The organ has now been serviced which had been impractical due to the church temperature issue.

The practical completion form, required by the Diocesan Advisory Committee, is almost ready to submit.

A burst pipe in the loft space above the office vestry, in the week prior to Christmas, resulted in extensive water damage to the room and electrical equipment.

An insurance claim ensued which led to full redecoration and replacement equipment including the photocopier machine. The costs amounted to over £3,200.

The working party operations returned to normality following the pandemic restrictions.

LED lights replaced with low energy bulbs and fluorescent tubes. A water butt was installed.

A cable from the router in the office to the streaming equipment area was fitted.

The church was cleaned several times following the services being moved.

Grids and gulleys were unblocked, a broken exterior soil pipe was replaced as was the hall kitchen boiling water appliance.

St. Nicholas' was recognised for reaching the final ten of over 18,000 applicants for the Naylor Awards for church care and maintenance competition run by the national Churches Trust.

Of concern is the damp on the North Western area. This could be attributed to loose or broken slates. Professional advice needs to be sought to address this before the situation deteriorates.

The Health and Safety policy has been updated and approved by the PCC and duly signed by our vicar Beth.

The restoration application for the East end of the church and St. Barnabas' chapel had been suspended mainly due to the time constraints required to address the replacement heating issue. Recent changes to NHLF guidelines need to be reflected in our application which we feel will be to our advantage when the team imminently reconvene.

We are still on the Heritage at Risk register.

Heritage 2022 by Peter Batey:

The main activities organised by the Heritage team in 2022 were:

- A history lecture by Peter Cousins, a visitor from Leicester, on the postal service in WW1. This attracted a lot of interest and provided an opportunity to re-launch the team's activities. The team plans to host a second lecture by Mr Cousins in May 2023.
- Heritage Open Days in September 2022, a three-day event as part of the National Open Days Festival. It included two lectures covering architectural heritage and social history, a tea-party, open to all, and guided tours of the church building. There was a focus on St Martin's Chapel, marking the 70th anniversary of its dedication. The scope of the tea-party, originally based around personal memories of the early 1950s, was widened to include memories of the late Queen, whose death occurred shortly before the Heritage Days. Attendance was good, (25 for each of the two days). The Heritage days were successful, with audiences drawn from the local community and further afield, and it certainly seems worth repeating them in 2023.
- A special event was held in November to mark the 70th anniversary of the dedication of St Martin's Chapel. An illustrated booklet was produced to mark the occasion.
- Also in November, the Team joined forces with Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) in contributing to the Historic Townships initiative. Their travelling exhibition was displayed in church for four days and the launch event was hosted by the church. The Team provided volunteers to man the event. The Team has found it very helpful to develop informal links with other heritage-focused groups and holding the CVS event did a great deal to bring St Nicholas' heritage to a wider audience.
- For a number of reasons, St Nicholas' restoration programme has been paused and it is currently uncertain when it will re-start. This has an impact on some of the heritage activities that had been planned for the coming year.

- The Team had also hoped to reconnect with the group of volunteers who were recruited in 2017-/18. This has proved more difficult than expected and has prompted a re-think of the role of volunteers and the pattern of church openings. The Team intends to consider further recruitment early in 2023 and also feels that visits by groups should be encouraged in future.

Social 2022 by Derek Parkinson:

The Social Committee was re-established in August 2022 and held several events.

A Sunday lunch to mark Jennifer Levick's retirement after many years as a Reader at St Nicholas. Outside catering was arranged to provide the food and committee members set up the hall and served lunch and drinks with help from other volunteers on the day. Many comments about excellent food and arrangements and how good it was to be able to socialise together.

In October, a Fun Quiz night was held in large hall with 39 attending in seven teams. It was a very light hearted, enjoyable evening with lots of chatter and laughter. Many said how much they enjoyed the opportunity to be able to get back together again.

An Afternoon Tea in November with cakes, biscuits and drinks served by the committee and other volunteers. It was attended by members of our local Community and was appreciated by the few visitors who came. They were made welcome by church members who were able to give knowledgeable information to them.

After the Carol Service in December, mulled wine and mince pies were served in the large hall. The mulled wine was made by members of the Social Committee in slow cookers after the morning service and there were several requests for the recipe. It was another very successful event.

Overall, it was a good return to social events and several more are planned for 2023, at some of which there will be fund raising opportunities.

Eco 2022 by Pete Warren:

The team was inaugurated in 2022 and its first task was to achieve an ECO award from the ECO Church organisation, which could be Gold, Silver or Bronze. There were 5 aspects of church life encapsulated in a survey which had to be examined for "eco credentials". These were: Worship, Buildings, Land, Community & Global Engagement, and Lifestyle. Lesley Utley & Margaret Bird had carried out a lot of work pre-pandemic to evaluate where the Church stood in the survey and so this work just needed building on to be able to apply for an award. The work became focussed on looking at Building

and Land, and how to demonstrate the attention being paid to reducing energy usage, reducing non-recyclable products, and optimising the gardens for wild life and the natural world. Specifically the use of LED lighting has spread and the central heating boiler has been replaced by a more efficient Category A system. In the gardens a water butt has been installed and a number of mini bug hotels put in place. The team has worked with St Nicholas School to help put bug hotels in their gardens also.

The net result of the changes was an application for the award to ECO Church and we have just been presented with the Silver Award which is very pleasing.

We are now starting to focus on the next big target, which is moving towards achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030 in line with the Church of England Synod's statement of 2022.

Communication 2022, by Joyce Batey:

The team was established in late 2022.

Aim: To look at all methods of communication within St Nicholas' and to establish a consistent and professional approach to design and communication. The team will create a 'house style' to be adopted by different teams and individuals.

Ongoing work: The priority has been to update the outside notice boards with Beth's name and contact details, which was well underway by December 2022. Internal notice boards, posters and publicity leaflets are also to be under review.

Joyce continues to take responsibility for the building and maintenance of our website to reflect current church life through its weekly newsletters and information regarding church services and events. She and other church members update Facebook on a regular basis.

The team also aims to foster good communication between teams.

Finance:

For full financial reports, please see St Nicholas' Final Accounts for the year ending December 2022, available on the website.

14th Crosby and District (St Nicholas) Scout Group 2022 by Andy Davidson:

Over the past twelve months we have seen our numbers stay reasonably unchanged.

The sections have been doing a variety of badges as well as having fun and playing different games. (Unknown to the younger ones, these are part of the badge work!)

The Beavers went to Liverpool University one Saturday with Beavers from around Merseyside to do some badge work, while Cubs and Scouts visited the Waterloo Forest Garden to do some outdoor activities and take part in backwood cooking over a campfire. They also went on a weekend camp to Shirdley Hill, the first camp that we've been on since lockdown happened.

We have had one Beaver gaining his Chief Scouts Bronze award and one cub gaining his Chief Scouts silver award. These are the highest awards that they can achieve.

We still have vacancies for all sections and we need leaders; we have just got a new assistant, but we need more!

Music Report by Joyce Batey:

The strong musical tradition in our church continues to grow (despite the pandemic), under the leadership of our Musical Director Mike Foy and has played an important role in the worship and life of the church.

- **Church Choir - led by Musical Director Mike Foy**
 - The small number of loyal choir members have provided significant support to services on most Sundays.
 - Continues to rehearse weekly, adding to its repertoire.
- **St Nicholas Singers - Community Choir, led by Musical Director Mike Foy and its role as part of our wider Christian mission:**
 - Celebrated its Tenth Anniversary since its creation in 2012
 - Supported major festivals in church - Carols by Candlelight, Good Friday performance of 'Olivet to Calvary', Easter Day Service, Remembrance and Hope Service, Remembrance Day Service and occasional Evensong.
 - Provides 1st concert in week-long Annual Music Festival, which returned in 2022 after 2 years absence because of the Covid pandemic.
 - Continues to rehearse weekly - adding new major works to its repertoire.
 - Sang at weddings and funerals within local community. Joined St Anne's Church Stanley in its performance of 'Olivet to Calvary' on Palm Sunday.
 - Sang at annual awayday weekend at Derby Cathedral, at Saturday Evensong, Sunday Eucharist and Sunday Evensong.
- **Annual Week-long Music Festival:**
 - Starting in 2014 and absent for 2 years because of Covid the festival was back this year with an amazing line-up of

local talent, including choirs, a wind orchestra, ensembles, an organ recital and finishing with Sunday's Festival Eucharist.

- **Church Organ:**

- Our prized Norman and Beard organ is an invaluable asset and, apart from professional tuning three times a year, has been in need of major repairs for many years.
- After fundraising for restoration for some years, these repairs were finally carried out in late 2022 at a cost of £50,000. Money was raised through a grant, proceeds from Music Festivals and other initiatives. The organ was out of action for several weeks to facilitate these repairs.

- **Other Musical Contributions:**

- Edwin Paling and Rosalyn Lazaroff have provided violin and Viola musical interludes at services throughout the year.
- Mike Anderson provided guitar and vocal support during organ restoration, during the winter closure for boiler breakdown/replacement, during illness and for occasional All Age services.
- Keith Thornborough has played the organ at services throughout the year and, more recently, during Mike Foy's illness and recovery period.
- Various other local musicians who have performed at our week-long annual Music Festival.

St Nicholas' CE Primary School

Academic Progress:

When reviewing the academic progress of pupils across the school, it is still impossible to ignore the after effects of the Covid pandemic. The consequences of lockdowns, remote learning and general disruption to face to face teaching are gradually working their way through the various age groups. As was to be expected, they are most clearly visible in the classes, current Years 2 and 3, whose earliest years were most affected, preschool children who missed the experience of nursery and Early Years and who also lost the sociable and learning benefits of the structured transition to more formal types of learning provided by Reception. It remains the aim of St Nicholas' School to ensure that, by the time each child leaves the school at the end of Year 6, they will have achieved a comparable level of progress to that which would have been expected pre-pandemic.

Particular attention continues to be paid to the progress of disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), on whom the pandemic has often had the most severe impact, and data seems to indicate that additional funds available through Pupil Premium, Recovery

Premium and the school-led tutoring grant have been used effectively to support these groups. New arrangements for SEND provision also seem to be working well. Children are taught as far as practicable within their own class, maintaining their position in mainstream schooling, but can move as needed to specialist provision in a separate hub where they can receive more personalised teaching in particular areas.

The results of external tests taken during the Summer term showed that progress and achievement for all groups in Reading, Writing, Maths, Phonics and Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPAG) all compared extremely favourably with both local and national averages, often coming in the top 20% nationally. School is keen to emphasise, however, that the comparison which is their real priority is with their own pre-pandemic performance.

Enrichment and Enjoyment:

Away from purely academic matters, 2022 was the year in which it did at last seem possible to leave Covid behind and return school life to normal. Although cases of the infection still occur, there are no separate Covid restrictions and precautions have now been merged with standard infectious disease procedures. There have, in fact, been more cases of infections such as chickenpox, as children missed much of the early exposure to infection they would have experienced at nursery and in playgroups.

Nevertheless, the scrapping of Covid restrictions has meant the welcome return of extra-curricular activities, including many successful sports teams, class trips, residential stays and theatre visits. The health benefits of physical activity, a notable casualty of Covid for many adults and children alike, can again be prioritised, in part through the generosity of FOSN, who have funded the installation of higher challenge fitness equipment next to the junior playground and of an all-weather artificial grass surface to further enhance opportunities for active breaks.

Staff and pupils alike have benefited from the new freedom to welcome external visitors onto school premises. Specialists in Art and Design and Technology have provided inset for staff, bringing both greater confidence and innovative ideas to their teaching; a group from the Assembly Team have presented A Walk Through the Bible, with the help of both puppets and actors and a growing number of external volunteers have started coming in to school to help children with their reading. In addition, money workshops, specialist support in protection against gang culture and hands-on science workshops have also been provided.

A highlight of 2022 was without doubt the first summer fair in three years, in which the school can invite the whole community into their grounds to enjoy a rich variety of stalls, games and activities together. Again, the generous support of FOSN made this possible and raised considerable funds for use to support the wellbeing and learning of the children.

Looking Outwards:

St Nicholas' has always been a school which values its place in the wider community and nowhere is this more in evidence than in the ethos of service to the community which motivates many of the pupils' efforts. Recent examples of this have been in their generous donations to the Ukraine Appeal, Children in Need and to support for the victims of the Syrian earthquake.

Staff, too, share this culture of concern for others. Aware that Covid and, more recently, the cost of living crisis have had a serious impact on the wellbeing of both children and their whole families, they have tried to make the school a hub for advice and support which is both practical and empathetic. It is good to know that staff wellbeing also might well benefit from recently revised work life balance policies and, while it is too soon to hope that a kinder and more practically supportive culture might one day influence the policies of OFSTED, SIAMS, the body which inspects the Christian ethos in Church schools, has already announced the adoption of a new format, which puts greater emphasis on explanation and support as opposed graded judgements.

One of the significant advantages of the Teaching School initiative was its reliance on teacher-led Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and school to school support. Using her experience as the head of a designated teaching school, however, Mrs Woods has worked closely this year with both Sefton Education Department and the CAPITAL Cluster of schools, to maintain and develop opportunities for a needs-led programme of CPD across Sefton schools.

Church / School Life:

Links between church and school have also continued to return to normal. The most encouraging sign of this has been seen in the resumption of Church@School and thanks are due in particular to Keith who has played such a pivotal role in the development of this initiative. His departure will leave as large a gap in the life of the school as it will at church! In addition, classes are again able to make regular visits to church as part of their curriculum and to explore features of the church itself. Beth has likewise been a regular visitor to school, to take assemblies and talk to children, staff and parents

Two joint fundraising appeals have been particularly successful - for Sefton Community Pantry at Harvest and the toy appeal for Blytheswood House, who send gifts overseas at Christmas.

The link between church and school continues to enrich the life of both and thanks are due to Becky and her staff, Beth and the dedicated team of foundation governors who ensure that it continues to develop.

Vicar's Report

Church family life at St Nicholas' 2022

As God's church family in our community we are guided by Church of England Canon Law and the Charity Commission's guidance with reference to the advancement of religion which give us these following headings :-

- **Regular public worship, open to all.**

We have maintained our two Sunday morning services with the 8.30am BCP and the all-age service both once a month (10.30 services live-streamed wherever possible) and our weekly Wednesday morning communion as a more informal gathering. Toddler Church has evolved into twice a month Picnic Praise on a Sunday afternoon catering for families with nursery and primary aged children and is a lot of fun and numbers are growing. Our monthly Evensongs/reflective services continue to contribute to the diversity of our worship along with Sanctuary@7 and Church@School.

We have continued to work on our welcome: considering and providing for the needs of those with dementia, learning difficulties, children and babies. We re-designed our logo adding the Pride Progress flag as a symbol of our welcome to all and continue to strive for equality of access for everyone.

- **The provision of sacred space for personal prayer and contemplation.**

In June and July, we held a Festival of Prayer receiving prayer requests from our community and hosting 6 different prayer stations from community groups and school. All were available on our Day of Prayer. While always offering space for reflection and prayer when open, (with Bibles available and the Prayer tree) we specifically provided a focus for collective grief and commemoration for the Queen's death in September.

- **Pastoral work including visiting the sick, the bereaved and the elderly**

This has grown again since Covid with clergy and congregation members carrying out more regular visiting.

- **Teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups**

We held a second Living in Love and Faith course, followed the Life on the Breadline Lent course from Church Action on Poverty and held our second

Prayer Course in person this time rather than the previous year's Zoom. Our sermon series included: 4D Faith from the first 4 chapters of Ephesians, prayer, discipleship based on Micah 6:8 and Compassion – Love in Action focusing on generosity in giving and caring. The evening services followed the theme of Jesus' 'I am..' sayings. The Prayer group and Bible Study group both continued meeting weekly.

- **Taking of religious assemblies in local schools**

Beth has developed a regular pattern of leading St Nicholas School assemblies several times each half term and attending class collective worship.

Provision of a youth club with a Christian ethos

Discussion started about paying towards more of the L23 youth worker, Ethan's, time to enable him to help re-start our youth work in conjunction with Beth.

- **Promoting the whole mission of the church through provision of activities for senior citizens, parents, carers and toddlers and other special needs groups**

Soupa Thursday was started in early November as a 'warm space' provision. This extended our existing coffee morning into earlier 'tea and toast' particularly for families after the school run and later into a soup lunch. This is, so far, a story of prayer and hope and God's amazing provision through his people, building community. The St Nicholas Community choir met and supported our Evensong and Easter services.

- **Supporting other charities, at home and overseas.**

We have continued supporting our church mission partner, Stephen Hatch working in Tanzania for CMS, through different services and events we have also supported The Children's Society, the local Foodbank, The Salvation Army and Christian Aid.

With a view to eventually being able to tithe from our income the Finance Team have proposed an increase in our missional giving to model the generous mindset we teach.

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Promoting links with our ecumenical partners in Churches Together

More ecumenical events are now taking place and we are promoting and taking part in them.

· Reaching out to our local community in ways which make a difference to the lives of our neighbours

A major part of the Prayer Festival was church members delivering postcards to our community offering to pray for them. People responded with prayer requests and there was space in church for people to read and pray these postcards. Church@school, Picnic Praise and Soupa Thursday are enabling us to make more contact with our community, to offer company, nutrition, safe space, friendship and spiritual support and guidance. Our Scouting groups planted trees in the church garden to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Our new Eco team, has involved St Nicholas School children in building bug hotels for our grounds. We have built excellent relationships with Sefton CVS through the Prayer festival which led to us hosting the Historic Townships exhibition which brought many people together to share memories.

Highlights and Challenges

Some of our wonderful highlights this year have been:

- a return to the annual Music Festival, (thank you so much to Mike Foy for his amazing organisation and running of that);
- coming in the national Top Ten of the Awards for Church Maintenance; (thank you to Stephen Green and the Working Party)
- completing a major repair on the church organ;
- the variety and range of our music ministry and all who play and sing in our worship
- celebrating Jennifer Levick's retirement move from Lay Reader to our Reader Emeritus with a lunch together in the hall,
- starting our Social Team back up after covid and meeting for a quiz;
- picking up our work towards the Arocha eco award
- celebrating the 70th anniversary of St Martin's chapel
- continuing to welcome new families and children back into church
- building community connections through the Prayer Festival and Soupa Thursday

Some of our challenges this year have been –

- concern for the health of Mike our organist (and admiration for his continuing battle back to health)
- replacement of the church heating necessitating moving our services into the halls from October
- a flood in the church office
- increased Parish Share

Moving forward

Our journey continues as we seek to follow our God, grow in faith, explore discipleship and find new and broader ways to share God's wonderful love with all our community.

As PCC and the wider church community we will look to creatively discern our shared vision under God, to swap faith stories, learn and pray together and for each other.

There will be challenges – some we will see coming and some we might not. When we faced the upheaval of moving services into the hall and some hurdles we encountered, we decided – “We will just love each other through this!” Let's hold on to that.

As your vicar I thank you for all your help, support and contribution to church family life.

And I invite you to keep going on this journey; keep seeking God and working out each day what it means for us to be his disciples in this place together.

God bless you.

Beth

The Church of St Nicholas Blundellsands
St Nicholas' CE Primary School Blundellsands
Belonging Believing Becoming