



West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership



**Annual Report
for the year ending 31 December 2021**

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This report should be read in conjunction with the reports from the 4 local churches, available at <http://WSwinLyd.org.uk/council/report>

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 25th April 2022 and signed, on its behalf, by



Chris Scarisbrick, Trustee

Focus for 2022

Our Partnership Council propose the following areas of focus:

- Take steps to work smarter together as a mission-focussed Local Ecumenical Partnership, making best use of the resources we have locally.
- Re examine the demand for children's work in our church communities, and shared across the Partnership. Appoint a children's worker.
- Review our administrative/management resources.

Prayer for our Partnership

Lord God, we thank you
for calling us into the company
of those who trust in Christ
and seek to obey his will.
May your Spirit guide and strengthen us
in mission and service to your world;
for we are strangers no longer
but pilgrims together on the way to your Kingdom.
Amen.

Financial Review

The Partnership's main source of income is the share from the individual churches, with some additional income generated from fees for weddings and funerals. Most of the fee income is then paid out to cover costs to the diocese or clergy, organist, vergers and clerk as well as for costs such as heating and lighting. We do almost no public fundraising and this has been restricted even further due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Partnership's main expenditures are contributions to the parent bodies, this accounting for almost 82% of expenditure, leaving a small amount for general expenses including the maintenance of Hook Cemetery and outreach work. Due to restricted income together with Government imposed lockdowns, the ongoing employment of staff became unsustainable and the schools' worker, youth worker and Partnership administrator were all made redundant. All three were part time posts. We are now, more than ever, reliant on volunteers to continue the work of the charity, and are incredibly grateful to all who contribute in this way.

Government imposed lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic continued throughout most of 2021 and this had significant negative impact on fund raising opportunities and income in each of the churches. With current cost of living increases we expect this to challenge us even more in 2022, whilst increasing the need for our services.

In the consolidated accounts the total unrestricted income was £170,773, and restricted was £17,058. Unrestricted income increased thanks to a legacy of £27,538.

The total unrestricted expenditure was £140,041, and restricted was £55,809.

The reserves being carried forward were £114,657 for unrestricted and £93,418 for restricted. The restricted funds are being held against future building related work and the family work funds.

Reserves policy: The individual churches and the partnership try to keep 6 months of expenditure as reserves, which for the group amounts to some £70,000. The total free reserves are £114,617 which is in excess of the required amount.

Our financial controls are reviewed on an ongoing basis as is risk. This enables us to act/react to changes to both legislation and provision requirements as soon as possible.

We continue to support Katikama Sebamala Primary School, Luweroo Diocese, Uganda although it too has been affected by closure imposed due to COVID-19. We are currently fundraising for a new roof for the school and to provide a library.

Charitable Objects

The purpose of our Partnership is to advance the Christian faith in West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze in accordance with the principles and practices of the Participating Churches. In achieving its purpose, the Partnership will engage in a range of activities, either on its own or with others, including (but not restricted to):

- the celebration of public worship;
- the teaching of the Christian faith;
- mission and evangelism;
- pastoral work, including visiting the sick and the bereaved;
- the provision of facilities with a Christian ethos for the local community, including (but not restricted to) the elderly, the young and other groups with special needs; and
- the support of other charities in the UK and overseas.

Administrative

West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership is registered in England as a charity. Charity Reg no; 1141341. Our address is the Partnership Office, c/o Holy Trinity Church, Shaw Village Centre, Ramleaze Drive, Swindon SN5 5PY

West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership is a registered data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act. Our registration number is Z2669468.

The Partnership is registered to claim gift aid enabling individuals to give tax efficiently either to the general fund or specifically for the primary schools work. Our Bank Account is with CafCash P.O. Box 289, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA. Our Independent Examiner is Steve Fraser, MHA Monahan's, 38-42 Newport Street, Swindon SN1 3DR. Steve Fraser retires in 2022 so we will rely on James Gare from next year.

Credits

This report is prepared by, and with thanks to Rev Lis Arnold, Heather Benn, Janet Clarke, Rev Capt. Clive Deverell, Mark Dowling, Wendy Dukes, Rev Gerald England, Pete Gilder, Edward Glennie, Ed Poole, Mary Poole, Pam Ray, Chris Scarisbrick, Pat Watson

Organisation

The partnership comprises four churches, acting together:

Holy Trinity Church, Shaw (HTS)
St Mary's Church, Lydiard Tregoze (SMLT)
Toothill Church
Westlea Church

We are a Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership, as described by Churches Together in England. The Partnership is part of the Baptist Union, Church of England, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church (URC), and looks to the Swindon Churches Together Sponsoring Body for guidance and oversight.

Our clergy comprise those who have been duly authorised and appointed by our participating denominations. Rev Capt. Clive Deverell is Team Minister (Church of England and Authorised to Serve in the Upper Thames Circuit of the Methodist Church and within the URC) with responsibility across the partnership and posted at St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze. Rev Trevor Day is Assistant Minister (Church of England) working across the partnership. Rev Rachael Wilson is a Methodist Minister, working part time at Toothill and Rev Teresa Townsend is a CofE Curate working with Clive. Rev Lis Arnold (CofE) has Permission to Officiate in the parish.

Trustees

The trustees are the members of the Partnership Council (PC). Anglican Members also constitute the Parochial Church Council (PCC) when needed to conduct Anglican specific business, though the PCC delegates as much business as it can, to the wider PC

The charity trustees have had due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers or duties.

The Partnership Council (PC)

The PC is the main governance and representative body. Its responsibilities are Regulatory, Oversight, Governance and external partnerships. Other responsibilities, ministry / mission, buildings, pastoral care and local leadership, are delegated to the Local Church Committees (LCC) / Leadership Teams. A fuller description of the current functions of the PC, PCC and LCCs can be found in the Partnership Constitution (2015) and in draft Standing Orders.

Great opportunities now open up for St Mary's to review and build on its life and mission in the setting of the newly conserved building - for present and future generations.

Pastoral and Occasional Offices

Baptisms/Thanksgivings, Dedications, Marriages/Weddings, Funerals

Weddings began again in May 2021 it was a delight that the last ever marriage entered into a register at St Mary's was Jamie Vernon and his wife Meg, a special historical occasion, as from May 5th we began to use Marriage documents.

The Life events diary has been introduced at St Mary's and this has helped after some teething problems and a trial helped with bookings. Baptisms began, from the summer yet it would fair to say all occasional offices have all been impacted by Covid 19, significant funerals of people involved in leadership within the Churches of the partnership, over many years like Maureen Evans and Cynthia Dowdeswell. Working with the bereaved has been an important piece of occasional office work in 2021, even then limited by the context.

Pastoral Home Visits & Communion

It is always a special time, to be with those who are no longer able to get out of their homes and it's been a privilege to be able to share Holy Communion with several people, some have moved to nursing homes. Others like Penny Cox and aforementioned Maureen Evans have died, however a few others due to infirmity now receive at home.

Partnership Office

Our admin office is not staffed, we can be contacted electronically, but appointments must be made to visit the office. This is partly as a response to COVID-19 shutdowns, but also driven by long term financial pressures. Most of the day-to-day administrative burden falls on our clergy or members of the Executive

Our web site <https://WSwinLyd.org.uk> is somewhat static, but a helpful central point of information.

Each local church is responsible for local publicity – this is through their Monthly Magazines, Weekly Notice Sheets, Christmas cards etc.

Local Church activities

There is much more that happens in each of our local churches, well described in their local Annual Reports, available online at <http://wswinlyd.org.uk/council/report>

With risk assessments in place we returned to Shaw in October and were pleased to welcome back some families now nearly two years older. Other families have moved on and the group is aware of the need to invite new families to join us. It has also been time for some regular helpers to retire; Freda Spencer (tea maker in chief), Eddie Koppoe (brilliant constructor of all things cardboard) and Ed Poole (excellent at welcoming families). All have been part of the team since its early days and will be much missed. Hopefully new members will join the team to replace the gap they have left behind.

There will be new challenges and changes in the year ahead but Messy Church continues to reach out to families in a way that enables everyone to learn more about God together.

Oliver Tomkins CE Infant and Junior school

Junior School had a very good OFSTED inspection in 2021, being graded as good, which means that they will not be reinspected for three years. The Infant School will be inspected in 2022. Rahel Dams and Clive Deverell remain as Foundation Governors. Places remain available for others to join.

Link with Katikamu Sebamale School, Uganda

In September 2021, the 'Target 1000' initiative was commenced to raise money across the Partnership for the school in order to be sent in 2022 to fund a new roof for the hall and a new library. Clare Smith, the deputy headteacher at Oliver Tomkins Schools has joined a 'WhatsApp' Group between all the schools and the Partnership. This link has allowed the Carols at Oliver Tomkins to be shared with the school in Uganda.

St Mary's Conservation Project

We are within sight of the end! After the long delays caused by the Covid pandemic and other reasons, the Conservation Project is due to end in May '22.

Various features are now completed to inform worshippers and visitors about the Church and its long history. The striking Interpretation panels introduce key features; and there is a fine explanatory model of the triptych. Repairs and improvements to outside pathways also help to welcome visitors. All work has been completed within the budgets agreed with NHLF, which is good news.

Responsibility for overseeing the project's links with visitors and the local community now passes to a new group - the St Mary's Futures Group. This will build on the Church DCC's work with its team of Volunteers, the building itself, and links with Lydiard House and the Park, schools and the local community. A survey of Park visitors in October also gives useful information to the Church about the interests of the local community.

Clergy (ex officio)	Rev Capt. Clive Deverell Rev Trevor Day Rev Rachael Wilson Rev Teresa Townsend	
Partnership Council Chair	vacancy	
Treasurer	Sue Green (resigned Jan 2021) Pam Ray (from April 2021)	
Secretary	Chris Scarisbrick	
Churchwardens and Synod reps (ex-officio)	Wendy Dukes Mary Poole (till Apr 2021) Angela Mak (from April 2021)	Pat Watson Jacqueline Kirwan
Elected Members	Claire Camm (till April 2021) Gayle Bryon (till April 2021) David Hoar (till April 2021) Steve Kershaw (till April 2021) Mark Dowling (from April 2021)	Peter Gilder Edward Poole Janet Clark
Circuit Superintendent Minister, and Circuit Steward (ex officio)	Rev David Perkins (until June 2021) Rev Shirlyn Toppin (from Sept 2021) Andrew Fleet (until June 2021)	
URC Synod Pastoral Adviser	Rev Gerald England	

The PC met 4 times in 2021, in March (the AGM for year 2020), April, June and October. The March, April and June meetings were virtual (held using video conferencing). During the rest of the year, day to day operations and decision making was delegated to the Partnership Executive, with some major decisions being circulated for email vote.

Main PC topics during the year were:

- Safeguarding, the continuing catch up of our Safeguarding records.
- Income and expenditure; review of budget planning process
- The sustainability of our activities
- Operations in our buildings during COVID-19 lockdowns and actions to enable opening up safely.

The Partnership Executive met 8 times in 2021 using video conferencing facilities.

Appointed Sub Groups handled specialist areas of work on behalf of the PC, and gave reports on progress. Most of the meetings in 2021 were virtual. The groups were:

- Local church committees and leadership teams
- Messy Church team
- Open the Book team
- The "Veg Patch" – our worship programme planning group

- St Mary's Conservation group, finishing off the conservation works enabled by our Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

Risks

The Partnership has a number of risks to its activities which have been assessed at either PC or the Executive. These include:

- Risk of financial commitment, particularly relating to denominational contributions. Reserves cover approx. 6 month's normal expenditure
- Limited resources available for work delegated to clergy and to the Partnership Executive.
- Communication, organisational and accountability risks relating to the Partnership's Policies and Procedures
- Structural risks due to membership trends in some churches

The PC considers that these risks have been mitigated to the best practicable extent.

We have identified four risks that are beyond our direct control.

- Unpaid voluntary contributions cannot be quantified in the report, but are substantial, almost all of our activities depend heavily on volunteer goodwill, time and effort.
- The inability for some of our denominations to post clergy to LEPs.
- Denominational reluctance to support Single Congregational LEPs such as ours
- Covid-19 pandemic causes our inability to meet in person and possible consequences to finances

All risks are monitored within the Partnership's governance processes.

Induction and Training of Trustees

There is no formal training process for trustees, however all PC members are formally inducted and made aware of their role and responsibilities at the first PC meeting after the AGM, and through discussion and briefing before and at meetings.

External Representation

Anglican Deanery and Diocese

At Deanery Synod in May 5 areas were identified where help and coordination across the Deanery could be helpful in the post-Covid (or at least post-lockdown) period.

- Live streaming Services
 - Many churches still have some presence on-line, though not all
 - Advice can be shared by churches which are using different technologies

school was also cancelled and reimagined into an online production! All schools continue to receive a weekly online assembly.

During the summer some of the team got involved in the filming of Bible Societies Advent Encounter – a daily online devotional people could sign up for in Advent 2021. The story "Not so Ordinary Mary" made it through the "cutting" stage and involved both Shaw and Freshbrook team members. We all had a great time, challenged ourselves outside of our comfort zones and laughed to see each other in the devotional later in the year!

We have had a few changes to the team. Judith sadly stepped down but we were joined by Louise from St Mary's and then Tudor from All Saints. Our 5 Freshbrook friends have continued to be the mainstay of the online filming as they wait to return to in person assemblies at Oliver Tomkins school.

The feedback from the schools this year has been so encouraging. They are very thankful and value the assemblies as an excellent mainstay of their collective worship. Children and staff alike have found them encouraging and a welcome constant in these uncertain times.

Schools that had never experienced an Open the Book assembly before Covid have now experienced weekly online assemblies for 18 months. 2022 is the time to be building upon this by recruiting people so that in September 2022 more schools can enjoy the church/school relationship that grows through people going into their schools to tell bible stories through Open the Book assemblies.

We need people to join the Shaw team so that we can offer Shaw and Peatmoor Schools monthly assemblies. So if you are available for a few hours on a Wednesday morning or afternoon once or twice a month during term time then please contact Heather Benn to join your team! We would also welcome people from Westlea church with a heart for offering assemblies to Westlea school.

Messy Church

This will be my final Messy Church for the Partnership as I stepped down from overall leadership at the end of 2021. However Messy church continues to meet on the second Sunday of each month at Holy Trinity Shaw with team members sharing responsibility for its planning and delivery.



Throughout 2021 we continued to meet though in a restricted fashion. Some meetings were on Zoom where we provided one or two activities to share followed by a story and prayer. During the Summer months we met in the open air outside St Marys where we set up activity tables on (mostly) sunny days. Assisted by some excellent and creative resources we have covered varied topics ranging from 'be still' to 'wise and foolish builders'.

Day group for Jesus

During the last year (May 2021 to April 2022), we have continued to meet twice monthly on Zoom. We have decided to continue to meet on Zoom for the time being, after the end of lockdown. We now meet in the morning on Mondays, a more convenient time for us. Seven of us regularly attend. We are a mixed lively bunch, from Shaw, Westlea, Toothill, St Marys and All Saints, Lydiard Millicent. During the year we finished studying the spiritual charisms, using Penelope Wilcock's book '100 More Stand-alone Bible Studies'. We then followed an 8 week Bible Society course that gave us an overview of the Bible, and a Tear Fund course on the climate crisis (during the months leading up to the 2021 United Nations Climate Conference, CoP26). Both these proved to be very stimulating. In 2022 we have returned to '100 More Stand-Alone Bible Studies', looking at 'watchwords of the Bible', starting with grace, salvation and love. We still study, worship and pray for the first hour and then afterwards we have a time of virtual coffee, tea, biscuits and a chat. Members appreciate the informal nature of the study and chatting afterwards. Thanks are due to Peter Rogers for organising the group. Currently leadership of the meetings is shared between Peter, Angela Mak and Edward Glennie.

Children and Young People's work

Our local churches support for children and young people on Sundays, and midweek groups has been greatly diminished however Toothill are continuing to do some midweek work which has been well received by the local community. These are described further and reported in the local church annual reports at <http://WSwinLyd.org.uk/council/report>, here we consider our joint efforts

Emerge 2021

During 2021 Claire, our emerge leader for many years, decided to retire from work here. We thank her for her faithful service. Despite efforts, we could not find anyone to continue these activities and groups so they had to stop. The work of emerge has supported many young people over many years, and we believe it has been valued. We will continue to search for opportunities to release people to do work like this.

Primary schools work - "Open the Book"

This year the Open the Book teams have continued to provide a weekly online assembly to 7 West Swindon primary schools and we now have a wonderful online resource of 64 assemblies on our Primary schools YouTube channel. Plus, another 7 we have had to remove to comply with copyright time frames.

The Shaw team had a brief but happy return to in person assemblies at Shaw Ridge primary school in November but moving into 2022 this was thwarted by Covid again! Likewise, our Christmas in person assembly for Peatmoor primary

- [Church of England Digital labs website](#) has lots of useful information and runs webinars on various issues.
- Children's work
 - There is concern across the deanery about the number of children's leaders who have stepped down.
- Schools work
 - Watch out for details of an Education focussed synod next year
 - Liz Townend (Director of Education for Bristol Diocese) has produced a really helpful guide to good church engagement with schools and how to develop it.
- Engaging with those we have lost touch with - which is similar to
- Outreach and Pastoral care –
 - We would love to explore a social media presence for the deanery, so that information and events can be more easily shared.

Racial Justice

At the July Synod, how to make our churches more welcoming by engaging in inter-cultural worship was discussed. In October, Revd Anjali Kanagaratnam, a curate in the Bybrook Benefice near Chippenham, challenged us in a video (watch it [here](#)) to take 2 small steps to increase our inter-cultural welcome.

- Include a small act of cultural hospitality in services, for example
 - using part of a liturgy from another culture
 - using images or music drawn from non-western culture
 - Anjali recommended links to resources to help with this
 - Inclusion of global theological perspectives in sermon

Eco church

The Deanery Synod keen to share best practice and encourage one another in our attempts to be more eco-friendly in our churches and beyond. Phil Mansfield who worships at Christ Church, has taken on the role of Deanery Eco-Champion

Living in Love and Faith

2 Deanery wide courses started before the end of October the clergy did the course together here in West Swindon facilitated by Angela Mak

Transforming Church. Together

The Values, vision and organising Idea have been shared with Deanery Synod who discussed their initial reactions ahead of more detailed work on the strategy for the diocese in the coming years.

Sally Robertson became Area Dean at the very end of 2021

Diocesan Synod pushed on with Transforming Church, elected new members of General Synod, Clive was elected on to the Vacancy in See committee, and appointed on to the DAC. All the above items were discussed initially at Diocesan Synod.

Baptist Area

For the first part of 2021 most churches were meeting on Zoom. By the end of the year most were open on a Sunday with separated seating and a congregation wearing masks. The AGM was held a little later than usual on July 12th 2021.

Numbers in congregations have dropped and regular giving is down. The number of churches belonging to the Baptist union is down by 7%. Baptisms in 2021 were down 50 %. Membership is down 20%. Financially the association is well placed though as several houses were given to the association in wills. Congregations have been discussing how to spread the gospel of Jesus as fast as COVID spreads.

Several Baptist churches, including Gorse Hill, have opened food banks. Gorse Hill, Swindon, raised money for a community fridge and this will enable more fresh food to be given to those in need. Cirencester Baptist church has been enjoying its marvellous revamped space.

In September four new missions started for, young people, young mums, Grandparents, and electrician/lorry drivers. These are building on from the 72 project. There is a 72 website. Baptist churches have been encouraged to join in evangelistic weeks with material online. 'The man who split time in two' was one of the weeks titles in Cirencester as part of the 72 project. In the autumn they started some of their music groups up again suitably separated and a challenge has gone out for new songs to be written.

In December, for the WEBOX appeal, many items' toothbrushes, socks, gloves, bios, and calculators were collected for the shoe boxes going to Eastern Europe.

Methodist Circuit

It was good to welcome Reverend Shirlyn Topping, the new Upper Thames Methodist Circuit Superintendent Minister in September, and for some of us to meet with her soon after.

Reverend Rachael Wilson (Methodist Minister currently serving in the Partnership at Toothhill and three other churches in the circuit) is moving on to her next appointment in London this summer. Clive Deverell and Mark Dowling sat on the Circuit committee responsible for seeking a replacement for Rachael, however, due to a national shortage of ministers the committee were not successful, which means Rachael will not be replaced before September 2023, and there are no guarantees even then.

One of the initiatives to grow out of Holy Habits has been the 'Day Group for Jesus' sessions run by Pete Rogers and Edward Glennie which meets fortnightly.

Administrative and Support	
Mrs Pam Ray	Partnership Treasurer (temporary)
Mr Chris Scarisbrick	Partnership Secretary and Joint Safeguarding Coordinator
Mrs Julie Scarisbrick	Joint Safeguarding Coordinator

Usual Weekly Attendance

	2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
	Adult	Child	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
St Mary's	35	2	23	2	55	9	63	9	68	10	57	9	59	12
Holy Trinity	20	1	20	2	31	8	32	4	33	8	34	8	36	8
Toothill	14	2	24	3	24	3	24	7	25	8	29	9	25	5
Westlea	25	0	27	2	24	4	24	5	22	5	26	6	24	7
Total	94	5	94	9	134	24	143	25	148	31	146	32	142	31

Figures adjusted to include Messy Church other non-weekly services etc

This year and last, we note a significant drop in Sunday attendance of children and young people. We suspect this is because, when meeting online, we struggled to cater specifically for these groups. Most weeks we provided accessible material for family use, but we cannot know how many children engaged with this. We hope the numbers will change in 2022. We may have to make specific efforts to re-attract our children, certainly included in one area of focus for 2022.

Joint Partnership Worship

Due to the difficulties of meeting together there were no joint services in 2021. We continued to circulate written services, share online services, and continued to meet over telephone and video conferencing facilities. We plan to recommence Partnership Services in February 2022.

Prayer continues to be an important part of our lives within the Partnership and we believe this has deepened during COVID-19 lockdowns

We are grateful to the following members of the Partnership who are authorised by our denominations to lead services across our churches:

Denominationally Authorised Ministers	
Rachel Dowling	Methodist Lay Preacher
Mark Dowling	Methodist Lay Preacher
David Hoar	URC Lay Preacher

Hazel Davis was ordained in 2021 to ministry in the Church of England and accepted a post in Burton upon Trent. Teresa Townsend transitioned to incumbent status on the completion of her curacy and accepted the post of Priest in Charge of the ANNA benefice in the Diocese of Winchester starting at the end of April 2022. Pete Rogers was accepted for the final year training as a Church of England Licensed Lay Minister. Reverend Rachel Wilson to seek a new appointment for September 2022 in London.

Locally Appointed Ministers		
Mary Poole	Messy Church Leader (till Dec)	
Lay worship leaders		
Heather Benn	Jacqueline Kirwan	Mark Taylor
Andy Bissex	Ed Poole	Pat Watson
Janet Clarke	Mary Poole	Sarah Wilmott
Wendy Deverell	Peter Roslyk	Richard Williams
Stephen Kershaw		

Other Groups:	
St Mary's & Holy Trinity Shaw Worship team	
Westlea Leadership Team	Team Toothill

Our partnership's main services take place on a Sunday Morning with each of our Churches having a thriving and enthusiastic congregation, several with crèches, children's and young people groups also being provided. The communion services generally vary between Anglican order and Free-Church styles.

An Evening service continued throughout the year on Zoom

Friday morning prayers took place throughout the year on Zoom and attendance on Friday mornings' quite often reached double figures.

Messy Church is a missionary congregation aimed at families with young children. It is lay-led and resourced from the other "Sunday morning" churches.

A midweek meditation and study group "Spotlight" started this year out of a smaller group at one of the churches and has attendance across the Churches in West Swindon.

The Partnership Executive and the Circuit Leadership Team are intending to meet in May22 with a view to clarifying the nature of our relationship and planning a way forward that is beneficial to all.

We thank the Circuit and it's Ministers and Local Preachers who have been leading worship across the Partnership, we are grateful for their support.

URC

A number of our churches in the Synod were badly affected by the pandemic over the past year, and a number have decided to close as a result of much lower numbers and non-one available to fill key positions. Most meetings have been held over Zoom, which has allowed the work of Synod to continue unabated! The 99th meeting of Synod took place on Sat 12 March on Zoom. The theme for the day was "Walking the Pilgrim Way", and focused on the new discipleship programme of the URC, Stepwise, which will continue to be rolled out across the denomination. There has also been a lot of preparation for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the URC, and various events have been planned around October/November 2022.

There continues to be pressure of ministerial deployment in the Synod, which has forced Synod to look far more creatively at grouping churches together, and using local leadership more effectively to cover some of the gaps. A new church related community worked has been appointed at Bridgwater. Marie will have responsibility for community projects at local URC churches, as well as doing some work at Hinkley Point nuclear power station.

Safeguarding

The number of people we have trained and available to work with children or those who may be at risk, at the time of reporting was 75. We had no incidents of safeguarding concern in 2021.

Despite not being able to meet in person for much of the year, we have been able to continue working with our children and vulnerable communities, if online. During lockdowns we have continued to improve our documentation tracking, though at a reduced rate.

In doing our work of safeguarding the Partnership Council have followed the advice and guidance of the United Reformed Church Synod Safeguarding Officer. According to section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, the PCC have given due weight to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Areas of focus for 2021 reviewed

- Ensure our Trustees and leadership have training and knowledge to lead us. Having been challenged in several areas about the responsibilities and delegations that exist in our decision-making bodies. We tried to make special efforts in 2021 to ensure our Trustee responsibilities are clear. Due to low turnout during covid lockdowns, this was only partly successful, and we will continue this activity in 2022
- Emerge from COVID-19 lockdowns with intact communities and stable finances
This aim and objective can be assessed in a number of ways the extent Covid-19 permeated the year of course was an unknown. All the Churches, seem to have held their communities to some degree. St Mary's has probably struggled most numerically, although constant online provision in the evening has been a great resource. Financially during the year Toothill informed the Partnership that it would be unable to make its commitment to the partnership for 2022. An agreed plan to look at this during 2022 was agreed at Partnership Council with an initial reduction of 50 per cent agreed. Sustainability has to be looked at.
- Find areas where we choose to work together, given the possibility that in future there may be no formal LEP here.
Due to changes in Methodist Staffing this seems unlikely at present although ongoing reviews of Single Denominational LEPs means this may still be a possibility.
- In the Autumn, reflect on Messy Church, our work with Schools and youthwork, and those involved.
Although Mary and Ed Poole stepped back from Messy Church, the team have continued to work well together. Open the Book has been a great success and is used by 7 schools in the area. Due to Covid, any brief opportunity to hold assemblies in person stopped again before Christmas although Schools that had never experienced an Open the Book assembly before Covid have now experienced weekly online assemblies for 18 months. The feedback from the schools this year has been very encouraging and they are very grateful valuing the assemblies as an excellent mainstay of their collective worship.
- To rebuild respect for those called to serve with our Churches and the denominations within the Partnership.
The Ecumenical review we took part in at the end of 2021 was not reported back upon in 2022. This has not helped us feel valued. New leadership within

the Methodist circuit has brought about a sense of new beginning but certain misconceptions seem to have manifested.

The Vicar arranged to meet our Baptist Area Minister Alisdair Longwill to gain greater understanding of where he sits within Baptist tradition.

The Community

Membership is expressed through the Local Churches, and each congregation is responsible for encouraging regular attendees into membership. Within our different church traditions there are slight differences in understanding of membership, but this causes us no problems apart from explaining to our parent denominations.

Membership Summary

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
St Mary's	67	61	61	69	67	66	73
Holy Trinity	28	23	25	30	27	28	28
Toothill	31	31	31	31	28	35	34
Westlea	32	34	34	31	31	31	27
Total	158	149	151	161	153	160	162

Ministry and weekly services

The worship rota is arranged across the Partnership. Clergy, Local Preachers, Lay Ministers and our team of trained lay people lead services and preach in their 'home' church, in the other partner churches and some across the Methodist Upper Thames Circuit. The Circuit also contributes worship leaders.

Denominationally Appointed Ministers	
Rev Capt. Clive Deverell	CofE Minister. Authorised to Serve as Methodist. Authorised URC Minister
Rev Trevor Day	CofE Assistant Minister
Rev Teresa Townsend	CofE Curate
Rev Rachael Wilson	Methodist Minister
Rev Lis Arnold	CofE Ordained Minister (Permission to Officiate)
Mrs Angela Mak	CofE Licensed Lay Minister (LLM)