



The Parish of Harpenden, St John

MEETING PAPERS

FOR THE

MEETING OF THE PARISHIONERS

AND THE

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

To be held in the Church Hall

On Sunday 26^h March 2022

After the 9.30 a.m. service

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AGENDAS

MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

To be held in the Church Hall on Sunday 26th March 2023

Following the 9.30 a.m. service

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners held on 20th March 2022
- 3 Matters Arising
- 4 Election of Church Wardens

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

To be held in the Church Hall on Sunday 26^h March 2023

following the Meeting of Parishioners

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Minutes of the APCM held on 20th March 2022 and Matters Arising
- 3 Safeguarding Report
- 4 Treasurer's Financial Review & Trustees Report
- 5 Election of Representatives to the Parochial Church Council and Deanery Synod
- 6 Electoral Roll Report
- 7 Deanery Synod Report
- 8 Review of 2022
- 9 Fabric update
- 10 Project Phoenix update
- 11 Vicar's Report
- 12 Any Other Business



ST JOHN'S CHURCH, HARPENDEN

Minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners

Held on Sunday 20th March 2022
In the church hall.

Present: 37: James Hillman (Lay Chair), Jane Donati, Jacky Dodd (Secretary) Andrew Harbord, Bill Moore, Bryan Coventry, David & Heather Nye, Dawn Mason, Derek & Liz Curran, Di Borthwick, John Dodd, Joy Steele, Liz MacDonald, Liz Sergeant, Margaret Charlston, Martin Myers, Matt Barter, Moira Carrington, Naomi Burnett, Roger Carter, Penny McMenemy, Gemma Smith, Jim McGowan, Linda & Alan Webster, Mary Jean & Iain Pritchard, Anna Chambers, Betty Mitchinson, Elizabeth Gordon-Smith, Brenda Norwood, Alison Bygrave, Sophie Crawley, Anne Edwards, Gudrun Ledwith,

1. Apologies for Absence

Brenda Cottle, Alex Dales, Christine Kenyon, David Brown, Nick Lockett, John Jones, Michael Readman, Henrietta Hillman

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Adoption of the minutes of the Meeting of Parishioners held on Sunday 18th April 2021 was proposed by Margaret Charlston, seconded by Andrew Harbord and carried unanimously.

3. Matters Arising

There were none.

4. Election of Church Wardens

Two nominations had been received prior to the meeting:

Jane Donati, proposed by Martin Myers and seconded by Bill Moore, and

Heather Nye, proposed by Nick Lockett and seconded by Matt Barter.

In the absence of any other nominations, Jane and Heather were elected unanimously to serve as church wardens for the year 2021/2022.

The meeting closed at 10.51 a.m



ST JOHN'S CHURCH, HARPENDEN

Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

held on Sunday 20th March 2022

In the Church Hall

For the purpose of the meeting, Heather Nye proposed that James Hillman continued as Lay Chair as Revd Tim had covid, which was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

Present: There were 37 members present, the same as for the Meeting of Parishioners.

1. Apologies for absence: Same as for the Meeting of Parishioners.

2. Minutes of the last APCM

Adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 18th April 2021 was proposed by Mary Jean Pritchard, seconded by Moira Carrington and carried unanimously.

3. Matters Arising

There were none.

4. Safeguarding

Jane Donati

St John' subscribes (there is no cost) to the Safeguarding Dashboard, which outlines standards for policies, procedures, training, and practicalities, against which we measure ourselves as and when appropriate. An Action Plan is then generated and the PCC consider this at every meeting. This enables us to stay as up to date as possible in this area.

Despite the many measures taken, we cannot allow ourselves to be complacent, and not only do we formally review our policy and procedures annually at the May PCC meeting, but also recognise that this area permeates all our activities (and makes up part of the documentation for the APCM). Hard copies of our policies and procedures are in a blue file in the library and there is a dedicated area on the website too. Any enquiries regarding Safeguarding should be put to Jane Donati (Safeguarding Officer) or Naomi Burnett (Deputy Safeguarding Officer).

5. Financial Review

James Hillman

Alex Dales, our Independent Examiner was unable to be present, so James who sits on the the Finance Committee, gave the overview. He explained that the accounts were uploaded onto the website in draft form on 13th March, whilst we awaited one piece of evidence, a bank statement. This has now been received and the final accounts were uploaded on 15th March.

Income changes

There was a reduction in income for the Parish Centre, which took £136k in pledges in 2020 as opposed to £77k in 2021.

An increase with the Linwood Rd rental which was £17k in 2021 versus £0 in 2020.

There were increases in fundraising events, £1.4k in 2021 and £0 in 2020.

Greater fees for weddings and funerals, £7k in 2021 versus £4k in 2020.

Outgoings

Our Parish Share reduced from £108k to £98k reflecting our vacancy status for part of 2021 and small Electoral Roll changes.

There were increases in the costs of Linwood Road upkeep, reflecting the preparation for the tenants' arrival.

There was an increase in the vicarage running costs that we bore during the vacancy, as well as a few other costs associated with the vacancy.

Other costs of maintenance of the church hall, reflected its increased use, as lockdown was less prevalent in 2021 compared with 2020.

Other items of note

We have not yet given our 2021 10% of voluntary income to our chosen charities, so are holding an accrued liability in the accounts of £13.5k. This will be distributed as follows:

2021

Harpenden Trust, A Rocha and Disasters Emergency Committee

2022

Open Door St Albans, The Smile Train, Dementia UK and The Red Cross

Linwood Rd is carried on the balance sheet as an asset at cost, rather than at realisable value.

Legacies of a little under £5k were received during 2021

The only significant movement on Restricted Funds has been the increase of £77k for the Parish Centre fund. Others are largely unchanged.

What does all this mean?

We made a surplus for the year of £79k, noting that this includes £77k in respect of the Parish Centre, so excluding this, a small surplus of just £2k.

This also includes Linwood Rd rental of £17k which we would lose if / when we get a new curate.

So, a structural deficit still exists.

Throughout the course of the year, the Finance Committee has met regularly to review the management accounts and thanks were extended to Tim Coleman, David Nye and Andrew Poppleton for their work on that committee. In his absence, James thanked Tim Coleman for his work on the accounts over the past two years. The management accounts have always been very clearly set out and well explained. Alex Dales, who has independently examined the accounts again this year was also thanked.

There was one question from the floor regarding whether our Parish Share includes a proportion for a curate. David Nye answered this saying that if / when we have a curate our Parish Share will remain unchanged.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Bryan Coventry, seconded by Andrew Harbord and carried unanimously.

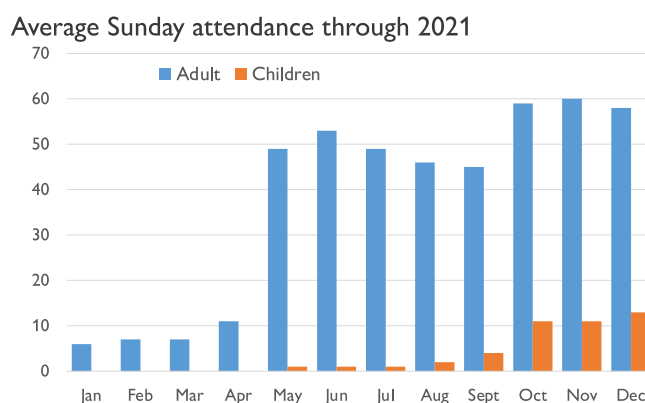
6. The Annual Report

Jane Donati

Jane presented the report by powerpoint which is now available to view on the website.

- There were 177 on the Electoral Roll.
- Church at Home at its peak was delivered to 21 homes in 2021, this number is now 9
- The number of children attending church or a church event was 52
- There were 6 baptisms
- There was one wedding
- 15 funerals, 2 crematorium services and 9 burial of ashes in the Garden of Remembrance
- 73 YouTube videos were uploaded and had 9,860 views

Worship



- There were 100 regular planned givers : 77 on monthly standing orders, 5 weekly or monthly envelopes and 18 on the Parish Giving Scheme (PSG). This produced £129,316 in 2021 which was 132% of the Parish Share. The Parish Share was £98,189
- £76,694 was given to Project Phoenix
- 6 members of the congregation had died in 2021, two families had moved away and there had been 2 significant 90th birthdays
- Due to covid there was lockdown in January, with the first in-person service not being held until May. We were fortunate that an outbreak was avoided thanks to the good care taken by the volunteer cleaners and regular communication and good practice

There was a collection of photos depicting the year at St John's and covering Easter, the licensing service of our vicar, Revd Tim Vickers, in September, the church open day, Christmas, Junior Church and young people, our buildings (the church, parish hall, vicarage and Linwood Road) with detail showing the current condition of the hall, the PCC and wardens, staff (Julie, Office Roger, Music and Barbara, Hall Cleaning) and the various groups at St John's.

The final slide thanked: the Ministry Team (Anne, David and Lauryn), Wardens, PCC, Staff, People on the rotas : coffee, reader and intercessions, Choir and all who provide music, Neil Middleton and those involved with livestream, website and communications, Michael Readman and the Servers, Sacristan and all the Volunteers.

7. Electoral Roll Report

James Hillman

The report had been prepared by Neil Middleton and had been available to read with the meeting papers on the website. In summary there were 177 people on the roll at the start of 2021 and at the end it stands at 172.

Adoption of the revised Electoral Roll was proposed by Roger Carter and seconded by Di Borthwick and carried unanimously.

8. Election of representatives to the Parochial Church Council

James Hillman

Andrew Harbord was thanked as he stepped down following 3 years of service on the PCC, as was Tim Coleman, who is also retiring.

- The following 2 PCC members had completed 3 years and were being re-elected for a second term:

Liz MacDonald	Proposed by: Heather Nye
	Seconded by: Christine Kenyon
Liz Newell	Proposed by: Pat Hudis
	Seconded by: Sally Creedy

state of the hall a new parish centre is needed more than ever and at the meeting in January the PCC voted to support the project as it stands at the moment.

There was a question regarding the timescale of the project. Matt explained that it was 5 years although in reality we are now 2 years behind, so in the worst-case scenario it will be 5 years from now and at best, 3 years.

Matt was asked if he was considering modifying the plans and the answer was no. The existing plans include a lift.

Matt was thanked for the huge amount of work he does on Fabric and Project Phoenix related matters.

12. Vicar's Report

Pre-recorded video by Rev Tim

This video is now available to view online.

Having joined on 12th September 2021, Revd Tim started by thanking for the welcome given by St John's to himself, Sophy and the boys. He went on to give sincere thanks to the Churchwardens, James and Jane, and to the Ministry Team who carried us through the vacancy and the pandemic and ensured that the parish was in a remarkably good state for his arrival!

Special thanks went to James Hillman, who after 7 years as Churchwarden, and the recruitment of 3 vicars has decided to enjoy life from the pews for a bit. James provided the parish with a clear strategic leadership and helped to guide the ship of Christ safely through troubled waters.

Thanks were also extended to Tim Coleman, our former Treasurer. Alex Dales, the Independent Examiner, had commended his very professional approach to the church accounts to Revd Tim and he affirmed our continuance to pray for him and send something to him by way of thanks when we can.

Thanks were given to the 3 members of staff and to for those who keep the church clean, arrange the flowers and keep the gardens looking wonderful and everyone involved on the various rotas.

Notable highlights included: Advent Carols Service and Nine Lessons and Carols Service, Eco-Church, T@3, Little Acorns, Christmas Holiday Club, Nativity Play. We are once again open 7 days a week and can be that place where people come for refreshment and an encounter with God, to that end, a Welcome Event for the community, sharing all that is involved in being the church here was held in November.

Looking forward, the first project is the re-ordering of our church building. Initially a response to enable choral singing during the pandemic, it has given us a chance to decide whether the building reflects what we believe about God and how we worship and pray.

What does it say about the place of the Eucharist, the place of children and families or those in a wheelchair, about music?

The second project is the new Parish Centre. The PCC have voted to restart Project Phoenix, and this is a real opportunity to serve the community in which we live. Understandably there is anxiety about the money, and a lot of unknowns, but if the Lord builds the house, who are we to stand in His way?

The last and most important thing is giving ourselves time to reflect on what it means to be St John's as a community of people in which all are invited and welcome, and what it means to be the church here in Southdown. During this year we will be looking at producing a 2-year Mission Action Plan with our aims as a church, so watch this space!

The vicar concluded with a prayer, based on the theme that had run throughout his report and calling us to be the Living Water of Jesus Christ.

13. AOB

- James Hillman thanked Revd Tim for the huge positive difference he and his family had made in such a short time. There followed loud clapping in the hope that it could be heard from the vicarage.
- Mary Jean Pritchard thanked James Hillman and Jane Donati for their work as Churchwardens.
- Jane Donati thanked her co-Churchwarden, James Hillman.
- Heather Nye made a plea for recipes for the Cook Book, being produced to generate funds for Project Phoenix.

The meeting officially ended with a prayer from David Nye and recital of the Grace at 11.50 pm.

St John the Baptist Harpenden: Electoral Roll

Report for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of 26th March 2023



For 2023, Church of England Rules required us to undertake an incremental refresh of the Electoral Roll; existing members of the Roll remain on the Roll unless they actively ask to be removed or both live outside the Parish and cease to attend without good reason.

Our new Roll has 182 entries. This is a net increase of 10 since last year; movement is as follows:

Last Year's Roll	172	
Passed Away	-2	
Removed (note 1)	-5	
Resigned	-1	
		<hr/>
Carried forward		164
Added to the Roll for the first time		18
New Roll		182

Note 1: Church of England Rules: "a person's name must be removed from the roll in each of the following cases... where the person (a) has ceased to reside [is not resident] in the parish, (b) has not continued to habitually attend public worship in the parish during any period of six months, and (c) has not been prevented from doing so by illness or other sufficient cause. ...The name of a person must not be removed from the roll in [these] cases unless the PCC has taken reasonable steps to establish the relevant facts".

The revised Roll (names and an in/out of Parish indicator only) will be displayed in Church from today.

Of the 182 entries:

- 114 are residents in the (ecclesiastical) Parish and 68 outside the Parish or state that they have worshipped for 6 months or more – a ratio of 1.7 to 1.
- 123 are female and 59 are male – a ratio of 2.1 to 1.

Neil Middleton
Electoral Roll Officer
3rd March 2023

Applications to join the Electoral Roll can be made at any time, but between now and the APCM cannot be added to it until after the end of the APCM. The easiest way to apply is usually via our Google Form – use the QR code for access; or blank forms are available in the Church Porch and from stjohnsharpenden.org.uk/electoralroll



CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2021-2022

As churchwardens we are required to provide a report to the APCM summarising the main activities which have occurred at St John's during the past year. We would like to begin by thanking our deputy wardens: Bill Moore, Martin Myers and latterly, Bryan Coventry, for their support.

We are also grateful to members of the Standing Committee: Jacky Dodd has kept us in check as PCC secretary during the year, and Jon Pitman, our treasurer, has carried out the duties and responsibilities of Treasurer efficiently and professionally, managing our budgets, accounts and finances. David Nye has also undertaken the overseeing of day-to-day accounting, for which we are very grateful. We have welcomed Alison Bygrave as the Stewardship Recorder. Anna Chambers joined the team as Parish Administrator and has fulfilled that role with great efficiency, and we are well supported by her work.

At the last APCM, unfortunately Tim, our Vicar, was unwell but everything proceeded as it should, chaired by James Hillman, who stepped down as Church Warden at that meeting after several years' sterling service. The Meeting also had a new feature – a slide show of photos and statistics that reflected church life in the last year.

As well as leading the live-streaming work which continues, Neil Middleton has a lead role in compiling and maintaining the electoral roll, and in the distribution of the newsletter. He, alongside Michael Readman and Roger Carter, met several times and investigated a suitable sound system to replace our ageing one. This is another project that needs financial attention.

We are indebted to the many and various teams of volunteers who give us their support in sharing with us the work of caring for, and maintaining, the continuing work of St John's. Cleaners, florists, sacristy duties, vestry duties, provision of coffee and refreshments, the choir, readers, intercessors, sound system and live-stream persons, Michael Readman and his team of servers, Alan and Lesley Tree who dress the altar for each service or season, sidepersons, welcomers – the list is endless. This report would be very long if we added detail to all of these roles and tasks!

We are in a position where the financial pressure still remains significant and the current economic, political and social uncertainty is causing additional difficulty to everyone. It continues to be a priority that we should be paying our Parish Share in full, and we have been able to do that.

We are pleased that we have been able to maintain our outside giving at 10% of our income and over the past year, as a consequence of the nominations and vote, monies have been sent to The Harpenden Trust, to

A Rocha and the Disasters Emergency Committee.

The key focus of the PCC on Safeguarding continues and this is considered at every meeting. We continue to encourage those who need to undertake training to either do so or maintain their status in this respect. We continue to ensure that we are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Charities Commission guidance. Thanks to Paul Bedding for making the returns to the Charity Commission.

As everyone knows, the Parish Hall is showing its age and causing much anxiety over its condition. For a long while, we were without a Fabric Committee, but we managed to address many issues and keep the regular inspections going as well as instigating a huge clear out of the hall, and enabled many small jobs that have enhanced both the hall and the church. Barbara, our hall cleaner, continues to keep it clean between bookings. Fusion, a pre-school playgroup, are users of the hall, and many adaptations had to be made to enable this.

We also thank Steve Howard, the gardener, who maintains our beautiful grounds and the Memorial Garden; at this time many spring flowers are out and help us to be optimistic for the future too. Thanks to Warren Greaves for the lovely new sign at the entrance to the Memorial Garden to remind people that it is a place of peace.

We are particularly grateful to Eco-Church Team led by Margaret Charlston for their efforts in encouraging us all to take responsibility for our environmental actions. Many initiatives have taken place with regard to the church property.

The pandemic saw the cessation of the parish magazine in hard copy but this is now back in place and distributed by many people, ably organized by Steve Whiting. Susan Kerr has taken on the editor's role, and has produced a more community-friendly, wider focused, and interesting publication.

We are also grateful to the group of parents who have revived Junior Church, under the auspices of Lauryn Awbrey. There is also a Mini-Church for toddlers and babies. The Nativity Play is always a highlight Of St John's Christmas, and this year was coordinated by the Junior Church team, and Madeleine Venner, which played to a packed church.

Music has always been an important part of life at St John's: as well as the return of the choir under Roger Carter's direction; All-age services have had input from musically talented children.

The very popular *Tea at Three*, under auspices of a trusty band of helpers, has been revived and continues to be successful as part of the community outreach work. *Soup for the Soul*, a weekly event has also been re-established and again, serves the community. Thanks to all who volunteer for these events and make them so welcoming.

Little Acorns has re-started and flourished under Christine Kenyon's leadership of the team, and with the support of Tim and Sophy. This is a key part of our offering to families with very young children.

Faith and Light has also resumed, and Lauryn and her team have welcomed many attendees back to this event.

Please be assured that we are most appreciative of all the support we have received over this past period from everyone who has been involved in these activities. Whether or not we have mentioned you by name in this report, we know who you are and we thank you!

And finally, it is appropriate at this time to remember the friendship and faith of those of our congregation whom we have lost in the past year, and to record our grateful thanks for their lasting influence and respective contributions that they made to the life and ministry of St John's over many years. We look forward with a new hope to the resumption of fundraising efforts for our projected parish centre, as well as some major changes that are necessary to keep the church building efficient in delivering its mission.

Lastly, we invite new volunteers to step forward to undertake some of the tasks, perhaps shadow someone with a view to fill in occasionally or be supportive to a group or team. St John's Church is able to operate and fulfil its mission because of people who give a little time and some who give lots, so please help if you can, even if only in a small way.

Jane Donati

Heather Nye

WHEATHAMPSTEAD DEANERY SYNOD –REPORT YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2023

Three meetings were held during the year.

Deanery services were held on Ascension Day and in October.

July: A Presentation from Revd Jo Burke, in her role as chair of the Racial Justice Action Group:

Jo gave a very interesting presentation about the issues around racial equality in our churches. There is an organization called The Inclusive Church Network – please consider joining!!

The RJAG would like to have some feedback about issues relating to race in our churches. Could you volunteer your church by inviting non-indigenous members who might share their experiences for the benefit of improving what we do.

November: Round Table Exploration of Working Together as a Deanery: What can we do better together?

We broke into small groups to discuss the subject. More Deanery services – what you do is up to you! Pulpit swaps. Youth groups? We need to do things that are not adding burden – pooling resources not adding events. Parents having quiet days/activities alongside children's activities? Do you need to keep parish identity? Deanery quiet days?

Real challenges in doing things together, but maybe with some longer term planning, we might be able to try some things.

January: A presentation on the new system for vocations within the Diocese, by Revd Charles Burch, the Diocesan Vocations Officer.

Charles said that he was happy to be back in his sending deanery! Until recently, he has held the post of Vicar of Bovingdon and the Diocesan Vocations Officer. He explained that vocation just means that we have a calling. Narrow definition.

We spent a few minutes sharing our stories of 'being called'. We all need to spot people in our parishes that we feel might have gifts to offer, and actually ask them!

Clergy have an opportunity to encourage people to 'have a go'. This is encouraging to people who might lack confidence.

He shared details of the new Shared Discernment Process.

Ordained ministry NATIONAL system, for Reader selection, it is at Diocese level.

Remember that we need to encourage ALL people. Don't need to have a degree for train for ministry. Age limit 58 for self-supporting, 53 for stipendiary.

From 1st Feb, Revd Charles is stepping down from his role as Vocations Officer. Ruth Dennigan (Reader) and Revd. Simon Moore are taking over Charles' role.

David Nye February 2023

REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING for the APCM 2023

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, HARPENDEN

The PCC of St John's has a duty to have *'due regard to guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safety of children and vulnerable adults'* (from Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016).

Policy

The PCC have adopted a raft of policies derived from the Diocese and the Church of England that concern safeguarding: Safeguarding, Lone Working, Responding to Domestic Abuse, Safe Use of Images, Safer Recruitment, Recruitment of Ex-Offenders.

The Safeguarding Lead regularly checks the Diocesan newsletters and website for any relevant updates in this area. We have subscribed to the Safeguarding Dashboard which gives us standards with which to measure our practice.

All policies and relevant documents are available as hard copy in the blue file on the book-case.

Disclosure and Barring Checks

St John's subscribes to the 'Thirty-one eight agency' for DBS checks, which is recommended by the diocese. *"God's call to 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable' as described in Proverbs 31:8"*. All checks are completed online, and identification documents checked by the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy. Usually a check lasts for five years. There is a system to remind those with out-of-date checks to renew, if necessary. Seven DBS checks were made since the last APCM.

Safeguarding in practice

There have been two safeguarding queries/incidents that were referred to the Diocesan Advisor, but they did not warrant further action by us.

The focus is always upon recognising and establishing good practice as regards safeguarding, and health and safety, through the means of risk assessments for church activities. These documents are available in the Risk Assessment File on the book-case. As practice is updated or changed, so these risk assessments will also be kept up to date, or at least reviewed annually.

An appendix for hirers of the church premises to raise their awareness of safeguarding is in place.

There is also a duty upon the PCC to ensure reporting of any 'serious incidents' not only to the diocese, social services, police etc, but also to the Charity Commission, as the church is a registered charity. In the year to December 2022 there was one incident that was reported but which did not require any investigation.

Naomi Burnett has undertaken to be the Deputy Safeguarding Lead, and there are plans to ensure she has full information to do this effectively.

Training

The PCC has undertaken online training in safeguarding. The Lead has completed relevant training. A few members of the Junior Church need to renew the training. However, despite the many measures taken, we cannot be complacent, and not only will we formally review our policy and procedures at the next PCC meeting, but also recognise that this area permeates all our activities.

If you have any questions or queries, please contact:

Jane Donati, Safeguarding Lead

Naomi Burnett, Safeguarding Deputy.

GROUP REPORTS FOR APCM 2023

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BAPTISMS, FIRST COMMUNION & CONFIRMATION

Baptisms

We were lucky to have a bumper number of baptisms at St Johns in 2022. We are even luckier to have a small team of people who help out with baptism preparation, the baptism services and in our ministry to those who have recently been baptised. A big thank you to Dawn Mason, Sarah McKie, Liz Harbord, Miriam Grundy-Evans, Alison Totty for assisting in the important task.

In total throughout 2022 there were 25 baptisms in Church, and 10 baptism preparation sessions through the year. We hold baptisms on (normally) the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month at 11.30am, or in the Parish Eucharist. Baptism preparation normally takes place on Saturdays. We hold baptism throughout the year apart from in Lent and Advent. At each baptism preparation session, we guide families through the service, and see the baptism as a packing for a journey with God, and it contains everything we need for that journey.

We also welcome the recently baptised to our All Age service and are working on communicating ways we support families to keep the promises they made at baptism. Having a baptism team means that the welcome and support is often given by the team rather than the Vicar up front.

If anyone wants to join us – more are welcome.

First Communion

In 2022 we welcomed 9 young people to First Communion, and 3 Adults were confirmed by Bishop Stephen at a memorable confirmation service in June.

First Communion takes place around the age of 7 upwards and is specifically about preparing children to receive communion. It's a way to demonstrate belonging and being part of the church. We have two preparation sessions, and each person to be admitted has a sponsor as well. These three services were moments of great joy for us all, and something to continue for anyone who would like to receive communion. This is not the same as confirmation.

Admitted to First Communion:

Clemency Venner
Jess Norwood
Harry Evans

Phylis Venner
Sophie Bygrave
Sophia Neville

Emily MacDonald
April Winfield
Luella Buckle

Confirmation

We also held a confirmation service for 3 adults. This is different from First Communion as it was a public profession of faith, and it was a really joyful occasion. Preparation took the form of meetings on zoom, using some reading by Rowan Williams on the nature of Christianity and the Church as a reference point. Each candidate had a sponsor from within the congregation.

Those Confirmed:

Anna Chambers

Gemma Smith

Paul Ellison

If anyone is interested in confirmation, please speak to the Vicar.

CHURCH@HOME

Church@Home consists of a copy of the weekly pewsheet and a reflection (sometimes the sermon) relating to the readings, subject, for the Sunday morning service. The reflections are usually written by members of the Ministry Team, and there is a team of eight who deliver these to those members of St John's who are unable to get to church Sunday by Sunday, and either find the internet difficult to negotiate or don't have it at all. It is also available through a link in the weekly email, and available for anyone else to read.

We began doing this during the first lockdown, when there were 25 people receiving it. There are now just six – some have sadly died or for a variety of reasons no longer want to receive it.

Anne Edwards

CHURCH CLEANING

St John's Church is kept looking beautiful thanks to the hard work of members of the congregation, men and women, who take on the responsibility of tidying and cleaning an allocated area of the church by working a rota system within their group.

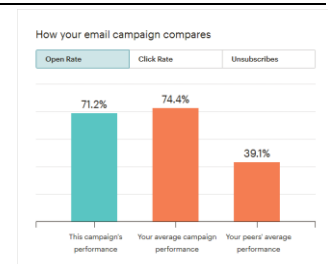
We can always do with more help as many of the cleaning team are "not as young as they used to be"! Do please offer if you have some time to spare. It can be as little as half an hour a month and you can choose your day and time as the church is now open for most of the day. Better still, ask a friend or partner to volunteer with you, as it is a good way to catch up on chat while you work! All the equipment is provided and you are welcome to bring children with you. They do enjoy using our feather dusters!

Di Borthwick

COMMUNICATIONS

Email newsletters

Our weekly email subscriber count is currently 234 (last year 213), and around 70 – 75% of recipients at least open the email each week (this is unchanged from last year). Mailchimp, our providers suggests that we are just under twice as successful as our peers, but whether this is fair or not is not clear as we do not have the definition of "peers" beyond them being "Non Profit".



Neil Middleton

Social Media

We currently have accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. All the accounts have seen growth over the last year.

At the end of the year we had 269 followers on our Facebook page (up from 64 at the start of the year) and 134 followers on Instagram (up 22 from the start of the year).

We are using social media to reach more people and in 2022 reached 20,882 people via Facebook. Most crucially social media is a really good way to communicate with young people and those who do not yet come to church.

Our most popular post of 2022 was that's of David Nye celebrating 40 years of ministry (3,900 people reached) but 8 posts have reached over 1,000 people.

If you aren't already following us you can find us at the following locations

Facebook: @stjohnsal5

Instagram: @stjohnsal5

Twitter: @stjohnsAL5

Rev'd Tim

Website

The St John's website has continued to be one of our key "shop windows" as St John's seeks to demonstrate how we are Living God's Love. The year has been one of operation, rather than evolution, with very regular updates, but no design or fundamental extension in the purposes or types of page on the website.

For 2023, we are looking for a significant refresh of the website look and feel to bring it up to modern standards.

In terms of visitor count, this is difficult to discern reliably, as activity is much impacted by the website crawlers used by search engines to catalogue the web. For instance we had 15,511 page impressions for all of February; on 3rd March we had 8,422 before 11am.

Some analysis of February 2023:

- Total page impressions: 15,511
- Impressions claiming to use a known web browser: 12,638
- Lowest Daily impressions: 244 – times 28 is 6,832
- Total referrals from mainstream search engines: 472

It is hard to reliably conclude on the numbers above, but it is certainly evident that our website is an important source of information about St John's.

Neil Middleton

DORCAS

We now have to carry out our work in the Lady Chapel which is not ideal due to poor lighting, very cold environment and little room to manoeuvre around each other.

Despite this we are now putting the final stitches into the All-season frontal for the Lady Chapel which we hope will be blessed in the next few months.

We shall continue to meet most Fridays but back in the committee room, close to our store of fabrics and threads and spend some time on the maintenance of robes and frontals that are beginning to show their age.

New projects will still be undertaken but with a close eye on costing as the type of fabrics used are currently up to £125 per metre even online.

Helen Davies, Dorcas Leader

ECO CHURCH

We have had another busy year; the following are a few highlights.

Litter picks: We continued to hold a couple of litter picks each year, one on May 29th, as part of the St Albans Sustainability Festival, and one on February 5th, after we led the sermon, based on caring for our environment. Harpenden Council provide the litter pickers, Debbie organises the routes, and recycles most of the rubbish. Do come and join us at our next one!

Blister pack recycling: St Johns continues as one of the collection points in Harpenden for empty medicine blister packs. This has been hugely successful, and thanks to Di Borthwick for organising this. She has now passed on 68 large dustbin bags of empty packs to the Lions Club to be recycled (up from six last year). There are also boxes for recycling candles, stamps and old greetings cards in the porch.

Recycling bins: This time last year, we couldn't recycle any of the rubbish produced by the church or church hall, it all went to landfill. Thanks to hard work by Tim, we now have two large recycling bins collected by the council: one for card and paper and the other for cans, bottles, and *rigid* plastic. We have sets of bins in the church hall, hall kitchen and church, and Anna and the Ecochurch team are working hard to encourage people to use them correctly. There is still a lot of misunderstanding around soft plastic and disposable cups. We can't currently recycle *soft flexible* plastic (wrappers, bags, clingfilm, crisps packets, etc) and are trying hard with labelling to explain this. They should all go in the general waste bin, but often are put in the recycling box, which may mean that it is rejected. Disposable coffee cups can't be recycled either. We led a sermon on the environment on Feb 5th, and hope this has helped encourage everyone to 'reduce – reuse – recycle' and to use the new recycling boxes.

The Big Plastic Count: In May many of us took part in this, counting how many pieces of single-use plastic we used at home over a week. The numbers were enormous, and lead many of us to think about alternatives to single-use plastic, which is difficult to recycle, and is often sent overseas where it may be burnt, causing air pollution.

Encouraging wildlife in the church garden: We took part in 'No-mow May' again with the grass on the slope and at the front of the church. This allows wildflowers to bloom, providing food for bees and other pollinators. The 'slope' area between the church and vicarage was not cut until the end of August. Some of the seed sown last year had germinated, including yellow rattle, which is semi-parasitic to grass, making it less vigorous, so that other plants can flourish. Thanks to all who helped cut and rake the slope.

Repair Fair: A very successful 'Repair Fair' was held on 15th October by Sustainable St Albans in the church hall. 33 items were seen, of which 21 were fixed and only 3 declared 'end of life'. This was equivalent to saving 362kg of CO₂ emissions and 45kg of waste.

Fairtrade: We held a few Traidcraft stalls this year which were very well supported. However, we received the sad news in January that Traidcraft plc is going into administration, due to financial difficulties. Traidcraft was set up in 1979 to promote and sell Fairtrade food and handicrafts, as a Christian response to trade injustice, and has worked hard over the years, helping to establish the Fairtrade logo, increasing the number of Fairtrade goods and getting them sold in supermarkets. We have had Traidcraft stalls at St Johns since 2010 and sold around £5,000 of goods. Thank you to everyone who has supported us, you have helped to make a difference to the lives of many producers around the world. You can continue to buy Fairtrade goods in many supermarkets, cafes etc – the Co-op has a good range. Just look out for the Fairtrade logo.

Travel to Church survey: We held a survey on how people travel to church – walk, cycle, car, and type of car, as part of our church family Carbon Footprint calculation. We were pleasantly surprised at how many people already walk to church or are sharing lifts with others. We will be repeating this later this year.

We are delighted that Ella and Nic have joined the Ecochurch team, with lots of energy and good ideas.

Margaret Charlston, Anne Edwards, Andrew Harbord, Debbie Knight, Martin Myers, Liz Neville, Ella Connolly, Nicola Neville and Tim

FABRIC

Although for this year we had no Fabric Committee, and obviously no meetings took place, various members of the church have been busy maintaining the property in a multitude of ways.

In September 2022 the Quinquennial Inspection took place and was carried out by the recommended church architect who said that the church in general was in a reasonable condition and there were no surprises in this inspection that were not already known about. A detailed report, with photos, has been received and there is a list of tasks and jobs which are prioritised according to a scale. One of the important tasks is to address the damp in the porch; James Hillman and Neil McClure have obtained specialist advice about what can be done.

The sound system and its projected replacement was researched, considered, and discussed at the many meetings held by those who volunteered to deal with this. This is another project planned to enhance our church.

The boilers are outdated and have caused some issues this winter; their replacement also has to be considered carefully too.

Maintenance and safety are always paramount, and inspections for fire safety, lightning conductor, servicing of the boiler, have all taken place on schedule. Broadband has been installed too. High-level gutters cleaned. Low gutters and drains formed part of the tasks of a working party led by Tim; they also swept up autumn leaves as well.

The outside lights have had new bulbs and been re-timed according to the seasons. New bulbs were replaced in the Lady Chapel by Martin Myers - just a few of the ongoing jobs that take place.

The church continues to be cleaned and polished by a team of volunteers, who keep it well. Certain areas are regularly cleaned by this team, and other specified people, who perform tasks that are essential but often unseen and unsung.

The ageing hall roof was the subject of lots of attention and hard work by Paul Bedding, James Hillman, and Neil McClure, whose sterling work staved off the perennial damp for some time.

Anna, and others, as well as Tim, filled two large skips over the summer with unwanted rubbish from the hall, to enable its use by Fusion, the pre-school playgroup. Whilst clearing the overgrown garden, asbestos waste – obviously dumped by persons unknown- was found and had to be disposed of by specialists. Fusion have also done work on the hall garden to facilitate their children's outside play. Various small jobs were completed to make the hall as user-friendly as possible for the various hirers; for example, a new outside light, adjustments to the doors, an enlarged cupboard, and so on. A Hive heating system has been installed in the hall so that heating can be controlled more carefully.

The disposal of waste has been updated by Eco-Church and is working well in both hall and church.

Steve Howard keeps the Memorial Garden and the planted sides in good and colourful order. He works with Eco-Church to encourage wildlife and wild flowers in the grounds. There is now in existence a Policy for Benches with regard to the Garden and the church grounds.

Many more tasks have been undertaken to keep the church and hall in working order and pleasant places to be in. As this report is being written, there are plans for a new Fabric Committee to both continue, and enhance, this important work, especially at a time when the church building celebrates 115 years of existence. Take time to look around in church, in the hall, and outside, to see how much goes into stewarding the property for us, and future generations, to enjoy. Consider if you can help in any small way.

Jane Donati

FAITH AND LIGHT

We have been asking, recently, how long Faith and Light has been running at St John's. The origins seem to be lost in the mists of time, but we have reckoned at least 35 years. We are proud of providing a place of fellowship and worship for so long! Our numbers have dropped considerably since Covid. Many of our members with learning disabilities found the mandatory lockdowns and isolation extremely difficult, as they rely on routine and external activities. Some people have not regained their confidence in the 'outer world'. Some have continued to suffer from poor health. So we number about 20 regular attendees at our monthly gatherings now. But we are still able to enjoy crafts (such as making seasoned salt and salt paintings as we explored being the Salt of the Earth), praying together, and sharing in the teas so generously provided by all the churches of Harpenden. Visitors are welcome, and we would also welcome a few more people on our planning group. Do come along sometime!

Lauryn Awbrey, Chaplain

FLOWER GUILD

Our loyal team of 22 ladies have provided and arranged flowers for the Church throughout the year including those for 2 weddings 3 funerals and 3 memorials. At festivals we all come together to fill every corner of the Church with flowers .

Oasis is now only used for large arrangements and we have an abundant supply of vases and pots which gives rise to a problem of storage as we are short of space.

In July we met up for lunch in the hall to have a chat and get to know each other better .We are always on the lookout for new people to help us enhance the beauty of the Church.

Elizabeth Curran



JUNIOR CHURCH

During 2022 we continued to build junior church following the pandemic and are delighted to report that we have established and grown a core group of regular attenders (of around 28 children). We hold a monthly gathering split into pre schoolers and primary school aged children on the second Sunday of the month. At other times we have worked hard to make children and families feel welcome by providing colouring packs, books and a dedicated children's area at the back of the church. A big thank you to Christine Kenyon for all her hard work on this. Junior church members have played an active part in our worship by doing readings, providing music and reading prayers. We are very proud of them!

Some of our highlights include the nativity in December which was a triumph with lots of children taking part and the epiphany with beautiful music provided by our junior church members. Thank you to Madeleine Venner and Anna Chambers for providing music direction.

We are still seeking a dedicated leader to co-ordinate and lead junior church activities - a big thank you to Lauryn Awbrey who has filled this gap this year.

We also still welcome anybody who wants to volunteer to help out at junior church. We currently have 11 volunteers but require at least 3 per session. This may enable us to run more sessions.'

Naomi Burnett

LITTLE ACORNS

We have had a busy and successful year, but it has not been without its challenges!

Little Acorns meets on a Tuesday morning from 10.00 - 11.30 in the church hall. Over the past year we have had 36 sessions with an average attendance of:

Spring Term 23 children and 25 adults, Summer 22 children and 25 adults and Autumn 27 children and 29 adults.

We have had donations of £129.97, expenditure of £922.40 and donated £120 to the church for the coffee we use.

Revd Tim wrote a prayer which we aim to pray before we start each session and morning prayer has been moved to 9.00 on Tuesdays so that we can attend and pray for Little Acorns.

I would like to thank all the volunteers for their support as without them the group could not run. A special thanks to Steve Whiting for handling the money and Alison Gardiner for producing our spreadsheets, Sophy for her cakes, and Revd Tim for his 100% support.

Over the summer we moved out toys from the committee room to the hall, to accommodate Fusion Preschool. This has made a huge difference in terms of setting up and tidying up. Since September we have shared the hall with the Pre-school.

We have become famous for our homemade cakes and delicious coffee! Sophy's flapjacks are legendary! It doesn't matter how many cakes we have; they always go. We have done a wide variety of activities and aim to celebrate significant Christian festivals as well as national events.

During 2022 we have celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee where activities included corgi races, planting bulbs (which have grown!), and a lovely Christmas service in church where we invited Fusion Preschool to join us. We gave each child a copy of the Christmas story and a chocolate angel. These were much appreciated by all who received one.

I will finish this by adding a few of the positive comments from our recent survey

- Friendly, well organised and a pleasure to be part of this group
- As a nanny it's a nice space to come and meet other nannies
- Very warm, welcoming group
- It's an interesting group. The space, toys and the interactivity make it a fun space
- I like the hot drinks and the selection of cakes.

Christine Kenyon

LIVE STREAMING

We have continued to routinely live stream our services since first starting this activity in November 2020. Now we are mainly an in-Church congregation again numbers watching are much lower, but it still remains a noticeable source of engagement.

During the last 12 months we've had 6,422 views, and of more relevance, 761 hours of viewing; in the last 28 days 392 views and 52 hours of viewing (March 2022: 436 views and 78 hours of viewing). We have 185 subscribers (March 2022: 152).

Our most watched video of the year was the 'A Requiem Eucharist for Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II' on Sunday 11 September. That was watched for 30.9 hours and had 697 views.

An analysis of 2022 Live Streams shows an average watch time of 12.33 hours, which maps, broadly, to an additional in-church congregation of around 10 (the median watch time was 10.49 hours).

A key improvement, effective from 14 December was the install of full fibre into Church. This has made the live stream much more stable and enabled us to broadcast it a higher resolution; it has therefore removed the 'frisson' of danger that live stream operators previously faced with short term outages on the live stream (the full fibre connection is also used for the Parish Office).

Most recently, we have suffered some issues with connecting to the sound system due to software changes on the devices we use, but this has not prevented us live streaming, nor does it impact stability.

The planned Sound system update described below will include a feed for the live stream and this is expected to improve audio quality.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow live streaming crew for their support in delivering our live streams ~ if you are interested in joining us, please do get in contact.

Neil Middleton

MUSIC AT ST JOHN'S

Having been at St John's for some forty-nine years, by the time you read this report I shall have left my post and moved on. However, during this considerable period of time it has been my privilege and pleasure to help with the provision of music for the church both in worship and in many concerts.

The recent period following the pandemic has been challenging for churches and for (church) musicians generally as we have attempted to rekindle what had been lost and to rethink future provisions. This has included both the opportunities and challenges presented by live-streaming and also, in our case, the additional difficulties created by the constraining layout of our building.

Against this problematic backdrop, I am very pleased that, once regulations permitted, we were gradually able to move from having solo cantors (whom I would like to thank for their valued part in reintroducing vocal music to our services), to succeeding in rebuilding our choir to the point where it has again functioned as a fully-fledged group of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. I would like to express my sincerest thanks to all of them for all that they have contributed over so many years, but, even more particularly, for their good humour and willingness to be flexible in what has often proved to be difficult circumstances for them in these recent times.

It has also been very good to see and hear the Junior Music taking shape recently and my thanks go to Anna and Madeleine for all that they have done in enabling this to happen.

Additionally, I would, like to record my huge gratitude for all the organ playing support which I've had over the years from Derek, Terry and Tom.

It has always been a huge encouragement to have been part of such a supportive congregation, who have so often expressed their appreciation of what we have attempted to do, and this has been a large part of the joy of working here.

As I transition to another chapter of my life in making music in churches where my experience can be of help and use, it is my sincere hope that, in the decades to come, worship at St John's will still be a place where well ordered liturgy and quality music are valued.

Roger Carter, February 2023

PARISH MAGAZINE

Over the year, under the guidance of Revd Tim and the Communications Committee, the content of the Parish Magazine has been gently repositioned with the aim of outreach. Shorter articles, wider focus, more images and a forward-looking emphasis are intended to attract Southdown readers who are not regular church-goers, as well as appeal to the present congregation. The change has been generally well-received.

Editorship was handed from Sophie Crowley to Sarah Allen for Spring and Summer 2022, and then to Susan Kerr for Autumn 2022 and continuing, all using the same designer, Martyn Wainwright. Tighter liaison with the Parish Office has enabled Anna Chambers to secure timely delivery from the printer, so coordination by Steve Whiting of the deliveries to some 4,000 Southdown homes and businesses is smoother. The delivery volunteers are vital to the outreach to the community. The magazine is posted on St John's website as well.

The cost of producing the magazine continues to exceed the revenue from advertising. Comms group explored options to improve this (number of pages, change of printer, change of advert/editorial ratio). No way to reduce costs was found. The conclusion was that the spend provides a valuable representation of St John's Church in Southdown, our presence and service, over four seasons of the year.

Susan Kerr, Editor

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral Care, showing compassion to those around us, is something for all of us. However, in any organisation a group of people is needed to make sure no one accidentally falls through the gaps. For that reason we decided to set up a Pastoral Visiting team at St John's.

In early 2022 ten people took part in Pastoral Visitor Training, and Diocesan Training Course for Pastoral Visiting, which was led by Revd Tim. As a result of that training, the following felt called, along with the Vicar, to assist in pastoral visiting with the Parish:

David Nye, Heather Nye, Bryan Coventry, Anne Edwards, Revd Tim.

They were commissioned during a Parish Eucharist on 31st July 2022. The Team meet quarterly to discuss visiting, and all pastoral visits are logged using a special google docs form.

Please do get in touch if you, or someone you know, would like a visit.

PROJECT PHOENIX

Following the hiatus in progress due to the pandemic, the project was re-launched at the Patronal Festival service on 26th June. Illustrated boards telling the story of St John's from the Paper Church to the present day were displayed around the church. The re-launch focussed on taking the next step in faith together to build our new Parish Centre.

Momentum built during the autumn with several successful fund-raising events.

- After many months of hard work by a small team led by Heather Nye, St John's Cook Book was launched on Harvest Sunday and proved extremely popular. The 500 copies, sold at £10 each, went like hot cakes and raised a total of £3752.
- In September, a very entertaining Quiz Night with Fish & Chip supper and a raffle was hosted by Paul & Debbie Bedding and Anna Chambers and raised £1600.
- Over the weekend of 19th & 20th November, we held the beautifully presented Photographic Exhibition, organised by Carol Cooke and husband Brian who is an internationally recognised photographer. Delicious refreshments were served by the Mothers' Union. Together with Sophie Crowley's concert in church, they raised £834.
- St John's Christmas Cards, designed by Liz Sergeant (pack of 10 for £5) raised £480.

In total, the funds for the Project as of December 2022 stand at just over £285,000 with over £215,000 more in pledges.

The Steering Committee has been reinvigorated with new members Andrew Ballard and Tracey Wilkins from Fusion Pre-School joining Tim, Liz Sergeant and Neil McClure. Each person has a focus on a particular aspect of the project – Neil - technical/building ; Liz – fundraising events; Andrew – grants and funding, and Tracy – community liaison.

In addition, Andrew has agreed to oversee our team of Ambassadors whose role is to hold 1-to-1 meetings with church members to encourage pledges to the project.

The cost of living crisis means that this is a particularly difficult time financially for many people, and we are very grateful to everyone who continues to support the project with pledges and donations.

As well as the financial situation, the other key issue we are currently facing concerns Planning permission. The permission granted in 2019 has now expired, as three years have passed without construction work starting due to Covid. The original planning documentation was therefore resubmitted in September 2022. At the time of writing in February 2023, we are still waiting for a date for our application to be reviewed in committee by St Albans District Council.

Meanwhile, the current church hall continues to decline, and a new Parish Centre is needed more than ever. As always, we ask for your prayers and support as we consider our next steps.

Key Project Milestones - achieved

September 2019 – Planning permission granted by St Albans District Council

February 2020 – Fundraising launch party

April 2020 – Fundraising total from donations and pledges (including Gift Aid) - £500,000

June 2022 – Relaunch of the project

September 2022 – Planning Application resubmitted

Autumn 2022 – fund raising events begin again

Liz Sergeant, February 2023

SACRISTAN'S UPDATE

I imagine few people think about the background work that goes on in church to enable services to run smoothly. I have to admit I had no idea until I started this job that one of the weekly tasks is to

make sure there are plenty of wafers counted out and the wine flagon is full, the candles are oiled and the silver is shining.

The job also includes laundering the cloths used during communion and a wonderful group of ladies do this. They take on the task for a month at a time and if you feel you would like to help please do let me know. Thank you ladies!

However my biggest thanks go to Warren who is a fabulous deputy if I am away. Thank you so much Warren.

Heather Nye
January 2023

ST LUKE'S CELL

St Luke's Cell is a prayer group dedicated to praying for people in any kind of need. It has members both at St John's and Southdown Methodist Church.

The St Luke's Cell list is of people in the parish or relatives or friends of those living in the parish who are in particular need, and for whom our prayers have been asked. St Luke's Cell Prayer Group are always happy to pray for you (confidentially if needed).

The group is named after the disciple and physician Luke, who is the patron saint of doctors. A request can be as simple as a name, if preferred. We don't need to know details in order to pray. Each of us prays for a small number of people on the list, moving to a further group each month. This last year we have begun meeting in person again, on the second Wednesday of each month in the Church Hall Committee room at 2.30 pm. We also keep in touch by email and phone. Would you like us to pray for you? You can get in touch with the parish office, a member of the ministry team or with Michael Hughes (01582 765576) from the group.

SERVERS UPDATE

Servers have an important role to play in the life of the Church because they assist the Celebrant at the altar so that they can focus on their role in the Eucharist. They play a key part in public worship in ensuring that the service runs smoothly, thus enabling the congregation to focus on the important elements of the Eucharist.

We continue to build the serving team and are now fortunate to have seven adult and nine younger servers, although more are welcome. We need to recruit some more adults to the team, particularly for the 8am service.

Michael Readman
February 2023

SOUND SYSTEM

It is planned to replace the current system this year with a system that is more reliable and better suited to our requirements. The loudspeaker system will be replaced in order to make speech more easily heard. There will also be a hearing loop provided for the hard of hearing. A demonstration of the new system was given in June last year, and we are now awaiting approval from the the Diocesan Approvals Committee (DAC) to give us a faculty for the new system.

Volunteers are sought to operate the sound system at the 9:30 Eucharist, making sure that the levels are correct and that the appropriate microphones are live. There are other services where an operator is required on an occasional basis, such as carol services. It is quite straightforward and training will be given, and there is no need for detailed technical knowledge. It is anticipated that when the new system goes live there will be one operator for both the sound and live stream elements combined.

Michael Readman
February 2023

TEA@3

Tea at Three has been running for nearly ten years now and it has enjoyed much success and strong attendance. Although, understandably, the weather plays a major part in the head count seeing slightly lower numbers in the cold or wet winter months.

For those unfamiliar with this event, we (a team of St John's volunteers) hold an afternoon tea in the hall at three o'clock on the last Friday of every month for those in the parish seeking company and succour. Our bone china crockery and home-made cakes and sandwiches are much appreciated and the amount of tea that is consumed is impressive. It is a most friendly and happy occasion.

At the beginning of this venture most of those attending were members of the church congregation but over the years those without a connection to St Johns have joined us also.

Our tea in December, held earlier than usual on the 16th, was celebrating Christmas and as it fell during one of the worst bouts of cold weather this winter, we held it in the smaller, warmer Committee Room. Madeleine Venner and her merry choir of youngsters provided a much-enjoyed small carol concert and our guest joined in with fervour! Considering the snow and the cold we were very pleased to have a good turnout of nearly 20 guests and a good number of helpers.

No charge is made for these teas but a well-placed dish by the door receives kind donations. When necessary, we give lifts where needed.

It is a pleasure be involved in this event and the stories and anecdotes that we hear from these senior members of our society are inspirational and uplifting.

Briony Linsell
January 2023