

Administration and Management Report for 2015

The committee met four times during 2015 and reported back to the PCC members via the meeting minutes and at PCC meetings.

The group's brief is to discuss and where appropriate recommend action, or take action on items referred to us, by the PCC.

Some of the main jobs completed and topics discussed, are listed below.

Buildings and Maintenance

Completed during 2015

- *AK Marshall serviced all gas boilers appliances on Church premises..*
- *Lightning conductors annual check by external company.*
- *Fire fighting equipment checks (by external company with certificate issued). Also 'hands on' experience given to church members.*
- *ADT alarm annual maintenance.*
- *Cyclical maintenance days (Spring and Autumn)*
- *Hedge cutting on Blinco Grove and Hills Road boundarys.*
- *Purchased additional smoke alarms – installed by Thompson Electrical (now 11 units).*
- *Removal of (unsafe) Church flagpole*
- *Repairs / modification of No. 1 safe – by Ron Huntsman.*
- *Locking back chain and padlock fitted to Wilkinson Room acoustic screen.*
- *Up dating of Conditions of Hire Booklet for room hirers from 1st April 2015.*
- *Community Rooms landing and stairwell emergency lighting units replaced.*
- *Training - refresher courses carried out for wardens and sidespeople. An H&S requirement every two years.*
- *Fitting of three CO Detectors located by water heater boilers and also central heating twin boilers in Wilkinson Room cupboard.*

Items discussed

- Church accessibility Issues (ongoing)..
- Kitchen upgrade (current position).
- Showing of fire DVD's.
- 2013 Quinquennial report re-visited to check on position for completion of necessary work.
- Training requirements for Clergy, wardens and deputy wardens on smoke and heat alarm checks and also disarming in the event of an incident.
- EF Language School – position now they have more classrooms and are using the Church only intermittently.
- Room hire criteria for 'public meetings.
- Carpet behind nave altar, replacement required as it was deemed to be a 'hazard'.
- Discussions to clarify site signage and discuss timescale to implement.

Peter West

Monday Evening Bible Study Group

We are a small friendly group made up of Children's Church leaders. With the support of Sue, Julie and now Petra, our Bible study group meets fortnightly on a Monday evening. Trainee ordinands often join us and we very much value their input and knowledge of the Bible. We enjoy studying texts relating to our forthcoming teaching in Children's Church; not only does it help us in our leadership skills but increases our own knowledge of the Bible. We usually end the session in group prayer.

Janet Tankard/Mel Bolye

Tuesday Bible Study Group

This group of about 8 parishioners meets on Tuesdays at 10.30am in the Wilkinson room. It is a lively group of people who are interested to find out what the Bible said to 1st century Christians and what it says to Christians today. We are concerned to find out how the church developed, what problems they had and what solutions were found. We also look at how the solutions worked for the people in the first Christian groups.

Obviously these concerns are closely connected with the cultural background of converts, so we get to know about that too following the ideas and information in books by Tom Wright who also poses interesting questions that we can discuss and follow up. This is certainly not a group of experts but it is a group of curious Christians which anyone can join and contribute to.

The second topic we have discussed this year is connected with the alarming drop of committed Christians discovered in recent surveys into church allegiance and church attendance. We used a series of DVDs about being in the Front Line. Topics highlighted for our prayer and discussion were how we reach people who need the strength and confidence that the church can offer to people who are lost and lonely in our society and how we can continue to support them when they have shown interest. Out of this has come the idea and scheme to make and keep in contact with the housebound parishioners in the parish especially in the interregnum when Sue goes.

So the Bible group is certainly not for academics only. A warm welcome is guaranteed for all.

Margaret Parry

Children's Church Report for the APCM 2016

Children's Church has had a good year, with lots of children and lots of helpers! Many families attend every week, (also coming to All Age services and Messy Church), there have been several church baptisms this year, and new families who are becoming committed members of the church.

The children benefit from dedicated and enthusiastic leaders who provide a safe and comfortable environment each week in which the children can learn about God and the Bible, explore and deepen their faith and ask big questions. Thank you to our great team of helpers – Sian, Janet and KC who lead Raindrops, the group for children aged 5 and under; Mel and Sarah with Fountains, the middle group of 5-8 year olds; and Jeremy who leads the 8+ group, Waterfalls.

We were all really sad to say goodbye to Sam last summer as he left Cambridge to start his medical training, but wish him well and thank him for his invaluable and generous contribution to Children's Church, leading the singing on his guitar and alternating with Jeremy in the leadership of Waterfalls. We hope he will continue to come back in his holidays as he did at Christmas!

However, we are thankful and blessed that Fiona Richards has kindly offered to play the piano for our introductory worship, and that Jo Hart, Anne Rigby and Sara Bishop have come forward to help lead in the groups. It is really great to have enough helpers so that the same people are not obliged to be there every week.

This year we have continued with the regular group sessions using Scripture Union material, but also added in some All Age sessions with all the children joining together for songs and activities related to a particular theme. We started with S.A.M., a sponsored event on the theme of Mission to raise money for Sam's trip to the Philippines. We have since had fun mornings thinking about the Armour of God, Bible Sunday and Pentecost. We will continue with this pattern, enabling the children to have fun together while learning and thinking about important events in the church year or themes in the Bible.

All the leaders will be joining a Diocesan course this term, to be held at St John's, entitled *Core Skills for Children's Work*. We are excited about joining with other children's church leaders from across the diocese to think about team work, child development and spirituality amongst other topics.

The children did a marvellous job of leading both the All Age Worship in July on the theme of the Lord's Prayer, and the Christmas Day service, providing a different take on the Nativity story but enabling the congregation to join in with much loved Christmas carols. We are looking forward to leading the February All Age service when we will be thinking about Christian love on Valentine's Day.

Lucy Holden

Choir Report for APCM 2016

2015 was a busy year for the choir, leading all the major services at St John's as usual.

Membership

The trebles are enthusiastically following the RSCM Voice for Life training scheme. Theo has succeeded Helen as Head Chorister and Emilie has been appointed as Team Leader. Theo has achieved the Dean's chorister award this year. We were grateful to St. John's for hosting these Diocesan exams in our own vestry! We currently have thirteen children (under the age of 18) in the choir. Ten of them make up the treble line and we are pleased to have three former trebles now singing tenor and bass. It is a delight to have the front rows full of children, the only challenges being supplying cassocks of the right sizes and enough copies of music! We sadly said 'Goodbye' to Eddie and J-C this year.

We are continuing to build up a body of occasional members who are unable to commit to the weekly rehearsal schedule but have been able to join us for occasional services throughout the year.

The fellowship of the choir has been greatly enhanced by our regular social events this year. These have included socialising together after evensong, a summer garden party and Sunday lunches together.

Outreach

This year's performance was our most ambitious yet. After many months of rehearsing, the choir performed Gilbert and Sullivan's "HMS Pinafore" to a packed church. This was directed by Suzanne and accompanied by Roger and Pamela with set designed by Joseph. It was a huge success both socially and financially. It was also nice to welcome back former choristers Charlotte and Edward B who took lead roles in the performance.

On Palm Sunday this year we sang Stainer's "Crucifixion". Joseph and Roger were the soloists under the direction of former chorister Edward L. It was felt that this was a good way to start Holy week and we would like to continue to offer something similar next year.

We have sung at several weddings this year which has really enhanced the ceremony and supported the wedding guests in the singing of the hymns.

The choir has served as a visible presence in the community this Christmas with carol singing for a variety of audiences at Morley School, Hollies home, and the Rock pub. It was lovely for us to sing outside of St. John's and we were made most welcome at each venue. The Hollies home have very kindly donated their digital piano to St. John's as a mark of appreciation for all that the visiting group have done for them.

The choir continues to take an active part in the diocesan choir festivals at Ely Cathedral and King's college Chapel. We are proud of Benji and Theo who both sang solos at the choir festival at King's this year.

The choir continues to offer hospitality to Homerton Charter Choir who sing evensong weekly during term time.

Finance

The choir have remained financially self sufficient in terms of all the activities we organise in addition to supporting worship. This year our income has come from our "HMS Pinafore" performance, wedding fees, and our termly cake stalls. We have spent money on music, robes, chorister exams and diocesan choir festivals. We are most grateful to the congregation for their support of the choir.

Future

Next year we shall continue to lead the musical worship at St John's. We hope that our trebles will continue to work through the RSCM training scheme and some may achieve awards from Ely Diocese.

I am hugely grateful to Roger Lilley for acting as Assistant Director of Music throughout the year.

Elizabeth Trenchard

Church Fairs Report

Both the Summer Fair in June and Christmas Fair at the end of November seem like dim and distant – and very pleasant memories. Both were lovely social events bringing in a mixture of people, as well as adding some tidy sums to the coffers. The Summer Fair saw the consumption of a record number of cream teas – at least it would have been a record, if we had not lost count! There was also the most amazing Hamper Raffle with hampers provided by each of the many groups active within the church.

Due to a clash of bookings, it was decided to hold the Christmas Fair entirely in the Church, which turned out to be an unexpected success – there was a lovely atmosphere – quite a buzz – with people milling about at the stalls and enjoying their tea/coffee and cake. Due to the success of the Hamper Raffle it was decided to hold the “Great Christmas Stocking Raffle” with stockings again, kindly provided by the different church groups.

As yet a date has not been set for the Summer Fair. This is largely because an ‘official’ committee does not exist and the last few Fairs, Winter and Summer, have fallen on the shoulders of a small and already busily overstretched few. What is proposed for this year is to try to get a group of around six people to oversee the organisation and running of the Fairs. This does not mean doing everything, but facilitating the bookings and advertising, the stalls and getting the people together for the day, etc. It would be a shame to lose something so traditionally part of parish life and that everyone enjoys so much, so if you feel you could contribute in any way, particularly if you feel you could be a part of the group overseeing the organisation, or could run or man/woman a stall, please do have a word with either Sue or myself, or with Lucy Holden or one of the Church Wardens. Let’s do it!

Petra Shakeshaft

Curate’s Report for the APCM 2016

It feels slightly surreal reading through the report I wrote for last year’s APCM to find that so much of it still remains true and yet how much has changed and to realise how much has happened.

The biggest change for me this year was my ordination to the priesthood in July. The service at Ely Cathedral was incredibly powerful – I could never have anticipated how moved I would feel as my hands were crossed with oil by the bishop. It was wonderful later to spill out onto the grass in front of the Cathedral and to see so many familiar faces from St John’s as well as from St Mary’s in Sawston, and from other churches and places from my near and distant past.

Nor could I have anticipated the sense of privilege and joy I would feel, not just that first time of celebrating the Eucharist, but that each and every time I am moved and filled with a sense of gratitude that God would trust me with this ministry with these people.

A year on the sense of place and rhythm are both more familiar. I found it strange at first being in a building of such different proportions and colour from the medieval churches I was used to and it took time to ‘find my own space’ within it. The people too are more familiar – thank goodness I have managed to learn some names – I still get tripped up occasionally, so please forgive me if my mind seems to go blank! I am much better at remembering conversations and shared moments and have so enjoyed getting to know so many of you better. It is so lovely to be welcomed into your homes, to occasionally bump into you in the street or more often in Balzano’s and to chat after church on Sunday.

Conversation is also a special part of many of the groups I am involved in. I can hardly believe that talking, singing, playing and praying with toddlers and their mums/dads/grandmas/grandads

on a Monday morning is actually called work! It has also been good to see the Tuesday morning Bible Study group grow and flourish, despite one or two members no longer being able to come. Again the conversation is good and we have tackled some very difficult and challenging Bible passages, always relating the Scripture to our lives and experiences and to the world today. 'There is nothing new under the sun' and human beings seem never to learn. Thank goodness for the grace of God.

One aspect of all the groups which I have been a part of or have visited (too many to name them all) is the mutual support and kindness offered and the flourishing of relationships within the group and it is really encouraging to see so much 'informal ministry' going on within the groups and after services, meetings, etc. I spend quite a bit of time with the choir too, chiefly because Eleanor is a member, though it is a special treat to be able to have a mid-week sing with them at rehearsals and to get to know the members better - and how exciting to see so many new small members! I really appreciate the commitment that Elizabeth, Suzanne and Roger make to the children of choir as well as the huge support from other adults. It is so important to preserve these God-given skills and traditions and love for making music together, which are ours not to possess but to pass on to the next generation. This is equally true of all work with children and it is wonderful that here, at St. John's there is such a committed team of people who work with Children's Church, Toddle Along and Messy play, headed up by Lucy, who has, over the last year in particular, become another valued, generous colleague from whom I have learned much. It is also very special to be honoured with the more 'difficult', personal conversations and confidences and again I feel privileged to be trusted by you and to be entrusted with this ministry by God. It is a privilege too, to be invited into stranger's homes following the death of a loved one and to be entrusted with helping the process of mourning, of remembering and healing; to be entrusted with the words of the church, spoken in some form for hundreds of years and to witness the power of the words to begin to restore people, even during a short time.

Of course, another great change during this last year was the departure of Julie and for Sue and I, the loss of a dear and generous colleague. This year will see another great change as Sue leaves us in June. For me personally this will be the loss of another dear and valued colleague, teacher and confidante. While the Churchwardens will bear the day to day responsibility for the running of the church it is inevitably going to alter my own pattern of work. There will be things I do now that I simply will not be able to do. As well as my commitment to St John's I am also committed to completing my training and all that entails. I am immensely grateful for the warmth, the support and encouragement which you have shown me over the last (almost) two years and I look forward to serving you and working with you in the year ahead. Who knows what changes there will be by next year.

Petra Shakeshaft

Flower Arranging Report

Flowers in church over the past year have once again be supplied and arranged by the ladies on the church flower rota. Judging by the appreciative comments made by the congregation, these have been much admired and the ladies can feel proud of their efforts.

During Church Festivals all the ladies supply flower arrangements for the window-sills, willingly giving their time and skills. These are also admired and appreciated by the congregation.

We are always looking for more volunteers to join the flower rota. This involves supplying and arranging flowers at the altar on four or five Sundays in the year.

Olive Langley

Healing Prayer Group, St John The Evangelist Church, March APCM 2016

Who are we? Four members of the congregation always ready to welcome others to the prayer circle.

How long has the group existed? Well actually many years, back to the time when Philippa and Rosemary Guillebaud, two Third World Bible translators, were alive and it has continued ever since.

How often do we meet? Monthly on the second Thursday afternoon (although not during the Summer months of July and August).

What time do we meet? For one hour between 1.30pm and 2.30pm.

Where do we meet? At present at number 77 Hartington Grove.

Why do we meet? We meet together to pray for our Clergy, our Ordinands, Choir and Organist, Children's Church, those listed on the pew sheet and for any requests that we receive.

What is the format? After an extended break of a few months we agreed to think about the future format of the service that we use. June went into action and following her research she came up with a Celtic Healing Service from The Order of Jacob's Well in Wales. We also have a lighted candle and our Bibles.

June Huntsman, Margaret Parry, Chris Plunkett-West

Health & Safety Report for 2015

Completed during 2015

- *Routine internal checks carried out on 'Smoke / Heat alarms*
- *Routine internal emergency lighting checks in community rooms area.*
- *Routine internal fire fighting equipment checks.*
- *Faulty PIR lamps replaced as necessary in car park, EF boundary and above choir vestry door.*
- *Gas appliance checks including Church and Community Room boilers carried out, by external company, with issue of 'landlords certificate.*
- *Fire extinguisher checks and unit replacements where appropriate, carried out by external company.*
- *PAT testing carried out, by an external company on all portable electrical appliances, fitted with 13 Amp plugs.*

- *Procedures and forms issued (for the 1st time *) also updated and re-issued ones where appropriate including:-*
 - *Evacuation of the Church **STJ 4** **
 - *Checking smoke and Heat alarms **STJ5***
 - *Large Services / Events in the Church **STJ 6** **

- *Use of Fire Fighting Equipment STJ 16 **
- *Testing the Fire bell STJ 20*
- *Checking emergency torches. STJ21*
- *Panic Alarm Buttons STJ 22*
- *Checking of site CO detectors. STJ 24*
- *Internal monthly checks on Fire Fighting equipment STJFM01 (Form)*
- *Internal weekly / monthly checks on smoke / heat alarms STJFM 02 (Form)*
- *Internal monthly checks on emergency lighting STJFM03 (Form)*
- *Internal biannual Checks of Panic Alarms STJFM05 (Form)*
- *Internal monthly checks on CO Detectors STJFM08 (Form)*

Items discussed

- ♦ Changing PAR 38 filament bulbs to LED's. a trial 5 LED's were installed with success. It was agreed to purchase further LED's for the whole church; for installation in 2016
- ♦ Health & safety training for three members of congregation required.
- ♦ A further Fire Exit sign to be purchased, for use above middle Narthex door when appropriate.

Peter West

Knitters Report

At St John's we continue a tradition of knitting (or some crochet) blankets or the needy that started in 1984 in response to the Band Aid initiative. Since then, our comfort blankets* have been distributed to missions in Africa (mainly Malawi) and Europe. During the past year the main recipient of our output has been The Children in Distress charity which cares for children of all races and religions and its work crosses all ethnic and religious boundaries in order to achieve its aim: to cure, sometimes; to help, often; to *comfort, always. A pair of size 8/4mm knitting needles, DK (double knitting) wool and a little of your time is all it takes to craft the 24 squares – 6”x6” – that make up each blanket. If you feel you could support this worthy effort in some way please speak to Tricia James in church.

Tricia James

Parish Magazine

This year there have been some changes to the Parish Magazine. After several years of devoted work, Michael Fincham relinquished his role as Editor to allow himself time to grow into his new role as Churchwarden. The new editors – Liz Radice and Paula Wolff – are both very grateful to Michael for the help he gave them during the transition period and for the continued support he offers.

The magazine contains a range of regular features – service details, letters from the clergy, notices of forthcoming events etc, but we are also keen for it to grow as a medium for all members of the congregation to make contributions. Some examples might be reports on church events, local interest stories or particular prayers or poems that have inspired you. From February

2016 we have also adopted a new style colour cover on a slightly heavier paper, as well as tweaking the format of some of the regular features.

We receive an income from advertising and produce and photocopy the magazine in-house. The cover price remains 40p each (£4.40 for 11 editions per year) and we thank Cherry Hopkins who oversees distribution and Lyn Harrison who co-ordinates advertising and photocopying. There are also teams of volunteers who collate, staple and deliver the magazine each month and again we are very thankful that they give up their time for the benefit of the magazine.

In the future, we hope that the magazine will become bigger, better and even perhaps more colourful!

*Paula Wolff
Liz Radice*

St John's Men's Breakfast – report for APCM 2016

Women and men are created equal and most church activities should be open to all, regardless of gender. But church attendance patterns suggest that there is a need for churches to be better at accommodating men. Against this background, the St John's Men's Breakfast aims to create a context for friendship, pastoral support and spiritual growth. It is often only when personal crisis strikes that we appreciate the importance of these things. Attendance is around 12-20, the frequency is around 3-4 per year, the venue is either the Heslam's or the Rock Pub, and the speaker is a volunteer amongst one of the men. We have discussed a variety of themes and have been challenged and inspired by the stories of struggle and faith that have been shared. Surplus donations made at the breakfast support **We See Hope** (formerly Hope HIV), a charity working with orphans in Africa. Consequently, our breakfasts help provide theirs.

Peter Heslam

Messy Church for APCM

We start 2016 with a lifesize stable at the back of the church, the latest giant masterpiece to be created out of cardboard at a Messy Church! Our Christmas Messy Church followed the church's Advent theme of SONG, and we had a wonderful afternoon making things to do with Christmas carols, eating a Food of the Bible picnic with the children sitting in boxes at the back of church (see photos for explanation!) and praising God in songs of our own! I think the sight of Tricia in her Christmas jumper and earrings is something we should have on the door at all our Christmas services!

Messy Church couldn't have continued for so long and become such a part of St John's church life if it weren't for all the wonderful people who turn out time and time again on a Saturday to welcome families, help with crafts, music and food. We would like to thank everyone who comes to help, and also those who kindly give their time to bake and bring food to share.

As with Toddle Along we hope to attract more families to Messy Church this year and hope you will help us in spreading the word. We will meet as usual at 10am on Good Friday for our Easter Messy Church and then again in the summer holidays.

I would like to thank Sue for being so enthusiastic at the initial idea of bringing Messy Church to St John's and her ongoing support. I think it gives such a good message out to all who come to see the vicar in attendance, joining in, welcoming and (often) sweeping up glitter. We will miss her leading us in the Messy Grace!

Lucy Holden

Mission Action Planning 2015

The Mission Action Planning Group aims to help St John's discern the way forward – what our vision is and where we should be investing our energy and resources. There are always plenty of ideas; the hard work is in determining priorities. The group reports regularly to the PCC

The members of the group are: Derek Swanson, Roger Lilley, Suzanne Barton, Sian Binley, Rachel Gray, Peter Tavner, Petra Shakeshaft and Sue Wyatt but from time to time there are open meetings to which the PCC and wider congregation are invited.

In the past year the key areas for development in the long term were summarised as:

- Growing in confidence in the Christian faith and encouraging a 'cradle to grave' spirituality.
- Developing a sense of community within the church.
- Developing a presence in the parish
- Making church the focus of the community.
- Supporting neighbouring churches.

Also the Diocesan Strategy has been launched in the past year. The vision of the Diocese is 'We pray to be generous and visible people of Jesus Christ'. The strategy for achieving this has what are called '5 levers for change':

To:

- Nurture a confident people of God
- Develop healthy churches and leaders
- Serve the community
- Re-imagine our buildings
- Target support to key areas

The overlap between St John's priorities and the Diocesan strategy is clear so we are working under the Diocesan headings to determine what is now termed our Development Action Plan.

Examples of developments that illustrate the above headings and that have happened In the past year are:

- 4 members of the church have attended a Discipleship Course which was organised by the Diocese
- 3 people are actively engaged in, or exploring, formal lay leadership training
- Rock Allotment Society decorated the church at Harvest.
- Links with educational establishments have continued to grow and deepen
- Discussions have moved forward with regard to improving the kitchen toilets and accessibility
- Lay and clergy support has been given to our neighbouring partnership churches of St James' and St Andrew's while they are in a time of interregnum.

The key projects for immediate action are:

- **‘Celebrating St John’s’** – a service in January aimed at letting everyone explore the diversity of groups and activities that comprise the life of the church at St John’s.
- **‘Prayer 48’** – 2 days of continuous prayer in the church between 7pm on Friday May and 7pm on Sunday May . All in the parish will be given cards inviting written prayers that will be offered in that 48 hour period. All will be welcome to come to the church to pray during those 48 hours. There will be various services during that time with a focus on prayer.
- **Supporting our neighbouring partnership churches** who are in a period of interregnum

Projects for the future include::

- **Kitchen, toilets and accessibility** – the proposed changes to the kitchen and other areas will require resources of time, energy and finances.
- **‘Companions Extra’** to increase the frequency of meetings aimed for those who are at home during the day, particularly the elderly
- **Developing our relationships with St James’ and St Andrew’s** supporting the new clergy in all three parishes
- **Faith sharing** - encouraging people to share the stories of their faith, through interview in services, in the magazine, on the website, etc.

Membership of MAP is not limited to PCC members. If you are interested to know more please speak to any of the present members of this group.

Sue Wyatt

Overseas Mission, Report for the ACPM, 2016

The committee’s short and productive meetings are held three or four times a year to discuss and make decisions on matters concerning the Church’s overseas mission partners and other mission topics. The members in 2015 were Sue Wyatt (Chair), Dominic Barton, Jane Henry, June Huntsman, Katie Knapton, Roger Lilley and Derek Swanson.

Receipts of donations to overseas mission work in 2015, including Gift Aid, totalled £5,135 (2014 - £6,199) and our payments were £8,433 (2014 - £4,541). Last year we reported a balance of £9,000, adding that this would enable us to increase payments to some mission partners and to give one-off additional payments to others.

During the year we:

- gave £3,000 to Christian Aid’s Syria Appeal
- adopted a new mission partner, Iraqi Christians in Need
- increased the monthly donation to our CMS Link Partners in India and gave them a financial gift after their visit to St John’s.

- sent a cheque to Keppleway, following the outbreak of civil war in Burundi, in reply to their appeal for contributions to their fund for humanitarian assistance.

The new balance brought forward will enable us to make additional donations as needed.

We have good communications with all overseas mission partners and receive reports from them all, some more regular than others.

Reports on our Mission Partners

Robert Imbali/Kids to Kids, Nairobi

Having supported Robert financially since he was a young boy to enable him to study, it was agreed in 2015 that funding should cease and be channelled in other directions.

Kids to Kids continue to receive support, largely funded by Children's Church.

St Peter's Happiness Nursery School, Arua, Uganda

The school continues to struggle to make ends meet from pupil fees and payments from St John's. We are their only outside source of funds, which are stretched as parents find it difficult to pay the fees and there is a constant threat of thieving from outside. The head teacher and staff are determined to continue to educate young children, particularly girls who too often have no future beyond marriage when very young to much older husbands. The political unrest in South Sudan impinges on the lives of people in Northern Uganda adding even more challenges to the school.

Christ the Saviour Church, Lentegur, South Africa

The St John's Hands of Hope committee now administers the donations we send and keep us informed about their plans. They offer bursaries to enable children to continue secondary and tertiary education and also support community-based projects within the parish. They aim to distribute the money evenly amongst deserving and qualifying applicants to ensure that as many as possible can benefit. There are calls from many church groups for funds.

CMS Link Partnership

Kylie and Bhim Bahadur, our mission partners, accompanied by their son Joshua, visited us in May during their tour of supporting parishes. They gave an illustrated talk in church about their work to reduce human trafficking and child labour in Kampilong, one of the most inaccessible parts of north-east India. After the service the Overseas Mission Committee entertained them to lunch at the Huntsman's home. Now back in India they continue to train local people to share their work and to spread their message throughout the area.

We receive regular emails from them in addition to their newsletters sent via the CMS.

Bethesda Project, Burundi

The civil war in Burundi is having a devastating effect on the country and claiming many lives. The situation is desperate in the capital Bujumbura but less so in Muyinga where the Bethesda Project is located. They continue some of their activities for people with disabilities, having moved to the relative safety of land close to the Cathedral.

ICIN (Iraqi Christians in Need)

Founded in 2007, our new Mission Partner addresses the basic needs of Iraqi Christians displaced within Iraq and in neighbouring countries by providing financial support to those in greatest need and by working with local bodies that provide medical care and primary & adult education.

*Katie Knapton
January 2016*

Parish Walks 2015-2016

There have been 4 Parish Walks this year, April, May, June 2015 and September 2015. The walks have been on well known routes. Mostly there have been two people on each walk. An article was put in the February Parish Voice to see if someone would like to take over the leading of the walks.

David Waterhouse

Pastoral Report January 20th 2016

VISITING in the parish

There has been continued and sustained emphasis on the pastoral care at St John's, due mainly to a stalwart and dedicated team of visitors, both lay and ordained. We have aimed at visiting the house bound, sick and lonely on a regular basis. The team has included three clergy, the ALM and eight lay visitors.

HOME COMMUNION has been regularly administered usually on a monthly basis to seven parishioners by Rev Petra Shakeshaft, Rev. John Hillier and June Huntsman. Until mid-December 2015, regular monthly Home Communion was taken into the Hollies; also a monthly service of hymn singing by Tricia James but this has now ceased, as the Home was closed in mid-December. The Hollies Residential Home has been part of the life of St John's for the past seventeen years. The links we have formed through our visits, together with that of the Choir who sang carols each Christmas to the residents, their relatives and the staff, have been much appreciated. As a token of this appreciation Mr Philip Curtis the owner, has donated their piano to St John's. This has been very gratefully received and now resides in the Wilkinson Room as a reminder of their link with us.

COMPANIONS

The format has not changed during this year, which has involved an opening hymn, 'thought for the afternoon' usually given by a member of the clergy and then a speaker is announced - after which the ever-popular cream tea is served.

The tea parties welcomed the following speakers in 2015:

February

Majors Martin and Carole Whybrow from the Salvation Army
Collection £61.00 to SA, 29 attended.

April

Dr Shirley Wittering “ What people had in their houses in the 17th and 18th centuries. ”
31 attended, Collection £35.40 for speaker’s fee.

June

Paul Shakeshaft ‘Comments on a painting by Vermeer - a reflection of the artist’s life and times.’
38 attended, Collection £44.

September (the 50th meeting of Companions since its introduction)

Guide Dogs, with speakers Tessa and Jason and puppy in training, Finn
Collection £70 to Guide Dogs, 31 attended.

November (Armistice Day)

Eva Clarke from the Holocaust Educational Trust
Collection £120 sent to the H.E.T., over 60 attended.

December (Christmas tea party)

Senior Perse Jazz Band
Collection £18 for expenses, 23 attended.

2016

January

New Year lunch at the Park Restaurant (CRC)
23 attended.

An article on each of these afternoons can be found in the following monthly edition of the Parish Voice

Companions 2016

It has become very clear to me that since April 2008 when the first tea party was held, the popularity has been maintained and a need is fulfilled within the social life of St John’s. Not only do newcomers venture in, but our regular Companions enjoy the company, tea and stimulation of the variety of speakers. It has been suggested that these tea parties are held on a monthly basis. This I think, would be a more than substantial load for the stalwart and hardworking tea team and flower arranger. Therefore, it is hoped that there will be additional meetings to be known as ‘COMPANIONS’ EXTRAs’ on the alternate months. They will be in a simpler format (but none the less as enjoyable we hope!). These could occur on the 2nd Wednesdays of March, May . July and October and would feature a varied programme such as quizzes, Scrabble etc. Volunteers will be needed to serve tea and biscuits. The organiser will be announced at a later date.

I have to thank the incredible and unfailing help given at every tea party last year, namely Marion Murdoch who heads up the refreshment team, with Rachel Gray and Jean Guy, and for Olive Langley’s breathtaking table arrangements which never fail to amaze us each time. Lastly, my thanks go to Ron Huntsman - my quiet and stalwart aide in setting up the audio system etc and ‘generally fetching and carrying.’

It is hoped that we have another good and stimulating year for Companions, with sustained and increasing numbers from the congregation as well as the parish.

*June Huntsman (Authorised Lay Minister - Pastoral Assistant)
January 2016*

SALT - Report for APCM

SALT (Sharing and laughing together) is the youth group for young people in school years 7-9 (ages 11-14). There are currently about 12 youngsters involved and they meet about 6 times a term. Meetings are held on Sunday evenings with Sue at the vicarage, where they spend time exploring their faith and on Friday evenings with myself and usually an ordinand as leaders. The Friday evenings vary between social evenings and discussion evenings. There have also been occasional joint meetings with YEAST, the older youth group.

Over the past year the youngsters have been bowling, watched films and cooked together. They have also planned and lead an All age service and are currently in the process of planning to lead the next Informal service in March. The informal service has been introduced as part of the youth programme and members of SALT and YEAST have been involved in choosing and leading the music at these services.

Future plans for the group include an overnight event as part of Prayer48 and a visit to Lindisfarne during the summer holidays. It is a privilege to lead this group and to watch the young people grow in their relationships with each other and with God.

There is still a need for more leaders to help with the youngsters. Please be praying that the right person or people will come forward to support this work.

Suzanne Barton

What have the Youth Group achieved so far?

The year 7 and 8 youth group moved from being 'Year 7 and 8s at St John's' to 'SALT' which stands for sharing and laughing (or loving) together. This year SALT also introduced more members in year 7 which very much expanded the group so that more people in year 7, 8 and 9 were 'sharing and laughing together'.

Youth group have also raised money for various charities; our main fundraiser being our cake stall that was held at church which raised money for refugees in Syria. We all worked together to bake cakes that would go towards a cause we all wanted to support in the time of crisis.

Recently, the more musical participants of 'SALT' have started playing in the informal worship band and those who are not as musical still attend the services. Soon, the youth group shall be leading an informal worship on the theme of salt.

This year we have done a lot of cooking together, eating together, praying, discussing and exploring further into Christianity. Those who started off with little faith have been supported and gradually have become firmer in their faith. Others who started off confident in their faith were confirmed in the Easter term in Ely Cathedral and were encouraged to continue exploring their faith.

We have also lead services to the congregation – spreading the message of God. This included showing the many talents God has given us by Henry Ashton cart wheeling down the aisle!

Youth group has been thoroughly enjoyable so far and everyone has enjoyed laughing together and growing together in faith in an environment where we know that nobody judges us and that we can talk to others in the same position as us and with other teenage Christians – who are all incredibly nice! ☺

Emilie and Eleanor

Sacristans, APCM report 2016

Those of you who love making comparisons and have kept last year's APCM report for the purpose (and I'll bet there aren't many) – or even 2014's for the same reason (and I'll bet there are even fewer) – will notice this year is fundamentally and ground breaking different. We have a report from the Sacristans! Perhaps the reason for the omission in previous years is that, on the face of it, there is very little to say. 'We lay up before a Communion service and clean up afterwards'. That's it. Well, fortunately, even the bottle-washers of this life get recognition in the Kingdom of Heaven! And it's perhaps this thought that is worth dwelling on for a moment. I have been a Sacristan for about five years, David Waterhouse much longer, Don Simpson perhaps not quite so long and Sarah Alexandra Tasker shorter still. But we will all say that it's not so much the carrying out of this relatively routine task that attracts us, but the opportunity it gives to prepare ourselves ahead of an important celebration. In other words, not an exacting job, but one which gives immeasurable pay-back. Believe me, it does! We are Sacristans by turns throughout every Sunday of the year and on special high days during the week. Some of us can only commit to a limited number of Sundays and others only to specific Sundays. Candidly, there being only a few of us, being certain the tables are laid and the wine is poured can be a bit tricky at times. But wouldn't you miss it if there was no wine and no wafer?! Accordingly, may I appeal to you to join me in becoming a Sacristan. The more the merrier and less onerous the task. Come and find me after morning service on any Sunday in the Choir Vestry or Wilkinson Room and I'll show you what goes on behind the scenes!

Joseph Saunders

Toddle Along for APCM 2016

Toddle Along is possibly one of the most rewarding parts of our church family to work with. As the months go by, children who started coming as babies are joining in with the words of all the songs at our Worship time, showing they know Bible stories, and praying independently for friends, family and even "Mary, Jesus' mummy". It is a joy to see these children so confident in God's love for them and especially, and importantly, radiating out that love to others.

Our thanks go to Monica Taylor for her continued creativity and patience with the crafts she puts together week on week for the children (though also enjoyed by parents!) and the kind helpers (Pat Chapman, Edna Whitmore, Anne Rigby, Sarah Chivers, Katie Knapton and Jean Guy) who provide snacks, ever more delicious and numerous cakes and much needed cups of tea each week. We were sad to lose lovely Beryl as a helper this year. We all miss her, but thank her for her long and much valued service to Toddle Along.

We are going to make a real effort this Spring to advertise Toddle Along to a wider audience. We will be giving out fliers at the Pelican school, Homerton nursery and other venues in the neighbourhood as well as publicising it online to local families. We hope to welcome more children and families to this very friendly and supportive group. If you know anyone with children under 5, please do invite them to come along!

Lucy Holden

Traidfair St John's, Report for the ACPM, 2016

We continue to fly the Fairtrade flag at St John's and in 2015 it has flown very high. We had a bumper year of trading, thanks to the support of the St John's congregation and other shoppers.

We sold £4,941 of goods (2014 £3,666) This means that we have purchased more products from Traidcraft who in turn have been able to buy more from small producers in the developing world who, with their families, benefit from increased trading and from the Fair Trade Premium, which enables them to improve their standard of living and educate their children.

As well as our regular monthly stall after the service each first Sunday of the month, we held a very successful Big Brew Coffee Morning during Fair Trade Fortnight and enjoyed taking part in the St John's Summer Fair and Christmas Bazaar, donating a hamper and Christmas stocking. I was invited (following an initiative from Julie) to set up a Fair Trade Stall at Long Road Sixth Form College on two occasions and hope to continue to do this.

Our sales have generated a small profit from which we donated £175 to St John's and £178 to Traidcraft's charity which helps small producers to reach western markets.

Our activities in support of fair trade would be impossible without the willing team of helpers who work on a monthly rota. In 2015 they were: Caroline and Peter Chamberlain, Pat Chapman, Erica Crouch, Joanna Depledge, Helen Fincham, Mary Griffiths, Erica Lowry, Peter MacGill, Sarah Philip, Fiona Richards, Amanda Taylor and Denise Wilkinson. I am most grateful to them and to the children who help their parents behind the counter.

*Katie Knaption
January 2016*

Wednesday Women's Group

Last term we were very lucky to have Helen Hartnett, one of our Ordinands, with us. She suggested that we looked at and tried different forms of prayer. We had some really interesting and rewarding evenings in which we really felt God's spirit with us. We tried Quaker prayer, praying the rosary, praying the Psalms and Lectio Divina. We would highly recommend trying different forms of prayer, especially if you find praying alone difficult. We would be happy to share our experiences! This term the whole group will be taking part in the diocesan run *Core Skills for Children's Work*.

Lucy Holden, Jo Hart, Sara Bishop, Sarah Talmage and Helen Hartnett.

Wednesday Evening House Group

This group has continued to meet at 2 Fendon Close on the first and third Wednesday of the month from about 7.45 to 9pm. During Lent we join others for the weekly meetings in the Wilkinson Room. During the last year we have considered the figure of St Peter and studied his First Epistle. Recently we have been looking at the sayings of Jesus in St John's Gospel that begin with 'I am'.

Leadership is shared by members. Newcomers are very welcome. Please contact Sue or me if you are interested in joining us.

Rachel Gray
01223 212660

YEAST

YEAST is our 'older' youth group, that is, 15 years and upwards. At the end of the last academic year a number of members left to go off to university, leaving a small, but dedicated group which continues to meet regularly.

Since September we have had card nights, games nights (pool like you've never seen it played!) and question/discussion nights as well as one-off activities. In November we showed the film 'Testament of Youth' which members found 'moving', 'much more interesting than I thought it would be' and 'brilliant'. On Advent Sunday we made Advent wreaths which, I am told were well received at home and dutifully and reverently lit each week on Sunday. On 6th December the Heslams kindly treated both YEAST and SALT to a terrific Dutch-style St Nicholas party, complete with puppet show (think Sound of Music!) and traditional food for St Nicholas.

The year ended with a huge YEAST reunion party hosted by the Hurst family when Andrew cooked a splendid meal, those past members, home from university came and Julie and Callum too. And then it was Christmas.

Each session ends with prayer and for Epiphany we went into the church and prayed with gold (leaf), Frankincense and myrrh. It was very moving to see the attention given to contemplating the gifts God has given us and that we give back to God focussing on a flake of gold leaf and to watch young people cross their palms with myrrh oil.

It's been delightful to welcome a new member and there is certainly room for growth – and not just among the young people. With Sue leaving in the summer, we will need to think about leadership for our youth groups as Sue and David currently lead some of the SALT sessions.

Youth ministry is something I am completely new to and was utterly terrified this time last year when I realised that as Julie left I would need to step into this unfamiliar place. God is full of surprises and, as so often happens, I not only discovered how much I enjoy being with the young people, but that I receive far more from being with them than I can possibly give. They are a joy and whatever kind of week it is and however jaded I feel, I come away feeling refreshed and joyful – sometimes with my sides aching from so much laughter. (Ask Ben to do his Dutch accent!)

I also realise how important it is to be able to offer young people a place to come to be together, to grow together, to question together in a world that is so full of other temptations. It is vital that we are able to continue to do this and so we really *do* need *you* to think seriously about whether this might just be the ministry for you. It requires no expertise (I can vouch for that) except maybe an ability to make hot chocolate and float marshmallows on top! It doesn't need to be hugely time consuming – if several people offered even one evening a month it would make a huge difference. It needs just a willingness to walk alongside these lovely, wonderful, inspiring, funny, joyful young people, to share with them and learn from them and be prepared to be surprised.

Petra Shakeshaft