



# Experience Hope

St John's Church,  
Easter Centre, Manor Farm Lane  
Egham, Surrey, TW20 9HR

## St John's Egham Ministry Reports 2020

This document includes reports from ministry leaders on a wide range of ministries and activities at St John's. Ordinarily these reports would focus on the previous calendar year (2019) but because APCM has been delayed this year, and because so many ministries and activities have had to adapt to COVID restrictions, or have temporarily ceased, the reports may look a bit different this year.

Do have a browse through the reports and be encouraged by what you read, and how, in spite of the recent challenges, many ministries have been continuing to strive to express God's love to our church family and to the wider community. Please do also pray for ministry teams and for the people that they serve, both now and in the months ahead.

Please do contact the ministry leaders identified in the report if you would like to know more, or would like to get involved. The Church Office can put you in touch.

Our thanks go to everyone who has contributed to this report:

Carol Peters  
Chris Gray  
Conrad Benefield  
Dal Hettiaratchi  
David Cox  
Debbie Benefield  
Emma Evans  
Esther Prior  
Grace Hopkins  
Heather Kimberley  
James Ellin  
Johnny Sheppard  
Jörg Haustein  
Lesley Pocock  
Linda Matthews

Mandie Shirnia  
Phil Darby  
Phil Holloway  
Rachel Upcott  
Sally Thompson  
Sarah Gillies  
Sharon Mitchell  
Simon Fraser  
Steve Cresswell  
Sue Gray  
Sue Naudi  
Tim Senanayake  
Veronica Cresswell  
Will Bissett



**Experience  
Hope**

## St John's Egham Ministry Reports 2020

### CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Vicar's report</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Services</b>	<b>5</b>
Sunday morning services	5
Midweek Communion and Open Church	5
Revive	6
Contemporary worship	6
St John's tech team	7
Zoom coffee on Sundays	8
Tower Bell Ringers	8
<b>Teaching and Nurture</b>	<b>8</b>
Pastoral Teams	8
Single and Fulfilled	9
Growing Together	9
Life Groups	10
Events	11
<b>Prayer</b>	<b>11</b>
Breakthrough	12
Ladies' Prayer Breakfasts	12
<b>Outreach</b>	<b>13</b>
Arts Creative Team	13
The Shed	13
Besom in Runnymede	13
The Atrium Café	14
Christians Against Poverty	14
Be Creative	15
Mission Partnership Team	16
Music in the Caddey	16
The English Language Café	17
<b>Young people</b>	<b>17</b>
Students	17
Teenagers	18
Children	18
Playbox	20
<b>Marketing, communications &amp; campus</b>	<b>21</b>
Website and Social Media	21
Church Administration	21
Eco Church	22
Fundraising for the Easter Centre	23

## Vicar's report

I have really enjoyed being your Vicar over the last 2 years – almost to the day as I write this. Even with a Pandemic making up 6 of those months, it remains a joy to serve alongside you. St John's is gifted with people of faith, people of prayer and of great generosity. A people who have demonstrated great creativity and resilience since the announcement on Tuesday 17 March that churches were to close. Some of you have been on the frontline of our response – with our online presence and our pastoral response - and many more of have kept us going through encouragement, prayer and your generous giving.

For years we (the wider church) have talked and prayed about taking church outside the building and church being more than the building, but if we are honest we have struggled to effectively put this into practice, but suddenly we had no choice. We became a church without walls – reaching wider and I hope deeper than ever before... This journey has seen us head up lots of things in the community and I feel we are now more integrated in the wider community than ever. The local GP and Counsellors have referred people in need to us, the Town Team asked us to facilitate the Town wide Magna Carta Fair this year, we have been at the centre of community litter picks and we even managed a Community Eco Festival! I could go on. #nostoppingthischurch is not just our rallying cry, but has become our DNA.

We have welcomed our wonderful Curate and his wife Emma and daughter Elodie. They can speak for themselves, of course, but I hope they would say that #nostoppingthischurch was mirrored in our welcome of them.

We have prayed for prayer to rise up and just speaking and we have had daily bible readings and prayers – 3 times a day! Ironically not something that was part of the pattern of many evangelical churches like our own – now it is... Compline will be an abiding legacy of lockdown. More people turn up to Prayer Meetings on Zoom. We've had more 24-hour Prayer Events and had 24/7 Prayer for the first time. We post an outward looking prayer on our Facebook Page each day – something I had wanted to do for a long time and kept putting off. I think it's sending a message that we care as we are praying for the issues that our community is facing each day. Worship and prayer is now in our homes in ways we couldn't have imagined – even in our most fervent prayers for revival. People reporting that spouses and children are 'attending' church with them online.

We now have a Hardship Fund - when before Covid-19, we might have felt our debt burden means we can't do something like this. We have, as result, supported households (church family and wider community) from grocery shopping to paying rent. We have adapted and I think managed to deliver inspiring content for our Stewardship Season and are so grateful to God for the many who have responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Like many churches, we have seeing 'growth' in the numbers that are 'attending church'. Probably an average of about 5 times more (sometimes more, as much as 10 times and rarely less over any given week). While it's way too soon to know for sure the results of all these things, but there is definite cause for hope.

My hope is that we will hold on some of the positives that come out of this disruption in the rhythm of our life together:

- We have learnt lessons about accessibility – St John's Online is here to stay. We are getting equipment ready to continue streaming live from the Church as each stage of the phased return and this will remain our practice
- We can't sustain 3 Services a day mid-week (although it's been important for this season), but will keep Compline.
- A mixed economy of online and in person with almost everything we do will remain part of our mind-set
- We have learnt that we can adapt and change rapidly
- We have remained outward looking and that will be good for us going forward
- We are less nervous of having a very wide front door when we can't see what state the back door is in!

- We have learnt to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. I have been very deliberate about language so we don't 'watch the service', we 'go to church' – taking what we used to mean by that and equating it with what we are doing in our homes. I am hoping for more liberated worshippers to be some of the treasures we forge in the darkness
- We have learnt how much we can accomplish simultaneously when people are empowered and released to play their part

So, Team St John's – it remains my prayer that we will emerge out of this crisis a bigger church. With a bigger view of who God is. A bigger view of who we are in him. A bigger heart for our community and bigger, with more people belonging to this wonderful church family.

Finally, to say thank you, Team St John's – thank you for your support, encouragement and gospel partnership. You rock☺

## **Services**

### **Sunday morning services (Esther Prior)**

Apart from a 4-week trial in September, we have had one morning Service during lockdown and it has served us well. My thanks go to Johnny Sheppard, the AV Team and all who have contributed to enabling us to worship in our scattered gathering during this testing time. However, the last 6 months have proved to me that the treasure we had/have at SJE is our ability to offer 3 distinctive Services – a Traditional, Contemporary and in the evening – Charismatic. One of the things I am urging everyone to do is to examine what we have been doing and as we are able to resume our activities, to ask if they are still the right thing to offer and if they are still fit for purpose. I am more committed than ever to our trio-tapestry of Services.

In the morning, we have continued with our programme of teaching through our mission, vision and values, while pausing to celebrate Major Festivals. Stewardship Season in the autumn (which we are currently in) feels established and an important part of the shape of the year.

Pre-lockdown, we were seeing encouraging signs of gentle growth at both Services. In lockdown, we have seen the massive potential of having an online presence. Going forward, when we are 'allowed to hug again', we aim to return to the two-morning-Service pattern, and both will continue to be Live-streaming. An enduring lesson from lockdown has been about accessibility and we don't want to lose that. We want to continue to offer the opportunity to people who are no longer able to physically come to church to be part of our 'scattered gathering' and we want to enable the Nicodemuses to feel they can approach Jesus under the cover of darkness.

I want to end with a reflection I have shared before about what it means to say: 'I am going to church'. For many of us at the moment, this no longer conjures up pictures of people going to a building to worship with others. What this has become (alongside limited in-person opportunities) any virtual gathering of the St John's church family. We may dip into other things online (I have always done this and still do), but for me 'church' in this sense is about this local church, this body of believers, this church family. Let's continue 'to go to church' together in our scattered gatherings. Let's remain connected to God and to one another - sharing the same spiritual pilgrimage until we can meet again. We will hug again.

### **Midweek Communion and Open Church (Simon Fraser)**

The primary objective was to make the church available to all during the week for at least a couple of hours a day. The original format was a time for prayer in church on a Monday, the church open on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 12.30 and 2.30pm hosted by two volunteers. A communion service at midday on Wednesday and Playtime that occupied most of Fridays. In this way the church was accessible Monday to Friday.

And then came Lock Down. As we all know, this stopped us in our tracks, and it is only in recent weeks that we have restarted. For the moment we have lost Playtime on Fridays, but we have expanded our opening

times to 12.30 to 2.30pm Monday through to Thursday. With Communion starting at midday on Wednesdays. I pay tribute to Linda Matthews who does much behind the scenes, compiling the rotas, recruiting new volunteers and the go to person if there is a problem.

Since restarting, the Communion service has taken off with a regular attendance in the mid 20s. This has been especially beneficial for those in our church community who do not have access to the internet, and has also drawn in a few outsiders who have been affected by Covid 19.

There is now an area in church where a candle can be lit, and this is very much appreciated and many take advantage of this.

At present we are not getting great numbers coming through our doors on weekdays, but some of the contacts we have made during this time have been very precious. These contacts would not have been made if our doors had been closed.

I end by thanking all those involved in this ministry and making it possible for us to demonstrate our love for our community. It certainly fulfils some of our church values by being inviting and welcoming. I pray that the Lord will continue to bless this ministry and our church that we may in turn be a blessing to others.

### **Revive (James Ellin)**

Revive continued to thrive in 2019. Grace left it, at the end of her Maternity cover role, in good heart and able to continue flourishing in her absence. We started to see real growth in number too, which was encouraging. Like all our other ministries, Revive came to a sudden halt, with what turned out to be our last Service being a celebration of our 200 year building with John Coles. We have just celebrated 2 years of Revive and are excited at all that God has in store for us, in this season and beyond.

Revive restarted on 6th September as part of the next phase of reopening the church for worship post lockdown.

Having arrived and given the brief of restarting the services, it has been a gradual process of seeking to understand the journey that this particular ministry has been on and where might God want to take it next. Some of that is still being formed, but it has been a prayer that Sunday evenings may be a time set aside for people to meet with God and one another in a safe and more contemplative way, recognising the restrictions we face, but still expecting that the Holy Spirit of God will move in wonderful ways.

It has been important to offer those gathered space to think about and recognise the reality of their feelings in light of the last 6 months and so we have spent the first 4 weeks 'camping out' in Psalm 23, slowly reading it through together and allowing the truth that 'The Lord is my Shepherd – I lack nothing' to really be true in our lives. For such a well-known psalm, it has been really good to look in detail at the promise that this Shepherd leads us, guides us, comforts us, is with us in our darkest moments, and protects, provides and surrounds us. What an awesome comfort to know that THE Shepherd is Jesus in whom we can trust for all these things and more.

Sue Naudi in her capacity as prayer co-ordinator leads the prayer team, and is actively growing and training new people for that vital ministry. We are also in the process of identifying and inviting others to step in to leadership positions with the revive team, whether that is welcoming, hosting, leading, setting up or the audio-visual side of things, we are thankful that God is providing, but always welcome others to join too!

In the coming months we will be delving into the book of Ruth and seeing what and where God takes us next! Do pray!

### **Contemporary worship (Conrad and Debbie Benefield)**

'Contemporary worship' is the sung and musical worship provided at the 11am and Revive services, as well as for special services and events. Worship at these services is led by a small band and mostly draws on 'modern' worship songs and the occasional hymn.

Around 35 people make up the team, including singers, guitarists, bassists, pianists and other instrumentalists, and bands are led by worship leaders (Debbie & Conrad Benefield, Clem Jones, Nancy Parker, Philippa Stuart and Andrew Tebboth).

In 2019 the team was shaken by the illness and passing of Malcolm Bateman, who had served as an organist for many years in St John's, and had been leading the worship team for several years. We greatly miss Malcolm's gentle leadership, his sharp mind, his inspiring faith and, of course, his outstanding talent. Since then the worship leaders have continued to provide leadership to the team with support from Esther.

The other major change in 2019 was the introduction of distinct bands in September. This meant that rather than creating bands for each service, people are now usually in the same band, with the same people, on the same Sunday each month. This approach has bedded down well and has removed the time-consuming process of creating termly rotas, as well as giving people clarity and consistency as to when they are being asked to serve. It also supports stronger team building within bands, but there are opportunities going forward to support people in getting to know and working with people outside their own bands, for example through whole-team events and training.

With live worship ceasing during lockdown, worship leaders began creating pre-recorded worship for morning services, using the Apple GarageBand app. This has been a very challenging and time-consuming process but has, we hope, provided good quality music to enable people to engage in the worship at home. Our special thanks go to Johnny Sheppard and Steve Jenkins (who have led on much of the production and mixing, and who have also provided help and advice to others), and to the worship leaders and other musicians who have given their time and energy to this. We are also grateful to Johnny and the tech team for the huge contribution they make to worship in St John's by giving their time and talents to mix sound, live stream video and manage the projector during the services.

### **St John's tech team (Johnny Sheppard)**

The Tech team at St John's is a group of people that serve God by enabling the church to take part in the services. This can be very simply turning on the mics so that the people involved in the service can be heard, displaying words to follow the liturgy or songs on the screens and more recently enabling people to see what's going on at St John's while they have to stay at home.

The team is made up of various people – some with previous technical backgrounds and some with no previous tech skills or experience at all who just wanted to help serve God and the church in this way and have been willing to learn.

This last year started as they mostly have been, with the teams working hard to fill the needs of the various services we have at St Johns. More recently we have had the challenge of connecting people to services remotely as we negotiate our way through lockdown and the restrictions that this has placed on us all. This has given us the opportunity to create a new team dedicated to providing video of the service so that people can take part more easily than when we just had an audio feed on the internet. As well as reaching the congregation at home, this has also enabled us to reach many more people outside our parish which has been very exciting to see.

As usual we would love to welcome more people to the teams. We have 3 main teams now, sound, projector and video mixing. Anyone interested would be given full training and I like to think it is a great experience for anyone interested in tech, but also a great way to serve – I really think the team has shown its value in recent months. We are struggling with the number of people we have on the sound team – particularly those who can mix a band. We will happily train people for this, but if anyone has previous experience, it will really help as it will be easier to get them quickly to full speed. We would also like to continue to increase the number of people using the new video equipment and we always need people for projector too.

## **Zoom coffee on Sundays (Sarah Gillies)**

We saw a gap - getting people together to chat after the service - and decided to see if we could fill the gap online. Zoom coffee and chat launched on Pentecost Sunday and brings together people from across the church family to chat online in small groups on Sunday mornings. We are now a team of four with Julia, Veronica and Philomena having joined in September. If you haven't tried it yet we would love to welcome you.

## **Tower Bell Ringers (David Cox)**

We ring "to call all willing hearts to prayer and praise" and "to cheer the sick and comfort the sorrowful". We hope the bells lift the spirits of all in Egham who hear them, on Sundays especially, but also whenever else they are rung.

The welcoming band of ringers have continued to ring for two Sunday services each week.

Nine peals have been rung on the bells all of which have included members of the local band. The bells continue to be maintained and are very easy to ring but there may be a need to have more extensive restoration carried out in the next year or so.

The church and tower were packed on 22nd August on the sad occasion of Joyce Parson's funeral. Joyce had been a ringer at Egham for over fifty years and will be sadly missed.

We have not been successful in attempts at recruitment for a number of years. We will continue trying, but through this report we invite members of the congregation to come to watch ringing on a Sunday to see what's entailed, and we offer anyone from around 13 years and older the challenge and pleasure of learning to ring, as a contribution to parish life. We are happy to arrange hands-on try-the-bells sessions for groups or individuals wishing to try their hand. We have welcomed three first year students from Royal Holloway, including one beginner, who joined us for practices and some Sundays.

We have been fortunate to attract regular visitors to the Thursday evening practices and continued to have regular 10 bell practices for the Chertsey District on the first Thursday of each month.

We ask the Church congregation for support in encouraging new ringers, so that we can continue to "call all willing hearts to prayer and praise".

## **Teaching and Nurture**

### **Pastoral Teams (Carol Peters)**

When I updated the PCC in January with regards to Pastoral Ministry, we couldn't foresee what this year would bring! Up to that point the team was growing and the face to face ministries were developing in many areas.

We had increased our partnership with the Day Centre and extended this to include Manorcroft School joining us for services for festivals and the Craftea Ladies knitting group was flourishing. We were partnering with the leadership team to provide fortnightly services there and also monthly services in the local courts, and getting involved with Home Communion for those not able to attend these services.

The team assisted in facilitating the first Hope in Depression Course to run at the Easter Centre and had a programme of regular bereavement coffee mornings which were well attended as well as the thanksgiving services in church and support with after funeral gatherings. We also had a presence at Playtime to talk to families, assisted at the foodbank and at the hospital with the chaplaincy team so the ministries had been very varied as each member of the team brought different gifts and skills.

However, this year our ministry has changed a great deal and yet still developed though in different ways as the team have adjusted to new ways of keeping in touch and providing pastoral care. The team too has

still been expanding despite the absence of organised training as 'honorary members' have come alongside to support the work of pastoral ministry which has been wonderful.

A number of the team have been involved in weekly phone calls to members of our groups from the community as some of them were isolated in their homes when the Day Centre closed. Some have been assisting with shopping or picking up prescriptions for those shielding at home. We have also been able to deliver food locally that has been donated from the local supermarkets.

Others have been willing to keep in touch with people on a regular basis by telephone to ensure they do not feel forgotten and also provided practical help if needed. They have been able to signpost to the Hardship Fund if appropriate which has been so crucial at this difficult time as well as pray for the individuals. We have also been able to provide transport when safe to do so for hospital appointments.

There has also been a great deal of prayer support through the wider group throughout this time and this has been incredibly appreciated. We have not been able to have face to face meetings but the team has kept in touch with one another via zoom meetings and as the future is still uncertain we continue to look for new ways to reach out to our community with God's love and care!

### **Single and Fulfilled (Tim Senanayake)**

Single and Fulfilled is a group that seeks to encourage and empower people in their God-given state of singleness, whether that's a short or long-term calling, where we help each other to navigate how we can live a Christ-centred life as a single person. The group is open to single adults of all ages, including those who have always been single and those who are divorced or widowed. Singleness and marriage are held equally highly in the Bible, and this group aims to intentionally show that we honour this Biblical value at St John's – 40% of adults in the UK are single, so this group can help us be a more welcoming church to them. Pre-covid, we would have a lunch every month after the 11am Sunday service, which was a wonderful way to enjoy fellowship and spend quality time with our church family. Since March, we have been having a catch-up video call on Zoom every Wednesday for anyone who wants to join, which has allowed people to connect with others in a relaxed atmosphere.

Since Single and Fulfilled was launched (in September 2019), some members have said that this group caters for them and makes them feel included in a way that they previously had not experienced, which is a great encouragement. We have a WhatsApp group in which people support each other and send encouraging messages – singleness and loneliness can often be linked, so the WhatsApp group has been especially important during the lockdown when many people living on their own were not able to see or interact with anybody else easily.

It has been a challenge to know how best to help people engage during the pandemic, I would appreciate prayer for where to take the group next, particularly during this time. Looking at our mission statement, I would love Single and Fulfilled to develop the ways in which we love God and love each other, as well as seek how to love our community in new and creative ways.

### **Growing Together (Simon Fraser)**

When it was first suggested that we should run multiple courses at the same time, I thought the idea was crazy. Which only demonstrates my lack of faith and vision. What I hadn't taken into consideration was just what an incredible resource we have in our Easter Centre. It gives us the space and the facilities to do things that many other churches are simply unable to do. Praise God for all those who persevered through all the years to see and experience what the Lord has given us.

Having started the Alpha Courses, the objective was to bolt on other courses too, and consistently ran three or four courses simultaneously. These have included Parenting Courses, Parenting Teenager Courses, Marriage Courses, CAP related Courses, Bible Courses, a Grace Course and the SHAPE course. My apologies if I have missed out any other courses that we have done.

We would all start with a meal on a Thursday evening at 7.30pm and then split into our individual courses normally finishing by 10.00pm.

I would pay particular tribute to all those involved in the catering. Many would be on duty at 4.00pm preparing the meal for later and not finishing till well past 9.00pm. These dedicated brothers and sisters made it possible to build community over a meal. At times there were 50 to 60 of us having a meal together. A winning formula.

Of course, Covid 19 struck and the Lockdown put paid to any live courses. However, it was suggested that we do a virtual Alpha Course using Zoom. Again, I had difficulty getting my head around this one, not being blessed with the technical ability to understand let alone operate Zoom.

But, with two other dear colleagues who understand these things, we started a virtual Alpha Course and we have completed the first three sessions. We have moved to a Wednesday and start at 8.00pm and finish by 9.15pm. We now have four guests and although this might not seem a great number, this a great opportunity to connect with people who are seeking. I am pleased to say that my misgivings were unfounded.

In terms of our church's values, we are inviting and welcoming, we have certainly needed to be courageous and creative, and we aim to be transforming and Christ Centred. Even in these uncertain times, the Lord gives us opportunities. Praise God!

### **Life Groups (James Ellin)**

Firstly may I say a huge thank you to the Life Group leaders and members who have risen to the challenge of adapting from one model of 'gathering' to now having to meet online and sometimes even by keeping in touch over the phone.

We have around 16 active Life Groups at present. Our groups range from the small (4-5 members) to the large (15+ active members) and meet at many different times and places. As I understand it, each group chooses their own study materials and plan social events which can cover a wide range of topics and themes.

Life Groups have been a lifeline for many of our church family in lockdown. The leaders have found it challenging, but nonetheless have sought to serve faithfully.

My prayer is that the groups which are at or reaching capacity might consider what's next for their group. I am also praying that for those who are new members of the St John's family who may be seeking a place to call home, a place to be nurtured and grow together in faith and love of Jesus. To do this we perhaps need some new leaders to be raised up and trained and released into this rewarding and vital ministry.

I plan to visit all the Life groups over the coming term and look forward to meeting more people in the wider church family.

### **Church Oasis – Heather Kimberley**

Oasis is a group of ladies who usually meet weekly in the Upper room of the Easter Centre for Bible study and prayer.

In recent months, the group has had to become more flexible, which has enabled us to become more concerned and supportive of each other. I feel that we have grown in our friendships and sharing this year.

We have established WhatsApp groups for instant communication and prayer requests and continue to telephone those who do not have a Smart phone.

We now have weekly Zoom meetings which enable us to meet 'face to face', share news and needs and pray for each other, in our different circumstances.

Before lockdown affected us, we were studying the gospel of John together, with a study aide. We completed that individually at home following the March lockdown date, maintaining weekly contact via Whatsapp over the summer and then met for a couple of distanced picnics, in the church grounds, when the weather was good.

We studied a modern parable in September, linked to Colossians 3 and then decided to start a series of bible studies again in October on Christian Virtues which should be challenging and instructive!

We have welcomed 3 new members to Oasis recently and would be pleased to add any new members who are able to join us on Zoom.

### Home Oasis – Dal Hettiaratchi

Home Oasis is a caring group of ladies whose aim is to study the Bible and grow closer to God, while supporting and praying for each other.

We have struggled with lockdown but managed to meet online via zoom for a few months, then we met socially distanced in our gardens in the summer. We are now restricting our meetings to 6 people out of 8 of us, which we are finding a real challenge.

We express ourselves creatively at Advent and Easter craft sessions and have two social events a year, at Great Fosters for coffee, and The Rose and Crown for lunch.

We want to reflect God's love in everything we say and do and draw others towards Him.

### **Events (Sally Thompson)**

The main purpose of the Events team is to enable our church family to gather together for social occasions so that friendships may grow, and new friendships can be made.

We have seen this happen at most if not all of our events so far which include Harvest Supper/lunch's, Sing Along evenings, Christmas parties for the children, karaoke evenings, Film Afternoons/Nights (for both families and adults).

We also love to encourage/enable others in our Church family to run events that interest them such as the Curry and Beer night, Craft events, Games nights. What is it that you might like to see and be a part of?

It's very difficult to put on social events that the whole church would choose to attend but through a good variety of events we have found we can reach most of our Church family. It's wonderful seeing different groups/age ranges enjoying each other's company and especially when meeting other members of the family they have never met before!

We are all about Loving Each Other which is a vital part of our church Mission statement.

## **Prayer**

### **Overview (Sue Naudi)**

2020 has seen us continuing our rhythms of prayer in all forms. We have tried to provide prayer support for all aspects of our church life. We have continued to provide intercessory prayer during the Sunday services whether in person or online.

Prayer ministry after the services continued until lockdown when we then offered prayer by phone and prayer during zoom coffee. We have also shared church family prayer requests between a dedicated group of pray-ers so that prayer remains forefront and people feel supported.

We have had various 24 hour prayer events and one 24/7 where we prayed, unbroken as a church family for a whole week. These have been great examples of what can happen when we join with others to pray and we have had some amazing feedback.

Monthly First Priority meetings have moved online and have seen a good take up (usually 30-40 participants). We have done a prayer walk around Royal Holloway praying for returning students and for God's presence on campus.

Thank you to all involved in this ministry. We look forward to seeing all God will do in the coming year and hearing about all the answered prayer.

### **BreakThrough (Will Bissett)**

There are three BreakThrough groups which each foster the vision of being 'Men of God, Men of Prayer'. As well as a commitment to regular prayer, we seek to encourage one another in daily life and discipleship, remind one another who we are in and through Christ, and walk with and sometimes carry, each other, through the ups and downs of life.

In these strange COVID times we are even more aware of the need to keep connected with God and with one another. We welcome any guys who'd just like to connect with other men, hang-out, be encouraged and pray. If you'd like to connect or know more then please speak to any of the group leaders, or myself (will.bissett@stjohnsegham.com).

BreakThrough 1 (hosted by Will Bissett) meets on the first Thursday of each month. We met physically up until lockdown, then switched to digital. After the first digital meeting the guys asked to meet more often, so we switched to fortnightly, and this has been a huge support and benefit to us all during the challenges of covid restrictions. We chat and pray together. Occasionally we also meet at a pub, as restrictions permit. We provide prayer and moral support to one another, and pray for our friends, our community and our church.

BreakThrough 2 (led by Chris Matthews) meets on the first Wednesday of every month. Since lockdown meetings have moved to Zoom. It is difficult to point out a particular high point – because there is always something special when we get together! It's great to meet together, talk together and pray together. We are really encouraged by the shared prayer times. Prayers and pastoral concern are not just about the guys, but about families, friends, church and community.

BreakThrough 3 (hosted by Phil Holloway) has committed to helping at Alpha, and met when there were no courses. We have only met once formally since Covid lockdown. We keep in touch casually and also regularly visit one member who is isolating. With the continuing restrictions we're now considering digital meets.

Over 20 of us also met at Acquolina in Egham for our annual Christmas dinner in December.

### **Ladies' Prayer Breakfasts (Linda Matthews)**

'REJOICING, INSPIRING BREAKFASTS! In 'normal' times we meet once every two months between 8.30 and 10.15 am when we enjoy a light breakfast together followed by worship, themed teaching and prayer. Having met in borrowed premises while our new premises were being built, then having settled so very happily in the Easter Centre - we are again facing new challenges and learning how to hold the breakfasts in a virtual fashion - on Zoom.

However we come, wherever we come - our purpose is the same and God continues to bless us. We come - in order to encounter God, to be spiritually refreshed and encouraged, to pray, to meditate on what God has taught us, to pray for others and to share friendship and support.

Speakers in the past year have focussed on a variety of topics:- Women in Ministry (Esther), St John's in the Community (eg Sustain, Pastoral Team, Besom and Open Church, Mary the Mother of Jesus (Advent meeting). Also Debbie and Nancy have faithfully and perceptively led our times of prayer and worship. We are grateful to all those who have used their various gifts in this way, and we thank God for them.

Bearing in mind the uncertainties that Covid 19 brings please pray with us as we plan our 2021 programme. Also please pray that the faith of all who come will be strengthened, that newcomers will respond to the gospel and will feel truly at home with us. It is our desire too that Christ will be 'more and more at home in our hearts as we trust in him' and that together we may continue to 'encourage one another and to spur one another on toward love and good deeds.'

# Outreach

## Arts Creative Team (Emma Evans)

The 'Arts Creative Team' at St. John's was seeded in 2018 and quickly grew to our current status of eight members; all with unique and God driven styles.

We work collectively and individually to produce art in various media, including oils, acrylics, pencil and water base paints. We produce work in landscape or portrait form on canvas, wood off-cuts, paper, board, plastic sheeting and banners and using re-cycled material where possible to show thematic expressions of our worship.

We have supported the major calendar events such as Christmas Nativity, Easter, Pentecost, Holiday Club and Remembrance Day.

There are numerous banners that go on display both inside and outside Church, we are supporting the ongoing project to renew the signage outside Church to align with our new corporate logo and colour and to provide accurate and welcoming information about church life. There is a new 'Prayer window' which has been set up in Church as a permanent feature.

We have received great feedback from the local community and from within the congregation, which is encouraging, and we will do our best to support any requests for art products.

The attached video demonstrates some of the work by our members and shows the effort and faithful commitment to using our artistic talents as a means of worship.

We encourage everyone who joins the group to exhibit their work and we are open to new members.

The use of computers and the internet enables many of us to see each other's work which has been really encouraging.

During 'Lockdown' we have seen many more emerging artists within our church community and would love them to join the St. John's art team.

My thanks go to all the artists in the group for encouraging and supporting each other along our journey of 'Faith in Art' over the past two years.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SpLExzKboAE7xGRI7yipJX7DWQLCSNhr/view?invite=CJe7w7QD&ts=5f610832>

## The Shed (Phil Holloway)

The Shed in 2019 continued to progress, with a good mix of about 10 men and women (including facilitators) attending each Thursday morning between 10am and 12pm, throughout the year.

Members continue to bring their own projects to work on, which might be a model aeroplane or an upcycled piece of pallet art. We have also continued to support St John's by repairing broken chairs, building backdrops for Holiday club and items of furniture for Playbox.

We hope to be able to start meeting again soon in 2020 as Covid rules permit.

## Besom in Runnymede (Mandie Shirnia)

Besom is a registered charity which welcomes time givers and donations from a variety of local churches, including Ashford Congregational Church, Runnymede Christian Fellowship, Christchurch Virginia Water and Egham Parish Catholic churches. We are a prayer based equipping ministry and delight in encouraging generous giving of Time, Skills, Money and Things from the community locally.

Donations are measured to high standards; we aim to give God's best to those we engage with. These donations are matched with referrals (from official support agencies) and passed on via our van team to equip and bless those in need. The donations range from offers of time to help/assistance in maintaining their home, supplying larger goods, driving the van or assisting in the office to making up parcels of clothes or writing thank you letters. Items we have been given and passed on are as varied as, sheds, massage tables, Christmas hampers to holiday places at Christian camp, bikes to cookers food and clothes. We have been closed throughout lockdown to protect our time givers but are now back operating, with the bonus of furloughed staff joining the team and are open three mornings a week (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday). We are always keen to hear from prospective timegivers ( who can be referenced via their church) and can be contacted on [thebesom@btinternet.com](mailto:thebesom@btinternet.com) or 01784 470387.

### **The Atrium Café (Lesley Pocock)**

The Atrium Cafe is now a regular feature in St John's mission of loving our community. We have welcomed new guests and new volunteers to this well-known and well-loved ministry, and we continue to provide a hot lunch, home-made cakes and hot drinks on a donation basis. I am delighted to say that more people than ever enjoy the hospitality of the Cafe and the opportunity to meet old and new friends.

We are delighted that we have continued to enjoy support from the local community with the weekly food collection from Tesco and Waitrose have also been very active in supporting the Café. They have hosted and provided the food for a "Healthy Living Lunch" an afternoon tea and a pre-Christmas Day lunch. The Waitrose staff very much enjoyed hosting and serving these events and as you can imagine, our guests very much enjoyed the Waitrose fayre.

The Cafe's guests were also invited by Strode's College to attend an afternoon tea at the college, which included song and drama entertainment by the students. This event was also very enjoyable for all those who attended.

The volunteers and the pastoral team welcome the informality of the Café, which enables them to spend time with our guests, sometimes just chatting but also offering prayer and support, if requested. The Atrium Cafe is a huge blessing to everyone, and I know that since our closure due to the current pandemic, volunteers and guests have all missed our regular Wednesday get together. We pray that we may be able to open again before too long and that this time of reflection gives us an opportunity to listen to what God has in store for the future of the Atrium Cafe. The volunteers really enjoy serving in this ministry and showing the love of God to our local community and a huge "Thank You" to them for their faithful support and commitment.

### **Christians Against Poverty (Sue Gray)**

"Serve the poor, save the lost, with the church across the nation."

That's CAP's strapline though we at St John's don't see clients nationwide, our centre concentrates on Egham, Englefield Green, Virginia Water, Pooley Green, Egham Hythe and Thorpe.

Our heart is to make a difference in our community by being a practical outpouring of God's amazing love to those struggling with unmanageable debt.

This is done by helping them set a budget to either repay their debts or help them through an insolvency route. Even during this crisis one of our clients became debt free after a long journey involving many hiccups and false starts over a period of 6 years of and on.

We've been delivering food and accessing grants for school uniform.

One of the most exciting events is that Veronica Priestly has joined the CAP team as a CAP coach. This has meant that we've been able to increase the number of new clients that we see.

We have also kicked off Kickstart, an online zoom course lead by Chris Gray and Christine Symons covering aspects such as managing money, anxiety, loss and dealing with habits. This course was designed by CAP for helping people through Lockdown and in the time afterwards.

We have decided not to continue with Life Skills as it wasn't meeting the need we had at this time, we can review that in the future.

Before lockdown as part of Growing Together we ran a CAP Money course which was well attended, and participants found it very useful.

We expect demand for our service to increase as we continue to struggle and deal with the financial fall out from Covid 19.

As we look to the future please pray for guidance for our ministry at St John's. For the finances to keep the Centre running. For each of our clients that they will not only find a way through their debt but also find and experience God's love and saving grace.

Practically please tell people about the service, most of our clients come through personal recommendations from someone they trust.

### **Be Creative (Sharon Mitchell)**

We normally meet every Friday (in term time) between 12 and 2pm in the Atrium Cafe area in the Easter Centre. We had dates in the diary this year for Saturday all day Workshops once a month; obviously, that has changed!! We have already run two all day Saturday workshops; one to learn more about quilting and the other paper crafts; they were both very successful and people look forward to more! There was a lino printing workshop planned but the lockdown changed that!

We are a group who enjoy sewing, knitting, crochet and paper crafting and have done projects for St Johns including white bunting for the children's groups which they could then decorate themselves, and drawstring bags for the children at Child Action Lanka. We've also helped knit poppies to decorate the church on Remembrance Sunday, and made welcome banners for church and Thank You and Christmas Hamper Cards for Besom.

We play a part in the Eco Church and have a table at any Eco Church Fairs showing ways of how to "make do and mend" and give ideas for how to recycle etc.

We are a fun group who look forward to welcoming everyone to our group. We specifically chose 12-2pm in order to be able to welcome local office workers who might want a break from their desk; bring their lunch and participate (or not) with their craft passion - or learn one!

During this COVID time, and as we are able to meet 1 to 1, I can organise sessions if anyone wants to get in touch.

During lockdown, Lyn and I were busy making clear face shields for the NHS and, through this process, her home became a natural and lovely place to meet and craft.

So, effectively, six of us are able to meet in her garden and craft every Friday from 11am to 4pm. We are so encouraged by the church family who appear to delight in coming and creating and, more wonderfully, that they're bringing friends.

Our "market stall" exists to fundraise for the Easter Centre and we encourage home crafters to either help with our projects or to offer their crafts for sale. We are waiting to hear if it's possible to sell items on a church website which, at this time, when we can't have a market stall, would be great for us and fundraising!

## Mission Partnership Team (Jörg Haustein)

Many things have changed since my last report in early 2019. We have ended our partnership with Ruaha Diocese in Tanzania, COVID-19 has severely affected our mission partners, and our team keeps changing.

After a long and searching process we recommended to the church to end our partnership with Ruaha Diocese. Communication had been in decline for some years and our efforts to revive the partnership in various ways were not successful. Some developments within the Diocese also made it clear to us that it was time to move. We remain connected in Christ and pray for our brothers and sisters in Tanzania as we explore where God will lead us next in Africa.

We had some lovely events in 2019. In June we paired our Mission Partnership Day with Magna Carta weekend, with a decorative stall in the High Street, a service centred on our mission partners, an amazing lunch from the kitchen team, and an afternoon with Kirsty Stevenson from the Bible Society. In September we hosted a very well-attended tea for Child Action Lanka. Our Lent project was also dedicated to Child Action Lanka and raised an amazing £5,620 (plus £587 Gift Aid).

What a difference 2020 has been in comparison! Our mission partners were all severely impacted by the coronavirus. Some had to cease or curtail their activities; others are busier than ever. Given the economic uncertainties, financial worries and shortfalls have also affected them. Here in the UK, we have not been able to put on special events for our mission partners, and the Lent project fell by the wayside as the church was adjusting to the new realities of lockdown.

Steve Hodgkinson and Victoria Mcharo left the team this past year. We are tremendously thankful for their work and dedication in looking after Ruaha all these years. Our team has now shrunk to only five members and we are looking to grow again. If God has put the wider world on your heart, do consider joining us!

Our annual tithe distribution for 2019 was as follows:

Olinda Mission	-	£5,600
Child Action Lanka	-	£5,600
Hannah and Tim	-	£5,600
FACT	-	£2,000
East to West	-	£4,900
Bible Society	-	£1,500
Total	-	£25,200

Our mission partners are really encouraged and blessed St. John's continuing support. It is an enormous privilege to partner with them in God's kingdom work, as they work the front lines of the disruption and devastation wreaked by the coronavirus. Please keep them in your hearts and prayers as we step into the future together!

## Music in the Caddey (Phil Darby)

**"Music in the Caddey"** [MIC] is the umbrella name for two different social evenings based around listening to and playing music. We meet in The Caddey which is the black and white barn at the top end of the St John's car park.

**"Vinyl Nights"** are for those aged 18 and over who want to play their own vinyl records or simply enjoy other people's music tastes. We meet on the 2nd Monday monthly from 7.30pm. We offer an opportunity to buy used vinyl albums and singles and give the proceeds to the Easter Centre. There is a "Record Booth" so you can hear a forgotten track before you play or buy. About twice a year we have an album only evening. Refreshments are available and entry is £1.

**"Everything but Vinyl"** is for those aged 18 or over who want to play or listen to music which is digitalised and so we play CDs, DVDs and also use YouTube. We have a Bluetooth connection for other devices and also facilities for playing tape and videos cassettes. Refreshments are available and entry is £1. We meet on the 4th Monday monthly from 7.30pm.

From April 2020 we have met online listening and watching digitalised music and videos. Since September though we have found a way to play vinyl records using a turntable and sharing with everyone which is adding to our enjoyment.

One of the benefits of our socials is that people on the fringe of church life or with no connection meet up with those who are Christians and enjoy time together. From this we hope to be able to offer other church activities and events which may help them on their spiritual journey.

Please contact Phil Darby on 01784 473750 for further information.

### **The English Language Café (Linda Matthews)**

The English Language Café has been running in the Easter Centre since September 2018 but had to be temporarily closed at Easter this year because of Covid 19.

In normal times we meet on Thursday mornings - advanced and intermediate level students at 9.15 and complete beginners at 10.30. Lessons start with prayer and invitations to church events are regularly given. Since last year, the number of students has grown, and Nick Cottam's assistance has been invaluable and hugely appreciated.

The class serves the wider community; students work on their language skills, begin to feel more confident to use English in everyday situations and make friends. However, alongside this there is the desire that students should be drawn into the life of the St John's family and encouraged to investigate Christianity. Several have attended church events; a South Korean Lady brought her whole family to church on Remembrance Sunday and one Greek lady came fairly regularly to the 9.15 service and Revive until March. She now comes to the Wednesday Communion Service occasionally. Invitations to church events and services are offered and significant occasions in the church year provide opportunities to explain Christian beliefs to those of other faiths.

People of a wide variety of nationalities and faiths live and work in our community and all are really keen to improve their English skills. During the last year we have welcomed to the class people from Sri Lanka, India, Algeria, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Spain, Columbia, Ecuador, Chile, Greece, South Korea and Turkey. Lessons are informal and alongside all the hard work, we drink coffee, eat biscuits, meet new people, and thoroughly enjoy each other's company.

No classes have been held since we had to close the Easter Centre, but we are currently investigating ways of starting up again. If we are unable to go back to the Easter Centre in the immediate future, perhaps on-line lessons may be the answer.

Please pray 1) for wisdom as decisions have to be made about how to continue the class without being able to meet face to face 2) for the ability to witness effectively to the students and 3) for the building of lasting relationships.

## **Young people**

### **Students (Grace Hopkins)**

**A Home: for such a time as this.** Whether it is for a term, a year, 3 years, 4 years we want to offer Royal Holloway Students a home for their time with us.

**A Home: to be.** We want this to be a place where they can come just as they are, where we will rejoice with them in their highs and weep with them the lows of life. At university it can feel like your life is changing week on week as you learn so many things, not just on your course but about yourself, where you've come from and where you want to be. We want to say come, come as you are, come with your stuff and we will walk with you in it.

**A Home: to explore.** We want this to be a place where they find out who God is and who they are in him. To offer a grace place, a place where they can try new things and fail spectacularly, where we don't mind a

bit of mess as they work out the good gifts God has placed in them and where he is calling them. We want to be raising up sons and daughters, disciple making disciples who dream big and watch God exceed their expectations.

**A Home: to stay.** St John's is here to stay and we want for however long the students are with us for their time with us to stay with them for years to come as they walk confidently into the world knowing who God is and who they are in him! For them to know that they will always be able to call St John's home, whether they stay as many have before them, maybe like our exciting new Intern Carrie has post university or as valued memories wherever they land next.

As much as possible we want to model an Acts 2:42-47 style ministry with the students that join us, pushing us to move out into our Parish where roughly 3,000 students live as a witness of the great love and hope we find in Christ Jesus.

### **Teenagers (Grace Hopkins)**

In CHARGED everything that we do is centered around the young people (11-18 years old) falling more in love with God, learning to love their neighbours and themselves better and going and telling everyone and anyone of this amazing love that is on offer - this is our new vision and name we launched in June 2020.

The out working of this looks like a mission shaped youth ministry, where we are raising up disciple making disciples who are released and empowered to join in God's work of proclaiming and demonstrating the good news to Egham and beyond. Andy, one of our leaders, has a great analogy for how we do this in the form of a doughnut!

The sugary outer layer represents a social group, a purely social space that is a fun and inviting place for young people in Egham. This is a place we want those in our youth group to feel comfortable to invite their friends to experience the practical love of Christ in action. We have hopes of creating a venue that is the place to be in Egham for young people.

Next, we have the dough, a bit more substance and still some sugar. A light mix of social fun, games and bit of bible stuff. We see this our Sunday provision as an introduction to the Christian faith for those new to church, maybe visiting for the first time, or on the edge regarding their faith.

Finally, we reach the jammy centre, what we have all been waiting for! We see this as a youth cell group for those that have a personal faith and attend by choice. This would be the Christian nucleus where they can grow in their faith together and support each other and no doubt eat doughnuts!

This provides somewhat our scaffolding from which we branch out into other key areas of Youth ministry for example: mentoring, attending Christian camps, serving, seasonal activities etc.

We are still working on getting all of these areas up and running and for that we need volunteers that get to go on this amazing journey with us with the young people. That could be you! Let's grab a doughnut and see where you might be able to help out!

### **Children (Rachel Upcott)**

#### FootPrints

Your word is like a lamp that guides my steps,

a light that shows the path I should take. Psalm 119 v105

FootPrints is our Sunday group for children aged 2 ½ to 11 years old. We want children to have a sound knowledge of the bible and learn how they are accepted, special and loved by God. We pray they will learn how the bible can be a guide to how we should live our lives, care and love each other and look after our world.

The committed FootPrints team provide a welcome, secure and loving environment for our children. Together, we learn through songs, games, discussion, stories and craft and much more. We have a weekly collection and discuss how our money can be used to help others throughout the world.

We also want our children to become serving members of our church family. Opportunities are provided for them to serve in the Christmas and all-age services.

Most recently, due to Covid we have adapted and recorded our FootPrint sessions and put them online for families to watch together. We have tried to stay connected by giving children challenges each week either through quizzes or crafts etc. Regular emails have been sent to families offering prayer and support as well as craft packages and other resources. We were able to have some zoom sessions with our year 6 children. The team have continued to pray for our families during this season.

Looking to the next few months we are going to keep our sessions online but we are hoping that we can meet up in family bubbles once a month so we can have some face to face contact.

Please pray for the FootPrints team, that we will be filled with the Holy Spirit and be given encouragement, enthusiasm, energy, fresh ideas and especially guidance as we continue to look at all the changing rules and work out the best way forwards. We also ask that you pray for the children of St. John's as they are having to live their childhood during extraordinary times. Pray that they will look to God for reassurance and guidance and they will learn to put their trust in Him and become witnesses to God's grace in their communities.

### Playtime and Praise Tots

During 'normal' times Playtime welcomes families and their pre-school children into the church building on Fridays. We provide a safe, warm, caring environment where children can play learning social skills as well developing in other areas. Parents and carers also receive a warm welcome and are invited to receive the many blessings that St. John's has to offer. This can be in the form of prayer, support for any problems they may be suffering from, baby meals, pastoral care, friendship, celebration in times of joy, the children's clothes bank, invites to our many and varied events and so much more. Over the year we enjoyed a visit from the farm, picnics outside, a Christmas party, gifts on mothering Sunday and Father's day and on the last event we could hold we celebrated the 200 year churches anniversary with a cream tea, bouncy castle and a visit from Peppa Pig! We want our families to receive through us the overflowing love that God has for them.

Once a month during Playtime we hold a praise Tots service where families hear a bible story, we pray and sing together and make crafts related to the story. This gives us opportunities to talk more about our faith. Our theme for Praise Tots from Sept 2019 was family relationships and we looked at stories like Joseph and his brothers, Mary & Martha and the Prodigal son as well as many others. Parents and children were invited to give thanks for members of their families and add them to a family tree.

During the last few months during the pandemic we have filmed Playtime and Praise Tots which have been made available on the Playtime at St. John's Facebook page. I have continued to email families on a regular basis offering support in terms of prayer, financial or just a friendly chat. Many families have offered items that they no longer need, and we have been able to pass these onto families who needed them. We were able to deliver gift packages, including knitted chicks from Craftea ladies, to many of our families which were gratefully received especially during the early summer months. It was a privilege to catch up with families and see their children at the end of the garden path.

Very sadly it looks too difficult for us to resume Playtime and Praise Tots face to face due to all the restrictions so we will continue online recordings. We are hoping that we might be able to open up our clothes bank once a month in a safe way that would give us some face to face links with our families. We also hope that we will be able to deliver more gift bags especially towards Christmas.

I would appreciate prayer and support in finding fresh ways of presenting Playtime and Praise Tots online. If anyone would like to help, please do get in touch. If you know of any new families, please point them in the direction of our Facebook page or You Tube Channel. Please pray for families with young children in

Egham as they navigate these very difficult times and their children miss out on valuable playing and learning times.

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me. Don’t stop them, because God’s kingdom belongs to people who are like these little children.

Please help the Playtime/Praise Tots team to show God’s love to our families during the next few months.

### Holiday Club

During August 2019 we held St. John’s Holiday Club called Kingdom Quest. During July and August there was a flurry of activity as we prepared and decorated the site in preparation to accommodate approximately 120 children aged 5-11 years old, on an adventure exploring the Armour of God. The church was turned into a castle where Lady Rachel and Sir Robin explored the word and object each day with the children. Everyone sang along with the Merry Minstrels and each day we heard about a different bible character with the help of Jester cam! We were entertained by the ‘Watt’ family (members of our youth) as they tracked down the villain of the story. The children let off steam outside with healthy outdoor tournaments and were treated to healthy, nutritious snacks to keep their energy levels up. There was also some quiet time as each group had their own space to learn more about the bible characters and hear about the word of God, pray together and make crafts.

The week was then finished off with a banquet following the all-age service.

All of the above was only possible by many members of St. John’s giving of their time, love and talents so freely. It was a true intergenerational project with teenagers helping up to some of our much older and wiser church members. Thank you all so much.

The reason we do this each year, although it is exhausting, is because we want to welcome children in to church, to build relationships with families, let children hear how special they are to God, to see we can have fun learning about bible truths and to discover more about the Christian faith and hopefully see the out pouring of God’s love for them.

We were heartbroken this year not to be able to run holiday club face to face. We decided to film seven sessions of Adventure Cruise exploring the seven Cs and discovering how much Jesus changed people’s lives and how much he can change ours. We delivered activity bags to families who wanted to take part and set them challenges they could take part in at home.

Please pray that next year we will be able to run holiday club properly again and start building on relationships that were being formed previously.

### **Playbox (Conrad Benefield)**

Playbox is an Ofsted-registered nursery school offering early years education and childcare to 2, 3 and 4 year olds, in the Children’s Zone in the Easter Centre. Playbox is accountable to the St John’s PCC and governed of Playbox is delegated to a Playbox Voluntary Management Committee chaired by Conrad Benefield. Playbox achieved another ‘Good’ Ofsted rating in March 2019.

Sian Williams stood down from her role of Supervisor in 2019 after 16 years and is greatly missed by staff and families alike. A new senior staff structure was developed and implemented in autumn 2019, with much clearer role descriptions and the creation of a Nursery Administrator role to take on the administrative burden.

Playbox continued to thrive and grow through 2019, with the nursery pretty much at full capacity by the end of the year. Children attending come from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds: for example, three have special educational needs and 17 come from families where English is a second language. Playbox is committed to welcoming children from all backgrounds and supporting families as well as their children, for example through signposting to other services, pastoral support etc.

The dedicated, purpose-built facilities in the Children's Zone are greatly appreciated by both staff and children and several improvements have been made to the equipment and facilities available. Much of this investment has been made possible through the Pupil Premium funding that Playbox receives for children in particular circumstances.

Playbox was closed from 20 March this year following the Government's decision to close most schools and nurseries and reopened in June, initially with only 10 children attending. Playbox has now reopened for the autumn term with 34 children and things are going well, again thanks to the dedication and planning of staff.

We are working towards further expanding provision towards normal levels, and encouraging more families to return to Playbox, in line with Government guidelines and in a way that is safe and sustainable. There are opportunities for volunteers to support Playbox in a number of ways and if this is something you are interested in, please get in touch. Please pray for our Management Committee, our staff and volunteers and most of all for the children and families we serve – that Playbox will continue to be a safe, happy place for young children to play, learn, make friends and have fun.

## **Marketing, communications & campus**

### **Website and Social Media (Steve Cresswell)**

#### Website

We now have a completely new web site. All the content has been re-written to bring it up to date and give it a modern look and feel. There are over 80 different pages giving information about all kinds of things the church does, do take a look through it.

The web site is kept updated regularly. In particular the Church Office updates the notices and the What's On section each week, so look here first to find out what is happening. The web site is there to serve the church - to ask for any changes to the web site email [webteam@stjohnsegham.com](mailto:webteam@stjohnsegham.com)

It is particularly important to have a good, up to date website during these times of Covid restrictions.

In the update we have not yet been able to re-implement the popular address book feature. We hope to add this and a search facility in the next few months.

We are now using a much faster web site hosting company, so everything works much more quickly.

A creative development we have done in the last few weeks is a questionnaire which tries to match people with serving opportunities in the church. Do try it out.

#### Social Media

We have very active Facebook pages for both the St Johns community and the wider community, and our Twitter account and Instagram accounts are alive and active.

The St John's closed Facebook page (called St John's Church Egham) is for church members only. There are frequent posts about all kinds of things from other church members, as well as information and regular prayers.

The St John's wider community Facebook page (called St John's Egham) is available to anyone. It contains information relevant to the local community, daily prayers for the community, live-streamed videos of daily bible reading, compline services, daily features for both youth and students, and more.

### **Church Administration (Veronica Cresswell)**

The Church Administration Team strives to ensure that efficient and responsive administrative support is provided for the staff and ministry team and the work of the church. We also aim to be a friendly and

welcoming first point of contact for the church family and the general public, in person as well as on the phone and on email. A significant amount of our time is also taken up by various aspects of dealing with bookings for the church campus, both the administration as well as the more practical side of things.

We were pleased to welcome Claire Mallon (now Jenkins!) to our team in October 2019. 6 of her working hours on Tuesday mornings and Thursdays are for the Church Office and the rest of the time she works as the Playbox Administrator. Dal continues to work on Wednesday and Friday mornings and Veronica works Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.

Since lockdown, Dal and Veronica have been working from home, with Dal spending a short period of time on furlough, and Claire has continued to work in the Easter Centre. This has brought various challenges along the way, but we are very grateful to everyone who has enabled the work to continue in this way. Please bear with us as we do our best in sometimes difficult circumstances.

To contact the Church Office, please continue to use the email address or the usual telephone number. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **Eco Church (Chris Gray)**

The Eco-Church team have been in action for a couple of years now. While our initial focus was to seek the recognition status of the Eco-Church awards, as we have worked through some of the areas of focus, we have become a lot more engaged in the 'doing', prompted by those criteria. In doing so, we have brought together a committed and focused team who have different areas of expertise and passion – all motivated by our love of God's creation and obedience to care for it.

During 2019 we held our first EcoFair which involved a number of activities over a July weekend focused on the environment, including preaching, stalls, activities, and information and even held a bat walk. A great opportunity to engage with the community also.

We also launched a monthly Eco-Act which provided themes for people to focus on and presented the congregation with easy, medium, and hard responses they were encouraged to consider. We were ably assisted by Professor Potty to engage folk in a humorous but thought-provoking manner. Our first Act was to encourage the congregation to calculate their personal carbon footprint which sparked some good conversations and we used this to drive our subsequent Acts.

The other broad area we have been looking at has been the grounds, and after some analysis with Surrey Wildlife Trust we are considering the mowing regime for the grass, will plant a native species hedge in November with whips donated by the Woodland Trust and are considering how to establish a well-being and community garden.

The 2020 EcoFair had to take on a modified format because of Covid, but provided an amazing opportunity to engage with a much broader group with on-line discussions, videos and educational sessions – bringing in experts and interested people from far and wide and developing strong connections with local councillors and people concerned with a range of environmental issues. We also developed through the Magna Carta festival the Messages of Hope which have provided a chance to see some wonderful artwork as well as some inspirational messages as we all consider the impact of the Covid crisis on our lives.

Going forward we intend to reactivate Traidcraft sales at church, formalize the EcoChurch award itself and continue the initiatives we have developed.

Through Facebook, the St John's website pages and monthly Zoom meetings we have established great engagement between the team and the church family. If you want to find out more, we would love to hear from you at [stjohnseghamecochurch@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnseghamecochurch@gmail.com) !

## **Fundraising for the Easter Centre (Phil Darby)**

We have been fundraising now for 10 years and at the end of April 2020 we had raised a staggering £73,736.21 [£63,996.94 April 2019] Our target originally was £50,000 but we passed that in October 2017 so have just continued and are aiming for £100,000. Thank you everyone whether you are one of our many “helpers on the day” or have attended events.

We have achieved this by staging music concerts, quiz nights, fashion shows, garden tidy ups, “bangers and mash” evenings, sales of items on social media, car boots and auctions, a children’s talent show, a 3 peaks challenge, a chess tournament, cake and refreshment sales including Magna Carta Day, an auction of goods and services at St John’s, Garden Parties, valuation days, a holiday homes “silent auction”, car washes, a sale of Christmas baubles, sales of “Music Memorabilia”, sales of St. John’s own bi-centenary recipe book, a photo session etc.

At the time of compiling this report we have been in a Covid situation for 6 months. Even so we have reached a figure of £75,460.73 having raised a further £1,724.52. We have hosted an online quiz night; a scattered garden party held a car wash and a valuation day. In addition, we have sold 62 St. John’s bi-centenary recipe books leaving just 38 from the 150. A big thank you to Laura Greaves for gathering in and putting this all together. It has been produced and available for sale at just the right time.

We have however lost a potential £1000 to £1500 income from hosting another two live concerts and our annual garden party and we are naturally missing the opportunity to gather people together and socially interacting as this is what we regard as the “Fun” in fundraising.

The team’s aim is not only organising activities but also to encourage others to fundraise themselves. It does not matter how much an idea is able to raise as every little bit helps and is appreciated.

If you have an idea or would like to do something yourself or would like to be kept up to date via our monthly newsletter, please email [fundraisingfortheeastercentre@stjohnsegham.com](mailto:fundraisingfortheeastercentre@stjohnsegham.com) or speak with one of the team. They are myself [Phil Darby], Pam Darby, Laura Greaves and Carlos Pittol.\*