



# Experience Hope

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

## St John's Egham Ministry Reports 2021

This document includes reports from ministry leaders on a wide range of ministries and activities at St John's. These reflect updates, where applicable, since the 2020 Ministry Reports were published in October 2020, and reflect the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and COVID restrictions on many activities.

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:

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# Vicar's report - Vision 2021: #nostoppingthischurch

## The Journey so far

The priority in 2018 into 2019 was working on our Mission, Vision and Values. This led to an exciting process, with the prayer and hard work by the PCC leading to their launch at the APCM in 2019. What they have given us is a set of words and a framework that has proven to be fit for purpose - even at a time of crisis. Our mission statement inspires me, our values shape my actions, and our vision gives me something to pray into. Since then, we have been working hard to make these part of our DNA in various ways.

Having established our Mission, Vision and Values, the next big task was to build a Governance Structure that would help us move these ideals forward, enabling us to have a vehicle that was fit for purpose. Again, the PCC went to work, and we were able to launch our new Governance Structure at our APCM in October 2019.

The next step in this journey will be a step change in the quality of our internal communications strategy and tools such that the whole church family feel inspired and empowered through improved information sharing as we reform and develop the effectiveness of our communications.

As I write this, we are still living through an extraordinary time of challenge as the Covid-19 pandemic continues down its often unpredictable path. But we do not lose heart because, if 2020 taught us anything, it is that times of unprecedented crisis also present unprecedented opportunities for the Kingdom. As such, we find ourselves with much to celebrate. **#nostoppingthischurch** has become our rallying cry as we continued to push on all fronts in ministry and mission. Below is but a glimpse into the amazing work of SJE over the last year:

- From the beginning we put together a need/volunteer list and set up systems in place to support our Pastoral and Social Care ministry, which has helped us to keep in touch with the vulnerable throughout the pandemic.
- Children's and Youth Ministry has adapted and worked hard to keep connected to our young families and young people, through Playbox, Playtime, Footprints, Charged and other related ministries.
- The creation of the phenomenal "St John's Online", with an offering of daily services and Sunday worship, as well as the general building up of our online presence.
- Highly visible presence in the community with our 'Hope in the High Street Project'.
- Huge financial blessings, with about £400 000 paid towards our Easter Centre debt, Partnership giving up a staggering 13% compared to 2019 and a further £38 000 for our Hardship Fund.
- More people than ever engaged in prayer and more opportunities to pray, including two 24/7 prayer cycles.
- Celebrating new faith through our Alpha Course.
- The Hope in Depression Course bringing hope to just over 20 people.
- We have knitted, baked and cooked meals. We have delivered flowers, chocolate, activity bags, food parcels, Christmas hampers, Christmas dinners, care packages and prescriptions.
- We have kept our buildings open and safe as much as possible.

This is just a snapshot. Instead of turning in and looking after ourselves, we reached higher and wider as we sought to love God, love one another and love our community. We sought to bring hope and light to our community. We have stepped beyond our comfort zones and done things in new ways. Overall, in big and small ways, the scattered family of St John's has learnt to be agile, innovative and creative in our response to ever changing circumstances.

## Looking Ahead

**#nostoppingthischurch** remains our rallying cry. It will continue to propel us as seek to push forward on all fronts in ministry and mission. We will continue to strive towards our vision of 'a loving and growing community released and empowered to join in God's work of proclaiming and demonstrating the good news to Egham and beyond.'

## Laying Tracks for our Re-formation Post Pandemic

We will intentionally prepare for our re-formation post pandemic. We are all agreed that we do not want simply to go back to the way things were. The church will need to re-form in order to take on the challenges of future and continue to advance the kingdom of God in the post pandemic world.

We have experienced and are experiencing a time of darkness and it is easy to be paralysed by fear. However, knowing that we are part of something bigger than this present darkness keeps us front footed, holding on to the real hope that we will emerge out of this crisis as a bigger church. One with a bigger view of who God is. A bigger view of who we are in him. A bigger heart for our community. And physically bigger, as more people discover the Gospel of Grace through Faith in Christ alone as testified in scripture to the glory of God. This remains my prayer for this season. Our Re-Formation preparation will consist of:

### 1. Teaching

This year's programme is framed around this idea of 'Re-forming' the church, asking: 'what will shape us going forward?' We will look at:

**Our Reformation History:** looking at the five "Solas", which are five Latin phrases (or slogans) that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the Reformers' theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity. The Five Solas are:

- I. Sola Scriptura ("scripture alone"): The Bible alone is our highest authority.
- II. Sola Fide ("faith alone"): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.
- III. Sola Gratia ("grace alone"): We are saved by the grace of God alone.
- IV. Solus Christus ("Christ alone"): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Saviour and King.
- V. Soli Deo Gloria ("to the glory of God alone"): We live for the glory of God alone.

These pillars sustained the church in the reformation, sustain us today and will continue to sustain us in the future. Remembering that we are saved by Grace alone, through Faith in Christ alone as revealed in scripture for the glory of God alone. We want to stay rooted in this truth as we re-form for the future.

**Romans:** Going back to the basics. Romans is a sort of Christian manifesto in which Paul freely expounds the gospel. Many agree that the letter to the Romans stands as the clearest and most systematic presentation of Christian doctrine in all the scriptures. Paul presents a union between doctrine and life, illustrating the importance of both what we believe and how we live out those beliefs

**Acts:** picking up our abandoned study of Acts. We will look again at how the church was first formed. Acts concerns the very vital period in Christian history between the resurrection of Jesus and Paul's imprisonment in Rome in about AD 60. It tells the story about how Christian ideas and beliefs were being formed and when the organization of the church into a worldwide movement was being developed.

I am hoping to provide doctrinal infrastructure for our re-formation post pandemic that will give us touching points for theological, ecclesial, spiritual and ethical formation. Therefore, providing us something to frame our Christian identity and ministry.

### 2. Sustainability

With the Eco Team, to develop a unified and joined up Net Zero/Sustainability strategy for all parts of our church to commit to. We want it to be embedded in all SJE activities & operations from administration to Play Box, to leaders, fellowship and more as it will impact on:

- technology implemented
- equipment that is bought
- how we do things

We plan to have a strategy in place to present to the next APCM

### 3. Hybridity

Worship is now in our homes in ways we could not have imagined even in our most fervent prayers for revival. For years, we have prayed for a church without walls, a church that moves out of the comfort of our buildings and this crisis has taken the decision away from us. We are a church without walls, reaching wider and I hope deeper than ever before as we have kept innovating and adapting.

We have learnt lessons about inclusion that we want to take forward. For a long time, we neglected those who could not come to church because of ill health or age-related frailty and could even be a bit harsh about those that have difficult choices to make on a Sunday. Online worship has enabled God's people and those seeking to connect when they can and where they can.

We want to embed a culture where we are intentional about thinking 'hybrid' for all our events, asking the question: 'what will in-person and/or online presence look like?' It might be that it is one or the other, but not without deliberate exploration.

We want to put in place plans for hybrid worship and events for our adult, student, youth and children's ministries, ready for when we are able to meet again. This will include plans for 'our first Sunday back'

### 4. Governance

- Accelerate the growth and development of SJE, leveraging the clarity provided by the "governance wheel" to focus on those areas identified necessary as part of PCC governance
- Conduct an audit of volunteers and teams, seeking to ensure that all areas of ministry are properly resourced, and have clear objectives and action plans to present to the next APCM.
- Improve the quality of our internal communications strategy and tools such that the whole church family feel inspired and empowered through improved information sharing and centralised communications.

### 5. Radical Inclusion

- Continue our work and conversation about racial equality. The staff and PCC have attended unconscious bias training.
- We will engage with the Church of England's 'Living in Love and Faith' process. We will seek to hold truth and grace together in all our teaching and interactions about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

Underpinning our hopes for the year is the conviction that we are always held in the love of God, as our verse for the year reminds us:

*'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*

### Goals

1. **Teaching** - to provide doctrinal infrastructure for our re-formation post pandemic that will give us touching points for theological, ecclesial, spiritual and ethical formation. Therefore, providing us something to frame our Christian identity and ministry.
2. **Sustainability** - to develop a unified and joined up Net Zero/Sustainability strategy for all parts of our church to commit to - to present to the next APCM.
3. **Hybridity** - We want to put plans in place for hybrid worship and events for our adult, student, youth and children's ministries, ready for when we are able to meet again. This will include plans for 'our first Sunday back'.
4. **Governance** – Embed Governance Structure, audit of volunteers and teams and reform and develop the effectiveness of our communications.
5. **Radical Inclusion** – As we engage in a conversation about racial equality and engage with the 'Living in Faith and Love' process.

# Services

## Sunday morning services (Esther Prior)

### Overview

#nostoppingthischurch is our rallying cry and this has been reflected in all our ministries – not least on Sunday mornings. We began livestreaming our Services on 22 March 2020 and haven't looked back since. St John's Online was launched and soon grew beyond Sundays. We have continued to hold one morning Service at 10am. At the start of 2021, PCC passed a Resolution to suspend online Services as we went into Lockdown. As I write this, we are due to resume in-person Services from Palm Sunday – following another Resolution of the PCC.

Huge thanks go to the AV Team, the Worship Team, Dave Watts our Health and Safety Officer, the Admin Team, the Wardens Team, Leaders, Preachers, Readers and Intercessors. Thanks too to the Zoom Coffee Team, who have enabled connection after the Service on Sunday. We are grateful to God for everyone who has enabled us to say #nostoppingthischurch and enabled our scattered gatherings on Sundays. Some have been on the frontline of our ministry – with our online presence - and many more of have kept us going through background support services, encouragement, prayer and generous giving.

### Teaching

The 2021 programme is framed around the idea of 'Re-forming' the church, looking forward to our re-formation post Pandemic - what will shape us?

Looking at:

- Our Reformation history: Through five Latin phrases which have defined Protestantism for 500 years – examining how they might help us stay rooted as we re-form for the future.
- Lent: Mission Focus and Lent Reset focusing on Purpose, Loving Presence and Prayer
- Romans: Going back to the basics. Romans is a kind of Christian manifesto, in which Paul freely expounds the gospel.
- Stewardship Season: The Grace of Giving
- Advent and Christmas: The Gift of Life

### Looking Ahead

My hope is that we will hold on to some of the treasures of darkness that we have gleaned in this season:

- We have learnt lessons about accessibility – St John's Online is here to stay and will be incorporated at each stage of our phased return. A mixed ecology of online and in person will remain part of our mind-set in all our ministries
- We have learnt that we can adapt and change rapidly
- We are less nervous about having a very wide front door when we can't see what state the back door is in! We will continue to scatter seed generously, with careless abandon
- We have learnt to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. I am hoping for more liberated worshippers when we re-form.
- We have learnt how much we can accomplish together when people are empowered and released to play their part

### For Prayer

- Please pray for wisdom as we determine what shape our Sunday mornings will take when we can hug and sing again.
- Pray that those who have joined us online will find a pathway into the fellowship as people who are known and loved.

## **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)**

Since October, Revive has had to adapt several times between online and in person, along with the other worship services at St John's.

Those involved have taken it in their stride however, even where things have been frustrating, such as dealing with bandwidth of internet causing frozen screens, echo cancellation causing audio issues for worship leaders, but all in all, personally I think it has been really fun! Just before we resumed in person gathering, it really felt like we had hit our stride utilising Streamyard, and found a welcoming, workable and sustainable pattern and rhythm.

Since October you may be aware that the teaching topics have covered include: the Book of Ruth in which we discovered the hidden yet sovereign hand of God at work to bring about his purposes. A two part series on the church Vision; Commanded and Commissioned. Advent. Romans 8:31-39 Verse for the Year. A series on 5 're-formation' priorities for us to keep in mind as we begin to emerge from the crisis of the past year. And Now we are in the midst of resuming or rather, restarting the interrupted series on the book of Acts from last year. Easter service led by Carrie, Nancy and Grace included a whole host of faces from across the youth, student and young adult ministries, a real joy to see, and a lot of work by those involved, thank you!

Thank you to the service leaders who have adapted really well to the different modes, and particular thanks to Debbie and Conrad as Worship Pastors who have co-ordinated live music from people's homes when we were on Streamyard, and now continuing that as we gather in the church building. Many thanks to the worship leaders who have either stepped up for the first time, or adapted to the new ways of leading we have introduced. Courageous people!

Prayer Ministry has continued to be co-ordinated by Sue Naudi, for which I am extremely grateful, and there is a special sense of togetherness in that team, especially as we are still unable to offer prayer ministry that is recognisable to what once was. They now function as intentional intercessors, who are

seeking God on behalf of those gathered for word of knowledge, insight, comfort and wisdom. A real highlight has been how much those words and prayer have impacted people, even when they have stepped out and shared what is on their heart not knowing whether it was going to be for anyone in particular. I know they are keen to be praying **with** people, so we pray that can happen soon. Lastly, I would like to express my extreme thanks to Johnny Sheppard, Alastair Marshall and the AV teams who have, from Easter, resumed technical support of Sunday evenings, it's a huge weight off my mind, and I think a huge gift to those who gather to be able to hear and see what is going on well, rather than my cobbled together attempts. Thank you AV Team!

Two specific prayers from me for the year ahead please:

1. As we come 'back together', that we might gather in all whom God is calling to himself. That we might provide a safe space, a fun space, and creative and energised space where together we are transformed by Jesus.
2. That we might see more students and young people come and worship together and gather for fellowship. They bring such vibrancy to worship that I think we are poorer for not having them present, do be praying for ways that we can give them space to help shape what Sunday evenings look like.

The creative opportunities that in person gathering, alongside the AV team now providing tech support and streaming means we can explore what lies ahead for the evening service at St John's, what is needed for the season ahead and discern what that should and could look like, **together**.

### **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.

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

For the past year, our worship has been very different as for most of this time we have had no live worship in church. Instead, worship has been supported through pre-recorded music created using the Apple GarageBand app. This app enables the creation of songs through synthesised instrument sounds, to which 'real' vocals and instruments can be added. We hope that these recordings have helped members of St John's to engage with the worship, albeit in a slightly different way.

Another development in 2020 was the appointment of Debbie and Conrad to the role of joint Worship Pastors in October. In this role we will look to lead and support individuals to develop their musicianship and confidence in worship, promote and foster fellowship and team building, identify and nurture aspiring leaders, and strengthen the links between the worship team and the wider church family. We hope that the easing of lockdown measures will enable this work to begin in earnest, and are excited to be resuming some live worship in church. Many members of the team have not served in live worship for over a year, so our first priority will be supporting team members to re-engage and rediscover the joy of leading others into the presence of God through worship. Please pray for the whole team as we move forward on this journey.

We are grateful to Grace for introducing StreamYard, which enabled Revive to continue online, and to James for leading the development of Revive over the last few months. This has provided a great platform for giving Shamilka Hewagama, Steve and Claire Jenkins, and Liz and Wayne Cole the opportunity to lead worship.

Special thanks go 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. We are also hugely grateful to Johnny and to Steve Jenkins for leading the way in creating music through GarageBand and for the many others who have been involved in this, investing many hours of their time.

## **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 in the last year enabling people to see what is 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.

We have continued in the latter part of 2020 and early 2021 to enable the services to be accessed from home as the country stayed in Lockdown. The team has grown a little and it's been great to get those new people on board as part of the team. As the number of services starts to expand again, we are taking part in more service each week which is excellent although does present more challenges to the rota. As usual, this is an area we would appreciate prayer both in terms of strength and energy for the existing team and also for more volunteers to come forward to help.

We would love to welcome more people to the teams. We have 3 main teams, 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. 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 need to continue to increase the number of people using the new video equipment and we always need people for the projector too.

## **Zoom coffee and chat (Sarah Gillies)**

Coffee and Chat continues to meet online every Sunday after the morning service and is facilitated by a team of six. We use small 'breakout rooms' enabling conversation in groups of 3 – 6, as you would find if meeting for coffee in the Easter Centre. There is a core of regular attenders plus others who join us when they can. Conversation topics have included among other things gardening, flying, music, walking, eco Church, reading, follow-up to the service, cooking etc. It has also been a supportive environment for the difficult times – loss of employment, health issues and family bereavement for example. We have shared in the trials of life in lockdown as well as in fun and laughter.

It is a great way to stay in touch with fellow members of St John's and share ideas as well as enabling us to get to know those we might not otherwise have met. In the words of one of our participants: 'it has been an appreciated way of seeing a few members of the church each week and offered an opportunity that not living in Egham, there were even fewer possibilities of chatting to fellow believers naturally. It has enabled us to build up a few relationships in the church.'

Please pray that we would be able to reach those for whom this could be a beneficial way to keep in touch with fellow members of St John's. If you would like to join us on a Sunday morning you would be very welcome. With thanks to Philomena, Julia, Veronica P, Alison, Teal and Elaine for your partnership in hosting week by week.

## **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 until the Covid-19 lockdown. When the restrictions were partially lifted, we managed to ring where the ringers were socially distanced from each other (by 2m). Now that the restrictions are back in place the ringers were saddened that the bells haven't been rung for the last few months as Covid distancing regulations mean the

ringers can't meet up and this will apply until late June as it stands. Even then we won't be able to ring the full complement.

Two peals have been rung on the bells all of which have included members of the local band. The latest of these was the specially arranged peal for the celebration of the Church's 200th Anniversary of the building on 16th March. The Covid-19 crisis has prevented any further peal attempts.

The bells continue to be maintained and are very easy to ring but an inspection by professional bell hangers has discovered a crack in the headstock of the third bell which makes it unringable. Further inspections are underway with a view to starting a restoration project.

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

## **Teaching and Nurture**

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

In the last APCM report in October 2020 it concluded by saying that we continue to look out for new ways to reach out to our community with God's love and care and we have sought to do that through the pastoral team and honorary members alongside.

We had been making weekly phone calls since the start of lockdown in March 2020 to our Craftea Ladies, however, we realised that they were really struggling with the length of the time that the Day Centre had been closed and the absence of seeing people so we decided that every six weeks we would visit these 20 ladies. This started with a Christmas gift, followed by daffodils at the start of spring and more recently an Easter gift. The Hardship Fund has kindly assisted with these gifts which have been so appreciated as have the opportunities to see someone 'face to face'. We shall continue this for as long as we need to. They continue to knit for charities and we were able to send a big shipment to Elaine and Michael in November as well as some hats, gloves and socks to 'Knit for Peace'. We have been saddened though to lose two of our ladies during lockdown – Betty and Mavis who died during this time. We have kept in touch with Betty's daughter and were speaking to Mavis until recently too. They will both be much missed when we can return as a group, and we have also supported one of our member after the death of her son.

The previous report also mentioned facilitating a Hope in Depression course in the Easter Centre. This had not been possible since then and it was felt there was a real need to provide this so the pastoral team and others have facilitated two online courses through zoom, one before Christmas and one before Easter. These were run in conjunction with Christchurch, Virginia Water and proved popular and successful, each one being attended by approximately 20 people.

Individuals in the team also keep in contact with other members of the congregation and community by messages, and more recently distanced walks. Some continue to shop and pick up prescriptions for those who are still vulnerable and can't go out themselves. We also take referrals for the Hardship Fund and Foodbank.

There are also zoom groups to maintain social contact and a pastoral WhatsApp group to keep in contact and encourage one another through prayer. Many members of the team have recently undertaken safeguarding training online, which seemed quite daunting beforehand but all who have completed it have said it proved to be valuable and worthwhile training. A number of the team are shortly going to attend a Diocesan Webinar on bereavement. We are grateful to all those who support us through prayer and practical help, thank you.

## **Hope in Depression (Lesley Pocock)**

We are pleased to report that St John's has recently delivered our 3rd Hope in Depression Course. Due to restrictions this course was again delivered online via Zoom with over 20 people attending the course, some of whom are local to Egham but with others from around the UK. The course runs over six weeks with each weekly two-hour session exploring how you can play a part in your own recovery – whether that is through medication, nutrition or simply education about your brain chemistry when depressed. Sometimes, understanding that depression is a physical illness can be the start of your journey to recovery. To ensure everything that is discussed is done so with the most up-to-date research and guidance, we have expert speakers for each week to guide discussions,

We were blessed with good facilitators for small groups from within St John's, including some members of the Pastoral team. All attendees on the course very much valued and benefited from the opportunity to gain understanding from the course and also to discuss and share personal issues with the facilitators and other people on the course, in a confidential and supportive environment. Those attending the course have requested that St John's facilitates a follow up meeting which we will be pleased to do. The Hardship Fund has supported the cost of this course and also further courses which will be delivered either face to face or via zoom, or possibly a combination, during 2021.

## **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.

During the past year, we have been having regular catch-ups over Zoom so that members can talk to and pray for each other, and we also have a WhatsApp group in which people support each other and send encouraging messages. Singleness and loneliness can often be linked, so these forms of communication have been especially important during the lockdowns when many people living on their own were not able to see or interact with other people easily.

It has been a great encouragement to hear people say that this group caters for them and makes them feel included in a way that they previously had not experienced. Many people have struggled during the pandemic, so I would appreciate prayer for the members who have found this particularly difficult. I would also appreciate prayer for knowing where to take the group next as things start to open up and we are able to have in-person events again. Looking at our mission statement, I would love Single and Fulfilled to grow in our love for God and each other, as well as seek how to love our community in new and creative ways.

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

The objective of Growing together was to provide a number of courses that would benefit the community as well as our own church members.

Prior to our first lock-down we were running three of four courses a term simultaneously in the Easter Centre on a Thursday evening between 7.30pm and 10.00pm.

These courses included, Alpha, Parenting Courses, Parenting Teenager Courses, Marriage Courses, CAP related Courses, Bible Courses, the SHAPE course, a Grace 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.

It has now been over a year since we have been able to do live courses due to Covid, and there is still uncertainty as to when we will be able to resume. However, we have now completed two zoom alpha courses. This has been a revelation to me, as I was quite sceptical as to how the zoom courses would work out. The courses have been quite small, but the quality of the course has been maintained. There have been some benefits to zoom over a live courses.

Mothers with young children have no problem about baby-sitting. And distance is no object. One of our course members resides in Canterbury! In this context this is not so much about local community, but very much about Kingdom values. I have a feeling that even when we are able to go live again, that there will still be a place for on-line courses.

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)**

It is a joy to be able to report that Life Groups continue to exist(!) and flourish under the leadership of the Life Group Leaders and those that attend each one. We have around 20 Life Groups at present. Of which a couple have paused meetings due to various reasons - not least the ongoing COVID19 concerns and "zoom-fatigue". Our groups range from the small (4-5 members) to the large (15+ active members) and meet at many different times and places.

Most groups choose their own study materials and plan social events which can cover a wide range of topics and themes. Recent highlights include: the 24/7 Prayer Course II, studies in John, and material from the LICC, following the Sunday teaching series.

Life Groups have been a lifeline for many of our church family in lockdown, including setting up support WhatsApp groups where pastoral and other needs can be shared quickly and met with prayer or practical help. The leaders have sought to serve faithfully in this area and it's always amazing to hear of how Life Groups are very much enjoyed!

I continue to pray that the groups which are at or reaching some sort of capacity might consider what's next for their group, perhaps planting a new 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, cared for and grow together in faith and love of Jesus, especially as we emerge from lockdown, and learn new ways of being a community, perhaps there will be need for some new leaders to be raised up and trained and released into this rewarding and vital ministry.

Alongside 13 of the Life Groups that are made up of a variety of people, there are 7 groups that have different focus groups they are aimed at, including: Young Adults, Women's 'Oasis' Groups and Men's 'Breakthrough' Groups.

The PCC recently spent time looking at Life Groups ministry and we look forward to sharing their thoughts and gathering the input from Life Group Leaders to see how we can deepen and widen this ministry. I am hoping, COVID restrictions notwithstanding to hold a leaders get-together later in the year, alongside developing a more structured approach to training and support for leaders and invitation/participation in Life Groups to be made more accessible.

Let us pray that each Life Group becomes a missional, life giving and prayerful space to each person who wishes to be part of one.

## **Events (Sally Thompson)**

The purpose of the Events team is to enable our church family to gather together for social occasions and as you can imagine over the past year that hasn't been possible!

In the past we have enjoyed singalong events, film nights, karaoke evenings, family parties, craft days and other gatherings. We will think about what might be possible as the restrictions lift...

We would love to encourage people to come forwards with new ideas for events they would like to see happen and be involved in and we would also love to increase our team of helpers so if you have ideas and would like to be involved please let us know!

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 The 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.

### **Men's 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, support, 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](mailto:will.bissett@stjohnsegham.com)).

BreakThrough 1 (hosted by Will Bissett) In 'normal' times we meet on the first Thursday of each month. Since March 2020 we've been meeting fortnightly. This has continued in the 6 months since the last APCM. We have all found this helpful as we navigate the tiredness, stresses, and strangeness of pandemic restrictions. We chat and pray together, providing prayer and moral support to one another, and pray for our friends, our community and our church. We look forward to beginning to meet outside as restrictions allow.

BreakThrough 2 (facilitated by Conrad Benefield) We meet on the first Wednesday of every month, currently via Zoom, for fellowship and prayer, and we share prayer points by email so that we can continue to pray for one another over the coming month. Our membership has remained pretty steady and all of us value the opportunity to meet together, catch up and support one another, often through challenging situations. In time we look forward to being able to meet again in person and share a meal.

BreakThrough 3 (hosted by Phil Holloway) Due to COVID, we have not met. We have kept in contact informally by phone. We hope to meet again in person once lockdown is lifted.

Due to the COVID restrictions there was no Christmas dinner in 2020.

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

WHO COMES? About 50 women attend, mainly from St John's but some also from other fellowships.

WHEN? Bi-monthly, on Saturday mornings.

WHERE? Normally in the Easter Centre, but for the past year we have been meeting on Zoom.

PURPOSE? To enable those who attend to encounter God, to be spiritually refreshed and encouraged, to meditate on what God has taught us, to pray together and to share friendship and support.

WHAT HAS IT BEEN LIKE MEETING ON ZOOM FOR THE PAST YEAR? Emma Roberts has regularly emailed all those on our mailing list giving them up to date information on church events along with a warm invitation to attend each Breakfast. At the start of each meeting, we have enjoyed an open 15 minutes of socialising as people 'arrive' and there has also been a further opportunity for fellowship in Breakout Rooms at the end. There have been so many benefits from meeting together on Zoom over these last twelve months. Firstly, our speakers have brought us new insights, and great encouragements, reminding us of our hope in Jesus. Debbie Benefield provided wonderful PowerPoint materials and reflections for our prayer times and Nancy Parker has masterminded the provision of worship songs and music. We are so grateful to them all. And secondly there has been a warm welcome for everyone attending and especially during this lockdown period the Breakfasts have helped us all to remain 'connected' with our friends in the church family.

WHAT NEXT? We are currently planning the new programme and we are looking forward so much to meeting in the Easter Centre again. But whether we meet on Zoom or face to face our prayer remains 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 (Steve Jenkins)**

#### Main Purpose and Goals

- We believe in taking the good news of Jesus to the local community through the Visual Arts.
- Identifying and developing artistic ability within St Johns and Egham
- Encouraging each other to take risks and be courageous in expressing our message.
- Being sensitive to the needs of our ministry team and to be welcoming to new members.
- Be inviting to those that are not part of our community
- To try and transform dead spaces of our community into God spaces
- To show our church as dynamic and relevant to Egham in 2021.

- To meet the needs of other ministries in working towards common goals and to encourage the support of other ministries in our work.

### Main achievements

We have managed since 2019 to build a good base of exhibition materials. The main resources are as follows:

- Easter walkthrough. A collection of 6 stations showing the Easter story. We have plans to expand this up to 9. In 2021 we added a set of QR codes connected to a Spotify playlist. This was at the suggestion of the youth ministry. The walk through is created to be both educational and visually exciting. It is also a showcase for the St Johns artists to look at classic Easter topics and find new ways to tell the story through painting and graphics.
- Nativity Gazebo. Again in its third year the hand carved silhouettes bring a traditional message and a focal point for the church and community at Christmas.
- Pentecost Holy Spirit dove art. We are looking to use the centre piece for a third year. We update the art on the back to keep the message fresh.
- Shop window art. This is our first year creating window displays in the community. But we now have the start of an art collection that connects into the heart of Egham

### Next steps and challenges

- Finding new members is massive. The pandemic has not made life as a working ministry group easy and we have struggled to expand and find space to encourage each other.
- Seeking ways to bring the art to the heart of the church. Finding temporary and long term art spaces inside the church and Easter Centre campus.
- Workshops to develop skills and to share the creative spirit.
- Work with other ministries to collaborate on future projects. Open up better lines of communication between ministry communities.

### Key Message

We LOVE it when St Johns folk volunteer art for our projects. Even if it is a one off. So if you feel inspired talk to us as there is always something going on.

### **The Shed (Phil Holloway)**

The Shed provides a space on Thursday mornings for people to come together to work on art, craft and DIY projects.

Due to lockdown The Shed hasn't met since March 2020. We hope to open again on 17th May 2021.

### **Besom in Runnymede (Mandie Shirnia)**

We aim to release, equip and encourage the body of Christ to generous God led giving within our local community.

Working with support agencies and Christians throughout the Runnymede and Spelthorne areas we collect good quality items and pass them on to referred recipients. Some of the support agencies we work with include, housing, social services, medical support teams, refuge centres, rehab and probation services plus child support teams.

These recipients are facing a broad range of life challenges and we aim to help by matching the glorious God led giving with the needs of these recipients. These needs can vary hugely but broadly include food, clothes, toiletries, furniture, soft furnishing, storage, bedding, garden equipment and white goods.

The foundations of Besom are prayer love and relationships. As such we trust God will equip, lead and provide in every aspect of our organisation. We have 'time-givers' from a variety of local churches and fellowships, with Christ at the centre of all we do we build strong supportive relationships.

2020 was an especially challenging year in which many of our team were shielding and we were closed for more than 6 months. However, we supported over 200 recipients and delivered the same number of Christmas hampers thanks to the generosity of our team, local givers, steadfast donators and additional support from Foodbank. Thank you to everyone who gives and blesses us, and our recipients, as we participate in being the good news and friendly smiles here in our community.

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

Unfortunately, it has not been possible for the Atrium Café to open since early 2020 due to COVID restrictions.

### **The Christmas Kitchen (Veronica Priestley)**

With a group of volunteers and guest contacts we held a Zoom in November to consider the options for the Christmas lunch and mercifully all concluded that hosting a 'meals on wheels' service would be appropriate as it would keep people safe and allow for a possible change in lockdown restrictions even though we knew this would reduce the social interaction that has made the event so popular in the past.

I was humbled and daunted by the enthusiastic response to my tentative calls seeing whether the 'meals on wheels' service would be appreciated! In order to keep the numbers manageable, I arranged that the families would receive a delivery of frozen produce well before Christmas so that they could make their own lunches and these were supplemented by small gifts, crackers and other little extras.

An appeal for Christmas cards to Strode's College and particularly Bishopsgate School produced a huge number of cards, enough for each 'guest' to receive several. When news of the changes to the covid rules were announced with only just over a week until Christmas I was convicted that God knew we would have more guests and contacted the housing associations and sheltered housing managers, offering meals to all those whose plans had been thwarted. Within days our numbers leapt by a third, our butcher was able to supply extra turkey, the delivery routes were reworked, the bags of cards, gifts and puddings were refilled and many volunteers helped shop when Dave and I had started our self isolation to ensure we were well and non-infectious for the cooking.

We were blessed with generous donations and assistance from members of the St John's family and community to produce Christmas meals for 130 people. Thank you to everyone who made this possible.

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

This has been a strange year for us all and that is no different for us at CAP and our clients. Veronica and Sue have continued to work but in a very different way from pre Covid . Face to face appointments in our clients' homes are not allowed at present and the interviews have to be done over the phone. We were able to see a couple of clients in the summer in the east room at church, but that was then also stopped as restrictions tightened again.

We presently have 17 clients on our books and no waiting list. All our clients either have a budget set up or at the final stage waiting for their budget completion by head office.

It was lovely to bless each of our clients at Christmas with a huge hamper thanks to our partnership with you as well as Buckland School, Foodbank and Waitrose.

We've been able to bless them again at Easter with eggs for each family from Tradecraft.

We've also been encouraged to be able to share the gospel and pray with a number of our clients.

CAP plan to go back to face to face appointments as soon as it is safe and legal to do so.

During both lockdowns we have run the Kickstart course twice lead by Chris Gray and Christine Symons. This was a course run over zoom covering subjects such as money management, writing a cv, interview skills and mental well-being.

We are presently low on referrals the Debt Centre so please pray that those who are struggling with their finances gain the courage to make the phone call and seek our help. Please pray that as things return to normal our referral agents such as the job centre direct clients our way.

Please also pray for more opportunities to show God's love to those who are struggling in our community.

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

Be Creative, in its original form, met each Friday in school term between 12 and 2ish. We enjoyed fellowship, getting to know each other better and working together on either our own personal craft projects or "church inspired" projects (you know who you are !! ). Being in the hub of the Easter Centre was a real treat and opportunity that encouraged visitors.

Our mission statement, if you like, of "BE" is more than just practicing creative art, it is to encourage anyone from our church family, their family and friends and, especially, the local community to just come and BE.... welcomed, heard, encouraged and all those lovely things we all want and need.

God has blessed creativity during this past year of strangeness and shown us all how to look outside the box and perhaps place better value to our gifts. It's been great to hear of and see creative arts developing within our church family. We look forward to getting back to community, where we can encourage others to share their creative skills in a safe environment and feel included.

Moving forward, we are looking at monthly workshops held in a private garden, with 6 participants and, when the Easter Centre opens, taking these workshops indoors again and being able to throw the doors open to all!!

### **Mission Partnership Team (Jörg Haustein)**

Our mission partners need our prayers and support more than ever. The global pandemic has continued to present significant challenges, but also new opportunities. Hannah and Tim are still working from the UK and are eagerly waiting to return to Brazil when it is safe to do so. The Olinda Mission in Brazil has been distributing food and hygiene parcels (even as Ian and Simea were sheltering), and toward the end of last year the Mission returned to in-person activities, downsized and with safety measures in place. Child Action Lanka was also engaged in the supply of food and supplies when its centres had to be closed, in addition to providing night shelters in Kandy for children left on the street in destitution. Here in the UK, FACT and East 2 West had to rethink their services to children and youth multiple times as we moved into and out of lockdowns. The Bible Society has had to adapt to working remotely, but their on-line resources found greater prominence in these times of limited contact.

At St. John's, we were able to celebrate our mission partners in a special Sunday service on 28 February. Most of our mission partners contributed to the service in one way or another: recording a message, a song, the Bible reading, and a prayer. This was a great way to reconnect and draw on their thoughts and voices as we thought about what it means to be called to serve.

Our Lent appeal for this year was Hannah and Tim Flatman. They are currently raising funds for a small guest house and chapel in the Quilombola community they serve near Custódia, Brazil, as well as for some teaching supplies for schools they are working with in Abyei, South Sudan. We have raised £1,920 so far (not including gift aid). For those who meant to give but did not manage to do so yet, the online giving facility will remain open until the end of April via the front page of the church website.

Veronica Priestley has joined the Mission Partnership team, and we are happy to be growing again! We reckon that we need at least one more member in the team as we continue our search for a new Africa partner. If God has put the wider world on your heart, do join us!

Our annual tithe distribution for 2020 was as follows:

Ian and Simea Meldrum:	£6,150
Child Action Lanka:	£6,150
Hannah and Tim Flatman:	£6,150
FACT:	£2,000
East to West:	£5,650
Bible Society:	£1,500
<u>Total:</u>	<u>£27,600</u>

St. John's benefit in kind contribution to East to West (Easter Centre use) is estimated at £1,320.

Our mission partners are really encouraged and blessed by St. John's continuing support. Please keep them in your hearts and prayers as we continue to face the pandemic and its consequences around the globe!

### **Music in the Caddey (Phil Darby)**

"Music in the Caddey" [M.I.C] 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 St. John's car park.

"Vinyl Nights" are social meetings 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 also offer an opportunity to buy old vinyl albums and singles and give the proceeds towards the Easter Centre. A "Record Booth" is available so that you can try forgotten tracks before you play or buy and about twice a year we have an album only evening. Refreshments are available with entry just £1.

"Everything but Vinyl" are social meetings for those aged 18 or over who want to play music etc. using C.D.'s, DVD's, Bluetooth or even videos and reel to reel tape. Refreshments are available with entry just £1. We meet on the 4th Wednesday monthly from 7.30pm.

One of the benefits of "Music in the Caddey" is that people on the fringe of church life or with no connection at all are invited to 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.

Over the lockdown period we have met up on Zoom twice per month. A good amount of music is digitalised so that was helpful and we found a way of listening to vinyl from a turntable over the internet. Those who do not have internet though have not been able to join in and restrictions have meant that we have not been able to meet up with them either which saddens us. However, we have planned a BBQ for June 21st outside the Caddey which will be the kick start we need before we fully return in September. Please contact Phil Darby on 01784 473750 or email: [musicinthecaddey@stjohnsegham.com](mailto:musicinthecaddey@stjohnsegham.com) for further information.

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

In normal times - before Covid - the English Language Café took place in the Easter Centre with numbers varying from 7 to 18 learners of different nationalities and religions present. As well as a lot of hard work on language there was a lot of relaxed chatter and the development of good friendships.

For the past year classes have been very different. Currently lessons are emailed every fortnight to the students whose work is marked and returned before the next lesson and this is supplemented by informal weekly meetings on Zoom. All this has been welcomed and taken up by the more advanced students. Fortunately, however, contact has been maintained with the others through WhatsApp and messaging, plus occasionally bumping into one or other of them in the town.

Whether meeting and learning on-line or face to face, the purposes of the class remain the same. Firstly, we aim to help people of other nationalities to speak better English so that they will be better able to become a part of the wider community. And secondly, we ALSO aim to show the love of God to those attending by welcoming them, listening to them and establishing genuine friendships with them. I believe that they do feel loved and welcomed and to a certain extent they do identify with the community of St John's.

During lockdown it hasn't been possible to give invitations to church events - but it has been possible to talk with students about the Christian faith by marking events in the church calendar - Christmas, Advent, Easter, Harvest and so on along with explanations and discussion.

Please pray for the class as we eventually get back to meeting in the Easter Centre, that students will want to come back and that we won't lose any of those who have not joined in the email or Zoom sessions and also that our Christian witness will be clear and attractive.

## **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.

We are currently offering one to one mentoring to some of our students, a weekly bible study split into men's and women's and a Friday night social. This ministry is currently supporting 12 students plus 8 young adults. We need you to help us to invest in this group so that we together may go out and share the gospel with this emerging generation in our community.

## **Teenagers (Grace Hopkins)**

CHARGED is our youth group for 11-18 year olds. Together we are charged to love God, love one another as we love ourselves and to go and share that love with our communities. This underpins all that we do.

How we do this comes in many forms from our weekly teaching on a Sunday, to our online gaming socials, to our seasonal activities to name a few. Youth work is constantly evolving with each generation and the pandemic has provoked the need to think creatively about how we connect with, nurture and empower young people as disciples.

One of the highlights from the last year have been setting up our Discord server. This platform enables us to give the young people a safe and secure space online to interact with each other and with us. Not only does it enable us to disciple them through a medium some have responded really well to, it also has the opportunity to empower the young people to grow their own relationships with one another where previously they may have only seen each other on a Sunday morning.

Our prayer need is how we move forward with youth work, continuing to grow and train our team to disciple this generation well. We are thinking innovatively about how we engage with young people online in ways we hadn't previously which it is fantastic. However, this is a generation that also desperately wants that one on one or small group interaction, the sense of being seen and belonging. A want to be a part of a bigger story, and to be an active participant in that.

For some of our youth we have already begun to release them in places with their giftings, do take a look at some of the artwork they produced for Easter or our worship videos. Our next series is going to be answering some of their big questions, we want to encourage them that asking big questions is brilliant and we to help them grapple with what they think about God, themselves and the world. Could you be a part of that?

## **Children (Rachel Upcott)**

### FootPrints

At FootPrints we have a desire for our children to know they are welcomed, valued, loved and accepted by Jesus and we hope they will experience some of this welcome, love and acceptance through us. We hope they will be able to use the bible to guide them through their lives and keep Jesus at the centre as they grow. We also want our children to know they have a place to serve at St. Johns and be courageous in inviting their friends to join them in their journey of faith.

During 2020 we have recorded sessions for our FootPrint children which are shown on the St John's YouTube channel every Sunday morning at 9.00am.

Moving from face to face sessions to recordings has been both a challenge and a learning curve. We had no previous experience with filming, editing, or presenting to a camera lens and so had to teach ourselves. After over a year of weekly recordings we are becoming more proficient but desperately miss the interaction from the children.

In our recorded sessions we attempt to involve the children by including opportunities for them to send us pictures of their crafts and drawings for including next week, they have also recorded short video clips for us. A huge thank you to Toby and Elliott Sheppard for creating Lego stories for us to use. Many of our leaders have also helped by recording prayers, readings, and crafts.

We have also involved the children with a 'Light trail' at Halloween where people decorated their windows with themes of hope and light and a Bible verse. In the Autumn we managed to run two messy family fun sessions where children attended with their parents. Our themes were Harvest and All Saints. As restrictions are eased, we are hoping we will be able to restart these this term.

Throughout the year we have delivered activity bags to our families which hopefully has given some fun activities for the children but also enabling conversations round certain themes such as Advent and a

weekly meditation through Lent. Our activity bags included Advent packs, Christmas, Lent, Christingle and Easter packs which included an Easter egg. Thank you to the hardship fund and Waitrose for the chocolate eggs and Craftera Ladies for the knitted chicks.

Another way of keeping in touch has been on zoom where we have been able to meet some of our older children for a Christingle, a pancake party and a time to chat.

During the Autumn we looked at light in the bible which led us into advent. We were concerned leading up to Christmas that we would not be able to have a Nativity but with a little creativity, using the outdoor space etc. we were able to film children on separate occasions telling the Christmas story through dance, song and words. After Christmas we started 'Cooking through the Bible'! Each story we have looked at had a recipe which the children could make e.g. we made Epiphany cake for Epiphany, Tuna Melt toasty linking to Jesus calling the fishermen plus many more scrummy foods to make. We are hoping that by making foods that have a connection with the bible story parents would discuss the stories more with their children during the preparation and eating of the recipe.

We would love to expand our team so if you have a heart for our children to know and experience the love of Jesus please chat to me about how you can help out on the team.

### Playtime and Praise Tots

During 2020 due to covid restrictions we were unable to meet face to face with our playtime and praise tot's families, so we have recorded sessions which are shown on the playtime Facebook page. These are then uploaded to YouTube. The sessions consist of singing nursery rhymes, children's Christian songs, telling secular or Bible stories through puppets, pictures or models, and usually a craft demonstration. It is hard to know how many families we are reaching through this format, but I do get some very positive feedback and thanks from some parents. I regularly stay in touch with playtime families through email giving them details of church events such as Blue Christmas, 'doorstep sing' and links to online services. We have offered prayer, a listening ear if needed as well as practical help. Although we have not been able to meet for proper toddler sessions, we have run the clothes bank where parents could drop in to take any clothes they needed, we have continued to supply clothes to families when they have requested help, we have also assisted in passing on baby equipment when one family no longer needs it but others are in need of it. At Christmas we were able to have Santa's grotto where families visited at intervals and saw a socially distanced Father Christmas. Families also received a goody bag of crafts and a Christmas story. A nativity trail was also available in the churchyard.

Just before Easter we were able to hold an Easter trail in the church grounds where we saw many families for the first time in many months. These families also received a bag of Easter crafts, a knitted chick, the Easter story and a chocolate egg.

We have started to host an infant feeding support group in liaison with St Peter's hospital. The intention is to combine this with our regular events on Friday once these are allowed to start.

We are still prevented from meeting at the moment, but we are hoping as the weather improves to run playtime sessions outside using material from Muddy Church and 'OWT' from the Salvation Army.

Although we do not 'see' many of these families in church on Sunday, many of them view St John's as their church and some have joined the baby meals rota, some are enquiring about baptism for their children and a few have enquired about children's groups on a Sunday.

It is vital that we increase the small team of people that help with playtime so we can continue to build and form strong relationships and show love to those with young families in our community and beyond. Please ask yourself how you can become involved and pray about how you can help us.

### Holiday Club

During the summer of 2020 we were unable to run holiday club in our usual format due to the restrictions of the pandemic. As a replacement we filmed 7 sessions of a holiday club entitled "Adventure Cruise" by John

Hardwick. In each session we explored one of the seven Cs. These were choice, courage, call, change, commitment, challenge and cost. In each session the children met a character from the bible who had a life changing experience with Jesus. We tried to include all the elements from our usual holiday clubs eg puppets, a quiz, a game the children could play at home, songs, prayer and crafts that were delivered to all our church families and other families in the community.

We want to say a huge thankyou to everyone who helped by cutting out crafts, packing and delivering craft bags, helping with puppets, recording songs and taking part in the daily stories etc. A big shout out goes to Gemma Evans who helped enormously with editing the films and uploading to YouTube so that families could watch at home.

We are making tentative plans for a holiday club this August if Covid guidelines allow us. If this does take place this will be August 23 – 27. Please put these dates in your dairy and let me know if you are interested in helping out. Holiday club can be a real spiritual boost to the life of the church as we work together as one body reaching out to our community, build relationships with our local families. Please pray that Covid guidelines will allow holiday club to take place and how you can be involved in supporting St. Johns to run a holiday club this summer which will engage with families who have school aged children.

### **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 governance of Playbox is delegated to a Playbox Voluntary Management Committee chaired by Conrad Benefield. Playbox achieved another 'Good' Ofsted rating in March 2019.

In Autumn 2019 we implemented a new senior staff structure in Playbox. Sarah Merifield and Beverley Fayers serve as Nursery Supervisors, supported by Deputy Supervisor Jenny Leadbitter, and a team of six other staff plus volunteers. In particular, the establishment of a Nursery Administrator role, staffed by Claire Jenkins, has significantly reduced the burden of administrative work carried by the Supervisors, enabling them to focus more fully on running the nursery, supporting and mentoring staff, and caring for the children who attend. The new structure has bedded down well, and Sarah, Beverley, Jenny and Claire have adapted very successfully to their new roles

The past year has been perhaps the most challenging for Playbox in its history, as the Management Committee and staff team have coped with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and the Government's requirements for nurseries to remain open during much of this time (with reduced numbers of children), including during the spring term this year (January-March) when other schools were closed. Staff have responded admirably to these challenges and worked hard to keep Playbox open and safe for the children who have been attending. 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.

Children attending come from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds and a number have special educational needs. 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.

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.

I am immensely grateful to the Playbox Management Committee for the support, wisdom and encouragement they offer both to me as Chair and to our staff, and to the whole staff and volunteer team for their dedication, professionalism, and commitment, not least during these very challenging times.

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

The aim of the website is to provide up-to-date information about what is going on at the church. It is intended for both members of the community and church members. There are over 80 different pages giving information about all kinds of things the church does, do take a look through it.

Last year it was re-written to make it clearer, easier to use, more relevant and up to date

It 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)

Since it has been re-written we have not yet been able to re-implement the popular address book feature. We hope to add this and a search facility later as other software the church is using evolves.

#### 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. We produce the service sheet and newsletter every week as well as a large variety of other tasks. A significant amount of our time is taken up by various aspects of dealing with ongoing bookings for the church campus, both the administration as well as the more practical side of things. Judah Garrison, the new Campus Development Manager, is taking on dealing with new bookings.

Claire Jenkins continues to work 6 hours on Tuesday mornings and Thursdays for the Church Office and the rest of the time she works as the Playbox Administrator. Dal retired at Christmas and we are very grateful for her many years of faithful service. We wish her a very happy and blessed retirement. Veronica continues to work Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Veronica continues to work from home while Claire works partly from home and partly in the office.

We are currently conducting a review to assess all administration tasks the Church Office undertakes, with the view to determine the level of resources required.

Our goals for the coming year are as follows:

1. Sustainability – reduce the amount of paper we use in the Church Office by at least 50% of pre-pandemic usage by the end of 2021.
2. Communication – develop the use of the general Church Office and individual emails to enable effective communication within the Church Office team and with others by September 2021.

3. General - have someone available in the Church Office or on duty elsewhere 9am-5pm every weekday to answer queries, give access, etc. by November 2021.

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 is now firmly established in the life of St Johns and our meetings, Eco Acts and Professor Potty communications feel as though they are embedded in what we do as a church as we Love God, Love Each Other, and Love our Community.

Since the APCM in October, a lot seems to have happened:

- We planted our native species wildlife hedge along the path next to the kissing gate. We were assisted by our MP Dr Ben Spencer and we used this as an opportunity to highlight to him some of our concerns for the environment.
- We have begun laying out a Wellbeing Garden in front of the church which will be a space for people to pause and reflect, benefiting from the properties of the plants as well as the wildlife they attract, and although it will take time to fully establish, like with the hedge, the slower pace for some things to get established can also be beneficial as we adjust.
- Encouragingly we have been awarded Bronze level in the Eco Church awards – a recognition of the steps we have reached, and a reminder we are by no means where we want to aspire to. It does show we are addressing the different elements of those awards and is helping us decide where we focus next.
- We have been able to re-establish St John's Traidcraft sales despite some of the complications of Covid and want to ensure we promote Fair Trade in all aspects of the church. More details at <https://stjohnsegham.com/eco-church-2/fair-trade-at-st-johns/>

### 2021 will bring new challenges and opportunities

We will continue our engagement work through monthly Acts and are planning another Eco Festival in July. Preaching and teaching need also to become more comprehensive and we will increase our efforts by recognizing Climate Sunday. We also want to engage with our Mission Partners to understand how they are impacted by climate change and remind ourselves of the consequences of what we are doing on others.

Within our church we need to think how we embrace the CofE edict to reach Net Zero by 2030 regarding our carbon emissions – a journey we need to undertake where we look at all aspects of church life from how we heat our buildings to where we source our candles from, to reduce the harm we make to the planet as we go about our lives. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change>

The works we have started in the campus grounds will grow and flourish and will be a sign of hope and encouragement to us and the community.

On a national level, in November the UK is hosting COP26 in Glasgow. Many Christian groups are seeing this as an opportunity to be a witness as to how we can act responsibly in God's world, so we have an opportunity to take some political steps also.

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) !

### **Campus Development (Judah Garrison)**

Campus Development is the renaming, under the new St John's Governance Structure, of what was the PCC Easter Centre Subcommittee. This reflects that, in a sense, the Easter Centre is no longer 'managed' by this committee – the Campus Fabric Team are now responsible for ensuring the campus is managed

and operated efficiently and effectively. Campus Development takes a more top-level strategic role to 'identify opportunities and solutions for advancing the vision and aims of the church through the use of the church's facilities'. To this end, the team's goal is 'to maximise use of St John's church campus by the local community, held in balance with maximising revenue via use of St John's campus in order to fund St John's ministries and activities'. Put simply, our site and its buildings are fantastic resources, and we endeavour to make sure they are 'used to their full potential, to the glory of God'.

With coding help from Andy Balaam, we have been able to calculate our current commercial usage of the Easter Centre within the 5% de minimis margin of its total usage that we are limited to until 2027 due to VAT restrictions. We are currently not maximising use of this permitted, de minimis margin. Covid restrictions have severely impacted the use of the Easter Centre and other facilities in 2020, however this has presented us with the opportunity to refocus and to further align our efforts with the mission and vision of the Church.

During lockdown, the decision was taken to keep Playbox open as a service to our children and the community. It was felt that it would play a key role in helping to maintain the mental health of the children. The Infant feeding program has also continued throughout lockdown, and has opened up opportunities for us to connect with parents and families.

Appointed on 1 March 2021, Judah Garrison as Campus Development Manager will be supported to strengthen existing stakeholder relationships to secure future opportunities. The team are Sara Holloway, Judah Garrison, Veronica Cresswell, Carol Peters and Andy Audsley.

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

We have been fundraising for nearly 11 years and at the end of March 2021 we have raised £76,655.33 [£73,736.21 September 2020] Our target is £100,000. Thank you everyone whether you are one of our many "helpers on the day" or have attended events.

Over the years we have staged music concerts, held quiz nights, fashion shows, garden tidy ups, "bangers and mash" evenings. Sold items on social media and at auction houses, held car boots and our own auctions. Organised a children's talent show, a 3 peaks challenge, a chess tournament, cake and refreshment sales, including the Magna Carta Day. Held Garden Parties, valuation days, a holiday homes "silent auction". Held car washes, sold Christmas baubles, sold "Music Memorabilia" had a photo session and put on an online concert.

In addition, we have sold 134 St. John's bi-centenary recipe books leaving just 16 from the 150. In the pipeline is another online concert and hopefully an online quiz night before the summer.

From September we are planning some live events which will include a car wash and bicycle repair morning, a valuation day, a concert and a Quiz night.

Philip is compiling a bicentenary Wedding Album featuring contributions from those who were married at St John's between 1820 and 2020 and also writing a History of St. John's church book which will become fundraisers in due course.

The team's aim is not only organising activities but also encouraging others to fundraise themselves. It does not matter how much an idea is able to raise as every little bit helps and 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 who are myself [Phil Darby], Pam Darby, Laura Greaves and Carlos Pittol.