



Experience
Hope

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St John's Egham Ministry Reports 2023

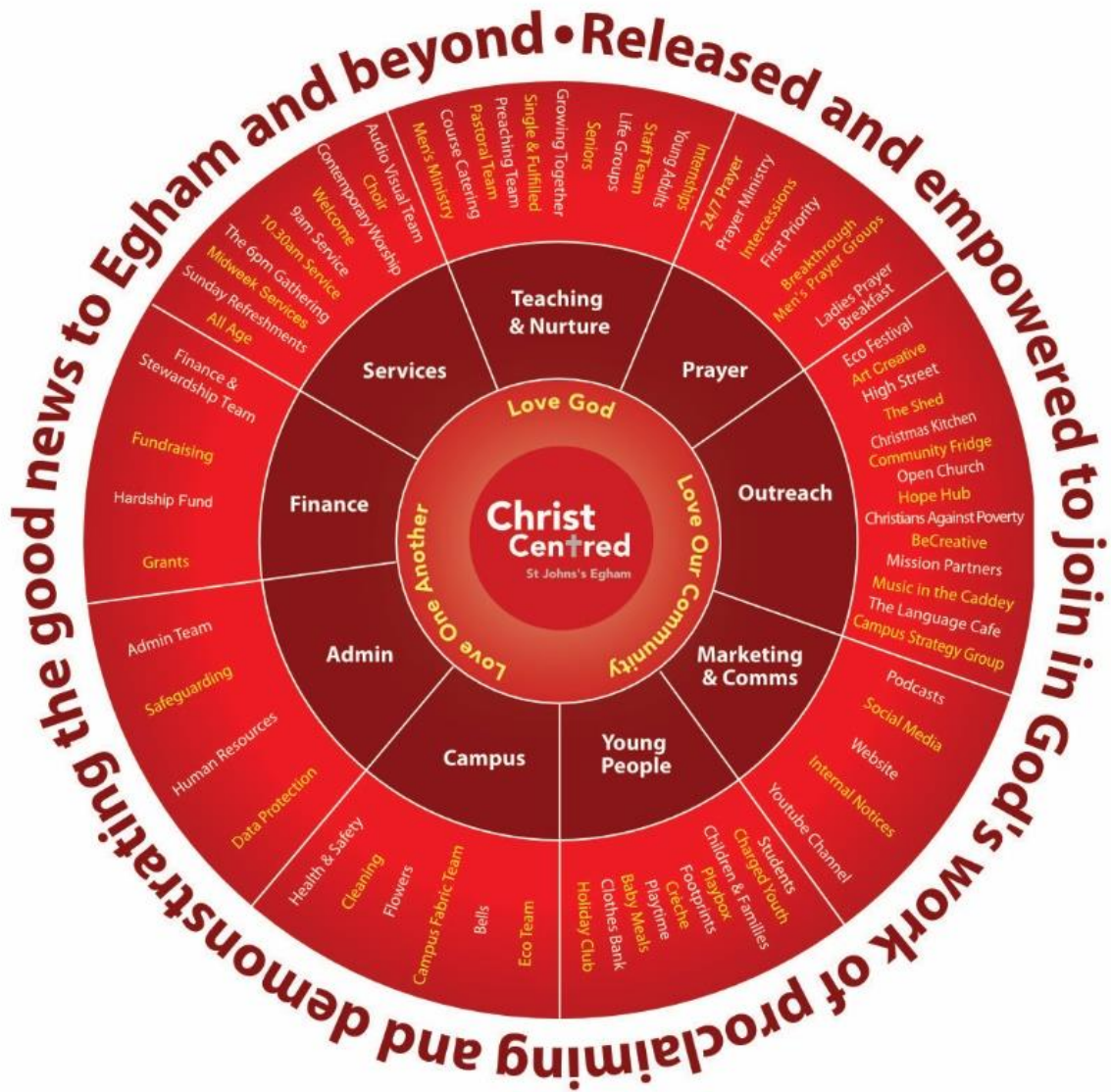
We are blessed to have a wide range of ministries and activities at St John's and this document includes reports on many of these. We welcome you to read these reports prayerfully and be encouraged by what you read – some reports have included specific requests for prayer or volunteers.

St John's ministries continually strive to express God's love to our church family and to the wider community. Do continue to pray for ministry teams and for the people that they serve in the months ahead.

These reports are mostly written by the ministry leaders, or someone who is part of the ministry. Do contact them if you would like to know more, or would like to get involved. The Church Office can also put you in touch with the ministry leader.

Our thanks go to everyone who contributed to this report.

Our ministries and activities at St John's are split into 9 ministry areas, as set out in the diagram below. We encourage you to read all the reports, but if you are reading online and would like to read a specific report you can use the contents page to jump to the relevant section of the document. At the bottom of each page is a link back to the top of the document.



Why not use this diagram as a prompt for prayer over the next year? Whilst we have 9 ministry areas, combining some of the smaller ones would create 7 categories, one for every day of the week. If you prayed for one ministry each day for a year, you'd pray for each ministry at least 5 times!

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Vicar's Report – Esther Prior

Services

I am straddling hope and despair in my reflections on where we've got to with Services.

Hope

There is an army of saints that give of their time, talents and treasure to ensure that our services run and that they enrich our lives. From cleaning, lighting, heating, moving chairs to welcoming, administration, reading, praying, leading, preaching, music and technical support. God's people going about our Father's business fills me with hope. SJE is blessed with committed disciples who spend their lives for the service of God and his church.

May I ask you pause and pray? Maybe determine to thank someone for their ministry among us

Despair

The 9am and 10.30 Sunday Services, in particular, have struggled to recover numerically. We have struggled to relaunch our Welcome and Refreshments Teams – the latter at 10.30am. I am so grateful for those who have stepped up, but I am acutely aware that this area of ministry needs revitalisation. Sometimes I feel all of this keenly.

May I ask you to pause and to pray into this before you read on...

Hope

God's presence seems really close. I have experienced all our 4 worship services as 'thin spaces' – where it really has felt like heaven is breaking in. Sometimes in an overwhelming way. I have sensed a renewed call to repentance and holiness. Someone (not your usual suspects) said to me recently that he felt that although he often prays 'your kingdom come', they are just words. A recent Service felt to him like we had been transported into heaven for an hour and a half.

We have more students than we have had in my time here. They are creating community and some are serving in various ministries. There has been a better recovery in children's church too. Charged has fared better in the evening (new in 2022) than it did before. As a result, the 6pm feels like it is numerically healthy. The Wednesday Communion is truly established as a Service in its own right, alongside Sunday – with members of the congregation for whom it is their only Service. Baptism Sundays are an inspiring celebration of faith. There are new people at all four services. It's been such a joy to welcome them.

The choral scholars have really enlivened the 9am Service – huge thanks to Terry and Ingrid for all they do. Our Contemporary Worship too has been a point of

encouragement with new people joining the ministry and enriching our worship at 10.30am and 6pm. With heartfelt thanks to Debbie and Conrad for their leadership. Our online engagement continues to be strong – giving some balance to my despair about in person numbers at 9am and 10.30. With huge thanks to Johnny for this leadership of the Audiovisual Team.

Hope – Aslan is on the move...

May I ask you to pause and to pray into this... More, Lord...

Preaching Journey 2022

Verse for 2022

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

In his Image – called to reflect his character

This sermon series is based on a book 'In his Image', by Jen Wilkin. After many months of praying and searching, the blurb on the book seemed to echo where I felt my prayers were leading us in our next preaching journey – giving us further solid foundations on which to build 'good lives' in Christ.

Sometimes we ask What is God's will for my life? when we should really be asking Who should I be? The Bible has an answer: Be like the very image of God.

By exploring ten characteristics of who God is - holy, loving, just, good, merciful, gracious, faithful, patient, truthful, and wise - this book helps us understand who God intends for us to be. Through Christ, the perfect reflection of the image of God, we will discover how God's own attributes impact how we live, leading to freedom and purpose as we follow his will and are conformed to his image.

This book lends itself well for bible study should life groups want to explore it further

Matthew's Passion – Matthew 21-28

From Palm Sunday – we will dwell in the events of Holy Week through the eyes of Matthew. We won't cover all of the above chapters, but would encourage you to read them as part of your Easter devotions this year.

Any number of Bible Study materials on Matthew would be a good companion if you would like to go deeper

Holy Habits

Holy Habits is an adventure in Christian discipleship based upon Luke's picture of the early church in Acts 2:42-47. It explores and encourages the practice of ten disciplines, or holy habits: biblical teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, sharing resources, serving, eating together, gladness and generosity, worship and making more disciples.

There are various resources, booklets and videos that are designed to help churches explore the habits creatively in a range of contexts and live them out in whole-life, intergenerational, missional discipleship.

Our Mission: Extravagant, Sacrificial, Radical, Courageous, Renewed and Surrendered

James began teasing out the phrases associated with our Mission Statement in a sermon this term – whetting our appetites. We will look at them in greater depth at the Evening Service

Natural Evangelism – J John

Evangelism is the whole work of the whole church for the whole age. The Natural Evangelism Course is a six-session course, which provides a simple, yet insightful training programme for all churches wanting to encourage and equip their members towards more effective friendship evangelism.

Themes:

1. The 'Why' of Evangelism
2. What is the Good News of Christianity?
3. What is Friendship Evangelism?
4. This is My Story
5. Demonstrating the Good News

Surprise the World – Michael Frost

In 'Surprise the World', Michael Frost challenges us to lead lives that cause the world to question how we love and serve so well. This book is a timely wake-up call for believers and a concise and helpful encouragement to those seeking to live on-mission in their communities

1. Bless: The First Habit
2. Eat: The Second Habit
3. Listen: The Third Habit
4. Learn: The Fourth Habit
5. Sent: The Fifth Habit

Recovering Sundays. Rebuilding the Church

An opportunity to think again about what it means to be church and why meeting together matters. The past 2 years have been difficult on Christian fellowship all over the world. I am thankful for the creative opportunities for worship we have experienced. And we are committed to ensuring that those that can't gather in person remain connected in our scattered congregation. Yet, it feels important to remind each other that gathering is a part of who we are as people belonging to Christ and to one another. Gathering isn't merely a nice thing to do; it's part of what a church is.

At the 6pm – the series will be based on the Alpha Session 'What about the Church?'

Stewardship - The Generosity Project

The book we are studying for Stewardship season this year is meant for Life Groups too and would encourage those of you in Life Groups to use it. At least it looks like a book, and contains some sections of text to read, but it is not a 'book' in the normal sense of that word. It's not something for someone to pick up and read on their own. It is specifically designed as an interactive resource—something you work through with others.

It is a six-part teaching resource for use in small groups that stands at the centre of a larger strategy to shift the culture of generosity in our congregations. We've put together an integrated resource that prayerfully applies the word of God to people's hearts so that, by God's power and grace, they might arrive at:

- a powerful, clarified understanding of what generosity is and how it grows
- a renewed, generous heart that longs to give to others
- a fresh language for talking about generosity within their congregation
- a new resolve to put all this into practice in various areas of their lives.

<https://matthiasmedia.com.au/pages/the-generosity-project>

Nehemiah @ 6pm

The last 2 years have been a very strange time. In some ways it feels a little like we have been in exile!

Some would argue that there is a sense in which the church has been in exile for some time, even before the current pandemic. Some feel the church is in exile because it does not hold the same place in our society and culture as it once did. Others feel exiled from the church because it's structures and practices are stuck in the past and do not relate to their lives. Others that the church is changing too much in order to accommodate the world we live in. There is a general sense of disconnection and discombobulation and a strong desire to return to some kind of normal – to return from exile.

Nehemiah is a good resource for people who are seeking to rebuild. The book provides an account of the return to Jerusalem of some of the people who had been exiled to Babylon.

My good friend Nicola has written study notes that we can use in our Life Groups

Advent and Christmas - Good News Great Joy

Advent is a time of the Old Testament meeting the New Testament. This advent, we will study a couple of key chapters from Isaiah's writing that anticipate the coming messiah. This will serve as the lens through which we will view the great joy of the good news of Advent. Someone has suggested the Old Testament prophets were called to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. At a time when many feel they are struggling and feel their needs are ignored by the powerful. We explore the good news, great joy of the gift of Jesus and the hope and anticipation in the message of now and not yet
Pia Balaam has written Study Notes for Life Groups

Please Pray

- That the Lord will add to our number those who are being saved and for all 4 of our congregations to grow
- That all our 4 services would be places of engagement with scripture and encounter with the living God
- For our Sunday Teams to be built up – particularly the Welcome and Refreshment Teams

Staff Team

As I write this – I have just received an email entitled ‘What a team you have!’ and it ends with these words about an event held on Saturday:

‘So I just wanted to share my experience of your wonderful folk because I really was blown away by their willingness, joy, care and humility. What a team!’

The Staff Team and army of volunteers at St John’s are AMAZING and I am grateful to God for the privilege of leading and serving alongside them.

Name	Role	Time	Paid?	Comments
1. Annelise Pettit	Admin – Creative Comms	P/T	Yes	Maternity Leave from 17 April
2. Claire Jenkins	Admin – Church Focus	P/T	Yes	
3. Grace Hopkins	Lay Pastor – Youth and Students	F/T	Yes	
4. Jo Starr	Intern – Leadership and Children	P/T	No	
5. Johnny Sheppard	AV Team Leader	Flexible	No	
6. Judah Garrison	Campus Development Officer – (hiring an internally funded P/T Campus Administrator)	F/T	Yes – externally funded	Transitioning to new externally funded role of ‘Parish Worker’ in acknowledgement that this was not a good fit
7. Madalyn Brooks	HR Consultant	Flexible	No	
8. Maddy Jones	Intern – Children and Worship	P/T	No	
9. Mandie Shirnia	Ordinand	Flexible	No	Ordination on 2 July
10. Margaret Stevens	Associate Lay Minister	Flexible	No	
11. Mel Cramer	Cleaner	P/T	Yes	Ended 12 March
12. Philomena Evans	Leader of Pastoral Care Ministry	P/T	Yes	Ended in January Ordinand

Name	Role	Time	Paid?	Comments
13. Rachel Upcott	Lay Pastor - Children and Families	P/T	Yes	
14. Sue Gray	CAP Debt Manager	P/T	Yes	
15. Sue Naudi	Prayer Development Leader	Flexible	No	
16. Sue Stafford	Staff Pastoral Support Worker	Flexible	No	
17. Veronica Cresswell	Lead Administrator	P/T	Yes	
Clergy				
1. Esther Prior	Vicar	F/T	Stipend	
2. James Ellin	Curate	F/T	Stipend	
3. Matt Prior	Associate Minister	Flexible	No	
4. Michael Callaghan	Associate Minister	Flexible	No	
5. Simon Fraser	Associate Minister	Flexible	No	On Sabbatical since November 2022
6. Will Bissett	Associate Minister	Flexible	No	

Admin

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 act as a reception point for people needing to access the Easter Centre, covering the whole week Monday to Friday. We produce the service sheets, newsletter and many social media posts every week as well as a large variety of other tasks.

Claire Jenkins works Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday mornings for the Church Office and the rest of the week she works as the Playbox Administrator. Veronica Cresswell works Tuesdays and Fridays. Annelise Pettit, whose primary focus is on creative communications, works Monday – Thursday mornings. Judah Garrison covers the office for us on Thursday afternoons – thank you Judah.

Our goals for the coming year are:

1. Encourage full use of ChurchSuite (a church management system) across all users and ministries as far as we are able by December 2023.
2. Develop our use of Office 365 (including Teams) and how we use emails and One Drive - bringing efficiency and knowing clearly who is doing what by June 2023.
3. Communication – develop a strategy for communicating events and activities by the Church Office team by September 2023.

To contact the Church Office, please email us on office@stjohnsegham.com, call on 01784 605400 or pop in to see us. We look forward to seeing or hearing from you.

Data Protection – Steve Cresswell

In this day and age it is important that your personal information is kept safe. Any ministry within the church may have some information about you, even if it's only your email address. St John's ensures that all your personal information is kept safe and all relevant legislation is followed properly. Anyone with access to your personal data will have had individual training in how to keep it safe.

Campus

Campus Fabric Team – Joyce Johnson

Not a lot of people know this, but our Campus Team has been very busy behind the scenes each week of the year. This team is headed up by Chris Peters, ably assisted by Dave Watts. With the Easter Centre now 5 years old, there is a lot of maintenance tasks that have coalesced at this time. This is as mundane as replacing rechargeable batteries for our emergency lighting (almost 100 units!), to fixing out snagging to the Easter Centre. In the spirit of **loving one another**, we are working our hardest to keep everyone safe and comfortable while they are on our campus.

As for **loving Egham**, we have opened up our churchyard several times this year, for various festivals and events. Everyone will remember the fantastic Jubilee Celebration, but also Holiday Club, Eco-Fair, Light Party, and Light-Up Christmas.

An exciting part of the work of the Campus Team is working towards Net-Zero Carbon by 2030. This demonstrates that we are **loving God** and his creation. Net-Zero means reducing our energy consumption as a church. We are working towards this by encouraging people to change behaviour, such as simply closing doors and turning off lights. We have replaced most of our incandescent lightbulbs with LEDs, and have plans to complete this work. We have reduced draughts, to prevent precious heat from escaping. We are collecting data to understand our building, such as looking at daily temperature graphs, and tracking meter readings.

Longer term, we are looking at options to replace our gas heating system, and hope to be ready to jump in on any grants that may become available in the next 3 – 5 years, and are also monitoring potential changes to planning permissions for things like solar panels.

Campus Development – Judah Garrison

There has not been a Campus Development team since early 2022. It had dwindled to just myself and one other, but I was left without a team when Sara became Treasurer as she was the only remaining member. Despite the lack of a Campus Development Team, there were still new things launched and developed during the year. These were primarily the Hope Hub and Community Fridge.

Hope Hub

The Hope Hub, launched in September of 2022, is doing quite well. The hub is an outreach activity designed to bring various groups of the church together, as well as creating a space for expansion of ministry. Another aim of the Hub is to create a space where community partners can engage with members of the community.

Hope hub operates on a Wednesday and includes Hope café, crafts with Becreative and a Christians Against Poverty (CAP) drop in clinic. In addition, Community partners that have been a part of Hope Hub to date includes, Age UK and the police with Meet the Beat sessions. Hope hub offers potential for growth in outreach and building community partnerships.

Hope Café itself also has experienced tremendous growth resulting in the cafe outgrowing the Atrium. The cafe now operates from both the Atrium and the first floor on Wednesdays.

Community Fridge

The community fridge was launched on the back of Hope hub on 22nd October 2022. Since its launch, we have prevented over 1000kg of food from going to waste. Volunteers from our church and community, run the community Fridge. Rima who is central to the setting up of the community Fridge, organises various workshops that run alongside. These include, repair clinics, really really free market, and various other activities.

Runnymede and Elmsbridge Youth hub

The youth hub continues to operate out of the Easter Centre on Wednesdays and is currently in its 2nd year, having received further funding. Some of the young adults that have received help through the hub have volunteered time at the Hope Cafe

Cleaning – Judah Garrison

Mel Cramer and Andy Missen cover the cleaning of the Easter Centre and Church

Church cleaning

- Mondays by Mel who also cleans after funerals and weddings
- Fridays after Playtime by Andy and covers when Mel is away

Easter Centre Cleaning

- Weekly cleaning done on Thursdays / Fridays
- Glass windows and roof cleaned as needed and as instructed by campus Development Manager
- The catering Kitchen and Servery deep cleaned as needed

Eco-Team – Chris Gray

The Eco-Team continues to be active within the life of St John's.

We hosted another successful Eco Fayre drawing in many from the wider community; our work done previously in the grounds with the well-being garden

and the native species hedge are thriving and we have continued to focus on acting responsibly in how we consume and recycle. We believe the awareness of the spiritual imperative has been maintained within the church.

Our application for Silver Award status was successful which is a source of encouragement, and there have been a number of new initiatives. Probably the most remarkable one being Rima and others setting up the Community Fridge – an initiative focused on reducing food waste while also potentially helping those in need. To date over 1.5 tons of food has been saved from landfill and helped a large number of people – principally through the Saturday distribution sessions held in the Caddey, but also through other church ministries such as the Hope Café, Alpha and Teatime Together. The concept of the Really Really Free Market has also been promoted on a number of occasions, to reuse items no longer needed.

Disappointingly, Traidcraft as an organisation ceased trading in January 2023, although the interest in purchasing through our team had already waned in recent times and so has not had a huge impact. Nonetheless, we believe we must remain completely committed to the concepts of Fair Trade and the church must continue to serve Fair Trade products, sourced through Kingdom Coffee and others.

Beyond these activities, there has been discussion as to the role of the Eco Team within the church family. On one hand we believe that it is important that the focus we bring becomes embedded in the DNA of the church and not something only a few people prompt the rest of the church on, while on the other we recognize the value a group can bring to deliver specific activities which focus on God's world and our care for His creation. To this end we believe St John's is an Eco Church – so the whole of church life needs to factor in the ideas we promote in all that we do. At the same time we should continue with a group who will deliver specific activities such as the Eco Fayre, continue the journey to become a Gold Award EcoChurch and provide a point of focus for those we believe in the discipleship focus of caring for God's world.

Living out this "embedded" approach feels like it is already becoming real as demonstrated by the sub-committee formed from the Buildings & Fabric group to develop a plan for heating our facilities within the Net Zero Carbon requirement that the Church of England has laid down. Participants in these discussions include those with concerns for the ongoing cost of heating, the appropriateness and effectiveness of proposed solutions as well as the impact we make on the environment just so we are comfortable while at church. This approach should be the way forward across all aspects of the church life, from what we teach our children in Footprints, to which cleaning products we use.

The group consists of individuals who have different interests, concerns and areas of expertise, which helps us make an impact in all sorts of ways. We do intend continuing to deliver events in 2023 and believe they are an important aspect of church life. We must also continue with the daily practices we commit to, both individually and corporately, as we care for God's world.

Want to know more? – contact any of the Eco Team or find more on our [Facebook page](#)¹ or email stjohnseghamecochurch@gmail.com.

Flowers – Brenda Richardson

By arranging a display of flowers in the porch we look upon this as a welcome into the church for the congregation and everybody from the community who visit St. John's.

By using fresh flowers we feel that the beauty of God's creation is evident and brings life and love to aid our worship.

In the past we were able to offer our services to arrange flowers for weddings but this is becoming very difficult as there is now only two of us.

We would gratefully appreciate more volunteers to join our team, both male and female would be welcome. We would be happy to work along side you until you are confident to do so on your own. The more helpers we have, the less often we need to arrange the flowers of our choice.

We are both volunteers and regard this as our service and worship to God.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/StJohnsEghamEcoChurch>

Finance

Fundraising for the Easter Centre – Phil Darby

This is the 13th year of fundraising and at the end of March 2023 we had raised £90,000.51p. [£81,846.70p March 2022]. Our target is £100,000 [initially £50,000].

Thank you everyone whether you are one of our many helpers on the day or have attended events or simply bought items.

Our next event is a Quiz Night in the Easter Centre on Friday April 21st [to include a fixed price table top sale] and then a Car Wash in the church car park on Saturday May 13th [helpers to wash the cars please]. Then on Sunday June 25th we will hold our annual garden party from 3pm-5pm featuring the Riverside Jazz Trio.

Our fundraising initiatives have included a bi-centenary wedding album, a bi-centenary cook book, 27 live music concerts and 2 online, 14 quiz nights, 145 garden tidy ups, sales of items on social media, at auction houses and our own auctions. Sold stamps, coins, old mobile phones, computer games, organised car washes and bicycle repair days, cake and refreshment sales, 5 garden parties and another online, 4 valuation days, and a holiday homes 'silent auction'.

Others have organised a children's talent show, a 3 peaks challenge, a sailing trip, a chess tournament, fashion shows, sold Christmas baubles, a photo session, bangers and mash evenings, car boots, given some proceeds from the sales of books they have written, Eco- walks and sponsored fishing events.

We have recently added the recycling of ink cartridges to our pot of ideas and so far have raised £202 with 10.7 kg saved from landfill.

Philip is writing a book about the history of St. John's church from its origins to the present time. It will be in chronological order of vicars and what happened during their time in office. It is nearly ready so please let Phil Darby know if you would like a copy at £14 at the moment without postage. £5 will be given to the cause from each book.

Carlos Pittol, Phil and Pam Darby are the overall planning team. Our regular team of helpers include Paul Bridgman [sound], Dave Hassan, Susan Scott, Dave Watts, Dave Stone, Chris and Carol Peters and many others.

We would also like to thank Peter and Audrey Lowther who have to date raised a total of £1,465 from the sale of stamps and coins and are now able to sell old postcards and cigarette cards.

The fundraising team's aim is not only to organise activities ourselves but also encourage others to fundraise. It does not matter how much is raised as every little bit helps and is appreciated.

Do speak with someone if you have an idea.

To keep you up to date with upcoming activities and events and how we are doing we produce a monthly newsletter. If you would like a copy please email fundraisingfortheeastercentre@stjohnsegham.com or Tel. me Philip on 01784 473750

Hardship & Wellbeing Fund – Chris Gray

The Hardship Fund was established at the start of the pandemic in response to a desire by some members of the congregation who wanted to help those around them who may be in need as a result of the pandemic.

Over the intervening period we have been blessed with huge generosity, primarily from within the church family, and have put in place terms of reference and policies and procedures which ensure we act as good stewards of this money and are using it appropriately to help those in need. Along the way we have expanded our title to incorporate needs which may not be simply driven by lack of financial assistance.

Since its inception we have had donations of over £56,000 and made grants of nearly £36,000. The balance at the end of 2022 was £27,700 and is currently £20,800.

During 2022, the steering committee have been focused on the impact of the broader cost of living crisis and higher fuel bills and made a large number of small donations to help a broad range of individuals and families, as well as more significant grants to individuals where we have evaluated their need in more detail. There were 53 individuals or families helped directly by our program as well as a number of others who have been touched through groups we have supported.

We continue to communicate through the church newsletter and website to encourage direct requests for help, as well as referrals from others in our community who may know of someone in need. We are also grateful for ongoing donations, both regular and one-off's.

If you have a heart for those in need and might consider serving on this committee, in the first instance send us a message via our email hardship@stjohnsegham.com, which is also where you should direct requests for assistance.

Marketing & Comms

Audio Visual Team – Johnny Sheppard

The AV team continues to provide the technical support for the weekly services as well as cater for some external events. One particular highlight was running the service from the Easter Centre which presented a few technical challenges but provided us with a fun different feel to the service and resulted in a great time of worship for the church.

We've had a fairly static year in terms of both equipment and team. We have sadly lost a few members of the team, but also joyfully gained a few. We are excited to be training a few young members and students of our church which provides a great opportunity for them to experience interesting tech kit, as well as gaining a chance to help serve in St John's. This is something we always love to see.

We would still love for more people to join the team both to ease rota pressures but also to share the joy of being part of this ministry. Please let us know if you're interested.

Creative Communication – Annelise Pettit

2022 has been full of wonderful events. From the Queen's Jubilee to Christmas! It has been wonderful creating adverts, posters and flyers for our regular events as for our one-off activities too.

The aim of creative communications is to use the creative tools we have whether it is social media, Church News and our Church website, to reach our congregation as well as the local community. It has been really encouraging to see people engage more with our Church events via social media other than just regular flyers or word of mouth. We've had huge successes with the local events we've held, for instance Egham's Got Talent had great turn out.

My prayer for 2023 is to see more people from Egham flocking to our Church to receive the Good News of Jesus through what we have to offer. I pray that the use of creative communication will flourish and touch those outside of our community.

Podcasts – Andy Balaam

Podcasts are Internet radio programmes. The Podcasts team makes one podcast ("Justice Worriers"), and offers support to others interested in listening to podcasts and creating them.

We maintain the [Church's podcasts page](#) which recommends interesting and enlightening podcasts.²

Justice Worriers caters to Christians and others who are trying to be inviting and courageous, thinking about how to apply ourselves to matters of justice, and searching for new ways to understand and challenge our faith.

We recently held our first in-person meeting for listeners where we recorded [a special podcast entitled Why Don't I Care?](#)³ It was a lovely evening of exploring together!

If anyone is interested in the creative adventure of making their own podcast and would like technical help or general advice, contact Andy Balaam on andybalaam@artificialworlds.net.

Website – Steve Cresswell

The St John's web site is our on-line front door. It is often the first place newcomers will look to find out what is going on. It is where church members will look to find out more information.

It is updated each week to ensure everything is relevant and up to date. The weekly notices can be found there along with the order of services and details about planned events each week. To give feedback or ask for any changes email webteam@stjohnsegham.com. Note that the web team are always looking for new people, so if you are technically inclined do contact us.

The web site is used by about 90-100 different people each day and each person looks at an average of 4-5 different pages.

YouTube Channel – Johnny Sheppard

YouTube has continued to provide an essential means of access to the church for those who are housebound or not local. It has been great especially to be able to provide a means for people to access special services like weddings and funerals when they would have otherwise missed out.

We have made a few changes to the way the services are presented on YouTube both in trying to provide more relevant holding images as well as putting more information into the description making it easier to search on YouTube for specific topics and preachers.

² <https://stjohnsegham.com/podcasts/>

³ <https://justiceworriers.libsyn.com/why-dont-i-care-justice-worriers-episode-36>

We do occasionally have issues with streaming the services when the tech misbehaves in some way which is a shame when people are relying on it at home, but we are looking at ways to mitigate this to help prevent it being a problem too much of the time.

Outreach

Art Creative Team – Stephen Jenkins

Main Purpose 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 2023,

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 walk through. A collection of 6 stations showing the Easter story. 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 silhouettes. Again in its 5th 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 5h year. We update the art on the back to keep the message fresh.

Shop window art. This is our 3rd year creating window displays in the community. But we now have the start of an art collection that connects into the heart of Egham. In 2022/23 put up new displays for Christmas and Easter. We also displayed the prayer window again. We are working on a new display for the summer to celebrate local manufacturing and the sad demise of a major local employer since 1960.

Building links with the community. We have enjoyed the continuing support of John Butters of Butters Associates

Next steps and challenges. Our group has moved our focus from our private spaces into the community space that is the Easter Centre. We now meet once a

month and are planning; days out to London exhibitions, workshops, lectures and a relaxed place to meet talk and share.

We are looking forward to expanding the group and publishing a programme of events. I have also asked Iris Partridge to co lead the group. with me. In the spring we intend to have a full audit of our resources in the crypt.

Christians Against Poverty – Sue Gray



This year we at CAP have been able to get back to a more normal way of working and we've been able to visit clients in their homes again.

Sadly there is even more need for our service than ever before. We currently have 22 families working with us.

8 families went debt free in 2022 compared to 5 in 2021.

53 families have been supported since the center opened in May 2014.

Our diary is now booked up until May this year.

A large number of agencies have referred clients to us including Foodbank, Job Centre Plus, Local charities, schools, Housing Associations, Citizens Advice, Social Services, Runnymede Borough Council, Spelthorne Council and word of mouth.

The area we cover has expanded to include, Staines, Ashford and Stanwell as well as our existing patch of Egham, Englefield Green and Virginia Water. We have also taken on a couple of clients in Sunbury and Shepperton to assist Citizens Advice.

Our relationships with churches in Staines has expanded. Staines Congregational and All Saints Laleham have provided us with Befrienders who can work with us in the newly expanded area.

Veronica Priestly has decided to step down as a debt coach and is going to continue as a befriender and promoter of CAP for us.

Hilary continues as our essential admin support.

Please pray that we will have more opportunities for conversations to share God's love.

Pray for wisdom in our interactions with clients and other agencies that we can see God's kingdom advanced and those in poverty supported

Christmas Kitchen – Steve Cresswell

Just over 80 people came to the St John's Christmas Lunch on Christmas Day. A number of people fed back on what a great time they had. Many of the guests

would otherwise have been on their own on Christmas Day. We give a big thank you to Natalie and the rest of the team that made it happen. If you would like to organise the lunch for this year, or if you would just like to help, contact the church office.

English Language Café - Linda Matthews

The English Class continues to meet at 9.30 on Thursdays in the Easter Centre during school term times. Numbers have not really picked up since returning after lockdown - some students have moved away and several have stopped coming because they have found employment. However we have a small core of faithful regular attenders (from Brazil, Ukraine, Poland, Albania and Sri Lanka).

The purposes of the class are twofold. We aim to help people of other nationalities to improve their English so that they will be better able to become a part of the wider community. We also aim to show the love of God to those attending by welcoming them, praying at the beginning of every lesson, listening to them, and establishing genuine friendships with them and there is always a relaxed, informal atmosphere. Serious learning takes place, we have good conversations, and we often laugh together as well. I believe that the students do feel loved and welcomed and to a certain extent they identify with the community of St John's.

We are incredibly grateful to Nick Cottam who continues to set up the rooms and clear away afterwards. In addition to this he now teaches the more advanced students for the second half of the session up in the Prayer Room while the others remain in the Long Meeting Room for work on more basic language skills.

Please pray that our Christian witness will be clear and attractive, and that teaching will be effective in spite of the enormous disparity in language ability within the group.

Homelessness – Sue Gray

Fortunately, there are not many people who are sleeping rough in Egham at present. However when we do become aware of any individuals we have a system set up to enable us to sign post those in need of help to the right place for support.

We have simple mobile phones that we can offer them also a rucksack containing essential items as well a sleep mat and sleeping bag.

We work closely with Runnymede Borough Council and the charity "Just a Helping Hand" in Chertsey who support those sleeping rough.

Mission Partners – Jörg Haustein

Our mission partners are very thankful and blessed by St. John's continuing support. At Child Action Lanka, work has grown significantly in a very challenging economic environment, with CAL now serving appr. 2,000 children at eight centres nationwide. My Father's House also faces an unstable political situation in Brazil, but its shift to prevention work in youth centres is now complete and working well. Hannah and Tim are raising a church building in the quilombola community they serve and will lead a small mission team to England in the coming summer. FACT is now focusing mainly on intergenerational ministry, and East 2 West has grown significantly in the past year but also has seen quite a few changes in its team in recent months. The Bible Society continues its work of spreading the gospel all around the world through various programmes.

As part of our new terms of reference, we now regularly review all of our mission partnerships, beginning with FACT this past year. During our conversations with Simon Shutt, it became clear that we need to find better ways of partnering with FACT beyond our annual giving. We have initiated conversations between Simon and the church and will review whether this has led to an improved partnership and new avenues of collaboration by the end of this calendar year.

Annual giving to each of our mission partners has slightly increased over last year, but still significantly down in comparison to all other previous years since 2015. This is mainly caused by the dues for CAP Bradford being deducted from the church's tithe before we consider our mission partners. Discussions with the PCC about this matter did not yield a better arrangement. As a result, we are still not able to pursue a new Africa partner in replacement of Ruaha Diocese, despite having received promising proposals from Abyei, South Sudan via Tim Flatman.

Our annual tithe distribution was as follows (2021 for comparison):

	2022	(2021)
My Father's House	£5,800	(£5,450)
Child Action Lanka	£5,800	(£5,450)
Hannah and Tim Flatman	£5,800	(£5,450)
FACT	£1,500	(£1,500)
East to West	£4,200	(£4,050)
Bible Society	£1,000	(£1,000)
Total	£24,100	(£22,900)

Jörg Haustein is stepping down as Chair of the Mission Partnership Team. Thankfully Kamani Hewagama has received a calling to continue the work. Jörg will stay on as a member of the team and facilitate a smooth transition. Sara Holloway has left the Mission Partnership Team to focus on her work as St. John's treasurer. Our team now consists of Kamani Hewagama (chair), Jörg Haustein, Veronica Priestley, Sue Stafford, and Philippa Stuart. We urgently look for (at least) two new

members. Do talk to Kamani or any member of our team if you feel called to extend God's love to people in Egham and the wider world!

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 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 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 listen to a song before you play or buy. About twice a year we have an album only evening.

We meet on the 3rd Monday monthly from 7.30pm. Refreshments are also available, and entry is just £1.

Everything but Vinyl Nights are social meetings for those aged 18 or over who want to play or listen to music on CD, DVD, Bluetooth, Video or Cassette Tape.

We now include a short 'open mike' session where people can bring a musical instrument and/or sing to their favourite songs.

We meet on the 1st Monday monthly from 7.30pm. Refreshments are also available, and entry is just £1.

One of the benefits of 'Music in the Caddey' is that people on the fringe of church life or with no connection at all can meet up with Christians and enjoy time together.

From this we hope to offer other church activities and events which may help them on their spiritual journey.

Our evenings always include a lot of fun and laughter and the occasional take-aways and BBQ's.

Is this something that you or someone you know might like to join in?

If so please contact Phil Darby on 01784 473750 or email: musicinthecaddey@stjohnsegham.com for further information.

Open Church – Linda Matthews

During 2022 the church building has been open to visitors for a couple of hours on Tuesday and Thursday lunch times. There were days when we had no visitors at all - at all but usually a few folk wandered in. Some just wanted to look round and

were interested to know about the church and its activities, some visitors quietly sat down and prayed while others needed someone to talk to. All were made welcome and over this past year we have been able to talk to people, pray with people, hand out welcome packs and all sorts of other information about St John's. Hopefully those who have come in have seen something of the love of God. Please pray for them - that for some this might be the beginning of their journey of faith and pray for the team as well. Pray that we will be sensitive to the needs of those who come in - that we will know God's leading as we engage with our visitors.

Since the end of 2022 we have opened on Wednesdays only, from 2.00 to 4.00pm. So now, as well as saving on fuel costs, the church is open for a variety of activities/services throughout every Wednesday. We are hoping to have a new publicity drive from Easter onwards in order to make 'Open Church' more widely known in the town - either on Wednesdays or on Tuesdays and Thursdays if we revert to the old pattern.

We are so grateful to the volunteers who regularly sacrifice their time to open the church. St John's is already very much a part of the community it serves, and it is our hope and our prayer that opening the church so regularly will contribute to this and that it will increasingly be seen as a welcoming place for everyone.

Teatime Together – Sacha Sheppard

Teatime Together was born in January 2023 after many months of feeling God pressing a vision on our hearts for an outreach ministry that would serve the needs of those who may be struggling with the cost of living, in particular the cost of food and heating. The initial vision was for a slot after school when we could invite families to come and eat a free meal in a warm space. Teatime now occupies the timeslot between Hope Café and Alpha from 4-5:30pm and is a part of "Warm Wednesdays".

Week one was quiet, but in weeks two and three we were excited to welcome not only more people, but some families we had no other connection with and even a family who had come to the wrong place but decided to stay as they thought Teatime looked better than what they had intended to go to! It was exciting to see God's vision coming alive, we saw families who had come to Teatime join us on a Sunday morning for church and we saw Teatime develop into a space where the St John's children could serve. The children began to pray before Teatime and then see those prayers answered and they have become experts at generating fun and welcoming others in.

At the end of January we evaluated and decided that at present it wasn't feasible to continue weekly, but we felt it was important to carry on. Teatime Together now runs fortnightly and is supported financially by the hardship fund.

Warm Wednesdays – Steve Cresswell

With fuel prices increasing and colder weather coming we decided to have a day with something going on all day, so it would be possible to join in and stay warm all day for free.

On Wednesdays we currently have:

- 11.30-2pm Hope Hub
- 12-12.30pm Communion Service
- 2pm-4pm Open Church
- 4pm-5.30pm Tea Time Together
- 7.15pm Alpha

Prayer

Prayer – Sue Naudi

2022/23 has seen us continuing our rhythms of prayer in many forms. We have provided prayer support for all aspects of church life.

Intercessions prayer continues in both morning services although teams are small.

In person prayer ministry is available at all 3 services, again with diminished teams but has proved valuable. We use the sofa area at the back of church for the 10:30 service and the prayer room for the 9:00, 6 pm prayer ministry happens throughout the service. We are continuing to offer prayer by phone in some cases.

Our dedicated prayer group has grown again throughout the year with people requesting to come on board. This is a group where church family prayer news and requests are shared and prayed for, ensuring people feel supported and covered by our prayers. Several emails are sent weekly.

We have continued with our 24/7 weeks of prayer, with set times of the year for them. Take up has been mixed but feedback has always been encouraging.

Monthly First Priority meetings continue in hybrid format meaning that we can gather in church and online as one group rather than separate meetings. These have been very successful with a real feeling of togetherness.

We have had a prayer walk around The Royal Holloway campus praying for new and returning students, organised by Grace and in conjunction with the CU there.

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

BreakThrough Men's Prayer Groups – Will Bissett

BreakThrough exists to 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.

We welcome any guys who'd 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).

BreakThrough 1 (hosted by Will Bissett) We meet on the first Thursday of each month to eat and pray. There are now 15 men in the group. However, due to working away commitments about 4 of our membership are occasional. One member left (moved to another church during the year) and we have had 5 new

joiners. We eat and pray for each other, for our community, our churches and God's purposes in our lives, and sometimes walk and pray through Egham.

BreakThrough 2 (led by Conrad Benefield) We meet once a month, usually on the first Wednesday, for fellowship, a meal and prayer, and we share prayer points by email so that we can continue to pray for one another over the following month. We have enjoyed getting back to meeting in person and we have a very strong core membership of nine, although our attendance varies from meeting to meeting. Several of our members take turns to host and we are greatly blessed by their generosity and cooking skills, and by the advice, support and prayer that we offer to one another.

BreakThrough 3 (led by Phil Holloway) The group meets every Thursday. There are 6 members, who meet to eat, chat, pray and study the Bible passage for the following Sunday sermon.

Due to Covid the Christmas dinner 2021 was postponed to June, when 27 of us met together for dinner. Our Christmas dinner for 2022 was in early January this year, and 22 of us met together. On each occasion the guys not only paid for dinner but also donated a proportion. The January donation was to Tea-time Together.

We also supported the Men's Breakfast in February and are working with other men in the church to put together a regular rota of events through the year.

Intercessions at the Traditional Service – Sarah Gillies

A small, committed team leads the intercessions at the traditional service, some as individuals, some as couples. The variety of different styles and voices is much appreciated by the congregation for helping us to focus our prayers, and I am grateful to all those who lead our intercessions so faithfully week by week.

Intercessions at the 10:30 Service – Sally Thompson

What a privilege to be a part of this team leading the congregation in Intercessory prayer. It's always amazing how the Holy Spirit puts different things on each of our hearts and guides us as we prepare our prayers which so often reflect other parts of the service.

Leading Intercessions is a great way to grow in your own personal prayer life and we would love to encourage new people to join our team!

Ladies Prayer Breakfast – Linda Matthews and Heather Kimberley

Rejoicing inspiring breakfasts

It has been really lovely to meet back in person for the bi-monthly Ladies' Prayer Breakfasts over the past year, following the zoom meetings of Covid. Seeing each other face to face has enabled us to fulfil the purposes of the meetings better, which are to encounter God, to be spiritually refreshed and encouraged, to meditate and pray about what God has taught us, to pray for others and to share friendship and support.

We enjoy getting to know each other and extend a welcome to old and newcomers, for a relaxed, informal continental breakfast followed by a time of worship, and then a presentation – a talk or a testimony – something different each time. Sometimes our own folk offer to speak but sometimes we invite a guest speaker. After this we spend time in prayer – often in small groups praying together. The sharing and building of friendships and support are a very important and a key feature of the Breakfasts.

Speakers' topics over the past year have been 'Mentoring' (Esther), 'Walking with God when Life Hurts' (Emma Ellin), 'Equipped for the Journey' (Margaret Stevens), 'Spending time with God' (members) and 'The Light of the world' (Advent Reflection, Sue Naudi).

One of our important aims has been to keep in touch with people and to make sure that newcomers are welcomed and 'looked after'. This has been addressed by sending out a regular e-mailed 'newsletter' and by bringing in a new committee member with particular responsibility for the welcome table and all matters related to newcomers and visitors. We are also proposing to start sharing personal testimonies via the group email this year, anonymously if preferred, to encourage and inspire each other.

We are grateful to God that women from all three of the St John's congregations come regularly to worship and learn together. We are also grateful for friendships being formed and that so much love and support is being shared.

Please pray with us

Our prayer is that we will be able to welcome newcomers into the group and 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'.

Services

Traditional Service at 9am – Sarah Gillies

The Traditional Service, a possibly more reflective service than others, incorporates traditional liturgy and hymns alongside the same teaching as the Contemporary Service. It has a faithful regular congregation, many of whom also contribute to the services. The vibrant choir including our choral scholars and other students, not only supports the congregational hymn singing but also contributes several anthems each month, all led by one of our organists. Both the organ music and the anthems are much appreciated by the congregation for helping us to worship and to contemplate God's word. Small but dedicated teams of volunteers assist by running the AV, leading intercessions and prayer ministry, assisting in serving communion, welcoming, and choosing the hymns. This stands alongside the excellent teaching and fellowship of this service. If you have never been to one of these services, I would encourage you to come along and see what its like. You will have to get up early but I think it's worth it!

Choir – Terry Hogan

This year the 9am choir welcomed a number of new singers, including our three Malcolm Bateman Choral Scholars, Clodagh, Noel and Seb. The choral scholarship scheme allows us to offer up to four choral scholarships a year to aspiring young singers - primarily from Royal Holloway. This dependable core of voices during term time has allowed us to provide an anthem at every service, except for the first Sunday of the month, at which the choir is still present to give a good lead for the hymns. It also seems that the general 'buzz' and publicity generated by the choral scholarship scheme has enabled us to attract a number of other new singers, who are making a great contribution. It is important to us that we continue to attract more members though, as that makes the experience more enjoyable for everyone, as well as improving the overall quality of the sound, and making the choir better able to cope with individual absences. At the moment we have a particular need for tenors and basses.

I believe it is important that the choir should remain open to all, without audition. For those who want to participate, it provides an opportunity to serve, which is both enjoyable and spiritual. We are a friendly group, who are very welcoming to new members.

We hope that, for the congregation, the anthem provides a moment of reflection that enhances the worship - generally a moment of peace and tranquility, but sometimes a great exclamation of joy.

Contemporary Worship – Conrad & Debbie Benefield

'Contemporary worship' is the sung and musical worship provided at the 10.30am and 6pm services, as well as for special services and events.

Throughout 2022 we have had live worship at the 10.30am and 6pm services every week, which is a far cry from much of 2020 and 2021 where there was no, or very limited, live music. It has been a real joy for everyone in the team to be back serving the congregation in this way on a regular basis.

As of April 2022, we have about 35 active band members, which is significantly more than this time last year, and we have been delighted to have some old friends and new faces join the team over the past year.

We were incredibly sorry to say goodbye to Carrie Brown this year, who had given so much to our worship ministry during her internship, and to Shamilka Hewagama. However in the wake of Carrie's departure we have been hugely blessed by a flourishing student worship ministry: Abi Woolley and Lydia Callomon are leading worship on the third Sunday evening each month and Oliver Grimes is now leading worship at the All Age services, with a number of other talented students singing and playing at these and other services.

As Worship Pastors we have been able to make progress this year with the development of a new vision for contemporary worship at St John's which we shared with the wider team and a meeting and lunch in October and which we will shortly publish on the St John's website. We look forward to making and realising plans to grow and develop the team and its ministry over this year.

Our team of worship leaders now comprises Debbie and Conrad Benefield, Lydia Callomon, Oliver Grimes, Steve Jenkins, Clem Jones, Nancy Parker, Andrew Tebboth and Abi Woolley. We have set up a WhatsApp group to keep in touch and enable the leaders to talk to, support and encourage one another.

We are committed to creating opportunities for team- building and development going forward and to identifying and nurturing new talent.

Finally, this year we were proud to formally launch the Malcolm Bateman Music Fund, enabled by Malcolm's generous legacy to St Johns, which has already funded a small number of choral scholarships and will also support development of our contemporary worship through training, equipment and resources - more information about this will be available soon.

Please pray for the worship leaders and for the whole team as we move forward on this journey, and for us as Worship Pastors as we seek to know God's plans for our contemporary worship and be guided by Him.

Our thanks go to everyone in the team who has contributed to worship and to the worship leaders for the time and energy they invest in planning and leading worship each week.

Special thanks also 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.

The 6pm Gathering – James Ellin

St John's evening service, known as '**The 6pm Gathering**' continues to build on the great foundations of charismatic worship expression over the past few years., so we are thankful to God for all that brings to the worshipping life of the whole church. Ekklesia is the Greek word where we get our word 'church' and it translates as 'the gathering'. With the inclusion of the parents/carers and young people that come along to attend 'Charged' Youth, we are regularly seeing 80+ worshippers on a Sunday evening.

At the heart of The 6pm Gathering is the hope that as we gather together, we **engage and encounter Jesus**. We engage him first and foremost with our whole selves, our hearts and minds open to what he might do amongst us as we then engage with one another, to build up and encourage. Secondly we want to encounter Jesus, as he works amongst us by his Spirit, connecting with our spirit and lifting our eyes to see the Kingdom he is building inside and outside the building.

Great hospitality is at the heart of the evening in many ways, this is seen clearly in the refreshments area, where Fred van Huis, Jan Ellender, Michael Sorotos and myself busy ourselves making sure that teas, coffees, hot chocolate and cakes are in ready supply to help people feel really welcome and cared for.

Continued thanks to the worship leaders who serve so wholeheartedly and enthusiastically to add to the worshipping community in the evening.

Prayer Ministry continues to be co-ordinated by Sue Naudi, for which I am extremely grateful. We look forward to more opportunities for prayer ministry throughout our times together.

As always a special thanks to Johnny Sheppard, Alastair Marshall and the AV teams who have really enabled us to grow our capabilities in the area of sound, vision and lighting!

The service leaders are becoming more and more aware of the creative space they have to lead, to do things differently, in their own style, rather than mine or someone else's. This includes being responsive to change things around, include more sung worship, or have an elongated prayer ministry time. It is really wonderful when leaders pair up, as it brings a dynamism to the holding of the 'sacred' spaces between songs, preaching and prayer and other things that are part of the gathering.

Please continue to pray:

1. That we might provide a safe space, a fun space, and creative and energised space where together we are transformed by and for Jesus.
2. That we might see more and more students and young people come and worship together and gather for fellowship.
3. That we discern together, how we can all find a place to serve the body, whether that's playing in a band, welcoming, leading, praying or serving refreshments.

Teaching & Nurture

Bereavement Ministry – Margaret Stevens

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Matt 5:4

The bereavement ministry seeks to support those in our church family, parish, and often beyond, as they deal with their loss and grief, through providing safe spaces and opportunities to meet with others as they work through this difficult process. Our prayer is that they may find the open arms and wonderful healing love of our Heavenly Father in their time of need.

This happens principally in three ways:

Bereavement Coffee Mornings

These take place once a month, usually on a Thursday upstairs in the Easter Centre, providing a space to meet with others who have also been bereaved. A short time of reflection and the opportunity to light a candle in memory of a loved one concludes the morning. During the summer months, we also offer an occasional and optional short walk, leaving from the church car park and returning to share the end of the morning with those at the coffee morning itself.

The Bereavement Journey

Beginning in autumn 2021, we have now run five of these excellent courses, and have another planned for summer 2023. The course is for anyone who has been bereaved at any time and in any way. It consists of six sessions, the first five dealing with different aspects of grief and bereavement and the final one looking at questions of faith. The response to this course has been extremely positive and we are hoping to continue to provide them, alternately offering evenings and mornings each term.

Memorial services

We hold two memorial services during the year; a Blue Christmas service in early December and a memorial service with a tea in the summer. Our Blue Christmas service incorporates the annual Tree of Hope in the churchyard where stars or decorations are hung in memory of loved ones at what can be a difficult time of year. The services are well attended and reflect a growing 'bereavement family' reached through funeral contacts, the coffee mornings and course.

Garden of Remembrance

Work has been ongoing during 2022 to revamp the Garden of Remembrance to make it into a lovely space where flowers can be left and time spent in reflection. Much has been done already and work continues into 2023.

My grateful thanks go to all who contribute to this precious ministry in whatever way.

Life Groups – James Ellin

Life Groups continue to be part of the discipling and fellowship here at St John's and under the leadership and steering of the Life Group Leaders, each one has a different flavour and expression of supporting each other in our faith. We have 16 Life Groups at present.

Sadly one more group has ceased over the last year, with disbanded members currently seeking a new group, or taking a rest from meeting. Our groups range from the small (4-5 active members) to the large (15+ active members) and meet at many different times and places, some during the day, some during the evening.

Most groups choose their own study materials and plan social events which can cover a wide range of topics and themes. Life Groups continue to be a lifeline for many of our church family, many have set up WhatsApp message groups where pastoral and other needs can be shared quickly and met with prayer or practical help. The leaders serve faithfully in this area and it's always amazing to hear of how Life Groups are very much enjoyed and places of growth for many!

A real area for ongoing prayer and discernment is training and growth for Life Group Leaders. I recognise many people are pushed for time, so am looking to being able to offer something that can fit in to people's busy lifestyles. With much lost over the past few years, but we must build on the solid foundations that many years of fruitful small groups have laid as places for encouragement and discipleship. The pandemic taught the worldwide church that the Sunday gathering cannot, nor is it perhaps meant to be, the primary place of discipleship for the followers of Jesus Christ. Please pray, and any thoughts, please do pass them on to me.

We are also increasingly in need of new leaders who can offer to host and/or lead meetings. This doesn't necessarily have to be at home, as we have a range of suitable rooms on the church campus. **Please do pray, ask around and invite people to step forward, if not yourself.**

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, taking seriously the words of the write of Hebrews to not give up meeting with one another, and as we do, to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not just toward each other, but also to our neighbours, friends, colleagues and those in our community.

Pastoral Team – Philomena Evans

Pastoral ministry within our church is diverse and our pastoral care focus is to follow and fulfil our church vision statement, to “Love God, Love each other and Love our Community” in our work and all we do. Currently we have 10 Pastoral Assistants including a new and very welcome addition, Dave Watts, who we are delighted has recently completed his training and has joined the team. Each member of our pastoral team brings a range of different gifts, skills and experience which enables us to also offer help and support to other church ministries and groups.

Our pastoral work mainly involves befriending, home visiting and making pastoral telephone calls as we look to be a listening, prayerful ear and bring comfort and reassurance to those we are supporting. We are also involved in regular church activities including the Hope Hub. Since its growth and development in September to offer the café and other activities on both floors of the Easter Centre, we have tried to have a pastoral presence every week in the upstairs cafe area. A team member also assists Rachel with the Infant Feeding Sessions, building relationships with the parents and babies who attend. Some of the team also regularly support Margaret with the Bereavement Ministry, offering pastoral care for those present who may be grieving and needing extra support at both the monthly coffee morning and the termly Bereavement Journey Course.

As a team we have also been meeting regularly for our monthly Pastoral Prayer sessions, and during this time we fellowship and pray together for our work, church family and community, bringing these prayer requests to God and asking for his guidance and lead in all we do. We also have team meetings and during our time together last April we spoke about the upcoming “Mission Week”, which was taking place in June, and how we could best serve our church and pastorally connect with our community during that week. We came up with two suggestions, a “Prayer and Wellbeing Session” in the Church, which involved the team working together to organise a variety of prayer stations, craft activities, refreshments and to offer personal prayer during two sessions on the Wednesday of Mission Week. Prayer on the High Street was the second suggestion made and resulted in a small team of us going out on to the High Street offering prayer and speaking to those passing by about upcoming church events and services. These activities helped us to engage with our community and pastoral team members are now often involved in helping at other events in the town, including the Magna Carta and Christmas Fair, sharing God’s love and presence with our community.

Preaching Support – Norm Beers

The Purpose of the Preaching Support Ministry

The group of preachers at St. John’s is larger than at most churches—covering the 9:00, 10:30, and 6:00 services—and there is a significant range of experience and

training in that group. The preacher support function at St. John's exists to accomplish two goals:

- To assist in enhancing the quality of the preaching to benefit all who hear sermons at St. John's
- To gradually build, within each preacher, greater understanding, skill, and confidence for ministries, especially preaching, that they become involved with in the future.

Esther asked Norm Beers to provide coaching support to that end.

How Was This to be Done?

- It was agreed that the less experienced preachers would submit a sermon plan or script to the coach several days in advance for review and suggestions. (For more experienced preachers, this practice would be optional, but still encouraged.)
- The coach and each preacher would debrief the sermon within a few days of their preaching their sermon to glean as much learning and confidence as possible from each preaching experience.

What Has Happened?

- Since the last APCM, 25 sermons have been supported at least in the form of a debrief after the fact and perhaps 10 beforehand, working on the script, as well.
- We conducted a preachers' workshop in September 2022 to highlight for all preachers learnings that have come up in individual cases over the past year. It was well received (given a 4.25 out of 5 satisfaction rating), and numerous learnings were identified on how to make future training events even more fruitful.

Apparent Outcomes So Far

- We believe that most, if not all, preachers receiving this support appreciate the assistance. Typically the preacher in any particular week volunteers how much they have appreciated the support.
- Esther confirmed her belief in late 2022 that the effectiveness and value of this ministry continues as it has been since its inception in late 2020.

Enhancements to This Ministry:

- The following efforts were mentioned in last year's APCM report as aspirational, but have been only partially achieved. They will be an even higher priority in the coming year.
 - Greater alignment around procedures that will make for maximum impact in our preaching.
 - A more robust process for the development of individual preachers' capabilities.

- Help preachers to be clearer in their own minds about the outcomes they will prayerfully seek in their preaching: “What specifically do I believe should be the results of this sermon in the lives of my listeners?”
- Nurture the most essential source of one’s wisdom and power—the presence of God—seeking to open themselves further to His influence on their lives so they are sharing from a life of intimate devotion.

What would we ask you to incorporate into your prayers for preachers at St. John’s?

- A growing understanding and implementation of the most effective methodologies to maximise the impact of the preaching ministry at St. John’s to build disciples
- That each preacher would be infused with the life of Christ so that they are sharing from the well of God’s presence, wisdom, love, and power.

We’re grateful to God for His work in all of us over the past year and for His provision of grace and wisdom.

Seniors – Margaret Stevens, Hilary Davies and Carol Peters

Manor Farm Day Centre services for 2022 – Margaret Stevens

It was with great pleasure that we accepted an invitation in the summer of 2022 from Manor Farm Day Centre to run a service there once again, after they were eventually able to re-open after Covid.

Beginning in September, a small team now visits once a month on a Thursday morning to take a half hour service, where around 20 people gather in the main room. Two hymns are sung to the accompaniment of organ and choir (courtesy of a CD!) and a reading, short talk and prayers complete our time together. We look forward to a good year ahead with our little congregation.

My thanks go to the team and to Manor Farm Day Centre, who welcome us so warmly.

Craftea Ladies – Hilary Davies and Carol Peters

We have continued over the past year to enjoy fellowship with one another fortnightly on a Thursday afternoon at Manor Farm Day Centre where we are so well looked after by Debbie, Lisa, Bev and Nikki who tell us they really look forward to us coming. There is always a lovely buzz of conversation amongst the ladies.

Our numbers had dropped following closure during the pandemic and we have also been sad that three of our members Angela, Wendy and Hilda died during this year, a few others are not well enough to join us anymore, however, they are all still

remembered when we meet. We have been really encouraged recently to welcome some new members and currently there are normally around sixteen to twenty of us meeting together to knit or crochet, chat, have tea and biscuits (or cake when we celebrate birthdays). We always have a bible reading and this year we have mainly focused on the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke as well as a psalm which is always fitting for the day.

The ladies continue to knit between the group meetings and we have been able to donate or sell many items during the year. We had a very successful sale at Playtime in the autumn and raised over £100 for Child Action Lanka (CAL- our adopted charity) through donations. We didn't ask for any money but the parents were very generous. We also sent a large number of teddies out to Sri Lanka with Sue Stafford and Dal Hettierachi when they visited and the feedback was that the children were delighted to receive one just for them. We have also supported Mission to Seafarers (hats), Knit for Peace, Baby Basics and other charities through our knitted goods.

We would love new members to join us, so if you might be interested please contact the church office or come and speak to one of us. Please don't worry if you can't knit or crochet as you are welcome to come and learn. It is a great way to meet new people and enjoy being together. We value your prayers for these wonderful ladies, thank you. They bring us joy and blessings each time we meet.

We are grateful for support from Sue Beer, Kim Callaghan, Margaret Stevens and Penny Thomas.

Single and Fulfilled – Tim Senanayake

Single and Fulfilled aims to create community for single people within the church, welcome to single adults of all ages and backgrounds, whether single for the short-term or long-term, whether always single or 'single again' (for whatever reason).

Over the past year, we've been having monthly lunches after the Sunday 10:30 service, usually in the Caddey. Some months we have one or two people joining, whereas other months there are 10 people - the numbers don't matter really, it's more about creating the opportunity for a space where we can encourage and support each other to pursue a Christ-centred life, which I believe we do provide.

It has been a privilege to cater for people who otherwise may not have a group they feel they belong in - 40% of all adults in the UK are single, so my prayer is that this group goes a small way to help St John's be more inviting and welcoming to single people.

I would appreciate prayer for God's guidance on the direction the group should go in over the next year and beyond.

Young Adults – Joanna Starr

The Young Adult Life Group has been growing an atmosphere of honesty and vulnerability. Members have shared their struggles together and grappled with passages from the Bible and questions that have arisen. There is also a sense of communal gratitude developing as stories of encouragement are shared. An increased hunger and interest in God's word has also been noticed in group members. Times of fellowship have been enabled through socialising and meals together. There have also been a couple of new attendees this year, and it is encouraging to see how they have become integrated within the group. Perhaps the most exciting thing that God is doing is the shaping of young leaders. Each week a different person leads the study. This has meant that individuals who might not have imagined themselves capable have grown in confidence by expressing their gifts, whilst creating a space where we can seek Jesus together.

Young People

All Age Service – Rachel Upcott & Grace Hopkins

Our All Age services have been on quite a journey over the last few years from building a great momentum before the pandemic to seeing them stopped altogether. We made the decision after a year back in person that it wasn't sustainable to do both Family Footprints (a fantastic initiative from the pandemic) and effective all age services and so we prayed. In that time God laid a vision on our hearts that we needed to bring these two ideas together which led us to the following vision that -

All Age services are an **intergenerational fellowship** which utilises **creativity** and **interaction** as its modalities to enable **faith building** across our diverse church family.

Our passion is that this will be space where we are intentional about growing as a family and is a gateway for dechurched or unchurched members of our local community.

Off the back of the first two we have done under this new vision these are some of the comments we have received:

'I am really enjoying the services and although I do not feel the crafts are for me as a learning tool I am really appreciative that we are putting in so much effort to engage with children and families. I love the theology corner and the swedish bible study method on the tables aswell'

'We are so happy to be part of St John's church Egham. The all inclusive service was brill and so nice to be able to pray 🙏 in small groups.'

We are really happy with how the first two services have gone and are continuing to feedback and develop its form with each month.

These services are no mean feat! A small team of people meet just the week after the All Age service to begin planning the next one, this includes the preacher and the worship leader (which has just been taken on by one of our Students!). We work together to create a service that draws out the theme we are looking at that month and from there a hefty to do list is created and shared across many people in our church family. If you would like to be apart of the planning or the executing team please do email all-age.worship@stjohnsegham.com

Please do be praying that each month we are led by the Holy Spirit and have the energy for the vision God has given us

Baby Meals – Natalie Tisdall

What does Baby Meals do?

The Baby Meals team provides parents who are known to the church with up to 14 meals to help at home following the arrival of a new baby. It is a really practical and simple way for members of the church to love each other and love our community, in line with our mission - making a real difference to local families.

What's happened this year?

It has been a quiet year for baby meals, with only a small number of meals requested, but the team has remained ready to help when required. A couple of new people have come forward and volunteered to join the rota and we are always on the look out for new people to join the baby meals team.

How can a family access baby meals?

Last year, the decision was made to serve members of the community known to the church, Playbox and Playtime, and that the request for support should come from the leader of the ministry that the family are connected with. We continue to feel it is important to have a certain level of relationship with those we cook for, as the ministry requires personal information to be shared and cooks also deliver meals themselves to recipient's houses.

How can you support this ministry?

We hope to be able to provide more meals during the year ahead (dependent on how many babies arrive, of course). In the past, it has sometimes been a challenge to cover all the slots for some new parents, so if you feel like you would be able to prepare and provide a meal for a family with a few days' notice, please get in touch.

Clothes Bank – Rachel Upcott

The clothes bank fulfils a need for families who want to pass on children's clothes at no cost. These clothes are available to anyone who maybe struggling with the cost of living but are also available to everybody else. No questions are asked. Some clothes are passed onto Baby Basics at the Village Centre and many have been passed onto refugee families.

The clothes are available at Playtime, the Infant Feeding Clinic and other events such as the Christmas and Eco Fairs and other times if we can find someone to supervise the table.

At present I am overseeing the Clothes Bank but I would love someone to come on board who would run the clothes bank and become responsible for it. I would still be able to support whoever took this over. If this is something you feel able to do or would like more info, please contact me.

CHARGED (Youth Ministry) - Grace Hopkins

CHARGED Small Groups and CHARGED Central

I want to begin by saying a huge thank you to our CHARGED Leaders who have helped transition our Youth Ministry into a really exciting and developing space.

In the first year back in person we very much tried lots of different ways to engage our young people back into church post the pandemic, imagining what could our youth work look like with a clean slate.

Through some really productive conversations with Alastair Etheridge, the youth mission enabler at the diocese, we decided to make some changes and relaunched our new activities in September 2022 with a Pizza launch night for Parents and young people!

Part of the discerning in this decision was by using a strategic tool Alastair had given us. This was to ascertain where we felt our group was in terms of faith, using the 5 C's -

- Contact
 - See them irregularly, little knowledge of them, or their issues problems or view of Jesus/Church
- Crowd
 - Come semi- regularly, Are not Christians, are constantly working out whether to stay or go
- Community
 - Feel part of something, and have friendships in the youth ministry, some will have made some sort of commitment, others will be open to Jesus but undecided
- Committed
 - This group attend most things and want to get involved more, passion for what Jesus is doing around them, struggle with culture and living out their faith beyond church
- Core
 - This group are growing in their calling and gifting. Often young leaders, progressing from being served to serving, they are starting to share their faith

From which we found that the predominance of our group were in the community area and we needed something to help us grow these young people's faith more into the Committed and Core areas.

This is where our Small Group Discipleship model came in for our Sunday provision. The small group discipleship model is about creating connection and deepening

discipleship through consistent small groups and leaders, consistent structure each week, allowing trust to grow and bigger questions to be asked.

We have seen some exciting stuff with this change! We are seeing more consistent numbers, our young people are growing friendships with each other, as a team we can get to know the young people better and tailor our content each week to help our individual groups grow well. In our team debriefs each week that has been the awesome picture of the same content being offered and received in such different ways!

In using the 5 C's we relaunched our mid-week provision called CHARGED Central to be a space where our young people felt comfortable to invite friends and hang out after school – very much a contact/crowd kind of space to welcome non-christian young people in. We open the Caddey three Fridays a month (with an outing on the 4th) as social space with a Caddey Café (a very reasonable tuck shop), our sports equipment, games consoles, board games, crafts and more. We have seen a steady group of young people who have begun bringing their friends along. A highlight from this term has been the time we have been able to borrow Johnny's VR machine much fun has been had throwing squirrels (don't ask!).

With this ministry we know there are a lot more young people we could be reaching so we would love you to be praying for us as we continue to assess and envision how to engage more with the young people in our community.

Some of our bigger highlights outside of this has been the baptisms of 3 of our young people! An absolutely joy to behold! We took some of our young people to SORTED in London a day conference for young people which was fab! We are seeing our young people grow in serving and getting involved in the wider church, recently a few joining our All Age Band and absolutely smashing it!

This term we are heading off on our first ever CHARGED Weekend Away, just us! We are super excited to be able to grow closer as a group, hear some great talks from Denis Adide and test our limits of some awesome activities! Please do be praying for us, particularly that our young people will understand more about who God is and who they are in him.

Thank you for your prayers and support

Footprints – Rachel & Robin Upcott

It has been very exciting in FootPrints over the last few months as we have seen new families arriving either through Playtime or children inviting their friends along. Our prayer is that FootPrints will grow through our invitation to others so they can know the welcome and generous love of Jesus.

Last year we finished off a series of 'Meals with Jesus' from Faith in Kids and we are now completing a series on 'The I am' statements. In the lead up to Christmas we

studied some of the prophecies in the Old Testament proclaiming the coming of the Messiah. We also used the time in FootPrints to prepare for the Nativity where the children led us in worship so beautifully. The nativity also included some of our holiday club characters, thank you Josh and Tim for stepping in.

Up until Christmas we had been holding Family FootPrints every third Sunday. A time when parents stayed with their children and investigated the bible themes together. During these sessions we were looking at The Holy Habits through family discussions and creative craft activities and hopefully conversations about the bible passage, faith and how we could show this in our everyday lives would continue at home. During one of these sessions we made up shoe boxes full of goodies that would be sent to Moldova and other Eastern European countries in time for Christmas. We linked up with a Christian Charity called Link to Hope which is based in West Sussex.

Family FootPrints was meant to be intergenerational - participation from grandparents, parents, teenagers down to the youngest child. It was suggested that we could use Family FootPrints as a model for our all-age services. After much prayer, conversations and thought we have decided to explore this model in our all-age worship services.

One of our hi-lights last year was seeing two young people baptised, one who had come through FootPrints. It was a privilege to know we had been part of her journey of faith. WE also have a few younger children who have expressed thoughts about baptism and this is something we are exploring with them.

Please pray for the young children and families who attend FootPrints and help them to feel welcome with a cheery smile and hello. We would also appreciate your prayers for the team who give so generously of their time and energies. The team would feel greatly encouraged if you popped in on a Sunday to ask what we were covering or you offered your help in clearing up or getting the team a tea or coffee or maybe asking what our prayer needs are.

If you would like to know more about FootPrints please don't hesitate to contact me or chat to one of the team. You would also be welcome to come and visit us on a Sunday morning to see how you could support us.

Holiday Club – Rachel & Robin Upcott

Holiday Club is probably one of the largest outreach children's events we hold each year. Children from reception to year 6 are invited to five mornings of fun, laughter, games, songs, drama, crafts, stories and puppets but most of all a time and a place where they can experience the welcome and love of Jesus.

Holiday Club is a time when our own children can be built up and nurtured in their faith but also a time when they can invite their friends to a church event and share their faith.

Holiday Club is also a time when the whole church family, from our youngest teenagers to our experienced older members work together and support one another in this massive event. A true picture of the body of the church using their different gifts. Last year's holiday club was Expedition force and was held at the end of August. With the help of church members using their artistic skills the church was turned into an expedition adventure with snow-capped mountains, sunny valleys and aeroplanes and hot air balloons flying overhead. We were supported by a fabulous band, and we discovered many budding performers and puppeteers in our teenagers. The technical team were invaluable. The week culminated on the Sunday with an all-age service which incorporated many of the elements of holiday club. We then shared in fellowship over a lunch with many families who had come along to find out more about the activities and stories of the week. Thank you to Natalie Delboux for overseeing the catering and feeding approx. 200 people!

Although we had started building holiday club back up after the Easter Centre building works with Kingdom Quest we were then disrupted with the pandemic so Expedition Force was a great success in starting again. During the week we welcomed over 70 children, many not St. John's attenders, and all of them experiencing church in a rather different way.

This year's holiday club is already being planned and will run from August 21st until August 25th and will also incorporate a Sunday morning service on Aug 27th. There are many roles to be filled, some up front, some behind the scenes, prep beforehand and willing hands each day. It is always a massive undertaking and we do need as much help as possible, so please ask God if he would like you to be involved, and remember – if the answer is yes he WILL equip you to be able to make a real difference.

Infant Feeding – Rachel Upcott

The Infant Feeding Support Group started during lockdown when restrictions were less tight.

I was approached by Liz Jennis, who leads the Infant Feeding Support Team at St. Peter's hospital about using the Easter Centre to hold sessions for new mums to come along to a safe space for advice on feeding their babies. We have continued to facilitate this group by us providing a warm space, welcoming new parents and providing them with a much welcome drink and snack, someone to chat to if needed and sometimes a box of tissues! Liz and her team provide the advice and support.

So many new parents have been thankful to have somewhere to attend where they can sit down and know that there is support on hand at a time when they feel so vulnerable.

Many are curious about the church especially when we offer them clothes from the baby clothes bank, bread from the community fridge or they see us preparing for events such as Christmas or Easter. They have expressed amazement at the generosity that is on offer and the many activities that St. John's undertakes.

Some of the mums have started to attend Playtime and one family with older children came along to holiday club.

Our dream for the group is for it to grow into an under one's group where parents can continue to come along, initially for feeding advice but then come for more of a social time where they will support one another through the first year of their new child's life. However, for this to happen I need more support so if you are interested in helping please have a chat with me about how you can be involved. It is so good to be able to welcome new parents, chat to them, give them a hug when needed and sometimes we have the privilege of cuddling their new born.

Playbox – Conrad Benefield

Playbox is an Ofsted-registered nursery school offering quality 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 its governance is delegated to a Playbox Voluntary Management Committee (VMC) of members of St John's chaired by Conrad Benefield. Playbox is subject to Ofsted inspection and currently has a 'Good' rating. It is staffed by a Supervisor, Deputy Supervisor and six other nursery staff, supported by a part-time Nursery Administrator, Claire Jenkins, and by a number of volunteers. I am humbled by and hugely grateful for the commitment, energy and professionalism of VMC members, staff and volunteers.

Children attending come from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds and some have special educational needs. Playbox is committed to inviting and welcoming children from all backgrounds and supporting families as well as their children, for example through signposting to other services, pastoral support etc.

2020 and 2021 were challenging times for Playbox as we were required to continue to operate during COVID restrictions, in compliance with Government guidelines. This has been much less of an issue in 2022 which has nevertheless been a year of significant change. Early in 2022 our Deputy Supervisor Jenny Hickmott moved onto pastures new, and in July one of our two Supervisors, Beverley Fayers, stepped down. We took the opportunity offered by these changes to review the future management structure of Playbox.

2023 will see more change as we say goodbye to our current Supervisor Sarah Merifield, who will be retiring in the summer after many years of devoted service, and seek to appoint a new Nursery Manager. We are also excited to be celebrating Playbox's 50th birthday on 1 May this year - look out for more information about this coming soon - and to be developing a new mission and vision for Playbox centred around that of St John's.

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.

We would value your prayers for the Management Committee (Conrad, Esther Prior, Chris Gray, Margaret Llewelyn, Carol Peters, Natalie Watson) and for the staff team as we navigate the year ahead. Please also pray that we will find a new Nursery Manager who will lead Playbox into the future, and for Sarah as she enters retirement. But above all please pray for the children who attend Playbox and their families, and for Playbox to continue to be a safe, happy place for young children to play, learn, make friends and have fun.

Playtime – Rachel Upcott

Playtime continues to meet weekly, usually during term time but with some sessions during the school holidays. Our aim is to show families with pre-school children that our church community is open and ready to welcome them in with the generous love that Jesus had for everyone.

We make available lots of different toys and activities, have messy play available and take time to chat to as many parents as possible. Refreshments are available throughout the morning with a designated snack time for children where we provide a healthy snack of fruit. We have recently started to provide toast as families arrive as we were aware that some children may not have eaten breakfast that morning or just needed a top up after an early start.

I regularly email over 150 families each week welcoming them to events such as the Light Party, Christmas, Eco fairs, Easter, Family services, Men's and Ladies breakfasts plus much more. We have supported families by making use of the clothes bank, the hardship fund, Christmas hampers, the community fridge, helping them pass baby equipment between themselves as well as offering prayer support.

I want to say thank you to the Playtime team who give so generously of their time to make Playtime happen every week by helping to set up, clear away, providing and serving refreshments, welcoming at the registration table, supervising and chatting at the craft tables or simply looking out for an opportunity to talk to parents. A huge thank goes to Sally Champion who supported me for many years at Playtime, preparing crafts, turning up early to set up, sharing ideas and generally being my right hand man. Sadly, Sally has had to give up Playtime and we all miss her greatly.

We have welcomed a few new people to the team – a grandparent who said she enjoyed the session so much could she please supervise crafts some weeks, another grand parent who has joined the refreshments rota, Robin who now provides some musical elements, our two interns Joanna and Maddie who lead the sessions if I am unavailable. We have noticed many more dads attending Playtime so having Robin on board is wonderful to show St. Johns is not just made up of women. Any more men free on a Friday to come and chat to the dads? It would be wonderful to expand our team at Playtime and to spread the workload so if you are available on a Friday morning do pop along to see what happens and chat to me or one of the team to see how you could help. It is a huge opportunity to get to know many young families in our area and be able to invite and welcome them to other events at our church.

I received this email just before Christmas which hopefully shows how much Playtime means to some families –

'I have really enjoyed playgroup, and our daughter LOVED her first ever visit to Father Christmas on your special playgroup. I think St John's do such brilliant work with and for the children. Thank you.

I'm bringing my daughter and my husband to the crib service on Christmas Eve and we're looking forward to it. (He is Catholic so we go to a Catholic Church every Sunday but I'm Anglican, and just love what you're doing and can see us spending a bit more time with you all over time, as we've been so warmly welcomed and looked after, from the breastfeeding cafe to the clothes bank and the lovely people at playgroup.)

Thank you for all you do.'

Praise Tots – Rachel Upcott

Praise Tots takes place during a Playtime session so is aimed at families and carers with pre-school children. What makes Praise Tots distinctive from Playtime is that we always tell a Bible story, incorporate more children's Christian songs and we have a prayer time. The crafts are also related to the bible story so hopefully there will be some discussion going on at home about the story.

Some of Bible stories we have covered are Noah, Breakfast on the beach, Creation, Mary visited by an angel, the Nativity, Epiphany, and Simeon and Anna. We had a visit from Mr. Christingle and made Christingles.

Families are receptive to listening to the stories and we hope and pray they will want to know more about the bible and will join us at our all-age services.

We would love to have more people join us to engage with families about faith. Maybe you could join us to chat with families at a craft table or sit with them while they have a coffee and biscuit.

We would appreciate prayer for these young children as they hear messages from the bible and although they are very young that they will remember the stories and songs that they hear.

Student Ministry – Grace Hopkins

What a privilege it is to have Students as a part of our church. At the end of our last academic year we celebrated with student and young adult BBQ and Waterfight night as part of our Mission week which welcomed over 30 young people. We cannot thank God enough for what he has been doing in both ministries!

It was considering this that we found ourselves in a confident position to split the 18-30's group back into a Student group and a newly formed Young Adult group. God's hand has really been on this as we have seen growth in both groups since the split for the new academic year.

It has been such a joy to welcome back our 2nd and 3rd years, one highlight was myself getting COVID during freshers week. A highlight because these students have created such great bonds with St John's they stepped up and stepped in to advertise and welcome new students in our church family. Big shout out to them! It really has been an honour to see them grow and step out into new things this year!

This is not something we are shouting from the rooftops because we really do encourage that Students just go to church, whether that is with us is up to them but we are now the largest student church in the area. I can only thank God for hearing our prayers and the heart of those who share in the ministry to students that we want to give them a place to call home whilst at university. A place where they will be discipled, where they will learn more about God and who they are in him. That they will be given opportunities to grow and become disciple making disciples.

If you want to come and experience some of the vitality and joy that these young people bring you would be so welcome to visit us on a Tuesday evening for our student night or come along to one of our student lunches or pub nights.

Our prayer now is for more team and more time, with only 30% of my hours allocated to this ministry there is only so much we can do without this. We are so grateful for God bringing over 30 amazing young people to join us, our heart cry is for spiritual Mums and Dads, Aunts and Uncles, Grandmas and Grandads to come alongside them and for the time to grow a ministry that loves and serves the student community in our town.