

ST JOHN'S HARBORNE • APCM • 26 APR 2023



APCM REPORT 2023



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PCC & DIOCESE

Chairman's Report

Reverend Leonard Browne

If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed! (John 8:36)

The last year has been one which has seen 'the church family gathered' gain momentum in terms of both our post-lockdown numbers and our ministries, reflected in these written reports for the APCM. Although the recent sermon series on freedom is still fresh in my heart and mind, I think we have witnessed a growing freedom over the last 12 months in seeking to be the Body of Christ here at St John's. Things like the freedom to send a large group of our brothers and sisters off to revitalise St Mary's Bearwood; the freedom to re-engage with a number of our strategic ministries (e.g. Welcome, Small Groups, Toddlers, Youth, Childrens', Elderly); the freedom to initiate new 'Bridge-Building' ministries (e.g. Community Café, Language classes for Ukrainians, Friday Night Dinners, Warm Room); the freedom to encounter the Lord in our main gatherings – both midweek and Sunday services ,as well as our monthly Powerhouse prayer and praise meetings; and the freedom to live more faithfully in our homes, neighbourhoods, and workplaces.

For all of these out workings of what it means for us to be God's kingdom representatives, we need to keep keeping our eyes on the One who brings true freedom. In England, both the nation and the Church have faced challenging times for a whole host of reasons. In seeking to stay close to Jesus, we have drawn up a new 5-year plan as we have sought the Lord for His priorities in the coming days to help face these challenges, which are also of course, great opportunities! It is both an exciting and an awesome calling: to grow in faith and worship and outreach and service and numbers and diversity. Having such a gifted and loving colleague as Jo Jennings join us as our Curate, adds to our already wonderful Staff Team, which has continued to serve the mission of God, and has helped, under the Lord and alongside our amazing volunteer teams, to begin to bring some of our dreams into reality. Our wardens Phil Varley and Kate Collins, with their teams, have helped keep the show on the road week by week – thank you to them.

So much of what we achieved in God's grace over the last 18 years has been down to Steve Foster's passion, character, gifting and perseverance, as our Operations Manager. Amongst too many things to fully mention, helping oversee the building project was perhaps his most intensive, and rewarding project contribution; and his care of those around him was simply amazing. We are so thankful to God for Steve, as we are for Catherine White, his wonderful successor, who has recently started.

Thanks are also due to all those who have given so much over the years, who have stepped back from ministries; and to those PCC members and Deanery Synod Reps whose term of office has come to an end. We are also so grateful for those who have recently stepped into what for them are new ministries, and we hope that our renewed PCC will have new faces with new contributions to bring. As we have stressed many times the church is like a football match with everyone on the pitch and in the game; or like an orchestra, with everyone playing their part. And of course, the part we play is not confined to, but should include serving in, the ministries of St John's. Everything we do in the name of Jesus – at home, in school, around our community, in our workplace – is ministry; and our longing should be to see the freedom that Jesus has brought us, bringing freedom to those who as yet do not know God's forgiving love revealed supremely in His Son. May God bless us in the coming year to be His Freedom People.

Associate Vicar's Report

Reverend Jon Tattersall

As I continue well into my fourth year in post at St John's, it really has started to feel like momentum is building and that we are entering into a new season of church life. This was particularly seen with the launch of the revitalisation of St Mary's Bearwood in September, but also the start of new and renewed ministries within the life of St John's. Of course, each ministry area requires a volunteer team to take that ministry forward, and we are blessed with incredibly dedicated people who serve in so many ways.

It is a joy to serve and support Leonard in the leadership of the church, on a strategic and pastoral level. It is also an absolute pleasure to line-manage Diana, Catriona, Patty and Nathan. One of the small jobs I do each week,

which brings me absolute joy, is ringing those who have filled in a 'Hello & Welcome' card and welcoming them to St John's on an almost weekly basis, and it's been good to run another 'Way-In' course for newcomers.

It has been really exciting to see so much development in the bridge-building ministries that have been set up over the past few months. My contribution with most of them has been minimal - more of an 'encouraging' role! It has also been good to see progress in our commitment to 'wellbeing' as an area of bridge-building. To the end, we are just about to host our first Mental Health First Aid course, which will be attended by several key staff members, as well as being open to other churches and organisations. We plan to expand this in the future and make this available to a wider pool of staff and volunteers at St John's. In addition to this, we have also updated our Single-Friendly Church audit and will be taking some of the recommendations from that working group to Staff and PCC. I am also looking to draw together a team to refresh and renew our commitment to Men's ministry over the coming months - so watch this space for that!

As ever, in addition to supporting the church with preaching, leading, pastoral visiting and overseeing our monthly prayer gathering 'Powerhouse' (with a wonderful team), it has been great to see the church deepen our relationship with New Wine by hosting leaders' gatherings, local celebrations, as well as camping with many church family members at the summer conference - a time of refreshment, challenge and hearing God speak to us!

In all that we celebrate and in all that we still long to see God do among us, I continue to pray that God increases our hunger for him, that we continue to look to his faithfulness and his word, that we root ourselves deeply in prayer and we see lives transformed by the love, grace and mercy of Jesus.

Curate's Report

Reverend Jo Jennings

2022/2023 has been a significant year in so many ways! After many years of discerning and seeking God's will I finally stood in Birmingham Cathedral and was ordained deacon. Nerves, trepidation and a healthy dose of excitement greeted me after that noteworthy event as I arrived to begin my curacy here at St Johns. I firmly believe that this curacy has been a gift from God, and I want to begin this short report by saying thank you! Thank you for the warm welcome that my family and I have received since we have been here. It certainly feels like we have been part of the St Johns family for much longer than eight months (in a good way of course)!

I have been fortunate to arrive at a time when the bridge building ministries are beginning to get off the ground and one of the greatest joys in the last few months has been the opportunity to get involved with the Saturday Community Café. Working with Harvey and the team, it has been wonderful to see the Café grow and develop into a great resource to connect with our community. With hot drinks, epic cakes and good conversation we are beginning to see the fruits of the Café as a place to minister to people outside of our church doors. This is a good and fruitful ministry and I look forward to being a part of it over the next few years and to see how God will use it to build a stronger bridge into our community.

Two other ministries that I have been closely involved in are Toddlers on a Wednesday and Midweek Service on a Thursday. In my former life, before theological college, I was trained in childcare and education, and I have loved being able to spend time with families and children again. Toddlers is a special ministry; to be able to provide a space for parents to come and allow their children to let off steam whilst connecting with other parents has been a joy to watch. Conversations with parents and the ability to share the love of Jesus in a more informal setting has demonstrated the value in creating relationships to enable God's love to show through.

In totally the opposite side of the age spectrum, I have been working closely with Catriona in our midweek services. This spirit filled, gentle service is definitely a joy to be involved in, and not to mention the rather

lovely time of cake (there may be a theme developing here) and fellowship following each service. I have really enjoyed the leading, preaching and creating new sermon series for this ministry and it is with great pleasure that I look forward to later this year when I will be able to preside at the Lord's table, not just at this service, but at our Sunday gatherings too. I am looking forward to furthering my ministry here at St Johns over the next few years as together we worship, praise and serve God in our church and community.

Wardens

Phil Varley & Kate Collins

This is our first report as St John's Wardens having both stepped into the role in the last year taking over from Ruth Downing (who moved to St Marys) and Rich Lovell. Thank you for making us feel welcome and being extra kind to us this year as we find our feet. In addition, we are massively supported by a capable team of Deputy Wardens who should definitely get a mention, so, thank you to Janet, Jez, Geoff, Ian, David and Linda you are all truly appreciated and valued.

Our building is getting used significantly now, and having been without for a long time, we have had the blessing of a Building & Facilities Manager for a number of months. We thank God for Wills skills and input over the time that he has been with us.

St John's has had the misfortune of a part of the new build flooring literally crumbling away beneath our feet. Intrusive diagnosis revealed rotten flooring across swathes of some of the first-floor rooms. This led to much scratching of heads as to the reason for the rotting as no water leak could be detected. The final answer was that we had been the victim of a flood that was understood to have occurred during the building phase and had not been dealt with correctly by the contractors as the project came into land. Steve has feverishly been attempting to resolve this for a number of months now in a bid to do so before retiring from his role but has been met with many challenges in doing so.

We have a number of new ministries to thank God for, many of these have been initiated from within the congregation, some with long gestation

periods where they have been prayed into for many months or years and are now coming into bloom. It is amazing to see the heart for building community that exists within St John's. Please continue to press into how God wants to use you through the ministries of St John's, there really is space for everyone to play their part in God's plan for St John's!

By the time you are reading this we will have welcomed Catherine White into the Operations Manager role. We are so blessed to be able to facilitate this full-time role at St John's and it seems only right for us to recognise the commitment and professionalism that Steve has given to the role over the last 18 years. I am certain we can speak for many generations of St John's wardens before us in offering our sincere appreciation to Steve for his service to us and to God in this role.

Both Kate and I are looking forward to working in partnership with Catherine and are excited for the future plans that God has for St John's!

PCC Secretary's Report

Hannah Reed

The PCC has overseen another significant year in the ministry of St John's as we settle into the new building. We have sought to extend our bridge building ministries, fully utilising the new spaces we have. We have faced challenges, including staff vacancies, low volunteer numbers and addressing issues arising from the new building.

The current PCC, which numbers 19 including clergy, Deanery and Diocesan members, held 6 meetings. James Whitehouse, appointed as Vice-Chair this year, ensured meetings were conducted in a positive and constructive manner. There was a sense of unity and purpose in our meetings, which comes through the work of the Holy Spirit, as he guides and directs us. The Standing Committee meets between PCC meeting to carry out the work of the PCC.

We have three Deanery Synod members, and Two Diocesan Synod members, who also sit on the Deanery Synod. We are grateful for the

regular reports and updates they provide to the PCC from the wider church family in Birmingham.

There have been some changes in key roles, with Ruth Downing stepping down as Church Warden, as she joins the revitalisation project at St Mary's Bearwood. Her role was filled by Kate Collins, who was elected in September. A member of the Deanery Synod has also stepped down from the synod and hence the PCC. Ben Baker originally joined us in our PCC meetings but has moved over to St. Mary's to chair his own PCC meetings there.

A regular programme of received reports on policies and procedures has continued, enabling the PCC to carry out its Trustee responsibilities. This has included the important work of Safeguarding with regular updates from the Safeguarding Team and the updating our policies and documents.

Our Church Treasurer, David Harvey, has provided clear presentations on financial matters enabling important decisions to be made confidently. These have included decisions on finalising and closing the Building for Mission accounts, planning the budget when faced with a changing giving picture and releasing money to pay for repairs to the floor.

Staffing reports have been regularly supplied by Steve Foster, our operations manager. The PCC directly employs some 12 staff, some in paid roles and some in voluntary roles. We have struggled to recruit some key roles, including the buildings and facilities caretaker and the debt service manager. We have been kept informed of recruitment processes and progress, as well as changes to staff contracts and employment law and how it affects our staff. One of the important jobs of the PCC was preparing for Steve's retirement and the appointment of his replacement.

Although Building for Mission has officially been completed and accounts closed, we have had to make important decisions with regards to ongoing maintenance of the building, including the discovery of a major defect with the upstairs flooring. The PCC has made key decisions over the financing of the repairs.

We, as a PCC, have considered our position in the diocese and the wider church in our discussions on the People and Places proposals for Oversight Ministry. We have also considered Living and Love Faith and the decisions made by the General Synod.

The PCC has also promoted the missional side of St John's Ministries, and as part of this mission we have appointed Kate Quarrell to chair the GPS team. We have also said goodbye to a large group from St John's as they moved to St Mary's Bearwood as part of the revitalisation project there. We continue to explore and discuss the proposed bridge-building ministries.

We continue to pray and seek the Lord's will as we serve the church in the areas of governance and strategy. Please pray for us in this role.

Electoral Roll

Jo Herlock

The Electoral Roll number as at 2 April 2023 is 335. The next full revision will happen in 2025.

Previous figures are listed below:

Year	Electoral Roll Number	Revision Year
2022	325	
2021	374	
2020	379	
2019	378	Revision
2018	406	
2017	423	
2016	409	

Deanery Synod

Adrian Collings

The Deanery Synod met three times since the last APCM. On the 8th June 2022 at St Augustine's Edgbaston, on the 13th October 2022 at Holy Trinity Smethwick, and on the 7th February online.

There were reports back from the Diocesan synod (Paul Martin) in February 2023, and from the General Synod (Gut Hordern) in October 2022.

The main topics discussed included people and places, and oversight ministry and how the different Parishes within the Deanery can support each other going forward.

There were updates on Environmental matters, on ways of churches can reduce their carbon footprint. A presentation on Warley and Edgbaston Deanery, working together for a greener world was given by Ruth Haynes in October 2022, with encouragement for parishes to support the A Rocha Eco Church initiative. The Diocese aspires to be carbon neutral by 2030.

On the 18th October, the Bishop of Birmingham David Urquhart retired, and the process for appointing a new bishop was outlined in the October Synod. Anne Hollinghurst, Bishop of Aston, will become acting Diocesan Bishop.

After the hiatus due to the Pandemic, it was good to be able to meet together, under the leadership of the Area Dean Mike Sermon.

Diocesan Synod

James Whitehouse & Mike Down

The Diocesan Synod met three times since the last APCM. On the 14th July 2022 at Gas Street Church, on the 12th November 2022 at St Columba's Church Sutton Coldfield, and on 25th March 2023 at St Philip's Church Dorridge.

Some of the topics discussed during the synod meetings have included improving the diocesan procedures for safeguarding following the IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) report 2022, a drive to Net-Zero and the diocesan response to climate change, and progress made towards racial justice on the implementation of the Lament to Action report (2021).

In safeguarding, most of the recommendations of the IICSA report focus on ways to improve transparency and accountability and improving the way the churches of the diocese engage with and respond to those with lived experience of abuse.

As in the deanery synod report, there is an encouragement for parishes to support the A Rocha Eco Church initiative as the diocese works towards carbon neutrality by 2030.

A Racial Justice Board has now been formed, chaired by the Rev'd Canon Dele Sotonwa, St Stephen's Rednal. The Board is responsible to the Bishops Council and the Diocesan Synod and will continue to monitor and report progress towards racial justice and equity.

A standing item at each Diocesan synod is to receive reports of the finances of the diocese. The finance report for our diocese reflects the national picture of shrinking contributions to common fund (monies given to the central expression of the diocese from parish giving), and of Church of England dioceses have higher outgoings than income. We have been assured that mission and strategy will continue, and our Board of Finance is hopeful of recovery.

Diocesan Synod on the 26th March 2022 also saw the proclamation of the Vacancy in See upon the announcement of the retirement of the Bishop of Birmingham, David Urquhart.

Fabric & Building Development

Steve Foster

The main fabric concern in the last 12-month period has clearly been the latent damage that has appeared in a large section of the first floor of the main church building. After various investigations it was discovered that there had been a leak when the first-floor kitchen was being installed and water had become trapped in the acoustic floor structure that sits on top of the concrete slab. Once the floor coverings had been fitted the moisture had no means of escape and the floor structure began to rot. After significant investigations and meetings our insurers will not cover the cost

of replacement as the damage occurred during the construction period where they were not responsible for the building. The building contractor went into administration in August 2021 and therefore it is not possible to make a claim against them. St John's will have to cover the cost of repair and it is hoped that by the time you are reading this report all works will have been completed.

St John's owns two other properties, 2 Milford Copse and The Crossway on Vivian Road. In addition, it is responsible for the maintenance costs of 5a Greenfield Road under terms of the licence. There are currently no significant fabric concerns with these properties, however there will need to be budget provision for ongoing maintenance during 2024 & 2025.

Steve Foster

Operations Manager – Emeritus!

Safeguarding Report

Parish Safeguarding Coordinator: Fran Varley

Parish Safeguarding Officers: Helen Baines and Dave Atkins

“The care and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a Safer Church for all.”

As a Church and as a PCC we remain committed to ensuring that everything we do is in accordance with and in adherence to The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy and Practice Guidance.

Safeguarding update reports were presented at each PCC meeting and included, amongst other statutory items, a review of the Parish Dashboard system (an online tool for tracking the safeguarding requirements of St John's and keeping updated with regards to any local and national changes in safeguarding requirements).

The Parish Safeguarding team, comprising of Jon Tattersall, Sue De Waal (until July 2021), Helen Baines (from July 2021), Mike Down and Fran Varley, have held termly meetings. The purpose of which was to review any

safeguarding cases and actions taken, to ensure best practice and to review, discuss and action anything relating to training, policies, and diocesan safeguarding updates.

We would like to extend our gratitude and thanks to Sue De Waal and Mike Down for all that they have given during their time as one of our Parish Safeguarding Officers over the past three years.

As our ministries continue to develop and new roles are developed, our safer recruitment processes remain a priority for all ministry leaders as does the need to ensure that we continue to prioritise our commitment to providing a safe environment for all. An example of this has been in the lead up to the launch of our various new Bridge Building ministries over the past few months.

St Mary's Bearwood Revitalisation

Ben Baker

2022 was a significant year for St John's in seeing the sending out of a team to join St Mary's Bearwood on a new chapter of revitalisation, as part of a vision for church planting across the diocese. St John's first 'church plant' in many years is the culmination of a long period of discernment and planning that has seen a group from St John's join St Mary's to partner in a new future for this church community. It was formally re-launched in September 2022 with a new service pattern and has since then been focused on reaching out to the local community under the vision to be 'Sharing God's heart with Bearwood, in the heart of Bearwood'.

Following the appointment of Rev Ben Baker as team leader in Autumn 2021, 2022 saw the plan evolve from the recruitment and building of team members from St John's to the gradual integration and collaboration with the existing membership of St Mary's that led to a new identity being formed with new missional impetus to reach out to the community with the love of Jesus. We've sometimes described this process like two parent churches coming together to bring a new church into being that will have a shared DNA of characteristics from both churches. This has required delicate care in navigating the distinctive cultures and traditions of both

churches, but I can commend the former congregation of St Mary's for their faith and courage in embracing this journey of change and likewise the team from St John's who have humbly and lovingly befriended the community at St Mary's.

Through the early part of the year, members of St John's started to attend St Mary's enabling them to put themselves forward for the PCC, and from the APCM in April plans developed including the appointment of two new part-time members of staff using the SDF funding from the Church of England for the project. Roz Tang (children's and families outreach worker) and Ruth Downing (operations co-ordinator) both started in September, as we launched the revitalisation formally at St Mary's. Around 30 members of St John's Harborne of a range of ages including children were officially commissioned at a service on Sunday 4th September. The following Saturday, we launched with a fun day for the whole community, seeing over 300 people come onto church grounds for free food, live music and many activities for all ages.

Our re-launch involved a new informal service with a renewed children's ministry, alongside a more liturgical service more in keeping with St Mary's previous tradition. Across our two Sunday services we now get about 90 attending each week including up to 20 under 18s. We also started the process for planning releasing the congregation into new outreach and missional opportunities which will start in 2023. We were thrilled to welcome lots of visitors through the doors for our Christmas services, including a new event 'Beer and Carols' for carol singing at the local pub.

As we look ahead to 2023, we are excited to see various outreach initiatives get going such as Alpha, a toddler group, coffee morning, community meal and gardening group. We are also continuing to explore how we can make our building functional for the new season of mission and ministry St Mary's is embarking on. I want to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you for the generosity of St John's in releasing such a wonderful and gifted group of people to join St Mary's and for the incredible generosity of giving as part of the Building for Mission tithe which will see the kingdom of God further released and fulfilled in Bearwood and beyond.

LIFE AT ST JOHN'S

The Alpha Course

Brennan Horne

Since last year's APCM we have held one 'in person' Alpha course, in the Autumn of 2022. We had eight guests sign up. Three folks never made the course. Two folks attended occasionally and three stayed with the course finding God to be faithful and meeting with them. One guest was a person of faith who was already involved in Christian work. They had been recommended to attend Alpha as they felt faith was more about head knowledge than heart felt. God met with them on the Holy Spirit day leaving them feeling that the Lord had come close to them and their relationship with him had been transformed. One guest came to faith following a baptism enquiry and being recommended to attend the Alpha course. Their new found faith showed in their continually smiley face and joyful laughter. A third guest asking God why the healings testified to in the video series could not happen to them. Well, they did, as he testified to the following week. Small numbers, but God was at work.

Over the years we have had people joining the course after seeing advertisements on buses, seeing our large posters on the front of the church, the Alpha website and from some personal invitations from SJH church family. Whilst the course in the Spring of 2023 was heavily plugged, there was little to no interest and three folks that signed up online did not attend. We were particularly sad about this and we ask for your prayers in determining the next steps with Alpha and how God would have us move forward as we seek to see people come to a living faith in an amazing loving God.

CAMEO

Kate Diwakar

CAMEO is run by Jane Fletcher from St John's and Rachel Hill, and her team, from Friends International Selly Oak. It is a group for international women who meet on Thursday mornings, in church, to make friends, improve their English and learn about British culture. This year the group has grown and

now regularly welcomes 18 ladies and 4 preschool age children. A mixed programme is provided and this year they have discussed topics such as Harvest, Show & Tell; Hobbies, Soup tasting from different countries, Advent, The Christmas story, making gift boxes/cards, Money management, The year of the Rabbit/Chinese New Year/ Beatrix Potter, Valentine's Day, Lent; fasting & feasting, The Meaning of Names & Naming Ceremonies.

It is an amazing bridge building opportunity welcoming people from our local international community into our church. A few weeks ago, I came into church on a Thursday morning and popped my head round the door of the Greenfield Room where the CAMEO group (Come And Meet Each Other) were meeting. Most of the 18 or so ladies were leaving at the end of the session, but I saw a group of 6 or 7 ladies sat around a table, with Rachel Hill, poring over a Bible passage together. Many have never heard the gospel before and this year a group of 6 ladies have chosen to stay on after the sessions to study the Bible together with Rachel. This term they have been studying Mark's gospel.

A few weeks later I was greeted by one of my Toddler mums who told me excitedly "I have been learning about Jesus Kate! I have been reading Mark's gospel in the Bible!" The joy on her face was beautiful, as was her enthusiasm. I pray that, when she returns home, in a few months' time, she will remember all that she has learnt and the community that she has been part of here at St John's. And I pray that the Bible words sown in CAMEO will take root and grow into a personal faith, sustaining her for her future life at home.

CAMEO is an amazing ministry, which welcomes, encourages and supports women who find themselves far from home, at sea in a culture that is unfamiliar to them and struggling to understand a language that they don't speak. With kindness and empathy these ladies are welcomed and encouraged to make friends, to support each other and to make sense of living in Birmingham. Part of learning about our culture includes learning about our faith. Many of these ladies are keen to learn and ask to study the Bible. Many of these ladies come from countries where the gospel is forbidden, yet they choose to stay on after their CAMEO session to study the Bible. They have a real sense of expectation, and it is exciting to see their commitment to learning about Jesus. What an opportunity!

CAMEO is run by Jane Fletcher from St John's and Rachel Hill, and her team, from Friends International Selly Oak. Please pray for the team as they seek another person willing to lead this exciting ministry with them.

Celebrate Recovery

Nathan Burden

At the time of writing the recovery ministry has just started the second year and we give thanks to the Lord for what he has done throughout 2022 in the first year of the ministry. During the year we have run 5 separate open groups and welcomed people from both the St John's community, and other churches in Birmingham. In some respects, this first year has been more beneficial for the team of volunteers to see the ministry in action, understand the material used and to work out what the future looks like for the recovery ministry here at St John's. Having said this we also give thanks that it has made a positive difference in the lives of those who have attended.

For those that are not sure what this ministry involves, it is a Christ centred 12 step recovery ministry, for anyone that is suffering a hurt, habit or hang-up. Each meeting consists of a large group meeting with teaching, and the smaller, gender specific groups that are 'open share'. This is where guests have an opportunity to share life's struggles and challenges in a safe, confidential and supportive space.

Is this for you?

As you read this you may be thinking, that sounds great, but I am too hurt, or too ashamed, or too afraid to come. If you do feel this, then this is definitely for you – and I want to assure you that in this ministry there is no judgement, condemnation or embarrassment – quite the opposite. We do not try and fix anyone – we simply let the Lord work by providing a safe space for him to do so. On a Monday evening at St John's you will simply find others who struggle with hurts, habits and hang-ups and an encouragement from the Lord who wants to free you and transform your life.

Prayer points for the year ahead:

- * For a few more small group leaders so that we can grow smoothly
- * For sustaining strength for the volunteers as they give out, and bear the burdens of others
- * That guests will be able to give testimony to transformed lives
- * That the Lord would continue to call those that need to, to make that first courageous step

If you would like to know more about this ministry, and to enquire about joining the team, please contact Nathan Burden at nathanburden@stjohnsharborne.org or Alison Boughey aeboughey@gmail.com

Celtic and Intercessory Prayer Groups

Beryl Beavis

The **Celtic Prayer Group** meets each Thursday from 9.10–9.30 using the Northumbrian set Morning Prayer cycle. There are 8 regular attendees. We start and finish promptly and find it a really blessed way to start the day. As we meet via Zoom we each read part of the liturgy so that we all take part but there is no echo. There is space within the set readings to pray for others and this is often prompted by the words we have just heard.

We don't just pray we chat before and after: we share family news and answers to prayer,
Our reason for praying is that Jesus prayed, and He said 'when you pray' say.....

'thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as in heaven'

And so we do.

The **Intercessory Prayer Group** has continued to meet each week via zoom and will continue to do so until further notice. If you would like to join the group, please contact Helen Nixon our techie and without whom we may not have continued to meet. Many thanks Helen.

There are many verses in the Bible that encourage us to pray, not just when we feel like it but all the time.

The group meets on a Friday for an hour from 9.45- 10.45, and has 8 members. Our prayers range far and wide based on current events. We pray for **YOU**; from toddlers through children, pathfinders, Authentic, students and others through to the elderly. We pray for the leaders- paid and voluntary-those on our prayer list, and anything, person or situation that God put into our minds -e.g.; Alpha.

We believe in the power of prayer whether it is for our local community or international situations.

If you have a prayer request contact us.

Children and Families Ministry

Diana Hopkins

This year across the Children and Families Ministry, there has been much more of a sense of getting back to 'normal'. We have been able to run a full programme of children and family events with very little restriction. Again, my first task is to pay tribute to the children's team and say thank you for their time, dedication and effort. It is thanks to them that we have been able to provide the full range of groups and events whilst still not having a full team of volunteers. I quite simply couldn't do my job without them! They include Sunday group leaders, volunteers at events and our all-age services team.

We have struggled to recruit new volunteers and this has put extra pressure on our current team, however, we have had some answers to prayer in that we have had 3 volunteers return to the team having taken time out and are currently processing 3 new volunteers, this is a huge encouragement and we are grateful and excited to be welcoming these people back, or for the first time. To say that even with 6 additional volunteers, we still have gaps, will give you an idea of the scale of the ministry and how many volunteers it takes to keep it running. On Sunday mornings alone we have an average of around 60 children under 11, across 5 groups, with 88 officially registered on ChurchSuite. In addition to that we have a number of children joining us regularly or semi-regularly who are not registered on ChurchSuite, so I estimate the numbers of under 11's who

are connected in to our Sunday morning groups to be around 100 all in all, which is consistent with pre-pandemic numbers. We are delighted to have had a number of new families join us over the last year.

In addition to our Sunday groups we have also engaged under 11s and their families with the following:

- Good Friday Trail & Crafts
- Holiday Club (albeit at a reduced capacity)
- Light Night and Light Trail
- Reverse Advent Project
- Christmas Adventure
- Prayer, Praise and Pancakes
- Lent booklets

Added to this we have had our regular programme of monthly all age worship and all age gatherings throughout Easter and Christmas which have been well attended by church members and those from the community who have links with SJH through Toddlers, Guiding groups, our schools work, through friends/relatives or who have developed a habit of visiting for events and festivals. We are continually seeking to build on those relationships.

It has been great to have our schools work finally up and running again and to feel that God is flourishing and growing our relationships with our local schools.

5 schools joined us here at St John's for the Christmas Adventure, over 400 children and approximately 20 adults. This year we joined forces with some of the Thursday congregation who lent their voices to create a choir, making it a real multi-generational event! We ran two prayer spaces, one at St John's and the other in school, both a week's worth of prayer and reflective activities for the whole school. I am regularly visiting Harborne Primary, St Peter's and Kitwell schools for assemblies and festivals and our one to one Early Intervention coaching in partnership with Transforming Lives for Good has restarted. Currently I am spending one hour a week, supporting a pupil at Harborne Primary. I would love us to be able to grow

this aspect of our ministry, to be able to train more coaches, enabling us to support more pupils and their families within our local community.

We would value your prayers going forward and we consider how God is calling us to grow and develop our ministry going forward and how we can best support children and families in growing in their relationships with God.

Community Café

Harvey Rigby

'Dear God, please help this thing to work' is a prayer I've often prayed in recent months. At the outset because I didn't really know what I was doing. Thank you, God, that You brought Jo J to our church when You did! And a big thank you for all the help and encouragement from our church staff.

Later on it was more to do with the use of gadgets in the kitchen. Getting more familiar with the coffee machine. Learning how to switch the oven on - there are 6 different switches. And that doesn't include the ones on the oven itself. And then the question, 'Harvey, what are we doing for hot water this morning to serve tea? Somebody has turned the hot water machine off'. 'You should never turn the hot water machine off' - I remembered Fran's words on the matter. Who was brave enough to switch it off I wondered. But how do I switch it back on? Which button do I push? 'Dear God, please help this thing to work'. Thankfully, we have a great team of helpers. Between us we always manage to work it out. And a great team of bakers! There was a risk the café would start 'cake wars' at St John's with different ministries in a 'tug of war' over cakes. But people have been incredibly generous. Other highlights have been the craft tables and the Christmas celebration with the choir. Big thank you to all of you for coming along. And bringing friends and family with you. It has really helped to make it our cafe. Thank you, God, for bringing us this far. And thank you for the way things have fallen into place. You are our Provider! Lord, You asked the question, 'Who do you say I am?' It's such a privilege to be involved in this and to learn more about the answer to that important question. To learn more about your faithfulness and to learn more about trusting You. And importantly God, may our Community Café play a helpful part in

people's journey into You. May we grow in courage and wisdom as we welcome people. Please pray that God will continue to guide us and show us opportunities to reach out to our community. And to make Him known. 'St John's Community Café - a heart for the people in our neighbourhoods. A desire to grow in our understanding of God's heart for the lost. And committed to having a significant impact on the community around us

Debt Support

Nathan Burden

Overview

During 2022 we give thanks for the ongoing provision of the Crossway building, enabling us to serve members of the community close to Harborne, as well as further afield. Over the course of the year we have seen many new clients, with 27 current live cases with over £200,000 of debt between them. The team itself has reduced slightly, although we give thanks for answered prayer in that several people have approached us to join. This means it is likely that we will be able to open on more days as we head into 2023 which is good news.

Over the years many people have been involved in the ministry, but it is right to make a special thank you to Michael Waters who retired from the debt ministry at the end of 2022 after many years of faithful service. His dedication and wisdom will be missed. On behalf of the leadership, and the wider church we want to acknowledge the commitment given over so many years

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For personal thought

Debt is a powerful, enslaving force and one in which we at St John's wish to contend with. If you are struggling with your finances, then please do contact the team at debtsupport@thecrossway.org.uk to arrange a meeting. We specialise in freeing people from guilt, shame and embarrassment! There is no condemnation - debt happens for many reasons.

Prayer points

- * That the new volunteers would settle in quickly and gain the confidence to start seeing clients
- * That we would find a suitable candidate to take on board the running of the ministry.
- * That we would be able to find new ways of maintaining relationships with the clients that we see.

English for speakers of other languages

Anthony and Fiona Collins

English for speakers of other languages- ESOL The idea of St John's running ESOL, or ESL as we have been calling it, was born from one of our home group telling us in May 2022, that they had decided to host a Ukrainian couple with their young son. We felt prompted that we at St John's needed to do something for the hundreds of Ukrainians who had started to arrive in Birmingham after the start of the war on the 24 February. Another of our home group was able to help towards the booking of a room at Harborne Baptist Church for hosts and their guests to meet for coffee each Friday and we set about recruiting teachers and helpers for a St John's ESL, all of whom had to be cleared for Safeguarding and DBS. It was not until January that these had been cleared and on 16 January, we were able to start. With a team of four teachers and six helpers to welcome the Ukrainians and serve coffee we had twelve Ukrainians attend, some of them had only arrived the week before from a shelled Mariupol. We have now held beginners classes since January and plan to continue whilst there is a need. We feel that we should concentrate on Ukrainians at the moment but we are open to helping other refugees in the future. For everyone involved it has been a privilege and a delight to witness the joy and hear the laughter of the students as they grapple with learning English.

Ukrainian bibles have been eagerly received and as we pray we hope that many of them will receive Christ's love and healing. We are very grateful for the many of St John's who have been praying and helping with ESL. Thank you.

Friday Night Dinner (FND)

Kate Stone

So excited to share that since the start of January we've been serving dinners on the first and third Friday nights each month. We use food which would otherwise have gone to waste provided by The Real Junk Food Project Central.

Guest numbers have increased from 2 to 35 and relationships are really starting to develop.

Huge thanks to everyone involved and to all who have been part of the journey bringing the biblical call to feed those who are hungry to a reality at St John's.

Global Partner Support

Kate Quarrell

Global Partner Support (GPS) is an integral part of church activity that contributes to the 5 year plan to 'have a heart for God, for our city, and for the nations'.

This year has seen changes within the GPS team with the retirement of Daphne Ryland who has faithfully served GPS over many years and the resignation of Jo Jowett who contributed to revising the GPS guidelines. The GPS team meets formally 4 times per year, co-ordinated by Diana Coplestone as secretary. However, the work of the GPS team continues throughout the year managed by e mail correspondence, ad hoc meetings and with additional support from church members to assist the vocations teams.

Summary of the progress in attainment of the GPS objectives are:

1. Supporting our Mission Partners:

We have 29 Long term Mission Partners, 20 in the UK, 9 overseas plus 1 short term Mission Partner. Mission partners are supported by prayer, linking with small groups, zoom meetings and financial provision. It is always wonderful to hear the testimony from Mission Partners of how God's mission for the world is evidenced through the teaching of God's word,

translating the Bible, practical support such as mental and physical wellbeing projects.

2. To develop, maintain and apply appropriate policies for the selection and support of candidates, projects and agencies.

The GPS guidelines have been revised and ratified by the PCC in January 2023. The website has recently been updated.

3. To manage GPS budget.

GPS finance is coordinated by John Cheatle. The actual budget spent for 2022-2023 was £134,425, 80% of which went to support Mission Partners, whilst 20% was spent on projects.

4. To review supported projects.

As part of the annual review all projects are reviewed in context of project outcomes and the financial resources available.

5. To coordinate prayer for our mission partners and projects.

Jude Smith is the link co-ordinator. Prayer support is facilitated through small groups, the GPS team and the wider church via information shared on the website. The goal for the coming year is to increase the number of small groups supporting Mission Partners.

6. To promote interest in local and global mission.

GPS features on the St John's website and Mission Partners provide individual blogs which are highlighted in the weekly Round –Up email. The GPS team are currently seeking to increase awareness among the wider church through monthly intercessory prayers for Mission Partners during the Sunday service.

7. To support and nurture people as together we seek to discern God's calling on their lives.

This activity is currently undertaken via the selection process, encouragement from small group leaders and the senior leadership team. This year we had 1 new long term Mission Partner and 1 short term Mission Partner. Patty McCulloch leads long term vocations whilst Nathan Burden leads the short term vocations.

8. To contribute to equipping members of St John's for mission. This objective will be addressed in the coming year. We are seeking new members to support the work of GPS, please contact Kate Quarrell for more information.

Healing Prayer Centre

Sue Clegg

It's a privilege to pray for healing, freedom, and strengthening in an atmosphere of care, support and respect. We continue to respond to those seeking opportunity to share and pray with a small team offering appointments primarily on Tuesday afternoons, but also other suitable times.

Beside physical healing, several guests have brought stories of loss of or strained relationships that have been unresolved, sometimes for a lengthy period. Relational issues cause much grief and hinder from living a life as God intended. It is good to provide a confidential space to share, give and receive forgiveness as we pray and seek God.

Some of the team have stepped away or left the church, but we are grateful for their contribution over the years. We welcome those with a passion to see people healed and set free to consider joining us. With a smaller team and safeguarding, as we deal with vulnerable people, care is taken in assessing appropriateness of what we offer. We refer those under 18 to access help through other sources, churches and organisations.

Since December It's been really encouraging to field a team of prayers at the 2nd Sunday morning, and more recently the 4th Sunday evening Communion when anointing and prayer is offered. While healing can be immediate, it is also good to experience healing peace and grace from isolation and disconnection toward deepening communion with Christ and one another. I ask those at the services to pray for those who seek anointing to have increased faith and that they will have renewed hope and healing for their situation.

The Marriage Course

Dave & Kay Schofield, Rich & Jane Lovell

Our vision and prayer is that the marriage course is seen as a worthwhile and desirable activity for every couple in St John's. 100% of those attending the Autumn 2022 course found it beneficial.

The Marriage Course is now updated for the 2020s with completely new videos and a new Guest Journal. See

<https://themarriagecourse.org/try/the-marriage-course>

We still come across couples with misunderstandings about the course, for example,

- it is out of date but in fact updated new videos and guest journals for 2020s
- that intimate details will be revealed but in fact conversation is only with partner
- it is only for marriages with "problems" but in fact it is for anyone. God's desire is to bless all marriages, to make them even better and stronger.
- we don't need to go on course because we did one 5, 10, 20 years ago but in fact we live in a world of change and it is all too easy to drift apart.

We would like to encourage any couple to spend time together investing in their marriage especially when facing times of change e.g. children, retirement, redundancy, illness, new job, and many more.

The Marriage Course offers the opportunity to spend quality time in a safe setting improving your marriage. Our aim is to make the evening as comfortable and relaxed as we can. It is like a meal in a restaurant with time to talk to each other without interruptions or distractions. There are NO group discussions, all conversations are private between the couple.

For more information contact marriagecourse@stjohnsharborne.org or contact Dave or Kay Schofield or Jane or Rich Lovell.

Mnet

Brian Thomas

How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony.

Psalm 133v1 (NLT)

If you scroll down from Connect on the church website and click on Small Groups, you will find a heading MNet. I suspect many members of St John's have no idea what MNet is! Let me explain. MNet stands for Men's Network and for many years St John's had 3 active MNet groups, providing a monthly opportunity for guys at St John's to get together for worship, Bible Study, fellowship, prayer and mutual support. Two of the groups no longer meet because the leaders have been called to move to other churches. During the pandemic the MNet group I lead continued to meet up online for prayer and fellowship. The Lord was very gracious and we saw many answers to prayer. In addition, the group held together and (sadly!) we haven't got room for any new members.

For years I have seen God work powerfully through MNet and I would love to see more men's groups at St John's. I believe there is a need for men from St John's to be able to talk and pray with one another in confidence, providing the mutual support that only the Body of Christ can give.

If you would like to find out more about MNet and how these groups work, please email me at briankaren.thomas@virginmedia.com.

Pastor for Older People

Catriona Foster

The Over 70's Ministry at St John's is mainly about the spiritual care and support of older people. It includes involvement with older people in our local community and Care Homes as well as within the church fellowship.

The midweek service regularly attracts 70-80 people. Refreshments are served after the service. Many who attend greatly appreciate their Thursday mornings at St John's and I am grateful for the amazing

volunteer team which includes those who help with transport, welcome, refreshments, PA, music, visuals, clearing furniture, speaking and leading. Special services included the Queen's Jubilee, Remembrance Day and a Carol Service.

We continue to nurture strong links with The Field House Care Home. Visits are made to St John's members who live there as well as to some of the other residents, and we have two dates this coming term to lead services for the residents. It is encouraging that the Manager will occasionally ask for someone to come in and pray with a resident, e.g. when at the end of life. Throughout last year, we continued with the self-care sessions for staff at Field House. Staff can drop by for 'time out' to consider how they take care of themselves amidst the pressures of caring for others. It's a safe environment for them to share anxieties, reflect on coping strategies, be thanked, valued, and blessed with a small gift and the offer of prayer when appropriate. With additional help, this project has potential to be developed in other Homes.

Elsewhere, we were encouraged by the fact that The Kenrick Centre invited us to do a Christmas service for the residents (all of whom are living with dementia). We used to do a monthly service there which ceased with the pandemic, though a volunteer has kindly maintained contact by delivering home baking for staff.

During the past year, we led Reflections at Easter and Christmas in two Retirement complexes where we receive a warm welcome. We again linked up with Harborne Primary School at Christmas when the infants entertained some older guests.

Autumn term 2022 saw fifteen volunteers completing an 8-session course on the spiritual care of older people. We used a course which originated in Australia and has recently become available in the UK through the Bible Reading Fellowship. Each session lasted 2 ½ hours and included Bible reflection, videos and small group discussion. It was no small undertaking, and additional tasks were to be completed at home. It was inspiring and extremely worthwhile in equipping for fruitful ministry.

Funeral ministry is an important area of outreach as we have opportunity to be closely involved with bereaved families, many of whom do not normally attend church.

Volunteers are required for a number of roles including visiting, praying, transport, refreshments, PA, furniture shifting, staff self-care. If you have a heart for older people and would like to explore the possibility of being involved in this area of ministry, please be in touch.

Prayer for Work

Laura Clifford

Work is many things to us including a source of livelihood, sense of purpose, a place where we can excel and thrive. However often the pace of work, the unending list of tasks, unrelenting demands that require our attention and the pressures experienced can drain, sap our energy and joy.

Therefore, to orientate ourselves to God, on the first Monday of the month, at 6.30am, a group of us meet on Zoom for Prayer4work for 30 minutes. It is a time of encouragement, support and refreshment as we pause in our hectic lives to turn to God and bring before him our workplaces. We believe we are God's witnesses and light in our place of work.

We are seeking, intentionally, to involve God in our work by joining together in prayer. We take turns to lead a session, sharing a thought or verses from the bible to mediate on. This is followed by an opportunity for each of us to share prayer requests and answers to prayer, with time made for everyone to be prayed for.

Meeting to pray is a time of uplifting and blessing, an opportunity to share our burdens for our workplace and cover everything we do in prayer. If you would like to join, contact Laura Clifford, and you will be sent a Zoom link each month.

Prophetic Art

Carolyn Lewis

The prophetic art ministry has been running for 18 months and aims to encourage individuals to partner with the Holy Spirit to create art, believing that God uses visual imagery to speak to us. This may be in the form of painting but also in other creative tasks such as photography, textiles, journaling and possibly many other creative processes.

To help us all learn, grow and develop in this process, an art table is set up on most Sunday evenings and is open to everyone who feels inspired to create a picture.

It has been encouraging to see people producing pictures during these services which have been relevant to both themselves, and others. This visual form of what God is saying often happens during worship and some of the pictures have been shared during the service when appropriate.

Several prophetic teaching sessions have been run for adults, teenagers and children during the last year. There has been good engagement as we learn to hear God together and allow Him to create with us. Prophetic Art is not about outcome but intention.

These teaching sessions have drawn some of the creatives in the Church together and examples of their work have been displayed at the Good Friday reflective service.

At both the Harborne village Fete and the Carnival, we ran prophetic art and card making tables which attracted people from both the local community and Church. Recently at the Shrove Tuesday event we were amazed by the words the children had for their families, friends and even the about the war in Ukraine.

Looking to the future, we would like to take prophetic art out into the community and are planning to have a table at the Community Café.

We would also like to work with the Restore ministry to reach out to refugees and asylum seekers.

Quinton Food Bank

Adele Cheatle, Carol Dealey, Stella Jennings, Marian Pretlove

The Quinton Food Bank, formerly Quinton and Oldbury Food Bank, is open on Wednesdays and Fridays at St Boniface Church, Quinton from 10.30am-1pm every week of the year except Christmas week.

Persons with a food bank voucher can access this service. We are seeing an increasing number of clients at the moment due to the rise in cost of living. Your donations are hugely appreciated and we would like to encourage more people to bring their gifts on Sundays and add them to the bins so that our donations grow.

Currently there are three St John's members actively involved, Marian on Fridays and Adele on Wednesdays at the Foodbank, and Stella delivers contributions from St John's each week to the Food Bank.

Carol retired from overall administration of the Food Bank in 2022. She gave her service to the Food Bank over many years. Special thanks are due for her exceptional contribution in administration of the Food Bank, her love and care for vulnerable people, and her encouragement of others to become involved in this ministry.

The increasing number of clients means that more people are needed to welcome and to signpost to other sources of help, and to pack the food parcels. There is also a need for somebody who could take on the overall administration.

Are you someone who could welcome clients and pack food bags, or take donations from St John's regularly? If you would like to help please speak to any of the team.

Rest in God

Sue Clegg

Previously we met in the Crossway which tested nerves as to what we would do if over capacity (though God was always gracious!) We transferred to the Upper Room in October giving much more space to welcome our guests that include several from local churches. The format changed slightly to give time for feedback mid-way through the session to prompt, encourage and challenge. A regular participant from another church, who first came as a Guest for an HPC appointment shared that though a Christian for many years, had never heard God speaking in this way and was encouraged to listen to Him throughout the day. The opportunity to take time out, reflect and seek to hear from God for ourselves and our communities is valued by those who attend.

Website <https://hpchealingwell.wixsite.com/crossway>

The website that helped connect during the pandemic once again provided 41 (!) Lent reflections. Thank you to all who contributed. As I write, during the start of Lent, statistics show that traffic has come from across the world – Singapore to USA, and the Netherlands and we pray that God uses our offering to bless and challenge those who read them both home and abroad.

Restore

Jeremy Thompson

At Restore, a project of Birmingham Churches Together welcoming and integrating refugees and asylum seekers, we are extremely grateful to St John's for your prayers, for those members of the congregations who volunteer with us, for generous financial support through a GPS grant and through donations from your Christmas services. As a result, we can continue to work towards our vision for a society into which all refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed, valued and integrated.

We believe that through offering welcome and support through our one-to-one befriending scheme and group social activities, we are demonstrating God's unconditional love in practical ways. This is counter-cultural in what can be a very hostile environment for refugees and asylum seekers.

A recent survey of refugees who have been befriended showed that 100% of those who responded felt that meeting their befriender had helped them to feel more welcomed; 97% felt less lonely; 97% felt that meeting their befriender had helped them improve their English; and 92% thought that having a befriender would help other refugees or asylum seekers.

At its heart, befriending is not about numbers and percentages but about relationships. Here are some recent quotes from refugees who have been befriended. One befriender wrote, "My befriender helped me learn more about Birmingham. She also helped me improve my English. Moreover, she became a real friend to me and I knew if I needed anything she will help me. She took me around Birmingham when I needed to take my mind off things."

Another wrote, "Meeting my befriender makes me feel less lonely and I am always excited to meet him."

A further befriender wrote, "My befriender has introduced a cycling routine, which has helped me mentally and physically, to lessen my worries!"

There is also an impact on volunteers, as one wrote, "Being able to 'walk' with my befriender in some of her pain, and talk things through, encouraging her in some of the challenges she faces, I believe lightens her burden a little to enable her to carry on. It is a privilege having such a role."

At Restore, we are passionate about campaigning for improvements to the broken asylum system. A more just and compassionate approach, that reflects God's heart for the oppressed, would include significantly speeding up the decision-making process and allowing asylum seekers to work. Both actions would improve well-being and reduce the cost to the taxpayer. At the time of writing, there are only safe routes available for

Ukrainians and a few Afghans. More safe routes would vastly reduce the need for dangerous small boat crossings.

We've been delighted to see the development of English classes for Ukrainian refugees in Harborne, here at St John's. It's a wonderful response to the needs of newly arrived refugees on our doorstep and another expression of God's welcome and love in action.

Thank you St John's for your ongoing partnership with Restore and for your heart for refugees in Harborne and across the city.

Resource Days

Kathy Lee-Cole

At the end of 2021, at the staff Christmas party, Kate Diwakar and Phil Varley (who was there as Fran's partner) had a conversation about the work Kate was doing to support recently arrived families living in hotels on Hagley Road. This prompted Phil to consider whether, as part of St John's role as a "resource church" resourcing could extend beyond spiritual resourcing to providing the physical resources our partner organisations needed.

Phil joined the Social Justice and Transformation Bridge Building group, and together the group took stock of the localities around us at St John's. We could see that not very far away, in fact a very short distance by car, were areas where many households were struggling to get by. We prayed and investigated a number of different ministries which St John's could partner with, for example by providing volunteers or mentors. This included providing supplies to partners, and this is the ministry Leonard asked us to take forward. And so the idea of "resource days" was born.

Although everyone's budgets are stretched at the moment, compared with many people in Birmingham, St John's is relatively wealthy. And through our giving, including special collections and support for GPS ministries, we are already a generous church. Could we boost the contribution we make even further, particularly to other local Christian organisations, to help equip them in doing the work of Jesus?

Of course, the answer is yes. This built directly on things that were already happening. Our weekly contributions to the food bank at Quinton. Our coat collections at Christmas and the great generosity shown during the pandemic to families who had suffered domestic abuse.

We've had four resource days so far. We have collected and distributed thousands and thousands of items. We've collected not only from Sunday morning and evening services but from our friends at Thursday service as well. And our Girl Guides you have really come up trumps with substantial contributions.

You will remember that this year we have collected; thousands of items of food and toiletries for the Quinton food bank, food for our friends at St Germain's to share at their café, nappies and toiletries to support the BabyBank at Karis Neighbourhood Scheme, Coats for St Chad's refugee centre, and of course 700 pairs of socks for people who are homeless.

St Johns, you are amazing. Donations at this level help transform ministries across South Birmingham and demonstrate Jesus' love. Thank you so much.

Small Groups

Patty McCulloch

Wanting to have a deeper faith, become more like Jesus, and generally grow as a disciple of Christ? Then being part of a small group can be one of the most helpful ways of achieving these aims, alongside the transforming, renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Small Groups meet in homes across this part of the city and a few meet in the church building, with some specifically for women or men, others mixed; some meeting in the daytime and others in the evenings.

The past year has seen a lot of movement in terms of Small Groups as we have had both leaders and members leave to join the revitalisation at St Mary's Bearwood, and some leaving due to moving from Birmingham and other reasons. At the same time, we've had a lot of newcomers attending

our Sunday services, some of whom have asked to join a small group. I'm very grateful to the groups who've welcomed new members to join them, recognising that this always involves some adjustments as the group dynamics change with new people joining.

A few groups have had to close and new groups found for those who wish to continue to be part of a group. There's a need for new group leaders and new venues, especially in the Harborne area and we're praying for God's leading and provision as we address these needs.

To support Small Group leaders who serve faithfully and sacrificially we have appointed 3 mature couples to provide Pastoral Support to 3 groups each. They liaise with me as Small Groups Pastor. We're hoping to recruit a few more to this role in the coming year.

Material for Small Groups to use, if they wish, is produced by those preaching on Sundays so that there's the opportunity to go deeper with the topics raised and seek to work out how the teaching can be applied in everyday life. Among the topics we've covered during the past year are being Fit for Life in body, soul and mind; the book of Malachi and, currently, Freedom issues.

St John's Eco Church

Adrian Collings

The first meeting of the restarted St John's Eco Church Group took place on Monday 20th February 2023. We already have a Bronze Award from A Rocha .It is early days; and it is planned to meet monthly, and to develop our aims and objectives. One of which is to consider St John's progressing to the A Rocha Eco Church Silver Award.

St John's Women

Heidi Adams, Luisa Berger, Karen Blanch, Kate Diwakar, Sarah Gough & Linda Phillips

Our aim is to encourage and build community, help women to grow in their relationship with Jesus through fellowship, teaching and worship and setting time aside to be open to God.

Our events in 2022 included a Women's Afternoon Tea in March, where we indulged in tea, sandwiches and delicious homemade cakes, all beautifully served using our collection of traditional afternoon tea sets to add to the occasion. It was a delightful afternoon, with lively fellowship and an inspiring talk from Sarah Down. Definitely an event to be repeated and a great one to invite a friend!

In December we hosted our Christmas candle making event, this year entitled 'Love Divine'. We engaged our creative sides by making beautiful Christmas candle arrangements while enjoying mulled wine and festive nibbles in good company. The focus of the evening was on how we can share God's love in practical ways. Guests were encouraged to bring along donations for the foodbank and Carol Dealey spoke passionately about her work with the Quinton and Oldbury foodbank, giving us all a greater appreciation of how necessary our contributions are and how God blesses the work going on. Kate Diwakar rounded off the evening by leading us in a moment of quiet as we reflected on the hope we have in Jesus.

Looking ahead to 2023/24: We are planning a quiet morning so we can come together as women of God to worship and grow closer to him. We are hoping to organise a creative event with opportunities to try new things as well as repeat our popular Christmas candle event. We are also looking to welcome some new faces to our organising team. Sarah Gough has stepped down from the team this year and we have been joined by Heidi Adams who has inspired us with her creative ideas and enthusiasm! If you would be interested in joining us then please do get in touch with the team at womensministry@stjohnsharborne.org to find out more.

Students and Young Adults Ministry

Adam Best and Sarah Holbrook

This year the students and young adults ministry has continued to grow and gain momentum as we return to normality following the pandemic. We are passionate about ensuring that students who choose to make St John's their church during their time in Birmingham feel welcomed, able to worship Jesus and get involved with the life of the church. We also love being a church that can support students as they make the often challenging transition from student to young adult working life. This year Jon and Rachel Hudson and Dave and Emma Orton have joined the young adults team and have been really generous with their enthusiasm and time for this ministry.

This ministry can be summarised into two main strands: firstly, supporting and being a pastoral point of contact for students and young adults at St John's; and secondly, supporting the work of the Christian Unions at universities throughout Birmingham, most notably the University of Birmingham and Aston University.

We believe that relational mentorship is currently the right way to organically grow this ministry as we strive to ensure students feel a part of the St John's community during their potentially short time in Birmingham. Therefore, supporting the students and young adults at St John's has involved weekly socials to the pub after the evening service as well as meeting up for coffees with students to care for them and encourage them to serve at St John's. Additionally, the academic year began with four welcome events where the young adults at St John's hosted events for students trying out St John's. We feel these events were a great success and really highlighted the values of St John's.

St John's continues to become involved with supporting the local Christian Unions. We feel it is important to do this in three main ways – prayer, presence and finance. We do this in a variety of ways including: speaking at events; providing one off gifts, such as meals and resources; and attending meetings, which allows St John's to be seen as a multi-generational church that students can get plugged into. Most notably, in

February we provided dinner for over 150 students at UoB's annual "Events Week" where hundreds of students have the opportunity to be introduced to the Gospel during a week of events put on by the Christian Union. Supporting CU's is an area of the student ministry that we love seeing the fruit from – facilitating outreach events that allow students to talk to their friends about Jesus during this unique period of their lives. We would love St John's to build bridges with university Christian Unions and young adults communities who can see St John's culture as one of generosity, sacrificially giving and having a "heart for our city". We believe this continual support is something that is critical to continue whilst we lead this ministry.

In the year to come we hope and pray that more students and young adults would feel that St John's can be their church during their time in Birmingham – now having students at both UoB and Aston will make it easier for more students looking at churches to be aware of the values of St John's. If numbers allow we would like to be able to build relationships with our students and read the Bible together in a student small group. However, it is worth noting we are most passionate about students finding a church they feel comfortable at and are able to grow in discipleship at – whether that is St John's or elsewhere. We are both really excited about the encouragements we are seeing in the students and young adults ministry at St John's and what God might have in store for this ministry moving forward!

Toddler Group

Kate Diwakar

Toddlers has continued to thrive this year and most weeks we are at capacity of 60 families per session – 55 families signed up online and 5, often new, families turning up on the day. We pondered through lockdown how we were ever going to return to 100 Toddlers all playing with the same toys in a shared space. After months of restricting numbers, lateral flow tests, mask wearing and frequent toy cleaning we are now back to business as usual. Praise God!

Over the past year the children have thrown off their lockdown reticence and have gained in confidence, now bounding into Toddlers, happily chatting to the team and making friends. There is also a real community atmosphere again of care and friendship amongst the parents. One of the mums wrote:

“I wanted to personally thank you for the great opportunity to be part of toddler group! Learning how to keep my baby busy to meeting so many moms and becoming good friends with them. It just made my heart warm every time!”

Our Parent and Baby Group has flourished this year. We now regularly have 12-18 families with babies, mostly under 6 months, attending. It is a very gentle group. We listen to the parents, chat with them, encourage them and enable them to make friends. While drinking tea and sharing experiences with each other they build a support network of people, with babies the same age as theirs, who they can meet up with and message throughout the week.

“Baby Group was a lifeline for me. It was far more than a parenting group. It was somewhere I felt safe and cared for.”

Through Toddlers and Baby Group we are able to listen to parents concerns, offer encouragement, lend a shoulder to cry on, pray with them and empathise with them about the busyness and stresses, as well as sharing the joys, of bringing up young children. We have links with the Children’s Centre and through them we are able to refer parents for specialist help if needed.

FaithChat is up and running again. We have run the Care for the Family ParentTalk Course twice this year and have had great discussions with parents about our faith as well as parenting. The feedback we have received has been amazing. One mum wrote:

“Each week I discussed what I’d learnt with my husband. This course has made such a difference to our family time together. We now pray the Toddler Prayer at bedtime each night”.

The Toddler Community still supports families in emergency accommodation in Birmingham, providing donations of baby equipment and toys, as well as household items needed when they set up new homes. Some of these families have come along to Toddlers and Baby Group as well as the Crossway, CAMEO, the Warm Space, the Community Cafe, Friday Night Dinner and some Children's Events. Seeing all these ministries link up to support and reach out to our community and our city is so exciting!

I would like to say a big thank you to my wonderful Toddler Team without whose dedication and selflessness none of this would be possible. Thank you.

Warm Rooms

Des Cole and Kathy Lee-Cole

In many ways Warm Rooms might be the most straightforward ministry at St John's. We turn up on Monday afternoons, set out tables, chairs, games and crafts, prepare to serve coffee tea and toast, and wait to see who arrives. We chat, serve refreshments for free, play the games, do the puzzles and crafts, and finish late afternoon. It's great to have a really straightforward way for people to come into church.

As the price of heating at home rocketed last year, the national warm rooms movement was born. Warm rooms are located in community buildings, leisure centres, libraries, and most of all in churches. At the heart of warm rooms are two principles. Firstly, anyone and everyone is welcome to come, without conditions. Secondly, that the offer is made consistently week after week so people can count on us being there.

Making everyone welcome, offering friendliness and hospitality felt central to a bible based view of the world and St John's warm rooms came to fruition in late January. We advertised across the parish and many people have taken up our offer.

Some of the people who visit us Mondays already have some connection with church, but most haven't. Some mums from toddlers or baby group

have visited. Some people have seen located us online, and a number spotted the ad in the library. The most successful method of inviting people in has been Brian standing outside church on Monday afternoons, with leaflets and a friendly personal invite.

Our band of 7 volunteers all bring different experience. Each week we pray that God will bring as many people as we can sensibly support. And He has been faithful in this. We estimate that by Easter we'll have welcomed well over 100 people during our 11 sessions, most of whom have not been to St John's before. Ages range from 2 to well over 80. They include people from other faiths and professed atheists as well as people who are looking for their faith to be reignited. We have a small number of "regulars"; some people come for a few weeks, some visit us once. We really don't mind. Our aim is to share Jesus' love so without being corny we hope we're offering a warm room and a very warm welcome over the winter. We've had some great conversations about Jesus, we've prayed with some people, and had many more conversations about people's children, family, interests, concerns, work situations, whatever is on their mind.

There is a clear synergy developing with Warm Rooms, Friday Night Dinners, Celebrate Recovery and the Thursday Service. We have people who have started with us at Warm Rooms who are now regulars at other ministries as well.

Warm Rooms will stop at Easter when warm weather comes and generally, people's patterns of activity change. We'll take stock, pray and see if it's right to start again next autumn.

Way-In Course

Fran Varley and Jon Tattersall

Way-In is intended to give an introduction to the life and community of St John's for people interested in joining the church. It takes the form of a four-week course introducing key aspects of St John's and also key members of the leadership team. The aim of the course is that it gives participants an opportunity to:

- Meet new friends
- Get to know what makes St John's tick
- Ask questions
- Explore whether St John's might be God's place for them
- Take steps to join a small group at the conclusion of the course

The meetings include a delicious hot meal (cooked by a number of our fabulous in-house cooks and aided by many other wonderful volunteers!), a short presentation and interviews with key members of staff and ministry teams plus some time for discussion in small groups.

Way-In Course Programme Outline

WEEK 1 WHO ARE WE?

WEEK 2 WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

WEEK 3 WHAT'S GOING ON?

WEEK 4 HOW CAN I PLAY A PART?

So far, we have welcomed 30 potential new members of St John's at the courses that took place in February and November 2022. Looking ahead to 2023, we are planning to slightly change the format of the course in order to encourage more mealtime conversations and to help grow community over the duration of the course. The proposed date for the next Way-In course is October 2023.

In line with current good practice, we gave all attendees the opportunity to feedback on their experience. Here are a couple of answers to the question 'what did you find most helpful about the course?'

"It was a lovely way to meet other new people and the staff at St John's. It was good to understand the vision and values of the church and become more familiar with what is going on in the church. The food was delicious and gave a relaxed atmosphere to chat and ask questions. We appreciate the effort made to make our children feel welcome too."

"We found it very encouraging and enlightening to have the various Values and Vision and Priorities presented in an easy and understandable way. It was good to be able to see and meet the various 'team leaders' as they shared about the various ministries, also the needs for help in various ways

from volunteers. Not too much information to absorb each week, but in four weeks covered all the information needed.”

All feedback has been taken on board for planning of future courses.

Welcome Team

Katharine Spellman

During 2022 one of the big changes that happened was Ruth Downing leaving St Johns for St Mary’s church, Bearwood. Ruth did a fantastic job in organising and running both Welcome teams and the refreshments team and she took a lot of time to hand over the ropes to Deb Carr (evening service) and myself (Katharine Spellman, morning service) before she left. We want to thank her for all that she did and are sure that she must be a great blessing to the church in Bearwood. Since then, Deb and I have been getting to grips with Church Suite and Kate Collins has got involved as well. Kate is such a great support.

We want to thank all the people who are involved with Welcome at the morning and evening services. They have been quietly adjusting to the changes over the last year, faithfully rolling up their sleeves and greeting and befriending people with warmth and kindness. We’d also like to thank the refreshments team for their hard work sorting out the tea and coffee and tidying up afterwards. Having refreshments contributes greatly to the relaxed atmosphere after the service.

We are hoping it will be possible to offer refreshments at the evening service as well. At the moment this couldn’t be every week given the number of volunteers, but a plan is hatching so watch this space. If you are interested in getting involved, then do contact Kate Collins.

Recently we held a Welcome and Refreshments team afternoon tea to say thank you for all the teams do, to give a chance to those involved to relax and chat with other team members. It was a good opportunity for chatting, coffee, tea and cake and also to gather some feedback on how things are going. We hope to go through the comments in the near future.

Thanks again to all the Welcome and Refreshment teams for all you do in this important role.

Worship

Jon Hudson

The St John's Worship Team exists to create an atmosphere for us all to worship God through music. We desire to follow the Spirit, leading the congregation into deeper worship, bringing God's people to His throne through musical excellence, creativity and passion. Above all, we desire for God to be glorified through all we do and for worship to transform us into increasing Christ-likeness.

As we reflect on the past 12 months, we have been greatly encouraged by all that God has been doing in and through our corporate times of worship. This year we've been intentional in pursuing the St John's vision and passion for creating space for the Spirit in our gathered worship. It's been wonderful to see and hear so many stories of how God has been speaking and moving in these times. We would love for this to be something we continue to grow in as a community over the next year.

We're so grateful for our amazing Worship & A/V team. Although the team is thin, we've been blessed with fantastic volunteers and it's been a joy to welcome new members over the last year too! It's been great to see the relationships amongst the team develop, even over some very competitive games of bowling!

One of the most exciting things we have seen this year is great growth in worship amongst our young people during their midweek groups. Jon has had the absolute joy of joining a couple of groups to run worship "jam" nights, facilitating the young people leading their peers in worship. It's often that you will find one age group leading another in wonderful, deep and powerful times of worship, as our young people grow in confidence to lead their peers and discover the musical gifts that God has given them.

The festivals throughout the year are always a highlight for the worship ministry. It was great to bring new expressions of worship & praise into our Easter programme with the inaugural 'Behold' – an evening of worship, creativity and interactive prayer on Good Friday – as well as our Christmas programme through the new Contemporary Carols service and more traditional Carols by Candlelight.

This past year also saw the release of a new homegrown All Age Worship song, "No One Like You". It was a great project to work on with some of our musicians and kids' team and such an encouragement to see people of all generations connect with the song and use it as a vehicle for worship. The song is available to listen to on all major streaming services by searching for St John's Harborne.

And finally, this year has seen the appointment of Caroline Richards to the staff team as Assistant Pastor one day a week in a self-supporting capacity. Part of Caroline's remit is to work alongside Jon to support the worship ministry and grow the worshipping life of St John's.

We're greatly encouraged and expectant to see how God will meet with us and transform us through our corporate worship at St John's over the next 12 months!

Youth

Henry Frankel

In the past year at St John's we have been focused more on breathing in God's word, really digging deeper into the word to deepen our knowledge of scripture and understanding of God. We have attended a summer festival together called Satellites, we have put on 6 revolutions which are larger worship gatherings for youth, Authentic have come and led 4 Pathfinder small group meetings demonstrating their leadership to younger youth, the youth team have led 2 weekends away for our youth and a Christmas party for all our 11-18 year olds.

Over this past year we have seen young people maturing massively in their faith, which has become really evident at events like the Pathfinder or Authentic weekends away, revolutions or last summer at Satellites festival.

We break down the youth group into 2 halves, Pathfinders, Year 7-9, and Authentic, year 10-13. There is a small group that runs weekly for every single year from year 8 through to year 13, unfortunately there is an exception to this at the moment as the Youth Team does not have enough available people to put on a small group for the Year 7's, our counter to this issue has been a short term solution of expanding the Year 8 leaders team by 1 so we can invite Year 7s to join that group. These small groups either meet at church or one of the leaders' houses. Currently 4 out of the 6 weekly church small groups meet at church. In small groups we currently follow a year long curriculum following 7 principles that we believe are 7 key things for a young person to know about God. The idea is that if we had just 1 year with a young person what 7 fundamentals must they know about God. These are:

- Who is God?
- Who am I?
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Relationships
- Wise Choices
- Mission
- Equipping

Each term of small groups is accompanied by 2 socials, one at the start and one at the end, these can be an event out to somewhere or can be a fun session with games and so on at church, it is up to the youth.

In comparison to last year our socials team has grown which has been a huge encouragement, we have been able to start a monthly Friday Night Youth Club where we have a different theme each month, we see around 60 young people coming to that most months.

The biggest need at the moment is more people on the team willing to run a weekly small group session on a Wednesday evening, ideally 3 more people to offer to help lead a weekly small group. The practical resource of

people offering time is invaluable and is what is most needed right now on the youth team.

Currently we have an incredible team of 30 people who help make our 9 weekly and monthly sessions run. There are an extraordinary 150 or so young people between 11-18 on our registers. The team is at capacity with what we can run as of right now but in order to reach all of those 150 11-18 year olds we need to grow the team a little bit.

FINANCE

Mutual Care Fund

David Dixie

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31 DECEMBER 2022

	2022		2021	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
General gifts	5,280		2,979	
Specified gifts	1,020		5,367	
		<u>6,300</u>		<u>8,346</u>
Expenditure				
Bank charges	38		15	
Specified gifts	1,020		5,367	
Other needs	5,200		13,300	
		<u>6,258</u>		<u>18,682</u>
Surplus/(Deficit)		<u>42</u>		<u>(10,336)</u>
Balance at 1 January		<u>1,845</u>		<u>12,181</u>
Balance at 31 December		<u>1,887</u>		<u>1,845</u>

The Mutual Care Fund exists to provide an opportunity for members of St John's to help other members who may be in financial need, without the donor's identity being known.

Grants are made either on the specific instructions of the donor, or at the Trustees' discretion from gifts received for general purposes. During the year 13 individuals benefited from grants from general funds and 5 from specified gifts.

The balance held on 31 December 2022 was received towards the end of the year and will be distributed when needs become known, especially in the light of the present cost of living crisis.

The Trustees during the year were Leonard Browne (Vicar, ex-officio), Fiona Collins and David Dixie. The trustees would like to thank all who have contributed so generously during the year.

Finance Team

David Harvey (Hon Treasurer)

The main aims and objectives are:

- To formalise financial policy
- To prepare and maintain a financial plan/budget and management accounts
- To prepare and submit to the Charity Commission & Birmingham Diocese the statutory annual report and financial accounts
- Liaise with the Diocesan finance team as required
- Ensure appropriate processes and controls are in place
- Count and summarise all weekly collections
- Ensure all payments and banking of receipts are timely and that auditable records are maintained
- Manage and submit Gift Aid claims to HMRC
- Management of the payment of staff salaries and expenses
- Identify and secure the appropriate people necessary for the smooth operation of the church's finances
- To brief the Standing Committee and Trustees (PCC)

During 2022 the team of people managing the financial affairs of the Church were as follows:

Bill Smith monitoring income and administering the gift aid scheme, Ruth Downing managing staff salaries/expenses and John Cheatle as Global

Partner Support Treasurer. The payment process was operated in the Church office by Sue Mulholland until March and then by Wendy Rigby.

I am hugely grateful for the enormous amount of work that goes on behind the scenes by everyone involved and on behalf of the whole Church I want to say thank you for all of the time and energy that is given.

The separate Trustees Report and Accounts gives the financial summary for 2022.