

St John's Church
St John the Evangelist & Hall
Grove Lane, Kingston upon Thames

ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

Vicar's report

"The centre of the community", "friendly and inclusive", "community spirit", "welcoming". These are some of the responses from a survey of the congregation and local people that we carried out in the autumn. This was to help shape the Heritage Lottery Fund application for our regeneration project. When asked what they valued most about St John's the word overwhelmingly used was "community".

We have worked hard for many years to make the church available and relevant to local people – organising well-attended community events, opening up the church building for community use and improving the parish hall.

Work on our Regeneration project to upgrade the church building continued and after the disappointment of an unsuccessful Heritage Lottery Fund application in the summer, we reflected, prayed and refocused and an exciting and dynamic new application has now been submitted. Through this second application new partnerships have been put in place with community partners including Kingston College, King Athelstan school and the Bradbury Centre. These are already proving fruitful. It was particularly heartening to be invited to King Athelstan school for the first time to take an assembly before Christmas.

We took some valuable steps to show that our worshipping life is also about inclusiveness and God's love and welcome of all people. Following agreement at our Annual Parochial Church Meeting, the Church Council passed the required resolution and we have registered and been accepted as a member of Inclusive Church. We have made a public statement that anyone – regardless of their sexuality, gender, ethnicity, ability or financial means – will be warmly welcomed at St John's. At a time when many LGBT Christians are feeling rejected and wounded by the church, we have joined a directory of inclusive churches to say that they and everyone will be welcomed and valued at St John's.

In the summer we decided to move our worship space around and trial services in the round, emphasising our togetherness as a church family with Christ at the centre.

Our worship in the round has also been enhanced by the generous gift of church furniture and an organ from the sisters at St Michael's Covent, Ham. They have given us

the beautiful wooden altar, lectern, credence table, priest's table and chair, processional cross and candles and colourful organ from their chapel as they have now relocated to Gerrard's Cross. Leaving their home in Ham was emotional for the sisters and it was an answer to prayer and a great comfort to them to know that these items, which they have prayed at daily since they were specially commissioned in the 1970s, would find a new home with us. It is a great privilege to have stewardship of such loved and valued pieces.

Worship continues to be the focus and anchor for our church life and our third Sunday 9am communion and Sacred Space services are now well established. This year we have continued with the excellent and challenging Pilgrim Course, which offers Bible study, prayer and reflective questions to discuss in small groups. Our children's work continues to flourish and this year we held a children's workshop and party during Kingdom Season organised by Julie Morris which was greatly enjoyed.

This year we said goodbye to a number of faithful members of St John's who are much missed. Longstanding members Hugh Wickham and Joan Eggins died within a few weeks of each other. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. We celebrated their lives at well-attended funerals at the church and discovered even more about the amazing things they did over the years. Olabiyi Owokoniran, Angus and Nancy Pearson, recent churchwardens and their children Oscar and Digby and Vicki Beech all moved away from the area. We said a big thank you to our organist of the past 10 years, Chris Metherell, who left in the summer.

So it has been another busy year. I thank God for all the good things that have happened and for the many people who give their time, energy and gifts at St John's. Huge thanks to you all, particularly to churchwardens Mimi Fagan and Tim Partington, readers Isobel Robinson and Mick Cooper, treasurer Tony Hardy, administrator Frances Hazelgrove, and new deputy wardens David Hamilton, Luanne Higgins, Jan Hartley, Bill Baker and Kat Welch. It is a great blessing to have such a capable and caring lay leadership team at the church. May God bless us all in the year ahead.

Vicky Maunder

Team Rector's report

We have continued in the past year to keep some constants in the life of our team. We have shared worship together with at least one joint service, and we have jointly visited Winchester and its cathedral. This year, we combined the visit with a team conference, a chance for the PCCs from our three churches to share ideas and experience. Our team council – of wardens, readers, pastoral

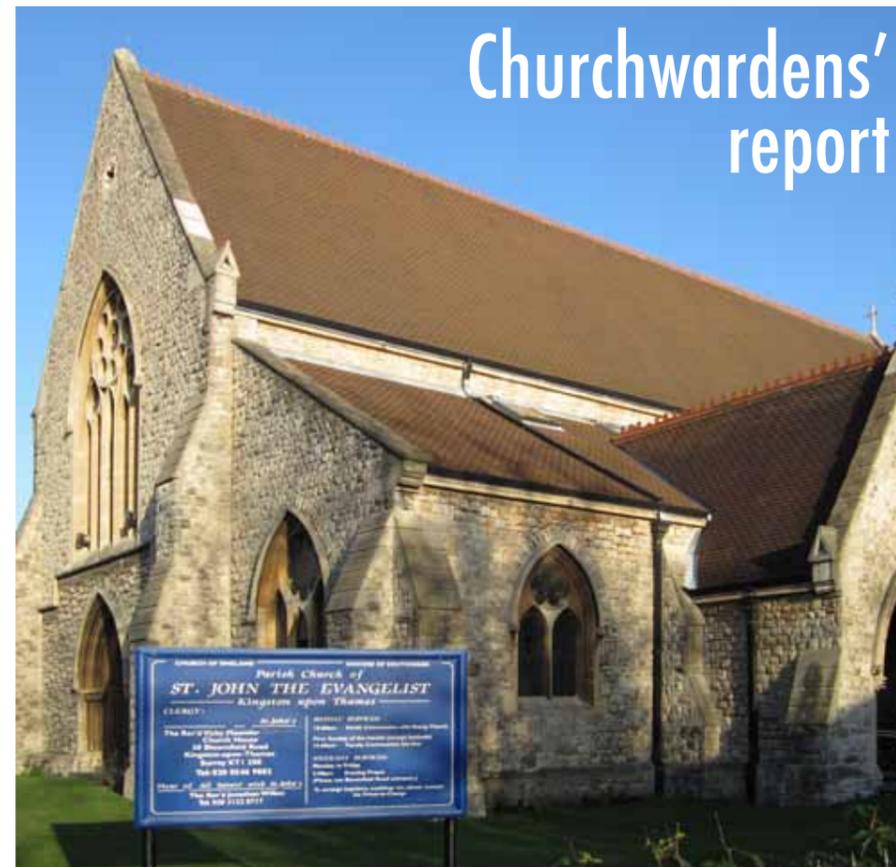
assistants and clergy – has continued to meet three times a year.

Groups and courses are also shared across the team. We will continue with this model in the coming year, while keeping an eye out for ways to foster our mutual support and sharing without overburdening our life with more commitments than we can manage.

All three of our churches are working

incredibly hard to make the life of God relevant and accessible to the people of our areas. That this is possible, so creative and successful, is the result of a great deal of hard work and imagination by many, for which we must express deep gratitude. Workers in the vineyard have turned up early and stayed late and we thank God for it.

Jonathan Wilkes



Churchwardens' report

"Churchwardenship must be one of the strangest voluntary occupations you could imagine, because it is partly intensely practical and partly quietly spiritual. I inhabit a world of aumbries, risk assessments, blocked drains, corporals, coffee mornings, quinquennial architect's reports, vestments, child protection policies, intercessions rotas, gluten-free wafers, 'open gardens' and altar frontals." So wrote a fellow churchwarden, Ursula Buchan, under the heading "A churchwarden's lament" in *The Spectator*, and it rings very true.

Put simply, the churchwarden's duties are to care for the building and its contents, to ensure the smooth running of services and to have pastoral duty towards the clergy and the congregation. This is a big ask for many church members these days, who are often juggling full-time jobs with family responsibilities. So last year we put a new structure in place to share out some of these duties and tasks across a team of deputy wardens covering five key areas; building, pastoral, services, children and young people, and hirers.

It's still early days – in some areas the tasks are more obviously practical, in others more time is needed to establish the roles – but it feels good to have shared responsibility. We are extremely grateful to those who have stepped up to these positions: Bill Baker, Luanne Higgins, David Hamilton, Kat Welch and Jan Hartley.

Tim Partington and Mimi Fagan

“Last year we put a new structure in place to share out duties and tasks across a team of deputy wardens covering five main areas”

Administrator's report

The church space continued to be well used. Regular users were: the Kingston Morris; the Orpheus Choir; Little Groovers; the Samantha Trust meditation group; 8-18 Youth Theatre; Tiny Tunes, music and movement for pre-school children; yoga for adults; Exam-berry, tuition for 11+ students; Rees UK for retail training; and the university for its spring/summer examinations.



Other hirers were the National Child-birth Trust; Slimming World; Kingston Council, on two occasions for a polling station; and the Department of Criminology and Sociology of Kingston University for a student event. Two concerts were given by the Linden Wind Orchestra and an evening of singing by Community Choirs was arranged by Love Kingston in association with Singing it Back.

There were seven book fairs with the church café, 11 meetings of the First Monday Club, a film and music quiz night, one coffee morning and a children's beach party organised by Kingston Kindergarten. St John's School used the church space for a disco, after-school dance classes and its Christmas bazaar.

Children from St John's nursery and junior school, Kingston Kindergarten, Surbiton Junior School, King Athelstan school and Bedelsford School visited the church. The university carol service and Bedelsford School harvest festival and carol service were held here, as was the annual memorial service arranged by Frederick Paine funeral directors. Our school had services in the church for Ash Wednesday, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest, Christmas and the Leaver's service.

We thank Wing, our conscientious caretaker, for her support.

Frances Hazelgrove

Churchwardens' report



BUILDING FABRIC

Churchwardens carry out regular inspections of the building and grounds, working to a maintenance plan identified at the architect's five-yearly inspection, the Quinquennial report, last undertaken in 2014. The two main areas that are still outstanding

from the report were repairs to the roof in several places at high level to prevent water ingress, and several windows that have to be repaired or replaced. The roof works were carried out in 2016 along with maintenance of the valleys and guttering at high level.

CHURCH LIFE

Our regular pattern of worship is now well-established with an all-age Family Communion service involving many young families on the first Sunday of the month, and a non-Eucharistic service, Sacred Space, on the third Sunday with a quiet service of Holy Communion preceding it. Feedback suggests that church members appreciate the opportunity to worship in different ways; however, we're mindful that we aren't currently able to offer anything specifically for children and young people above primary school age.

It was part of our Mission Action Plan to build a friendship with Kingston Methodist Church (KMC) in our parish. Coming together for a joint service on Palm Sunday made for a lively and memorable gathering at their church on the Fairfield, followed by a procession accompanied by their worship band and singers to pause on the blue bridge before moving to St John's for the Passion reading. At the end of the year, we welcomed members of KMC to join us for the Carols by Candlelight service at Christmas.

At all our services, the churchwardens are assisted by a great team of servers and sidespeople, and we are most grateful for all their help to ensure that people receive a warm welcome and that services run smoothly. They rose to this challenge with aplomb on Christmas Eve when welcoming more than 450 people to the Crib Service and

A specialist quote was obtained for the repair of the windows, but the work was put on hold because it could form part of the scheme of refurbishment under the Heritage Lottery application. If this bid isn't successful we will proceed with these repairs as a priority.

Heating and lighting the church continues to be a challenge while we work on securing funds for the regeneration project, which will deal with so many longstanding frustrations with the building. There is very little we can do to improve the main body of the church during this interim phase – patience and a long view is called for.

However, after a trial period, the decision to alter the layout to enable worship in the round of has been very well received. A few months after implementing the change, we were very fortunate to be offered a wonderful pipe organ and a beautiful set of ecclesiastical furniture from the sisters at Ham Convent. The heavy altar is particularly impressive, and it stands, unadorned, as a simple but striking focus in our

then re-setting the church again for Midnight Mass.

As we press on with the plans for Regeneration, much of our social life has a fundraising element to it; yet all of this time, effort and activity is also missional, reaching people in many ways through which the family of St John's grows in ever-widening circles. From Little Groovers and Children's Church to the First Monday Club, the book-fairs, bazaars and all the brilliant events that happen at St John's and reported on elsewhere in this annual report, St John's intention is always to be an open and inclusive church where all are welcome. Many people are involved in making this happen and we can't thank them enough. Above all, we wish to thank Tony Hardy, our longstanding treasurer, for his good stewardship of our resources and his spirit of patient endurance.

Finally, we have been truly blessed to have the leadership of our vicar Vicky for the past 10 years. Vicky has worked faithfully and unceasingly on our behalf this past year, heading the project development committee and the recent Heritage Lottery Fund application. As she now takes a hard-earned three-month period of sabbatical leave, on behalf of the community of St John's we express our huge thanks and wish her well for a time of rest and refreshment.

Tim Partington and Mimi Fagan

midst. For the first time, St John's now possesses a complete set – including the lectern, priest's chair and credence table along with beautiful copper candlesticks and crucifix.

The sisters generously offered several beautiful banners which may be used at special services throughout the church seasons. We are most grateful to the sisters for their generous gifts to us and we're mindful of the need to cherish and care for them. We're also appreciative of the support of the Archdeacon in enabling us to take ownership of all these items under a temporary licence until a Faculty can be obtained.

The organ has been installed in a new position in the south east corner of the church, closer to the worship space. The intention is for the old organ, only ever on loan to St John's, to be removed by its owners, which will create more space in that area for administration and clergy vesting.

The crypt, home to the older children's church group, was in dire need of refurbishment after a flood. This work

was completed in the autumn so the children once again have a bright, warm and cosy room, with non-slip paint to the steps and an improved hand-rail. Also, the younger children's room and the toilet were redecorated at the same time.

The church grounds have been generally well maintained in recent years by local florist Carole Martin, who sadly closed her business at the end of the year. We hope to find a replacement gardener soon. We are very grateful for the support of one of our new deputy wardens, Bill Baker, who has attended to several minor maintenance issues both inside and outside the church, and has a schedule of tasks for the coming year.

In spite of its shortcomings, the church is hired out regularly. Managing all this is our ever cheerful parish administrator, Frances Hazelgrove, caretaker Wing and cleaner Tracey who work hard to keep the buildings fit for both worship and community hire.

Tim Partington and Mimi Fagan

Report from the PCC

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is the 'governing body' of the church; it is usually chaired by Vicky – but more recently by Mimi and Tim while Vicky is on sabbatical. The PCC also includes other members of the clergy team, the churchwardens, and nine members of the congregation who are elected at the APCM and serve for three years.

The PCC is responsible for the overall practical and spiritual wellbeing of the church, its building and its people. It has met five times since the last APCM.

It was agreed at the beginning of the year to have a standing committee – comprising the vicar, church wardens, treasurer and two other members (Isobel and Luanne) – to make *ad hoc* decisions between PCC meetings during the year.

Meanwhile, the Archdeacon has authorised the appointment of Luanne, Neville and Alice as lay Eucharistic ministers to administer the chalice.

Following the positive vote at the 2016 APCM, St John's has applied and been accepted as a new member of Inclusive Church, a Christian charity that believes the church should not discriminate "on grounds of economic power, gender, mental health, physical ability, race or sexuality".

We also received an organ and furniture – including an altar, lectern, credence table, priest's table and chair, processional crosses, processional candles and altar cloths – from the sisters at St Michael's Convent, Ham. Many thanks to them for their kind donation.

The PCC represents the congregation and welcomes all thoughts, questions and observations about church life. There is a vacancy on the church council since the departure of Olabiyi. If you are interested, or wish to discuss any other matters, do talk to a PCC member after Sunday services.

Annette Simmonds, PCC secretary

Safeguarding Reports

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

I'm pleased to report that there have been no safeguarding incidents over the past year. We have taken steps to improve the congregation's awareness of the safeguarding officer role, including a regular notice in the weekly pew sheet and updated information on the website.

Over the past 12 months, four new Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks have been completed for new Children's Church leaders and current leaders whose checks were up for renewal.

The online system continues to work well and has significantly sped up the process.

In February 2017, I completed my Safeguarding Level 2 training course run by the Diocese, which completes my formal training.

The Diocese has recently issued new parish safeguarding self-audit forms for 2016/17, which I worked with Vicky to complete and submit by the 31 March 2017 deadline.

Anna Gorrell

ADULTS

As safeguarding officer for vulnerable adults at St John the Evangelist, I am pleased to say that once again since our last report we have had no incidents brought to our attention.

All our procedures and processes are up to date. We recently completed an internal audit.

Chris Fowles

Electoral roll

There are 104 people on the electoral roll for 2017.

Six people have left the roll and 17 people have joined.

Jenny Holden
Electoral roll officer

Music

This year, sadly, we parted company with two gifted musicians, each of whom had made a real contribution to worship at St John's. Chris Metherell, who had been our regular organist for 10 years, with barely a Sunday off for good behaviour, decided to take a break, having developed his teaching work in recent years. Chris came to us as a pianist having sung in the church choir as a boy when his mum was the organist, so we all accepted that he'd served his time at St John's.

Angus Pearson, churchwarden and accomplished cellist, had enhanced much of our worship, particularly the Sacred Space services where his contemplative playing was helpful and at times very moving. Angus and his family moved to Norfolk to take up a new teaching post. We miss them both.

Before they left, both Chris and Angus had looked into the possibility of replacing the organ. However, shortly after their departure, we learned that the Ham convent organ might become available to us. It was installed after Christmas and in spite of its surprisingly bright blue and green casing, it fits perfectly in its new position.

Church organists are few in number and in high demand, and we have so far been unable to recruit anyone. We've been fortunate to have several people who between them have covered every service, either on the piano or the organ. In particular we're grateful to Chris Morris who has covered the larger share, Donna Stanley, George Short and Michael Chapman – and to Chris Metherell for occasional back up.

The Community Choir came together for two important occasions last year – Dedication Festival led by Angus and the Carols by Candlelight, conducted by Angela Grellier. The choir is an *ad hoc* gathering of members of the congregation, local residents, members of the Orpheus Choir, and friends of friends. Somehow, after just a couple of practices, a random group becomes a competent and enthusiastic choir. To all who get involved, thank you very much.
Mimi Fagan

Treasurer's report

In 2016, our total funds increased from £125,957 to £136,251, representing a surplus of £10,294 for the year. Our unrestricted funds used for the ordinary purposes of St John's, however, fell by £10,039 to £30,049, largely because of the cost of replacing the warm air blowers. Without this cost we would have recorded a surplus. Net regeneration funds increased by £20,663 to end the year at £106,202. No costs were incurred this year.

£11,695 was raised through the Blossom Scheme with the balance coming from fundraising for regeneration. We currently have 38 active contributors to the Blossom Scheme each month, plus three who made annual gifts. Our sincere thanks to all those who have supported the regeneration fund through regular giving and tireless fundraising.

Total income for the year was £104,255. Income from all other church hirers grew from £10,000 to over £15,000 while Kingston University remains the significant single hirer at £16,675. The Christmas Bazaar raised about £5,000. Giving for ordinary purposes recovered somewhat in 2016 and, including tax reclaimed on Gift Aid, was sufficient to cover 77 per cent of our annual pledge to the Diocese. The £30,000 available in unrestricted funds gives us a reasonable cushion, although we are increasingly reliant on hire income to help meet our overall running costs.

Total expenses were £93,961. We pledged and delivered £44,000 as our contribution to the Diocese – a 2 per cent year-on-year increase. Despite increased church hire, heating and lighting costs fell by over £1,000, the result of new contract rates with a single supplier and greater fuel efficiency from the new warm air blowers. The capital

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cost of these (£12,000+) is included in church repairs and maintenance; a category that saw higher expenditure from works including repainting the crypt and children's church room.

We closed 2016 with total reserves of £136,251 made up of £106,202 held as restricted funds earmarked for regeneration and a balance of £30,049 held as unrestricted funds for the ordinary uses of the parish.

Tony Hardy

CHURCH LIFE

Flower arrangers

Thank you to our great little team of flower arrangers at St John's whose gift of fresh flowers each week brings life and colour into the church, and especially for the great festivals of Christmas and Easter.

New arrangers are welcome any time in the year, if you'd like to help out occasionally, have a word with Vicky or Mimi.

Mimi Fagan

Servers

The server sets up the altar and helps the priest during the service. I'd never thought about serving, but like everything in church life, it just happened. I volunteered to carry the cross for a few weeks and soon I was asked if I would like to be a server.

If you'd like to be a server, talk to me, Vicky or any of the servers.

Neville Hall

Charities, causes & campaigns

During the year we welcomed Tony Williams onto the team; and we said farewell to Hugh Wickham, a long-serving and dedicated member of the team, who died in May and is much missed.

The team had three meetings and kept in touch in between as needed. We have continued to co-ordinate fundraising activities for charities and inform church members about various needs and issues both locally and in the wider world, mainly through the weekly pew leaflet and Vicky's email circulation. Regular newsletters are received from local charities including Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness (KCAH), the Joel Project and Kingston Foodbank: please have a look at these on the team's noticeboard in the North Aisle, where you can also see thank-you letters from charities we have supported.

St John's Church paid a total of nearly £2,400 to local causes KCAH, Oxygen and the Joel Project; national causes including the Children's Society; and international causes Christian Aid, Water Aid, Women and Children First, and the Leprosy Mission. This was mostly raised through book fair refreshments, collections and donations. Our Lent Appeal for 2016 was for Hand in Hand for Syria, and we were able to send £800 and a carload of donations



in kind, including nappies, new clothes and shoes for families left destitute by the conflict in Syria. Many thanks to Mimi and her helpers for all the work they put in to achieve this.

Christian Aid Week raised a record total of nearly £1,800, including £1,532 from the house-to-house collection, which is paid direct to Christian Aid, so doesn't appear in the church accounts. Thanks to all who contributed to this excellent result, especially those who collected from their own or another street: this can feel quite a difficult thing to do, but it remains Christian Aid's most effective fundraiser by a long way.

Thanks also to the many church members who hold Children's Society collecting boxes at home and bring them in to be opened once a year: last year's total was £933, which was sent direct to the society. Dave Farris from the Children's Society came to our Christingle service in December and gave an inspirational talk, as well as thanking Mimi for her work as society rep at St John's and welcoming Emma Perries as her successor.

Generous harvest donations of food were received from St John's Church and school, and from the Kindergarten and Bedelsford School. Most of these went to the Kingston Foodbank's central store, but we also took boxes of food to the Fircroft Centre in Surbiton and to Welcare in Kingston. Foodbank donations from the collecting box in church are taken direct to the outlet at Kingston United Reformed Church.

Later in the Autumn, 52 shoeboxes filled with gifts for needy families and elderly people in Eastern Europe were donated by members of St John's church and school and All Saints church, and we were also able to give Link to Hope another large batch of Maggie's beautiful warm knitted hats.

Very many thanks to all those who continue to give so generously of their time and resources to help St John's remain generous and engaged in its relationship with the wider world.

Pat Lines, Kay Baker, Vicky Maunder, Jenny Holden, Isobel Robinson, Hugh Wickham, Tony Williams.

Sacred Space services

We offered our non-Eucharistic Sacred Space services on eight Sundays in 2016 and they were generally appreciated by those who attended. Once again, the focus for each service was different, sometimes taking a fresh look at one of the Church's great festivals, as we did at Epiphany and Pentecost, at others thinking about general subjects such as pilgrimage or living generously. Having spent time in the desert during Lent, after Easter we enjoyed a pop-up garden in church, with aromatic herbs to pick, taste and smell. After St John's signed up to Inclusive Church earlier in the year, July's Sacred Space explored issues of inclusivity.

A new venture in November was a Songs of Praise service, where congregation members and local residents were invited to choose a favourite hymn and, if they wished, share the reason that it was special for them.

We plan to continue these services on the third Sunday of the month though 2017 whenever this is possible. Meanwhile, many thanks to all who have enriched these services with their help in planning, reading, sharing reflections, providing music or preparing activities and visual aids.

Isobel Robinson



Regeneration

Church building projects often take many, many years from their conception to completion – and ours is no different. It's a huge undertaking to develop the vision and raise the funding needed to modernise and upgrade the facilities in our big, beautiful church to secure its future.

It's an exciting and challenging journey that needs determination, resilience and perseverance because there will always be setbacks along the way and times we need to revisit our thinking and adapt our plans always keeping at the heart of the project our vision for the church as a welcoming space for everyone that glorifies God and brings people together.

We have been working on the project for a long time and 2016 was a testing year, but one that brought new energy and opportunities for the project. The focus of the year was applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a large chunk of the money needed to do the work.

We submitted a stage 1 application in March and were informed we had been

unsuccessful in June. After a helpful feedback meeting with HLF the project committee decided we should reapply and a team of Hannah Hines, David Robinson, Mimi Fagan, Tony Hardy and myself – assisted by other members of the project committee – have worked on our new application that was submitted in March 2017.

Hannah Hines (*pictured*) has taken the lead and a new, dynamic and exciting vision for the application has emerged. We have uncovered more about the history



of the church and area, consulted widely about the new application through a questionnaire and consultation meeting with local organisations and built partnerships with, among others, Kingston University; Kingston Museum and Kingston History Centre; Kingston College; and Bedelsford, King Athelstan and St John's schools.

If we are successful, we will not only enjoy a beautiful, restored worship space, but the church will also become a heritage and community hub where the rich but near-forgotten history of this area can be discovered and explored in fun and exciting ways. The HLF application process is highly competitive. We will hear in June whether we have been successful.

In the spring we were informed that we had been successful with an application to the City Bridge Trust for £2,500 to carry out an access audit of the Church and Parish Hall, and an access appraisal of our church building plans. This was carried out in the summer. The recommendations will feed into our building plans and we will apply to the City Bridge Trust for funding to carry out the access elements of the building works.

Alongside the focus on these grant applications, our events team has continued to work incredibly hard delivering wonderful and much-enjoyed fundraising events (see opposite) and our generous Blossom Scheme Patrons have continued to give through this vital fundraising scheme for the project.

Thank you so much to everyone who is supporting the project and working so hard to achieve its success.

Vicky Maunder

Book fair & church café

For the third year, the book fair was held in the church on seven Saturdays to support the regeneration fund. The church café opened at the same time offering drinks and home-made cakes, the proceeds going to chosen charities.

The regeneration team organised a special brunch in April to raise extra funds for the regeneration, and it was a great success. Books are still regularly donated and we have customers returning each month. The fairs and café continue to be worthwhile socially and financially, and

give non-church members an opportunity to come inside our beautiful church.

Thank you to everyone who helped during the year by sorting books, setting up tables, putting out and putting away the boxes of books and being there on a Saturday to "man the shop". Thank you also to the loyal café helpers who provided, prepared and served the refreshments – and did the washing up!

Frances Hazelgrove



From teddy parachutes to puppets and the Queen's birthday party, what a fantastically fun and varied year of fundraising events we had in 2016. Our strategy of "doing less, but better" has most definitely paid off – we raised over £8,000 for the regeneration fund.

We started off the year in style with Bill Price's famous film and music quiz in February. Tickets sold out before the posters went up and we can see why. An epic evening, which was six months in the making, included a live music round and the hilariously acted "films in the community" round in which different groups from the Spring Grove acted out famous film scenes. I have to say the events team's recreation of the chestbusting scene from *Alien* was Oscar-worthy! A huge thank you to Bill for his effort and costumes. The event kicked off the year nicely, raising just over £3,200.

Moving on to our regal event in May, celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday

with the Great Grove Garden Party (*pictured, right*). Not even the British weather got us down, and the whole community celebrated in style with cream teas, Pimm's, royal bingo, hunt the corgi, colouring-in competitions and, of course, a guest appearance from her majesty to cut her birthday cake. A fantastic fun day was had by all, raising over £1,600 for the regeneration fund.

Back by popular demand was our wine-tasting event hosted by the talented Vanessa Hamilton, who taught us the differences between a Shiraz and a Malbec. The Book Fair Brunch also returned, and the team took over the kitchen at the book fair – serving all our breakfast favourites and raising just under £500.

We heralded the autumn season with our Happy Harvest event in October, a wonderful family event at which we challenged the children to build parachutes for teddies before we dropped them from the church tower. We enjoyed plum punch and hearty harvest soup and raised nearly £600 for the regeneration.

The talented Peter Case and the Hidden Strings Theatre company treated us to a festive puppet show in December. *Granny and The Christmas Dragon* kept the youngest members of the community enthralled with audience participation and giant puppets. It was one of the most popular events of the year and raised over £600.

In a new move, the events team branched out with its own line of

merchandise, which we sold over the Christmas period and beyond. Working with the talented Leo Duff, we created a fantastic collection of tote bags, tea towels and aprons featuring fantastic line drawings of all the Spring Grove landmarks. The wonderful Hannah Hines created a beautiful oil painting featuring all the best-loved parts of Kingston and the surrounding areas, and she generously allowed us to produce a run of prints that were framed and sold to a few lucky people of the



Christmas Bazaar, raising just under £1,000. A lovely end to a great year.

Looking forward to 2017, we are excited to announce the return of Bloomfields fête and street party on 13 May, along with Potato Day in October.

Thanks to the fantastic events team and the church community for their unfailing support and willingness to volunteer to make these events happen.

Jennifer Marshall

First Monday Club

The FMC has had an entertaining year with 8-10 members meeting in church between 2 and 4pm on the first Monday of each month.

Last year we visited Bushy and Non-such Parks, and Strawberry Hill House in Teddington. This April we are being given a guided tour of St Mary's Church in Twickenham, a Grade II listed building with its 15th century mediaeval tower.

We have enjoyed talks and activities including an indoor games evening with darts, bowls, quoits and bagatelle, on the strength of which we have been loaned a table tennis table by David Bell. Mimi gave a demonstration and talk about flower arranging.

We conclude each meeting with a gossip over tea and cakes. Do join us if you are free – we'd love to see you.
Jo Need



Children's Church

The children's groups meet regularly each Sunday, apart from the first Sunday in the month when it is family service. The younger group is still well supported, while the older group (6+) has fewer children because they have so many outside activities on a Sunday.

Each session is based around the readings for that Sunday – with varied activities and crafts to help the children understand the lesson, aimed at their age group. They are always pleased to show these off at the end of the service.

The sessions can only run with the help of the dedicated team of helpers – seven for each age group. This year we have introduced a designated 'sitter-in' for the older group, drawn from all the helpers. This fulfils our safeguarding needs and gives the class leader extra help with some of the younger children, without adding too much of an extra burden to the helpers.

We are always happy to welcome new helpers to the group.
Carolynne Cotton



Other children's activities



This year we introduced a new event, the Christ the King children's party. The children had a chance to make crowns, placemats and produce a lunch fit for a king by making their own pizzas (above). At the end of the activities we sat down and had lunch together. This was a wonderful occasion that allowed the children to make new friends and to enjoy spending time together.

Our Good Friday workshop gives the children time to learn, reflect and have fun on this important day. We have a number of activities such as bonnet making, Easter baskets, rabbit masks and making hot cross buns. It is a delight to see families come together to

learn about this day and the children go home with lots of crafts they have made.

We are always discussing new activities for children. We want them to see the church as a place of fun and learning – and a place to get to know new people. We hope to offer some more special days in line with the Christian calendar. If you have any ideas, please feel free to let us know. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who make it possible for us to hold such wonderful events for the children.

Julie Morris
Parish representative to the diocese for children and young people's work

LITTLE GROOVERS

Little Groovers is a stay-and-play toddler group that runs on Tuesday from 9.45-11.30 at St John's. We welcome all ages from newborn to five with activities including arts and crafts, fancy dress, train sets, garages for our many cars and a book corner.

More active children can use the ride-along vehicles and the popular Little Tike cars. Little Groovers is not just great for the children but perfect to catch up with other parents over a tea or coffee.

Sarah Pinchbeck



Administrator's report

The Parish Hall continued to be a popular place to hire.

The Kingston Kindergarten used the hall every weekday morning during term time and the following groups met regularly: yoga for children up to October half-term, badminton, Dance Stars, jiu jitsu for adults and children, Perform, the Spring Grove Fringe, Calasara Fitness, Bellarinas, Rugbytots and neo-nunchaku.

The hall was booked most weekends for children or adult parties. The Spring

Grove Fringe drama group put on four productions and the hall was hired for quiz nights, charity events, private ballroom dance practice, a Labour Party meeting, as a recording studio, and for the annual general meeting of allotment associations and the Spring Grove Residents' Association and their annual barn dance.

Wing Wong, our caretaker, continues to be a very conscientious and helpful in managing our hall.

Frances Hazelgrove



TREASURER'S REPORT

The Parish Hall started 2016 holding £47,546 – £21,546 unrestricted funds, £26,000 church reserve. The reserve shows evidence of regular surplus income from lettings that could be used to service a future loan against the regeneration project. By the end of 2016, total assets rose to £56,290 after a surplus of £8,744. £10,000 was added to the church reserve and unrestricted funds total £20,290.

Income was 2 per cent lower than in 2015, at £28,061 (£28,624 in 2015) – 78 per cent from regular hirers, 22 per cent occasional hire.

Expenses were 44 per cent above last year at £19,317. Repairs & maintenance were almost £6,000 higher, reflecting renovations to exterior windows, stage and electrics.
Tony Hardy

OTHER KINGSTON TEAM CHURCHES

St John the Baptist, Kingston Vale

Journeying together. Each of us has our own story, and we are very diverse as a parish – and as a congregation – when we come together to socialise, to worship or even to moan. We touch one another's lives and so are changed by one another.

2016 saw us, as a church, seeking to find new ways to reach out. We now have a church Facebook page, where pictures and thoughts can be shared with those in and outside church. We joined with people from the whole diversity of the parish where we live, social events such as the switching on of the Christmas lights were enabled to grow because we worked with others – in this case Aura – and of course we continue to value the relationship with the Korean Christians who worship in our church.

We also shared with others, welcom-

ing a Muslim girls group that came to hear more about Christianity.

On a Sunday we come together and share our journey, joys and sorrows. As vicar I have learnt that at St John's at least some people will not feel the peace is finished until they have hugged every person in church. We journey together, sometimes there are tears and sometimes smiles, but all are shared. We have welcomed new members in the congregation and sadly some have left, only the love of God and the love for one another remains. As we think of those who have gone before us into heaven, the hole they have left can feel immense yet the love and legacy remain.

There are numerous events and highlights that could be mentioned, the youth club performing at the Rose Theatre, Stormtroopers marching through the

garden, parties and celebrations, baptisms and confirmations. The year ended with a great gathering in the garden to see a gentle donkey and live nativity.

The depiction of God entering into our world and journeying with us. So as we journey forward as a church serving the people of the parish in new ways, may we together support and care for one another in all our diversity.

As always, I want to say thank you to all who are part of making St John's the place it is. I will mention by name Una Sutcliffe, Penny Jivani, John Waddleton, Cheong Wong, Sue Richardson and Ruth Brown. Each with named roles, but this church is made up of so many more and I would really want to thank them all.

Rev Mandy Beck
Vicar

All Saints Church

“If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honoured, all are honoured together”.

What St Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:26) is important for reminding us not only of the interconnectedness of our globalised world, but also because it tells us something about the place of teamwork at home. We stand or fall together (just ask Leicester City about that...) and the achieving of good things is always possible when people pull in the same direction, matching each other in their energy and commitment. Reflecting on the past year makes me aware of how many people work with enormous dedication and love to make the life of All Saints possible.

The grace and prayerfulness of our worship, which stands at the heart of our church life, is made possible by the gifts and dedication of our musicians, choristers and those who serve, read, pray and preach. Our children are valued and looked after by those who lead their activities with flair and enthusiasm on Sundays and during the week. Our thriving Church Council takes care to oversee our mission and ministry and the business of ensuring that “All Saints plc” is compliant, safe and responsible. Our vergers welcome visitors, our listeners provide an attentive ear, our bellringers not only call people to worship twice each week but take care to ensure that the bells and its tower are in good order. Our heritage team teaches young and old about our history and provides imaginative activities for visitors on many days of the year. Hard-working people maintain and beautify the churchyard, while others decorate the church itself with flowers.

All of this takes place because a great many people (150 at last count) work with incredible devotion and kindness to make our life inventive, accessible and loving. We’re only as strong as our parts and our parts are many, varied and devoted. We are hugely blessed in this and I want to say clearly how grateful we are for this blessing.

The year has seen ongoing development of our life since we fully re-opened after our redevelopment. The church is used more, for a wider variety of activities than ever before and we continue to seek ways in which we can make ourselves relevant and accessible to the people of the town. I found myself describing us the other day in these terms: “Our aim is to be a community organisation whose essence is about the divine and whose essential currency is spirituality.” Everything that we do seeks to foster the innate spirituality that we believe is a God-given part of every human being.

More lies on the horizon. As well as a continuing mindset that seeks to find opportunities as they arise, we are particularly exploring the possibility of an entirely new worshipping congregation for the church that may well use our links with popular choral music groups who already rehearse in the church. This won’t affect, in any way, our current worshipping life but may provide a way of sharing our liberal theological outlook with an even wider base. Plans for a new building on our north lawn have also been reinvigorated by a partnership with the Royal Borough of Kingston, which would like to house a new museum in our building. This is a very exciting link that plays well to our current strength for heritage, in particular our place in the town’s Saxon past. Further funding is still needed, but the plan is looking more possible than at any other time in the past 10 years and we aim to make significant progress in the next six months.

There is much to be grateful for and much more still to do.

As well as thanking, by name, our ministry team of Martin Corner, Isobel Robinson, Mick Cooper, Peter Hann, Sandy Cragg, Andrew Williams and David Bell, we should also thank those we employ to help us make our life possible: Kat Hardy, PA to the Rector; Kate Kern, heritage and learning officer; Robert, who recently began work as our



caretaker; and, of course, our director of music Stephen Westrop and assistant organist Matthew O’Malley. We are deeply fortunate to benefit from the gifts and skills that they bring to our life and we thank them all most sincerely, as we do also those, from Kingston College and elsewhere, who work in the café.

Though a list of 150 names would feel rather long, the two who stand at the top as first among equals, our churchwardens, should be mentioned. Yet again we cannot state how much we owe to John Dewhurst and Liz Deller for their endless good humour, dedication, patience, wisdom and love in all that they do for All Saints. Our gratitude is unbounded and, in this, his last year as churchwarden, we pay special tribute and thanks to John, and Julia his wife, for his six-year term in office. John’s spell as warden straddled the redevelopment work of recent years where he was required as much to move chairs and dust down altars as he was to accompany the Bishop or oversee the articles of enquiry. We owe him a great debt of thanks.

But let the final word of thanks and praise be to our team of 150 or so who work so hard with such dedication. There is much to admire and be grateful for as we look forward to another year.

Rev Jonathan Wilkes, Rector