

grace-full thank-full faith-full joy-full hope-full



Annual Reports for 2023

(As prepared for the APCM on 28th April 2024)



Registered Charity Number: 1130172

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Foreword

*“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.*

Jeremiah 17:7-8

After a life changing event, like a death or a debilitating illness, we know things will never return to ‘normal’ again. What we mean is they won’t go back to how they were, but we will find a ‘new normal’. After the first three years of this decade with the loss and instability they brought, and the resulting anxiety and fear, 2023 was the year of the new normal. That’s not to say nothing changed; King Charles III was crowned, a new horrifying war began in Gaza, climatically it was the hottest year on record are just three examples that remind us that change is here to stay. As God’s people though, we follow one who is constant, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. If we put our roots down deeper, trust in him, we will be enabled to weather the changes and still be the fruitful people he calls us to be.

My intention in our preaching and bible study was that we would each ‘Go Deeper’ with God finding his security and peace in the change. We started the year gathered in the Church centre on Thursday evenings following the Bible Course and the St Mellitus Old Testament overview. Discussing in groups the reflection questions this was not only about gaining head knowledge but applying it to our lives and growing in faith. Before Easter we preached through the life story of King David known as one with a heart after God’s to cultivate one ourselves. We read + Jill Duff’s book ‘Lighting the Beacons’ together. It was brimming full of faith and she kindly joined a zoom call with many of us and challenged us to find the deep wells locally. Responding to my invitation to give us a word of encouragement she spoke about a blanket over us, rising because of the warm air beneath it and quoted Isaiah 54:1&2 “extend your tent pegs!”

Believing the power of Jesus shown in his miracles is a challenge to have deeper faith, so our Together@10 services during the summer focused on them whilst simultaneously training and equipping our prayer ministry team so that offering to pray for miracles and healing has become a regular part of our Sunday worship. In September and October, I preached through Jesus last conversation with his disciples as documented in John’s gospel, providing a linked creation-tide challenge each week. Preaching these beautiful

chapters was a personal challenge for me which I found incredibly fruitful and trust others did too.

Finally, before Advent a speaker from Open Doors and Mags Mercer as the CEO of The Hope Hub helped us to focus more deeply on our mission partners and that challenged us to think about putting our faith into practice or how to stand firm against persecution.

In October in the space of 10 days we welcomed 2 Bishops: Bishop Debbie was our speaker at a Women's discipleship breakfast before she left the diocese to become the Bishop of Peterborough and Bishop Philip, his wife Ruth and Noggin (their west highland terrier!) attended our morning services as part of their informal visits to get to know the Diocese after he was made Bishop of Winchester. After some turbulent years his arrival signals a welcome 'new normal' for the diocese too. In May it was a real joy to gather on the school field in Dogmersfield with the other churches in the Benefice when Bishop David licenced Sam as her curacy came to an end and she became Assistant priest. I am grateful to Sam as she takes on more responsibility for St Marys and All Saints leaving me with a little more time at St John's and for diocesan roles.



Helen began maternity leave in June with the joyful arrival of Zac in early July. This meant that we had the honour of holding her priesting at St John's on 1st October and baptizing Zac all in the same service!

One challenging aspect of the 'new normal' continues to be finding volunteers. The staff team do a wonderful job at leading areas of ministry and equipping others but every activity we do as a church requires people to serve in it. It was a real loss to our Youth Ministry when Sam Blackwell left in August to train as a secondary school RE teacher. He had rebuilt the youth groups from the remnant left by the pandemic into a wonderful community of young people whose love and acceptance for each other is exemplary. The PCC decided to invest in this ministry, offering a full-time role to his replacement so that there is time for more school outreach and offering oversight to the whole under 18s ministry at St John's. We have been unable to fill this role to date despite the church generously responding to the request to fund it.

Faithful volunteers and some new recruits enabled us to reach out to our community in many ways in 2023 for which I am so grateful. As you read on, please offer a prayer of thanks for those who are named or implicated in this report. We reached out at the village festival (both on the common and in the centre), opened our doors for the needed wet weather screening of the Coronation, offered free drinks and cakes at the Christmas market, and sung carols round a fire. We do much of this in partnership with others and personally I am grateful to the Scouts for their help at Carols on the Common! The coffee shop is an ever popular and important place where people can encounter Christian hospitality and welcome, so thank you for all who make it so. Our mission though is broader and each area of church life that welcomes in others to experience a little of the love and acceptance of Christ is valuable. Sometimes this looks like holding a baby while a parent drinks a hot cup of tea, a prayer for someone who has given up hope, a hot meal served to someone struggling with isolation or toastie for a hungry teen after school or a smile and greeting of welcome to a newcomer (or regular) at our services. This work is only sustainable though because we have put our roots down deeper into the one from whom we find love and acceptance, strength and security. Trusting in him, we will be ever green and find the strength we need to continue to serve him.

With my thanks and prayers

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angie". The letter 'A' is stylized with a loop at the top.

Rev'd Angie Smith, Vicar, April 2024

Churchwarden's Report

The past year has been encouraging with many new faces joining St Johns and despite a gloomy financial forecast going into the year, we ended with a small surplus – for which we give thanks. In November it was good to look back and celebrate the Church Centre, now ten years old, which allows us to do so much, and also to think together about mission for the next 10 years.

Both Wardens felt the need to have an increased emphasis on corporate Prayer this year, and have introduced a bi-monthly mid-week prayer meeting, with the ministries of St John's as the main focus. A Prayer ministry team for both Sunday services has been set up, and in August an excellent training day was held and run by Lin Button.

We have been very blessed that the PCC continues to work well together, and would like to extend a special thanks to the PCC secretary, Andie Painter, who is standing down, and to Matt Pitcher, Treasurer, who is also standing down.



The Benefice came together to hold an open-air service with Bishop David presiding. Rev'd. Sam Chandler was licensed at the service to serve as an Assistant Priest in the Benefice with more responsibility for Winchfield and Dogmersfield.

The organ restoration fund reached its target allowing work to start. The work has been seriously delayed but St John's has been lent an electric replacement for the duration. Our thanks to Martin Barnes who has managed and overseen the work.

The Church heating system continues to be a concern, as the gas boiler has reached the end of its design life. A small group have investigated various options for a replacement and the PCC is starting to work through these, with the implications, following receipt of a report from a firm of heating consultants. The intention is to move to a low carbon solution in line with current advice and our efforts towards an Eco Church gold award.

We have also received Planning permission for Solar PV panels on south facing roof of the Church Centre, and will look to progress this during 2024. This would help to give us energy price security, reduce our carbon footprint, and could also help to power a replacement heating system for the Church.

The pathway from Green Lane to the church has been paved, making access for wheelchairs and pushchairs much easier, safer and cleaner.

Since Covid we have suffered from a shortage of volunteers. The success of both new initiatives and existing programmes depends on more people being willing to give a little of their time, as so much of the work falls to a few. Please prayerfully consider whether and where you could help and join a church ministry team.

Angela Southern, Justin Hooper, Churchwardens

Section 1 - Administration and Financial

Activities of the PCC

The PCC of St John's met 6 times during 2023. The APCM took place on 30th April 2023. Our Christmas social event held in January with a curry supper and review of the year.

The Parish Clergy (licenced to the Benefice):

Rev Angie Smith, Vicar (Clergy Deanery Representative on Diocesan Synod)

Rev Sam Chandler, Curate then Assistant Priest (After May 2023)

Rev Helen May (Priested September 2023) (On maternity leave since July 2023)

Supported by Rev Pauline Moyse who holds the Bishop's PTO

Ordinand

Amy Bianchi (from September 2021 – training at St Mellitus)

Licensed Lay Ministers (to the Benefice):

Ian Coster

Alison Harris (LLM Representative on PCC)

Richard Blore

Sarah Groombridge

Churchwardens:

Angela Southern

Justin Hooper (Laity Deanery Representative on Diocesan Synod)

Deanery Synod:

Camilla Deane

Trudy Rankin

Dave Collier (Laity Deanery Representative on Diocesan Synod)

Andrew Moyse (after April 2023)

Elected Members:

Andrew Moyse (until April 2023)

Matt Pitcher

Andie Painter

Jess Arthur

Jim Dewes

Lesley Churms

Ray Kelly

Helen Harwood

Chris Thornton (resigned May 2023 leaving 2 year vacancy)

Sarah Lello

Clive Walden (from May 2023)

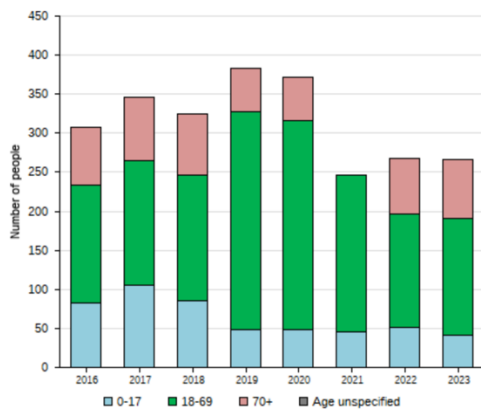
Helen Budd (from April 2023)

1 year vacancy

Worshipping Community:

We returned a Worshipping Community figure of 266 to the Church of England’s Statistics for Mission Online System in January 24. Of this figure there were 149 (145) adults of which 50% were over 75 and (51) 42 children. (figures in brackets are 2022 returns). Further statistics are in Appendix D

2. Worshipping Community, (2016-2023)



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	308	346	324	383	371	0	268	266
0-17	82	105	85	49	48	45	51	42
18-69	151	160	162	279	268	202	145	149
70+	75	81	77	55	55	0	72	75
Age unspecified	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joiners	30	66	38	7	6	10	26	27
Leavers	21	13	52	24	24	15	10	18

Worshipping Community information has been collected from 2012 onwards.

Angie Smith

Treasurer's Report

At the start of 2023 we feared a deficit would drain our cash position and leave us with some difficult decisions to make in 2024.

I am very pleased to say that our income was up and expenditure down vs the forecast in 2023 and as a result, we achieved a healthy surplus. This puts us in a strong position as we start 2024 and should help us to pay for some of the costs that we are hoping to incur this year, including a salary for a Youth Pastor.

This success has also left us in a strong cash position which will help with some of the capital expenditure needed in 2024, including the installation of PV panels and the wider Church Heating Project.

As always with St Johns there is so much positive progress that we can make as a community if the gifts of money and time continue to flow from all of you.

The finances of the church have become increasingly complex in recent years, for very good reasons such as the multiple ways you can now donate to St Johns. We have been able to professionalise and improve much of our finance operations during my time as Treasurer and have achieved a huge amount financially as a church.

Last year was to be my last full year as Treasurer and I am hopeful that good candidates will come forward for the two roles that are to replace mine; Church Accountant and Treasurer. I am very grateful for the support that Linzi Lawrence has given me in the transition period.

It is always the case that I am grateful to the work of all the staff and volunteers who have an impact on the finances of the church. So, a big thank you is due to Christine Andrews, Lisa Walker, Sally Hall, and Justin Hooper for their help with the finances last year. I would also like to extend my thanks to the volunteers who run our coffee shop and hall hire for the financial contribution these activities make to the running of the church.

More detail about our 2023 finances is included in the Trustees' report in Appendix B.

Matt Pitcher, Treasurer

Church Centre Buildings and Grounds

The church is not defined by its physical structures, but by the people who gather in the name of Christ. We are called to come together, to worship and to serve, and this requires a common place for the body of Christ to meet. Therefore, this part of the annual report highlights some of the practical achievements and challenges of 2023. Other parts of the annual report will cover specific activities and events, church bookings and the coffee shop. This section focuses on the general operations and maintenance of the Church and Centre.

As the severity and impact of the Covid pandemic recedes, it has been extremely encouraging to see the overall use of the church and centre increase in 2023. On average (and not including church services), there are an estimated 800 separate visits every week of the year to the church centre – this is up by around 15% over 2022. We also celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the opening of the centre this year, and it is highly encouraging to see the centre being used more and more by the community as a whole.

With all of this increased usage, and also with the increasing age of the building and facilities, regular and preventative maintenance and building improvements have continued to be a challenge throughout 2023. There has been a continued emphasis this year on maintaining the balance between both containing costs and spending money in a responsible and affordable manner. However, it is an unfortunate fact that as the centre is now 10 years old, and as inflation peaked at over 10% in early 2023, the number and costs of necessary and unexpected repairs to and replacement of equipment are on the rise.

The following list describes a few of the year's highlights and lowlights. It gives an indication of the variety of activities that have taken place, and their associated expenses:

- Regular scheduled statutory and preventative maintenance of the various plant and equipment throughout the estate has continued, including the fire alarm, the security alarm, both heating systems, the automatic drainage, the lift, the hall acoustic walls, the front door, the kitchen and coffee shop equipment and many others. Planned and scheduled regular maintenance alone cost us around £5000 in 2023.
- Repairs were necessary to stop leaks in the foyer roof, a total cost of over £3000.
- The Halls and Meeting Room 1 have been repaired and redecorated.
- The patio has been levelled to remove trip hazards.
- Various remedial plumbing works were required, at a total cost of around £1250.
- An issue with the exterior storm drains was investigated, and some preventative remedial work performed at a total cost of just over £1000.

As can be seen from the above, the ongoing church and centre maintenance covers a considerable range of areas and expense. In order to prevent unnecessary expenditure, it is essential that everybody treats the buildings and contents with care and respect, to avoid unnecessary wastage, breakages and costs.

In 2023, utility bills were a particular challenge and they are one of the largest regular expenses that we have to pay. A fairly aggressive approach was taken to reduce power usage (particularly gas) as much as possible throughout 2023 without affecting comfort! As a result, across the entire estate in 2023 our actual gas usage was down by around 14% compared with 2022. Our electricity use was stable, despite the increased usage of the buildings. All power was provided via green electricity and a mix of carbon offset natural gas and sustainable green gas. The solar panels on the centre roof generated 3,542 kWhr of power in 2023 – around 2.5% of all the estate power usage. As utility costs continue to be high and volatile, a particular challenge in 2024 will be keeping these costs under check.

Finally, as always, this report would not be complete without expressing my gratitude and appreciation to the many people who, silently, loyally and often invisibly, carry out various practical (and, in some cases, unglamorous and unpleasant) works of service around the church, centre and gardens. Without this assistance, the church and centre would cease to be presentable and well maintained, services and other activities could not happen and, most importantly, the church's outreach to Hartley Wintney would be hindered. It would not be right to mention specific individuals, so instead a warm and genuine thank you to you all.

Dave Collier, Operations Manager



Health and Safety

During 2023 the PCC reviewed and updated the H&S Policy and Arrangements. It was decided that future reviews will be at three-year intervals in light of any changes in legislation and the low level of accidents.

This year there were 16 accidents recorded, mostly involving children.

Both the PCC and the CCOT consider H&S aspects at their meetings.

Training for PCC members, Employees, Responsible Persons and Volunteers as defined in Section B of the Policy was given by Dave Collier and Millie Deane.

Andrew Moyse, Health & Safety Officer

Bookings

Our regular bookings continued throughout the year to almost complete capacity on most days – as could be seen by the full carpark.

Our weekly hall bookings continued with Bumps and Babies every Monday morning and Forget Me Not Café every Tuesday afternoon. The monthly Community Lunch ran on the first Wednesday of each month and Naomi's Footsteps on the second Wednesday afternoon and both continued to be very popular. A new cookery course, Come & Cook, started in October on 3rd Wednesday afternoons – very popular and very tasty!

Some daytime life groups met regularly in the smaller rooms upstairs. The children's and youth groups met in various rooms around the centre on Sunday mornings and on some evenings during the week. The church and halls were used for a very successful Jungle Safari Summer Club for a week in late August. Two Alpha courses ran at St John's, a daytime one and an evening one in the autumn, also daytime and evening Kintsugi Hope courses from January to May. Life Group Spring courses were popular and ran as both morning or evening meetings in the church and centre. Other smaller rooms were used for church and PCC meetings on an ad hoc basis. During the past year, other visiting churches enjoyed the use of the Youth Room and Prayer Room on Saturdays for their Alpha Away Days or PCC Away Day meetings. Warm Space continued to reach out to the community on Monday afternoons until the end of March. Almost all of these events used our very well-equipped modern kitchen, often with 2 groups sharing the space with ease and good humour.

The Coffee Shop made good use of the foyer and the coffee shop itself to supply the local community with drinks, cakes and a warm welcome every morning - with the added bonus of bacon and/or egg rolls on Saturdays.

The halls continued to be hired weekly with 5 adult exercise classes, 3 art group sessions and 2 music and movement classes for babies and toddlers. In the autumn, the much-loved Circuits classes stopped for now and one of the baby classes did not have enough customers to continue. One u3a group regularly held a class in the Prayer Room - as the acoustics are so good there.

The local Repair Café started meeting in the halls from a Saturday in April and from then continued every 3 months. Various businesses hired upstairs rooms for meetings, workshops and training. The halls were also hired for wakes, afternoon teas, wedding receptions and many and varied parties. The charges made for such bookings make a considerable contribution to the overall running costs of the church and its mission to Hartley Wintney.

It is wonderful to see the church centre in so much use, although sometimes this means we cannot accommodate all of the requests for hire that we receive – and the carpark may be full. It is so good to hear from our visitors to St John's of their appreciation of what amazing facilities we offer and word of this is spreading throughout the local community.

Lesley Churms, Room Bookings Administrator

Odiham Deanery Synod

Odiham Deanery is our local grouping of parishes in the Diocese of Winchester. It consists of 26 separate churches throughout 18 parishes, organised within 6 benefices. At the end of 2023 St John's had 4 elected lay and 2 clergy members on Odiham Deanery Synod.

Odiham Deanery Synod met three times in 2023. Overall, each meeting always includes sharing knowledge, advice and lessons learnt in dealing with the varying challenges of the day in our local situations. In February, at an open meeting at St John's Hook, there was an additional focus on cross cultural mission with Paul Thaxter presenting. In July, we met at St John's, Hartley Wintney, with AD Richard Brand presenting a focus on clergy and laity well-being. Finally, in November we met at St Barnabas, Darby Green, with an additional focus on Children and Youth.

In addition, St John's is one of the 255 parishes and 375 church buildings that together comprise the Diocese of Winchester. In 2023, Bishop Philip Mounstephen was installed as the new Bishop of Winchester. The primary governing body of the Diocese is the Diocesan Synod, although the majority of Synod's work is strategic, or 'big picture'. In 2023, Synod met formally four times (once online), along with additional informal meetings of laity and clergy and various operational sub-committees. At the end of 2023, St John's had 2 elected lay and 1 elected clergy members on Diocesan Synod.

Dave Collier – Deanery Synod Representative

Communications

Joining the team in March, the year has been about figuring out how we connect with our congregation and community and how to communicate with transparency, creativity, and relevance.

E-News - Our E-News has been a large part of our communication strategy, with a 73% average open rate. This is a testament to the community's engagement and interest in our content. Special thanks to Mark and his photography, as his locally captured images have added a great touch to our E-News headers.

Social Media - Please see below some statistics for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter:

Twitter

- 336 average impressions (people seeing posts) per month with a total of 4,037 impressions for 2023
- 4 followers gained in 2023
- 1.3% engagement a month (people interacting with post)

Facebook

- 15.7k reached (people seeing posts) for 2023
- 176 content interactions for 2023
- 3,657 page visits for 2023

Instagram

- 300 reached (people seeing posts) for 2023
- 176 content interactions for 2023
- 416 profile visits for 2023

Current follower standings:

Facebooks - 910 people

Instagram - 252 people

Twitter - 346 people

These are encouraging statistics, showcasing positive engagement and interaction. The growth in attendance at services, particularly during the Christmas season, demonstrates the effectiveness of our advertising this year, keeping the community informed and engaged. Holiday Club and other family events reached maximum capacity, again highlighting the effectiveness of our promotional efforts.

Media - 2023 saw a few opportunities for displays of graphic and media such as videos for the Coronation and the 10-year anniversary services. These were well-received by the congregation.

Website - Throughout the year, there has been an effort to update and refresh our website. Acknowledging the importance of accurate and current information. While still a work in progress, we are happy that the latest news and events have been readily available on our website.

Communications Future - Looking ahead, our vision includes a shift toward more content that fosters daily discipleship. Beyond event advertisements, we aim to provide meaningful and relevant posts that contribute to the spiritual growth and well-being of our congregation.

Chloe Hale

Administration

The staff team in the church office continue to provide administrative support across the benefice including the arrangements for Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals. They also continue to work closely with Hartley Wintney Parish Council and the local community.

Lisa Walker

Section 2 – Worship and Services

Worship

‘I find myself dreaming of an atmosphere of worship so full of His glory that it transforms anyone coming into it.’ Jeremy Riddle

I came in as the new Worship Pastor at the end of March with a vision to ignite the fire in our hearts to worship and to rebuild the foundations within the worship team. After a season of there being no Worship Pastor the team really relied heavily on each other, it was a big job to carry. Specific honorary mentions to Ian, Amanda, James and Ollie for the roles they played and continue to play in the team for all their hard work in making sure the various areas run smoothly.

Team Growth: Despite facing a few departures as some members moved on to new opportunities, our team witnessed a 28 percent increase in overall size. This brought fresh perspectives and energy, contributing to the dynamics and atmosphere within the Worship ministry.

Finding Our Sound: The process of starting and settling in has been a journey of working together to find out what works well and what maybe doesn't. This kind of worship team self-discovery inevitably comes with Sunday services that went better than others but it's all part of the growing process and has led to us discovering blends that makes our worship truly special.

Team Nights: Throughout the year, we had a couple of team nights which were introduced. These were opportunities to strengthen our bond as a team, provided us with the chance to learn new songs and time to foster a deeper understanding of how we can best serve in our respective roles of worship. To enhance unity and clarity, a team manual was introduced, outlining values and expectations in the hopes to lay a foundation for a healthy and supportive team environment.



New Songs: The introduction of several new songs has proven to be a highlight of the year. Songs such as "I Speak Jesus," "Bless God," "Miracle Power" and "Ancient Gates" have resonated with our congregation and help to cultivate a fresh expression of collective worship.



Memorable Services: The Worship team played a pivotal role in a variety of memorable services throughout the year. The Benefice Service, where we came together to curate a service in a field, with a varied choice of songs, there was something for all styles of worshipper, a beautiful blend of traditional and contemporary.

The Coronation Service saw collaboration with Martin and the organ, resulting again in a fusion of styles. Christmas services, with a highlight on the nativity service, were executed well, bringing the joy and spirit of the season to our congregation.

The year saw beautiful moments of worship that we have shared together. Looking ahead we look forward to building upon foundations that continue to enhance our worship experiences and deepen our connection with God. As a team we hope to continue to provide space for people to experience the presence of God and space for the congregation to further explore their worship expression.

Chloe Hale

Sunday and Mid-week Services

A two Sunday service pattern was maintained for the majority of the year breaking in the summer for six weeks when one 'Together@10' service was held to make the holiday season easier to manage. 'Together@10' is a blend of worship and liturgy from across the styles so that there is something for everyone and ends with a shortened eucharist. We have seen a further increase in attendance at festivals: For example, over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in 2023, 741 people attended a service.

Service Attendance:

Our midweek communion service (11.15am on Wednesdays) continued to grow with an average of 15 in the congregation. I'm grateful to Martin for playing before and after and leading a hymn in it and for Pauline who leads it with me and Sam.

It is encouraging to see new people finding and joining our community and others as they stay developing deeper relationships with God and each other, and beginning to serve. Thank you particularly to our team of church cleaners who ensure the church is ready for Sunday worship, sacristans who support the Priests and especially Anne and Jean our devoted flower ladies who faithfully decorate the church with colourful flowers.

Angie Smith

Organist Report

Services

The organ has been played each Sunday for the 9 O'clock service, and at the combined Together@10 services during the Summer. It has also been played for most of the Weddings and Funerals at St John's.

Schools and Pre-School Groups

During December, Claire Parker, (Children and Families Pastor) invited various School, pre-school and Nursery groups into the church to tell the Christmas story. The organ console is moved out for the children to see, and Martin played carols and songs for the children to sing along. The children are fascinated by the organ and particularly when Martin demonstrates some of the sounds it can make!

Organ Students

I encourage anyone to learn or try the organ who is interested. One such student is James who has been coming in most Saturday mornings to play the organ. Sadly for us, he has enrolled in the army and is now away to start training. Another student, Thomas found out about the organ at Calthorpe Park School with the North Hampshire Organists Association portable organ that is taken into school to raise awareness of the organ. I am part of that initiative and Thomas showed great interest and promise

Friday Lunchtime Organ Concerts

The Friday lunchtime organ concerts were held again this year. The original purpose of these concerts was to get people into the church, to hear the organ and to experience the St John's coffee shop. With the coffee shop now closing before lunch I reassessed the concerts and in conjunction with the coffee shop staff moved the concerts to 11.00am, so they are now the 'Friday Morning Organ Concerts'.

I played for the first two in May and June. In July we had a session with three organists, including Stephen Davies (organist at St John's, Hook), Ben Constant (organist at All Saints, Basingstoke) and myself. The final two concerts in August and September were by Geoff Willis (no organist position, but chairman of The North Hampshire Organists Association) and Ian Rees (locum organist in the Honiton area) respectively and were on the loaned digital organ as the pipe organ was dismantled at this point.

The average attendees were 40, with the highest being 51 and lowest being 28. £769 was donated with just £40 taken as expenses, so a net of £729 received.

Carol Extravaganza

The Carol Extravaganza took place on a Saturday morning before Christmas. As it is too much to sing carols continuously for an hour, I announce certain criteria that if it applies to you, you stand and sing that line and if not, you sit. For example, 'sing the first line of verse 2 If you like Brussel sprouts, sing the second line if you don't like Brussel sprouts, sing the third line if you like Christmas pudding and sing the last line if you don't like Christmas pudding'. Some criteria are more fun and some more in the form of a quiz, linking possible answers to the different verse lines.

Also, poor one liner Christmas jokes are told!

The flyers were nicely rebranded by our Worship Pastor, Chloe Hale this year and as usual I dress up in elf trousers, Christmas jumper and hat!



The church was full and the coffee shop very busy, it seems a very popular event.

Carol Service

We managed to get a good scratch Choir assembled for the Christmas Carol Service. This was kindly conducted and trained up by Amanda Pennington who I am extremely grateful to as it alleviates the difficulty of trying to play the organ and conducting the choir at the same time!

Organ Overhaul

Bishop & Son of London started the organ overhaul in August. It got off to a good start with the organ being stripped and all but the largest of its 1,500 pipes being taken to the London works for cleaning, reshaping and overhauling. Associated parts also were taken including some smaller chests. The console was stripped, and the keyboards and pedal boards were also taken for refurbishment.

Sadly, the work has taken considerably longer than estimated, the original timescale being 2 – 3 months. Although some extra work over that estimated for has been found, the delay is more down to Bishops' workload rather than problems with the organ.



The timescale estimated for the work to be carried out was carefully planned, the organ was stripped in July, so that it would be completed by the busiest time of year, the lead up to Christmas. Sadly, the work was not completed within the estimated timescale, and the work continues to be ongoing to date. Bishops have lent St John's a digital instrument which is a great help but not the same at all.



Bishops have not given us a completion time but have emphasised that they always stick to their quote and to date have only been paid about a quarter of the total cost.

Martin Barnes, Organist

First Sunday @7

1st Sunday@7 is a monthly, one hour prayer gathering which has been held at 7pm on the first Sunday of each month for the last 3 years. It is normally a fairly small gathering with attendance in 2023 ranging between 8 to 15 people and meets in the church centre or, during the warmer months, in the church sanctuary.

In establishing this service, the Lord gave us the verse 2 Chronicles 20:12

'We do not know what to do but our eyes are on you'

Our key aim in the service is to listen to the heart of the Lord and pray as He directs us.

Each service includes worship to draw us into the presence of God, a psalm and the Lord's prayer before a period of silence to listen to God. We then share anything we have heard from God, for example bible verses, words and pictures, before moving into a time of prayer around the subjects prompted by the time of listening. As we listen, a theme usually emerges at each meeting which guides our prayers. The prayer time concludes with a worship song. We were blessed to be led in worship by Chloe Hale when she joined as Worship Pastor half way through 2023.

In December 2023 we decided to discontinue 1st Sunday at 7 given the new opportunities for corporate prayer which had arisen over the later months of 2023.

Alison Harris, Trudy Rankin

Occasional Offices

Baptisms and Confirmations at St John's

There were 10 baptisms at St John's, out of a total 15 across the benefice.

Funerals

The Clergy and Lay Reader team carried out 23 funerals: 18 in church and 5 at the crematorium, out of a total of 29 in the Benefice in 2023.

Marriage Preparation Day

A marriage preparation day was held on Saturday 23rd March, 8 couples attended the day with a full programme of sessions including love languages, conflict resolution, money, parenting and marriage in the sight of God delivered by a team from St John's. The day includes lunch, giving the couples the opportunity to have more informal conversations.

This year we introduced a new session "Meet the Organist". Martin Barnes was given the opportunity to say a few words about choosing hymns and music for weddings, encouraging couples to meet and to explore the wealth of hymns and music available, rather than just relying on the internet. This new session worked really well, and we plan to include a fuller presentation next year.

Marriages

During 2023 there were 3 weddings at St John's with a total of 8 weddings across the Benefice.

Section 3 – Prayer

Daily Prayer

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

Philippians 4:6-7

We continue to meet on Zoom each weekday morning to study God's word using the Church of England's Daily Prayer app. We read the Psalm of the Day followed by the Gospel reading and then after a brief reflection on the passages we pray together for our Church, our Community, individuals in need and the world. We usually end by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Morning Prayer is led by a small team, and we are joined each day by a faithful group of individuals with a heart for prayer. We would love for more of our Church family to join us even if it is just once a week. Over the past year, we have prayed for 51 weeks of the year - only taking a break between Christmas and New Year.

Over the past year, we have lost a few individuals who used to join us regularly and it would be helpful to know why that was. Feedback is always welcome! The prayer team leaders would be very happy to meet with you and talk about any suggestions/reflections and encourage more of you to be involved in the corporate prayer life of the church.

The Bible tells us that Jesus constantly prayed during his time on earth. As followers of Jesus who strive to be more like him, making time for prayer is important to our Christian walk. There is something very special about 'corporate prayer' - intentionally gathering with others to pray.

The Scottish Evangelist, Oswald Chambers once said 'Prayer does not equip us for greater works— prayer is the greater work.'

Spending time in prayer is probably the most important thing we can do as Christians. Whilst most of us will regularly pray privately or with our families it is also important for us to gather as the Body of Christ because a praying church is a powerful church. In our morning group, we have seen real answers to prayer - we know prayer makes a difference. Come and join us.

Sam Chandler

9am weekdays on zoom. Meeting code 956 4694 2455 passcode 333

Section 4 – Pastoral

Pastoral Care and Discipleship

2023 was an exciting year with several new pastoral care initiatives taking place. This was underpinned with a background of ongoing care offered by so many in our church community and especially from members of the pastoral care teams. Once again many have quietly, but faithfully carried out befriending, bereavement support, given lifts, helped with practical tasks, cooked and shared meals, delivered letters and gifts and offered prayer support and a listening ear. Thank you all!

As with previous years, we ran the Kintsugi Hope wellbeing course; this time starting in January, until April. The course was well attended with lots of positive feedback from participants. It was encouraging to see people grow in confidence and build good friendships within the group. Many thanks to Ray Kelly, Carol Service, Carolyn Marshall and Helen Timpany for leading the course with such care and commitment.

Women's Zoom Lunch, which ran weekly online from October 2022, continued through the winter until March 2023. My thanks to Paula Bennett and Vicky Harris for hosting and leading this small, but precious place of fellowship. It was beautiful to have bible study and prayer together and hear testimonies of God's faithfulness and goodness from so many women who came and shared with us.

In April 2023 I am really pleased that we started a new partnership with Citizen's Advice Hart, with their outreach support worker, Caroline, offering a regular drop-in for local people to receive free, confidential advice and support here at St John's. Caroline now visits Bumps and Babies and Forget Me Not Café once a month and anyone is welcome come and have an informal chat to find out more about benefits, housing, energy bills and so much more.

At the beginning of July, we hosted a new event called Dying Matters. People could come and talk in small groups about the subject of death and dying, over a cup of tea. While, on the surface, this might seem like an unhappy topic of discussion, it was encouraging to see how many people came and found the time together beneficial. There can be real peace and freedom in sitting with the things we find difficult or even frightening, alongside others we trust, and remembering that God is there with us too. Thank you to everyone who helped, both with leading the small groups and preparing and serving the lovely afternoon tea.

Throughout the summer of 2023 Angie, Ali Harris and I visited some life groups and church ministries, to carry out a spiritual needs survey of some of the senior people in the St John's community. Thank you to each of these groups for welcoming us and being open to answering our questions.

It was really good to spend time with the different groups and reassuring to hear that the majority of people felt they knew where to turn for spiritual support and pastoral care. Thank you for all the ideas and suggestions shared. The Pastoral Care and Discipleship Committee have reviewed these and look forward to following them up with appropriate responses throughout 2024.

In September, I was delighted to launch a new, free, weekly wellbeing space called 'The Well', running on Monday mornings, 10-11:30am in Meeting Room 1. The purpose of The Well is to offer a very informal, drop in space, where people can come and be refreshed. There is tea and coffee, books to read, colouring, painting, knitting and plenty of friendly chat. It has been great to see people come and enjoy meeting others and giving themselves some time to slow down.

October saw the launch of 'Come and Cook'. Running once a month until March 2024, these basic cooking lessons aim to help people learn how to cook healthy, good value, tasty meals for only £2 a session. Thanks to Millie Deane and Jane Cook who have pioneered this new venture, with their brilliant skills of cooking and hospitality. It is wonderful to see guests coming and engaging with the lessons, and then sharing a meal together to enjoy what they've made. It is really good to be able to show care to our community by empowering them to learn new skills.

In November we gathered as a church family to celebrate 10 years of the church centre. As part of our celebrations, we made a vision tree and asked everyone to contribute their prayerful suggestions of what hopes we have for the next 10 years of the church centre. To represent pastoral care ministry, we had some nests on the tree and asked people to write on an egg who they would like St John's to be a place of nurture, safety and growth for. Thank you to everyone who wrote on an egg. I am really excited to build on many of your suggestions in 2024.



On 2nd December we held Christmas in the Dark, for those who have lost loved ones or suffered bereavement. As with previous years, the service was well attended and gave people a chance to reflect on God's light and comfort in those places of darkness. Thank you to all who lead and supported the service so sensitively.



2023 came to a close with us making and giving out some beautiful candles and Christmas cards to those who have had a difficult year or just needed some extra care at Christmas. Alongside this, we gave gift cards to those we were aware of who needed some extra support. Thanks to Angie, Lisa Walker and Helen Cain for their help to make the gifts and shine the light of God's love in the festive season.



As 2023 draws to a close, we are receiving increasing requests to offer pastoral care and support to local individuals. It is encouraging that people are reaching out to St John's for help, but in order to meet these needs we need more people willing to offer help. If you would like to know more about how you can help with pastoral care, please get in touch with me.

Sylvia Evans-Pritchard, Pastoral Care Co-ordinator

Bumps and Babies

'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.'

Psalm 107:1

'You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.'

2 Corinthians 9:11-12

In 2023 Bumps and Babies went through some changes, continued to grow, and welcomed many new parents and children, and some new helpers.



First, the changes. Up until this year Bumps & Babies had been an independent group, operating in the church halls with the generosity of St John's PCC, with strong links to the church and Mothers Union. This year we moved under the church's ministry, formally contributing to the Family and Children's work in the church. We now have a bible verse each month, linked to the Fruits of the Spirit, with other relevant verses for the months of December and Easter month, which is projected onto the screen during the session and available as a postcard for people to take away. In addition to this, we have added the song 'Our God is a great big God' to our music spot at 11:00.

Our attendance has continued to increase. We were open for 44 weeks, closing for Bank Holidays, and had an average of 125 visitors per week, with a total of 5,486 visits for the year. Amongst that number were 202 new families who joined us. With so many visitors we are so grateful for the Lord's continuing protection over the group.

We were very blessed to welcome two new helpers this year, Jan Daborn and Margaret Filley. Vicky Harris who had helped us during her placement at St John's which finished last year, has continued to help and it is a pleasure to have her with us.

A huge thank you to the whole team, whose enthusiasm and dedication make Bumps what it is. It is such a pleasure to start our week with this wonderful service to the Lord.

Sue Cooper

Forget-me-not-Café

“Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you: I will sustain you and I will rescue you.” Isaiah 46:4:4

As I sat down to write this report, the following message dropped into my inbox, and I felt it told our story better than I would:

‘My husband and I went to the FORGET-ME-NOT-CAFÉ for several years. It was established in 2014 to provide a safe haven for those living with dementia and their carers. What it meant to us was I didn’t have to put a brave face on our situation and he didn’t have to pretend to follow a conversation or know who he was talking to.

The volunteers are a super group of people who are caring, understanding and thoughtful. They just chat and we laugh and joke, drink tea, eat cake and play games, read memory books – it’s food for the soul. For me, I was with people who understood what I was going through and we made friends with kindred spirits who supported each other, all made possible through the FORGET-ME-NOT-CAFÉ!’

In September FGMNC will have been opening its doors on Tuesday afternoons for 10 years except during the Covid pandemic. Due to the generosity of St. John’s, we are able to offer this service free of charge.

We are also very grateful to our band of amazing volunteers, who give their time so willingly, with kindness, humour and patience each week. Too numerous to mention by name, but you know who you are, and how much you are appreciated. FGMNC would not be here without you!

We have enjoyed our usual summer BBQ and Christmas Lunch, plus entertainment from HAG Rock Choir, Fleet U3A Ukulele Band and Dogmersfield School Choir to name a few.

We are grateful for the sponsorship received this year, as grants dwindle, we feel blessed to have these donations.

The attached photos show some of our guests enjoying an excellent Christmas Lunch; you may spot some familiar faces in one of them!



Judy Giles

Naomi's Footsteps

Naomi's Footsteps continues to flourish and we have acquired some new members.

We have enjoyed some very interesting talks which include Moira Lewin telling us about her work with refugees, Derek Trendall brought us his amazing photographs of the Galapagos Islands, Dave entertained us with a quiz entitled Church of Thrones. One of our regular attendees, Jacky Harding, reminisced about her life growing up in Africa and we enjoyed a visit from Caroline Sutton of Citizen's Advice.

In August, we don't normally meet as so many of our ladies are away or busy with grandchildren but as Angie, our vicar, expressed an interest in coming to meet some of the ladies, it was lovely to welcome her.

In September, we were treated to a talk by Stuart Rost who is a bank note designer of international currency. His talk was very fascinating as we learnt of the precision and secure features with which notes are designed. In October, Michael Edgar who is a retired orthopaedic surgeon, told us about the development and improvement in artificial hips and knees over the years.

Finally, in November, Violet McMonnies returned to demonstrate to us more of her festive table decorations.

We would welcome any suggestions of possible speakers as it is not easy to find people who have something interesting to talk to us about, but bearing in mind we do not pay.

Pippa le Roux

Section 5 – Discipleship

Life Groups

As well as worshipping together on a Sunday, St Johns offers midweek Life Groups as spaces to gather in a smaller group to build community and deepen faith. These groups meet throughout the week in different places and at different times to read the Bible together, discuss faith and think about what it means for our lives today. They are also a place of support and prayer; where friendships are deepened and prayer requests shared. This year at St Johns we've had 14 life groups running throughout the year.

We started the year all meeting together on Thursday evenings with two different courses on offer: The Bible course produced by the Bible Society and The School of Theology: Old Testament from St Mellitus College. We also ran the School of Theology on Thursday mornings to cater for our day time life groups. This generated much discussion and debate, and it was a real encouragement to be together. As well as this we've used various resources throughout the year including Jill Duff's book 'Lighting the Beacons', and we've spent time in the Farewell Discourse in John's Gospel and Isaiah 9 for our advent notes.

We've also continued to meet together as Life Group Leaders once a term, and it's been a real encouragement to hear how the groups are going and to hear feedback from the leaders. For our March leaders meeting Dr Jane Thompson also came and shared with us about how to spiritually care for ourselves as leaders, and this was very gratefully received.

I'd love to thank all our life group leaders who are incredibly generous with their time, and who are doing brilliantly at encouraging and serving their groups!

Amy Bianchi, Life Group Coordinator

Section 6 – Children and Young People

Youth Café

Following on from the closure of YouthQuake (due to the lack of volunteers that seems to have affected everything since Covid) Youth Café was started as a way of maintaining contact with youth in the area while pausing, praying through new strategy and the opportunities available. The café provides youth with a safe place to meet friends, enjoy a hot chocolate/cold drinks with a toasted sandwich (all free) on a drop-in basis from when the senior school buses drop them back in the village till 6pm. This means that there is no Christian input per se, but the café was only ever seen as a temporary holding arrangement before launching a more robust programme. However, plans change and our wonderful Youth Worker, Sam Blackwell left, reducing the Youth Café team to the two of us, and also halving the number of attendees from 15 to 7. We currently have youth from both Robert Mays and Yateley, previous we had youth from the Sixth form colleges and private schools as well, so a lovely mix all getting on well together.

The Christmas term saw the regular attendance of 7 youth with no church connection, and the development of the evening into a games night, with charades, Dobble, and categories being firm favourites. Sam came back for a Christmas party games evening which was very much enjoyed.

Over the Christmas holidays further volunteers came forward so there is now a team of 8 leaders. However, further reductions to the numbers attending also occurred, with families moving from the village and other youth starting after school clubs. We now have a regular core of 4 youth, although this can range from 6 – 1! The Café really needs to be advertised through the schools and in the local magazines to draw in more youths but, without a clear leader or a clear strategy to use/grow the club to evangelise, this is currently unrealistic. Please join us in praying for the next round of Youth Pastor Advertisements as we really need someone to spear-head this area of outreach.

Jess Arthur, Helen Harwood

DisCo

Disco (the Disciple Company) is St John's group for young people aged 11-13 (school years 7 to 9) and meets in the youth room in the church centre on Sunday mornings during the 10.45am service. The young people start in the main service and go to their own group after the first worship song, returning just before the end of the service. The group is normally led by the Youth Pastor and so for the first half of 2023 was led by Sam Blackwell together with a volunteer helper each week. The group averaged around 8 people each week. With the new school year in September, most of the Disco group were old enough to move to the older Youth Group, Enthuse.

At the same time, Sam moved on into teaching RE in a school leaving the Disco group to be led in the Autumn term by 4 volunteers on a rota basis, assisted by a volunteer helper each week (often a parent). A number of young people moved up to Disco in September from the children's group, Blaze, forming a new enthusiastic group. Normal attendance in the Autumn term was 5 to 7. A theme is chosen for each term, for example in the Autumn term we did a series on the names of God eg. Creator, Provider, Everlasting, etc, and each weekly session includes time to eat some breakfast together and catch up, exploration of the faith topic and a fun game to finish.

Trudy Rankin

Enthuse

Enthuse, the St John's youth group for 14-18's met term time on Thursday evenings from January to July, and then Sunday evenings from September to December in the youth room in the church centre. The group is usually between 10-15 and drinks and snacks feature together with conversation about the bible or faith in each session.

We were really sad to say goodbye to Sam Blackwell in August as he began the Teach First training programme as a RE teacher in Cove Secondary School. He had come to us in the summer of 2020 and rebuilt the youth ministry during and after the pandemic. His caring and open way, including and accepting everyone forged a strong community.

In the spring term Enthuse joined in with the Bible Course watching together with everyone else and having their own group discussion. After September Enthuse sessions were led by Angie with Amy & Nikita regularly supporting and we trialled some 'Late' night worship sessions once a month together with the Young Adult life group. We also ate together every month - thanks to Millie for cooking for us. On other weeks we have a 'bible bit' using Energize materials and often a Bible Project Video as well as the obligatory silly game! Enthuse enjoyed a trip to Soul Survivor Watford for a worship evening (and the MacDonalDs on the way back!), being part of the church outreach to the community by serving at Carols on the Common and celebrated Christmas together with a Pizza and film night!

Satellites

The highlight of the year is the Satellites Youth Camp in mid-august at the Bath and West Showground. Despite the (almost constant) rain everyone's spirits stayed high and many found the talks and worship moving, some compelled to make a commitment. Late night worship (particularly Ellie Limebear), playing in the football tournament, worm wars (ask them to explain!) and the North Korean children speaking about being a Christian in the country where persecution is worst in the world were their top rated parts of the whole camp.

See if you can guess who went from the personalized T shirt names!!



Rev'd Angie Smith

Children & Families

Kids Church

Our Kids Church groups, Blaze and Sparks have continued to enjoy meeting together on Sunday mornings.

Our under-fives group, Sparks, love exploring Bible stories through play. We spent the Spring and Summer exploring the parables and in the Autumn we returned to the key stories from the Old Testament.

Blaze, our primary school aged group, enjoyed the same teaching series as the adults throughout the spring and the summer particularly liking David's story and celebrating the Coronation. During the Autumn we followed a series looking at the Fruit of the Spirit which really captured the children's interest. Each week there was great excitement to discover which 'fruit' we would be focussing on and we created a piece of artwork to reflect our response each week. These now proudly decorate our room and remind us of how we can display the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Thank you to all the children's teams for your hard work and dedication. We always need more people to help so if you would like to join the team and help the children of our church grow in their faith please do come and talk to Claire, we'd love to have you on board.

Family Fun Days

We have continued to hold events every term using crafts and activities to help families explore a theme. These are extremely popular events attracting between 60-70 people each time.

In February we found out just how big God's love for us is. On Palm Sunday we braved a cold wind and used nature to discover the Easter story. In October we held a drop in Light Party in conjunction with the Youth Café. We learned to **G.L.O.W** – be **Gods Light** in **Our World**. Finally in December we explored the Christmas story by building Gingerbread Nativity sets. Lots more family fun is being planned for 2024 and we are looking to grow the team so please join us!

Holiday Club

In August we resumed our popular Children's Holiday Club. This year over 50 children went on a Jungle Safari exploring the Nature of God. We discovered that God is our Creator, Provider, Protector, Saviour and King through crafts, games, stories and songs. A big thank you to the magnificent team of volunteers who went on the journey.



Outreach

As well as all the events we have been putting on at the church we have also been out and about engaging with children and families in the community. The Christmas market was a highlight, despite being windy and wet, and we had many families follow our Children's trail, with some good conversations huddled around the hot chocolate.

We welcomed the cub scouts into the church in November to complete their faith badge. We spent time thinking about what people do in a church and why and then had a time of reflection and prayer.

Schools Work

At Easter we once again welcomed the local schools to come into the church for an 'Easter Experience' This was an interactive journey around several reflection stations following the events of Holy week. We set up the experience in both All Saints Church, Dogmersfield, and St John's and had several hundred children visit over the week. A big thank you to the team that helped to set up and run this experience for the children.



As always it is wonderful to welcome the Greenoaks Federation schools, Oakwood and Greenfields to the church for their Christmas Carol Concerts. The children sang beautifully and both services were packed with parents and grandparents enjoying the occasion. We have also had the opportunity to run some assemblies in the school and look forward to more in 2024,

A small team continue to lead collective worship at Dogmersfield school every week. Each term has a particular theme which we explore using relevant Bible stories and think about how it applies to our lives.

Claire Parker

Governors

St John's church members Angie Smith, Sue Cooper and Philip Baylis continue to be Foundation Governors at Dogmersfield C of E Primary School, because of our benefice connections and were pleased to be joined by Lauren Weeks in 2023.

Rev'd Angie Smith

Section 7 – Mission & Evangelism

Mission Partners Local and Overseas

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

St John’s HW provides regular support, through prayer, friendship and finance, to a number of local and overseas mission partners. Our overseas mission partners for a number of years have been the Anglican Diocese of Sittwe in Myanmar, the Diocese of Bunyoro Kitara in Uganda, and the Peart Family working with the Anglican church and community in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, through the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Locally we support The Hope Hub, a charity working with the homeless and vulnerable in Camberley, Junction 5, a money advice charity in Hook, and Nazareth Way, working to support women in Send Prison, including preparation for leaving prison. We also have an allowance available for overseas emergency aid or local support at the vicar’s discretion and for encouraging young people to undertake mission.

The mission partners for 2023 to 2024 were selected during the 3 year mission review which took place at the end of 2021. In 2023 the funds were allocated as follows:

	2023
Uganda, Bunyoro-Kitara Diocese	£3,000
Myanmar, Sittwe Diocese	£6,333
CMS – Peart family in Bolivia	£6,333
The Hope Hub	£4,334
Nazareth Way (Send Prison)	£3,000
Junction 5	£1,000
Vicar's Discretion/ Emergency funding	£1,000
Youth and children matched funding	£500
Total disbursements	£25,500

In 2023 the £1000 Emergency Funding was donated to Tear Fund for the Syria/Turkey Earthquake appeal.

The next 3 year mission review will take place towards the end of 2024 when the PCC will agree the mission partners and allocations for 2025-2027. The wider church will be asked for input into the process at that time but if you have any thoughts on future mission partners feel free to discuss with Angie Smith or any of the PCC.

Trudy Rankin

Section 8 - Local Outreach

While we support external mission partner organisations, our local day to day activities at St John's HW provide our key opportunities for all of us to engage in mission. Our vision at St John's is to reach out to our community to see everyone know the fullness of God's love in Jesus through our welcome, worship, work and witness. Throughout the week the Church Centre is bustling with activity with helpful courses such as Alpha and Kintsugi Hope, Community events such as the monthly Community Lunches, the weekly Bumps and Babies group and weekly well-being drop-in spaces (including one for teenagers), and occasional community events such as Create for Christmas and the popular Quiz Night. In addition, underpinning all of this activity, our vibrant coffee shop is open 6 mornings a week, plus for a short time following the 10.45am Sunday service, offering great coffee, home-made cakes and a warm welcome to all. Through all this activity, the staff and army of volunteers from St John's aim to share God's love in our community.

Trudy Rankin

Alpha

Alpha is a ten week course which provides an opportunity to explore and question the meaning of life and the Christian faith. Many people at St John's and around the world have come to faith, or gone deeper in their faith, through Alpha. Each session starts with a meal together, followed by a film and discussion in small groups.

In 2023 we ran two courses. The first took place on Monday evenings from September to December with 13 guests and a second course with 9 guests was held on Thursday afternoons from mid-October 2023 to January 2024. Both courses were held in the church centre. The evening course started each session with a home-cooked 2 course meal prepared and served by one of the St John's Life Groups. The afternoon course was held from 2-4pm, a timing which suited this particular group of guests, and we commenced the afternoon with tea and cake, mostly supplied by generous bakers from St John's. There were 3 or 4 leaders for each session, making a perfect "life group" size group for discussions and we saw the Holy Spirit move and lives changed. The Monday evening group have continued meeting together on Monday evenings, forming a new life group, led by Helen Harwood and Giles Evans-Pritchard.

Many thanks to all those who so generously and willingly gave of their time and energy to enable these courses to take place. Particular thanks to Noel Armstrong, Helen Harwood, Giles Pritchard, and Paul Main who joined me in leading the courses but also, we are very grateful for the generosity and love demonstrated by the Life Groups who provided and served the meals. The opportunity to get to know each other during a meal together each week is a major feature of the Alpha course so thank you to all who contributed in any way.

Many thanks also go to the group who faithfully provided prayer support for these Alpha courses. It is wonderful that the whole body of the church works together to make Alpha possible.

Attending Alpha has made a big difference to the lives of many and we want to see this continue. Our next course will begin at the end of Sept 2024. Please invite your friends and neighbours and, if you have never attended Alpha yourself, come and try it. It is a fantastic opportunity to review the basics of your faith and to deepen friendships with others within the church. If you are interested in getting involved in leading a future course, please let me know.

Trudy Rankin

Creation Care

'Therefore, the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.'

Hosea 4:3

Once again, the Creation Care team has struggled a bit in the past year due to having a very small team who all have other commitments.

Our PCC declared a Climate Emergency back in 2021 and we have secured Bronze and Silver Eco-Church awards. The Gold award however is proving to be much more elusive and needs a level of commitment from our Church which we still need to achieve.

In September we once again used the Creationtide liturgy and Angie focused on environmental issues in her sermons.

We have also supported the creation of the 'Hartley Wintney Climate Action' group made up of people in the community with a heart for the environment and led by Chris Farrance. St Johns have offered the Church centre for meetings without charge. The group started meeting early in 2023 and a Panel evening in April launched it to the community. The evening attracted much interest with four excellent speakers and as a result two smaller groups were formed, one focusing on sustainable energy and one on Biodiversity. These groups still exist but have lost some momentum and need individuals with the time and passion to take them forward. The group invited local MP Ranil Jaywardena to meet them and members of the local community at St John's in October where questions were asked on a variety of Climate and Sustainability issues.

Also in April, Angie, Sam, Ruth, Alison and Lucinda all represented St John's at 'The Big One' - a four day climate event in London which began with a service at St John's Church, Waterloo and culminated in a gathering outside the houses of parliament.

Sam Chandler represents St John's in the Hart Climate Emergency meetings that also commenced in the Autumn of 2023. At the moment, we are the only church in Hart that is represented. We are represented alongside local businesses, schools and individuals.

The Creation Care group believes that the Climate Crisis presents the greatest threat to the world we live in. We believe that radical change in the way we live and in how industry operates in the world is needed to avert disaster. We hope that in the coming year, we can have more opportunities to encourage our church community to become more aware of the situation and want to work for change. Helen May began a wilding project on the area around the buildings at St Johns before she went on maternity leave - this is ongoing and needs individuals to take it forward to make this area attractive to wildlife and in particular pollinators and insect life. We are still hoping to be able to achieve the Eco-Church Gold Award.

St John's Creation Care Group:

Sam Chandler, Ruth Jarman, Lucinda Pitcher, Helen May, Miranda Holness, Alison Tebbs

Coffee Shop

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."

Matthew 25:35

Despite, not having the exact figures to hand, we can safely conclude that 2023 was even busier than 2022, in the Coffee Shop. We have definitely become the place of choice for lots of people (who aren't necessarily Christian), who just want to relax in pleasant surroundings. (Is there a nicer location in the village, than our patio?) Our Bacon and Egg rolls on Saturday, have become a huge attraction for people. This is down to Gary, and his dedicated team of 'Bacon Bashers' (as his group like to call themselves). They have provided a great alternative to our sweeter offerings, in the Coffee Shop. There is one large group of friends who spend the majority of Saturday morning, enjoying our food and drink.

Our extended use of the foyer during the week, (and particularly on Friday and Saturdays), for customers has been helpful in allowing us to cater for more people, without a feeling of a cramped environment.

Thanks to Lesley's excellent work on keeping up full bookings, we also benefit from people attending events in the Church Centre. (eg. Colour Wheel, Alpha Away Days, Repair Café.) In addition, the Coffee Shop has also attracted the attention of a number of social and sporting groups, (eg.. Cycling, Walking, Running, Pilates, WI, including a Catholic Church group), who regularly end their sessions with coffee and cake with us.

The increased customer demand has meant more pressure on our wonderful volunteers. As always, we can do with additional help, so if anyone would like to join our great team, (even, once a month) we would be happy to welcome anyone who is interested. It is a wonderful way to meet local people.

As in previous years, the Duke of Edinburgh scheme has provided us with a number of young volunteers, particularly on Saturdays. Bethany, Izzie, and Millie have been extremely helpful to us, although we are always aware that they may not be able to continue, once their scheme participation has ended.

As always (as in life), we have comings and goings. We have sadly had to say farewell to our lovely Louisa Bunting who moved away from Hartley Wintney, last autumn. She was a stalwart of the Coffee Shop, working on weekdays, and weekends, as well as co-ordinating the Sunday Rota, and most importantly organising our wonderful bakers. She is a huge loss, and we thank her for all her years of support to the Church Centre and the Coffee Shop, in particular.

We have been very lucky to have Carolyn Hazell step into this pivotal role. She is doing a wonderful job continuing to provide scrumptious cakes for our customers.

We are very aware that apart from its important role as a centre for outreach to people who aren't necessarily Christians, the Coffee Shop also provides very considerable income to St John's. However, nothing can be taken for granted, and sometimes we have to invest in the future, just to keep our customer base.

We continue to look for ways to improve our service and are planning some changes to the furniture and counter in 2024 to enhance the look of the Coffee Shop to visitors.

As we race through 2024, we are aware of the increasing challenges that face us in the Coffee Shop, and beyond. Our hope is that our Coffee Shop provides a little bit of tranquillity, fellowship and sustenance to all our visitors, in a world that is full of turmoil.

The Coffee Shop Team: Helen Cain, June Shorey, Helen Timpany,
Glenn Sweeney, Gary Cook

Kitchen Report

We started the year with a vigorous Hygiene Audit by Hart Council on the 4th Jan. St Johns maintained a 5 rating, thank you all who helped with the difficult session.

We ran 2 Health and Safety sessions in March, which ran through Kitchen Hygiene.

The Community Lunches continue to be successful. In September we won the Parish Council Community Award for these lunches - Photos attached. We increased to admission to £6 in May.



Catering has continued with Funerals, Bring and Share Lunches, Enthuse Youth and the Forget Me Not Christmas Meal was cooked by the kitchen team making money for St Johns - rather than outside Caterers.

In October we started Come and Cook sessions, these are to help people in the village on a tight budget, to learn cook meals from scratch, to help with budgets, healthy, balanced and nutritious meals.

I purchased approx. 16 Vogue Gastromme Trays during the year, these help to cook and serve for the Community Lunches and any big Function. These were paid for by monies I have been given for talks I have done in the parish.

We have done some training in catering and serving with an individual, to look at a possible job in the catering industry going forwards. This is something we can look at going forwards on a one-to-one basis.

Please may I take this opportunity to thank all the people who help in the kitchen, it's a great team to be part of. Blessings to all.

Millie Deane

Hart Foodbank

With the cost-of-living crisis biting deeper into people's budgets, Hart Foodbank suffered the double whammy of reducing donations and increasing demands. Our donations in Hartley Wintney were no exception, falling from 6.25 tonnes in 2022 to 5.94 tonnes in 2023. A high proportion of gifts to the foodbank come from a few very loyal and very generous supporters, but every donation helps and is appreciated.

Collection Points were re-labelled Drop-off Points to avoid confusion. A few that were poorly supported have closed but others have been added, including Oakwood and Greenfields schools, Tesco Express, Caterpillars Pre-school (Victoria Hall) and the Cricket Pavilion.

We now gather the local donations at St John's before they are taken each week to the Hart Foodbank "warehouse" (former public toilets!) in Fleet. Harvest festival donations, from local churches and schools across the district, caused a spike in donations which almost overwhelmed the volunteers at the foodbank warehouse. Harvest gifts from St John's were shared as usual with The Hope Hub.

If there's not a collection point in your road, maybe you would consider hosting a foodbank box at your home or your business. Support and signage are provided, so contact me to check out what's involved. Please talk about the foodbank to your friends and neighbours, making them aware of the needs of those in our community who are struggling, and also pray for more people in our parish to be generous in responding to their needs.

Thank you for your support.

Ken Shorey



In the summer holiday we trialled 'Basics Bags' containing some food staples left in the foyer and porch for those struggling but who might not like to ask for help. Some were taken. In other instances, we give Tesco's food vouchers discretely and appreciate being directed to those who might benefit from some help.

Angie Smith

Contact Magazine

Contact continues to be the primary means of communicating parish matters to the church and wider community in a hard copy, physical form. From comments received this is widely appreciated particularly by the older generation of readers. Contact is a handy reference point for all of the many church's activities and articles by our regular writer Irene Airton often produce favourable comments.

The committee is well aware of the many competing forms of communication and keep these under review. But there is significant advantage in providing a magazine in which the church has ultimate editorial control.

The viability of Contact relies solely on the income from the advertisers which pays the cost of printing by Imprint, our long-established printing company. There is some evidence that fewer advertisers are choosing Contact now which may impact overall viability. This is also being monitored carefully by the committee. It is always interesting to hear the views of our readers on these matters and on what you read in Contact.

Mike Sisson, Chairman

Appendices

Appendix A – Agenda & Minutes

Please see attached.

Appendix B – Financial Reports

Please see the associated Annual Trustees Report and Financial Statements.

Appendix C – Safeguarding Policy 2024

The following policy was agreed at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) held on Sunday 28th April 2024.

In accordance with Church of England Safeguarding policy our church is committed to:-

- Promoting a safer environment and culture
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse or other affected persons
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others

The Parish will:

- Create a safe caring place for all
- Have a named Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) to work with the incumbent and the PCC to implement policy and procedures
- Safely recruit, train and support all those with any responsibility for children, young people and adults to have confidence and skills to recognise and respond to abuse
- Ensure that there is appropriate insurance cover for all activities involving children and adults undertaken in the name of the parish
- Display in the church premises and on the parish website the details of who to contact if there are any safeguarding concerns or support needs
- Listen to and take seriously all those who disclose abuse
- Take steps to protect children and adults when a safeguarding concern of any kind arises, following House of Bishops guidance, including notifying the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) and statutory agencies immediately
- Offer support to victims/survivors of abuse regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred
- Care for and monitor any member of the church community who may pose a risk to children and adults whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality and the safety of all parties
- Ensure that health and safety policy, procedures and risk assessments are in place and that these are reviewed annually
- Review the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practices at least annually

Each person who works within this church community will agree to abide by this policy and the guidelines established by this church.

This church appoints Moira Lewin as the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO).

Incumbent

Churchwardens

Date: 28.04.2024

SFM Dashboard for the Parish of Hartley Wintney w Elvetham: St John the Evangelist in the deanery of ODIHAM

Parish Census and deprivation summary
Parish population (2021): 5968

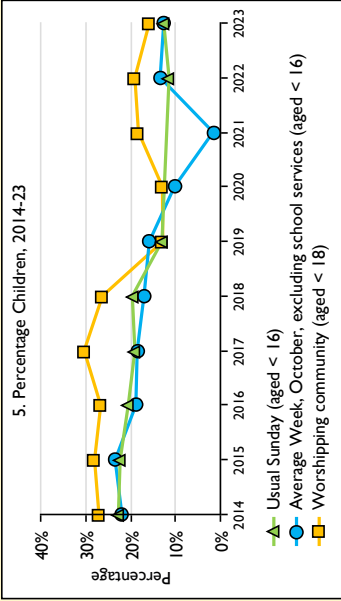
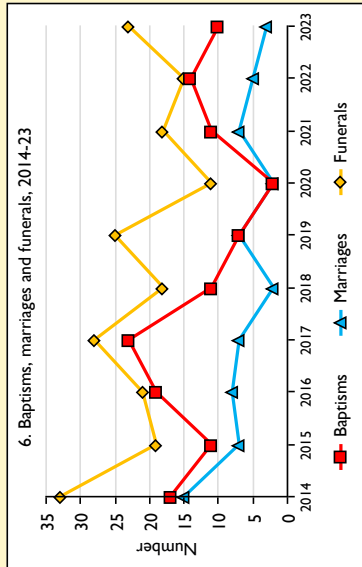
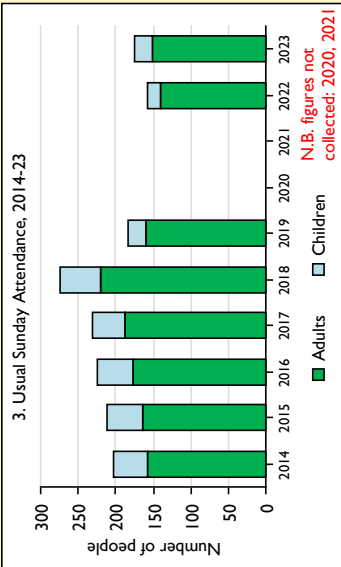
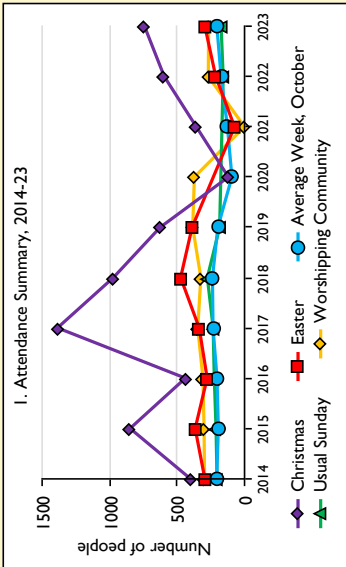
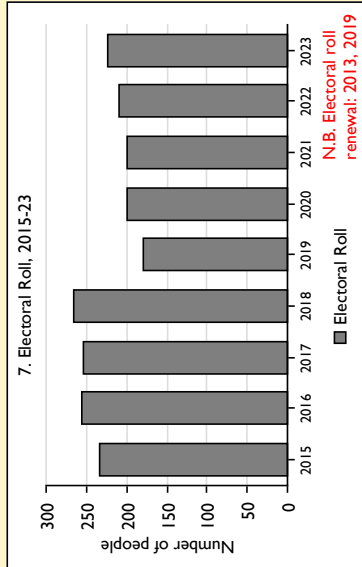
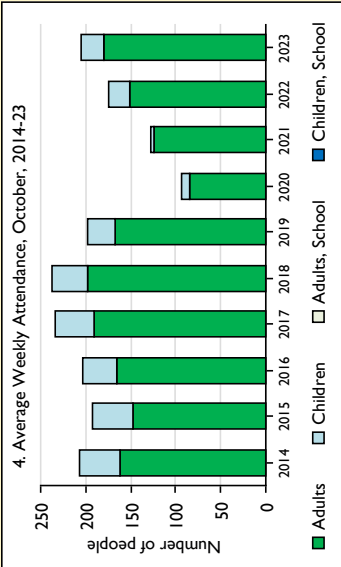
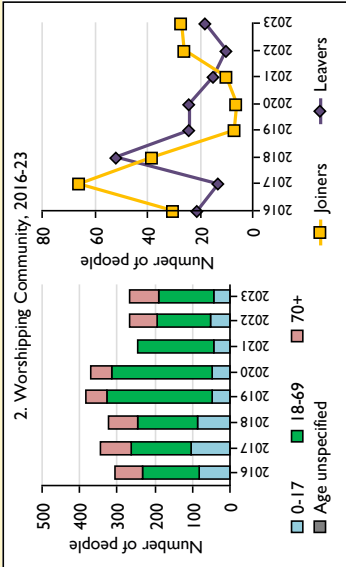
	Parish	Diocese	National
% aged 0-19	22%	22%	23%
% aged 20-44	24%	32%	33%
% aged 45-69	34%	31%	31%
% aged 70 & over	19%	15%	14%
% Christian	52%	47%	46%
% non-Christian religion	2%	5%	11%

Parish deprivation rank (MD 2019): 10638
(1=most deprived parish in the Church of England, 12,239=least deprived)

For more detailed census & deprivation info: see <http://arcg.is/IRa54CS>
<https://www.churchofengland.org/researchandstats> and
<http://www2.cdr.org.uk/poverty-england/poverty-map>

Number of churches in parish (2024): 1

Parish Code: 410118



This dashboard contains figures as submitted by churches currently in the parish
Attendance statistics: taken from annual Statistics for Mission returns.
Average weekly attendance: attendance at Sunday and midweek church services & fresh expressions in October; Figs 1 & 5 do not include attendance at services for schools.
Easter: Easter Eve & Easter Day; Christmas: Christmas Eve & Christmas Day.
Baptisms: all baptisms & thanksgivings.
Marriages: marriages and services of prayer & dedication after civil marriages.
Funerals: those held in church & at crematoria/cemeteries.
Because of pandemic-related church closures, Easter figures were not collected in 2020.
Census data: taken from the 2021 national Census.
Deprivation statistics: IMD taken from the English Indices of Deprivation, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, Sept 2019.
The above statistics have been mapped onto parish boundaries so are approximations.
For more information, see: <https://www.churchofengland.org/researchandstats>

Variations in attendance from year to year may be the result of changes in the number of churches that submitted returns, or changes in parish/benefice structure.

Number of churches included in returns: 2014 1;2015 1;2016 1;2017 1;2018 1;2019 1;2020 1;2021 1;2022 1;2023 1.

Produced by Data Services, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ. Date of production: 13/04/2024.

Every effort has been made to ensure that data are reliable. We would be pleased to be notified of any significant errors or omissions by email to statistics.unit@churchofengland.org

Follow us on Twitter:
[@cofestats](https://twitter.com/cofestats)



<https://www.churchofengland.org/researchandstats>



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND