



St Stephen's Church
Annual Parochial Church Report for 2023

Vicar's Reports

CAP – Christian Action on Poverty

St Stephen's is affiliated with CAP through the Anglican parish of Herne Hill and the community church Beacon Church, Brixton. Our local CAP provides debt counselling, Job clubs and a very popular Christmas Hamper, given to about 80 people known to the CAP workers. In 2022 St Stephen's has helped with the Christmas Hamper scheme and either Fr Tomos or the Vicar have attended steering group meetings. In 2023 the PCC supported the work of CAP by contributing £7000 to running costs. My hope is that St Stephen's can get more closely involved with the debt counselling and job club side of things so that some of the poorer residents of the parish St Stephen's can also benefit from these. For this we need to have volunteers from our congregation training in these roles.

Window front page writing

The purpose of this piece of writing is to provide people with a 'thought for the week'. It is meant to be formative in the Christian faith (an alternative to or addition to the sermon). It could be something topical (responding to what the media are preoccupied with), it could be something to do with readings or liturgical themes of that particular week or it could be 'drawing our attention to a poem or a picture'. The front page can cope with a length of between 150 and 275 words! It is not a noticeboard for forthcoming events. I normally print about 200 copies and members of the congregation take them home and distribute them to the homebound and/or friends. It is available all week at the church (at the times when it is open for prayer etc) and on notice boards. I also add it into parish correspondence, when appropriate. The FP is also a weekly feature on our parish website under the 'thought for the week', and back copies are available there. In 2023 regular writers included: The Vicar, Heather Savini, Susan Patterson, James Fraser and Tabitha Singh new writer volunteers, please contact the Vicar

CCJ South East London

St Stephen's is affiliated to the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) the oldest interfaith grouping in England that also has local branches. Our local branch is chaired by the Vicar. Branch meetings are held either at St Stephen's or at Bromley Synagogue, or sometimes also at Catford Synagogue. The purpose of CCJ is to model good interfaith relations through friendship and listening together and secondly to honour the memory of the Holocaust through education and calling out racism and prejudice. In 2023 we had a meeting entitled 'Is there a role today for Christianity and/or Judaism in setting standards for British public service?' and our speakers on that occasion were: Daniel Greenberg, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and Sir Simon Hughes (ex MP for Bermondsey), who stood in for Helen Hayes MP. And a talk entitled: "Eradicating Christian and Jewish perceptions of God in the Bible: Richard Wagner, his pagan musical religion and its consequences" given by Dr Margaret Brearley, sometime antisemitism advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Context based ordination training at St Stephen's

In the year of 2023 St Stephen's hosted a theological student who is being trained for ordination in a context-based course through St Augustine's College, our diocesan theological ordination training institution. Tabitha Singh has made much appreciated contributions to the life and faith practice of St Stephen's, while at the same time being supervised by me and receiving ample feedback from the congregation on her preaching. As well as learning through 'doing and reflecting' cycles, Tabitha has brought new ideas to the mission of St Stephen's. In particular we have been blessed to hear about and pray for Christian minorities in India, and Indian Communities in the UK.

German Service

At the end of the year 2023 we started a new mission initiative at St Stephen's: a service during which the only language used was German. Partly as a response to BREXIT, Germans who live in South London London have become more conscious about retaining some of their German heritage for their children. In our part of London there are five German language biased nurseries and one state funded primary school that uses German as a medium language (Judith Kerr School). St Stephen's has started offering a German language church service which is also Anglican in character, so that Protestants and Catholics from German speaking countries can feel welcome. The curate from St John's East Dulwich Revd Gemma Birt and our own Nicholas Ansdell Evans (musician and organist) have helped to start this initiative. The first service on a Saturday in December was attended by 75 people, more services are planned for 2024.

Lent Charity

The PCC decided to adopt the 'Mind and Souls Community Choir' as our Lent charity in the year 2023. Penny Fuller is the champion for this cause, she writes: Mind and Soul Community Choir hopes to raise £1120, half the cost of 14 weeks' free singing for Maudsley Hospital service users and the local community. The Choir has met since 2006 to improve health and wellbeing, a benefit in bad times as well as good. See <http://mindandsoulchoir.org>. The total raised for this in lent 2023 was £720

Dulwich Wood

During the year we strengthened our ties with our local Primary School not only in the excellent musical chances provided by Olly and the choir, but several of our congregation (and a dog) go into the school regularly to listen to children read and try to support the overstretched staff. As you probably know, the children are still suffering the mental and educational after-effects of Covid and missed school and this is an important mission. Sandra Potter is on the governing body and this secular LEA school come three times a year to have a church celebration for which St Stephen's provides an organist. If there is anyone else who can spare a couple of hours each week, please speak to Bernhard or Sandra Potter.

Bernhard Schunemann

Church Wardens' Report

Introduction

You can find elsewhere our fabric report for the past year, but as churchwardens we wanted also to include some more general reflections for the past year, which seems to have passed by in a flash.

Thanks to the wider church team

Once again we have been fortunate not only to have Bernhard as our leader and daily inspiration, but also to have many people volunteering to take responsibility for different aspects of church life, and so first and foremost we would like to thank them all for their various contributions. These include in no particular order:

- All the members of the standing committee and PCC, and especially Peter Frost as Treasurer who has overseen the introduction of our new accounting system – something that has involved a lot of extra work this year but hopefully an investment that will save time in the future!
- Oliver, Caroline and Tommy who have once again led our music activities, including the childrens' choir which continues to thrive, along with all those choir members and musicians who have participated and brought our services to life. Thanks also to this core team, assisted by the organ committee, for bringing their enthusiasm to the new organ project which is going to be challenging but has the potential to transform the musical life of the church and the wider community
- Ruth and Ray Cousins who have had to reduce their commitment this year but continue to offer valuable support and guidance – and Michael Stoney who has taken over the management of donations and gift aid from Ray.
- Our social committee who ensure that we have tea and coffee every week, along with some excellent one off events such as quiz night and Shrove Tuesday pancakes – and Steven Hicks for being an excellent quiz master.
- All of our servers, readers, sacristans and sides people, who provide invaluable support to Bernhard and contribute so much to the spiritual life of our church.
- Our safeguarding team and Sunday school leaders who make church safe and stimulating for the children in our congregation and teach them the importance of God in our lives.
- Our team of employees and contractors – most notably Sarah in the office, our caretaker Madeleine, our general helper (and wreath specialist!) Martin, and our gardener Adam.
- Felix, who has cheerfully continued to do the streaming of services on YouTube
- Our team who look after all the vestments, robes and other clothing.
- Our flower team who make everything look so beautiful.

Mission statistics

Our latest mission statistics, as filed with the Diocese for the year to December, show a small increase in overall attendances over the past year, as compared with the previous year, which is encouraging. Once again we had very large attendances over Christmas in particular, albeit slightly down on 2022.

The total number of baptisms continues to rise, although weddings have remained at a relatively low number, given the many wedding venue options that are now available.

We met with the Area Dean to review all aspects of church life and were pleased that she seemed satisfied with how everything is going!

Use of the buildings

We have continued to see high levels of usage of the church buildings and facilities over the past year, which contributes to our local community, and generates additional income for our mission. In addition to the nursery, the church hall has been used by the scouts, ballroom dance classes, the drama group Perform, children's holiday clubs, and the usual parties and similar ad hoc bookings. The church itself is also busy with recordings, concerts, Pilates and similar, alongside the role of the church and garden as a place for peaceful retreat and contemplation for anyone who is passing. Everyone who visits remarks on the beauty of the building, reminding us not to take it for granted!

Church finances

As discussed in more detail in the finance report, following the impact of recent inflation on energy prices and other church expenses, coupled with the sad death of a number of longstanding supporters of the church, it is difficult to "balance the books" and we are currently covering the shortfall in income through our reserves. We will need to address this issue in the medium term to ensure that the church remains sustainable. We hope to solve the issue through a combination of factors: further developing revenue streams from use of the buildings; increasing donations; control of costs; and a possible reduction in our contribution to the Diocese's Parish Support Fund, which represents roughly 50% of our total expenditure on an annual basis.

Conclusion

We have greatly enjoyed this past year and hope to continue to fulfil our role as churchwardens in the year to come.

Fabric report

1. In May this year, our architect Ian Angus carried out our Quinquennial Inspection, which has shaped the premises work undertaken during the year.

2. We have been able to complete substantially all of the items that Ian recommended as requiring “urgent attention” as well as addressing some of the other items from the report. The most important of the urgent items were:
 - a. Repair work to the roof, replacing cracked and broken slates – this was done with the help of scaffolding. Our roofer and architect also inspected the condition of the roof nails in the southeast corner of the nave, and that suggested that the condition of the roof was better than expected.
 - b. Clear out all gutters including high level ones, repair broken leadwork. As this required scaffolding, this work was combined with item 1 above, and we also completed the repainting of all metal gutters and downpipes.
 - c. Repairs to the external east door leading to the vestry and office – this was done including repair work to the door handle and repainting of the door and frame.
 - d. Make the tower secure from pigeons and other birds and cleaning of nests and guano. After some delay, this work was undertaken by the mobile phone contractors who have equipment in the tower.
 - e. Add protection over the cracked glass canopy above the entrance to the hall.
3. The main outstanding item from the QI report is the need to repair stonework on the east and west walls, and in particular to provide better support for the stone cross at the apex of the east wall. We are currently seeking quotations from three different builders in response to a formal specification prepared by our architect. We hope to meet these costs from existing reserves and to complete the work during the summer of 2024.
4. We have undertaken the usual routine maintenance items such as servicing of our boilers, alarms and fire extinguishers. Routine items also included minor matters such as replacement of broken lights and broken taps.
5. We have addressed a number of other miscellaneous matters during the year:
 - a. A paint spill from the nursery damaged the wooden floor in the hall, which was not possible to clean. We therefore commissioned a full renovation of the floor. We expect to recover the cost of this from our insurers.
 - b. Some tree limbs were damaged by squirrels and fell into a neighbouring garden. We commissioned a full tree survey and undertook work to ensure that all our trees are safe and healthy. This necessitated the removal of a diseased robinia tree.
 - c. Specialist repair work was undertaken to fix cracked and broken floor tiles and remove the trip hazard that they presented.
 - d. We repaired the worst parts of the York stone pathway, and jetwashed the path as well, to reduce the risk of slips and trips.
 - e. We have signed up for the Smart Export Guarantee Scheme, which should result in regular payments to the church for surplus energy generated by our solar panels.

- f. We have sought to generate some additional income by renting out two spaces in the car park.
 - g. We have maintained the CCTV camera behind the east end of the church to deter anti-social behaviour. We adopted a CCTV policy and registered with the ICO. We have nevertheless had a couple of incidents, including someone starting a small fire near the external door to the hall kitchen – fortunately this was swiftly extinguished through quick action by our caretaker Madeleine.
- 6. We received the faculty for the installation of the proposed stained-glass windows, which we hope to install later this year.
 - 7. We have maintained a logbook of all work undertaken during the year. We have also begun the process of reviewing and updating the inventory of church items that was original completed by NADFAS over 30 years ago.
 - 8. We reviewed the contract with Shared Access, in respect of the mobile phone equipment in the tower. Unfortunately, rental levels have been undermined by recent government legislation to promote broadband roll out, but we are fortunate that our contract has another 10 years to run.
 - 9. Otherwise, we have maintained revenues from use of the church and hall – in particular, through the nursery; the drama company Perform; Peter’s dance classes; and Sophie’s Pilates. We also derive regular income from recording sessions. These have become more frequent as people become aware of the quality of our piano and the attractions of our quiet location and excellent acoustics.

Barney Hearnden and Eleanor Bracken
Church Wardens

Reader’s Reports

Tuesday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer group.

Seven to 10 people attend each week on Zoom. 45 minutes of discussion followed by 15 minutes of prayer. Each week is a different style, depending on who is leading it, including compline, prayers based on the psalms, and intercessions. Susan Patterson took over the management and organisation at Easter 2023

During Lent term the group looked at 2 Samuel 7 to 1 Kings 3, and chapters from John’s gospel. During Easter term, the group discussed John Barton’s book, The History of the Bible, thinking about how the bible came into being. The term ended with the study of some of the Psalms and the characters Mary Magdalen, Peter and Paul. After the summer break, the group looked at Romans, using the book Romans for Normal People by J R Daniel Kirk.

Season of Lay Ministries

There was a season of lay ministries in January 2023, which St Stephen’s did not mark. In line with the ambition of the Church of England that the Church of England is a Christian presence in every community, the Diocese of Southwark is keen to

encourage everyone to exercise their gifts for ministry. Southwark has a wide range of recognised lay ministries. Affirmed ministries are unique to local situations, while commissioned and licensed ministries are wider in breadth and involve being in a public role. It provides training and support for all of these roles.

Deanery Synod

Both our Area Dean, the Revd Gill O'Neill, and Lay Chair, Sandra Potter, resigned in 2023. The Revd Anne Clarke became Area Dean, and Joy Taylor became Lay Chair. They are both from St John East Dulwich.

After the death of Michael Jenkins and Sandra Potter's resignation, St Stephen's has two lay members of Deanery Synod, Penny Fuller and Susan Patterson, who are in post until the next deanery synod elections in 2026

Deanery Synod met in July on Zoom and in person in November.

Each meeting starts with devotions led by a different parish and has time for each parish to share what is happening in each church. Other matters discussed at the two meetings were Living in Love and Faith, news from Diocesan Synod, and an update from our General Synod representatives.

Diocesan Synod

Diocesan Synod met on 11 March (10am-3pm), 12 July (6pm-9pm) and 18 November (10am-3pm).

General Synod updates are given when it has met. Other matters discussed were the environment and the diocese's carbon net zero action plan, ethical investment (proposed by Battersea Deanery Synod), divestment and fossil fuels. Southwark Vision, the diocese's strategy, and the Annual Report, have been presented by diocesan staff and discussed by the synod. Financial updates are given and the annual budget for 2024 was approved in November. Anyone who wants to read Diocesan Synod papers can find them here <https://southwark.anglican.org/about-us/who-we-are/governance-synods/>

***Susan Patterson
Reader***

Safeguarding Report

1. Safeguarding Awareness; our congregation should have noticed that we have "A Safer Church" notices, with contact details for help, in the porch and inside two of the lavatories (not the one used by nursery children as we do not think they would be fluent readers and might just be alarmed by picking up odd words).
2. Safeguarding is touched upon in the Standing and PCC committee meetings, though fortunately we have not had any major issues to discuss this year. My experience this year suggests that all our representatives are aware of the need to be alert, and who to contact regarding safeguarding concerns.
3. We should always keep under review changes on our and other social media, and diocesan, local authority, or police details.

4. Safeguarding Training is available from the diocese, at no cost, to committee members, officers of St Stephen's, and those with responsibilities for children and vulnerable adults on our behalf. Most topics are covered by Basic and Foundation online courses, for which registering and logging on can sometimes be tricky, particularly from mobile phones, so I am very grateful to Laura Thomas for helping our members to cross this first hurdle – Laura is younger and more fluent with the quirks of IT than I am! The courses can be downloaded and logged onto at times which suit the trainee. They take a bit of time to complete, but I have not heard that Basic and Foundation have alarmed any of us, though those asked to study Domestic Abuse have found it a bit more challenging! Please let me know if you have finished a course, as I am not automatically notified by the diocese.
5. DBS checks are made three yearly against officers of St Stephen's, those responsible for children and vulnerable adults on our behalf and employees who represent us to the public (so not e.g. our occasional gardener). It is my role to keep an eye on new, or aged, db's checks, with help from the diocese' agency who make checks on our behalf. From time to time there may be one for me to chase!
6. Safeguarding issues are confidential so you should never see a report from a Safeguarding Officer about the number or nature of issues raised. Just make sure you know the contacts shown on our "A Safer Church" notices or email me at safeguarding@ststephensdulwich.org

Please contact me with any comments on our Notices, or the training courses, or, of course, any Safeguarding issue you wish to raise.

Penny Fuller
Safeguarding Officer

Finance Report

See separate documents

Peter Frost
Treasurer

Music Report

Church Music

The adult choir stayed strong in 2023. Our soprano and alto choral scholars continued for a second year and a new bass scholar joined in September 2023 (supported by remaining funds from the Ouseley Church Music Trust as well as top-up money raised from special concerts). It was wonderful several times to welcome Jill and Jernej to play viola and clarinet in services, adding colour to our musical offering, and we also had other instrumentalists for special occasions: strings for Easter Day and Christmas Day; brass for Palm Sunday and the Carol Service. The interim electronic organ, although beautiful neither in sound nor appearance, has served the choir much more usefully than the Pulham instrument. The piano is frequently used for accompanying

in services. The repertoire was regularly added to, including several new anthems and carols.

Concerts, recordings and rehearsals

The church was again used for a plethora of external musical events in 2023: Myriad Choir, Concordia Chamber Choir, Dulwich Choral Society, and a local string quartet, and a few pupils' concerts delivered by local instrumental teachers, amongst others. St Stephen's is an important local community centre for activities musical and otherwise, and everyone comments on how well we look after them and the audiences who come to watch the performances. Several recording projects on the new piano took place, which is both a great help to the church finances and a compliment to the quality of our Kawai and the beauty of the church building. These strands of the church's mission are something we should continually strive to encourage by keeping our hire charges reasonable and our welcome warm.

***Oliver Lallemand
Director of Music***

The Choristers (Children's Choir)

The Choristers have continued to flourish in the past year. We now have over thirty children attending our regular Tuesday evening rehearsal and between fifteen and twenty singing on Sunday mornings. They are singing an anthem of their own for every service as well as joining the adult choir for other items.

This year saw their first You Tube and Spotify hit as they recorded Onward We Go which was written especially for them by Thomas Hewitt Jones www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOVsFmuCpnE. One of our choristers was awarded a place as a chorister at Christ Church College Oxford and whilst we are sad to see him go, we are immensely proud of his achievement. The choristers are working on the RSCM Voices for Life awards, which provides both musical and liturgical education, leading to medals and ribbons for each level. We now have four light blue-ribbon wearers. We have two head choristers and two deputy head choristers. A number of the choristers have been admitted to First Communion this year and many families now regularly worship at St. Stephen's since their children joined the choir. The children (and parents) have become an extraordinarily strong team and work together in a truly wonderful way. It is an absolute privilege and joy to be able to work with this group of young singers and I am very optimistic for even more success in the coming year, as well as knowing we are encouraging the next generation of musicians and church goers.

***Caroline Lenton-Ward
Chorister Tutor***

Organ Committee

The organ committee have been working extremely hard in the background for the past year. We put out to tender to three companies for a new build organ and after very thorough, thoughtful, and prayerful consideration we have chosen Nicholson and

Nicholson of Malvern. Their plans will give us an amazing new 3 manual organ at the West End with the window as the focal point, as well as being linked to a small chamber organ at the East end, which can either be used to provide surround sound with the main organ, thus enhancing the congregational singing experience, as well as independently for smaller services in the sanctuary. We will be reusing some of the existing pipe work from the currently moth balled instrument at the east end, along with new pipe work. We felt very strongly that this was not only cost saving, but also was a wonderful way of incorporating the history of the instrument and church into a new instrument looking towards the future and for generations to come. The instrument will also come into its own as both a teaching and recording instrument, thus widening our mission to the community.

We are currently in the process of producing a brochure about the project, along with looking at ways of fund raising and identifying potential donors, with the hope of launching an appeal later this year. We have also had a logo designed which very much represents the organ and the window. We have already secured some local businesses who are prepared to sponsor an advert in the brochure as well as assist us with fund raising events to come.

It is an extremely exciting once in a lifetime project and one that needs team effort to achieve, I am incredibly grateful to all those on the organ committee and music team for the huge amount of work that has gone on in the past year.

If anyone is interested in helping with fundraising, which is the next major step, please do talk to us and help make this a truly community project.

Caroline Lenton-Ward
Chair, Organ Committee

Young Musician of the Year

The Young Musician of the Year was held in March 2023. We received a record number of entries for both Junior and Senior Categories and the standard of playing was truly exceptional, which makes judging it difficult! The competition is a chance for young players to perform in a very safe environment as well as the possibility of winning. The young people are always very supportive of each other, and it is lovely to see the church full of young musicians and their families from the local community.

In 2023 the Senior winner was Etty Ashton - harpist who has played for us at church a number of times this year. The Junior winner was Charlotte Johnson -violinist, who has also played for us, and the audience prize was awarded to Bertie Murell on the clarinet.

Caroline Lenton-Ward
Organiser Young Musician Competition.

Youth and Children's Work Report

As we embrace another school year, it gives me great pleasure to be able to report another period of good success and growth, as far as the youth and children's work goes.

Watching some of the people I have previously met at times of community outreach, coming to church on a regular basis and taking up opportunities like baptism and confirmation to increase their faith is great to see.

The collaboration we have with the choristers has proved a lively addition to our regular Sunday school. Some of these kids have come from non-church or even other religious backgrounds and I believe they really enjoy their exposure with choir as well as our robust Bible and 'good works' based discussions we encourage.

A couple of exciting developments have come about with young Martin for instance who was happy to come along and work with us as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award scheme placement.

We have found him to be a hit with our regulars. He provides a unique perspective and is eager to learn and be challenged. Now his placement has come to an end however he feels very welcome and happy to support Sunday school when he can.

I have to say that some of our regular volunteers such as Pat, Angela and Christine have been unable to keep supporting us for various reasons however I am indebted to our safeguarding lead Penny who humbly and fully supports me and my efforts especially when we deal with some of the more challenging subjects/issues, topics.

Moving forward it would be good to seek to address challenges that may arise in terms of staffing.

Most of our regulars are primary school aged or in the first year or two of secondary school. However, we have a liberal smattering of teenagers. This group is growing and as such we need to start dividing the group along age ranges.

I do believe they all enjoy our lively group games, our lectionary themed Bible studies and completing our child friendly crosswords and puzzle sheets as well as talking about environmental and at times, even political concerns of the day.

I am happy to say costs have been kept to a minimum, in that we no longer offer refreshments (to avoid allergy concerns) also some of our volunteers have been quite generous in their donations/supply of books, leaflets and colouring materials.

Moving forward and at the request of some of the youngsters themselves, my provision will shift slightly, as there will be a development of a 'teen friendly' Sunday school/Bible study group curriculum to be developed.

Richard Sontan
Youth and Children's worker

Sidespeople

We have enough sides people to cover both the 8am and the 10am services as well as occasional special services. Sidespeople work at the 'sharp end' of the life of St Stephen's. They are the first people that people meet when they come to Stephen's for a service. As well as giving out service sheets and books the sidespeople deal with the collection and any special needs or questions that people entering the church may have. Increasingly sidespeople also have a safety and security function, keeping the congregation safe during worship.

Ovidiu Precup Head Sidesperson and Eleanor Bracken (8 o'clock)

Social Committee Report

Members of the Committee: Olivia Holmes, Maria Branchini, Sarah Bucknall
Ex-officio members: Heather Savini, Carry Hornby, Sandra Potter, Armored Weston
(Armored moved away at the end of May)

During the past year the Committee organised a number of social and fundraising events. We provided refreshments for the Choir event "Come and Sing" on 4th January, also for the Young Musicians Competition on 12th March, both well-attended and enjoyable occasions. On 6th April we catered for the Maundy Thursday supper (which is part of the service) and were grateful for donations of soup for this important evening.

In September Maria once again organised a Flower Arranging Demonstration, given by our very own Eleanor Bracken. This was much enjoyed by those who were able to attend that Friday afternoon. To mark the Harvest Festival on 1st October we held a Bring and Share lunch and many delicious dishes were brought to share.

The Quiz Night plus fish & chip supper on 11th November was the usual sell-out and great success, much enjoyed competitively by everyone! We had a new Quizmaster this year – our PCC Secretary Steven Hicks nobly stepped up for duty and did a splendid job. We were pleased to make a profit of £586 for church funds. Our other main fundraiser was the Christmas Sale, held on Sunday 3rd December after the 10o'clock service. People were very generous in giving items for the sale which found enthusiastic buyers and raised £659.49.

We are most grateful to everyone who has helped and supported the Committee throughout the year. New members are always welcome! Speak to Olivia or Maria.

Olivia Holmes & Maria Branchini
Social Committee

A new Sacristan for St Stephen's

I was baptised at St Stephen's as a child, my mum and I live a stone's throw away from St Stephen's. In 2022 I started attending St Stephen's and being confirmed. After being a server for a while, the Vicar has appointed me sacristan in 2023. This is a role that I am learning to fulfill as the time goes on. From Ruth Cousins I have learned about the care of the altar linen and the use of liturgical colours. From the Vicar and the other servers I have learned to get the sanctuary ready for big services as well as clearing up after these. I am currently doing my A-levels and I am looking forward to studying theology after a gap year.

Lauren Green-Wood

Textile Report

Our church has the good fortune to have received many donations for memorials and from others who have seen the need and generously paid for most of our hangings and vestments. Many of the items celebrate a special time in someone's life. We have a very full set of colours including, unusually pink for Rose Sundays and gold as an

even more joyous celebratory colour – many churches only use white. Both the Red and Blue Chancel Altar frontals are not hanging properly and this has been emphasised by the new lighting. I have been putting off doing work on them but the time is getting close for another remounting to be done. Everything else is in good order. I have fabric for a new blue set for the side altar which will appear one day.

The clergy chasubles are also an excellent collection to which the Vicar adds some of his personal stoles and his green chasuble. These are all properly stored and cleaned and repaired as needed.

We have a good collection of white linen for altar use and have recently added some new purificators. These are used with the chalice. These and the finger towels are only used once and require regular laundering along with the other whites as needed. This is all stored in the vestry and over the years we have been able to use lovely cloths rejected from linen cupboards across the parish, some are of beautiful quality.

We have servers who wear a cassock and cotta which has a square neck. All the robes are washed during the summer break – when they can be drip-dried outside. Despite having tried to give up these responsibilities I have continued to keep an eye on these things. However, Cath Crocker now manages the Adult Choir robes and Rachel Ortas has taken on the Choristers' gowns. Lauren George-Wood has been doing an excellent job with the small altar linen. I await help with the large altar cloths. We have managed the colour changes by doing them after the 10.00am services when needed. I am grateful to the servers' team for their help with this.

Dr Ovidiu Precup has taken over the necessary repairs to the hymn books – a memorial gift for Joy Hughes, which are sadly slowly breaking.

I am delighted to have all these responsibilities reduced but still feel that we need to have a larger team to cover everything with more of the congregation involved with making the church a welcoming and beautiful place for worship and contemplation.

Ruth Cousins

Millennium Hall Report

When we are not using it ourselves, the hall continues with all our regular users: the Montessori Nursery weekdays, Peter's Dance Club on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and occasional Sunday tea dances, the Cubs on Thursdays and Perform on Saturday mornings.. We have recently taken a regular booking on Sundays for yoga. We also have pilates at the back of the church four days a week. These all bring in a steady income. Bookings for weekend parties are fairly steady and we are often having several a month. £50 for the first hour and £25 an hour for the rest of the booking. Generally, the hall premises are respected and looked after by the clients. We have had the hall floor sanded and repolished this year and looks much improved. It had not been done for some years – Peter, of the dance club, is pleased with the renewed surface.

Sarah Bucknall
Parish Secretary and Hall Manager

Church Decoration

Members of the committee are: Maria Branchini, Eleanor Bracken. Ex-officio members: Carry Hornby, Madeleine Whitlock, Margaret Knight and Lucy Lloyd-Davies.

In the past year the flowers:

1. Every Sunday, except during Lent and Advent.
2. There were six weddings and for each on there was a larger than usual flower display next to the pulpit (Sunday best) and another one at the church entrance.
3. Family of the deceased normally took care of funeral flowers but last year for the funerals of two long term members of the congregation, Sunday best flowers were displayed
4. For Easter Sunday, the team assembled to do an Easter garden, fresh flowers to decorate the baptismal font, Easter candle and also two arrangements of Sunday best
5. For Harvest festival members of the congregation were encouraged to bring home-produced fruits and vegetables for display with the flower decoration under the altar and around the baptismal font
6. On Remembrance Sunday, red silk poppies were added to the greenery display to commemorate the event
7. Towards the end of the calendar year, the usual theme of Christmas is bright and cheerful. The team gathered again to decorate the church using bright red flowers, combined with glittery and ornamental twigs, bringing joy to yuletide.

Maria Branchini

Team members: Maria Branchini, Eleanor Bracken, Madeleine Whitlock

