



ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

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RECTOR'S REPORT

This report aims to outline the major developments at St John at Hackney in the past 12 months.

Worship

At the heart of the life of St John's we find our worship. Following last year's decision to experiment with service times, the new arrangements were subject to a church-wide consultation. The overwhelming response led to the PCC adopting new times (Parish Eucharist at both 9.30am and 11am) with both congregations coming together on certain Sundays (Easter, Mothering Sunday etc).

These developments have been a fantastic success. At the 9.30am service the choir continues to grow, we now have regular servers, new welcome literature has been created, the team of welcomers is being trained and a series of newcomers' lunches is being planned. The attendance on a weekly basis at times reaches over 180 people (the best attendance at St John at Hackney for many decades), and something in the region of 1,800 people attended our various Christmas services.

In addition, our status as the Cathedral of Hackney continues to develop. This past year we once again hosted the Stepney Area ordination service, and the Diocesan farewell service for Bishop Stephen Oliver and Archdeacon Lyle Dennen. This was a tremendous honour and privilege, with the Rector heading up the team to make this service possible.

We enjoyed a fantastic Patronal Festival in 2010, when we welcomed Br Austin as our preacher, and a group from All Saints Church in Martock, Somerset.

St John at Hackney Project - update

This year we have seen much development within the life of the St John at Hackney Project.

The key points to be noted were the finishing up of the tower works and the completion of phase 1 of the new seating appeal, thanks to many personal donations and the legacy of Irene Cammegh which have made this possible. Furthermore, from a fabric perspective, we are indebted to RJ KILN for their team-building day, when our coffee area was transformed into a new café style area, with purpose-built cupboards for Traidcraft, hot and cold water, a fridge, and new tables and chairs. In addition, they reordered the entrance area of the church and even created a new office above the Urswick Chapel (formerly the Archive room). This was an incredible moment in the life of our welcome and our hospitality. As such it now forms a regular meeting space for AA, amongst other groups.

Furthermore, at the halfway point of the Project we offered a moment of reflection through a listening exercise. Two Jellicoe interns joined us (Jim Barlow and Jaya Carrier) and listened to something in the region of 70 people, asking for their opinions as to the developing life of St John's. These results were shared through a quiet morning held at Hackney Free & Parochial School's new Watson Building, and they demonstrated an overwhelming support for the direction of travel for St John's, although some felt that the pace was a little too fast.

We have also been working hard on the nitty gritty of the church, especially as our finances are

becoming very stretched at this present time. We have overhauled our income and expenditure processes, have set up a series of formal arrangements with the Artists and Groups in Residence, and even changed our accounting packages to give us a closer hand on understanding our finances. I am hugely grateful in these details to both Jayne Bailey and Emily Ovenden for making this possible.

Finally, as we come to the end of this year, we look forward to seeing the fruits of a newly revised building vision for St John's, thanks to regular support given to the Rector by RLAM and also the fantastic newly restored Urswick Chapel which was formally re-dedicated by the Lord Bishop of Oxford last month. I am deeply grateful to Laura Tomlinson for overseeing this development.

Our projects and their impact upon Hackney

Clearly, these developments within our building are only worth something if there is a knock-on impact on our pastoral effect within the parish.

Much has taken place in this respect this year, although we have felt the loss of both Toyin Ajidele, our youth worker, and Fr David Evans, our Curate. Both these people dedicated most of their time to the developing of the pastoral and project life of St John's and it has been a struggle to keep this work going.

I am enormously indebted to the many lay people of St John's who have clearly responded by taking on much greater responsibilities in the oversight and development of this work within Hackney.

Amongst them, I am indebted to Sol Brown and Anna Milsom who have overseen the Night Shelter project, along with the many volunteers of this endeavour.

Furthermore, our children's groups continue to develop. Our Sunday morning programme now follows a different and more accessible curriculum devised by CPAS, and the children have been learning much about the Lord's Prayer. We are really grateful to Helen and Vastiana for their tireless oversight of this most important work. In addition, we have enjoyed three children's residentials this last year, which were led by the Rector, along with Patricia, John, Janet, Fr Lincoln, Jack, Emily, Are, Annie, Tolu and Camiele. A huge thank you must be extended to INVESTEC bank for the donations that make this work possible.

We have also developed our work to try to combat the gun and knife crime in Hackney this year. We hosted the Hackney performance of *The Crime of the Century*, a theatre piece by Chicken Shed Theatre Company that told the story of Shaquille Smith, a 14 year old who was tragically murdered in Hackney two-and-a-half years ago. This was a really hard hitting play, which was preceded by a group of Hackney youngsters telling the audience what it was like to grow up in Hackney today, and included six mothers all telling their stories of how it felt to experience a child dying unnecessarily in such gang-related violence. It was an evening I shall never forget.

On the back of this, we are now looking to erect in the churchyard some sort of artistic installation as a sign of a local community coming together to fight such events. In addition, we are working with Words for Weapons in the installation of a gun and knife bin in the churchyard - the first of its kind in Hackney.

We have also developed our links across London and Hackney Citizens. In 2010 we hosted the Hackney Mayoral Assembly, at which every candidate spoke of their election promises. As part of their pledges we managed to get Jules Pipe (Hackney's elected Mayor) to agree to Hackney becoming a Living Wage borough.

This work with London Citizens continues to grow as we develop the Hackney Citysafe initiative across the Borough. I am deeply mindful that it was Mason Springer who presented Mayor Boris Johnson at the GLA building with the certificate for becoming a Citysafe Haven, and Mason is in my mind as we strive to make Hackney's streets ever safer for our young people.

Andrew Coombs and Adrenalin Dance have also developed their work, and now offer dance classes for different ages, yoga classes, and the ever-popular Romp and Roll session takes place twice a week rather than the once. Hats off to Andrew and his team for making this possible.

Emily Ovenden is now overseeing the older persons group (the Senior Saints) and this group has been out for a series of meals, including a great Christmas lunch at Baxters Court in Hackney.

The health project has truly developed with more individuals being trained as emergency first aiders. The weekly health centre and HIV testing has also been a tremendous success, in partnership with Positive East and the local PCT.

St John's has also continued to invest in people. Fr David took a group on retreat in 2010 to Ely, where much meditation and eating seemed to take place. We also enjoyed the Confirmations of Ruth, Vastiana, Maggie, Georgia, Khamilla and Emmanuel in St Paul's Cathedral. We watched Tracy, Sandra, John, Stephen and Patricia become graduates of the New Step Course. We were thrilled at Helen, Peter, Vastiana, Jayne and Mercy being trained as Growing Leaders, and we now await the end of Marion Brame's course when she becomes our formal Pastoral Assistant at St John at Hackney.

Finally, we saw a great development with our community outreach in the winter, when the churchyard was turned into a winter wonderland with the ice rink. There was much hilarity as over 600 people visited the rink - including the Rector clad in a cassock! A big thank you to Hackney Council for their partnership in this project.

Schools

In many ways it has been all change for our schools. In the primary school we welcomed Jenna Clark, appointed as the Head of School, along with several new teachers. The primary school also received an 'outstanding' judgement for their management of the schools following an Ofsted Inspection looking at the Federation.

At Hackney Free, we enjoyed presentations and sermons from The Rev'd Jan Ainsworth, the Chief Education Officer for the Church of England and from The Rev'd Dr Howard Worsley who was the Director of Education for the Diocese of London. Most importantly and impressively we prayerfully said goodbye to the older part of the school building to make way for the Watson Building, a glorious new building to take our school into the next century. We also saw the results get much better this past year which is a great accolade for the staff and pupils for their hard work.

In addition, in 2011 we see the 200th anniversary of the National Society, founded at St John's by Joshua Watson. This is a monumental year for celebration. As such, a candle is making its way to every school in the Diocese of London, with prayers in celebration of Joshua's life. This journey began in Hackney and will end at St Paul's Cathedral. In addition, the Rector has played Joshua Watson in front of an audience of 4,500 children at the Royal Albert Hall. Furthermore, Hackney will be represented at the National Society's formal service at Westminster Abbey, with possibly Her Majesty in attendance, and we are also hosting a major symposium on church schools later in the year. There is even a rumour, as I write, that Songs of Praise will be coming to film at some point. Watch this space!

Other charitable works

Many in our past have begun and created a series of charities and charitable causes in Hackney. Our two main charities which we support (through the Rector, Churchwardens and others being ex officio trustees) are the Hackney Parochial Charities and the Dr Spurstowe and Bishop Wood Almshouses.

The main news to report is that the Dr Spurstowe almshouses are about to be demolished to make way for 31 new dwellings. These new homes are costing over £4million, and will be state of the art almshouses for the older population of Hackney. This is a major development, and we are indebted to David Horder for his oversight of this project.

The ups and downs

It feels as if we said goodbye to many people in the course of this last year. We said goodbye to Christine Davis and Pat Clarke, both faithful members of St John at Hackney for many years who now rest in peace. In addition, we also said goodbye to a number of the staff team - Fr David as he became the Vicar of St Christopher's, Walworth and the Warden of Pembroke House, and Toyin Ajidele who left to go travelling. We are very much indebted to their work.

In addition, we also marked the twelve month anniversary of the death of Mason Springer, and our thoughts and prayers continue to be with Sandra, Tyler and the rest of their family.

Finally

The year has been busy, full and wonderful. I am indebted to all the people of St John's who work so tirelessly hard in making this all happen through their prayers and dedication. Thank you for your perseverance, for your vision, for your co-operation and for your laughter. Thank you especially to leaders and chairs of working parties, for secretaries and supporters, for those who offer hospitality, ring the bells, blow up mattresses, visit the sick, pray with others, read the Bible and say their prayers. Each of you resembles Christ in our community, and without you, St John at Hackney would just be an empty old building. With you, we are transforming this community.

*Fr Rob Wickham
Rector of St John at Hackney Church*

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

The PCC has met on the following occasions since the APCM on 17 March 2010:

20 July 2010
21 October 2010
26 January 2011
29 March 2011

Most business is transacted by the three working parties (Operation & Finance, People & Prayer, Development, and Children & Young People). The activities of the working parties during the past year are recorded in this annual report.

The PCC has ratified the decisions necessary for the smooth running of the working parties, and has approved their budgets accordingly.

The PCC has also: agreed a new Child Protection Policy; consulted with the congregation on joint 10am services and confirmed and published the dates; endorsed the appointment of Stephanie Dervish as Social Secretary; agreed to apply for an Archdeacon's Temporary Re-ordering Licence to rearrange the pews and to buy 200 Canterbury chairs as part of an 18-month experiment regarding the use of the building; reviewed rental charges to groups in residence, instigated new credit control procedures and formulated a new Agreement for those groups.

The PCC has noted the increased workload for Fr Rob as a result of Fr David's departure and awaits developments regarding the appointment of an Associate Vicar.

Vastiana Belfon
PCC Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT

This is the report on financial activity for 2009. Our accounts have been audited by Leslie DuCane our independent examiner.

Overview of 2010

Planned giving fell in 2010 by around £7k but there was a general rise in loose giving and donations. We also received over £7k in Gift Aid from 2009.

Income received from rental of church buildings and space has now reached £17k (in addition to Hackney Grove) for the year and with a more flexible church space available we will be looking to increase this over the coming year. The lease of Hackney Grove & Vernon Hall remains stable at £27,000 per year.

There have also been a number of grants and special donations received throughout the year. A particularly good event was the Gift Day, which raised over £7500 for the Seating Appeal. The total amount raised for seating was £38k, allowing the new seating to be purchased. Details of all income can be seen in the accounts.

The income received enabled the Parish to give nearly £3000 to deserving charities nominated by the members of the People & Prayer Committee.

In respect of expenditure, we have continued to increase our levels of expenditure particularly in relation to essential building works and the initiation of a number of pieces of work within the St John at Hackney Project, including the refurbishment of the Urswick Chapel and work to restore the monuments.

Our contribution to the London Diocesan Fund for 2010 was £28,400.

As far as reserves are concerned, no further monies have been spent from the reserves. However, although income is increasing, so have our financial commitments. We need to continue to ensure that we manage our finances effectively.

Throughout 2010 the process for financial management, forward planning and fundraising have been developed further. This will help ensure that the good work being undertaken at St John at Hackney can continue.

Bank Balances as at 31 December 2010 (subject to Audit)

Current: £62,233.20

Deposit: £32,630.24

Total £94,863.44

NB: bank balances currently show monies held that are grants held for future work and current liabilities.

Jayne Bailey
Treasurer

PARISH GIFT-AID AND STEWARDSHIP

Shortly after my last report as Gift-Aid Secretary to the 2010 Annual Meeting, I made a tax repayment claim on 9 May 2010 to the Inland Revenue for the year 2009. The total donations made by UK taxpayers, including Stewardship, received during 2009 had been £25,728.52. As a result, the amount of refunded tax we received was £7,269.01. As many members of our Stewardship Scheme pay their donations by Banker's Standing Order, it is necessary for me to receive copies of the parish bank statements in order to keep the records up to date. Some of the bank statements for 2010 were late getting to me and so the tax repayment claims for the whole year have yet to be made. The claim will include all donations including those made towards our Seating Appeal. Hopefully, this year all the evidence will reach me in good time so that I can make the claims before our Annual Meeting as in previous years.

The bulk of the donations that we receive come mainly through your Stewardship giving, either using the envelopes printed with your personal code number, or through bank transfer by standing order. Stewardship giving goes into what we call the General Fund. I calculate what percentage of the total donations comes from Stewardship and what percentage is given for other specific uses. I

then allocate the same percentage of the refunded tax to the General Fund or to the specific causes for which the original donations were made. For example: the tax refunded on the donations given for new seating, will also be added to that fund.

At the date of this report, there are 69 people in the Stewardship Scheme: 51 using the weekly envelopes and 18 (to be confirmed on sight of the latest bank statement) who pay by Banker's Order. That's exactly the same numbers as this time last year, but not necessarily the same 69 people. It could be much better than that, in my view, so think seriously about it. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all who pay UK income tax (either on their earnings, their pension, or on their savings) to sign a Gift-Aid declaration whenever they make a special donation, however small, to the church. Also, by joining the Stewardship Scheme, your weekly donations can be Gift-Aided. You would be amazed at how all these pennies add up to a great many pounds.

I am available most Sundays during the break between our two morning services, if you wish to discuss joining.

*Audrey Seabrook
Gift-Aid & Stewardship Secretary
March 2011*

FRIENDS OF ST JOHN'S

As numbers have dwindled over the last couple of years, it has been decided to disband the *Friends of St John's* as such and to ask the remaining members to allow their email addresses to be added to the church's general mailing list. In this way, they will still receive *Reflections*, our monthly parish magazine, and details of forthcoming events from our Parish Administrator.

Those *Friends* have also been asked to consider joining our Stewardship scheme, using a bank Standing Order.

*Audrey Seabrook
Secretary to the Friends
March 2011*

FABRIC REPORT 2011

With careful monitoring of water ingress after the tower works of 2009 we were disappointed to have to contract another firm to carry out additional works to the joins between the tower and the roof. However, this relatively quick and minor piece of work has now completed the tower works and to date the structure is watertight.

Some remedial works to the four corners of copper roof were carried out by another firm in the summer and have again proved successful. However, the defective work carried out by Allards in 2004 has still not been actively addressed although the Operations & Finance Working Party have given much time and effort to assessing if any legal action could be taken. As we feel we would not be in a good position to win back the legal fees for any such action we are leaving this option aside for now and concentrating on some new fundraising work to carry out the necessary repairs.

On a more positive note, in the autumn of 2010 works began on the restoration of two large monuments in the Urswick Chapel and a refurbishment of the chapel itself. Skillington's Workshop carried out the conservation work, revealing a great reservoir of skill and patience, not to mention endurance in the cold temperatures of the chapel during the winter months. We have just completed the refurbishment which, together with delivery of new chairs for St John's, has transformed a once unloved corner of our church into a sacred and historic space.

At the end of summer 2010 we were extremely fortunate to have a day of pro bono work from RJ KILN, a firm based in the City, who undertook the improvement of our coffee point and welcoming areas. This in fact took some of their employees much more than one day's work, as they planned in advance, bought furniture and appliances, hired equipment and liaised with a small team at St John's. Part of the work included removing (but not disposing of) the draft lobby in the main entrance to the church which has allowed a much greater level of light and accessibility, especially during busy services. The new kitchenette is proving popular and efficient with our congregation and user groups.

Laura Tomlinson
Chair of Operations & Finance Working Party
March 2011

CHILDREN & YOUTH REPORT

Children's Sunday Groups

The numbers of children attending the I I am service have remained steady with growth in the Little Sparks and Sparklers groups off-setting a fall-off in the Blessings age range (the 9.30am choir has attracted many of these children).

As in previous years, there has been significant turnover in leaders and helpers of the children's work, and before Christmas it did seem as if we were reaching crisis point. However, God is good, and our most recent recruitment drive led to eight adults stepping forward to help take our children's work forward. Many and sincere thanks are due to all those who continue to dedicate their time and efforts to nurturing our children in the Christian faith. Please consider whether children's work is something that God is calling you to do - we can never have too many adults willing to help!

Little Sparks Crèche (under 3s)

Little Sparks continues to be very popular, with parents choosing to either stay with their babies or re-join the main service. We are very much looking forward to relocating Little Sparks to the newly refurbished Urswick Chapel (storage permitting) as it will make a more secure and airy space. We are also hoping to dedicate some of the children's work budget to making the area more comfortable and welcoming.

Sparklers, Stars and Blessings (Nursery-Year 6)

Since autumn 2010, lessons in Sparklers, Stars and Blessings have been planned using the Scripture Union 'Light' resources, making preparation easier for leaders and giving our children a more consistent experience. In March, we ran the initial three of a series of lessons on the Lord's Prayer,

and we have also begun a monthly music session in which the groups meet together to learn seasonal, contemporary and action songs. Music is an area that we aim to continue to develop over the next few months with the purchase of new CDs, percussion instruments and the help of congregation members (could this be you?).

Please pray for:

- Our wonderful children - that they may grow to be confident, questioning young people of faith;
- Our current leaders and helpers – that they may continue to be inspired and renewed in strength;
- More adults willing to help in teaching - especially the younger children and in music sessions - to enable us to enrich and expand our ministry;
- The needs of our children and young people to be considered when wider church decisions are being made.

Helen Wickham

CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKING PARTY

The Children & Youth Working Party has met monthly throughout the year and, following reflection at the 'Quiet Day' on 17 October 2010, agreed its Terms of Reference:

1. To meet once a month;
2. To ensure all work is in line with the St John at Hackney Child Protection Policy;
3. To provide good-quality Christian education for children and young people at St John at Hackney;
4. To provide a good-quality Christian youth club;
5. To develop and maintain two-way links with St John & St James primary school and Hackney Free secondary school;
6. To provide appropriate training and support for volunteers and develop a regular, sustainable team of volunteer helpers;
7. To develop children's life of prayer, working alongside the People & Prayer Working Party and make prayer for children and young people integral to the prayer life of St John at Hackney;
8. To support the development of children's music at St John at Hackney in liaison with the Director of Music;
9. To open up the provision to the wider community;
10. To ensure regular, quality residential trips for children and families are provided;
11. In conjunction with other working parties, to explore the possibility of an away-day for families;
12. To explore the need for, and feasibility of, a Christian under-5s playgroup at St John at Hackney.

The discussions of the Working Party continue to shape the planning, resourcing and running of the Sunday morning groups (see above report for details).

As we are now relying on volunteers to plan and run our children's programme, we have had to

reconsider what we can realistically offer.

A sessional worker ran our youth club until February this year and we are now looking to work in partnership with St Thomas's to further develop this provision. The Family Cookers Club has been reviewed and has become the Healthy Cooking Club, taking place at 2.00pm on the first Saturday of each month.

The Christmas sweet-making was a great success and raised £38 for the Children's Society. We are hoping to run a Good Friday activity session for all ages to include the making of the Easter Garden. 10 of our children took acting parts in the nativity story.

The Working Party oversaw three highly successful residential trips for children to Bryanstone School, Ely and Martock as well as an inter-generational arts workshop led by artist Will Bock. The finished painting now hangs in the building.

This year, we supported Operation Christmas Child and our church generously contributed more than 11 shoeboxes filled with gifts for children who might not otherwise be able to celebrate Christmas.

It has been a challenging but exciting year for the Working Party and we would like to express our gratitude to all the volunteers at St John's who help with our children and youth work.

Vastiana Belfon

Chair, Children & Youth Working Party

HACKNEY WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

Now in its third year of operation as a weekly overnight dormitory, St John's has once more been a part of the Hackney Winter Night Shelter. Seasoned volunteers from the last two years have been joined by some new recruits to welcome ten homeless men to sleep in the Hurdman Hall each Wednesday night - from early January through to the end of March. Volunteers get involved in a variety of ways: cooking breakfasts, staying awake in shifts to allow the guests a safe, peaceful night's sleep, offering a smile and a chat, or collecting the laundry, but all efforts are characterised by goodwill and the desire to do something positive for the wider community. Many of the guests are in temporary crisis and there is, for at least some of the volunteers, a real sense of 'there, but for the Grace of God ...' In fact, at least one of the volunteers is an ex-guest himself. Despite recent cuts to homelessness services, the HWNS Link worker Paul has once more done some amazing work, getting just over half of those referred to the Shelter into more settled accommodation - five of them without even staying a single night. We hope to continue as a part of this worthy scheme next year, wishing - of course - that it were not necessary, but realising it is likely to be more over-subscribed than ever.

Anna Milsom

Hackney Winter Night Shelter

It is our volunteers who 'power' the Hackney Winter Night Shelter. I've visited most main shelters this year and I've met them - preparing the evening meal, setting up tables, getting all the bedding out, meeting our guests as they come in, serving the food, chatting with guests and sitting and eating with them. And then, of course, there are those who do the overnight shifts - sitting up half the night to watch over everything and ensure all is safe and secure, and then desperately trying to get a bit of sleep the other half of the night - before the breakfast teams arrive!

Our volunteers come from all over; many are from the churches who host the shelters, but increasingly many are not. I know, for instance, that on Wednesday nights volunteers come from one of Hackney's synagogues, and on Thursday (my night) we have help from local mosques; and then there are all the local people who have no faith allegiance at all, but come in to help.

Cuts in funding, because of the recession, have created some problems this year, but in terms of smooth running and simple service, I think this may have been the best year yet – thanks to all our wonderful volunteers!

*Rev John Taylor,
Chair of the Core Group*

OLDER PEOPLE

This year we strived to extend our work with older people with great success. There have been several lunch parties including a highly successful Christmas meal, which was attended by 20 of our older congregation and friends. Three small grants have been secured from the Aged Christian Society in order to fund these occasions. We have been housing the Hackney Elders - a group who lost their meeting venue at the Hackney Empire – on Tuesday mornings.

In order to expand our knowledge of this age group and design a programme that proves to be both educational and supportive, we have been engaging directly with the elderly to establish a weekly creative movement session. With members from Hackney Elders, St John at Hackney's Older People's Group and local Hackney residents, we are endeavouring to improve their mobility and inject some creativity and much needed sociability into their week. We hope that after a few months we will be in a position to show some of the work we have done in a small performance here at St John's.

The class is structured but informal. We aim to make it inclusive of everyone who attends irrespective of experience or ability. Various styles of movement and music from around the world are introduced to the group, and these lead into more comprehensive movement sequences as the weeks go on. We also undertake short improvised exercises to encourage more personal creativity and input rather than simply holding a class of imitative technique.

We are aware that anxiety and stress relating to money is common with older people, and limits the ability of many to participate in anything creative and/or active outside their normal routines, especially if it involves a fee, however small. This can lead to loneliness and isolation. By providing these sessions we believe we can begin to challenge the negative impacts of poverty and low income for the older people in our community.

We have undertaken some research and development with a group of elders in Hackney, and have received some fantastic feedback. One participant told us that she felt her body "coming alive again" during the sessions. Another said he could "forget the twinges" when he was dancing. They found that not only did the sessions improve their strength and wellbeing but they also began creating new social networks.

Emily Ovenden & Catherine Bell
Parish Administrator / Adrenalin Dance

PEOPLE & PRAYER WORKING PARTY

The People & Prayer working party has met on nine occasions in the past year.

Our discussions, always friendly and congenial, have contributed unostentatiously to the development of our Sunday worship and generally to the advance of the St John at Hackney Project. Our meetings, usually held at I Lam on the second Sunday of the month, have been well attended.

A wide range of topics have been addressed. They include: arrangements for welcome on Sunday mornings; timing of our Sunday services; the Sunday rota of duties; arrangements for Mothering Sunday; Bible study groups; charitable giving by the Parish; fair trade and the Traidcraft stall; our new church seating; lunches for the older people and Lent lunches; and the appointment of the social secretary and support of her work. We selected three charities to receive substantial donations from the Parish this year: the Children's Society, Mildmay International and Traidcraft Exchange. On a number of issues we have begun to work with the Mothers' Union.

We warmly welcome plans of our newly-appointed social secretary, Stephanie Dervish, to enhance and strengthen the social life of the Parish. Her programme opened this year with a successful and highly enjoyable pancake supper in the church on Shrove Tuesday.

The Working Party's role is continuous and unending. We invite all who share our enthusiasm to join us in the coming year.

Peter Ottino

SUMMER FETE

This year's fete was a 'Right Cockney Knees Up' and was held on 10 July 2010, a very hot day indeed - so much so that the normally popular Bungee Run was a bit of a let down, literally! The good people of St John's continue to dig deep, with contributions, donations and lending a helping hand. Our fete is, surely, now one of the social events of the Hackney season - it's a pleasure to be able to welcome over 5000 visitors and see them enjoy our fantastic church and churchyard gardens.

Highlights this year included the Tiny Wallops Music Hall Show (who knew a giant marrow could have so many uses?!); Hackney Voices who are St John's resident community choir; and Brass Roots who are a local funky brass band. Special thanks go to Hugo Deadman for his hard work and financial contributions to this event. We raised around £4000 towards the St John at Hackney Seating Appeal and a grand time was had by all.

Emily Ovenden
Parish Administrator

MUSIC

This has been a tremendous year for music making at St Johns!

Our choir numbers have grown to the huge number of around 25, including 15 children. For an inner city parish church, this is an achievement that we are really very proud of, and there isn't another church in the local area that has a comparable musical resource.

Children's and education work is at the centre of what we do. In the last year we have made two trips to St Paul's Cathedral in London. On our trip in the summer, we were met by sub-organist Timothy Wackerell and taken down into the cathedral crypts to watch the boys and men of the cathedral choir rehearsing. We then had the privilege of sitting in the choir stalls during evensong: a fantastic vantage point from which to view all of the action! This was a great opportunity to inspire our young people in their music making, and to teach them that they are part of a long tradition of Catholic and Anglican music making; something they should be very proud of as they continue to develop. Other trips this year have included an afternoon spent at Tate Modern, and a day of ice skating in Central London.

This May, after much hard work and preparation, many of our young choristers will sit the chorister exam for the Royal School of Church Music's bronze award. This is a fantastic opportunity for them to learn more about singing and vocal technique, as well as to get the chance to learn public reading skills, and to learn and be questioned by an examiner about scripture and liturgy.

More on education news, Mia Burgher, one of our choristers passed her Grade 1 piano with flying colours this year, and Jayne Bailey has passed both her Grade 3 piano and Grade 4 theory exams with some very impressive scores. Both Jayne and Mia were examined by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. George Webster, who has played the organ at St John's on a few occasions, and sang with the choir over Christmas, is also taught by Director of Music, Jack Bicker. After much hard work and preparation over the summer, many of it on St John's piano, George was auditioned and gained places to study at two major London music conservatoires, the Royal College of Music and Trinity College of Music. These are world-class institutions, and we are very proud of George's achievement.

In December, we welcomed music groups from around Hackney to take part in our Winter Voices concert. Including the St John's Church choir, Hackney Voices, the Hackney Empire Community Choir, Ilford Ursuline High School Gospel Choir, and Pantonic, the evening was a sumptuous example of musical fusion, with songs ranging from mediaeval part songs, to hip-hop and RnB. Over 250 people were in the audience, and this was a great opportunity for local music groups to meet and collaborate in the impressive acoustic of our Grade II* listed building. This was an important step in encouraging both professional and local community artists and musicians to begin to consider using our transformed church space.

Another similar event is being planned for 1 July this year as part of the CREATE festival. This

concert will be in partnership with both the Hackney Empire and the Grand Union Orchestra, on the back of their live BBC Radio 3 concert, broadcast from Hackney. Grand Union also ran workshops at St John's last summer, as part of Open Weekend London 2012, an event that was listed as one of *Time Out's* top five things to do that weekend!

An absolute highlight for the choir this year was *Nine Lessons and Carols by Candlelight*, at which our singers did themselves very proud. With both our adults and juniors singing very demanding music in four parts, there were many very positive comments. A former head of classical music at the Barbican, who was present, said the music was 'outstanding', that she'd never heard the St John's choir sounding so good, and praised our achievement in overcoming the difficulties of being an inner city choir. Special mention must go to junior chorister Khamilla Boateng, who worked very hard over many months, practising for her two very impressive solos. Thanks also to Amy Stewart, student at Royal Northern College of Music, who played a very beautiful viola solo.

Congratulations to Emmanuel and Condoleeza who were appointed head choristers, with Khamilla as deputy. Jenine is the new senior chorister. A fantastic opportunity for our young people to take on positions of real responsibility in our church, and feel all the more invested in the work that they do.

This year also saw the launch of our new music website, www.stjohnsmusic.co.uk. This resource intends to focus on musical activities, in particular to help us engage with professional and community arts organisations across London, and begin to once again earn credibility as a space for making music, as specified in the remit of the wider St John at Hackney Project. Building up a music specific resource is an important initial, eye-catching strategy to get organisations interested in us, as part of our mission, and as part of attempts to make the space generate revenue.

Sunday morning music at the 9.30 service goes from strength to strength, with an increasingly diverse repertoire, ranging from classical, through more contemporary Taize worship songs, all the way to gospel choruses. Such a mix of musics is very appropriate in as diverse a parish as ours, and we look forward to taking part in the wider developments of the second service to bring a more diverse music set to this service too.

It's been a truly great year for music making at St John's, and we are very proud of the work we do, and the opportunities that we are providing to our young people, and the progress that they are making. We hope that we can continue bringing our liturgy alive as we continue into our next year of development. And as we do, a special thanks to Emmanuel, Wendy Z, Mia, Khamilla, Condoleeza, Ebube, Somadina, Owen, Ryan, Wendy A, Jerome, Bellis, Jenine, and Charis of the junior choir, and Joyce, Coral, Janet, Hazel, Barry, Victor, Alfred, Manuella, Jess, and Kingsley of the adult choir.

Jack Bicker
Director of Music

BELL RINGERS

There are a few new ringers on Sunday now, which means we can ring on eight bells nearly every week without calling on help, and sometimes on all ten. There are more ringers of different ages turning up for the Monday night practice, which is great news for the future of ringing in the tower. The variety of what is rung is gradually increasing following the good progress made at the regular Monday night practices.

Repairs have been made to the sound control system in the belfry, and we have a new steeple-keeper who is 'learning the ropes' from Stephen Jakeman.

This year there has been ringing outings in the neighbourhoods of Basildon, Bath, and more recently to Midsomer Murder territory. We also visited The Whitechapel Bell Foundry, which everyone found enormously interesting. We were invited to join in the ringing for the Lord Mayor's Show, which was as enjoyable, and challenging, as usual.

The bell ringers came seventh in a striking competition at Stamford Hill, and third out of six teams at a competition in Fulham.

The church bells were rung on Christmas Eve, Remembrance Sunday, New Year's Eve, at the Church Fete, and on many other occasions throughout the year. A team was brought together to ring the hand bells at Christmas time, which were much appreciated.

We are always keen to have new bell ringers so if anyone would like to give it a try, come along for practice night which is Monday at 7.30pm.

Neil Stewart
Tower secretary

PEMBURY THEOLOGY GROUP

We've had another very good year at the Pembury Tavern, meeting regularly and addressing interesting issues surrounding our faith. We've discussed prayer a fair bit over the last twelve months, engaging with the call to contemplative silence through both spiritual classics and a recent BBC documentary, as well as exploring the ancient Enneagram and the gift of spiritual direction. We also enjoyed debating the Pope's visit to London, and we've even helped Fr Lincoln prepare a sermon by studying Sunday's Gospel. Wonderfully, we've also enjoyed births, baptisms and weddings amongst the group, as well as tasty pancakes and Dave's famous Christmas Quiz.

Numbers remain steady, with a few slipping away and a few new beginnings. There's only been one serious blot on the landscape: the Pembury Tavern started a noisy quiz night on Mondays which forced us to rethink where, when, and if to keep meeting. After some discussion, we opted to make it a monthly gathering, on a Wednesday evening, again at the Pembury Tavern.

Fr Lincoln
Curate

ADRENALIN DANCE

Adrenalin completed the third year of their residency within St John at Hackney Church. In summer 2010 Adrenalin initiated the opening of an art gallery in the church; volunteers from the company painted the landing of the bell tower, east side of the building, preparing a gallery space. William Bock, a local artist working with family stories, opened the newly named Octagon Gallery with an exhibition of his woodcuts and ink paintings. In partnership with St John at Hackney he held an inter-generational art project working with grandparents/parents and their children from the parish. A mural was created by the group, which is now on permanent display on the west side staircase.

Adrenalin have developed four extra children's dance classes within St John at Hackney church over 2010, further enhancing the church's presence and identity as a provider of excellent artistic activity for children within Hackney. With generous support from St John at Hackney, Adrenalin continued their low-cost adult evening dance class within the church, furthering their commitment to providing healthy opportunities for members of the local community.

Catherine Bell joined Adrenalin dance in October and has become a valuable team player within the building, contributing to our residency. Catherine has undertaken the difficult task of letting out the old admin office to creative enterprises; we have two new users of the old office space.

Adrenalin have started a free over 60s movement class within the church and it is enjoying a brilliant response with good attendance by local elders. Hopefully, we will attract funding so that this fantastic initiative can carry on.

Romp and Roll, the free adult and toddler weekly class, is into its third year and has maximum attendance; a second class has been started. Adrenalin are currently fundraising to create a Saturday morning children's theatre, *Hackney Children's Theatre*, in the main space of the church. Adrenalin intends to program and host a range of cutting-edge inspirational children's theatre from a broad range of practitioners. With this we are intending to open up a creative dialogue between artists and local teachers, exploring the ways in which we learn in a dynamic exchange.

Adrenalin continue to enjoy the warm generosity and hospitable community of St John at Hackney Church led by Fr Rob. We look forward to an exciting year.

Andrew Coombs

HACKNEY FREE & PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

This is an exciting time for all at Hackney Free & Parochial School. During 2010 we celebrated our 490th anniversary, having been founded by Christopher Urswick, a former Rector of Hackney, in 1520. There was a special exhibition about the history of the school at Hackney Museum. This was opened by Richard, Bishop of London, who also attended a reception at the school.

In July we move into phase one of our new building. This includes fantastic new facilities for the teaching of English, Maths, Science, Art, ICT, a new library and school hall. Over the next year the

rest of the school will be rebuilt. We will be organising tours of the new school in September.

GCSE results increased by 10% in summer 2009 and we anticipate further improvements. OFSTED inspected the school in September 2009. In total, Hackney Free & Parochial was judged as 'outstanding' in three aspects and 'good' in 15 different aspects. There are no parts of the school judged inadequate. OFSTED commented, 'The exceptional quality of care is an outstanding feature of the school.'

Richard Brown
Head Teacher

ST JOHN & ST JAMES COFE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The last twelve months at St John & St James has seen many successful events. During the Summer term 2010 we celebrated lots of community events: a joint Sports Day with Holy Trinity; the year 6 leavers performance 'Snow White'; a truly fabulous Multi Cultural evening; Thames Festival singing event; and the Voices Eight concert in which the choir took part.

The start of the academic year saw several new members of staff welcomed to St John and St James. The school relaunched its marking policy, 'Great and Groovy Green,' to celebrate successes, and 'Build on it Blue,' indicating areas to be improved. Over the year the children have fed back that this has really helped them learn.

St John & St James continues to focus on teaching and learning and improving the educational achievements of our children. The Head of School has led the borough-wide Assessment for Learning Programme and showcased some of the school's excellent practice.

The school has continued to welcome the LDBS into the school and was very proud to begin the journey of 'The Light of Christ' for the LDBS. The school took an active part in a Church service at St John's with Hackney Free. In the Spring term the school observed the Church's contribution to education in Hackney again with a celebration at St John's, along with Hackney Free for Founders Day. Years 2 and 3 sang a Sho Sho Loza, a South African victory song that celebrates freedom. The school has seen many community events and performances enabled and supported by the newly established PTA. The PTA organised a magical 'SJSJ's Got Talent' event at Christmas and we are eagerly awaiting their contribution to Multi Cultural Evening.

The school took part in a very successful Ofsted Survey looking at the joint Federation the school is part of with Holy Trinity and the impact of leadership of more than one school. The school's outcomes for this review were deemed as outstanding. The school continues to build on the success of this survey and other recent reports.

Jenna Clark
Head of School

14TH HACKNEY SCOUT GROUP

The year has been a great one for all the Scouts here at the Den; as usual lots of badges have been gained and many weekend or day trips out have been had. But more importantly, the numbers in both the Cub and Troop section have nearly doubled, all thanks once again to our team of dedicated leaders. We have had three leaders gaining their Wood Badge, which, by the way, can take over a year to gain. So, congratulations to Caroline King, Hugh Johnson and Ben Williams.

The Cubs and Troop took part in a sponsored sleepover organised by BT. We took 50 Scouts to sleep over in Hamleys toy store in Regent Street. Can you imagine sleeping in the best toy store in the world? Well, sleep wasn't on the agenda. Hamleys also provided us with the biggest sleeping bag in the world; it held all 50 Scouts and was nearly as long as a bendy bus - and we were the first to use it. I wonder if we're in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Some of the other activities we have taken part in during the year are as follows:

- Indoor campfire
- Summer fetes
- Group, summer and winter camps
- District volley ball
- District five-a-side football
- District chess competition
- District swimming gala
- District St George's Day
- Group St George's Day service at St John's
- Remembrance Sunday
- District fireworks night
- District leaders weekend
- Sponsored walk over the nine bridges of London.

As you can see, we have been very busy.

This May we look forward to the start of our Centenary celebrations, kicking off with an indoor campfire at St John's and the following day we will be holding a service of celebration and planting a tree in the churchyard. I think that next year should be made a bit longer so that we can fit everything we have planned in.

Jim Phillips
Group Scout Leader
14th Hackney Scouts

HACKNEY DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2010 – 2011

Deanery Mapping Exercise (Saturday 22 May 2010)

Mapping Exercise: those present joined with the others from their respective parishes and these parishes sat with their geographical neighbours to share the information which they had gathered at their Lent parish council meetings in response to the Work Packs prepared by Sue

Hutson. Each parish filled out sheets which summarised their most important characteristics and presented folders with further information about their activities and achievements. All these were collected for processing by Sue Hutson.

Any Other Business: no other business discussed.

Common Fund (Sunday 19 September 2010)

Matters arising from Deanery Mapping Exercise: Julia Porter-Pryce took the Deanery Mapping Exercise under this item. She said that the Synod was a useful day in which most parishes took part. The Standing Committee have been working to create a database listing the resources and activities of each parish. The Chapter conference next week will develop it further. The database will prove a vital starting point for strategic planning and building development projects as parishes can see the plans of neighbouring parishes.

This will become even more valuable as we begin to see the impact of cuts on the work we do. She closed with thanks to all those who have taken time to make the project a success.

Update: Matters arising. Julia Porter-Pryce added that the information which we are gathering will enable us to generate more income through our buildings. In answer to Irena Edgcumbe, Julia Porter-Pryce said that Bishop Pete's plans had not been formalised but that he was not planning to cut posts. In answer to a question from Michael Barrett, Julia confirmed that the mapping data was for the current year, and that the challenge for every parish will be to keep information updated.

Common Fund offers 2011: Julia Porter-Pryce introduced this item with some background information. As shown in the Archdeacon's Charge in July, the costs for Stepney are now £4 million per year. As an area, Hackney contributes £2.25 million. The Common Fund is common to the whole Diocese of London with richer churches supporting poorer ones (47% of our costs are borne by others). The deficit this year is c. £430,000, so each area is being asked to increase their contribution, with £100,000 additional requested from our area. Bishop Pete has been finding ways to support us.

The standard parish cost for one priest is £67,000 (this includes not only clergy salary but also central costs, pensions, housing, training and education).

This means we have been asked to find 4% increase in Common Fund contributions for 2011.

The Consecration of Women to the Episcopate Guidelines for Discussion Deanery Synod (Thursday 27 January 2011)

This was the topic under discussion for the whole of the meeting. After discussion, both houses (laity and clergy), put forward their vote. It must be stressed that this vote was purely to help focus and inform the discussion and had no legal or moral binding status whatsoever.

Individuals: A mediated discussion board will be set up on the web for comments. This should have been confirmed by the end of January.

Diocesan Synod: there will be a major discussion on Thursday 14 July by which time we would hope to have feedback from all the Deanery Synods.

*Mary Ofori and John Geach
Parish Deanery Representatives*

MOTHERS' UNION

It's been quite a journey for the Mothers' Union but, by the grace of the Almighty God, we have pulled through.

The year started with a wave of prayer on 15 January at St Marks, Dalston. Praying for the world, our theme for 2011 is 'Faithful Relationship'. The Mothers' Union has been faithful in prayer and support for our sister churches in the dioceses, in Bo, Freetown in Sierra Leone and also five other countries.

On 26 January, we had a service for Rev'd Josh Zvimba who was ordained as the Mothers' Union area chaplain for the Stepney area and Dahlia Reid, ordained as the Vice President. The service was held at St Marks Dalston.

In May, we were invited by the members of Bishops Stortford to come and have lunch with them. Mary, I and Christina from St Paul's, West Hackney, attended; we enjoyed the day.

We also have a monthly prayer meeting at St Paul's Cathedral focusing on praying for the world.

In June we had our Festival Service at St Paul's Cathedral. In October we were invited again to Bishops Stortford to celebrate the opening of their new church centre, which was a great event.

We started knitting angel's pockets for babies at the Homerton Hospital. They will be presented to the Chaplain at the hospital in April.

Fr Rob has been a great support in working closely with the Mothers' Union to help develop the pastoral care in the church. We would like to thank him for all his good work and encouraging us to grow stronger. We pray for God's blessing to be with us and to help us grow stronger in every way.

*Mercy Moss
Branch President*

CHRISTIAN AID

Another year has passed and Christian Aid continues to play its full role in the life of St John at Hackney Church. As usual CA continues to be fully supported by the church's clergy as we fully support CA, doing street collections, sponsored walks and envelope collections in CA Week in

May and at Christmas. CA Week in May is correctly a focus point in the church charity calendar but it must be remembered that CA is a 365-days-a-year charity, reacting to disasters small and large year round. Our church accepts donations for CA year round; please speak to me or a member of clergy for further information.

Occasionally major disasters happen, such as in Haiti, which suffered earthquake damage last year and also in Pakistan, which suffered major flooding also in 2010. In these cases CA became part of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) since such disasters are too major for any one charity to deal with. When this occurs the DEC targets the problem for at least 6 months. When an incident occurs where the DEC is called into play, we can donate via the church in the traditional way; via our church website (please follow the links to CA); and also usually via the banks.

Mahandra Roopchan
Christian Aid Officer

For further information about activities taking place at St John at Hackney please visit:
www.stjohnathackney.org.uk