

# **Group Reports**

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### **BAPTISM GROUP 2010 - 2011**

We are a group of twenty mothers who meet to welcome and socialise with the parents of children who are to be baptised. We meet on the Wednesday evening before the last Sunday in the month. The priest who will conduct the Baptism Service explains what it means to have a baby, child or adult baptised. Two or three members of the group attend each meeting, and when the priest has finished talking, we stop for refreshments. We then go on to choose the hymns and arrange the logistics for seating two, three, four or more families and friends.

The same members who attended the Wednesday meeting will be at the Baptism Service on Sunday to welcome everybody, hand out books and show people where to sit. It is nice for families to see familiar faces when they arrive in Church. The children of the helpers also come along to the service. They help to give out books and give baptism candles to the families.

There are usually about 35/40 Baptisms each year, but not so many this year, only 26. I am sure the numbers will be up next year. At the end of the service a photo is taken of each individual family and put in an album on top of the font. There are now four albums, three are full and the fourth is half full.

Moira Carrington

### **BEDROCK 2010-2011**

Bedrock is now part of the established Sunday morning programme on offer to the children and young adults at St John's. We meet most Sundays in the vestry with our secondary school age young people, many of whom have moved up from Junior Church. We follow the scripture union "*The Grid*" programme of activities which encourages lively debate and Bible Study. We also try to discuss our response to current affairs wherever possible. This year we have a large group who have moved up from Junior Church and we are so impressed with the quality of their questions and their thoughtful responses. I am grateful to Paul Bedding and Kathy Hilton for their assistance in helping me to run the Bedrock sessions for our young people this year.

Katie Barter

## **DORCAS 2010-2011**

This year has been one of mending and refurbishment of vestments and altar frontals.

The red chasuble has been modified to fit our present ministerial team and the beading is presently being replaced after years of wear and tear.

We are also altering the "Old Portuguese" altar frontal for the Lady Chapel. This is made of a beautiful tapestry style material and incorporates the colours for each season in the church calendar.

I am most grateful to Anne Edwards for looking after Dorcas whilst I was out of action due to illness and to all the sewing group who carried on stitching in my absence.

Our year draws to a close with the sad news of the death of Renee Grieveson who was the leader of Dorcas for over ten years. Her experience, which she gladly shared, will be sadly missed.

Helen Davies

## **FELLOWSHIP IN THE GARDEN March 2010 – March 2011**

We have had another good year. There are casualties after the cold and snow, but nothing too disastrous. As I write, the prunus is in flower and the border on the north side of the church shows us that Spring is on the way.

We have tried to even up some of the dips and mounds in the Memorial Garden, but the uneven lawn there is a big problem. I hope the lawn mowers will find it a little improved. Thanks to that team for keeping the grass tidy and groomed. The magnolia has been cut back so the squirrels no longer have a bridge to the church roof, and a few other shrubs need trimming. The area behind the Hall is vastly improved, thanks to the Play Group.

As always, thanks to the 'Team' for their hardy support, Charles for keeping us stoked up with chocolate biscuits and Warren for the smart new Memorial Garden notice. Lots of jobs all year round, so you would be most welcome to join us: second Tuesday of the month.

Rosemary Horne

## **ST JOHN'S FLOWER GUILD 2010-2011**

St John's is fortunate to have 28 members in the Flower Guild who work together to keep three fresh flower arrangements in church throughout the year, apart from the Advent and Lent seasons. These willing workers provide the flowers at their own cost.

Special efforts have been made for the Easter, Harvest and Christmas Festivals to beautify the church for the enjoyment of the whole congregation and we have been grateful for some donations from them and their kind words of encouragement. The Guild has endeavoured to reimburse some of the costs incurred by the arrangers. The cost of flowers, like everything else, is rising and it is increasingly difficult to source them locally at advantageous prices. Arrangers incorporate foliage and flowers from their gardens whenever possible.

We have arranged flowers for five weddings during the year, and the small profit made from this has gone towards the costs of our materials such as oasis, etc. Surprisingly we have not been asked for any funeral flowers during the past year.

The flower Guild represented St John's and sponsored two large arrangements at St Mary's Church Redbourn for their 900<sup>th</sup> Centenary celebration Flower Festival.

I would like to thank Ian Ashton for acting as our treasurer during the past year and all the members of the Guild for their participation in its administration.

June Jones

## **GIRLGUIDING 2010-2011**

The 19<sup>th</sup> Harpenden Brownie Unit provides activities for girls aged 7 to 10 years old within the GirlGuiding UK programme structure. The Unit meets every Thursday during school term time at St John's Church Hall from 6:15 to 7:30pm. In addition to the normal weekly Brownie activities this year all members have been able to take part in a number of special events.

To celebrate the Guiding Centenary the girls all worked towards the Adventure 100 badge which included an outing to the Clock Tower in St Albans, as well as visits from the local PCSO and St Albans Model Aeroplane Club, a mother's pampering evening and a father's challenge evening. In April they had the opportunity to join with the rest of the District in the PGL weekend away where they took part in many exciting outdoor activities culminating in a camp fire on the last night. They also attended the annual St George's Day Parade in April.

We had our own Centenary party on the common in July and joined in with the District Centenary pink party in October. We decorated pumpkins to take part in the annual Pumpkin festival at Luton Hoo. The Centenary Year was completed when we took part in a Division torchlight procession and firework display on the Common in October.

The Brownies held their own Bring and Buy Sale in December where we raised money to buy Christmas presents to give to the residents of Walker's Court when we went carol singing during our last meeting of the year.

So far in 2011, we have celebrated Chinese New Year by sewing Chinese cushions, Valentine's Day by making and icing heart shaped biscuits, and Thinking Day by renewing our Brownie promise and talking about Brownies around the world.

Once again, it was a very busy year and St John's Brownies continue to thrive. As part of the Southdown and Wheathampstead District of Girlguiding we have a long waiting list, and we always welcome visitors and new volunteers!

Linda Traynor  
Snowy Owl

## **JUNIOR CHURCH 2010-2011**

Junior Church meets every Sunday in the Church Hall, except for the All Age Eucharist service. Numbers remain high, and we have a lot of children in the older age groups (8 plus). We regularly have 50 children each Sunday, and even more in the few weeks leading up to the Nativity play. Junior Church is open to all school aged children aged between 4 and 11, with pre-school children going to Little Gems and secondary school-aged children to Bedrock. We find it quite hard to manage when 50+ children turn up, especially as we have a lot of older children at present. We are looking at ways to resolve this, and are buying more teaching material suitable for older children, but lack of space continues to be a problem.

We have the same group of nine leaders as last year, who take it in turns to lead the sessions. We try to have at least three leaders and three helpers each Sunday. We have a good group of around 20 parent helpers who help as required 6-8 times a year. Margaret and Alison have both decided to scale down their commitment from September 2011, as they feel it is time for some new blood. They have both been actively involved now for many years. So we need more people who are willing to commit to being leaders, to bring new ideas and enthusiasm, as well as sharing the work out. We are very fortunate in that Mary Monk continues to help lead the group, and she ran the whole Good Friday Workshop in 2010 – it wouldn't have happened without her. 34 children, parent and teenage helpers had a very enjoyable two hours on a range of activities connected with Easter and Good Friday.

In the summer we spent five sessions finding out about Elijah, which gave us the opportunity to cover an Old Testament character in much more depth. We carried on meeting through the summer holidays, including a couple of sessions playing parachute games, which was possible with the smaller numbers.

In the autumn term we took part in the MU Wash Bags project, collecting toiletries for children in local hospitals. As always, much of the autumn term was spent rehearsing for the Nativity Play, which took place at the 9.30am service on December 19<sup>th</sup>. The play this year was called 'The Lonely Bat', and over 80 children took part in the play, narrated, or were in the orchestra. We are especially grateful to Sarah Poppleton for the fantastic costumes, and to Philippa Burch for arranging all the music, teaching all the songs and directing the orchestra, and to all our other helpers.

Children in Boulders, the oldest group, have lead the prayers in the Mothering Sunday and Harvest services this year, and we try to take some of our 'creations' into Church when appropriate to share with the rest of the congregation.

We always have a lot of fun, and you are very welcome to come and see what we do. As always, we appreciate the support and encouragement given to Junior Church by Philippa, the PCC, and thank all our helpers.

Margaret Charlston, Alison Gadd, Mary Monk, Paul Bedding, Carolyn Carman, Philippa Burch, Sarah Griggs, Kirsty Helm and Debbie Knight.

## **LITTLE GEMS 2010-2011**

Little Gems continues to flourish, with a regular Sunday morning attendance of around 10-12. Five children have moved up to Junior Church as they started school this year, which means a slightly younger average age at present as some new little ones join us. We are considering ways to mark this transition to Junior Church in future as we see regular friends grow and move on. We are delighted that Tim Davey has joined our team of leaders, and so are the children! We've also welcomed a couple of new parent helpers which really eases the rota. Many thanks to all of them.

Spring saw us getting to grips with sorting out our toy and craft cupboard, revamping the notice board, and buying some new little tables for craft work. We're building up a photo-gallery of our activities on the notice board, showing smiling Little Gems in action, so we can get to recognise the youngest of our congregation by name. Do have a look at what we are up to!

Since January, we have embarked on a new series of material, which explores the Big Bible Story. From Genesis to Revelation, we're covering God's big promises of the Old Testament, the stories of Jesus and the letters and Journeys of St Paul. As we go, we're making and building a collection of memory markers, which all fit inside our big "Book of Books" - the children are enjoying tracing and remembering the route we are taking through the Bible week by week, and we'll end up with a lovely "Book" of memories, promises and stories. Most importantly, we pray the children will have a sense that God's Big Story hasn't ended, but continues now, through the life of even the youngest child.

Celia Halsey, Imogen Brooks and Tim Davey

## **MEN ON WEDNESDAYS 2010-2011**

This group invites men to "Join us for a refreshing, stimulating and convivial social evening, where we explore and debate topical issues from a Christian perspective." We meet about once a month (yes, on a Wednesday!) at 8pm at 32 Wordsworth Road, first for a pudding, and then for a stimulating discussion, until no later than 10pm.

This year's programme has involved the following discussions:

- What are Governments for? (June)
- War and Peace (July)
- Usury: lending, interest and debt (October)
- Life and Death: people and technology (November)
- Wealth, Poverty and Consumerism: a simple lifestyle? (January)
- Climate Change: why should we care? (March)

All these discussions have been stimulating and given us plenty of opportunity to gain new insights both into the Bible and the topical issues we discuss. Tim Davey and I always welcome new participants....

David Halsey

## **MOTHERS' UNION 2010-2011**

We have enjoyed another interesting and varied year as a branch. Our theme for 2010 was Relationship not Rules and our speakers have covered a wide variety of subjects and topics from Harpenden matters, the work of a teaching assistant, stimulating conversations with the elderly, a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, the life of bees, relationships at work and the Harpenden Seniors Forum. We produced posies for Mothering Sunday, and Christingles in December. We have held produce stalls at Coffee Time, selling cakes, jams pickles and chutneys alongside Wardens' honey. Together with serving at Wesley's coffee shop in the High Street, we have been able to send donations to Mothers' Union outreach projects at home and abroad. We have made coffee after Church, and taken part in offertory processions throughout the year. We have also been involved with Play and Praise on Sunday afternoons in the hall, helping with the teas.

We celebrated our 75<sup>th</sup> birthday as a branch with a dinner at Aldwickbury Park Golf Club in July, with 38 members present and were joined by Diocesan President and Vice President. As part of Wheathampstead Deanery we get together with the two other branches, St. Mary Redbourn and St. Nicholas Harpenden for events throughout the year. In March we celebrated our Lady Day service in Redbourn, and later in the month went again, to hear Alison Bailey our Marketing Co-ordinator speak on her work. In June we enjoyed a Deanery lunch at St. Nicholas, and in August we were guests at the beautiful garden of Elizabeth Brown for our Deanery Garden Party. In October we again visited St. Nicholas to meet Lydia Gladwin, a past Central Outreach and Action Co-ordinator at Mary Sumner House. In December we hosted a Deanery Advent Communion Service at St. Johns, led by our vicar, The Rev'd Philippa Segrave Pride. Our final Deanery get together was an Epiphany Carol Service at St. Mary Redbourn in January.

We are also involved in Diocesan activities. In April several of us were present at the commissioning of our new Diocesan President Susan Roberts at her church in Hoddesdon. We hosted a Diocesan prayer walk round Harpenden Common in September, led by Jenny Lane.

My committee have been most supportive over the past year, Maureen Lacey, Barbara Chalk, Ann Peters, Gudrun Ledwith, Jenny Lane, Doris Hughes and Julia Smith.

We were very sad to learn of the severe stroke suffered by one of our members Jane Ingram in August, which has left her movement impaired. She is at present undergoing intensive treatment at St. Albans City Hospital.

Next year we have a full programme of events and activities, so I hope members of the congregation will be inspired to join in the fellowship and fun we have from being part of Mothers' Union worldwide.

Brenda Cottle

## **PLAY & PRAISE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES 2010-2011**

During 2010, Play & Praise continued at St John's on the second Sunday of the month with a time of worship, together with a time of painting, colouring, sticking, etc., and having tea together. Lucy Davis and Celia Halsey continued to bear the brunt of planning and running the worship and supporting creative art time, and that has been so good. It has been well supported by several members of the Mothers' Union. And for that we are so grateful.

However, there has not been the same attendance by families as there had been during 2009, and following discussion with Philippa it has been decided that Play & Praise will be 'put on hold' for the time being. With a review of the way baptism preparation has been done in the past, we may find that there is a better way of keeping in touch with baptism families which is what it was hoped Play & Praise would enable us to do.

Out of the families who have come, there are some who now attend St John's main services, so from that point of view we have succeeded in our task. A very big thank you to those members who have been such loyal supporters.

Anne Edwards

## **ST LUKE'S CELL PRAYER GROUP - 2010-11**

St Luke's Cell prayer group, named after the 'beloved physician', has members drawn from St John's and Southdown Methodist churches. Our ministry and joy is to pray for those in particular need of prayer including the long-term sick, who live in the parish or are friends or relatives of people living in the parish. By interceding in this way, we help to share God's healing power with other people.

Every month each of us prays for a different group of about five people. The ages of those we pray for range from the very young to the very old, and include those on the weekly pew sheet, as well as about fifty others whom we have been asked to pray for over a longer period.

Many of us attend the monthly meeting, at which we pray together for all these people, using a short service based on Common Worship at which we remember by name all those on the current list. We meet on the second Wednesday of the month at about 1.45 pm in St John's Church Hall Committee Room.

We always welcome new members (including those who are unable to come to meetings), as well as news of people in need of prayer. Please contact us if you would like to know more or if you know of people you wish us to pray for.

Michael Hughes

Rev'd Mary Monk

## STEWARDSHIP 2010-2011

The Stewardship Group has had a challenging year in light of the current economic state of the country. It is never easy to ask people to commit to new or increased financial giving but the Group has continued to promote the importance of giving “according to your means” and to welcome all offers of voluntary sharing of “time and talent”.

The recently reissued Parish Directory demonstrates how many members of the Congregation share their skills within the Church community and co-ordinate small groups of additional volunteers who help to keep St Johns alive and growing. The “St Johns Got Talent” day in autumn 2009 aimed to promote visibility of these Groups and activities and assisted in increasing the number of volunteers for some of them.

On the financial side, members of the Stewardship Group attended a meeting in Holywell Lodge last autumn to revisit how this aspect could be promoted afresh. The initial fruits of this consultation can be seen in the new “Parish Giving 2011” leaflet which aims to inform and encourage people to review their financial commitment to God as part of their Christian faith. Our current figures for Parish Giving are:

Regular ‘planned givers’ who are on the Electoral Roll	141
Regular ‘planned givers’ who are not on the Electoral Roll	42

(Note. The Electoral Roll for 2010 had a membership of 275 which included 54 spouses.)

Sadly, as a Church located in a relatively affluent area our financial giving per head is substantially below that of other parishes less well off. The Stewardship Group has formally discussed this concern with the PCC and analysed the feedback given by the congregation’s elected representatives.

In the coming year, the Group will be working more closely with the PCC to interlink stewardship with the Mission Action Plan (MAP). In particular we will be aiming to create an environment where financial giving at St Johns not only pays the bills but also enables us to support those outside our community whose needs are far greater than ours. My personal thanks go to all members of the current Group for their continued support and enthusiasm.

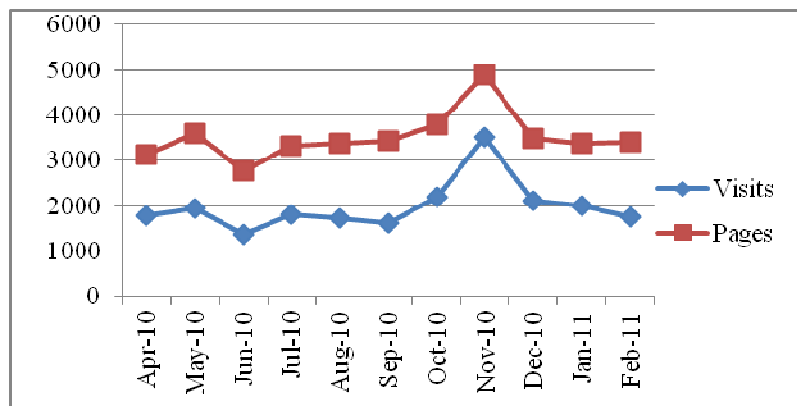
Lesley Richardson

## ST JOHN'S WEBSITE 2010-2011

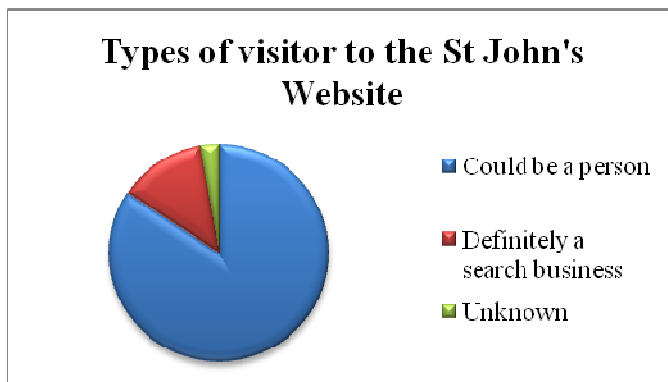
[www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)

The St John's website continues to be a 'shop front' for our church community. It is hard to say how exactly how many 'real' visitors we receive to the website as the traffic analysis available will not always correctly distinguish between visits from search engines such as Google and real people. However it would appear that in a typical day, the website:

- Receives 50 to 60 visits.
- 84% of them could be a real person (and in most cases probably are).
- Most visitors look at around 2 pages, with the contacts, map and sermon pages being the most commonly looked at. Dates for the Diary, "We don't bite" [a page that



attempts to reassure that it is not scary to come to St John's] and the Children's pages are also commonly accessed.



Google is our most common referrer – the key words used are often what we would expect – eg "st john's church parish magazine", but sometimes they are unexplained: "outward reward of the cross of saint", "st albans rowan Williams" and "catholic church in cardiff wales".

For the future, the intention is that the web site will continue to represent us to the wider community in Harpenden and beyond. It is my intention to modernise the look and feel of the website in the coming months – this will not involve significant change to the content.

Neil Middleton

## **YOUTH GROUP 2010- 2011**

Youth Group continues to meet once a month, usually on Sunday evenings, and we aim to organise a wide variety of fun activities to promote fellowship for young people of Secondary School age, as well as providing opportunities to explore issues of faith. I was pleased to join the leadership of the group in September, in time to welcome a large number of new members as they moved up to Year Seven.

Looking back over the diary, it is amazing just how much we have managed to pack into the year. Some sessions have been just for fun, including some very successful club nights of games and the ever popular tuck shop, for which thanks to Neil Middleton. Other meetings have been more focussed, such as our 'Justice Evening', which did however involve getting pretty soggy and, fittingly, Fair Trade tuck. Our March meeting saw pancake making thanks to some very brave parent helpers, as well as some drama and space to think a little more deeply about Lent and Easter. We have also had our share of offsite activities including a movie night, a trip to see Jesus Christ Superstar, tree planting at the new Heartwood Forest and an ice skating outing.

The group has taken its part in the wider life of the church, leading worship for the November All Age Eucharist with guidance from Charles Burch. Charles has also arranged another popular sailing weekend in May with Fellowship Afloat, which promises to be a highlight of the year for many of our members.

We are always very happy to welcome new members to the group, as well as receiving offers of help from any members of the congregation who are over eighteen!

Lucy Davis