

# APCM REPORTS 2023





## 1. Churchwarden's Report on Parochial Charities

### **BEST'S GIFT**

Balance brought forward	£395
Income year to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2021	£226
Distributions*	£0
Balance carried forward	<u>£621</u>

St John's now only has 1 charity, Best's Gift, which was originally set up to provide boots for apprentices. These days it is used to provide grants for the purchase of books for young people who are part of St John's and are going to university or college. During 2022, three grants were made. As before, the students were also given a Christian book along with their grant cheque.

\*Unusually the cheques weren't presented to the bank until January 2023, so no payments were made from the account in 2022.

Jeremy Tagg & Jackie Barter

## 2. Electoral Roll Officer's Report 2022

Total number on Electoral Roll in 2022	168
Names taken off 2022 Roll	5
Names added in 2023	10
Total names on 2023 Electoral Roll	173

Paul Kingman

## 3. PCC Secretary's Report

Since our APCM in April 2022 the PCC has held 6 business meetings and 3 vision meetings.

Safeguarding continues to be on the Agenda of every meeting.

Our teams continue to update the PCC on their current activities and their reports are attached.

The PCC Minutes are posted on the church website when they have been agreed by the PCC and a copy is also posted in church, together with the Agenda of each meeting.

Sybil Andrew

#### **4. Rector's Report**

It would be naive to say that the past 12 months have seen us shrug off all the effects of Covid, but it feels like many of the harder aspects are in our rear view mirror. Our numbers on a Sunday morning have been gently creeping upwards, and it is encouraging to see new people taking a look at how we express our faith together. Sunday attendance is a limited measure of 'success', but I am more heartened by the fact that many of those newcomers have been invited along by existing members of the church. Whilst we will continue to take care over how we publicise our activities as a church family, I remain convinced that our growth will hinge on the personal connections we develop around us.

Of course, some of those relationships are fostered by the things we do as a church. You only have to read through these reports to recognise that there are a number of spaces in which people are doing good work under the aegis of St John's. A lot of this happens in a very unassuming manner, but represents real commitment and sacrifice to those involved. I want to thank everyone who gives up their time in so many different ways. It is genuinely hard to profile all that is going on and I am sorry if it ever feels like it goes unnoticed.

As we continue to press into 2023, we will aim to provide a few key events to help us strengthen relationships with people outside of the church. These are designed to have less of a 'churchy' feel to make them more accessible for those who are not yet comfortable with faith. Our forthcoming Musical Fundraiser is an example and I encourage you to be bold and invite friends and family along to these occasions. They represent a stepping stone to more explicitly faith oriented offerings, such as the Alpha Course. It's no surprise that as our culture becomes increasingly secular in its outlook, the popularity of Alpha wanes, even as we publicise it through more channels. The personal invitation, from a trusted friend, will become ever more compelling.

In the coming months I would like us to press more deeply into a particular aspect of our vision (to be people who 'do life' with Jesus, as well as encourage others in that direction, so that we and our communities flourish). I will share the beginnings of this in the Assembly Rooms on 14 May, where we will begin to open out the idea of what being an 'everyday church' looks like and what shifts in our ways of being that might demand. I don't often pitch things as a 'red letter day', but it would be good for as many of us as is possible to attend then - it's not for a select, keen few, but for all, as it goes to the heart of how we can be a faithful, missional church family in our culture.

It's not a coincidence that we aim to underpin these movements with prayer. I hope that our recent '21 Days of Prayer & Fasting' was an encouragement to many of you. This will not be a one off. If we have sifted anything from this focus during Lent, it's that we are only beginning to scratch the surface on the devotional lives that God invites us to inhabit if we are to be his ambassadors in our day.

At the time of writing, we have once again put out an advert for our Families Worker position. We have been told that it remains a difficult climate in which to hire people to these roles, so please continue to pray hard about this. Our team of volunteers who support our work with young people and children are amazing, but we remain aware that having someone at the helm to steer and develop this ministry is invaluable.

This is not the only matter in which we are having to be patient. The wheels continue to turn very slowly with the development of the basketball court area. Vision Homes are yet to put in a full planning application with the Council. As mentioned earlier in the year, if successful, then we may be the beneficiaries of some financial support, as well as a gift of the car parking area. Obviously, this would be welcome and would allow us to free up some finance for the Families Worker role.

I pretty much always circle back to a thank you at the end of my report. I'm not going to break with tradition this year! I'll start by expressing my gratitude to everyone who contributes to making what our gatherings are on a Sunday. You will know me well enough to recognise that I see church as way more than what happens on that one day of the week. However, it would be very easy to underrate what we have together week in, week out. So everyone - cleaners, rota makers, flower arrangers, coffee servers, sound and visual technicians, musicians, preachers, readers, pray-ers, welcomers, bell ringers, group leaders and more - a really big thank you. I hope together we can continue to shape an environment in which God delights in offering us an encounter with His presence.

I would also like to single out special thanks to Jeremy for all his work as warden during his tenure. He's been in office during Covid and a sabbatical, amongst other challenges, and held the fort with admirable equanimity. Thank you Jeremy, and I hope you are able to pass on such mysteries as church heating controls to your successor!

Finally, thank you to each and everyone of you for making this a role which I am privileged to hold.

Jon Ward

## **5. Churchwarden's Report**

This report covers areas of church life which are a particular responsibility of the churchwardens. The main aspects of the role are:

- ensuring "good order" in the church building and churchyard (e.g. welcoming, heating);
- ensuring the church building and its contents are cared for and fit for purpose; and
- supporting the Rector in the leadership of the Parish.

The APCM will mark the end of Jeremy's final year and Jackie's first as churchwardens here. On top of the usual day-to-day care and maintenance of the Church, our latest Quinquennial Inspection was also carried out last Summer. As the term suggests, every five years, we are

required by the Church of England to arrange for our church building to be inspected by a suitably experienced and qualified professional, appointed after consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Committee. The aim of the report is to help us make sure that the building is kept in good repair. While the report shows that the church fabric remains in a reasonable state of repair, there are works that we will need to undertake. The immediate requirements identified by the report have already been undertaken, and there are others that are listed as necessary in the next one or two years, and others expected in years three to five.

We are fortunate to be assisted by a maintenance team, who help us keep on top of a host of routine smaller tasks that require attention throughout the year. We thank everyone for their prayers, encouragement and support.

Jeremy Tagg and Jackie Barter

## **6. Safeguarding Report**

The PCC takes very seriously the requirement to safeguard children, young persons and potentially vulnerable adults who attend any activity organised by the church. Accordingly it continues to actively monitor the application of the Diocese Safe Church policies and procedures.

Part of this monitoring process involves a Diocesan self audit and the formation of an action plan to ensure that the policies and procedures are being implemented. Hard copies of the Diocesan safeguarding manual, "A Safe Church," are on display in both in the church and at SJ's, as well as being available online via the church website.

All persons who have direct contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults are required to obtain a clear Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) report and these checks are renewed every 3 years. We currently have 67 live checks. Detailed records are kept and confidential documents are filed in a locked facility, and on an encrypted spreadsheet. Last year the Diocese instructed that the frequency of DBS checks be reduced from 5 to 3 years – the backlog of checks that resulted has now been cleared. Clergy, PSO's and other church officers continue to attend training provided by the diocese when appropriate training courses become available. All those who hold a DBS initiated by St John's, PCC members and new volunteers are signposted to the online basic safeguarding course run by the Diocese. This resource is free and is readily available.

The training covers the relevant sections of "A Safe Church", including whistleblowing procedures, as well as wider reaching issues and details of who to contact should an emergency arise. With the restrictions of lockdown leading to church online, the process of handling and storing images of children who may appear in the services was revised. As a result, the consent forms have been revised and an agreement put in place to protect both the children and also any adults involved in the technology.

The congregation as a whole will be aware of the enormous damage allegations of abuse can inflict on any organisation and they are encouraged to bring forward any concerns they may

have. Any such issues are resolved with confidentiality and are fully recorded. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and the congregation are reminded of this at a Sunday morning service periodically, as well as a visual reminder by means of a slide on display before every Sunday morning service.

The PSOs work closely together to ensure that there is always one of them available should any issues arise unexpectedly, and their contact details, and those of the Diocesan safeguarding team are on display in the church, at SJ'S and on the website.

Sometimes it is necessary to seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. The PSOs liaise closely with the relevant group leaders regarding children's/other activities and examine carefully the potential risks (eg. young person's residential trip to Carroty Wood; sleepover in the church; drama group at SJ'S etc). Safeguarding also extends to protection of church premises, in addition to children, vulnerable adults, those who work with them and the church's reputation. Any activities held either in the church, SJ's or elsewhere are scrutinised through risk assessments and other relevant investigations (eg. Insurance). A comprehensive list of contact numbers for support agencies across the borough is on display at SJ'S and is updated annually.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have due regard to House of Bishop's guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults). The relevant policies relating to safeguarding are ratified on an annual basis.

Sarah Fletcher and Michele Wickers

## **7. Deanery Synod Report**

This year the Deanery Synod met in June, October, November and February. On the 11 th June they organised the Deanery Pilgrimage which was held to be a particular success. In October there was a talk about the role of Lay Ministries and in February there was a discussion about the role of the Deanery Synod.

The event in November was a social event at St Edwards in New Addington with a "bring and share" meal. The meetings provide an opportunity to meet members of other congregations, to hear about what is happening in other churches and after a talk or activity to share in Compline together. Meetings are open to any in the congregation and the next meeting is on 07 June at 7.45pm with a talk entitled Citizens U.K. with the venue to be confirmed.

Jeff Seabrook and Philippa Tagg

## **8. Churches Together in West Wickham Report**

Stuart Talbot and I have been standing by but there have been few opportunities for reps to share, discuss or plan. However, all the Churches have taken part in the "warm spaces" initiative - St John's doesn't have suitable space but several members helped out at St. Francis.

There were the usual joint Christian Aid initiatives and these will be repeated this year, including stalls in May and a concert in St. Francis on 12th May and the Big Sing in December.

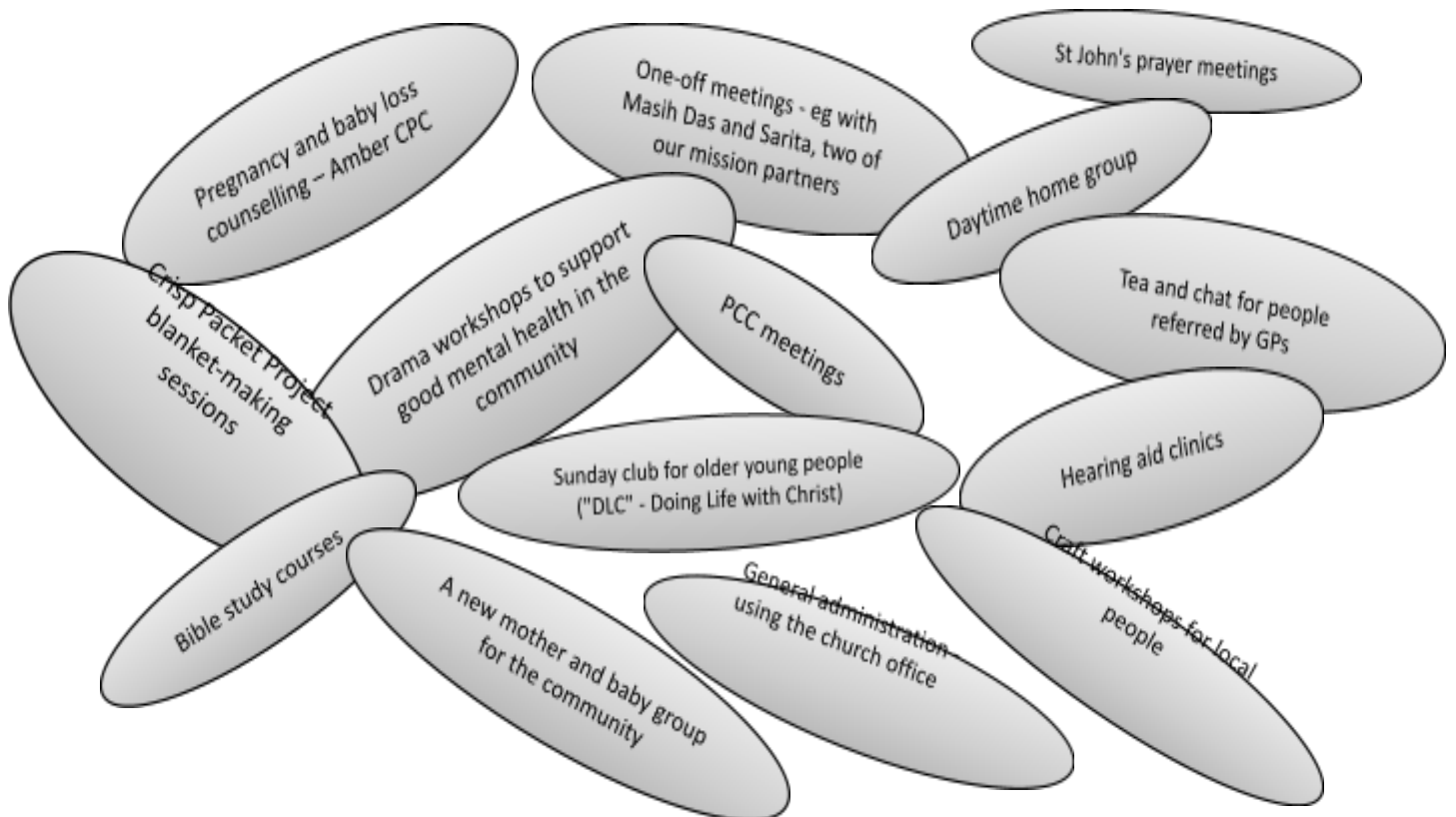
Penny Seabrook and Stuart Talbot

## 9. SJ's Report

Maybe it's worth starting with a couple of basic points –

- At St John's, we have the amazing privilege of owning SJs, a multi-use facility, renovated and fitted out to a good standard, located in the middle of the Coney Hall "high street". SJs puts us right at the heart of the local community. The question for all of us is how we make the best possible use of it.
- The vision we set for SJs a couple of years ago, is that it should act as a "bridge" between St John's and the people in our parish. Specifically, we long for it to be used in such a way that it enables people in our community to flourish and recognise the love of God in their midst

So, how are we doing? Over the last year SJs has left well and truly behind that strange time of Covid limitations. Here are the main uses:





As you will see, this is a rich mix of activities and initiatives, some serving particular needs in the community (some run by St John's, some where we make the facility available to others), others serving the needs of the church family itself. We want to say a huge thank you to all within St John's who lead and contribute to these activities. They are all part of our wider church vision. A big thank you, too, to Margaret, our Parish Administrator, who manages SJs bookings and seeks to meet all these diverse needs at a time when SJs is – wonderfully – being used more and more. SJs needs a team effort to keep it running and remaining attractive – from cleaning, through to equipment, to sorting out things like leaky roofs. A thank you to all who are involved.

Looking forward, we are keen for us to keep asking ourselves what else we might do in SJs to make it a true “bridge” to the local community, and what our individual part in that might be. If you think that might be you, do please get in touch. We would very much welcome some fresh ideas and energy.

Richard Cienicala and Jeremy Tagg

## **10. Team Reports**

### **Care Team**

This year has seen us busy and active both with our Befriending programme and our Tea and Chat afternoon which has gone from strength to strength. Over sixteen volunteers from both St John's, St Francis and St Mary's are involved in this and the people we care for tell us just what a difference our service has made in their lives.

The exciting news is that our garden project has started! An official open day is likely to be held in September. More details on that nearer the time. We are getting referrals from the social prescribing officers and after Easter when hopefully it is warmer, growing can commence. The lead on this project is our very own Wendy Jaffray.

We organised our Annual Thanksgiving Service in November for those who have been bereaved in the last couple of years with those in the community getting an invitation by post. We are always surprised, but perhaps shouldn't be, that lots of people come and really appreciate this opportunity to remember loved ones. After the service there is always tea and cake and an opportunity to talk.

As we go to print a welcome tea is being organised for newcomers to the Church. This has been an annual affair but because of various things the biggest being Covid, it has not been run in the last four years. We are aware that we have been blessed with a lot of new and now not so new people to our church so it will be lovely to get to know you better in an informal setting.

None of this can happen without support and we would welcome any of you who feel they could help in any capacity to come and talk to us. Firstly and foremost we would value your prayers that the people who come along feel valued, supported and encouraged. Also that more volunteers will come forward.

Sue Watson and Maureen Lang

## **Mission Team**

### **Aims of the Team**

The mission team has three aims

- Grow – to identify and nurture St Johns members to undertake mission
- Engage – to inform and inspire church members regards global issues / mission
- Sustain - to meaningfully support a small number of missions / missionaries in prayer and practical ways

### **Review of calendar year 2022**

Mission team leaders met in January to review 2022 and start planning with the team for 2023.

As a team we feel we have largely continued to meet our aims of engage and sustain. Grow has been the area we have progressed less well on. Personal connection and responsive calls appear to have the most success. The major missions/ causes we have supported seem to resonate with the church family and wider community namely Link to Hope, refugees and Christian Aid week.

#### Specific things that went well

- When people spoke and inspired others from the heart, due to personal connections/ knowledge/ experience.
- The fact that wider church members were able to speak and inspire others, not just the mission team.
- When mission calls to prayer or appeals were responsive to global circumstances e.g. Afghanistan, Ukraine & earthquake appeal.
- Ukraine- prayer in the all age service, welcome event.
- Traidcraft sale in church.
- Link to Hope Autumn Fair and shoe boxes.
- Donations to Medair following Afghan focus.
- Moving away from sole focus on people/ missions receiving PCC allocations, allowing responsive action / greater depth.
- Having young people as part of the team

#### Things that failed to have as much traction.

- Mission team members engaging and feeding back on linked missions/missionaries.
- Crisp Packet Project
- Link with eco church and ongoing fair trade, beyond Traidcraft sale.

### **Vision and priorities for 2023**

As a team our focus for 2023 includes:

#### Ukraine

- Prayer focus in all age service around 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary.
- Banquet evening

#### Link to Hope

- Autumn Fair 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023
- Ongoing support to shoe boxes

## Refugees

- Follow up on the situation in Afghanistan involving youth - 14+ service takeover in May.
- Feeding back from mission trips to enthuse and inspire others to step out.

## Personal relationships and connections

- Focus on missions where we have really clear personal links and passion and using this passion to engage church, youth groups and community groups eg Girlguiding

## Maintaining space and capacity to be responsive

## Developing the grow element of our aims

Continuing to build relationships with prayer team and missions team continuing to support all endeavours in prayer.

Milly Johnson & Sarah Morgan

## Prayer Team

Once again, this report starts with the vision for the prayer team from early 2019. This says-

We want to be a church where prayer – individual and corporate – is at the heart of all we are and do, and both reflects and helps build the fullest possible relationship with our God, being -

- ingrained, instinctive
- prioritised
- varied, using all our God-given gifts of expression
- systematic and spontaneous
- inclusive, involving all, from youngest to oldest

Over this last year we have tried to live out this vision through –

*Sustaining existing ways in which we pray:* we have continued to run our regular Monday evening prayer meetings (some in person, most online); people who lead intercessions on a Sunday morning have met and talked about what it feels like, and learnt from each other; we have started to offer prayer to people after the Sunday morning service again; and our Prayer Requests WhatsApp group has continued to lift needs up to God in prayer.

*Teaching and encouraging each other:* we have run two series of short interviews during the Sunday morning service, when different people have talked about their own experience of prayer, and answers to prayer; you may also have been struck by how often prayer is at the heart of the message in Sunday morning sermons; and we have put out weekly prayer suggestions to offer some focus for our individual prayers.

*Trying new things, and going deeper:* it has been great finding some new ways of praying – in the fields and open ground around the church at midsummer, walking round some streets in the parish to coincide with Halloween. More recently our time of Lent prayer and fasting has enabled us to experience praying together daily, using the Northumbria Community's daily

prayer material, and to spend time in the wonderful Prayer Room (thank you 14+) seeking to experience more deeply how God sees us individually and as a church community.

So how do we measure up against our vision? That's a hard question. Only God has the full picture of our relationship with Him through prayer in St John's – individually, in families, in Home Groups, in impromptu groups. The Prayer Team will continue to support this, and to encourage its growth.

So, what of the future? As we write this, we are discussing with Jon and others how we build on our time of Lent Prayer, including sharing what we believe God has said to us through words and Bible passages recorded in the Prayer Room. The Prayer Team itself has been strengthened through Annette and, more recently, Julia joining, which is wonderful. We will continue to look at ways we can support all of us in our vision of a praying church. We would, of course, welcome your ideas. Do speak to any of us.

Richard & Elzbieta Cieniala, Geoff Larcombe, Sally Munns, Annette Pinnell, Julia Cernoch

## **11. Authorised Lay Ministries**

### **Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary ('SPA')**

Our SPA ministry is open to all members of St. John's and to the community. We are ever mindful of the needs of those who are not so young, live on their own and often lonely, bereaved and possibly less mobile.

Sybil and Penny facilitated an Advent Quiet Day last December when we invited others to join us on a Journey to Bethlehem and Beyond. This gave us all an opportunity to meditate on the scriptures, to pray and to reflect on the real meaning of Christmas.

We also organised another Bereavement Journey course held in Sybil's home - much better than on Zoom! This was much appreciated by those who attended.

Home groups play an important part in our church life - Sybil leads an afternoon group for older members of the church and Penny hosts with her husband an evening group.

We are both up to date with our Diocesan Safeguarding training and have the opportunity to follow other courses organised by the Diocese which we find very helpful to our pastoral ministry.

Sybil continues her weekly phone sessions with Premier Lifeline to support and pray for those who are lonely, bereaved, facing financial challenges, concerned about the future. Mentoring is another aspect of her SPA ministry.

Penny has retired from her role as Archdeaconry SPA and this has given her more flexibility to do other things including -

Launching a Parent & Baby group on Wednesday morning at SJs along with others who have formed an enthusiastic team. We have made a slow start but after the Easter break will have new publicity available to distribute in the neighbourhood.

Penny is still one of the leaders of the Friday craft group at SJs enjoying each other's company and a range of creative activities. They much enjoyed making sewn and knitted things to go with the Link to Hope shoeboxes. It is a joy that the group still meets after 23 years during which time there have been many changes and support given through many of life's ups and downs.

As soon as allowed during the covid period the group met in gardens (often Sybil's) and even the Park for coffee and chat so we were able to keep going. Once covid bans were lifted we started to go on occasional outings. We hope to have a plaque on one of the trees in the Park to mark our long-running group: 23 years.

Penny also leads, with others, an "Inclusion Group" looking at ways we can make St. John's church building and activities more inclusive for everyone who wishes to visit or be part of the life of St. John's, regardless of whether they are "differently abled" or are aware of any diversity issues. Please see the Inclusion Group report for further details.

We are both part of the Welcoming team and prayer support at church. We attend the monthly communion at Bencurtis Park and assist with Pastoral support there.

The SPA ministry is very open-ended which gives us the opportunity to share our faith with a very wide group of people and in many different and challenging circumstances.

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Sybil Andrew & Penny Seabrook

## **Readers**

In October it was a delight to be at Julia Cernoch's licensing as Reader in Southwark Cathedral and subsequently welcome her officially as a Reader at St John's.

Both of us have the privilege of being part of the Preaching Team at St John's. In addition, at the beginning of the year, Julia led a stimulating 4-week bible study course on I Corinthians. She will follow this up with a 'Ground Floor Guide to I Corinthians' for the Diocese on 6th July.

I am just completing teaching and marking for the third year running on the Church History module for Southwark Diocese's Bishop's Certificate. It has been great this year to do this in person rather than on-line.

Please pray for us, that we will hear God's word correctly and communicate it well through God's grace. Thank you.

Sally Munns & Julia Cernoch

## 12. Inclusion Group

The Inclusion Group has not been as obviously active as any of us would have liked due to many other commitments and pressures. However, we haven't stopped working, conferring and making tweaks to our practices and facilities. We would still like to include others in some concentrated thinking and discussion about our priorities and challenges. However, several of us commented on the joy we felt when at church a few Sundays ago there were at least 4 "differently abled" people fully engaged in the service, obviously enjoying the music, worship and word and joining in heartily.

It is good that the 3 of us have a variety of background knowledge and experience but we know that there are those in the congregation who we would like to talk to and learn from without any need to commit to being in a formal group. We need to talk to those most affected too, whether relatives, friends, those who currently experience disability or feelings of exclusion for any reason. We need your input! Raising awareness is a number one priority.

St. John's is an awkward building but we have a generally welcoming and caring church family and that helps to make some of the difficulties faced by others, manageable to varying degrees.

However, it would be great if we could offer more support and solutions to some long-term issues: the need for an accessible toilet being high on the list but one of the hardest to solve! Many other things cost nothing or little and we are trying to do things like keeping the large print Bibles by the Welcomers. There are now a variety of "twiddle" items for those with restlessness to borrow. These are in the black cabinet in the Baptistry, a wobble cushion is also available. I will be putting a notice on the Welcomers' pew highlighting these and the Bibles. We have installed a sign by the path in the churchyard, indicating the more accessible back door.

Although organised by others, we are very pleased that Ukrainian Bibles have been made available for our Ukrainian members.

Inclusion also includes keeping an eye out for newcomers and those in "ordinary" but tricky situations such as newcomers with restless babies who might need help to find the baby changing facilities upstairs, toys in the side chapel or potty in the toilet, any of which might make the difference between a family feeling welcome and coming again or not.

Everyone has a part to play and we are grateful for the practical love already being shown but we would love to hear from you with concerns, ideas, inspiration and willingness to get involved!

Penny Seabrook, Julia Cernoch & Julie Lancaster

## **14. Welcomers**

The formal list of welcomers for 2023 is:

Sybil Andrew  
Charlotte Faint  
Sarah Fletcher  
Tim Harris  
Rosemary Jordon  
Christine Keay  
Felicity Mason  
Jeff Seabrook  
Penny Seabrook  
Philippa Tagg  
Jonathan Tickner  
Tim Howells  
Sally Munns