



ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

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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

The major change within St John's in the past 12 months has been with our worship, in a way of developing our growth. Following much prayer and discernment, we decided that we could offer different opportunities to meet with Jesus on a Sunday morning, and that it was not easy to hold our growing diversity within one service. Therefore from Advent Sunday 2009 we met around the Altar on two occasions. The 9.30am service was a formal and more traditional service, whilst the 11am service was to be more contemporary in style.

This was a 'liturgical experiment' and will be concluded at the feast of Christ the King in 2010. We will then prayerfully discern how we might develop our worship further.

St John at Hackney Project – update

We met most of the targets that we set ourselves for the first 12 months of the project, which is very good news. I want to make special reference to the Operation and Finance working party who, under the leadership of Jayne Bailey, have worked very hard both on our financial processes, to make our accountability more transparent, and also upon our building processes, with the nomination of Laura Tomlinson as our Clerk of Works. These decisions have enabled us to monitor how we use our resources more clearly, but will also help us in our fundraising into the future.

We have also managed to make some repairs to the tower, including the restoration of our clock faces and weathervane. I even had the joy of blessing the weathervane once it had been placed back on the tower, and for someone who does not like heights, this was no mean feat!

Further developments for the project were the employment of Ed Cox as a consultant for our overall building plans. Under Ed's steady hand we have now created a new Social Audit, carried out a community consultation involving 1,200 people and begun to work on our fundraising strategy.

Our next challenge comes soon as we aim to make our spaces more flexible to diversify our use. Likewise, we have managed to get the overarching principles of the project to be included in the London Borough of Hackney's master-planning process. This means that our vision for the church

and churchyard have been endorsed by the Local Authority, and have now become planning policy. We have the green light!

Governance

With few changes to the PCC, there has been little change in our Governance structures. The process of working parties continues to work, allowing the PCC to oversee the work through just four meetings a year.

In addition, we have been receiving much support from a team at the Royal London Asset Management (RLAM) in the form of business mentoring and property management. We are much indebted to them.

Impact Upon Hackney: Our projects

Our central mission will always be people based, bringing the good news of Jesus to those around us. In line with the St John at Hackney project, we have been able to support a number of initiatives this past year.

Children's work continues to thrive, and we offered three residential trips for our children last year. In addition, H Town Saints is developing into an exciting youth club where our young people are empowered to take many decisions for themselves. We have also continued to work closely with the Children's Society this past year.

From a faith development perspective, we have developed a series of Bible Studies which operate weekly in the parish, as well as the Pembury Group. We even managed to offer a retreat during lent 2010, visiting our link church at Ely Cathedral.

As part of our commitment to developing the skills of our church family, five people began the Stepney Area New Step Course in 2009, along with a further five people taking part in the CPAS Growing Leaders Course. We pray for them that God will make it clear as to how they might be using their new skills.

Hospitality and pastoral care are also key to our vision, and for this reason we have renewed a sense of enjoying shared lunches together, continued with the Night Shelter scheme, developed our older persons project, organised Lent Lunches and created a series of afternoon teas for parents with children soon to be baptised and children soon to begin school.

Finally, in 2009 we joined London Citizens, a collective of different schools, places of worship and community organisations who are passionate about social justice in London. In 2009, the church building became a Citysafe haven for our young people.

Personnel

This past year has been relatively stable within our personnel team. John and Janet Tribe have developed their roles as first aiders, and John now has the role of Caretaker to St John's. In addition, we have been delighted to welcome The Rev'd Sebastian Ejiaku as an Assistant Priest to the parish, as well as the Rev'd Dr Lincoln Harvey who comes to St John's to serve his Title Curacy with us. This is phenomenal, as there are very few parishes who have the privilege of four clergy serving them. We continue to be grateful to The Rev'd David Evans for his work amongst us, and also to the Bishop of Stepney for his trust in our ability to train and develop the skills of clergy in his Episcopal area.

Hackney Free makes history

This year our schools (which were once amalgamated as Hackney Free and Parochial) celebrate their 490th birthday. In 1520, the Rev'd Christopher Urswick founded the first church school in Hackney, and to him we are most indebted. Now, not only is our Primary school deemed as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, our Secondary school was recognised as having a number of 'Outstanding' features in a recent inspection by both Ofsted and the Church.

We are most indebted to Richard Brown and Sian Davies as our heads and also to Nicola Massey and Jenna Clark in their roles as Heads of School at the primary school. Keep up the good work! The schools have also been involved in a project to plant bulbs in the churchyard, and the crocuses in Spring look wonderful.

The ups and downs

This has been a difficult year in some respects. In the course of this past year, we have been involved in the pastoral care surrounding a number of tragic funerals. In the summer of 2009, we supported the families of Ahmed Benyermak and Jahmal Mason Blair, both former pupils of Hackney Free school who have tragically died, and then in January 2010 we heard of the tragic death of Mason Springer, a little boy who attended St John's weekly, and who attended our Primary school. Our prayers and thoughts are daily with their families, and I know that following Mason's death especially, St John's will not be the same.

In addition, we said a sad farewell to Lord Hugh Amherst in the summer of 2009. Lord Amherst of Hackney was the Patron of St John's and St John's was represented at both his funeral in

Hampshire and his memorial service on the Isle of Wight. Hugh Amherst has now been succeeded by William his Son, and William is now our Patron.

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.

Fr Rob Wickham, Rector of St John at Hackney Church

PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT

The PCC met on the following occasions, following on from the APCM on the 26th April 2009,

30 June 2009

6 October 2009

21 Jan 2010

17 March 2010

Most business is now transacted during the workings of the four working parties (Operation and Finance, People and Prayer, Development and Children and Young People) the activities of the working parties over the past year are recorded in our annual report 2009 – 2010.

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

In addition, the PCC has agreed to develop worship on a Sunday mornings to grow the congregation; Appointed Laura Tomlinson as Clerk of Works; raised funds for a Community Renewal worker to be appointed; welcomed Fr Lincon Harvey as Deacon and Fr Sebastian Ejjaku as Assistant Priest in the parish; raised funds for youth sessional workers to be appointed; agreed for an HIV clinic to run from the church building; organised formal chaplaincy at Hackney Free School with funding from the Bishop of London; and developed the St John at Hackney project

using Ed Cox as a Consultant, with funds raised from the Diocese of London.

We look forward to another exciting year at St John's.

Marion Brame, PCC Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT

Overview of 2009

Planned giving and cash collections have stabilised after a number of years of continue increase, although the move from loose giving to planned has continued to increase with annual planned giving now over £38,000 per year, which is up from £35,000 in 2008. The increase during 2009 matches the decrease in loose giving which has dropped to £6,000 which means we are in a much better position to claim gift aid and plan our spending over the coming year.

Income received from rental of church buildings and space has not show a significant change in what has been a transitional year for our space. The lease of Hackney Grove & Vernon Hall remains stable at £27,000 per year whist new income has been received from parking in the church yard. Hiring of hall and office spaces has shown less increase than expected.

There have also been a number of legacies, grants and special donations received throughout the year and have lead to an overall increase in income. Details of these can be seen in the accounts.

The income received enabled the Parish to give nearly £6439.25 to deserving charities nominated by the members of the People and Prayer Committee.

In respect of expenditure, we have continued to increase our levels of expenditure with the bedding in of the Parish Office, increased Clergy, essential building works and the initiation of a number of pieces of work within the St John-at-Hackney Project.

However, a number of areas of work have been undertaken prior to funds being raised to cover

the work, which is not a sustainable position and therefore there will need to be specific fundraising campaigns going forward for all areas of work.

The funding to manage the Parish's valuable youth and children's activity runs out in March 2010. However, a 3-year grant has been received to pay for a Community Renewal Worker which will cover some of the youth work.

Our contribution to the London Diocesan Fund for 2009 was £24,000.

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 2009 new process for financial management, forward planning and fundraising have been agreed and are under-pinned by the introduction of budgets in 2010 for all activities undertaken. This will help ensure that the good work being undertaken at St John at Hackney can continue.

Balances as at 31 December 2009

Current: £52,785.15

Deposit: £32,630.24

Total £85,415.39

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

Jayne Bailey, Treasurer

PARISH GIFT-AID & STEWARDSHIP

Since my last report as Gift-Aid Secretary to the 2009 Annual Meeting, I have made NO tax

repayment claims to the Inland Revenue. 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. Due to some technical hitch, I have received no bank statements since August 2009. Normally tax repayment claims for the whole year, covering all donations (not just Stewardship) are made the following January.

The bulk of the donations which 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 come 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.

At the date of this report, there are 69 people in the Stewardship Scheme: 52 using the weekly envelopes and 17 (to be confirmed on sight of the latest bank statement) who pay by Banker's Order. That's pretty good, but we could do better than that, I'm sure. 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, 12 March 2010

FRIENDS OF ST JOHN'S

We were delighted when the new Lord William Amherst became one of the Friends of St John's after stepping into his late father's shoes as our church's patron. We were also extremely pleased to welcome him with his young family to our Sunday Eucharist on 22 November 2009.

There are currently 19 members, who receive a mailing four times a year which includes a letter from the Rector plus a covering letter from me with recent copies of Reflections, our monthly parish magazine, and details of forthcoming events. Many Friends now have email addresses and those who agree to help us save postage and paper, receive their communications from us this way

The Friends have been very generous with their GiftAided donations to the church. All their donations go into the Parish Fabric Fund.

As I have said in previous years, it would be very encouraging if we could expand this membership. Could we invite our friends and neighbours who may not be able to attend church, but would nevertheless like to hear from us and support our efforts in Hackney? Of course if any of our fellow church members move away, don't let them escape without a Friends of St John's application form! A supply of these forms is available in church, or can be downloaded from the parish website - worth a visit at www.stjohnnathackney.org.uk. then go to **how to help** and click on **friends of st johns**.

Audrey Seabrook, Secretary to the Friends, 12 March 2010

FABRIC REPORT 2010

In month July of 2009 the church suffered an arson attack after a large funeral in the church. Cupboard doors on the south landing needed replacing, as well as a few other minor breakages and a general clean up after the soot. The incidence lead us to make various efforts to improve both the fire safety in the church (increased signage and clearing items from exit routes) as well as adding coded locks to the doors on the first floor of the south side of the building.

The appointment of our new administrator has meant that the Hurdman Hall and kitchen area now receive many more bookings than previously so some small scale works also took place to

tidy up its appearance and increase the levels of security again.

During the year we received the good news that the National Churches Trust would offer us a £45,000 grant towards the repair of our tower. A contractor was appointed and the scaffolding went up in August 2009. As the bulk of the cost of the works lay in erecting scaffolding we thought it prudent to do other works which would also require scaffold, namely the clock faces and weathervane. The repainting of the clock faces (in black) and the regilding of the numerals were funded by the Mercers' Company. The weathervane was found to be alarmingly unsafe so it was removed to the contractors' studios, made sound and repainted and regilded also. This was an unforeseen additional cost which the parish met out of its own funds.

Once these works had taken place, the scaffold could be reconfigured in order for the re-screeding and leading of the flat surfaces of the tower. The works were carried out and signed off by our inspecting architect but, sadly, since the scaffold has come down we have witnessed water ingress in some of the same areas previous to the works. We are currently re-examining all possible deficiencies in the tower and nearby roof to decide what to do next.

In a similar vein we have been disappointed to witness an almost wholesale failure of the roof works carried out by E C Allards Ltd in 2004. This has engendered lengthy discussions (Allards do not accept responsibility) and we are now waiting for their response following a letter from the Diocesan solicitors.

In the front porch of the church the original 18th-century York paving stones are wearing in an uneven fashion and so one large slab at the front of the porch has been replaced in order to minimise the trip hazard.

Finally, the church's brass processional cross – a centre piece of our liturgy – had broken away from its orb. Rupert Harris Conversation Ltd welded the cross together again and the inscription of 'St John at Hackney', which had worn to an almost imperceptible mark, was re-inscribed.

Laura Tomlinson, March 2010

CHILDREN & YOUTH REPORT

Little Sparks Crèche (under 3s)

The Little Sparks Crèche was set up in September 2009 and we now get up to ten babies and children every Sunday. In recent weeks some parents have felt confident enough to leave their children in Little Sparks and return to the worship in church. The next challenge is to make the Small Hall more attractive and comfortable for the Little Sparks and to introduce more of a structure and specifically Christian flavour to the sessions with simple story telling and singing.

Sparklers (Nursery and Reception)

The Sparklers continue to be a lively and diverse group with numbers fluctuating between 12 and 20 children each week. With the older children now being catered for by Stars, the atmosphere within Sparklers has become calmer, and routines more secure. This in turn has enabled the leaders to experiment more within the session structure particularly with the use of puppets and other props to attract and retain the children's attention and imagination during story telling. We continue to be very grateful for the extra hands and singing voices of those parents who remain with their children in Sparklers, and look for other adults wishing to lead this age group.

Stars (Years 1-3)

As hoped, Stars has now become firmly established as a group in its own right. There is a weekly attendance of up to ten children and a small but determined team of adults to lead them in their journey of faith. Very few of the Stars leaders have been directly involved in Sunday morning provision before, but the enthusiasm of the children in this group is testament to their dedication. We now need to work on expanding the adult team and exploring new resources for this age group to ensure they are learning through a range of experiences.

Prayer Points

- Thank God for our wonderful children and ask that they may continue to grow in their knowledge and love of God and their friendships with one another.
- Thank God for our current leaders and ask that their dedication and enthusiasm may continue to grow and be renewed.
- Pray for more adult volunteers, especially those willing to prepare and lead on a Sunday
- Pray for our ministry among children and their families at the 9.30am service

Blessings

During the last year we have been exploring the liturgy through prayer, drawing, acting and discussion. With the volunteers who work with us we have explored who Jesus Christ is and that he is the one and only. We have said prayers for each other and sung hymns together that uplifted our spirit and brought us happiness and joy.

We lead the way with the Nativity play in 2009, with a few members of the Path Finders group helping us out. We had to wear dark glasses and smart clothes for our costumes and use mobile phones as props for the play. We recounted Jesus birth in a 21st-century way.

When we were exploring 1 Corinthians 12. 12 – 31, one body but many members, we all choose a different part of the body drew it then coloured it in. When we put all the parts together we came up with a very interesting body that we all knew we were a part of.

St Paul had to undertake a long and dangerous journey on a ship (Acts 27. 1 – 44) in one of our lessons we tried to recreate the ship through our drawings and discussions.

Unfortunately this year we lost one our treasured members of Blessings. Mason Springer brought a lot of giggles, fun and interesting discussions to our group. He would always volunteer to say his prayer first, and then remember half way through some one else's prayer that he had forgotten to pray for something or some one. We all miss him dearly but we know that God is looking after him.

Helen Wickham

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORKING PARTY – ANNUAL REVIEW

The Children & Youth Working Party was tasked with managing the transition to a time when a dedicated Children & Youth Coordinator would no longer be employed by St John's. It has therefore been a busy, challenging and exciting year.

The Working Party has produced a welcome pack for parents detailing the numerous activities available for children and young people. We have also produced a behaviour policy designed to safeguard our children and to let parents and adults in church know what is expected of both the children and them.

With the help of Fr David, we organised training for the older young people to enable them to participate in serving in church. We also arranged for the young people to be given a more responsible role in welcoming the congregation on Sunday mornings and taking collections.

As well as ensuring a continued Sunday morning groups for children, a vital and welcome development this year has been the introduction of a crèche facility. There has been a distinct growth in the number of families accessing this provision.

The Working Party supervised two weeks of activities for children and young people during the summer around the them of 'kins' and various crafts/cooking activities at Easter, Harvest and Christmas and a regular Family Cookers Club each month.

Responding to the concerns of parents, we arranged a change of time for the youth club from 7.00pm on Sundays to 4.00pm on Sunday afternoon.

A vital and welcome development this year has been the introduction of a crèche facility on Sunday mornings since September. This has proved popular and there has been a distinct growth in the number of families accessing this provision.

We have spent a great deal of time planning for a future post-Children & Youth Coordinator and have allocated responsibilities for most of the children and young people's activities throughout the year to members of the Working Party. With Toyin's help, we now have a checklist of activities for any planned events. Working with clergy and Andrew Coombes (artist-in-residence) we have started to make plans and to schedule activities throughout the current year.

The Working Party would like to express its gratitude for Toyin for her help and enthusiasm and for passing on her knowledge and experience to us. It is hoped that, with God's blessing, the transition will take place as smoothly as possible.

Vastinana Belfon

DEACON'S REPORT 2010

I was ordained into the diaconate at St Paul's Cathedral on 27 June last year. My first ten months as a curate at St John-at-Hackney have been wonderful: humbling, challenging, upsetting, enlivening, troubling, exciting, saddening and nerve-racking ... and the list could go on! Yet I've been particularly struck by how generous everyone has been. You've really welcomed me into my new role, built my confidence up, affirmed my faith in Jesus Christ and invited me to hear things, see things, pray through things, discover things and get to know many of you in a short space of time. And, in so doing, you've changed me!

There I was – this time last year – projecting innocently into my post-ordination future, imagining the same old me doing different new things in a funny new outfit. But instead it's been a *different new me* doing different new things! I had honestly not expected all of this to be so transformative – and, I trust, for the better. It's very nice that a number of you have commented on how I look happier now, smiling, laughing, more at ease, freer – though this might simply have something to do with Arsenal doing well.

Seriously though, it's been a real privilege being part of all that's going on at St John-at-Hackney and to find my place alongside you in our gospel-shaped adventure. I love our Sundays together, the Pembury Theology Group, the trip to Martock, and getting to know the children at Stars and the young people in H-Town Saints. I'm also really humbled by the quiet conversations I've had, and the trust you've shown in me. And I really appreciate the support and the guidance, the encouragement and affirmation of Fr Rob and the team, as well as the chance to weave all of this into my ongoing work as a theologian at St Mellitus College.

Of course, as a church, we've seen ups and downs, question marks and difficulties, but I sense the gentle hand of God upon us, guiding us and leading us onwards and upwards. There is much happening, much to do, much to become, much to treasure. Praise the Lord and share the gospel!

Fr Lincoln

HACKNEY WINTER NIGHT SHELTER

St John's has for the second year welcomed ten homeless men to sleep in the Hurdman Hall on Wednesday nights during the first three months of the year as part of Hackney Winter Night Shelter. A star team of 38 volunteers has inflated mattresses, made cups of tea, accepted gracious defeat in games of chess, stayed awake half the night or arrived at church at 6.15am to begin cooking breakfast. Thirteen of our volunteers worship regularly at St John's; the rest are part of the wider St John's community, or are our neighbours. It's great to know that our dormitory at St John's is part of an organisation that does more than offer a roof and a meal: Hackney Winter Night Shelter employs several workers whose job it is to help our guests find accommodation, and by early March 50 people who would otherwise be sleeping rough had a roof over their heads. That's something we can all be proud of.

OLDER PEOPLE

Older people at St John's have enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with one another over meals in church and at Cimrik, a Turkish restaurant; have debated the merits of free films shown at the Rio Cinema; have participated in trips to the Hackney Empire and Margate; have been invited to share in the programme of activities organised by the Pembury Estate; and continue to give the church the invaluable gift of their presence and insights.

PARISH RETREAT AT BISHOP WOODFORD HOUSE IN ELY

The first weekend in Lent saw a group of nine members of St John's shun the delights of Hackney and head for Ely for a couple of nights. Those expecting rigorous mortification of the flesh were swiftly disappointed as we were treated to a very warm welcome, comfortable rooms with en suite facilities and toasty radiators, huge and delicious home-cooked meals, home-made cakes for tea and a view of the cathedral's tower. We prayed together in the chapel at Bishop Woodford House, we spent some time in silence together, and, somewhat ironically, we considered the theme of 'Hunger' in a series of five addresses. There were opportunities for walks along the river

and worship at the magnificent cathedral. We were refreshed and we got to know each other better. St John's next retreat in Ely will be 20-22 May, 2011.

SUMMER FETE

This year's fete was something of a spectacular, building on the successes of previous years. Organisation is that much smoother now we have a church administrator, enabling us to do far more to extract prizes and sell raffle tickets. The good people of St John's continue to give of their best in making this one of the social events of the Hackney season - it's a pleasure to be able to welcome so many visitors and let them see just what a vibrant, happy place St John's is. Highlights this year included the infamous Bungee Run and Jonathan Tomlinson's bikerides around the churchyard - and of course the French flavour of the event, as we shared space with our colleagues from Nous Aussi. We raised around £3000 - a record and one to beat in 2010!

Hugo Deadman

MUSIC

This has been a good year for music at St John's. Our choir has grown from four regular members, to around fifteen!

Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to one of our altos Janet Reeve, who moved to New Zealand with her husband Greg and son Benji. We were very sorry to see her go, but sang a special choral evensong in her honour at which we presented her with a silver chorister's medal. Thanks to Janet for all of her hard work, and best of wishes for her future in New Zealand.

One of the highlights of our musical year was singing for the deanery ordination service last May. We were joined by ten guest choristers, and among other things, sang Mozart's *Ave Verum* with much aplomb! We were similarly pleased by our leading of the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols: blessed to be joined by Fr Sebastian and his wife, the choir was able to offer a very successful

programme that drew many very favourable comments both from within St John's and beyond.

Wendy, Mia, Kamillah, Emanuel and Condoleezza form the new youth wing of the choir, all being under ten years old. We're so very happy to welcome them, and in January 2010 we started a new children's choir rehearsal on Wednesday evenings to aid their musical development. They've already shown much dedication, energy and enthusiasm, which we are encouraging by helping them to pass through the singing exams of the Royal School of Church Music.

In 2009 we changed the way that we rehearse, so that in addition to the 9am rehearsal that has been established for many years, the choir also meets for an hour on Saturday mornings (soon to become Wednesday evenings). We're also exploring the way that music can be used at the new I am service, so a massive thank-you to the four ladies who helped us get a choir off the ground for this.

We were absolutely privileged to have Amy Stewart, a viola player currently studying at the Royal Northern College of Music, visit us to play on two Sunday mornings this year. Firstly, playing a duet with the Director of music on flute, and secondly playing a string duet with a fellow student from RSCM. We've also seen her brother Henry, who attends the Junior Royal Academy of music in London, play the organ during services throughout the year as part of his organ lessons with Jack Bicker our Director of Music.

We've done good things, but there's more to do. Over the next year we need to find more singers both for our adult choir and our children's choir. In 2009 we were moved out of the Urswick Chapel for our Sunday morning rehearsal, and still need to find a dedicated space in church that we can comfortably rehearse in. We will also be thinking more about music lists, and choosing hymns that strike the balance between variety on the one hand, and tunes that everyone knows on the other. We'd also like to further embed music instinctively within our liturgy, to start thinking more about making links with other choirs in neighbouring churches, and about the role that music should be playing in St John's Development and Communications work.

Having been in post here for just over a year, can I say a major thank-you to everyone from St John's who has sung with us over the last twelve months; to Coral, Hazel, Janet Reeve, Janet Tribe, Alfred, Henry, Kingsley, Victor, to Condoleezza, Emanuel, Kamillah, Mia, Wendy and their parents, to Hugo and Laura, and to Vastiana, Sandra, Juni, and Tracey. Music in inner-city parishes is never

easy and always something of an experiment. This year has only been possible with their help and hard work, for which St John's should be very thankful indeed.

BELL RINGERS

The Bellringers have had another successful year. We have enjoyed three successful outings, including a weekend in Norfolk with our friends from Aldgate and Kilburn and to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. We took part in the Church Fete this year providing tours of the tower and demonstrations of ringing - and for those unable to climb the steps a video link we installed to permit viewing from the Church porch.

St John's continues to play a leading role in ringing in East London. We won the District striking competition held at St Dunstan's, Stepney and went on to be placed 1st in the County finals at Kilburn. We now ring before the first service on Sunday and welcomed three new recruits, all of whom are making good progress. Practice nights on Mondays continue to be well supported by own team and our friends from other towers.

Please feel free to visit us on a Monday night (between 7.30 and 9) – we are always happy to see you!

Stephen Jakeman, Tower Captain

PEMBURY THEOLOGY GROUP

The Pembury Theology group continues to meet every other week on a Monday night, around eight o'clock, towards the back of the Pembury Tavern. We've created a very comfortable and safe space – good friends, drinks and plenty of laughs – in which to think through some uncomfortable and risky thoughts. This year we've wrestled with a number of complex ideas and questions, allowing our minds to be streeeeeeetched as we've attempted to think through the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of contemporary culture. Our format remains pretty much the same:

someone circulates something which shapes the conversation, sometimes a book, an article, occasionally a picture or a poem. We've explored issues surrounding the Church's mission, the interpretation of Scripture, the passion narratives in Luke and Bach, HIV, the Confirmation service, and – at Christmas – the theology of a seasonal classic, 'Hark the Herald Angels' sing!

We've also been delighted to welcome some new people into the group, though one or two others seem to have drifted away. We've had a Christmas party, a pancake party and there are rumours of a future trip further afield beyond the walls of the Pembury. It's also been a delight to see some of the group start to come to St John's on a Sunday morning.

And so – in conclusion – we're pleased to report that the Pembury Group is very much alive and well in 2010!

Fr Lincoln

ADRENALIN DANCE

Andrew Coombs continued with Adrenalin Dance's artistic residency within the church. The holiday and half term children's arts program was developed and expanded.

The company tried many different models of working within the youth program finally a working program in liaison with Toyin and the children's steering committee.

Romp and Roll, the toddler and parent movement class facilitated by Andrew, grows from strength to strength has a large following, we are contemplating adding an older children's movement/dance class into the program. John and Janet Tribe have become an integral part of its upkeep; their loyal attendance is much appreciated.

Adrenalin are currently looking at ways to further enrich our arts provision within the church. We are planning on working with a local visual artist the summer 2010 who is interested in family histories and how they bring communities together.

This is a development of our '09 summer *Kin* program. *East Side Dance*, the low cost adult evening dance class which Adrenalin facilitates within the church, started up again in February, and although the numbers remain low, we are committed to providing such an opportunity within the church.

Adrenalin continue to enjoy the warm generosity and hospitable community of St John-at-Hackney Church led by Fr Rob Wickham. We look forward to a dynamic future within the community.

Andrew Coombs

HACKNEY FREE & PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

This is an exciting time for all at Hackney Free and Parochial School. During 2010 we are celebrating our 490th anniversary, having been founded by Christopher Ursuick a former Rector of Hackney in 1520. There is a special exhibition about the history of the school running at Hackney Museum until the 12th June 2010. 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 is 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 this year. OFSTED inspected the school in September 2009. In total Hackney Free and 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 been a year of changes, challenges, successes and great sadness. We bade farewell to Nicola Massey, Head of School, at the end of the summer term. Nikki had been with us at St John & St James for many years and we wish her well as she

starts as the Headteacher of a different Hackney school.

We celebrated our SATs successes in July and the children achieved the targets we had hoped for. It was only fitting then that the Year 6 cohort were sent on their way to secondary school with a rousing performance of Cinderella Rockerfella that some say should have transferred to the West End!

The academic year began with the school looking as smart and well maintained as ever and with a brand new perimeter fence. September also saw teachers new to the school in six of our eight classes, and of course a new Head of School. We set up a new behaviour management system across the school, Stay on Green. The children responded really well to the system and the new staff team have shown consistency and commitment in every area of school life.

Our focus at St John & St James is always teaching and learning and this year, with so many new staff, has been especially important. We have worked hard on the most important principles of good teaching and learning, in particular refining our learning intentions and success criteria.

As a Christian school we welcomed visitors from the LDBS. They really enjoyed their working lunch with children from years 1 to year 5. The students discussed their RE work, from the new LDBS scheme with the visitors who were full of admiration for the work we are doing. Our new RE scheme links closely to our PSHCE scheme. As a staff group we have outlined a list of values that we feel the school should hold dear. These values were then refined into single words. These words have become the 'Word of the Week' in every classroom.

We continue to maintain strong links with St John at Hackney, as well as our weekly clergy assembly we have celebrated many religious festivals at church. We celebrated Christmas in style this year with an extremely entertaining Christmas production. As Easter approaches we are fast preparing another performance to praise god and entertain our parents and performers.

Jenna Clark, Head of School

14TH HACKNEY SCOUT GROUP

Once again the Group have had a very busy year, and again all thanks to our dedicated team of Leaders. The Beavers, led by Sue Wilson and Zack Carpenter, our young leader, continue to have fun and make new friends before moving on to the Cubs led by Patsy Musgrave, Debbie Carpenter, Hugh Johnson and our latest recruit Caroline King. With all this help it is no wonder the Cubs' numbers have doubled. The Cubs continue to work on badges and have taken part in every district event on offer this year. The Troop led by Ted Chapman and Tony Spendlove also deliver great Scouting, camping, days out, badge work and last year a week's summer camp at Skreens Park. Our service Crew continues to support the group not only carrying out their own activities but also making sure the Den is in good order. We all continue to support the Church if and when the need arises.

As always my thanks for all the help and support from all the team at the Den and making my role as Group Scout Leader a pleasure to do.

Jim Phillips, Group Scout Leader

HACKNEY DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2009 – 2010

Over the past twelve months, the Deanery Synod has held only two meetings.

Once again on 19th September 2009, The Hackney Team Peace Walk took place. The march started from Hackney Community College, Falkirk Street and ended at London Fields with some good stage shows and encouraging testimonies from youth organisations.

At our first meeting on Sunday 20th September 2009, parishes were urged to keep up with their common fund contributions.

At our second meeting on the 27th January 2010, Sue Hutson a consultant hired by the diocese gave a presentation about diocesan strategy of mapping the deanery. This is a way of finding out

what is happening in each parish via the diocesan website to avoid duplicating activities then possibly pulling together resources to provide more effective services in our community.

Mary Ofori and John Geach, Parish Deanery Representatives

MOTHER'S UNION

It has been quite a hard time for the Mothers' Union but by the grace of the almighty God we have pulled through. On 15th January we had a wave of prayer at St James Church Clapton praying for whole world and an evening service there to end it. We have monthly prayer at St Paul's Cathedral church praying for families, mothers, fathers, lonely and older people and the sick around the world. In March we had a ladies day at St Matthias Church at which Fr Rob was our guest speaker. There was also a meeting on faith and policy at Diocesan House, In June members of the Mothers' Union from around the world meet for our annual general meeting in Croydon's Fairfield Court. We had our annual garden party which was hosted by Mothers' Union of St John-at-Hackney branch which was such a success and attended by members of our sister branches. Finally Florrie Curtis gave us a talk about how Mothers' Union has been at Holloway prison to look after their children and sometimes take them out for walks and shopping. I have almost finished the 'angel's pocket' which we will be sending to Homerton hospital premature babies. We hope with the help of God we will grow stronger.

Mercy Moss

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