

# ***St. John the Evangelist***

## ***Merrow***

***Annual Review 2017-2018***



***Our Vision is:***

***To be a Vibrant, Witnessing and Worshipping Church at the heart of the Community.***

**The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Merrow.**

**Our Vision:**

**To be a Vibrant, Witnessing and Worshipping Church at the heart of the  
Community**

St. John's Church is the Parish Church of Merrow. It is part of the Diocese of Guildford within the Church of England. The correspondence address is The Parish Office, 222 Epsom Road, Guildford GU4 7AA. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St John's was registered with Charity Commission in January 2008. Officially called The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Merrow, its registration number is 1127555.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW 2017-18.**

### **INTRODUCTION.**

Little did we think in April 2017 that we, the Churchwardens, would be presenting a second Annual Report and Review at the APCM in 2018. It is the Churchwarden's job to do so during a Vacancy and we do it with pleasure. The Annual Review gives us the opportunity to let the living body that is St. John's describe in its own words the lively activities that really go on in the Church. The Review differs from the Annual Report, which is the dry presentation of the facts and figures in the form required by the Charity Commissioners and the Diocese.

The Vacancy has lasted for eighteen months. Chris Luckraft retired in September 2016 and Rona was instituted, inducted and installed in February just gone. The length of time is largely our own fault as we were particular in looking for a future Rector who would have just the right gifts for St. Johns. Thus we decided to have a second round of advertising and interviewing before making our selection. We think we have made a brilliant choice! And it was therefore a great delight to us to be a part of the solemn and joyous Institution Service on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February and to join Rona for her first Sunday services the following day.

We have been hugely blessed again by having a great team pulling together for God during the year. How a parish manages without a priest during a Vacancy we dread to think. Jacqueline and Dermot, the full timers, have whole heartedly contributed the variety of gifts they have developed during their training. Diana, our "part timer," has been part time in name only this year and we thank her for the extra mile she has walked with us during the year. The kaleidoscope of activity described in the Review is an eloquent testimonial to the work they have been doing.

Jacqueline of course has gone and got herself new job. When you read this, her installation as Vicar of St. Peters, Wrecclisham will have taken place. We wish her well in her journeying for God at St. Peters; we pray the training she had in the three years with us stands her in good stead and that the gifts she showed to us she will put to even greater effect in her new role.

Incidentally, news filters out from deepest Dorset that Chris and Pippa are enjoying their retirement; helping with their local church, golfing gratuitously and gardening with green fingered abandon.

During a Vacancy some things have to wait, as it is not sensible to commit to new initiatives ahead of a new Rector coming into post. Thus, for example, our thoughts on the development of our ministry with families, children and young people have had to mark time. Conversely our Missionary and Outreach work continued apace, as you will see from the Review. Additionally the stewardship of our financial resources has been revolutionised by the great generosity shown by so many people during our Stewardship campaign last year. We also spent time reviewing and uprating our Safeguarding procedures, a very necessary activity in this day and age.

The Review as ever reveals that lots of people offer service in lots of different ways and we give heartfelt thanks to you all, whatever you do. Nothing would get done without the multitude of volunteers who make St John's a gentle beacon for all those searching for God. There are however four especial thanks we want to offer this year. Firstly to Dick Pyper for his four years service as Treasurer. He should have been replaced at the last APCM but kindly agreed to continue to support us during the Vacancy. The Treasurer's role is not an easy one and we are indebted to Dick for his work.

Secondly we want to thank the Stewardship Working Party, led by Ian Farr, for pointing us in the right direction for the Stewardship Campaign. Their research and guidance was invaluable.

Thirdly, as ever, to Michelle Hayward, our thanks for her dedicated work as Parish Administrator and Centre Manager. She would normally take her instructions from one person, the Rector; to be so calm, efficient and dedicated when there is a team of churchwardens and curates muddying the waters is beyond the call of duty.

Finally, to Nick Bond, who as Secretary to the PCC, prods and pokes us to do what has to be done at the appropriate time and thus keeps a modicum of efficiency about our business.

**Helen Chambers and Robert Avis**

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## **Altar Linen.**

A huge thank you to everyone on the Rota for helping to keep the altar linen pristine for use at the Eucharist, month by month throughout the year. Anyone who would like to join the team, or be on standby in an emergency, would be very welcome.

**Tricia Styles.**

## **Bell Ringing 2018**

Bell ringing at St John's is well supported and enjoyed by our ringers, both for Service ringing on Sundays and on Tuesday practice nights. We ring for weddings and on occasions such as St. George's Day and ringing the old year out and the New Year in!

Steady progress is being made and our striking in method ringing and call changes is much improved. We continue to be very critical of our ringing but a recent visit from past captain, Jonathan Banton, in February encouraged us as he commented on our improvement over the year. Mike & Margaret Bale, from Epsom, who taught us to ring, continue to join us monthly for practice enabling us to improve which is much appreciated. A highlight this year was when Jean Robson rang in her first quarter peal to celebrate her and Patrick's Golden Wedding anniversary. Jane and Linda rang with Mike & Margaret and Jenny Gordon from Stoke D'Abernon. A great achievement.

Our ringers can visit other towers for regular practice during the week. Leatherhead District holds practice sessions monthly in various towers locally, to which our ringers regularly go. They have also introduced a "now we are six" session four times a year to enable ringers from 6 bell towers to improve. The District also arranges a day's outing which includes 5 or 6 towers and a pub! Our tower is used occasionally by visiting tower bands in other parts of the country.

The camera installed in the belfry so the bells can be viewed as they are rung is invaluable, enabling learners and visitors to have a better understanding of how the bells work. The demonstration bell (a miniature version) also shows how we are able to ring a 13cwt bell with a piece of rope! Gordon and John are keeping the bells in good order and cleaning the bell chamber as necessary. Our project this year is to improve the acoustics with sound proofing as the bells are very loud.

There is a good camaraderie within the band which makes the bell ringing great fun, as well as challenging. We also have social events each year. Anyone wishing find out what it's all about or just see the bells being rung, is more than welcome to practices at 7.30 on Tuesday nights or at 9.30 am on a Sunday. Ringers have to be over 10 years of age, come and see why!

**Jane Farquharson Tower captain**

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## **Bible Reading Fellowship**

To encourage you into regular Bible reading yourself, we can supply the following notes:

*New Daylight* – devotional readings

*Guidelines* – in-depth study notes

*Day By Day With God* – notes by women for women

*Upper Room* – a world-wide vision

*Quiet Spaces* – a creative prayer- and spiritual guide.

*Bible Reflections for Older People*

Sample notes are available. These notes are also available as an App for iPhone, iPad or Android.

If you would like to join the St John's group and receive any of these notes, please let me know.

The BRF provides other resources including *Barnabas in Schools-Who Let the Dads Out*, *Messy Church* and *The Gift of Years*. Visit [www.biblereadingnotes.org.uk](http://www.biblereadingnotes.org.uk) for further information or follow the work of BRF on Twitter and Facebook.

**Jenny Welbourn**

### **Brass cleaning.**

The brass team continue their task of making St John's shine. We are a team of 10 and have one month each to keep things gleaming. It is not too onerous and a couple of new recruits would be made most welcome.

**Judy Farr**

### **Children's Society**

Over the past year the number of people who have house boxes for The Children's Society has increased from 21 to 23. If you haven't read or seen the article which was in March's magazine you may not be aware of the amount we collectively raised this year which was £486.03. This is an increase on last year's total and the most we have ever raised. So once again THANK YOU to those of you with the house boxes and for your continued support and commitment. Your generosity is greatly appreciated by The Children's Society to enable them to carry on the work they do. October saw the old £1 coins go out of circulation but thank you all for making the effort to keep these down to a minimum in your boxes. In the end I was able to change them for current coinage and include them in people's totals where appropriate. If anyone is interested in having a house box then please contact me on 01483 571847 or email me at [Judithsampson@aol.com](mailto:Judithsampson@aol.com).

My details are also in the Parish Directory. If you would like to find out more about The Children's Society and the work they do then I would refer you to their website at [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

**Judith Sampson**



## **Choir report.**

St. John's Choir continues to contribute to the worship of the Church. They are a committed group of people (about 16) who meet regularly on a Friday evening at 6.30 to practice, and sing every Sunday morning at the 10a.m. Eucharist, leading the hymns and singing an anthem during the Communion administration. They also sing at weddings, funerals and special services.

One of the most memorable occasions was Remembrance Day. The Church was full with members of the uniformed youth organisations. The choir sang the anthems, *Be still my soul* (Finlandia) and *God be in my head* (Rutter). The Carol Service was, as ever, a successful evening with many visitors. There were three choir items which were new to them, *Behold a simple tender Babe* (Colin Hand), *Christmas Night* (Rutter) and *All my heart this night rejoices* and the finale a rousing round, *Christmas Bells*.

The choir was involved with Jacqueline's Farewell Service – an emotional occasion with the choir at their best. Jacqueline, who had joined in to sing with the Altos on several occasions, enjoyed a farewell party with the choir. The choir sang to welcome Rona at her Induction Service and sang the anthem *Look at the World*, (Rutter), at her first Communion Service.

We were very pleased that a microphone has been installed above the choir to enhance the volume of the singers and to make a better balance with the organ which sounds at the back of the Church.

The choir is a close group who not only enjoy singing together but share each other's concerns and regularly pray for members (especially Barbara) and their families and friends. We are grateful to Sheila for organizing the choir and being responsible for gathering 'extra' singers and we really appreciate these wonderful people who augment our choir for special occasions. We also thank Hilary for her organizing – not least making sure everyone has a signed birthday card! We thank Maura for all her invaluable help with the folders and David for his musical input and support and Keith and Barry with practical help in moving things and locking up!

It is a pleasure to be involved with such an enthusiastic, musical and caring group of people and do hope you might be inspired to come and join us!

**Mavis and Micky**

## **Christian Aid**

Christian Aid has more than 70 years' experience of working in partnership to support communities to thrive. It tackles the root causes of poverty so that women, men and children the world over are strengthened against future knocks. And if disasters happen, it gets people the help they want straight away.

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously to the house to house collection last year and to all who helped to raise the money. We raised £2,483.90. Of this nearly £1300 was gift aided which will bring in more money to Christian Aid. This was not quite as much as the previous year but a very good result. The total includes £193 raised by our Coffee Morning and Bring and Buy table and £49 kindly donated from the Parish Breakfast. Thank you so much to all who helped with these events, especially Barbara, Jean, Maureen and Shirley.

Thank you too to those who helped with the Town Centre collection in December.

Do come along to our enhanced coffee after the 10.00 a.m. service on May 13<sup>th</sup> where there will be a sales table and refreshments.

To continue our fund-raising efforts we need more helpers. If you could spare a little time for the house to house collection in Merrow from 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> May, please contact me on 504205 or via the office.

**Sara England**

## **Church Cleaning**

The annual spring clean took place on a weekday in April 2017. A small but dedicated band of volunteers swept, mopped, polished and dusted all the nooks and crannies which a weekly cleaner does not have time to attend to. Refreshments were provided including homemade cakes!

During the year the church is cleaned at least once a week. This takes around two hours to complete, usually on a Monday. Thanks are due to the five people who have volunteered to keep our church looking clean and tidy on a regular basis.

The church is also checked before and after occasional services e.g. weddings and funerals, after school visits and before Sunday services. Whilst cleaning there are opportunities to greet visitors to the church but it is also a time for quiet reflection.

**Rosanne Bond**

## **Church Flowers**

The Church Flower Team are a great group of people and keep the Church looking lovely and welcoming throughout the year. They continue to freely give their time, talents and money providing flowers for the four festivals (Easter, Whitsun, Harvest and Christmas). Throughout the year they regularly arrange flower on the 'old altar' in memory of loved ones for a particular anniversary at the request of parishioners.

Any parishioner who wishes for the Flower Team to arrange flowers in memory of a loved one should contact me. We can accommodate most flower choice requests providing the flowers can be found although there are certain times in the Church year when we do not decorate the church (e.g. Lent). It is the parishioner's choice whether or not we mention who has donated the flowers in the weekly news-sheet.

We are a welcoming group and anyone who would be interested in learning more about Church flower arranging should contact me. We are always keen for new members and encourage people to come and watch us arranging for Festivals. Experience in flower arranging is not necessary, and we will be more than happy to pass on our training and expertise.

Although the Flower Team does not arrange flowers for weddings, I am happy to liaise with brides providing advice on the best locations for flower displays within the Church. I also offer the use of Church pedestals for their floral arrangements if required. Similarly for those that use the Church for anniversary celebrations, I provide advice and guidance for any floral tributes. Your feedback about our Church flowers is always gratefully received.

**Caroline Heron**

## **The Churchyard**

There is less and less available space in the churchyard with most of the original paths and various odd corners now having been used. However, there is still space for approximately twenty new plots. With approval from the diocese, it is possible to use the maximum in the consecrated area to accommodate a further few plots. It may be possible to bury a second coffin into an existing family grave; adding ashes is always possible. Although the area for caskets of ashes has been full for some time, it is still possible for ashes to be buried without a casket. Ashes may be interred into any existing family plot.

The general maintenance of the area is supervised by Lyndsay Ross, who clears away dead flowers and any unsuitable items. The grass is cut fortnightly, by a contracted firm, during the grass growing season. The maintenance of the individual plots is the responsibility of the deceased's relatives. At approximately yearly intervals, the headstones on the graves are checked for stability. Any headstones that are deemed to be a potential risk of falling and harming anyone are noted and any relatives are requested to correct the problem. If it is not possible to contact a relative, the loose headstone is removed and laid on the grave, in the approved manner.

**M J Newell**

## **Fairtrade**

Despite an increase in orders over Christmas, which was a welcome boost, sales of Fair-trade food on the first Sunday of each month has started to decline leading to stock going out of date. This is such a shame as we have managed to support this worthy cause for 16 years. We now sell on average about £60 of food each month, which is untenable with regard to purchasing stock, and has led to a big reduction in the number of products we can purchase to sell.

I think that this trend is due to 3 reasons – firstly, we have lost some regular supporters, secondly because we stock a smaller number of products we don't sometimes stock those our parishioners are looking for (but having taken individual requests, these have not always been collected!), and thirdly, Fair-trade is now so mainstream, in the shops, that parishioners support it elsewhere, and don't necessarily bring money with them to church on Sunday.

We will need to watch this trend over the coming months, and unfortunately, if things don't improve, we may need to discontinue this service.

Thank you to those who have supported Fair-trade over the past year.

**Cathy Thompson**

### **Guildford Deanery Synod report.**

The Guildford Deanery Synod lay members from St John's attended two Synod meetings in 2017 and one in 2018. The current members are: Barbara Lawrence, Mark Butcher and Peter Tappin.

Each meeting is often divided into two parts and commences with prayer and a brief business agenda including a roundup of news from around the parishes, followed by a particular subject area which forms the main element of the meetings.

In March 2017, the meeting was held at Emmanuel Church in Shepherd Lane and explored the concept of "Sharing our faith" presented by Alan Hulme, Director of the Parish Development Team in the Diocese.

At Easter the Rev'd Nick Williams became Area Dean succeeding the Rev'd Frank Scammell and now leads the meetings.

The meeting in June at Christ Church Hall in Waterden Road introduced the topic of Planting Churches and Fresh Expressions led by Jens Menkel.

In January we met at All Saints Church in Onslow Village and we were joined by the new Archdeacon of Guildford the Ven Paul Davies and the Ven Paul Boyer, Archdeacon of Dorking who presented his ideas and perspective on re-envisioning the role and purpose of The Deanery. This proved to be a thought provoking discussion with various power point slides and engaged members in proclaiming, encouraging and building up the church as part of our mission strategy of the diocese.

The concept of an inventory of talents and resources was considered in smaller groups for the Deanery to help in future with co-operation and the sharing of issues and challenges faced by our various churches. The potential for meetings without a speaker was also considered together with the vision of growing stronger as a Deanery sharing in joined up thinking rather than as a group of competing parishes.

**Peter Tappin.**

## **Head Server's Report**

The serving team at St John's comprises of servers for the Eucharist services and junior acolytes when available. We also include a growing band of communion assistants who help by serving the chalice to communicants. We are a relatively small but dedicated team of helpers and are always looking for new recruits who would like to assist in any of the serving roles. Full training is provided and we would be happy to welcome anyone who is interested. Please see me or one of the Clergy if you feel you would like to know more about the different ways you can take part.

**Kate Verschoyle**

## **Junior Church 2017/2018**

It has been a gentle year for Junior Church 2017/2018.

As I said last year, we have come to realise that our Junior Church is what the jargon calls a 'gathered church' – that is, a church of people who, while no less faithful to St John's and Junior Church, nevertheless are not able to come to church every Sunday. Therefore, some weeks it might look as if we have hardly any children, when in fact, once again, when we put out the call for the Christmas nativity play, we had an amazing turn-out – plus some 'bigger children'(!) – performing what was a truly memorable and joyful rendition of the Nativity and of Jesus's continuing love and presence with us through his resurrection to new life, made real for us through the Holy Spirit.

Jack, Henry and Freddie continue to contribute to our main worship as acolytes – and hope that sometime soon, Poppie, Wesley and Zac might be persuaded to perhaps become a little bolder as they grow in faith and confidence. They are doing a grand job of heading up the little junior church 'band' that we have come to enjoy during the last hymn of the All Age service.

And of course – I couldn't write a Junior Church report without celebrating the fantastic success of our 'Coin Trail' to raise money for our charity of the month, Heads Together! Jack had this idea last July and eventually we ran it in February when he developed and organised it with help from Junior Church friends. They enthused everyone to bring in their coins to make a trail from the church to the centre and back again – abundance indeed, raising an incredible £270.40.

This marked a turning point, I believe, for the faith and discipleship of our older Juniors – a point where their faith becomes alive in action for others and where they

will flourish and grow as a result. I would like to say to our budding disciples – ‘keep going – keep praying and learning – and keep loving Jesus – you will have a friend and guide and encourager and supporter for life’

Towards the end of 2017, Shirley Burns and Barbara Lawrence sadly had to relinquish their Junior Church work due to poor health. We cannot thank them enough for being part of a wonderful group who have built up the Junior Church community. Helen Noble has also had to stand down to prepare for, and giving birth to baby Verity. We must say a huge thank you to Jane Farquharson who has taken on the sole responsibility of leadership. Susannah Parker, Claire Fuller, Liz Morris, Richard and Christine Mithen and Hannah Roberts continue to support in-house Sunday by Sunday – Carol Gray continues her faithful service as Junior Church helper and of course, not forgetting our new ‘official’ Junior Church helper, Andy Nunney – welcome and thank you so much one and all!

There is great potential for exciting times to come for St John’s Junior Church and juniors of Merrow, so please keep our youngsters in your prayers in trust and faith that God’s grace will bring all that we need to do the work that he calls us to do for our children and youth.

There is also great potential for work with other young people. Once again, along with Merrow CofE Infants, Christmas 2017 saw Italia Conti use St John’s for their wonderful, and very moving, Christmas end-of-term service. Packed to capacity with students and families, they showed us a thing or two about what it means to ‘work that space!’ We have started to get to know them more through this event, and there is a potential opportunity to develop some sort of chaplaincy work with the school for the students who are sometimes as young as 17 and living away from home for the first time.

**Blessings, Jacqueline Drake-Smith.**

## Mission and Outreach Committee.

Despite our recent financial difficulties, our outward giving levels have remained consistently encouraging during the past year. We have held eleven committee meetings during 2017 (none in October). As shown in the table below, the sum raised at our August event was donated to St John's. Included in our outward giving is the amount raised in May by Sara England for Christian Aid which the M&O committee supplemented by the profits made at a coffee morning and parish breakfast. Carols on the Green for the third year was successful, and a Together in Christ churches committee will make sure this continues as a regular annual event. St John's has continued its support for the Bushy Hill branch of the North Guildford Food Bank, providing volunteers and supplies as required.

I set out below our 'charities of the month', together with a description of events and amounts raised.

I should again like to thank members of our committee (Helen Chambers, Bunty Coates, Jacqueline Drake-Smith, Barbara Lawrence and Dermot Verschoyle) for all their hard work and commitment during 2017.

I would like to close by giving a special mention to the two of our members who have resigned from our committee: Bunty, who has been a faithful member since the committee's inception in 2008 and who has moved to Chester; and Jacqueline from whose enthusiasm and creative suggestions we have hugely benefited. Both will be greatly missed, and we sent them our love and best wishes.

*David Welbourn (Chairman).*

### **2017 Outward Giving**

#### **Mission & Outreach Charities of the Month Fund Raising**

<b><u>Month</u></b>	<b><u>Charity</u></b>	<b><u>Event</u></b>	<b><u>Total incl. Gift Aid</u></b>
January	YMCA	Quiz Night	£837.50
February	British Heart Foundation	Patronal Supper and donations	£356.00
March	Bp Guildford's Lent Challenge	1. Pancake party + £12.50 donation inc GA	£150.00
March	As above	2. Lent Lunch	£154.50



April	Jigsaw Children's Bereavement Charity	Chicken Foot Night	£368.45
May	Christian Aid	Coffee am with B&B , & parish breakfast	£150 + +£49
June	(St J &) Guildford Action	Summer Fete 50% £635 + donations	£767.50
July	toilet twinning	Boxes, sale toiletries + donations	£600.00
August	St John's	Cream tea and entertainment	£663.61
Sept	Macmillan	Enhanced coffee + sales table	£245.23
October	Besom	Harvest gifts	
November	Send Family Link	Enhanced coffee £209.40+ collection+GA for Christmas present vouchers £100	£352.05
November	St John's & CMS	Christmas Bazaar 50% of total for CMS	£951.49
December	Send Family Link	Enhanced coffee & talk	£339.55
	Send Family Link	Vouchers for Christmas presents	£100.00
<b>Total</b>			

Additionally, over £1000 has been collected for DEC emergencies, the Children's Society and other causes.

### **Mother and Toddler Group (Playgroup)**

We meet on Monday mornings in term time in Merrow Hall from 9.45-11.45, with predominantly Babes and Toddlers. Parents, grandparents and carers bring and stay with their children. We offer the adults tea, coffee, hot chocolate and a good selection of “grown up energy food” biscuits. The children are offered healthy snacks at 10.30 with cups of water. Nursery Rhymes are at 11.15 once the toys have been gathered up and the room tidied, this is usually led by Louisa a parent, with us and other parents supporting.

We now have 2 toddler height craft tables with 2 crafts, home corner, reading mat, puzzles, cars, trains, and a soft mat baby area with a selection of toys. Rev Jackie and Gloria Guitar had been regular attendees until Wrecclesham was found as her new parish. Then on Jackie’s last Monday in the Parish we welcomed her back, to bid her farewell and for a final time she led the singing.

We have an eclectic selection of families, cultures and languages which come together regularly to support each other. We also have a closed Facebook page where families can support each other and discuss activities for the week ahead. We have welcomed Rev Rona to our little group and hope that once settled in she will pop in regularly. I’m pleased that Rosie Martin, Jo Stokes have been regular helpers with refreshments and extra hands for families with more than one child. Rosie with her parent/grandparent Care and Jo. We are also very pleased that some of our past families have had or are due to expand on their family in the past few and coming months. On occasion we have decamped to the church and been in the children’s area. Mavis has come and played nursery rhymes on the organ as background music. The children love the freedom to roam and love walking round every inch of the church with their grown up following.

**Claire Martin-Brown**

## **The St. John's Centre**

2017 was another incredibly busy year and we are delighted that so many local clubs, societies and charities continue to use the Centre. We have continued our policy of offering regular charitable users and local groups favourable rates, which we know is much appreciated and very much in line with our mandate 'to serve the community'. Clients not only value the Centre and its facilities, but feel very much 'at home' here too.

The Centre has now been in existence for over 16 years (opened in late 2001) but is well maintained and still looks in good order. We are continuing our programme of re-covering all the Centre Chairs using Oakleaf Enterprise, a Mental Health Charity, and now have only 17 chairs to go. During the Easter break the Centre's outside door and windows frames were repainted, plus a few inside. As usual during the summer closure the interior paintwork was refreshed and all the carpets were cleaned. With regards to energy costs, we have remained in the Parish Buying Energy Scheme to keep our energy costs stable. There are now over 4000 parishes in the scheme, and next year (2018) 100% of our Electricity will be from green sources. We continue to try to maximize Centre usage and manage our costs as efficiently as possible, and again this year our income has been good and our expenditure steady.

Our Clients remain loyal to the Centre and this year has been busier than ever. We have an abundance of U3A Classes from Languages to Line Dancing. For children we have our St John's Pre School, Zebedees, Godalming School of Dance, Grow Yoga baby massage, Jo Jingles, Brownies and our wonderful Monday morning Baby & Toddler Group. Our wonderful Wednesday Coffee Club run by Paulene Lambert and her team serves the elderly and disabled in our community, alongside our popular Wednesday morning Eucharist in Merrow Hall. For those wishing to keep fit in mind and body we have several Yoga and Pilates Classes, plus Taiiso for the more mature and Counselling sessions. We also have Merrow Horticultural Club meetings and shows, two Bridge Clubs, Merrow Afternoon WI meetings, Merrow Dramatic Society, Merrow Residents Association meetings, NCT classes, a Travel and Music Club. Saturdays are multi-cultural with The Hungarian Cultural Association and The Russian School & Choir. Age UK Surrey continues to run twice monthly Footcare Clinics and Surrey Adoption Services for courses and support groups. The Diocese use us regularly for training courses, Area Deanery Meetings and Bishop's Council Meetings.

Private companies have held courses and meetings and several Charities have run their fundraising events here. We have the occasional Wedding Reception as well as Funeral Wake and lots of children's parties with the occasional adult birthday/anniversary celebration. And finally all the church events, meetings and fundraising events add to what is a very busy, happy facility..

In addition to the various members of the PCC and the congregation who oversee and contribute to the running of the Centre, I would like to thank particularly Jane Reemer our cleaner, Tony Badham our caretaker and Lyndsay Ross who literally is our Do-it-all-Yourself man and are vital in keeping the Centre up to scratch. Thank you all.

**Michelle Haywood**

### **Weddings and Baptisms.**

With regard to Weddings, we had eight weddings and two Renewal of Vows celebrations this year. Thank you to Hilary Ellwood our Wedding Registrar who organizes the wedding banns and sends the quarterly returns. We also had 24 Baptisms. This is a wonderful way of welcoming new families to St John's, and many come back for the Anniversary Baptism Celebration Service in September. Our thanks go to our Baptism Team of Pat Baldock, Jane Farquharson and Helen Chambers.

### **Parish Magazine Report.**

During 2017 our churchwardens used the magazine to keep us all up to date with news about the search for our new Rector and the stewardship campaign; we continued with Tony Neale's moving accounts of Merrow men who perished during the 1914-1918 War, and in November an account of the Battle of Cambrai, credited as the start of modern tank warfare. Thanks to John Boon we have a Gardening Hints article each month, which is much appreciated. The monthly News of Our Cathedral gives us an incentive to go and visit the Cathedral and really 'look', and most months there is something on the church season and a prayer, plus news about the Charity of the Month, and some outside events. There is always the Clergy letter, the Who's Who and the Sunday and special services for that month. This means it is useful to be able to give a copy of the magazine to visitors and 'enquirers'. The editor would like to encourage more people to subscribe to the magazine so that it remains self supporting and does not become a drain on our finances. That is why the fall in subscribers is rather concerning.

The Editor posts magazines to Diocesan authorities, the media, local clergy and four paid postal subscriptions plus sending a copy containing the relevant register to baptism families and wedding couples. Two people receive their magazine via email and it is published on the church website.

My thanks go to the Magazine Team – Nick and Rosanne Bond who proof read and are available as my 'content consultants'; Angela Rye who organises subscriptions and distribution, co-ordinating the stalwart team who collect annual subscriptions and do the footwork delivering the magazines each month; Linda Elliot who deals with our advertisers and organises how they appear in each magazine with Nick at NJM our wonderful, helpful printers.

Finally an appeal for more articles of interest – how about an account of that special holiday, your favourite prayer, your pet stories; I have been promised some 'recommended reading' articles and I would love more 'funnies' of the suitable for the church magazine variety! [My disreputable friends send quite a lot of 'the other kind'!]

**Barbara Lawrence – editor**

### **Readings and Intercessions.**

The wonderful team who read and lead intercessions throughout the year make a valuable contribution to the Sunday Eucharist and we are very grateful for their commitment and preparation for these services. The lectionary readings, selected for the various seasons of the liturgical year include both Old and New Testament passages of varying length and complexity – all are well prepared and read with meaningful clarity.

During the Eucharist service, one of the readers will lead intercessions as we pray for the needs of the Church and the world, and for all who are in need, reminding us that all Christians are called to share in the ministry of Christ's intercession for the whole world. Our prayer language often comes from the Bible and the texts of the liturgy but these words and images are knitted together with concerns and ideas from the heart – for the communities in which we live and the big issues of the day.

We have really appreciated contributions from our younger readers this year and would like to encourage anyone (of any age!) to join the team, either as a reader or to lead intercessions. Please get in touch if you would like to find out more and get involved in this rewarding contribution to our worship.

**Tony Clare**

### **Sidespersons**

Our church has a team of 20 or so sidespersons who are on duty at the 8am and 10am services on Sunday mornings and at special services throughout the year. Our main duties are to welcome everyone as they arrive for the service, hand out the appropriate service books and sheets, take the collection and invite members of the congregation to come forward for communion. Behind the scenes, we tidy up afterwards, count the collection and record various statistics concerning the service. We see our role as creating a friendly and orderly environment for the congregation and as supporting the clergy by allowing them to concentrate on the spiritual aspects of the service.

My thanks go to all the members of the team, not only for their time and work throughout the year but also for quietly and efficiently swapping with each other when holidays or other commitments interrupt their normal rota.

**Ian Farr**

### **Together-in-Christ.**

The TIC group continue to meet on a regular basis, discussing various matters which arise amongst our joint churches, and arranging shared services.

There have been numerous clergy changes in the last twelve months both at St John's and St Pius and these have affected the dynamics of the group. Jacqueline, who was briefly chairperson, has moved on, but not before she once again organised a very successful 'Carols on the Green' service which was well received and supported.

The Lent groups continue to flourish, meeting in the homes of hosts, and discussing a shared programme of talks. It is enlightening to gain insight into the beliefs and ideas of other churches, and can lead to lively and thought-provoking discussion. More participants are always welcome.

The Mellow Food Bank and the Community Lunch Club for the elderly fall under the TIC umbrella and continue to be needed and well supported both by helpers and participants.

There have been shared services throughout the year on the fifth Sunday of the month, usually followed by tea and biscuits, so look out for details in the magazine and come along and participate in an enjoyable and worthwhile afternoon service, shared with other Christians.

### **Isla Stables**

### **Wednesday Morning Coffee Club**

Another year and the Coffee Club retains its role in the community, providing a meeting place for anyone, in a friendly atmosphere with the cheapest coffee in Guildford.

Our regular helpers, on a rota, arrive just after 9.30, when the children have gone into the main hall for their preschool activities. The room is then set up for the members who start arriving about 10.15. Some members choose to attend the Communion service in the Merrow Hall, whilst everyone else starts to catch up with their friends. From 11am there is a real buzz in the room with only notices of birthdays and events interrupting the usual hubbub. Members leave at 11.30 and the helpers clear the room ready for the next activity.

The year's events follow a very regular pattern.

The February Fish and Chip Lunch provides a very sociable and enjoyable time together. Being soon after the celebrations of winter, we were able to decorate the tables with spring flowers and enjoy a meal from 'the chippy' that it is a rare treat for most of us today.

Our coach trip to Worthing in June gave us a chance to share some extra and different time together. The sea air on the pier and promenade is also a rare treat, but it is the afternoon tea at the Denton Café that is the highlight of the day.

Finally, in December, the last coffee morning of the year was a very enjoyable visit from members of the choir who joined us for the morning and led the carol singing. Christmas treats were offered to members and helpers as a supplement to the usual coffee and biscuits.

Through the year there were three 'Bring and Buy' Sales, one each term, which allow us to heavily subsidise our main events.

We are grateful to Barbara Booth the deputy organiser, to Alison Skinner our Treasurer; and of course Rosanne Bond who somehow manages to get those less able members to the foyer each week. But also a special mention to Teresa Pepui who is in the kitchen every week, to the teams of coffee makers and hostesses who attend regularly and Rosanne's teams of drivers who often have to encourage and cajole as well as offer a helping hand to some members.