

# PARISH CHURCH OF BARBOURNE ST STEPHEN



ANNUAL REPORT 2010

# **Parish Church of Barbourne St Stephen**

**ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING** – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2011.  
Meeting called for 11.30 a.m. in Church.

## **AGENDA**

- 1 Apologies for Absences.
  - 2 Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2010.
  - 3 Election of Church Wardens.
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**ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING** – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2011.  
Meeting called for 11.45 a.m. in Church.

## **AGENDA**

- 1 Apologies for absence.
- 2 Minutes of meeting held on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2010.
- 3 Matters arising from the minutes.
- 4 To receive comments on the reports.
- 5 Election of
  - ❖ Sides people
  - ❖ Deanery Synod members
  - ❖ PCC Members
- 6 To appoint an Independent Examiner for the PCC Accounts.
- 7 Any other business.

Stuart Currie  
Vicar and Chairman

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## **1. Vicar's Report**

A regular feature of the calendar at St Stephen's are the visits from children in our local schools – Northwick Manor, Perdiswell and Springfield. Classes come and spend a whole day exploring the building, not just as part of Religious Education, but in a cross-curricular way. For maths, for instance, think how many things there are to count, measure, classify according to shape – children even add up the numbers on the hymn board; for English, the building stimulates creative and descriptive writing; for art the beauty of the building, its windows and furnishings provide rich inspiration. As part of our mission we offer sacred space to this part of Worcester: the children who come learn to appreciate what a treasure we have. But one simple exercise I nearly always do at the start of a visit as the children stand by the gate in St Stephen's Street is to ask them to point to St Stephen's. Naturally everyone sticks out a confident finger in the direction of the building. As they do so, I say, 'No.' And as they look suitably bemused, I remind them that the church is not a building, it is people. Of course I go on to say that in a way they are right, and when people ask for the church, it is a building they have in mind. But if all they learn from the visit is that the church is people, they have had a valuable lesson.

That is one reason why an annual report is such a difficult thing to write: so many things happen to so many people, it is impossible to record them all – this report is but a collection of snapshots, so, here are just a few. First, Margaret Mandrell, who was licensed to the parish as Reader in June. Margaret is developing a rich and varied ministry both here and at the College, and it is a joy to be able to benefit from reader ministry. Second, Sue and Gordon Gething, who were among the first people in the Diocese to be trained as Authorised Lay Ministers, developing further the ministry they have been engaged in for many years. One development in particular: Little Stars, who from October have come along on Thursday afternoon with their carers for fun, friends and worship. Third, Eleanor Mott, who was baptised in church, in the sense of surrounded by the people, but not in church, because the service was held outdoors in the summer sunshine (poetic licence). The service was a great celebration which the Mott family graciously allowed us to share, and it was also a great act of witness to all who passed by. Fourth is Bill Poole: how delighted we were to see him make a good recovery after a long illness and resume his place at the organ. And finally Judy Vale, who died at the end of the year, and who in her quiet way gave so much to so many people, a true servant of the community.

As for our buildings, like the people they are also here to praise God and to serve our community, and our Hall is in almost constant use by a variety of groups. We were very fortunate to receive a grant for £10,000 towards the cost of installing a gas supply and heating system to the Hall in order to provide better service and also to make more efficient use of natural resources. Our thanks go to *Welcome to our Future* for this grant, which covered almost half the total cost. Our quinquennial inspection revealed no nasty surprises, but a church building like ours needs constant maintenance. Church as building, church as people – both are here for mission and worship: we thank God for all the blessings as we seek to do and to be the church God would have us be and do what God would have us do.

Stuart Currie

## **2. Churchwardens' Report**

Two new members of the PCC were elected at the APM – Linda Trow-Poole and Danny Andrews while Kirstie Anwyl Hughes continued as Secretary to the PCC and Barry Lister as Treasurer but notified the meeting that this would be his last year.

Ray Wallace was re-elected as church warden and was joined by Beryl Thorp who replaced Neil Humphries. Neil had held the office for 5 years and we are grateful for all his hard work and he has kindly agreed to help out when necessary.

The confirmation service for candidates from Claines and St. Stephen's was held at St. Stephen's when we welcomed Bishop John.

In July, Ray resigned as churchwarden as he felt unable to continue in this position. He gave of his time and services freely caring for both the church and members of the congregation. His efforts were much appreciated and we are very grateful for all he did, especially with the upkeep of the Garden of Remembrance

Our curate, Rev. Daniel Jones continues his work with us but while we are delighted he has been appointed as senior chaplain at a school in York we shall miss him and his family who have given so much to St Stephen's.

Margaret Mandrell joined the ministry team while Rev. Stephen Malkinson continued to take services (his retirement seems to be quite busy at times) along with Rev. Fiona Howarth and Rev. David Morphy. Abigail Penfold also joined as a lay reader. Our cup overfloweth with clergy!

Beryl battled on single-handed as churchwarden for several weeks but was not short of offers of help and support. This was greatly appreciated and helped to share the load. It was with much joy and relief when Judy Hood agreed to be nominated as churchwarden (again!) adding to the post she already holds as parish administrator. We all appreciate the efficiency with which she carries out these duties.

One Saturday morning, a noble band of helpers helped clean the church when the dust on the high ledges was attacked and there was a lovely smell of polish.

In the autumn, there was a churchyard tidying session by a keen team when the council supplied litter pickers, gloves and black plastic bags for the rubbish. Several dozen daffodil bulbs were donated and planted on the South and North side of the churchyard. They are now in bloom and make the churchyard look very spring like. We very much appreciate the time and effort of all these helpers.

There are so many groups of people who all play an important part in the life of the church. In no particular order, there is the serving team, sidespeople, those helping in parish office and open church. Then there are the visitors and bereavement groups as well as those helping with the younger generation. Their various activities included a nativity play by junior church which they performed brilliantly although about a third of them were prevented from coming to church by deep snow for the second performance and some of the understudies were a bit 'different'!

We enjoy all the music provided - again this is performed by all ages.

One of the most exciting groups to be formed is the mother and toddler group – Little Stars. This has been hard work but it is very encouraging to see so many children arriving each Thursday and it obviously fills a need in the community.

The Thursday lunch-time prayers continue as well the Julian group who meet on alternate months in the Lady Chapel.

The events group continue to organise interesting get-togethers and are especially busy forming the programme for 2012 when we shall be celebrating our 150th anniversary in style. We are continually grateful to all those who help to organise the events. We shared pancakes with St. George's church on Shrove Tuesday and a few of their congregation joined us for our Harvest Supper.

We are fortunate to have those among us who look after the flowers, both inside and outside the church – the team of flower arrangers and the gardeners. We were particularly impressed by the lovely cross at Easter made up of yellow primulas.

We hope no-one has been omitted as each and everyone is important and contributes to the happy, caring group which makes St. Stephen's.

Lastly but by no means least, we thank Stuart for all his hard work and leadership.

Beryl Thorp and Judy Hood

### **3. Treasurer's Report**

This year has been a busy year regarding improvements and repairs to St Stephens. We spent in total for fabric and maintenance over £ 30,000. This is a significant sum out of our total income this year £127,000. This spend was the main contributor to our loss this year (2010) of £11,000.

However we should feel rather pleased, the finances of St Stephens are working as it should - surplus in previous years paying for heavy expenditure in other years – this can be clearly seen from the accounts. We do need to maintain these surplus years and to resist the desires to increase our expenditure.

Overall everybody should feel satisfied with their efforts, but as ever and always a note of caution we do need to increase our income to maintain this balance with increasing expenditure.

Barry Lister

#### 4. Secretary's Report

The structure and attendance of the PCC for 2010/2011 is as follows: These figures are approximate.

<b>Parish Priest</b> – Stuart Currie	9
<b>Clergy</b> – Daniel Jones	7
-David Morphy	2
<b>Church Warden</b> – Beryl Thorp	8
<b>Church Warden</b> – Ray Wallace	2
<b>Church Warden</b> – Judy Hood	2

#### Deanery Synod Representatives – All standing down in 2011

Derek Askew	4
Diana Fulbrook	6
Geoff Kington	5
Keith Layton	6

Elected Members of the PCC

#### Standing down in 2011

Scarlett Hemming	5
Sharon Hurley	8
Paul Kennett	7
David Parkin	4

#### Standing down in 2012

Caroline Carter	3
Grant Freeman	9
Gordon Gething	8
Meriel Orton	5

#### Standing down in 2013

Danny Andrews	7
Kirstie Anwyl-Hughes	6
Barry Lister	7
Linda Trow-Poole	6

Stuart mentioned snow in his report last year and I think we will all agree the snow we saw this year surpassed anything we have seen for many years. The PCC were therefore very grateful when Meriel offered her house as a much warmer venue for our meetings in the depths of winter – especially as at the time the new gas heating system seemed to be having a few teething problems and the church was at times rather chilly.

During the year we have discussed such things as the future of ministry in our area of the Worcester Diocese, plans for celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church in 2012 including the history of the parish, the installation of the new heating system in the church hall, the success of Little Stars as well as how best to use the funds available to us with our main outgoings being our parish share and the upkeep of the church buildings.

Sadly we haven't been able to have an away day this year as it proved difficult to find a suitable venue, however, we were able to share fellowship at the Vicarage over a nice glass of wine which Stuart made sure was in plentiful supply – our thanks again to Nicky and Stuart for their generous hospitality.

I cannot close without saying thank you, once again, to Gordon Gething for covering me on 3 occasions this year, often at very short notice – I am extremely grateful for his support.

Kirstie Anwyl-Hughes

### **5. Electoral Roll Report**

We entered the Year 2010 with an Electoral Roll numbering 253. With additions and removals since then we left 2010 with an electoral Roll of 263, a slight increase.

It is pleasing to note that although we lost several longstanding members during the year, we have had an influx of new younger members to the congregation and the Roll.

There are still regular members of our congregation who are not on the Roll despite regular reminders and pleas from the Vicar and PCC. It is only by being on the Roll that people can take a full part in our Church, both locally and more widely.

It is only Electoral Roll members who are eligible to vote for and stand for election to the PCC.

It is interesting to note that more than 45% of members of the Roll live outside the Parish Boundaries!

Paul Kennett

### **6 Music and Choir Report**

It is nice that I am well enough to be back in the driving seat at the organ and leading the choir. We have made a few changes, the choir remaining in their places and taking communion first, this has proved a lot more practicable. We have also changed the time of choir practice on a Friday to 6.30pm until 7.30pm. this has proved to be a popular move.

We have a very enthusiastic bunch of people in the choir who are always willing to turn out on a Friday to practice and to the Sunday Services. My thanks to them for making it worth while. My thanks are also due to Leon Bailey and Tony Mannion for their willingness to step into the breach when I am unable to play.

We did lose Anne Plester during the year she decided to hang up her robe and go into retirement, we all thank her for her contribution to the choir and wish her well for the future. We are always on the lookout for new members, it would be nice if we could find a bass to enable us to once again sing 4 part Anthems.

Finally, I would like to thank Stuart for his support and understanding as to the level of work I am able to undertake.

With regard to the organ, it continues to do it's job, it is a pity though we were not able to undertake the improvements recommended by the Organ Adviser.

Bill Poole

### **7. Lay Ministry Report**

We are fortunate to have a strong team of some 22 members, 17 who robe and 5 who do not, who are licensed by the Bishop to administer the Sacrament.

Members of the Team are proposed by Stuart and approved by the PCC before being licensed.

During the year one member has moved away and for some time we have lost the services of Colin Guest. He has been sorely missed and we look forward to welcoming him back to our number very soon.

It was good to see Caroline Hood back during the Christmas holidays and stepping in to help.

Two members of the team, Sue and Gordon Gething, have widened their knowledge and experience by becoming our first "Authorised Lay Ministers" or ALM's, to the benefit of all at St Stephens.

We shall be very sorry but also very proud as we lose Grant Freeman and wish him every blessing as he pursues his path towards Ordained Ministry and married life.

The visible role of the Ministry Team is to assist the clergy around the Altar and with the distribution of the elements at the Eucharist on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Festival days.

The unseen role is their reaching out from St Stephens and taking the Sacrament to the Care Homes in the Parish, to the hospitalised and to the housebound.

Geoff Kington

## **8. Servers Report**

Our serving team continue to quietly and reverently carry out their duties in assisting the clergy in the preparation for and conduct of services at St Stephens. Overall we now have a team of 18 regulars but, I am pleased to say, joined by Becky Amos, Caroline Hood and Annabelle Guest when they are home from employment or university.

During the year we have lost one member who has moved away and again, lost for a time, the services of Colin Guest. We have added to our number Phil Smith, Ivor Skillern and Danny Andrews who have, very quickly, become important members of our serving team and we welcome them.

We shall miss Grant Freeman when he moves on to greater things.

We continue to need new servers, to replace those who move on to university or to work away from the area. We would welcome anyone who feels that they would like to join our band, particularly for the 10am service. We welcome confirmed or about to be confirmed members of the congregation, of any age or gender, and do offer full training and mutual support.

Geoff Kington

## **9. Fabric Report**

The year saw the introduction of the new gas fired central heating system in the Bishop Allenby Hall. Given the exceptionally cold winter it was not a moment too soon.

The PCC's thanks are due to Ron Sims Heating for the manner in which they undertook the work and worked around daytime users. Our thanks are also very much due to Severn Waste Management who approved our application for grant aid associated with the Landfill Tax Scheme. The keen eyed amongst you will have probably noticed already the plaque placed in the Hall recording their involvement and support.

Further improvements to the Hall facilities are currently being considered these include :

provision of curtains/blinds to cover the high level windows in the summer time when the hall is used for entertainment or picture projection purposes.

and for all those who would like to no longer be involved in moving the chairs from and then back on to the stage..... the possibility of alterations to provide an internally accessed store area where, with the use of a wheeled stacker the chairs can be located but remain readily accessible.

The use of lower energy consuming lights in the Nave and Chancel area have also provided the additional benefit of much higher levels of lighting in these areas. It is hoped that further changes and enhancements to lighting levels elsewhere in the church can be introduced as funds become available.

Keith Layton

## **10. Events Group**

During the year an attempt was made to identify the type of events that people would most like to support. Unfortunately there were very few responses to the questionnaire and I was left wondering whether this implied that the regular church congregation no longer look toward, expect, or indeed want church life to extend into their social time. I hope that this will never be so and on reflection a number of events during the year were well supported.

April – We shared in a social celebration of St Georges Day with members of St George’s Church.

May - Beating the Bounds was followed by a picnic in the church grounds

Following on from the Confirmation Service at Claines on Ascension Day (13th) a wine/cake reception was held in the Bishop Allenby Hall on the Sunday after.

June – The Summer Fair was well supported and hopefully provided an enjoyable time for stallholders and patrons alike.

July - Our fellowship and support of our link with the Diocese of Peru was celebrated during a well supported evening. The Tester family gave us a fascinating insight into how the money pledged by our parish is used – it was amazing just how much was achieved.

Wine and Strawberries by courtesy of Mrs M Orton continued to attract its regular following and as always provided an excellent opportunity to meet and to socialise in splendid surroundings.

Sept - The “Back to Church Sunday” was followed by a “wine and nibbles” reception in the Hall.

Oct - The Harvest Supper and Quiz was well supported and continues to be popular.

The Church hosted a charity concert in support of Murray Fields – unfortunately this attracted little support.

Nov - Advent Fair - Despite concerns that we did not appear to have collected/had donated many items, all turned out well and the event was well supported.

2012 will be a year of especial importance to the life of our Church and our group has already planned a number of events – BUT we are always looking for new members. If you are interested please contact Keith or Val Layton (tel Wor 454732) - The next meeting of the Group will be on 26th April

Keith Layton

## **11. Flower Group**

This is the start of my second year organising the flower rota. We are very lucky at St Stephen’s as we have plenty of willing volunteers who are prepared to create our wonderful arrangements. Not only do they give up their time but they donate the flowers too. We are fortunate to have support from other people who prefer not to arrange the flowers themselves but donate money to have arrangements created on their behalf. To all these people I am extremely grateful, especially as the average cost of the flowers is now £20 per pedestal.

The displays at Easter were the result of wonderful team work and as snow covered Worcester at Christmas more willing volunteers came to help make our church look especially beautiful.

During the year we had 13 weddings. With financial constraints as they are now nearly all the wedding parties chose to have our arrangements at the chancel steps rather than provide their own. Some did donate money to our flower fund but we have not had as much revenue from this source as we did last year.

A small amount of money is carried over to the 2011 fund which will help finance Easter and Christmas flowers.

Liz Fleming

## **12. Bishop Allenby Hall Report**

The highlight of the year in the hall was the long awaited installation of the new gas central heating system. With the removal of the old storage radiators the hall looks wider and the risk of being burnt by red hot heaters has been eliminated. The toilets are now warm and apart from a few complaints about being too hot when the heating was first switched on, most of the time everyone seems pleased with the new system. Thanks to all those involved with obtaining the £10,000 grant which enabled the work to go ahead.

The hall continues to be used by a variety of clubs and societies from playgroup to camera club, Brownies to belly dancing, Kung-Fu to chess club and yoga to old time dancing, as well as church activities and groups. There is a dedicated team of cleaners from the playgroup who struggle against the odds to keep the hall clean and inviting for all the users and we are very grateful for their efforts.

Judy Hood

## **13. Open Church Report**

**“This Church is Open for You”** proclaims the Banner on the Churchyard railings – so telling the world (or at least those who go past it in Droitwich Road, who, hopefully, tell others) that our Church is alive and welcomes all who come through its doors.

As well as being open for Services, our Church is open every Thursday (from 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.) and on Saturdays (10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.). We also open for the whole of the week before Christmas.

Two “Church Sitters” are on duty for one and a half or two hours at a time and provide refreshments and friendly conversation. Of course, if someone prefers to come in for quiet time, on their own, their privacy is respected and they are just as welcome.

This year we have continued to welcome our regular “visitors” and have also been pleased to see many new faces. People come for a variety of reasons – some like to look round the Church, some just sit quietly and others visit the Lady Chapel for quiet prayer. We have had visits from people who lived in the Parish several years ago and went to St.Stephen’s School and/or were married here. Some people come in after visiting the Garden of Remembrance and some call in for a welcome break between shopping and going home. The majority of our visitors enjoy chatting to us over a cuppa and an amazing number of biscuits are eaten! We have also provided welcome hot drinks for people who arrived early for weddings or funerals, having travelled a long distance.

It is a pleasure to welcome residents from St.Stephen’s Care Home for refreshments and conversation after the 10:00 a.m. Thursday Service. Delicious homemade cake is often provided by one of our “sitters”, which disappears very quickly!

Some sessions, particularly Thursday mornings, are very busy and others are quiet – but, occasionally, into one of these quiet periods comes a person for whom it is a tremendous relief to find an open door and a friendly person to talk to. Also, as a result of coming into Open Church, a few of our visitors have started to attend our Services.

In July we had a Social Evening for all our Sitters and for anyone considering becoming one. About thirty people came and it was very successful - we had a lively discussion about how things were going and suggestions for future happenings.

Since November there has been a significant change to Open Church on Thursday afternoons. Arising from a suggestion at the Social Evening in July 2009, we started “Little Stars” - a Mother and Baby/Toddler Group, which is open from 1:30pm – 2:45pm in Church (see separate Little Stars report for more details).

Open Church has enabled regular members of our congregation to get to know each other better. As well as talking to the person we are “on duty” with, other regular worshippers quite often call in,

sometimes just for a chat and sometimes to do a “job” and enjoy a cup of tea. All this has drawn us closer together and made Church seem even friendlier and happier.

We have had many positive comments about how lovely it is to find the Church open and how much people have enjoyed their visit. The following are quotes from our Visitors Book **“Thank you for making me feel so welcome, the coffee was a lovely gesture! Lovely, peaceful place to be.”** **“Thank you for being so friendly.”** **“Invaluable company. Spiritual refreshment.”** **“Everything is so warm about this place; welcome, people and tea. Thanks a lot.”** **“Nice and fab to be here even not for a long time. Warm welcome from all ppl”(sic) – a visitor from Thailand.** Also a letter was published in the February edition of The Messenger saying **“ I would like to say thank you to the volunteers of the Church of St.Stephen for ‘being there’ and providing coffee, mince pies, biscuits, sweets, cake and conversation every weekday morning during the week before Christmas. It was lovely to walk into the Church and feel its warmth and welcome on a freezing cold day.”**

So, once again, **THANK YOU** to all our “sitters” for giving your time in such a willing and cheerful manner. The atmosphere of fellowship and welcome around the table is palpable.

We are always grateful for new offers of help, so if you think you would like to become a “sitter” please let us know.

Sue Gething and Judy Hood

#### **14. Bereavement Group Report**

The Bereavement Care Group, which is lead by Stuart, consists of about eight people who meet three or four times each year. Sadly, one of our members – Judy Vale, whose contribution was greatly valued – died just before Christmas.

At our meetings, various relevant subjects are discussed and, when requested, one of the group visits a recently bereaved parishioner.

During the year, we had the privilege of meeting David Knight, the chaplain at St. Richard’s Hospice, and after a very helpful discussion with him were then shown round the building which has been planned with much care and thought.

A service is held annually for the faithful departed after which members of the group are available to talk to the relatives and friends. Those attending were given the opportunity to light a candle in memory of their loved one which was placed in a window to burn during the service. Approximately 80 candles were lit.

Beryl Thorp

#### **15. St.Stephen’s (Pastoral) Visitors Report**

At present our group consists of thirteen members, with Stuart as our Leader. We meet about four times a year as a group and at these meetings we talk about visits we have made, any problems which have arisen and sometimes have some kind of training session. In between these meetings, Stuart is available to discuss any concerns which may arise. All these discussions are, of course, completely confidential.

Some of us visit people in their own homes – perhaps because they are lonely, or unwell and unable to go out, or because they would just like to see a friendly face. These visits may be long term or of limited duration e.g. they may stop when the “visited” becomes well enough to go out again and continue with their normal life.

As well as visiting individuals, six of us visit Noele Court, the sheltered housing complex next to Church, which consists of 38 Warden controlled flats. We go once a month and organise afternoon tea for the residents in the communal lounge. They are all welcome to join us if they would like to – but there is no pressure on them to do so. Those who come enjoy having a chat and a laugh, with a cup of tea and cakes and are always most grateful. We end the afternoon with a prayer and hymn singing.

We make our visits at Easter and Christmas extra special, with appropriate cakes, cards etc. Also at Christmas, Carol singers from Church call in to lead the festive singing. If any of the residents are not well enough to come to the lounge we usually visit them in their flat. Sometimes Stuart or Daniel join us and the "Tea Timers" are always pleased to see them.

Four of our group visit St.Stephen's Care Home. They go with Stuart once a month. He takes a Communion Service and then the visitors chat with some of the residents. They also call in at other times, to visit individual residents and support activities such as Coffee Mornings or Fairs.

A few of the residents are brought to Church, by staff at the Home and volunteers, for the 10:00 a.m. Communion Service on Thursdays. Afterwards they stay for refreshments and conversation, with our Open Church Sitters, which is enjoyed by all concerned.

Some of the Visitors help, on a rota basis, at Good Companions. This mainly involves providing the refreshments, but we also chat to the members and give a helping hand, where needed. Their Treasurer is also a Visitor.

We all enjoy our visiting and feel very privileged to be able to do it. We also know how much seeing a friendly face from St.Stephen's Church is appreciated.

If you are interested in becoming a Visitor, please have a chat with Stuart. The more Visitors we have – the more we will be able to do for our community.

Sue Gething

### **16. Good Companions Report**

Margaret Dow and the Committee put together an interesting and varied programme of talks, visits and entertainment which we greatly enjoyed.

The Spring Lunch was held at the Alma on March 8th. The meal was very good and it was served in the skittle alley.

The outing for the year was to Wyvale Garden Centre in Hereford. A raffle was held on the coach for our charity of the year Fort Royal Community Primary School. A raffle was also held in the Alma at our Spring Lunch and the proceeds of a Bring and Buy Sale held in November together with two other raffles held during the year, were all added together and a cheque for £205 was sent to the school.

We are grateful for the help we have received from a team of workers from the congregation who made tea for us and served it, also for the help from Sticky Fingers who put out the chairs and tables and to Jane Stinton who came to help put them away.

Worcester Wheels continued to give lifts to our members who have difficulty in walking. We were also pleased to welcome some residents from St Stephen's Care Home who were brought round in wheelchairs.

A warm welcome is extended to anyone retired and over the age of 55 either as visitors or as new members. Please come along and join us.

Judy Bolton

### **17. Housegroup Report**

Housegroup has continued this year to meet its objectives of providing people with fellowship, teaching and discipleship. Group numbers have fallen away towards the end of the year and there is a need for new leaders in 2011 as many of its longstanding members will be moving on for various reasons. The two groups have followed various course books this year including 'New World, Old Faith' and the Advent Course, 'Journeying with the Magi'. We hope that 2011 will bring a renewed vision and new leaders to the groups and that housegroup will continue to provide a much needed place for a deepening of personal faith.

## **18. TAG Report**

During the last year TAG has expanded to twice monthly sessions, thanks to an increase in adult volunteers and a consistent support amongst the young people who attend. Most sessions have had numbers between about 6 and 10 attending. (Only one session had an attendance of one, for which Fiona had done huge amounts of preparation for Remembrance Day; we'll recycle that material for next year!) We try to combine discussion with some simple activity.

Jo and Daniel have also been hosting TAG @ Home sessions on Friday evenings at their house, which some of the TAG members have been attending, combining some spiritual study and discussion with a more relaxed environment. Jo has also been an active member of TAG on Sundays (Daniel being fully occupied in services), and they will both be sadly missed when they move on, sharing their gifts with young people elsewhere. If any other adults now have the desire to join us and help swell the numbers again, please get in touch.

It would be great if those who have been confirmed could be encouraged to move on to TAG, assuming they are too old to continue in Junior church.

Ian King

## **19. Junior Church Report**

Following a successful Epiphany Party, our spring term began with an 8 week programme based on 'Jesus' hands are....' (kind, reaching, giving, loving, sharing, strong, caring etc). During this time we explored hopes and dreams, forgiveness, compassion and sharing with each other. We created some wonderful art work, dressed up as camels (!) and played lots of fun games, designed to bring home the point of each lesson.

The Junior Church children were involved in celebrating Easter, and as always, thoroughly enjoyed waving their palm branches and calling out to the congregation on Palm Sunday.

In the summer term we concentrated on the story of David which covered seven sessions. We started from the point when David was a young boy, who was brave when faced with danger and trusted God when he was afraid, and worked right through to David the King. We made woolly sheep badges, elastic band harps, and our own slings which we then used for target practice! The children played a human version of 'one man and his dog', and enjoyed a campfire supper (marshmallows toasted over tea-lights) whilst we pretended we were David and his friends hiding in a cave. This programme, whilst lots of fun, was also very thought provoking, and we experienced some wonderful insight and enthusiasm from everyone involved.

The parish picnic was a great success and very well-attended, coinciding with a baptism and a very uplifting service. Our new Junior Church parachute got a good airing, and everyone went home with full stomachs and a few grass stains.

In the autumn term we began to prepare for harvest by inventing a flying pizza to introduce the concept of 'food miles'. We made harvest cards to go out to the parishioners, wrote prayers on flower-shaped paper and watched as their petals opened up to release the prayer when they were placed on water, and worked hard to create a colourful banner which was displayed during the Harvest services.

We kept contact with our Junior Church friends in Peru, and collected lots of stickers which we sent to them in time for Christmas, along with some colourful drawings and letters.

After October half term we held auditions for the Christingle performance 'Memories of a Miracle', written by Judy Hood. Initially we had very low numbers of children come forward to audition, but with plenty of encouragement we soon had a full cast, and rehearsals were well underway. Our first performance was delightful, and the dedication of the children who had learned their lines and stage directions so beautifully really shone through. For our second performance we found ourselves dramatically short of players due to the heavy snowfall, and had a peculiar assortment of 'crumbles' step into the breach to play inn-keepers, kings, and of course ANGELS! In the face of adversity, the St Stephens family pulled together, and the performance was not only magical, but truly unforgettable.

This brought the year to a close, with everyone eagerly looking forward to more Junior Church fun and learning in 2011.

Tracey Fraser-Clark

## **20. Creche Report**

First Steps crèche has grown over the past year with up to 9 children on a Sunday morning. The building of new floor-to-ceiling cupboards in the crèche room has been a massive benefit as not only do we have lots of storage but everything can be cleared away leaving enough room for the children to play freely.

The crèche team have created a series of session folders which include the crèche prayer and song, story book and activity for each week. The idea being that whoever is on duty can just lift out that week's folder and have everything they need to run the session. The children have appreciated the structured sessions along with colouring and sticking activities.

The crèche area at the front of the church has been kitted out with new toys and mats and is used every week with those with children under 2. Toy bags have been re-introduced to hand out to new parents with babies, each bag includes a toy, book and information on the crèche facilities.

Another successful year thanks to a dedicated team!

Jo Jones

## **21. Little Stars Report**

During an "Open Church Sitters" Social Evening, it was suggested that we invite new Mothers, who may be lonely, to come into Church on Thursday afternoons with their babies. Another idea was that we have a Pram Service once a month.

So.....after discussion, planning and preparation, on 4th November 2010 we opened "Little Stars" – a group for Mothers (Fathers, Grandparents and Carers) and children from birth to 4 years.

We welcomed 20 children and their families through the Church door and 10 helpers ensured that everyone had a happy afternoon. Little Stars is now held every Thursday in Church, from 1:30pm – 2:45pm.

There are toys and activities for the children and the adults can relax and chat over a "cuppa" and biscuits.

On the second Thursday of each month, for anyone who wants to take part, we include a short informal act of worship, especially for very young children and their families.

The number of people attending varies each week – the largest number we have had being 35 children, who came with 26 adults.

We have been fortunate in having 8 or 9 committed, hard working, friendly helpers most weeks, which has greatly contributed to the success of the Group. With less helpers than this it is difficult to provide the activities and levels of contact with children and adults we like to give. Obviously, our helpers cannot attend every week, so we would welcome more people to join us in this new venture, run by the Church for the whole community.

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who has given their support and time so willingly to ensure the success of Little Stars.

Sue Gething

## **22. Child Protection Report**

Diocesan guidelines require that all adults who have supervision of children or who hold other positions of authority within St Stephens are clear of any criminal record. They also recommend that the youth helpers attend a short course relating to the safe protection of children within their

role. It is my duty to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to and that the guidelines are available for all to access. To ensure this, I also liaise with the Vicar, other PCC members and members of the various youth groups linked with St Stephens.

This year St Stephen's have added another new group working with young children. 'Little Stars' is a Mother & Toddler group run for the under 4s. This has meant more helpers being CRB cleared.

In the last 12 months St Stephen's has 6 new adults who have been CRB cleared to join their growing team of helpers working with children and young adults.

At present there are

Junior Church helpers - 20

Crèche leaders - 6

TAG leaders - 5

Church Wardens - 2

Server's leaders - 2

Choir leaders - 2

Confirmation - 2

Lay Readers - 2

Little Stars - 5

all who are CRB cleared.

Of the total, 4 are waiting to attend the CP course and 1 is waiting for clearance.

All this work is important to enable us to have so many willing volunteers to supervise children in their spiritual development and involvement within St Stephen's church.

Caroline Carter

Jo Jones

### **23. Tea and Coffee Rota Report**

The last year has seen a big drop off in the numbers volunteering to provide this much appreciated service after the Family Eucharist on Sunday mornings, but we have managed to keep the service running, even though it has occasionally been by the skin of our teeth! New volunteers have come forward to assist the regulars and hopefully more might be attracted to the cause in the future; pretty please!

It is a humbling experience to serve our congregation in this manner and wonderful way of meeting so many people; although fleetingly as they collect their drinks.

Our (and your), sincere thanks to the team for this last year's efforts and continuing support.

(Anyone interested in joining the team in future please contact us at [adrian\\_everett@btinternet.com](mailto:adrian_everett@btinternet.com) )

Adrian Everett

### **24. Fairtrade Report**

The church continues to hold its Fairtrade Status. Fairtrade Fortnight was promoted both in the main service and during Junior Church. The Traidcraft stall has become less viable now that many of the products available can be sourced elsewhere, so there may need to be re-think as to what products the stall at the back of church provides. A new addition is that of greetings cards.

Jo Jones