

**ST JOHN THE BAPTIST**  
**CATFORD & DOWNHAM**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2025**



## Contents

1. Rector's Report (Rev'd Peter) Pg 2
2. Churchwarden's Report (Julie Rochefort & Frankie Turner) Pg 3
3. Finance Report (Amos Eka) Pg 4
4. Safeguarding (Cynthia Harding) Pg 5
5. Children's Church (Cynthia Harding) Pg 5
6. Youth Church (Shea Hollis) Pg 5
7. Music Department (Jack Stone) Pg 6
8. Mission Action Plan (Shea Hollis) Pg 7
9. Senior Social Club & First Friday Club (Gillian Spencer) Pg 7
10. Mothers' Union Branch Report (Catherine Hall) Pg 8
11. Sacristan Report (Sandy Mawford) Pg 8
12. On-line Missioner (Shea Hollis) Pg 9
13. St John's School (Rev'd Peter) Pg 10
14. Special Projects Fund (Sandy Mawford) Pg 10

## Rector

Some highlights of the last year for me have been:

- Welcoming Bishop Erick from Manicaland, and enjoying the singing of the Mother's Union Choir.



- Seeing the Youth Group begin to grow.

- Finally getting permission from the diocese to get the Rectory Meeting Room up and running as a resource for the youth and wider church community.

- Seeing the Prayer Chapel be used by members of the wider community.

- Julie being presented the Lancelot Andrewes award by (nearly!) Bishop Alastair.



My thanks to all who've been involved with supporting the life of St John's over the past year, and in particular to Julie, Frankie and Amos for the important work they do behind the scenes.

***Rev'd Peter Organ, Rector, February 2025***

## Churchwardens

<b>1</b>	<p><b>Buildings</b></p> <p>St John's wardens are responsible for two separate Grade 2 listed buildings, the Church and the Hall, and for two small unlisted outbuildings known as the 'Air Raid Shelter' (aka: 'Scout Hut') and the 'Oil Shed'.</p> <p>All mandatory inspections were undertaken throughout 2024, including the architect's 5 yearly inspection of the church building ('Quinquennial') in February 2024, and the 5 yearly detailed electrical inspection of the church in October. Actions arising from these reports were added to our DCC risk register and tackled along with other identified issues and available funds, according to priority.</p> <p>The following exceptional works were therefore undertaken during 2024:</p> <p><b>Church Building</b></p> <p>'St John's Welcomes You' banners (weather resistant) attached to custom made wooden frames were fixed outside either side of the main entrance door.</p> <p><b>Corona sculpture</b> - previously suspended above the nave was removed and stored.</p> <p><b>Boiler room door</b> – original door upgraded to comply with fire regulations and reinstated.</p> <p><b>Roof repairs</b> – several hundred slates were reattached or replaced on the 3 pitched rooves; a large 18 inch round hole above the original font was fully repaired.</p> <p><b>Hoppers</b> – re-secured where fixings had loosened (the back of most of our hoppers have become distorted by the heat of the sun over many years therefore still do not appear to be flush with the wall, however all have been closely inspected and declared safe by our builders).</p> <p><b>SMART water</b> - reapplied as required.</p> <p><b>Lamps</b> above external doors, and timer replaced.</p> <p><b>Hall Building</b></p> <p><b>Steel lintels x2 inserted</b> - to canopy over front porch to correct a structural crack.</p> <p><b>Fire safety works</b> – compartmentation of understairs cupboard, fire alarm system replaced, worn intumescent seals around internal doors replaced.</p> <p><b>Leaking roof</b> – many dislodged slates on pitched roof refixed / replaced.</p> <p><b>Damp proofing</b> south facing wall – elimination of existing significant damp and future prevention.</p> <p><b>'Air Raid Shelter'</b></p> <p><b>Fence around front replaced</b> – old trellis fence was rotting in places so replaced by 'feather edge and extended to provide better security for users.</p> <p><b>Oil Shed</b></p> <p><b>Oil tank removed</b> – disused large tank cut up, removed and disposed of.</p> <p><b>LED lighting</b> – added inside shed.</p> <p><b>Guttering and water butt</b> added.</p> <p><b>External motion sensor light</b> added to improve lighting through that part of the grounds.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Priorities for 2025 – 26 and beyond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centenary of church building - July 2026 - planning of commemoration events has begun.</li> <li>• Improve access to church entrances - (add external slopes &amp; automatic doors).</li> <li>• Replace wooden soffit boards and mend guttering to hall to fix significant leak.</li> <li>• Replace church internal lighting system.</li> <li>• Repair parts of the flooring inside the church.</li> <li>• Repair / repaint the 6 large window frames in hall (thereafter 5 yearly)</li> <li>• Upgrade church sound system.</li> </ul>

- Replace external noticeboards.
- Repair / replace the 5 flat rooves of the Church (worn and leak).
- Organ repair / refurbishment.

A Maintenance and Repair Action Plan is held by the wardens and available to church members on request.

**Frankie Turner and Julie Rochefort, Churchwardens, March 2025**

## **Treasurer**

### **Our Finances**

- ❖ Unrestricted Balance at 01:01:2024 -£75,913.29
- ❖ Restricted Balance at 01:01:2024 - £15,765.47
  
- ❖ Unrestricted Balance at 31:12:2024 -£43,313.50
- ❖ Restricted Balance at 31:12:2024 - £14,673.25

### **Income Generation Activities.**

Secured Hall Rental boosting our Income circa £40,000 / annum

Three church fund raising activities, brought in over £2000

Curate House rental brings in £16,000

The Family of Colin Russell has gifted St Johns £500.00, allocated to our Organ Maintenance fund.

Our newly formed youth group hosted a “Chocolate Drinks” event raising £80.00 in the process.

Launch of the Parish giving scheme with majority of the DCC signed up and donating, thus far we have donations of £390.00, + £97.50 Gift Aided).

Claiming Gift Aided Donations from HMRC (Work in progress)

Some increase in our online Giving.

### **Major Expenditures.**

Major Reparations to the Fabric of the Buildings (£15,000.00)

Removal of Corona Sculpture/ Oil tank (£4,000 +)

Large Lawyers/ Surveyor fees from lease negotiations for Hall, rental to the Trussel Trust (Foodbank) - £10,500

Increased our Parish share in line with Inflation, to £25,000

Cleared SJB Debt carried over from 2023 (£34,811.00)

The year (2024) has been a very expensive year for St Johns, although the expenses has placed the Church building, and Hall in a better condition.

Many of the expenditures has been to “Sure Up” the Church and Hall Building and in preparation for the lease for the Foodbank leasing the hall.

In conclusion, 2024, has been an expensive year, as we have had to pay out large sums mainly for:

- Reparations/ Refurbishment of the Church / Hall Buildings
- Legal & Surveyor fees for Lease agreement for Hall Rental
- High Energy Bills, mostly Gas for the church
- Clearing church creditor carried over from 2023.

We are hopeful that now that most of the priority/Emergency items have been resolved, although there are still items outstanding, the financial situation should improve.

**Amos Eka (St Johns Treasurer) – February 2025**

## **Safeguarding**

### **Safeguarding Report AGM 2025**

There has been only one concern reported last year.

As a result of a review last year the Diocese of Southwark has conducted an audit of Safeguarding practices across the diocese. This was completed by Reverend Peter and myself in February 2025; identified areas requiring action will be discussed at subsequent DCC meetings.

***Cynthia Harding, Safeguarding Officer, March 2025.***

## **Children's Church**

We currently hold Children's Church every 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sundays (apart from in the school holidays), with all age services on special Feast days. Children and youth participate in services and help with Intercessions, Serving at the Altar, or processing with the offering. We would like these services to become more interactive with even more involvement from the children. Reminders are now in the newsletter each week so that parents are aware of when Children's Church is happening.

Although the children's group appears smaller this year, we haven't lost any children they have just grown up and joined the Youth! We have allowed some flexibility around this to accommodate individual needs; and to accommodate those who have taken an interest in serving or being in the choir. There are a few others who visit occasionally, the light party in October brought a new Romanian family; and the sad death of Eric who used to attend St John's school has brought his siblings to church occasionally. It is hoped that both these families will be able to attend more regularly. We have a new member in our group who came because of Rev. Peter's response to a prayer request in the Prayer Chapel. The core group is Sukana, Caleb, Celine, Rayhan, Amari, Amirah and Malachi

We continue to use Roots resources which follows the Lectionary and Reverend Peter sends me the service rota so that also helps with our planning. We generally focus on the Gospel reading each week although there are sometimes exceptions to this. We have a committed team – three of us teach regularly, we have two others who help regularly. The team currently are myself, Debbie Nelson, Kerry Smith, Anita Omari, Gillian Spencer helped occasionally by parents. We need another person to work with Kerry on a regular basis.

We moved into the vestry almost a year ago which serves our purposes well; it means particularly that if any younger members need their parents during the service this can easily be accommodated. We make use of the outside space when needed for games and other activities, all our resources are close to hand. We continue to meet each month for breakfast to plan and pray and are grateful to Debbie for hosting this. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything else that you would like to know.

***Cynthia Harding, Children's Church Coordinator, March 2025.***

## **Youth Church**

After many years (since before Lockdown), we are delighted to have an active Youth Church once more, led by David Harding and Shea Hollis. This group is aimed at those in Secondary School, with the aim being they move from Children's Church during Y6 to ease transition. We have however, had a couple of Y5 students attending with siblings.

Our new Youth group first met in July 2024, with the initial aim of gaining the young people's views on what they would like the group to look like. They were very clear on their hopes for new youth church provision- it should happen during church on Sunday mornings, and it should incorporate teaching, 'action' and prayer. This led to the creation of the name TAP Youth Group. They were keen for the group to include a strong

sense of action- helping bring about change or help others, within church, the local community or even further afield.

On the second session, we delved into the 'action' element further, with the young people sharing issues in the church and local area that bother them. One area that they all universally agreed needed addressing was the problem of litter around the church grounds and so this was chosen to be our focus upon return after the summer holidays. Posters were made by the group to share the new sessions.

Since then, we have had a regular attendance of between 3 and 8. Whilst we would like higher numbers, this slower start has allowed Shea and David to navigate the new group efficiently and for the members to create a real sense of belonging and motivation. The group runs on the first, second and third Sunday of the month, with occasional sessions on the 4<sup>th</sup>, leader availability and youth attendance dependent! We have trialled not running a session on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, after Café Church, to encourage youth involvement there, but it has not had an impact.

The litter campaign had inspired the church congregation too, and the support has been great. As well as surveying the litter (types of rubbish, particular problem areas etc) they have completed a thorough litter-pick (with the help of Children's Church) and held fundraising pop ups- Hot Chocolate after church and at the Christmas Fayre, both in November, and Pancakes on the last Sunday before Lent in March. They have raised just under £200 at this point, which will be spent on sturdy, fox proof litter bins for the church exterior.

Outside of the group itself, five of the young people met with Archdeacon Chignor on his Parish Conversations visit, they have taken on leading Intercessions on two occasions and are now making plans for the renovation of the Meeting Room which will become their Sunday meeting place once the work is complete.

We are all very excited about the future of this group, impressed by their motivation and outward looking focus. The group could grow and make further impact, with further volunteers. Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

*Shea Hollis, Youth Group Leader, March 2025*

## **Music Department**

Choir: The choir continues to show great commitment to the service they provide at St John's. Numbers are ok with recent musical recruits (from around Christmas time)

Lunchtime Recital Series: Attendance is on the low side which can be disappointing for performers. A strategy of advertising is being looked at.

Instruments:

1. Organ. Is in a worse state than last year: Last year's faults listed are exacerbated:

- Stops do not operate fully.

- Electronic contacts have worn away.

- The pitch is nearly a semitone too high – making it unsuitable to use with other instruments as well as making choral and congregational singing strenuous at written pitches.

- Aside from tunings the organ has not seen significant maintenance work since it was first installed in St John in 1982 and is now showing clear signs of degradation.

In order to save costs on tunings (despite us getting a large discount as I am a former employee of the tuning firm)

Julie, and myself have undertaken this from time to time on our own. I have continued to put off mentioning this as a priority due to financial troubles at St John's but I am afraid that there will be a time in the near future when the organ just suddenly stops and we'll have to look at where to get some money...

2. Pianos

In good condition.

3. Harmonium

In good condition.

*Jack Stone, Director of Music, February 2025*

## **Mission Action Plan Team**

The Mission Action Plan (MAP) team has now been meeting for over two years, having been formed was formed after the Mission Day in February 2023. We continue to focus on the three key priorities identified at that time: Community Outreach and Hub, Grow number of Children & Young People and Sharing the Gospel. In those two years, much progress has been made across the areas.

**Community Outreach** We have further integrated our Lewisham Foodbank partnership; as well as the Foodbank moving their offices and warehouse into our Hall, Rev'd Peter is now Centre Manager and we see many foodbank clients attending church services, asking for pastoral support, enquiring about baptisms and funerals and using the prayer chapel. Music recitals, seasonal events like fairs, the Senior Social Club & First Friday Club and Pram Club continue to attract and serve different sectors of our community during the week. School connections are deepening all the time, with regular visits and church member involvement in many areas of school life.

**Grow number of Children & Young People** The Youth group has now been back up and running for sixth months and are now looking to move sessions to the new Rectory Meeting Room which will support their growth and identity. Children's Church numbers fluctuate, but volunteers can run sessions on a clear rota and additional events like the Light Party at All Hallows Eve are becoming a regular fixture. The All-Age service in the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday is now a well-established pattern and families enjoy the interactive sermons.

**Sharing the Gospel** Café Church has been running monthly for a year and a half and attracts a mixture of regular St John's congregation and those who attend just for this. Bible Studies, a Lent Course and special appeal services like the Pet Service have run in addition to our regular Masses and those for Feast days and notable occasions. Streaming Sunday Mass on social media and midweek services support those unable to attend on Sunday.

**Next steps:** We now need a greater focus on attracting numbers to existing events and groups- Friday Music Recitals, Café Church and Youth Church would all appreciate more attendees! But importantly, volunteers to help will greatly impact the potential growth and reach of these.

*Shea Hollis, MAP Team Coordinator, March 2025*

## **Senior Social Club & First Friday Club**

### Senior Social Club

We continue to attract an average of 34 each month, around a third from our church and the rest from the local community. They enjoy an afternoon of companionship, themed quizzes and a lovely afternoon tea. We celebrate seasonal and important events, give birthday gifts, a free raffle and Sue produces a newsletter with church and local news/information and some quizzes to do at home.

Unexplained absence results in a phone call to check all is well.

We comply with Diocesan H&S requirements and our accounts are open for inspection.

Our charge has remained at £1.50 this is possible due to the legacy of a past member, our capital is kept

ringed fenced within the main Church accounts and we keep a small amount of petty cash to cover monthly expenses not covered by attendance fees. We have sufficient funds to allow us to continue for the foreseeable future.

We donated £300 again this financial year towards to heating and lighting for our meetings over the winter months, this amount is subject to annual review.

This club could only continue with the faithful support of its helpers, Sue Wardell, Sandy Mawford, Sue Coombes, Gillian Spencer, Maddie Walden, Linda Smithson, John Grosvenor and Carolyn Nield. Fr Peter is a regular visitor and we really appreciate his support and interest in our members' welfare.

New members are always welcome but due to limited space we do not advertise outside of our churches and by word of mouth.

#### First Friday Lunch Club.

We meet each month and bring our own lunches. We chat, play games of cards and scrabble, do some seasonal crafting and just enjoy each other's company.

There is an average of 20 people attending, we provide tea, coffee, soups, biscuits etc with the occasional treat, all of which is donated.

Since May 2024 members decided to donate any contribution they give to Centre Point, a London based charity caring for homeless youngsters. We have been giving £20 per month to this worthy cause. Any surplus will be accumulated and further donations made.

We would welcome new members, we meet in church, on the first Friday of each month 1-3pm

*Gillian Spencer, February 2025*

## **Mothers' Union Branch**

Our meetings have been well attended this year by those members who are available on a Tuesday and anyone else who might be interested in the speaker or subject.

The monthly meetings have been very varied, starting with Frankie telling us about St Anthony of Egypt, the AGM in February and in March a version of the ecumenical World Day of Prayer service written by the women of Palestine. In April, we loved learning of the eight pieces of music, choice of book and luxury item Frankie would take if stranded on a desert island. Rev'd Brown has been to talk to us twice and Rev'd Valerie spoke on 'Pilgrimage' including her experiences on walking the Campino de Santiago de Compostela. A very successful tea was held for the Summer of Hope appeal to which we invite the congregation and friends. In September, we held the annual Wave of Prayer Service, praying for the worldwide diocesan links with Southwark. We had a craft afternoon and in December a lovely service of Christmas readings and music with Frankie and Rev'd Peter. Stalls at the Summer and Christmas Fairs have raised funds for MU projects.

During the year there are also many meetings and services across the diocese which we are able to attend.

The programme is available on the MU board in church so do please come and join us if there is something you are interested in hearing about. As well as enjoying good company and friendship, we continue to pray for the Mothers' Union members and their communities around the world.

*Catherine Hall, Branch Leader, March 2025*

## **Sacristan**

I am pleased to report that we have been able to provide servers at every Sunday service and all additional services. At Midnight mass and our Easter Vigil services we also provided acolytes. Tony Miller has

continued to support us with his wealth of knowledge, as well as assisting with setting up and clearing away. Many thanks Tony.

I have a very committed team of eight regular servers; six adults, one member of our youth and one child. It is these seven to whom I owe a huge amount of thanks. Without their commitment and flexibility, I would be unable to provide servers every week. Many thanks to Maisie, Amos, Mamline, Anne-Marie, Robert, Jaimie and Hayden. I have also been able to recruit another boat server who will start her training in March 2025.

It is with sadness that we are having to say goodbye to Jaimie as a regular server due to school commitments. Jaimie has been an inspiration to other young people; showing them that the serving roles are not only for adults. May I take this opportunity to thank Jaimie for her service and commitment.

It would be lovely to recruit one more crucifer so that each server is only committed to a duty once a month as well as a couple of the children on the fourth week to serve as acolytes seeing there is no children's church that week.

We also now have a team of four regular Eucharistic Ministers: Myself, Mamline, Robert and John, with Alice in reserve if needed.

***Sandy Mawford, February 2025***

## **On-line Missioner (Shea Hollis)**

Our online activities continue to reach people who are unable to attend in person, allow more flexibility of output and share what we do to bring in more people, through advertising events, posting services and updating on what has been going on. In addition to our social media output, I have taken on a greater amount of poster/ printed material work- please do ask if you have an event coming up or a group that needs a new poster or leaflet!

One big change this year has been reducing my working time by an hour a week. This decision was made partly in reflection of the fact that my efficiency has increased and various apps make the tasks easier. As such I am not spending as much time creating content as I used to. Also Rev'd Peter often posts photos and news to Facebook himself which I can then use on the other platforms, saving my working time. However, it was also motivated greatly by the hope to save the church money; the difference in my pay roughly matches the increase in Parish Share payment we have pledged this year.

We continue to livestream Sunday Mass and occasional special services. This is managed in the main by Amos Eka (for which I am extremely grateful). However, recent occasions of us both being absent from church have shown we need a clearer plan/ rota to cover for this. While the numbers accessing the Mass livestream are relatively low, it is still an important part of our outreach as we continue to serve those who would otherwise be isolated and they are able to connect with the church and worship. Furthermore, it opens a window into the way we worship- people can see what happens in a service before coming along in person. It is also a useful part of our Funeral provision, especially for those with distant families.

Social media continues to change and we have constant struggles to ensure our posts and videos are seen and recognised by the 'algorithm' on Facebook and Instagram. Over the last year, our following on Facebook has decreased, but has increased on Instagram. Continuing with a mixture of videos and photos has helped, as have adding Threads in place of Twitter. We have also started using the Nextdoor App occasionally for events like fairs and Christmas services and both Threads and Nextdoor are areas I am keen to focus on further in the coming year. However, the single biggest thing that will impact the effectiveness and reach of our online mission is commenting and sharing- if you see a post from us, make a comment, share it to your own page, tag a friend who may be interested.

*Top Ten posts 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024- 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 (Reach= accounts this content has been accessed by on Facebook and Instagram combined, as of 10.04.24. Excludes posts shared to local Facebook groups- these are usually posters advertising events and special services and have a greater reach count as includes all the members of the group who see it.)*

Rank	Content	Format	Date	Reach
1	Izy Cheeseman Recital	Multiple images	27/7/24	479
2	Tribute to Rev'd Margaret by the Choir at lunch	Video	22/9/24	420
3	Rev'd Peter & Shea at Foodbank	Single image	24/10/24	393
4	Sheila Warr's birthday	Multiple images	6/12/24	358
5	Elsie's 99 <sup>th</sup> birthday	Single image	1/9/24	340
6	Kerry's baptism	Single image	26/1/25	307
7	Youth Church Hot Chocolate stall	Multiple images	21/11/24	304
8	Wuntanara Drummers Poster	Single image	29/1/25	301
9	First Communions 2025	Multiple images	2/3/25	299
10	Zimbabwean MU singers	Video	7/7/24	294

As you can see from the above, posts featuring real people are the most popular. We love seeing faces we recognise, celebrating their special occasions and enjoying the everyday moments together. To this point, we welcome UGC 'User Generated Content'. This means that our congregation, visitors and groups share posts featuring us which we can interact with and repost, or simply send us their content to share. Please rest assured that content containing people's faces and names and posts with children are never shared without permission.

I also, as mentioned above, ask that everyone continues to engage with us on social media- every like, comment, share and image you send me to use makes a huge difference. The aim for the Online Missioner role has always been to openly share what goes on inside beyond our doors, so that more may venture in and feel God's presence.

**Shea Hollis, Online Missioner, March 2025**

### St John's School

- Peter and Frankie continue to lead worship in school on Monday's and Wednesdays, following the themes of the new value words, along with reflecting on feast days and the Church's seasons.

- The school continue to attend worship every half-term.
- Peter led 1st Communion classes during March.
- Sonia, Shea and David give up their time to serve as School Governors.
- Staff enjoyed an end of year, thank-you social in the Rectory Garden in July.



**Rev'd Peter Organ, Rector, February 2025**

### Special Projects Fund

After the success of our first Christmas fayre in 2023 and our Summer fayre 2024, a discussion took place regarding how the funds raised were being spent. At that time all profits were just being paid into the church's account and being used to pay towards the cost of the many consumables needed in order to keep the church running. After consultations with the Wardens it was agreed that any money raised at a fayre, table sale, raffle or money donated on a Wednesday morning for coffee, would be ring fenced and used to buy specific items needed by the church or to be put towards any special projects within church that need funding. By using the money in this way it is easy for the congregation to actually see where their generous contributions are being spent.

This past year we have raised £450.00 at a Table Sale in October and £950.00 at the Christmas fayre, which were paid into the church account. Money raised by Wednesday coffee donations has been kept in the safe to use as 'petty cash'. So far the money in the church account has paid for a new Thurlible and Boat, something we have desperately needed for some time as our current one is becoming dangerous due to its age. These are being made at the time of writing this report and will hopefully be ready to use over Easter. The Wednesday coffee money has paid for the coffee, tea and biscuits for Sunday and

Wednesdays, the Mothering Sunday flowers and £150.00 was given to the Bishop's Lent Appeal 2024. These funds will continue to pay for similar items during 2025.

Going forward, we have a carry over balance in the church account of £1150.00 so... with the church centenary approaching in 2026 we thought a fitting project to use our carried over balance and any further funds raised would be, to give the Forster Chapel a much needed 'face lift'. This would include: repainting, new carpet and a new drape behind the altar. Something that is definitely needed, especially as the Lady Chapel had a 'face lift' not so long ago and now looks so stunning! Also we need to remember that if it wasn't for the Forster Family we probably wouldn't have our beautiful church.

May I take this opportunity to thank the committed team who help to run the fund raising events and both the congregation and our local community for their support and generous donations which have enabled us to set up this fund.

***Sandy Mawford, February 2025***