

APCM Reports 2012

PCC REPORT

Members of the PCC for 2011/2012 were:-

Revd Wilma Roest (Chair)
Martin Gray (Churchwarden)
Keith Holmes (Churchwarden)
Olu Agbalaya (Churches Together in Balham and Tooting)
Graeme Calf
Sarah Collier
Helen Cowen (*until December 2011*)
Victoria Gregory (Deanery Synod)
Karen Gray
Suzanne Hinkson-Marks
Keith Mitchell
James Morton
Alex Russell (Deanery Synod)
Christopher Serbutt (Deanery Synod)
Revd Eileen Serbutt

The PCC was elected at the APCM on 10 April 2011 and has met 6 times. Each member serves for 3 years after which time they can put themselves up for re-election; this means there is a good turn-over of members bringing new ideas, energy and enthusiasm. Meetings take place in the narthex or the balcony room; we start promptly at 7.45 pm and tea, coffee and biscuits keep us going. Wilma makes sure we always finish by 10.00 pm.

Our agenda covers all aspects of life at St Mary's. Reports are made by the various committees – Buildings & Finance, Fundraising and Lettings - and we are brought up to date with the Deanery Synod and Churches Together by our representatives. This year, there has been much discussion about building and maintenance, in particular the electrical work – which has brightened all our lives – and more recently, the planned restoration of the Chancel. Our Safeguarding Officer and Electoral Roll Officer keep us informed of news and changes and it is always good to hear local news from Wilma, especially the strong links being built with local schools. Planning social events is also high on the agenda – a good way to have fun, involve the community and raise money.

We were sad to say goodbye to Helen Cowen who moved to Scotland in December but grateful that Graeme Calf has taken over her position as Electoral Roll Officer.

We are always keen to welcome new members to the PCC. If you are interested, please speak to one of the Ministry Team or any of the PCC members.

Sarah Collier, PCC Secretary

Electoral Roll

In 2011 the roll was 136. In the past year 3 names were removed and 8 added. The roll now stands at 141.

CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT FABRIC AND ORNAMENTS 2012

This is the second report from Keith and I during this present term of office. Whilst the major part of this report will be concerned with matter appertaining to fabric and ornaments I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank you all for your support during 2011, particularly the members of the PCC and the Building and Finance Committee who have again worked very hard over the past year.

The church building is a wonderful resource in which to move forward our vision of St. Mary's Church being a centrepiece of community life; an opportunity embraced by the community which sees the narthex in use nearly every day. That in itself gives challenges in how we use the building for 'church' activities whilst benefiting from the income that these lettings generate. We have a wonderful lettings committee who grapple with these conflicting demands.

Building:

We continue to grapple with the mundane aspects of looking after a building that is in part over 200 years old. We have three areas of the building where damp ingress is giving us a problem i.e., narthex toilet, side porch, and the chapel dome. We continue to undertake work in these areas in an attempt to alleviate the problems. Unfortunately repairing the obvious has not resulted in success.

Early in 2011 we commissioned the re-plastering of the south tower staircase which was work remaining from the upper floor re-ordering. Whilst this is not a part of the building many of you see it is frequently used and the work was much needed. All that now needs to be done is the repainting.

As long ago as 2008 we were informed that the electrics in the chancel area were unsatisfactory/ unsafe and needed replacement. In 2010 we applied for a faculty for the works and this was granted in 2011 and the works have now been completed giving us significantly better lighting of the chancel and additional socket outlets in the area.

Unfortunately despite St Mary's Church being a prominent building on a busy main road, in October 2011 we were victims of the growing metal theft problem giving problems to parishes throughout the country. The lead was stolen from the side porch roof and the main entrance staircase roof. Following a protracted faculty process we were finally granted 'emergency' permission in January 2012 and the works commenced immediately on replacing the roof covering with a stainless steel product which has similar durability to lead but with significantly less scrap value. Unfortunately despite temporary sheeting water penetrated in to the two areas below causing residual damage to the internal fabric.

Ornaments:

Unusually we have several matters of 'ornaments' to report.

After many years of decay new servers albs were obtained in the autumn of 2011 and the old ones have been 'retired'. We trust that with the servers being in matching and hopefully smarter albs enhances the worship.

The parish office photocopier which had given us sterling service over the past few years was becoming increasingly temperamental. A new photocopier was purchased at the start of 2012. With 'technology' playing a greater part in the occasional services and various group activities we have invested in a projector for showing films, presentations and the like along with a new projection screen which is more robust and significantly less likely to topple over.

In March 2012 we suffered an act of vandalism. A number of prayer books were taken from within the Family Chapel; helpfully these were found in the refuse bin outside the church and retrieved. Sadly the large brass reredos cross was removed from behind the altar and was found badly damaged having had the top portion bent over and many of the finer parts broken off. It is unlikely to be cost effective to be repaired.

Finally, but by no means least, a thank-you to all of you for your support over the past year, and in particular a thank you to all who quietly assist with all sorts of little jobs in keeping the church fabric and ornaments in good shape. Your efforts are appreciated and I pray that your wonderful support will continue.

Martin Gray
Church Warden

Building and Finance Committee

The Building and Finance Committee is a sub-committee of the PCC which 'does what it says on the tin' – we deal with the day to day matters of the building and finances on behalf of the PCC.

Members of the committee were

Wilma Roest - Vicar

Martin Gray – Churchwarden and Chair

Sarah Collier – PCC Secretary

Victoria Gregory – B+F Secretary

Keith Mitchell –Hon Treasurer

Building

Throughout the year we have continued to monitor our 'regular' contracts for gas, electricity, water, telephones, broadband, insurance, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, boilers and lift, seeking to ensure we comply with legislation and keep the building safe for all to use in a cost effective way. In Jan 2012 we changed our gas and electric supplier to one with more competitive rates. In addition we have a programme of working through our quinquennial building report undertaking the works identified as required.

We have commissioned or undertaken work of a 'routine' nature throughout the year including:

monitoring and attempting to solve damp ingress at three places within the building.

- The Chapel Dome. We had this repointed in early 2011, but unfortunately the repair has not worked and the rain has started to come in again.
- Damp in the narthex toilet: We have made adjustments to the external rain water pipe and it seems that this has been successful. We are waiting for the wall to dry out fully before investigating re-decoration.
- Damp to the porch and family chapel. This is proving problematic. We have undertaken rainwater pipe repairs and some associated brickwork repairs. This has not eased the damp so further investigations are on-going.

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We employed specialist plasterers to use historic lime plaster to repair the tower staircase walls and ceiling and prepare this area for painting at some future date.

The side gate to the rear of the vestry was repaired following metal fatigue in the support post. A repair was undertaken on the narthex screen allowing for the doors to be fully operational again after several months, as parts of the mechanism were broken.

The router for the office broadband and the church's wireless internet failed and has been replaced.

We have identified a leak on the incoming water main and at the time of writing works to repair this are programmed.

Annual maintenance tasks such as unblocking toilets, drains and gutters have been on-going.

A major piece of work planned for the year was the replacement of the chancel electrics. These had failed a safety inspection and were beginning to fail physically. A faculty application was made for new lighting, rewiring of all the circuits including additional socket outlets in the chancel, vestries, transepts, music room and den areas as well as new distribution boards. This work was undertaken with minimum disruption over two weeks in the summer.

An intermittent fault on the fire alarm panel, resulting in the panel alarm going off without cause, necessitated its replacement. However the problem persisted. Following further investigations by our alarm specialist a fire detector head was replaced in the porch and since then there has been no reports of the alarm fault. We pray that this annoying problem is now resolved.

In anticipation of the chancel restoration appeal we appointed our architects to over-see the obtaining of a report into the repair and restoration and cleaning of the damaged paintwork and wall murals to the sanctuary and chancel. The report was obtained in the autumn 2011 and will form a significant part of our appeal for funding to restore the chancel area to its former glory. A separate committee has now been formed to manage this important piece of work over the next couple of years. Whilst the report contains a lot of technical detail on cleaning it also confirms that the water penetration that probably caused the initial damage is no longer

present and the fabric is dry.

Following the extended dry period we were alarmed to find one wet morning in early October that water was pouring into the main entrance staircase and the side porch. Investigations revealed that we had been the victim of metal theft and that the lead roofs had been stripped. Temporary repairs were immediately arranged, (these subsequently proved to be ineffective). In conjunction with our architect we applied for an emergency faculty to replace the roofs in stainless steel which has a similar lifespan to lead, is slightly cheaper and significantly less attractive to thieves. Permission for the work was finally received in January and the works were undertaken. Meanwhile the water ingress caused the ceilings in both areas to fail necessitating their replacement. The works have been completed and the ceilings redecorated. However a significant amount of damp has penetrated into the porch and this has exacerbated the damp in this area. Sadly insurance companies no longer consider the theft of lead as an unforeseeable event, and therefore severely limit the monies they will pay out against any claim.

Concurrent with the re-roofing works we have applied 'Smartwater' to the external metal. This is an 'invisible' marker on the metal that identifies it as being from our building in the event that any further material is stolen. Insurance companies see Smartwater as part of the fight-back against metal theft and will now only provide (partial) cover where it has been applied.

Finance

The main audited finance report for the year to 31 December 2011 is available elsewhere. The finance team is now working well with a dedicated group dealing with weekly matters such as paying bills out and monies into the bank on a weekly basis. Keith Mitchell produces a variety of cash flows and forecasts for PCC throughout the year as well as drafting the PCC's annual budget and accounts. For that work we are very grateful.

We continue to see if we can reduce our expenditure and have begun a general review of our suppliers and a move to direct debit payments where these offer savings.

At a time of national austerity we have been delighted to find that your financial dedication to St Mary's has remained robust. We began 2011 with a planned budget deficit (knowing the full cost of the electrical works) and with concerns that our income may fall. We are delighted to reach the end of the year with an unexpected surplus and to find that income has exceeded our budget. This happy state of affairs is not typical. We are aware of a large number of parishes that have struggled financially this year. As the work to replace the roofs falls into the current financial year we are again expecting to have a budget deficit for the year, however the early signs of 2012 suggest that your continued generosity may make this less painful than anticipated.

On behalf of the Building and Finance Committee I wholeheartedly thank you for your continued generosity.
God Bless

*Martin Gray
April 2012*

Lettings report for APCM

We have had no new lets for 2012

We still have the following regular hirers who are very pleased with their lets:

Jeremy Colledge, Chi Gung

Lucy Paul, Yoga

Lucy Quick, Perform Children's Drama Group

Sonia Forde, Pilates

Yohannes Asmelash, South London Refugee Association

Phyllis Osei, The United Church of the Messiah

There is one change to our regular lets and that is Jessica Pointon left us in July 2011 and Siri Ravi Singh took over her Kundalini Yoga with Sat Charan Kur in August 2011.

In addition to the regular lets rooms are also hired out for occasional lets, among others CAB, Festival Chorus and South London Community Choir.

Our lettings income from:

April 2010 – March 2011 - £19,182.50

April 2011 – March 2012 - £20,518.74

Car Parking stayed the same with 6 spaces rented out.

Pat Nevard
Lettings administrator

Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary report

I continue to share my pastoral work between St Mary's and Brixton Prison. As I have said before the prison caters for every religion so that whatever faith the inmate requires there is always someone there to meet their religious needs

My role in the prison remains the same, that is visiting the men who are vulnerable e.g. those who are suicidal, self harm, drug abusers, or have mental health issues. Most of my work in the Prison entails meeting and chatting with the inmates discussing issues that concern them such as family problems, their fears, anxieties, frustrations, also the difficulty with being locked up, sometimes the discussions can be quite challenging especially when it comes to religious issues.

Brixton will be undergoing some changes becoming a Category C prison, which will mean different structures in the way it will be run but I think it will be good for those who will be housed there.

My role as a SPA is to be supportive compassionate and caring not to judge and to always remember that GOD our heavenly father is a God of love and forgiveness and that he loves us all regardless of who or what we are, and that through Prayer he will give us the comfort strength and support that we need in difficult times.

Daphne
SPA

Director of Music

Last year, I promised that I had not come to St Mary's to see the musical life of the church stand still, and now at the end of my first full year at St Mary's, we can look back on a period of steady development and growth.

The choir has seen some turnover in membership, with the loss of some long-serving singers but also the arrival of some new faces. The number of regular attendees is now as high as it has been for some time, and this (together with moving the organ console) has enabled us to seat the choir on both sides of the chancel, which makes a positive contribution to the overall sound.

New adult choir members are always welcome, and previous experience of choral singing isn't necessary, so potential singers shouldn't hesitate to talk to me, or to any of the choir members.

We have maintained a good variety of music from week to week, and expanded it where we can. Alongside accompanied anthems and songs, we have made greater use in the last year of psalms, plainsong and unaccompanied choral singing. The sung services of Holy Week recently built on these developments, with plainsong psalms or hymns used in every service to provide a unifying feature, and the entire Good Friday service of the Veneration of the Cross sung without organ.

Our musical links to Trinity St Mary's school have continued to strengthen. I accompany a weekly singing assembly as well as run a lunchtime choir there. And on a few occasions in the last year (notably the Carols by Candlelight service and Palm Sunday) a number of children from the TSM choir have joined the adults of St Mary's choir and made an enthusiastic contribution.

We are now taking this further, with the formation of a permanent Junior Choir built around a core of children from the TSM choir, who will attend a Tuesday After-School Singing Club as well as sing every week at our Sunday Eucharist. The first few recruits are in place, and the Junior Choir will officially launch on Sunday 13 May. If anyone knows of children aged 7+ who might like to join and benefit from the free musical training available at the After-School Club, please let me know.

Another challenge and opportunity in the coming year will be planning for the restoration of the chancel, which allows us to look again at the layout of the expanding choir and the digital organ console, and consider what to do with the remains of the old unused pipe organ, taking a long-term view of whether rebuilding or replacing it is more than just a 'pipe dream'.

Finally, may I thank all at St Mary's for their continuing support and encouragement, but especially the choir members who give so generously of their time and talents, and our organists, Keith and Stuart, whose personal contribution is enormous and teamwork greatly valued.

David Fawcett
Director of Music

Tooting Deanery Synod 2011-2012

St Mary's lay member representatives for Tooting Deanery Synod are Alex Russell, Chris Serbutt and Victoria Gregory. This APCM marks the end of our first year of a three year term.

The Deanery Synod met three times this year: 21st June 2011, 22nd November 201 and 13 March 2012. The June and November meetings held very sensitive discussions on women bishops and the Anglican Covenant. They were chaired very gracefully by Rev Mtr Wilma which meant that diverse views could be expressed by the whole Deanery.

June Meeting

At the June meeting at All Saints, Tooting, we had been asked (as had other Deanery Synods), by the General Synod to express our views on the proposals for Woman to become Bishops. We were asked to discuss the issues surrounding the proposals and put forward ideas, views and feelings as best it could.

Using material prepared by diocesan working group and questions for clarification, The Revd CJ Davis (Rector St Nicholas Tooting) and The Revd Mark Steadman (member of General Synod from this diocese) presented their views, followed by further questions.

There was a following motion from St Nicholas Tooting PCC, presented by The Revd CJ Davis he asked Deanery Synod to propose to Southwark Diocesan Synod the following:

“That this synod

*(a) desires that all faithful Anglicans remain and thrive together in the Church of England; and therefore
(b) calls upon the House of Bishops to bring forward amendments to the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure to ensure that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops are able to receive episcopal oversight from a bishop with authority (i.e. ordinary jurisdiction) conferred by the Measure rather than by delegation from a Diocesan Bishop.”*

Voting took place in Houses.

<i>House of Laity</i>	<i>House of Clergy</i>	<i>In Total</i>
For the Motion: 8	For the Motion: 6	For the Motion: 14
Against the Motion: 13	Against the Motion: 3	Against the Motion: 16
Abstentions: 0	Abstentions: 2	Abstentions: 2

The Motion was not carried.

November Meeting

The November meeting was held at St Augustine's Tooting. A guest speaker, April Alexander, from the Diocesan Working Party helped Deanery Synod consider the Anglican Communion Covenant.

April talked about the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe which faces many difficult challenges both from the State and Bishops who have proclaimed themselves head of the church in Zimbabwe and stolen Anglican Church property for their own use.

The Anglican Communion over time has attempted to meet the divergent needs of the Provinces, United Churches and Other Churches representing nearly eighty million practicing Christians worldwide. The traditional Instruments of Communion are:

- The Archbishop of Canterbury
- The Lambeth Conference
- The Primates Meeting
- The Anglican Consultative Council

This needed to re-examined to see if they were still useful and 'fit for purpose' in the 21st century. To this end the Windsor Report of 2004 was produced, consideration of the Report carried through the General Synod in 2005 and through various stages in the Synodical process till. The Anglican Communion Covenant was presented to General Synod (under Article 8 – November 2010).

Currently The Covenant has the following Sections and basic structure:

- Preamble
- Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith
- Section Two: The Life We Share with Others: Our Anglican Vocation
- Section Three: Our Unity and Common Life
- Section Four: Our Covenanted Life Together
- Our Declaration

The Anglican Communion Covenant is intended “to offer a means by which the commitment of a member province of the Anglican Communion to the Anglican Communion as a whole can be reflected in the decision-making processes of that province”. By this means The Covenant is intended to deal with any serious issue in future which may affect relationships between provinces.

The Tooting Deanery Synod, like all Deanery Synods within the Diocese, has been asked by Southwark to supply input – that is our views by mid January 2012. The process after acceptance/rejection/change by the Diocesan Synods the Covenant is sent to the General Synod where a final decision will be made for the Anglican Church in England.

A vote was requested by a member of the Deanery Synod on whether or not to accept The Anglican Communion Covenant. On a show of hands:

For Acceptance of the Covenant	1
Against Acceptance of the Covenant	14
Abstentions	16

It should be noted that the reason for those abstaining was because not enough information was available to make a clear cut decision. It was felt that there were too many un-answered questions to arrive at a balanced informed opinion.

March Meeting

At this meeting held at St James' Church, West Streatham, we heard a talk from Pete Marsden, whose vocational role is to facilitate peaceful change and conflict resolution in worn torn areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan (although not limited to these areas).

They carry out a lot of work away from the spotlight often bringing spiritual and tribal leaders and elders together to sensitively discuss root causes of conflict where often personal family or tribal offence had been caused.

More closer to home, the Deanery Synod wishes to find out more about whether the spiritual needs of the elderly in our Churches are being met and questionnaires were handed out to pass on to them to ask for their time to complete then so that their views could be considered more carefully.

We also had the usual space for members to talk about what was going on in their respective Churches and to share experiences and viewed summary accounts of Deanery Synod expenditure.

The next meeting is scheduled for 26 June at St Alban's Church.

Victoria Gregory – Deanery Synod Rep.

Sacristans' Report 2012

The team of Alan, Graeme, Chris, Jamie, Alex and myself has remained unchanged, as have our jobs. Alan still does most of the ordering in of supplies and does sterling work with the displays of candles. As always, we are grateful for Sarah's help with the laundry.

This has been very much a year of "make-do-and mend" now that so much of our linen is showing its age. We were grateful to one of the fundraisers of the Parkinson Society who donated more than a dozen unsold napkins to us; after unpicking the coloured embroidery they make great purificators. The red frontal in the Holy Family chapel was in a parlous state, with enormous slabs of solidified wax on the top, two or three large rips in the actual fabric and much of the sewing holding on the orphreys (embroidered side panels) and the braid round the edges coming unravelling. We have done some emergency repairs on these problems which we hope will last for a few more years, but the fabric itself is so fragile now that we cannot hope that these repairs are a permanent solution.

The frontals for the main altar are also causing concern. In sewing up a hole in the red one where the orphrey was becoming detached I discovered that there was a piece of paper behind the cloth which bore the date 21st July 1882. It was very humbling and rather thrilling to feel the link with the long-dead seamstresses who made these church furnishings, even though I could never hope to match their skill. However if all our frontals are as old as this it is no wonder that some of them are showing their age. Repairing this frontal was a relatively simple job but the green frontal is in a much worse state. Because it is used for nearly half the church's year it has been subjected to much greater stress being taken in and out of a rather tightly packed frontal box and has also been much more exposed to the damaging effect of light. Every one of

its component parts is damaged; the green silk has large tears, the black velvet orphreys are wearing thin, the braid has become so rubbed that it is worn away completely in places, the fringe is becoming detached and even the beautiful central embroidered chalice is starting to unravel in places. We have consulted several firms of restorers and all say it is beyond repair, one even expressing astonishment that we were still using it! At the time we consulted them I had thought it was at least 60 years old and with that estimate the restorers felt it had lasted very well; if it is as old as the red frontal it has been in very hard use for 130 years and has served us very well indeed. We have decided that it really cannot continue to be used in its present state so whenever a green frontal is required we will do without one at all. Later in the year we have plans to replace it, hopefully retaining the embroidered chalice if detailed examination by the restorers allows them to salvage it. Watch this space – we will keep you updated!

*Penny Holloway
Sacristan*

Readers and Intercessors report 2012

Many thanks to all the readers and intercessors who have worked very hard this year and produced thoughtful intercessions and clear readings. We have had very useful sessions on the importance of intercessions and their place in the service. Also the value of silence when individuals may add their own prayers. Practice is essential and I very much appreciate volunteers giving up their time on Saturday mornings to learn from and share ideas with each other. Congratulations to all those who brought alive the Gospel reading on Palm Sunday and many thanks to Rose for all her help. There will be another session soon!

The Revd Eileen Serbutt

around the table

'around the table' is the St. Mary's men's group. It meets approximately every two months to discuss issues of life and faith and what it means to be a man, and a Christian, in today's world. We have a guiding principle of confidentiality which means that we can share openly and freely together on a wide ranging number of topics. We also enjoy sharing in refreshments – which has included a night out at the French Café. The night puts everything in the context of God by concluding with Compline. All men are welcome to attend whether you wish to come just the once or on a more regular basis.

For the next date just keep an eye on the pewsheet or have a look out for one of the postcards. If you would like to know more, ask Chris. (Or, of course, you could just turn up!)

Chris Serbutt

Safeguarding report

Safe guarding Officers: Elaine Joseph and Suzanne Hinkson-Marks

Assessment of Risk/Concerns:

So far as to date there have been no issues of concern.

The numbers of parents with young children have increased in church attendance. This has especially increased due to two definitive reasons:

- TSM School receiving an outstanding off stead report.
- By word of mouth it has spread that St Mary and St John the Divine is an inclusive church meaning that lone parents and/or parents with children are welcome even if they are attending with children exhibiting a certain amount of vigor.

Needless to say this has been very positive especially as a lot of the children either use the crèche or if they are of an appropriate age attend Junior Church.

With regards to professionals working within the church we have a total of 11 members who have been CRB checked and can be called on to support the Junior Church leaders as and when required.

Work that has already been completed:

Risk assessment for children going to Junior Church from the actual church itself was completed in 2011.

Outstanding work that needs to be completed:

A full risk assessment to the crèche area and toy equipment.

*Elaine Joseph
Suzanne Hinkson-Marks*

5th Balham Brownies & Guides Annual Report 2012

Both units are flourishing. We are fully subscribed in Brownies with 24 girls and an 18 month waiting list. There will be 19 Guides after Easter and we have another 4 young leaders/senior section.

Brownies have been doing badgework including Brownie Traditions, Artist and Road Safety. Some Brownies have been on a pack holiday and some Guides have been on camp. Guides have made pancakes on baked bean tins over candles for Shrove Tuesday and performed a dance routine tutored by a professional dance teacher.

Brownies and Guides delivered Christian Aid envelopes around the Parish and enabled us to raise over £1500 for this annual charity. The girls also took envelopes and filled them with at least 100 pennies raising another £25+. The Guides made mince pies for Crisis and raised over £100.

Both units enjoyed popping into the church and polishing all the woodwork 2 or 3 times a year and the Brownies enjoy ringing the church bell on parade Sundays.

We try hard to impress on the girls how important the Service of Remembrance is as they are the only uniformed groups present. They turned out in sufficient numbers to make a meaningful and poignant display to enhance the service.

At a District Thinking Day event we all met a Paralympic Gold & Silver medallist archer who will be representing Team GB in this year's Olympics.

Two young leaders won Jack Petchey awards for exceptional service and each won our units £200 to treat ourselves. The Guides had a pizza night at Pizza Express in Balham. Diane won the Adult Leader Jack Petchey award and the £500 grant went to a District and County project. Finally a big thank you to Jo, our Assistant Guide Leader, Keith my facilitator and all our adult helpers.

Diane Holmes

JUNIOR CHURCH AND CRECHE

In 2011 the crèche area received a bit of a makeover. Helen acquired appropriate equipment and ensured that stewards are happy setting the area up before and clearing after services. The crèche is well used by parents and young children.

Junior Church is currently led by Susanne Mitchell, Anzo Francis and Chris Serbutt, who in turn are supported by Joan, Moira and Suzanne. The programme they follow is tailor made to our church and usually follows the theme and readings of the day. The number of children attending Junior Church varies Sunday by Sunday, which doesn't make it easy to plan.

Junior Church meets in the Balcony Room, which has now been cleared of all computers and is made more child friendly.

The Ministry Team are currently looking for someone to take the lead in planning ahead in the work with our young people.

GARDENING GROUP

The Gardening Group meets at 10.00 am on the second Saturday of each month, although people tend to drop by in more frequently to do odd jobs, like watering, weeding and collecting the endless beer cans and fast-food containers that gather on our flower beds.

The monthly working group gives an opportunity to do some of the bigger jobs, like pruning, tidying the flower-bed edges and sorting out the variety of pots and containers. We have a small budget which enables us to buy plants, compost etc and we are very grateful for the donations we receive – each week, someone will pop in a new cutting or a little seedling, and that's why our garden is such a wonderful jumble of plants and colour.

We were very grateful to our local branch of Travis Perkins who donated 10 bags of compost last autumn – we hope they might do this again.

The Oasis Garden (code for entry is 01 followed by the month, so 01/04 for April) continues to be used by local shoppers and workers, young mums with small children, and older people as well as making a great place for summer evening meetings, or even better, parties.

The church garden provides a patch of green on our busy high road. It's a joy to see people sitting on the bench in front of church or walking through the drive to admire the flowers or take a moment of peace, away from the hustle and bustle.

If you would like to come and join us one Saturday, we'd love to have your help – and no gardening experience needed. And if you can't manage a Saturday, but have a moment to spare, please feel free to weed and water. We really do need helping hands, especially in the summer.

Sarah Collier

Serving Team Report

For those who may be unsure about what the servers do, as servers we assist the clergy in presenting and offering worship and in so doing, we aim to enable the congregation to share in the liturgy and aspire to do so with dignity, reverence and respect.

I am very pleased to be able to report that thanks to the generosity of members of the serving team and the wider congregation, we now have a matching set of brand new serving albs. I am extremely grateful to all who donated towards the cost of the new albs.

Over the course of last year, we were very sorry to say goodbye to stalwarts of the team Nick Cady and Helen Cowen, however we have had the pleasure of welcoming Millicent and AJ onto the team.

At the moment, I am only too aware that we are heavily reliant on a comparatively small number of people who have had to work extremely hard this year, particularly over Holy Week. It continues to be challenging for us to put together a full serving team for every 10.30 Sunday service and it would be wonderful if we could welcome some new members to the team.

If you have never previously served at St Mary's but would like to or you would like to know more about what it involves, please do not hesitate to speak to me or Alex Russell after any 10.30 Sunday service.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the serving team for their continued support and dedicated service.

*Jamie Morton
Head Server*

The Parish of St Mary and St John the Divine, Balham

**St Mary's Church
is a community of Christian people
who embrace the commandments
to love God
and to love one another.**

We aim to be

an inclusive church that welcomes diversity

a thinking church where questions can be asked

a living and growing church where change can happen