



The Parish Church of All Saints, Staplehurst

Annual Reports

2008/9

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Copies of the Audited Accounts are available separately.

MESSAGE FROM GILL

It's good to be writing the introduction to our Annual Report this year just as we start Holy Week and the journey towards Easter.

So much of our journey together as a Christian community is about waiting and trusting, contrary to the idea of many who argue for and against God's existence these days and think its all about intellectual argument and concrete proof.

The themes of waiting and trusting are apparent in our individual lives but also in our church life. So they are themes you will find in many of the reports you read here.

It was nearly seven years ago when I arrived as Rector here. I was told then, of an idea which had been around for a long time. It was about plans for the refurbishing of St George's chapel to make it a more flexible sacred space. Thanks to the generosity of many people, some of whom are no longer alive to see the results, we now have a beautifully carpeted area with comfortable chairs and no fixed furniture. It gives lots of new opportunities for meeting together and worshipping in different ways. We are also waiting and trusting as we look forward to the new lighting planned for our church. There is much spade work to do and funds need to be found.

And our ministry here is changing and developing, as we wait, trusting that All Saints will continue to serve the village of Staplehurst way into the future. Kevin Fulcher (Reader in training), Sonja Drew (ALM in training), and Steve Bennett (Ordinand) are all more than half way through their training courses. Our curate, Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy joined us last summer, having previously been a minister in the French protestant church and trained as an Anglican minister in Durham. His ministry amongst us has already been much appreciated. We eagerly await his priesting in July at All Saints. Our youth ministry, co-ordinated by Marion Whatmore, is changing as the number of older teenagers decreases and the number of under fives increases.

It is exciting to read here of all that is going on amongst us. I'm sure you would want me to express our mutual thanks to all who give voluntarily of their time, their gifts and their money. At this time of national and international financial crisis we are inevitably hugely concerned about how our church will make ends meet. We particularly miss the valuable advice and sheer hard work on our finances given to us by Geoff Greetham and Patrick Harrisson, our former treasurers, who both died during this year. Their good humoured and generous presence is much missed by us all.

So we look back with gratitude and forward in trust.
'For all that has been ,'*Thanks*' and for all that will be *Yes*'.

Enjoy the read!

It is exciting to read here of all that is going on.

SECRETARY'S REPORT ON THE BUSINESS OF THE PCC

Members of the PCC continue to be hardworking and very dedicated – working well together in all aspects of the life of our church. We held eight PCC meetings during the year.

We welcomed Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy as our curate in the summer. Unfortunately, for us, he had to miss his first PCC meeting – this was because he was acting as an interpreter at the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury.

With approval from the PCC, Sonja Drew is now training to become an Authorised Lay Minister (ALM).

The PCC also approved for the church to continue to be registered on the website as an 'inclusive church'.

Approval was given for the work to go ahead for the refurbishment of the St. George's Chapel.

A PCC 'Awayday' was held at Minster Abbey on 15th November 2008. During the morning we heard an update from our four trainees, Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy (Curate), Kevin Fulcher (Reader in training), Sonja Drew (ALM in training) and Steve Bennett (Ordinand). Nick Wells (Chair of Finance Committee) got us thinking of how we might increase income and decrease expenditure. The afternoon was spent reflecting on our Church's mission with Kerry Thorpe (Diocesan Missioner).

Members of the PCC were encouraged during the year to attend services other than their regular ones, especially concentrating on the Youth and Praise Services on Sunday evenings.

John Stewart, our Electoral Roll Officer, has now moved from the village and retired from this post and as Deanery Synod Representative.

We congratulated Gill on her appointment as Queen's Chaplain and look forward to May when she will take part in a service at one of the Royal Chapels.

In March of this year, Val Wallis was installed as Honorary Lay Canon of Canterbury Cathedral. This is in recognition of her timeless work as Lay Chairman of the Weald Deanery and on various diocesan bodies.

As I write this report, it is with great sadness that we hear of the death of Patrick Harrison. Patrick was our Church Treasurer for many years. He was a bell-ringer and was always ready to help when he was needed. All three of his children used to attend the church Sunday School. We extend our deepest sympathy to Yvonne and the family at this sad time and offer our support in the future.

Geoff Greetham, our former treasurer, died during the summer. He worked unstintingly for our church in monitoring its financial situation and helping with fundraising, as well as raising awareness of the imperatives of Christian stewardship. Our sympathy goes out to Gill, his wife, and the family.

Also in January another of our faithful members died, Stuart Tipples, who was one of our local farmers and a great supporter of all our church activities.

We give our grateful thanks to Gill, our hardworking Rector; she never seems to 'let up' at all and is always ready to help anyone.

Finally, many thanks from me to Karen (who still manages to understand my writing) for typing the minutes for me after the PCC meetings.

Sylvia Lade (Secretary)

CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT ON THE FABRIC, FIXTURES, FITTINGS AND FURNITURE OF THE CHURCH FOR APCM

The last Quinquennial Survey on the Church was commenced in the Autumn of 2003 but wasn't in fact finally prepared and sent to us until the Spring of 2004, so the next one should be prepared this Spring and this may highlight work which needs to be carried out. However work is continually being done to keep the building in as good a condition as finances will allow and to make it as user friendly and safe as possible. As items are found, that need attention, they are being dealt with from large repairs on the structure down to small repairs on fixtures and fittings. What follows is a summary of what has been done during the past year and which items now require attention.

The Rector's Vestry which was re-organised by changing cupboards around has now had the sloping window sill made level with a timber platform thus giving more space in the Vestry. The new light fittings for the Vestry have still to be fixed.

Obtaining approval from the Diocese for the necessary re-tiling of the South slope of the South Aisle roof proved a slow process but was eventually obtained and the work was satisfactorily carried out in June 2008, paid for with funding from The Friends of All Saints and The Friends of Kent Churches.

Obtaining approval for the proposed refurbishment of the Chapel also turned out to be rather drawn out but was eventually obtained and, with funds in place, the work has started and although progress is slow it is hoped that the work will be completed by Easter.

The work at the Parish Room to provide toilet facilities for the disabled in what was the male toilet and refurbishing the female toilet has been completed paid for with outside funds obtained from the Newlyn Trust and by the Nursery School. The ramp at the front is still under consideration but is proving difficult to achieve because of the slope involved.

Regular servicing of the boiler, organ and fire extinguishers has been carried out.

In the Churchyard; the work to the new extension, organised and paid for by the Parish Council, has been completed and this area has now been incorporated in the maintenance agreement between the Church and the Council; three trees in the long hedge have been felled to give the remaining trees more space and another near the East boundary is about to be taken down for the same reason. The contractor who mows the grass has now been appointed to cut the hedges. An inspection of gravestones has been carried out resulting in some stones being deemed unsafe and laid flat.

The CCTV system, which had ceased to function, has been replaced and the sound system control desk which had developed a fault has been repaired. Some ivy had been removed from the walls of the Church and during this last year what remained has been removed as well as most from the churchyard wall. Some of the external louvers to the Bell Chamber had fallen to the ground and these have been re-fixed but a new louver installation now needs to be considered.

As mentioned in last year's Report the halogen lighting in the Nave, Chancel, Chapel and South Aisle had for some time proved to be difficult to maintain and the PCC had accepted a proposal for a new lighting scheme based on chandeliers and wall lights. This scheme includes for a complete rewiring of the lighting circuits. However the process of obtaining approval from the Diocese is again proving difficult as has securing sufficient finance for the project and at the present time funds are well short of the required amount.

Norman Wallis

CHURCHWARDEN'S REPORT FOR APCM

I cannot believe how quickly the four years I have been Churchwarden have passed. Now that the end of this term of office is approaching feel I should have done so much more. I have enjoyed the four years, got to know lots of people, learnt a lot about the church and church life. It has been a privilege working with Gill, seeing how hard she works and how much she cares. We are fortunate to have John Walker with us as assistant self-supporting priest, and Lusa seems to have settled in well as our curate and we look forward to celebrating his ordination in June.

Gill has continued as Area Dean, which has been quite challenging with responsibility for the other churches in our deanery. She has also been made an Honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, and most recently a Queen's Chaplain, obvious proof of how highly regarded Gill is within the diocese.

Our services have been varied, giving people a choice of ways to worship. In particular it was wonderful to be able to have a communion service and baptism in the gardens of the Bell Inn. There have been prayer groups, bible study groups, Lent courses, all needing planning and preparation to make them successful. It has been rewarding to see the Church so full on several occasions, including the Christingle Service, when there was standing room only.

I would like to thank Gill, John and Lusa, for their ministry and inspiration here in Staplehurst; all those who give their time and their love to benefit the Church in so many ways; Norman, my fellow-warden, who works so hard and spends so much time and energy on Church affairs; and, of course, thank you Brian, who has helped and supported me throughout.

Alaine Summers

CURATE'S REPORT

When I chose to come to All Saints Staplehurst for my curacy, I had no idea that life in the Kentish countryside could be as exciting. I moved in the village shortly before ordination as a deacon in Canterbury cathedral and, right from the start felt warmly welcomed, both in the church community and the village.

Over the nine months spent here, I have had the opportunity of sharing in the wide range of worship experiences offered by All Saints and have felt enriched, and often challenged in my own spirituality (I would encourage all to try out one of the services you have never thought of attending).

I have valued the dynamic tension held between a strong social conscience and a desire to grow together in faith. Bible study, lent course and private conversation have all been a great source of stimulation. All Saints is a church community actively seeking to reach out to the needs of its "members", but also resolutely turned towards the local community. This double focus is very much in phase with my own understanding of what it means to be church.

I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity of working as part of a vibrant, creative, and committed team. I have no doubt that, by the end of my curacy, I would have acquired enough experience to exercise my ministry elsewhere with proficiency. We ought to acknowledge and be appreciative of the wealth of expertise present in our church and PCC.

I am indebted to Gill for her support in all matters and the time that she devotes despite her own obligations.

I often feel that this initial stage of my curacy was essentially made of gentle action and observation. I am hoping that in the months to come, I'll be able to contribute more substantially to the life of both the church and the village.

Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy

READERS' REPORT

The Readers continue to serve as usual in the ministry team at All Saints. Peter has a really important role in the ministry to nursing homes, together with a faithful team.

Lesley continues to co-ordinate the music. She has also been on call at other parishes where she has taken family services.

Kevin is well into his course and doing a placement in Maidstone for six months. His group sessions in our village have been most interesting and have given rise to plenty of discussion.

Lesley Whitwood

WORSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

Our worship committee have, this year, continued to look at the way we plan and deliver our services. Aided by the booklet “Worship Changes Lives” (Church House Publishing) we reflected on how such planning is not just about “my preferences” versus “your preferences” but more about “how can we help people continue their conversation with God?”. Worship, we agreed, is also a mission opportunity which might be missed if we don’t take some bold steps and make some innovations, enabling those who are unchurched to feel at home in our church, as well as those of us who have been here a long time.

That definitely means sharing in some forms of worship which are well outside our own comfort zone and we all did a bit of that, agreeing as members of the group, to go to at least one service we would not normally have chosen to attend. We discussed the genre of services and how the particular character of a service needed to be maintained throughout. It also meant us thinking about language and the power of words, particularly concerning the use of inclusive language. A lively debate ensued at PCC with some firm views expressed about changing hymn words and some opposing views were aired about how our youngsters felt about hymns referring to “he “ and “man” throughout. The committee recommended (and it was agreed) that Christmas Carols and well known traditional hymn words should remain unchanged but that, where possible, we would change more modern hymns to incorporate inclusive language.

We agreed that the variety of services was still helpful to many. A decrease in numbers of young people in their teens attending our church, has rather restricted our youth led services but the praise band has continued to augment both our Praise Services and the Family (all age) service on the first Sunday each month. Our committee felt a debt of gratitude to Marion Whatmore, our youth ministry co-ordinator, who has continued to master mind that service. The regular provision of Taizé worship has also been much appreciated and will continue.

We had various ideas for new forms of worship including;

- A summer garden songs of praise
- A choral evensong to be led by SEITE ordinands
- An open air Eucharist in “The Bell” garden.

The latter took place in September. It was very well attended and the sun shone throughout. It included the baptism of the landlord’s daughter and was followed by a barbecue in the garden.

As we consider our worship at “All Saints”, a special “thank you” should go to all those who lead our worship but are not on the church’s payroll. Many people spend much time and energy preparing services, prayers, readings, sermons, music and so on. Without you we would have a very dull sort of worship. So thank you! And if there is anyone out there sensing a call to join us, do have a word.

Gill

**THE HEALTH, HEALING AND SUPPORT PRAYER GROUP
REPORT TO APCM – 2008/09**

The group numbers are nine in number. We support, with our prayers, those who ask and those we know who are ill or having other difficulties with their lives. The group have continued to meet over the past year on the same regular basis as previous years. The group is presently formed of Ron and Barbara Dear, Jean & Des Liddicoat, Pam and Peter Mortley, Jean Clarke, Brioni Armytage and Sue Hollins. Any person who has an interest and would like to join the group or need prayer for themselves or another, please contact me. You will be most welcome.

Ron and Barbara Dear are accredited to the Healing ministry and the Laying on of hands. The Laying on of Hands with prayer is offered as part of regular worship at the Holy Communion service on the first Sunday evening of each month.

A leaflet, which outlines the work and aims of the group, is available from the writer.

We now maintain three separate prayer lists. First, the official 'Church Prayer List' which is published as a part of Church Notices each week and is monitored by the writer. The second is the 'Confidential Prayer List', which is for anyone requiring prayer who, for any reason, does not wish to be on the church list. The third is the 'Support Prayer list' and is primarily for those who have problems other than acute illness, for example those who are in cancer remission or have financial or other personal problems. Contents and details of all lists remain within the group, or to the individual members of the group when specifically requested, and not divulged or discussed outside. Confidentiality is strictly enforced.

Please ask me, or any member of the group, for help and Prayer when you, or someone you know, is in need. You will be surprised and thankful for the amount of help and comfort the Lord provides to those who ask.

Ron Dear (891407), March 2009

HOME GROUP WITH THE GREENS.

Sadly for us John and Sue Green have now left Staplehurst and gone to live in the Midlands near their daughter, son-in-law and two little grandsons. We miss them a lot, but we give thanks for the happy times we spent in their home during the three and a half years they lived in Staplehurst.
Brioni

MONTHLY PRAYER MEETING.

We continue to meet every four weeks on a Wednesday evening, 8pm at our home, to thank God for many blessings and to support and undergird in prayer all that is going on in our Church. If you would like to join us please give me a ring 891208.

Brioni

PASTORAL MINISTRY

The year has been a busy one for all members of the team, but also very rewarding. We continue to visit the sick, the housebound and the bereaved. We can also provide the occasional meal and invite those who are particularly lonely into our homes during Christmas-time.

We will also provide transport for hospital visits and arrange to help with shopping for those living in isolated areas of the parish. We find that the elderly we meet are so pleased to receive a cheery word and to have someone to *listen* to their troubles.

The team regularly administer the reserved Sacrament to the residents in our local nursing homes, with Gill and Lusa sharing in this occasionally.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team for all their hard work, especially for the help and comfort they bring to all.

We are always pleased to have extra help, particularly if you are a car driver. If you feel you would like to join us, please speak to Gill or to me.

Pat Sherlock

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMITTEE 2008/9

In June 2008 we successfully ran a stall at the Village Carnival to promote a number of aspects of Fair Trade. We continue to support Fair Trade and very much hope that those businesses trading fairly will not suffer disproportionately from the economic downturn.

We have a representative on the village Disability Action Group.

We are strongly supporting Bishop Stephen's initiative in formulating a response to the issues of climate change and the environment. Kevin Fulcher led a service at Harvest Festival on responsibility and sustainability. This will form the emphasis for this committee in 2009/10.

We are delighted to see that the village debt counselling service is up and running.

We are investigating joining with the Quakers in a project to help ex-offenders from Maidstone prison to re-integrate successfully into society.

Christmas Stars of remembrance were provided by Audrey Bullock.

There is a box at the back of Church to collect batteries to be recycled.

Mary Shaw

STAPLEHURST AND MARDEN MOTHERS' UNION

Although we are a small group, we still continue to meet once a month, but as you can see we have merged with Marden Mothers' Union and we can join Marden at meetings or they can come to us.

We belong to a worldwide Mothers' Union which has over 3.3 million members, so we pray together all over the world. We host the Deanery 'Strawberry Tea' at Spilsill Barn (by kind permission from Doonie Marshall) in July each year, for Mothers' Union charities and the 'Away from it All' holidays (the holidays are for families who cannot afford to go on holiday).

Our members are very grateful to Doonie Marshall, who has been a member for 63 years, as we have all our meetings at Spilsill, where we try to help raise money for Mothers' Union charities, and, of course, this meeting ends in a sumptuous tea! So, all in all, we enjoy our prayers and fellowship together and we try to help in other areas, when we possibly can.

Branch Leader

STAPLEHURST BELLRINGERS' REPORT TO APCM APRIL 2009

Ringling at Staplehurst over the past year has been revitalised following the decision at our AGM to have two assistant Tower Captains as well as a Tower Captain. This has enabled the load to be shared, particularly at our extremely busy practices, and the band as a whole has benefited from their different ideas. The enthusiasm of three of our younger ringers in particular has enabled the band to progress into a greater variety of methods than have been attempted in the past.

The band has been greatly saddened by the recent loss of Patrick Harrison. Patrick had been a loyal member of the Staplehurst band for many years and he will be greatly missed. That apart, the band has remained mostly unchanged throughout the year, although one of our ringers has now left to begin University but another has returned after graduation. In all we have 18 active ringers plus two recent recruits who are making good progress in learning to handle a bell.

Attendance per session during the past year has averaged 11.7 ringers, which is very slightly less than the previous year. The average figure for Sunday mornings was also 11.7, Sunday evenings' average remained at 9 and the practice night average has reduced from 15 to 13.9. These figures do not include ringing for the 14 weddings, for which it has sometimes been a struggle to find sufficient ringers. In this respect assistance from ringers from other towers has been much appreciated.

One peal and twenty-eight quarter peals have been rung, the latter mainly by local ringers, during 2008 with many "firsts" having been recorded for both conductors and in methods. Two of our ringers rang in a quarter peal for the first time and another is nearly ready to do so. At the other end of the scale the progress and expertise of two of our younger ringers has been astonishing both in the variety of methods rung and their ever-increasing skills as composers and conductors. They have made a big impact on our band and those of us who had settled into an easy life are now being given new challenges.

On the annual outing in September a variety of bells and good ringing were enjoyed by the smaller than usual number able to attend this year.

This year ringers have twice supported the Sunday Afternoon Creams Teas initiative. The Tower Tours during the Flower Festival in September were very popular. The W.I visited the tower in September and were very interested in what we had to tell them about the bells.

In December the Staplehurst Scout Troop held an investiture in the Ringing Room. The room was packed with Scouts, their families, friends and Leaders to witness nine boys make their Scouts' Promise and be welcomed to the Troop. They were then given a demonstration of how a bell is rung, and most took the opportunity to go up to the bell chamber and see the bells actually ringing – under close supervision of course, and wearing ear-protection! Who knows, we might gain some recruits in a few years' time.

We are lucky at Staplehurst in having one of the strongest Sunday Service ringing bands in the area. Our primary aim for the coming year is to maintain that status.

Roy Barclay, Tower Secretary

MUSIC REPORT

The variety of music used in services continues to develop and the Praise services, youth services and family services all benefit from the input of the music group in various forms. We are very lucky to have so many talented musicians willing to give their time to make our services very uplifting.

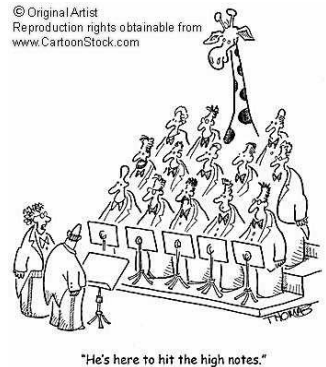
The choir has been undergoing quite a bit of change over the past year. We are very sorry to have lost the services of two long serving members: Jean Howard and Shirley Jackson. Their cheerful presence in the back row, pulpit side, is sorely missed. Other regular members have had to take a rest from being with us for various reasons and we hope that Karen, Katie, Chris and Fiona will feel able to come back to us when life is easier. On alternate Sundays we also lose Sonja to lead the Super Saints. For the big services, however, we have always had the help of "occasional" members such as Roy Barclay and James Dowsell which has been very beneficial. Another previously occasional member, Glyn Roberts, has become more permanent which has enriched the bass line. Once Kevin returns from his placement we will have his services in that back row again. The numbers are increasing in different ways and by the time you read this Izzy will have produced a tiny new member which is very exciting.

As usual the big events of the Nine Lessons and Carols and the deanery service have demonstrated to the world that in spite of changes, the Staplehurst choir is very much a force to be reckoned with.

Our loyal organists continue to do us proud and we extend our thanks to Bob, Steve and Ted for all their patience with us.

In a time of change, don't forget that membership of the choir is open to all and all we ask is a sense of humour, some musical enthusiasm and occasional attendance at services and practices. Are you interested?

Lesley Whitwood



MAGAZINE REPORT 2009

The circulation of the magazine for the year 2008 was 10,653 for subscribers, and with the addition of free drops this brought the total to 11,364. Working on an average of 888 copies per month, plus free drops 947 per month.

Profit made in the year 2008 was £1,000.

For the present time it has been decided by the committee to keep the subscriptions the same, £9 for the year or 90p per copy.

Successful openings are being made from the free drops.

Highgrove have been delighted with the photographs and articles featured in the magazine, especially on their work for charity.

Local outlets in the village are displaying the magazine and sales are good.

The Chairman would like to thank the Magazine Committee and the Distributors for their hard work throughout the year.

Chairman, Magazine Committee

HOLY DUSTERS AND BRASS CLEANERS

Our lovely church continues to look clean and cared for – I still get concerned about cobwebs, but I am told they make the windows look authentic. I am afraid I need to be a little more convinced!

We welcome Helen Wilkins to our band of cleaners. Unfortunately she has just lost two of her pews, but I am sure she will not mind too much!

Jean Rogers has taken over the list of brass cleaners and has two more names added to her list – Jill and John Dodman.

All of our Holy Dusters and brass cleaners do a wonderful job in keeping the church clean and their work is much appreciated. When the work on the Chapel is completed, I will organise one of two Saturdays of spring cleaning.

Thanks to you all.

Sylvia Lade

FLOWER REPORT

Thanks to all the flower arrangers and particularly to those who also organise various months.

Flowers are becoming more expensive and it was a huge help at Christmas to have money donated to pay for them. Thank you to all who gave towards them. We have a set donation given to the flower fund from each wedding. This helps towards Oasis and flowers on non celebratory Sundays. As usual at Easter we had lilies donated in memory of loved ones.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Golden Hill Nursery who give me generous discount on flowers I buy. Without it we would have fewer arrangements.

The pedestal by the memorial book is still used by a small number of people to commemorate special dates. If you would like to make use of this, please write your name on the list on the board in the coffee area.

The flower account is within the finance booklet.

CHARITY SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

Thank you for the generous donations throughout the year 2008 to our chosen charities. The use of the film pots for your loose change helped increase each charity's amount by an average of £150.

The total for each charity is as follows:-

| | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Ataxia UK | £633.57 |
| The Gurkha Welfare Trust | £794.00 |
| The Mission to Seafarers | £543.44 |
| Poverty and Hope | £316.86 |
| The Royal British Legion | £444.07 |
| Cruse | £ 47.91 |
| Christingle | £479.79 |
| Heart of Kent Hospice | £701.01 |
| Church Housing Trust | £445.30 |

The charities for 2009 are as follows:-

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Jan., Feb., Mar. | The Alzheimer Research Trust |
| Apr., May, June | The Smile Train |
| July, Aug., Sept. | Water Aid |
| Oct., Nov., Dec., | Hospice in the Weald |
| Gift Aid Refund | Bishop Sitembele's work for HIV/AIDS |
| Jan., Feb., Mar. 2010 | Community Dept. Advice Centre |

On each charity Sunday all loose money in the collection plate goes to the charity. If you contribute through the envelope scheme please use the orange envelopes which are behind the white envelopes in your packet. Likewise would those giving by direct debit to the general funds please use the orange envelopes provided. Should you use the blue, pew, envelopes please write the name of the charity on the front. Thank you.

Please remember to look at the charity notice board in the coffee area. The dates for Charity Sunday, information regarding the current charity and a folder with thank you letters are all there.

Chairman, Charity Committee

GROWING TOGETHER REPORT

This was formerly known as the Education Committee and seeks to find ways in which we can help one another grow and develop as we travel on our spiritual journey.

Over the past year a number of courses have been run, often both in the evening and then repeated at a morning session to enable more people to attend.

Last spring Gill lead, 'The Ten Commandments', by Joan Chittister and Kevin had a group looking at the Apocrypha.

In the autumn Gill and Lusa helped us to look at the books of Peter in the New Testament, and John spent several weeks taking us through the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic.

Mary is organising a Retreat to Bec in May this year.

At the time of writing this report we are in the process of collating and analysing the Questionnaire that each member of the congregation was requested to fill in to see how it might be possible for us grow and carry our ministry further.

Marion Whatmore

SUPERSAINTS REPORT

We've had a very exciting year with the very small group of children who come along to Supersaints. We meet in the Parish Room regularly on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. We have three children who regularly attend where we aim to provide them with a fun environment where they have an opportunity to participate in activities such as, listening to bible stories, singing songs, making things and playing games relevant to the story of that week, having rhyme time and enjoying time just being together. We have also had an opportunity to welcome some visiting children which has been an exciting change for the children.

After the Easter break we did a series about the people we meet in everyday life and how they help us, such as doctors, nurses and health workers, postmen, farmers, together with people who need our help. We had some very interesting discussion time about health and healing and they were very excited about learning how to bandage a sprained wrist! They also enjoyed writing a letter to one of their friends whom they hadn't seen for a very long time. Leading up to the summer break we started to look at the weather and how we can enjoy both the sunshine and the rain.

Supersaints restarted on the 14 September 2008 after the summer break with a new programme. Between September and Christmas, the children enjoyed a series about 'The Friends of God' where we talked about Noah, Moses, Jonah and David. They have enjoyed activities, such as making a paper dove when we talked about Noah; the children also did some creative artwork which represented Moses parting the Red Sea; they also had an opportunity to play different musical instruments to show how versatile David was, as a musician.

After the Christmas break we started looking at 'Our Five Senses'. The children really enjoyed an activity around how loudly or softly, or quickly or slowly they could talk; it caused a great deal of amusement for the Mums present. The session on hearing allowed us to talk about those who are less fortunate than ourselves and who have no hearing. I was very impressed with the children's knowledge about 'hearing dogs' and the use of 'sign language'. In addition to this the children also enjoyed putting on blindfolds and tasting different types of fruit and drinks and describing the taste, with some interesting observations.

After Easter we will be looking forward to a series entitled 'What's in God's Big Book' where we will talk about Friends of God, How to live God's Way, Songs and Music, some Adventures and Letters.

I really would like to say a big thank you to Alison Swannick and Heidi Lindsell who regularly help with the children. Their support is very much appreciated.

Sonja Drew

YOUTH MINISTRY REPORT

We continue to have provision for Children/Youth groups for those from 0-25. Numbers of those attending are much the same as last year.

Minisaints – this group is well in to its third year and continues to meet on Thursdays in term time in the Parish Room from 1.30-3pm. We have a Christian ethos and although the majority of those attending are not ‘church goers’, many come on a weekly basis and enjoy the free play followed by story time, singing and a themed craft activity. I very much appreciate the help of all the ladies who help to make the tea as well as Barbara and Pauline for keeping the registration going, to Linda for playing with the children and reading stories and to Debbie and Daniel (when he’s free) for leading us in the singing.

Supersaints – many thanks to Sonja for leading this group and who reports elsewhere on the activities this year.

Explorers – this group for 8-11 year olds takes place in the Parish Rooms on Thursdays in term time from 4.30-5.30pm. At the moment we have 4 members on the register and follow a scheme looking at the bible, the church and those who have influenced the Christian way. We also have fun evenings and often start the session with a game.

We miss Anna and Richard who finished their A Levels last summer and have left for University/travelling. They were both reliable and valuable members of the group and we wish them well. I am very grateful to Margaret and Lusa for their help.

CRU – the group for 11-15+ year old formerly met at my house on Thursday evenings but now meet at Lusa’s. The Cross Scheme is still followed with the young people working at their own pace. Some evenings are spent watching DVD’s, having discussions or playing games. Earlier this year a number of us went ice skating – the first time for Mary and Sharon – and they enjoyed it. Many thanks to Ann for her continued support here and of course to Lusa for hosting the group now.

ASClub – 15+ - a very small but select group who meet to plan the youth service as well as chat and sometimes play snooker or table tennis. Many thanks to Gill for her hospitality, and to Ann for coming along to support us with the Youth Services.

As well working with the young people within the church I also take occasional assemblies in the primary school and go in weekly to work with a Year 1 class. By getting to know the children I am able to encourage some of them to come to the All Age Workshops that we hold three times a year. A big thank you to Rachel and her team for all the work that goes into preparing these events.

SERVERS REPORT

The servers assist the clergy during our communion services.

We are a friendly team who help each other and consist of young people and not so young (but young at heart).

A couple of training sessions have been held last year and we have also had a fun social evening – another social event is planned. Our small group would welcome anyone who would like to join us – please talk to Sheila Brooker or a member of the clergy if you would like to know more.

I would like to thank all the servers for their help over the past year.

Sheila Brooker

WEALD DEANERY

Yes after a long wait we officially became the Weald Deanery in May 2008.

It has been a busy and year of change for the Deanery. We were aware of the Rev Barry Langman retiring in April 2008 from the Parish of Headcorn and had thought that the vacancy would be fairly quickly and easily dealt with. It became apparent that there were moves for a pastoral reorganization in the making and on January 2009 an informal cluster with the parishes Headcorn, Sutton Valance, Chart Sutton and East Sutton was formed. Interviews for Headcorn are soon to be held and new models of ministry with oversight from Headcorn for the Suttons will emerge. We welcome the Suttons to the Weald Deanery and look forward to working with them. Also in March a vacancy occurs at Cranbrook as Martin Burrell moves on to pastures new.

We come together as a Deanery each October to offer our Parish share and it was with much anxiety Gill and I approached this as we knew all Church budgets were tight. It is a mark of our trust and respect for each other, and how well we work together, that we achieved our total for another year.

The annual service was with Staplehurst again and was enjoyed by all. Thank you to the team.

This year we holding our annual service in April as a deanery confirmation and as Bishop Graham leaves our diocese a farewell to him.

Thank you our PCC representatives, Karen Kember, Sylvia Lade and to John Stewart who has just moved away from the Parish. My thanks to our Area Dean, Gill who is so very supportive of my work as Lay Chair.

Val Wallis

DIOCESAN SYNOD MEETINGS FOR 2008

May 2008

This meeting dealt mainly with the plans made for the Lambeth Conference outlined by the Dean of Canterbury, Robert Willis.

Others taking part were the Archbishop, who stressed that the heart of the conference is relationship, Canon Brian Chalmers, Liaison officer, Mrs. Virginia Corbyn, educational, and Bishop Stephen, who said that the conference is a unique gift to the Diocese and needs to be observed by all.

Accounts were approved for the Diocesan Budget for 2008. The Parish Share increased by 4%. A new Grants System was explained and approved. Members divided into groups to discuss the Parish Share System for GFT 2020.

November 2008

The Dean of St. Pauls, Rt. Revd. Graeme Knowles, gave a very amusing talk describing the next 100 years for our parish churches. Clergy from around the diocese spoke of how their own churches were successfully raising funds and interest, in various and varied activities within their parishes.

The afternoon session dealt with synod business and the Diocesan Pastoral & Mission Measure and Future Patterns of Common Tenure.

A new committee is to be formed to replace the Diocesan Pastoral Group.

The next Diocesan Synod is in May 2009.

Sylvia Lade (Diocesan Synod Rep.).

CHURCHES TOGETHER

Churches Together in Staplehurst continue to meet about six times a year. We co-ordinate the printing and distribution of both the Christmas and Easter cards to every house in the village as well as the Christian aid envelopes.

The Churches continue to hold 5th Sunday combined services as well as the annual "Service of Prayer for Christian Unity" , "Women's World Day of Prayer" and Christingle service again co-ordinated by members of our committee.

The Tuesday morning coffee morning continues to have a small but regular customer base, however we will be monitoring this carefully after the opening of a new cafe. Our stall at the Staplehurst fete continues to be popular and provides a small income.

In the past we have hosted all Church social events and will be re-instating that this year with a family picnic.

The committee could not function without the full support of the Clergy from all four Churches and we thank them for it.

Margaret Ashby

FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS REPORT

Fund raising activity continued throughout 2008, in accordance with our objective of supporting the PCC in maintaining and improving the fabric of the Church.

Although the events we put on are primarily intended to raise funds, they are also highly enjoyable social events, open to all and not just churchgoers. Indeed the Flower Festival in September and the Shepherds Market in December were enjoyed by many people from the village and beyond. Membership numbers remained steady during the year.

Over the year, the Friends provided the following:

- £6,814 for the South Aisle roof
- £630.60 to reorder the Rector's vestry
- £1891.91 for general maintenance

A further sum has been set aside to assist with the project to improve the lighting. During the year to date the Friends have raised around £6,500.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee, and all of the many other people who have helped us to run the events. The Committee and I hope you have enjoyed your involvement and look forward to your continued support..

Caroline Highwood Chairman, Friends of All Saints Church

Please note that this information is provided in advance of our full audited accounts being available. These will be presented at our AGM on 13 May (date changed from that previously advertised).

SOCIAL EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT FOR APCM

We have had another busy but successful year, thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of the members of the committee. We have continued to arrange events that have proved successful in the past and have also added some new events. One of our aims is to encourage people from outside our Church family to join us and this was particularly successful at May-hem at the Bell, our two coach trips to Arras and Winchester, and also at the Parish Sunday Lunch - this year we provided roast dinner for 60 people.

We have continued to provide events corresponding to events in the Church's year, Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday, Harvest Tea and Supper, and refreshments following services for special occasions, most notable this year was Gill becoming a Queen's Chaplain. We also co-ordinated the lunch following the Deanery Service again this year.

Although not the main aim of our committee, we have helped with fundraising for the Church. Having set up Donations for Dining in 2007, this has continued and raised almost £2000 in 2008. Carrying on into 2009 with Brian and Anita offering TWO Sunday lunches, we hope many more people will offer to put on a meal in aid of Church funds.

We served Breakfast in Church twice during the year and held the very popular Carols by Candlelight in December. A new event for this year will be a Hog roast at Maplehurst on 13th June, our thanks to Maurice and Brioni for offering their delightful gardens for this.

We are only a small committee but our members are very dedicated, as are their partners, who have all helped in a tremendous way at our events, and I thank them all sincerely for their hard work. A huge thank you to my husband, Brian for all he has done over the years I have been Chairman of this committee, for all the fetching and carrying, setting up, taking down, the bar work, barbecue chief/chef, advising, listening, the list is endless!

We could not provide the events without the help and support of many other kind friends and I would like to thank Robin, Marion and Colin, and Jean for helping at several events. It has been with great sadness that we have lost two close friends this year, Geoff and Patrick, who, with their wives, have provided so much help and support to me at social events since I became Chair of this committee. They have left a huge gap but we remember with grateful thanks the big part they have played over the years.

I will be standing down from the PCC this year and therefore handing over to a new Chairman of this committee, but will continue to help out if required. I have already been charged with the organisation of the Parish Weekend on **20th-22nd November** – please make a note of the date in your diary.

We hope you will continue to support our social events and look forward to any comments or suggestions you may have.

Alaine Summers

Parish Church of All Saints, STAPLEHURST