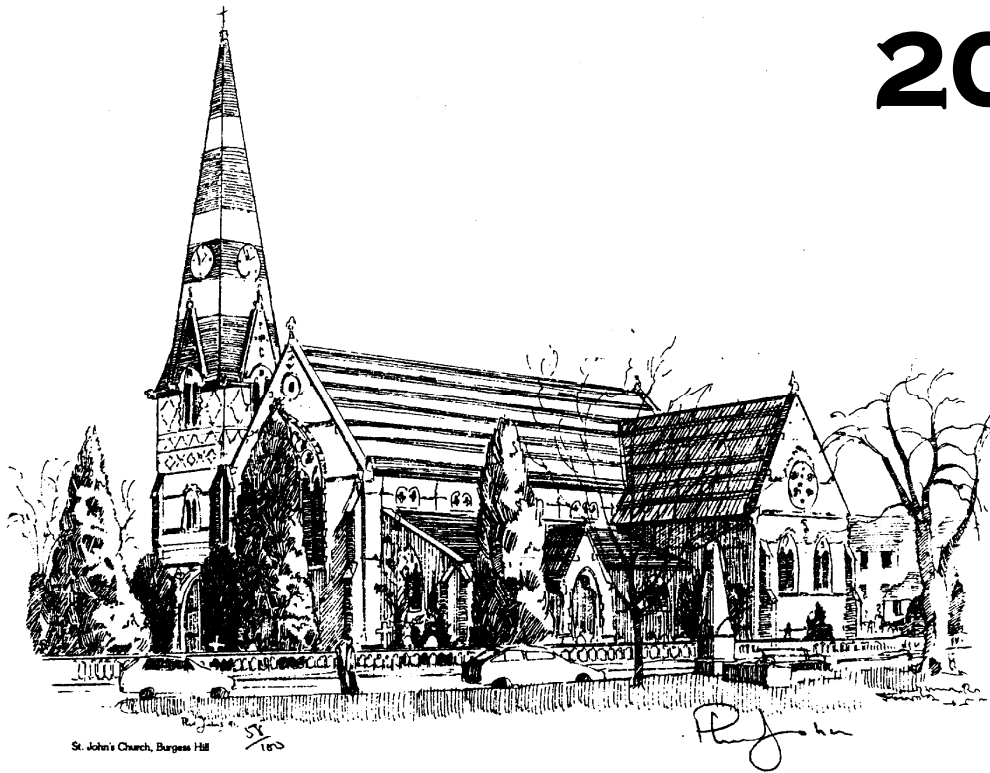


**The Parish of St John the Evangelist
Burgess Hill**

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2008**



*We exist to worship God and, in the name of Jesus Christ,
to reach out and share with everyone his life and his love.*

St John's Mission Statement

Index

Attendance.....	5
Bellringers.....	5
Choir.....	6
Churchwardens.....	6
Electoral Roll.....	8
Flower Team.....	8
From the Vicar.....	3
Mission Group.....	8
Monthly Charities.....	9
Parish Hall.....	9
Parish Magazine.....	10
Parochial Church Council.....	10
Pastoral Care Visiting Team.....	11
Servers.....	11
Services and Retreats.....	12
Standing Committee.....	12

From the Vicar

I have not for a moment given space to the thought of “winding down” as my retirement approaches, and so even at this, almost the Eleventh Hour, I feel compelled to write to you of **growth**. I do so with a degree of urgency, not just because of the time factor, but also because growth always **was** important, **is** still important and **will remain** important to us as individuals and as a parish.

“Growth” is an idea often applied to church life. And it is scarcely surprising that a term with such organic associations should be applied to a community of people at times described as “the Body of Christ” or even as God’s “vineyard”, or God’s “farm” (= tilled land - 2 Cor 3:9).

First there is growth in the sense of increase, or productivity, or in size or number. There is also the sense of a community so flourishing that it makes a noticeable impact on the community in which it is set. Perhaps this is part of what is meant in Acts 12:24 and 19:20 in which the word of God is described as continuing to “spread” more and more widely and gaining followers all the while. The word used derives from the same Greek word meaning “to grow” or to “increase” (αὐξάνω).

Second, we also speak of spiritual growth to describe what is a deepening of our faith and commitment to the Lord. And this can apply either to individuals, such as you and me, or to communities, such as our parish. This is the point intended by the writer of 2 Peter in telling his readers to “go on growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ” (3:18). In this sense, faith even “groweth exceedingly” (RV) or “is growing so wonderfully” (JB) (1Thessalonians 1:3, where the Greek word is from the same root - ὑπεραὐξάνω). And in the Letter to the Ephesians, we are told that “if we live by the truth we shall grow in all ways into Christ who is the head, by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together... So the body grows until it has built itself up in love”(4:15-16).

Growth can also refer to the process of becoming mature in our faith, so that we are stable and secure in it (**not** the same thing as “stagnant”!) rather than being forever at the mercy of the latest fads and fashionable ideas often deceitfully promoted as legitimate developments of Christian doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). The gift of discernment is a significant aspect of this growth into maturity.

Since our P.C.C. Away Day (a product of our “Growing Healthy Churches” programme) in 2005, comprehensive growth has been a formally recognised key



element of our parish agenda - growth in the depth and maturity of our faith and growth in the numbers of people we try to bring into the fellowship of the Church. Both kinds of growth have to be worked at simultaneously. You can't "do" one, and then think about "doing" the other! But it is only sensible that we should *begin* with ourselves.

There have been some encouraging efforts in this direction going on for a number of years. But this past year has seen some particular developments that deserve mention. We decided, after much prayer and discussion to run an Alpha Course for the first time. So we did the necessary preparation, planning and training, and put it on. It did not attract anyone from outside the Church, which with hind-sight is not as discouraging as it was then. We realised we had very much to learn about putting on such a course, but we did it in our own style, with each session beginning with a hot meal followed by a DVD presentation and discussion.

In the evaluation of the course, most participants felt they had benefited from it in terms of their personal faith, but just as important were the benefits in terms of the deepening of relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. This was evidence that there had been some movement in the direction of growth as a community of faith, and of a sense of solidarity with one another in the Body of Christ. One in-house Alpha course is not going to grow the community. This exercise needs to be seen as the beginning of the process, and another Alpha course should be planned while the memories are still reasonably fresh. The next one should aim to incorporate people who did the first course as leaders, and it should be advertised to attract people from outside the church, with a view to drawing them to Christ.

Following on from Alpha, we ran a subsequent course "This is My Body" in the Autumn. Almost all of the Alpha group, plus a few others, joined it. And this course really was a revelation to us all - me included - as we delved into the wonderful mystery of the Eucharist. It is a service which we all know so well. Its what we do, after all, Sunday after Sunday. And yet, this course enabled us to discover new depths of grace in it - knowledge, understanding, refreshment and a sense of our solidarity as members one of another within the Body of Christ. And so, it enhanced our collective understanding of what it means to be a community of faith. Things like this help us to grow and to become a more perfect expression of what the Church of God is meant to be.

In this year we have seen further growth in the preparation and presentation of seven candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation, and we hosted the service for the Deanery in November. We were able to offer a good standard of hospitality which was appreciated by all who attended from other churches. This capacity to offer Christian hospitality (also an integral part of the Alpha process) is a measure of the extent to which we at St John's identify ourselves as members of a community with an openness to others. This, too, is a sign of growth towards

Christian maturity inasmuch as it is possible only within a community which is at ease with itself and recognises shared values and aims in pursuit of a common mission.

So if there is just one conclusion to be drawn from this reflection on the past, and just one message I could choose to leave with you for the future, in this, my final proper contribution to an Annual Report, it is this: **Keep on growing!**

And do bear in mind that I say it to each one of us individually, as followers of Christ, and to all of us collectively, as members of the Body of Christ.

If we are faithful in this, God will grant the increase both in terms of the maturity of our faith and in terms of numbers as he adds to our community those whom he is calling to himself through us.

Fr Clay Knowles, SSC

Attendance

The average adult attendance for Sunday Morning Services during the month of October was 134. For Easter Day the attendance was 335 including 226 communicants. The adult attendance for Christmas Services was 674, with 244 communicants. These figures are substantially the same as those for 2007 and, while they show no decline, neither do they indicate the growth for which we are striving.

Bellringers

We strive to ring for the 10 a.m. Service every Sunday. We have however missed on an odd occasion due to Ringers being absent on holiday or sick. We were very sorry we were not to be able to ring out the Christmas Bells, but we do hope we will be able to ring for some of the special services during the coming year. A high point is the continued high standard of our Service ringing, the low point is the continued need for more learners. As we would like to be able to cover our holidays and sickness and still ring for the Church we need more people.

During the year we have rung for 10 Weddings, double last years numbers. An especially happy event for us was May 3rd when Shona (one of our ringers) was married here at St John's Church. Our sponsored ringing this year has raised over £70 for the Church Restoration Fund.

We are not the only ones to ring our Bells as we have had visiting ringers from Sussex and beyond and we have hosted the "Codgers" who are a local ringing group made up of ringers from more than one tower.

The bells and frame remain in good order. One extra effort this year was the replacement of the tenor bell clapper. This was paid for from the tower funds and the Church was able to reclaim the VAT.

Finally, our thanks to you all for your support again this year.

Doug Stewart

Choir

2008 has been a busy year for the choir, as we expanded our horizons with a major concert in the summer. Our numbers have stayed moderately static, although we saw the departure of Richard Sterne and Sheila Preston after the summer holidays, and the arrival of Louise Jessop in the summer and Josh Farrant and Grace Patterson in the autumn. We were all saddened by the news of the death of two choir stalwarts from the tenor line, Peter Mole and David Tredrea, both of whom gave a great deal to St John's Choir during their time with us.

Members of the choir attended the Festival at Chichester Cathedral, the last to be conducted by Dr Alan Thurlow before his retirement, and joined in the RSCM Singing Day held at church later in the year, run by Dr Thurlow's assistant, Mark Wardell. We've also maintained our links with Holy Innocents, Southwater, with members of their choir joining us for our Passion and Advent services, and a mass exodus across there for their 9 Lessons and Carols service just before Christmas.

The main event in the summer was the concert, which was run in conjunction with St. Wilfrid's School. Those members of the congregation who came to it were entertained with a wide variety of pieces, but it was once again disheartening to note that many people who had expressed their displeasure at a lack of concert in 2007 were conspicuous by their absence! Because my work commitments will see me away frequently during the first half of 2009, there won't be a summer concert this year.

The music group continued, with Tony, Sigrid, Claire and Sophie providing tuba, flute, violin and maracas, while Stella and Fiona Cross, Rebekah and Imogen Orchard and Alison Simpson formed a small group for the Nativity Service. The concert was aided by a band drawn from our talent pool, assisted by Mike and Tom Wood, Alex Durrell and Phillip Sear.

Carol Matthews stepped in to assist regularly with both practices and services, particularly when I was ill during the summer, and my thanks to her, to Sigrid Moiseiwitsch who led a November service at very short notice, and to Cherry Greveson who continues to supervise the robes.

I'd like to thank everyone for their enthusiasm and effort and look forward to continued growth next year, which will mark my 10th as St John's Director of Music.

Paul Simpson

Churchwardens

The wardens commend to you all the hard work put in by the officers, PCC members and lay people in our congregation who all have regular jobs keeping the church running, the services managed and the communications maintained. Parishioners should be aware of the many hours involved in repairing doors, locks, cabling, electronic items and tiling. Under this heading comes the building

of the crib scene, epiphany home and the Easter garden. The flower team do a tremendous job throughout the year keeping the church appropriately decorated and the bell ringers unfailingly meet to ring out the good news of St Johns.

Duty wardens and sidesmen regularly open up the church and prepare for services with good spirit and cheerfulness, not just for the regular masses but for the special services, including those for our deaf community. Our thanks to them.

This past year has seen good progress in our wider mission for 'Growing a Healthy Church' with the expansion of the youth group, the publicity machine and the preservation of the fabric.

Money raising ventures, as always, included two fairs and we are grateful to everyone who generated valuable cash both at Christmas and at the Summer fair.

These days, in every organisation, financial control is essential and therefore the budgetary forecasting and control that our treasurer's team maintains for St John's is invaluable. With an electoral role of about 200 people and an annual spend (including our proportion of the diocese quota) of £76,600, it means that on average, every church member needs to contribute £372 year through collections, gift aid, functions and refreshments.

This year we organised an Alpha course and whilst we were all apprehensive it was a great success both spiritually and through personal contact getting to know our fellow church family. Under Fr Clay's leadership, we then ran a Eucharist course which gave us a step by step understanding of every aspect of the sacrament.

Fabric work

Having completed a considerable amount of fabric repairs in previous years, this year enabled us to look at new Fire and Safety legislation where we have to address risk issues that could affect life and fabric. We have prepared a comprehensive document of measures necessary to minimise security, fire and safety risk which includes disability issues.

The fabric team has continued to keep the complex free of drain blocks, they have repaired heating control systems, saving considerable professional fees; they have designed the bookstall needs, liaised with the archdeacon on fabric matters and the listed perimeter wall repairs, following serious damage by a distracted car driver.

We consistently replace light bulbs, even those at high level. The team organised two working parties to maintain the churchyard and clear gutters.

Spiritually, the fabric work is far removed from devotion and yet because we all love St John's building it is our personal mission to work with God's guidance and blessing to ensure that our church is structurally in good shape for today's and future generations.

Graham Todd and John Orchard

Electoral Roll

In this, the second year of the current Electoral Roll, the numbers have increased from 204 to 210.

Alan Tipler, Electoral Roll Officer

Flower Team

We got carried away last year when the Team actually reached double figures, but since then, regrettably, we have had to say goodbye to Phyllis Hall when she and Stuart moved to be nearer to their family. Then Daphne Hubbard felt it was time to hang up her scissors and now we have half-lost Lisa as she has business and family commitments which, understandably, makes it difficult for her to commit to a regular rota at the present time.

While we receive a "float" from the Church enabling us easily to decorate the church with flowers weekly, in actual fact about half the cost comes from individual members of the Congregation who give money on special dates to them, using the list at the back of the church, either to celebrate a birthday, an anniversary or as a remembrance and it is good to be able to celebrate these dates together as a family. At Easter and Christmas the Congregation are particularly generous enabling us to make the most of decorating our Church when flowers are always more expensive.

Each year I put out a plea to see if anyone is interested in giving a helping hand with arranging the flowers, and I would please ask you to think about joining us. It really is not as difficult as it might look and you would not be left on your own; we would give you all the help you need, and it is a great feeling to see the results!

Kit Widdowson

Mission Group

The Mission group has met throughout 2008 and reported back as necessary to the PCC. It has continued to support the PCC sub-committees in the various activities following on from the Growing Healthy Churches initiative.

The administration of the St John's website has now been taken over by the Mission Group and it is now updated each month with Fr Clay's letter and the monthly calendar from the parish magazine. A facility for enquirers to email St John's through the website was reinstated at the end of 2008 and a review of the website content is under way.

The Mission Group has continued its work with the St John's charitable giving. The Lent 2008 charity supported was the WaterAid "Jars of Change for Jars of Water" appeal and raised £1734, including that reclaimable in respect of Gift Aid. Other charitable giving, including the sale of cards in aid of St Patrick's Night Shelter (now known as Lorica St Patrick's), support for the Knowles Tooth Centre and the monthly charities for the remainder of the year raised a further £2912, including £920 for Shelter, the charity supporting the homeless, which was chosen for

Christmas. The Christingle service raised £106.40 for The Children's Society and The Children's Society boxes collected £358.88.

The total income donated to charities during 2008 was £4646, 7% of general fund income and 6% of our total income.

As in previous years, members of the congregation were asked to offer suggestions for suitable charities to be supported in the monthly charity scheme for the coming year. The shortlist agreed by the Mission Group was submitted to the PCC for approval following which, in consultation with Kit Widdowson, a timetable for the 2009 charities is being drawn up. *Caroline Bates*

Monthly Charities

We continue to organize monthly collections at St. John's spread across home, local and international charities. Each year the Congregation are invited to list any charity which is special to them and from this collection, the Mission Group identify those that we will support during the following year. The Lent charity has always been chosen from the Mission Field while the December and Christmas Charity is particularly relevant for remembering the plight of the Homeless and each year the Congregation are particularly generous on both these occasions.

During 2008 St. John's sent the following donations:

January	Impact	£41.86
February/March (Lent)	WaterAid	£1,734.20
April	Terrence Higgins Trust	£33.30
May	Burgess Hill and District Toy Library	£92.06
June	Chestnut Tree Children's Hospice	£158.62
July	James Orchard Memorial Appeal	£527.00
August	Agape	£102.80
September	Chicks Making Memories	£66.50
October	Practical Action (Sedan)	£131.12
November	Bliss	£107.81
December/Christmas	Shelter Appeal for the Homeless	£920.73

Kit Widdowson

Parish Hall

The facilities of the Hall and the people who give up their time to keep it open continue to play a part in providing a welcome to people in the community and giving hospitality in a variety of ways. Hire of the Hall from groups such as the Noel Singers and the Bridge Club and the provision of refreshments during opening times provide a regular income. Others regular users include Toddler Groups, Support Groups and the Church Choir. Regular use over the years has made it necessary to refurbish the flooring and the recent renovation has made a great improvement in looks and safety. *Felicity Fernee*

Parish Magazine

The Parish Magazine continues to be produced every month and circulated around the congregation. Thanks to everyone who has contributed articles over the last year, however, I'm always on the look-out for items for the publication so if you have any ideas let me know. The deadline is always the 10th of the month and my contact details are in the magazine.

Over the past few months a parish profile section has been introduced for encouraging us to get to know people around the church. Again, if you would like me to include your details let me know.

Thanks to Val Gordon and her team for duplicating and collating the magazine every month, and also thanks to Graham Todd for managing the advertising by local companies.

Anne Gartrell

Parochial Church Council

The PCC has the responsibility of co-operating with the Vicar in realising the Mission Statement for the parish. It has full responsibility for the income and expenditure of St John's Church and it has maintenance responsibilities for the church building, the churchyard and the internal decoration of St John's Rectory.

Members of the PCC are either ex officio or elected at an Annual Parochial Church Meeting in accordance with the Church Representation Rules. During the year the following served as members of the PCC.

Ex Officio Members

<i>Incumbent</i>	The Rev. Canon Clay Knowles, SSC, Chairman	
<i>Churchwardens</i>	Mr. John Orchard	
	Mr. Graham Todd, Lay Chairman	
<i>Deanery Synod</i>	Mr. Jim Clapperton	Mr. Michael Hoddell
	Mrs. Claire Elliot	Mrs. Sigrid Moiseiwitsch

Elected Members

Mr. Bruce Abercromby, PCC Accountant	Mr. Robin Powell
Mr. Mac Atkinson	Mrs. Sheila Preston
Dr. Vince Elliot	Mrs. Rachel Staplehurst
Mrs. Felicity Fernee (co-opted)	Mr. Doug Stewart
Mr. David Gee	Mrs. Audrey Todd
Mrs. Carol Matthews	Mrs. Sylvia Wells
Mr. Nicholas Moiseiwitsch	

Appointed

Mr. Tony Cripps, PCC Secretary	Mr. Ray Gregory, PCC Treasurer
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Pastoral Care Visiting Team

Members of the team continue to meet once a month to report on visits to nursing homes, the housebound, sick and others known to us who welcome company from time to time. We undertake to make two calls in pairs by the next meeting, and aim to visit all on our 'books' once a month. We are always pleased to hear of anyone who would like to be seen either in their homes or if ill in hospital.

Some of us go with Fr Clay when he takes Holy Communion to residents of nursing homes, others keep the Church open when the Hall is closed. If asked, we have been known to undertake a bit of gardening for elderly householders.

This year several people left St John's, so we have been rather depleted in numbers, but hopefully others in the congregation will come forward and offer their services.

Dorothy Halsey and Phoebe Milne

Servers

The last year has seen a decline in our numbers as, sadly, a number of both adults and young people have dropped out. Stephen and Rebecca continue to be the mainstay of our team of young people and we are pleased that they have been joined recently by Graham, to whom we extend a warm welcome. Apart from our "front of house" duties there is some back room work involved. We usually arrive some 15 minutes before each service as, although the altar and platform areas are usually prepared in advance, we do need to check round and complete any outstanding tasks. We aim to be unobtrusive and avoid last minute and distracting fussing about before a service.

After each service we "clear up", including movement of furniture as required and then adjourn to the sacristy to wash up and put away the communion vessels etc, usually to a background of happy conversation from the choir in the adjacent vestry! Some members of our team are involved in cleaning the silver, maintaining our robes and ordering sacristy supplies. Janice continues to look after our roster - an increasingly difficult task in view of our reduced numbers and the need to cover major festivals such as Easter and Christmas. We have occasional social gatherings usually meeting in one of the local hostelrys for a relaxing meal.

We would welcome reinforcements and if you would like further details please approach Fr. Clay or any of the servers.

Charles Vigor

Services and Retreats

Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 08:00 and 10:00, with the main service on First Sundays being an all-age celebration.

The work of improving this all-age liturgy so as to make it more accessible is ongoing, with youngsters taking more responsibilities as they are able. With a number of young people and adults having attended the Diocesan "Critical Mass" celebration last Spring, we have taken on a couple of new ideas. From time to time, we have had visual power-point presentation to help the faithful engage more fully with the intercessions. And we have once or twice had a more visual and interactive offertory procession which has had great dramatic impact. The Deaf Community with their Chaplain continue to use St John's for their monthly area celebration of Mass.

Evening Prayer is said every Sunday evening with the First Sunday being a BCP choral Evensong. On the last Sunday of the month, Evening Prayer is followed by Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction. During the week, Mass is said most days and there is Daily Evening Prayer at 17:30 with Morning Prayer being said with the clergy of St Edward's at 07:30 in St Edward's Church.

Parents and Toddlers meet on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons for a simple service of prayer, praise and teaching. We share services with neighbouring parishes on a cyclical basis for our Walsingham Cell and the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. During the year, members of the congregation attended the pilgrimage to Walsingham in July and a silent conducted retreat at Glastonbury Abbey.

Standing Committee

This committee meets six times a year to plan the agenda for the PCC Meetings, and in extraordinary session, to transact the business of the PCC which cannot wait until the next meeting.

Members: Incumbent, Churchwardens, PCC Lay Chairman, Parish Administrator, PCC Treasurer, PCC Accountant and PCC Secretary.

St John the Evangelist, Church Walk, Burgess Hill

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Vicar: The Rev. Canon Clay Knowles, SSC

www.stjohnsbh.org.uk