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Dear All,

Sadly this edition of Arena has to come in a much simpler format....

### WHAT'S GOING ON?



I am sorry that you haven't heard very much from me over the last six weeks or so. Sadly, the eye problems that I shared with you in September have become even more challenging. Worse, I have got caught up in a mind boggling NHS system change which now demands that issues like cataracts/cornea dystrophy have to be 'approved' by a central health committee in Islington rather than just being processed by Moorfields 'as of right'.

Cataracts are now relegated to a non-urgent category so it is anyone's guess when an initial consultation will be arranged - let alone an actual operation. I was therefore very touched when the PCC made an offer to help with the cost of a private consultation. While this against all my principles (I really don't see why the wealthy should jump the queue), it is getting to the point where I can't do my job: even working with two magnifying glasses doesn't make it possible to cope with reading a full page of print! Leading our services is really stressful and even blowing up the size of the print doesn't guarantee the words are readable!

### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

You may remember that the late Queen called 1992 her 'Annus Horribilis' However we look back on 2022 - with Ukraine and Afghanistan, the death of the Queen and the resignation of two Prime Ministers very much in our minds - I suspect that 2022 will not be a year any of us wants to repeat either. Despite some glorious weather it has all seemed rather hard work. So we as a Church community are doing all we can to keep everything running - while planning for a rather better 2023!

It is also true that many members of the parish have been suffering similar difficulties. A whole crop of our younger families have had to cope with the transition of their children from primary to secondary school; we have had to say goodbye to a number of familiar faces who have left Islington - for work, larger homes and better schools elsewhere. And that is without the endless delays associated with completing the Organ Project which has unexpectedly now stretched into 2023.



## BUT IT'S NOT ALL GLOOM!!

Despite all these things St James' has done its best to 'carry on regardless'! We haven't managed to have any really big celebrations in 2022 although we have enjoyed the adult baptisms of Mohammad Bagheri and Anneke Pol and welcomed some new enquirers along the way. The 2022 season of the Islington Proms was a musical triumph and thanks to some careful budgeting even made a small profit. The numbers of people hiring the Church has shot up after the pandemic with rarely a day going by without someone playing here - which all helps to balance the books. Our new website is in preparation and thanks to Jill Hetherington's legacy, we have also been able to repair and re-stain our pews which has made a real difference. We look forward to the baptisms of Alice Holtom and Briceson Lambert shortly and we even have a wedding on New Year's Eve! Finally we wish Sergio and Cecy Munoz every blessing as they celebrate the religious element of their wedding, in Mexico City, on December 17th.

## 2023: A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS

So we are now planning for 2023 and hope to be able to get together far more than we have this year.

- In January we expect the organ to be returned to St James'! Once it is functioning in Swindon all the elements are taken apart again and the trucks will bring it back to Islington. We look forward to having it working sometime around Mardi Gras, February 14th.
- We are exploring May 7th as the day for the inaugural recital - which also happens to be the date of William Lambe's anniversary ... and the day after the King's coronation!
- Later that month we are looking forward to welcoming Bishop Joanne for her first visit to St James'. We have invited her to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation on May 21st (see below).
- On June 24th I will notch up 40years of ordained ministry! I am hoping that we might find some way of marking that, perhaps with some special music and other events in Church that week-end. That is at an early planning stage.
- All being well the Islington Proms will be able to run again in September 2023. The Proms Committee meets next week to make firm proposals to the PCC.

## CONFIRMATION 2023

Here at St James' we have invited children from the age of 8/9 - and also adults - to make their First Holy Communion as part of their reception into the life of the Church. Since January 2012 we have admitted nearly 60 people to the Table of the Lord. We would now like to invite anyone over the age of 18 to take the next stage which is Confirmation. Leaflets will be sent to all those who are eligible and we do hope that those who have not yet been Confirmed will take this opportunity to offer themselves to the bishop on May 21st and be admitted as fully fledged adult members of the Church. Please let me know asap if you are interested.

And do keep in touch!

Best wishes as ever  
John

### Donation to St James



May God bless every £1 we give so that St James' will be here, not just for today and for tomorrow, but for the future he wants to create.