

the arena

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newsletter

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NOVEMBER 2023

Dear All,

NOVEMBER HAS FINALLY ARRIVED...



WHILE THE LIFE OF A PARISH is far more important than any one individual, the retirement of the Vicar and their family is always a significant moment, especially after fourteen busy years. Leaving each area of our life in good shape has been the priority over the last few months and I am so glad that God has continued to encourage people to take on the roles necessary to keep the Church running well. You may not recognise all the names but that is a London Church for you!



Organiser in chief has been Churchwarden *Isabel Nisbet*. She has been in closest touch with the Diocese and she has also chaired the team writing the Parish Profile, the document which we hope will attract the very best person to come as the next Vicar. Many people have contributed to the text and it has been edited by *Kip Meek*. *Emma Crampton*, a very new member of the congregation, has arrived in the nick of time to help with the layout and design.



Vicky Bellamy our Parish Administrator has been a great support over the last eighteen months. In addition to her work alongside *Susan Sorensen* and *Tim Willis* keeping track of our finances, Vicky now takes over responsibility for the booking of the Church. With over 100 new bookings in 2023 (raising over £16,500) this is a crucial part of our income stream. Vicky will also oversee the move of the Parish Office from the Vicarage to the Hall in Prebend Street. To manage the physical care of the buildings themselves *Sharon McPherson* has recently joined the admin. team. Sharon will not only keep the Church open but also take on the supplies and repairs portfolio. Churches are like the Forth Bridge: there is always something that needs to be fixed!



AFTER A DECADE, it is time for the St James' website to be given a face-lift! Technology and design have moved on a lot in that time and *Thomas G* has brought all his skills in the industry to re-brand and expand what we are able to offer on line. Yet to be sorted out is the future of this Arena e-newsletter which goes to about 150 addresses each month and also what will replace our familiar Weekly News sheet.



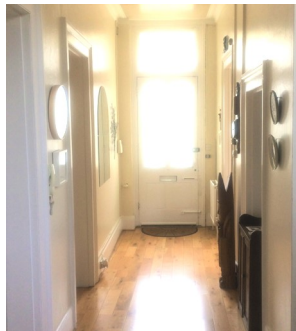
OUR WORSHIP lies at the heart of all that we do at St James'. We are so grateful that *Fr Jim Walters*, Chaplain at the LSE and *Fr Stephen Taylor* are able to celebrate the majority of our services here, at least until the end of February. And they will be well supported by *Mo Bagheri* and *Ethan Faloppa* who are fast learning how our sanctuary works. I hope they will also be able to help *John Roden* and his 'heavies' when the time comes to put up the new Christmas tree.



HARVEST this year was dedicated to prayers for all those affected by the medicanes and volcanic eruptions in Libya and Morocco. As a way of challenging our reluctance to give to people we don't know, we got the whole congregation to make and the fly paper aeroplanes across the Church! Thanks for all your generosity.



FIRST COMMUNIONS As usual a real delight to welcome more young people to the Table of the Lord on October 22nd. Much of their preparation is about good experiences...



BARELY ROOM to mention two other important events this month. First there was the good news that, as far as we know, the Diocese is not planning to sell the Vicarage and replace it with another one. They have not been able to find anything suitable. The other good news is the work on St James' Gardens where - at last - the overgrown bushes have been removed and recycled paving blocks are being laid to extend the amount of hard standing outside Church. It will be so much more open and welcoming.

THE PARTING OF FRIENDS Finally the time has now come for Maria, Sinead and I to leave St James'. Our final Sunday will be November 26th, the Feast of Christ the King. Vicky Bellamy our administrator and the Churchwardens are currently planning three celebrations:

- 1 Parish Party in the Church Hall, 6.30-9.30pm on Tuesday 21st November. Please RSVP.
- 2 A 'Book of Memories', pictures and messages which recall our time together since 2009. Contributions to this are warmly encouraged - in whatever format suits you best.
- 3 A final Parish Mass at 5pm on Sunday 26th November. This will be a big service with a special choir and the Mass will be followed by refreshments in Church. Everyone welcome.

WHAT MORE CAN WE SAY except 'thank you' for all you have done to make it possible for us to walk the pilgrim way over these last fourteen and a half years. There are so many memories of things which we have tried - some of which actually worked out! Of course we have made mistakes and we are very sorry for all of those but what pleases me most is that St James', Islington has been able to welcome such a cross section of our society through its doors - celebrities, people of every race and nation, singles and families, those who came and stayed and those who made their home for the short time they were in London. We are a Parish Church where we have no other connection with each other except our willingness to respond to the call of Jesus to be his friends. It has been wonderful to be here, and of course it has been challenging too! But I do pray that you will stay on and give your new brilliant Vicar your love as they take you on the next stage of the journey that God has in mind.

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.