

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING REPORTS 2010 - 2011

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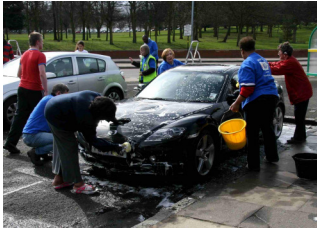
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PARISH REPORTS

Vicar's Report on 2010 – Revd Andy Jolley

The pictures show a number of the events many of us got involved with in 2010



The Easter Car Wash – this time without crowds of football supporters – though the Easter Car Wash will be followed by an Easter Pageant again in 2011.

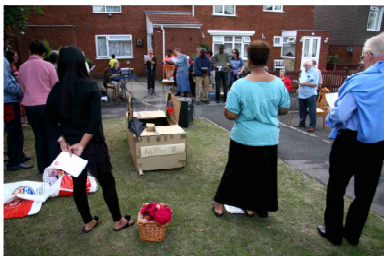
Fun Day at Yew Tree School – record crowds for Aston of over 1300 people – too many in reality

for the cramped site. We were also part of the Aston Community Festival – probably the last for some time with the imminent end of Aston Pride. With some of the Nechells churches we once again finished with the fun day at St Matthew's school in July. 2011 will see us back at Manor Park School for a fun day at the end of April, but the future of the Nechells Fun Day is uncertain due to funding difficulties.



The Aston Abseil raised lots of money for local youth work projects, with 77 abseilers in total. Many were even younger than Bill Perry, but not many came down faster!

The Parish Weekend was a fantastic celebration of our three churches coming together. We were well fed by the staff at Hothorpe Hall, and well taught by Bishop Andrew. There was much love and laughter and we have booked ourselves back into Hothorpe for another weekend in June 2012.



The Open Air Services around the parish were more popular than ever – though a strange cardboard car seemed to keep turning up ...

The party for **New Wine** headed north to Newark for 2010 – and will return there for 2011. It was great to be able to welcome some day visitors – though many of them will be coming for the week in 2011.



There's a much used phrase about football being "a game of two halves". For me, 2010 felt very much like that. The first half of the year was filled with excitement, growth and progress, culminating in our first ever parish weekend away. However, the second half of the year felt much more of a struggle, with difficult pastoral situations, key people being out of action for various reasons and ending with the closure of Aston Link and issuing redundancy notices for our Advice Centre staff and Deanery Missioner.

2010 saw some continued growth beyond the new heights of usual Sunday attendance reached in 2009, with over 200 people (adults and children) in our churches on a typical Sunday. The rate of growth was slower than 2009 though, and growth was mainly at Aston Parish Church. Nevertheless, with losses from death, illness and people moving out of the area, continued growth represents a considerable achievement. There have also been significant developments and growth in each of the five areas represented in our values.

Encountering God - Our Sunday services aim to offer space to meet with God, to sing His praise, to tell stories of what He has been doing, to hear from Him and to be resourced to serve Him. Hence it is always encouraging to see more people coming to them – and discouraging when people stay away. One of my personal highlights is leading MORE on Sunday evenings. MORE is an event with an opportunity for more extended worship, more time to listen to God together, more interactive teaching and more time for prayer ministry than is available at the Sunday morning services. It is joy also to help people from each of our three churches come to worship together each week.

Doing Evangelism – I have been really encouraged by the numbers of people on our Alpha courses – and also that we continue to be able to run three a year (one each term). Much credit must go to Beverly Watson and the teams of leaders and helpers that she continues to motivate. Healing on the Streets is now an established feature, both during the football season with Villa fans, and also at community fun days. During the Prophecy Training Day that we hosted in the autumn, several teams also went out “Treasure Hunting” looking for people that the Holy Spirit had given us clues to find so that we could take God’s blessing to them where they were. The Lord also keeps bringing new people to our churches.

Creating Community – Our congregations are comprised of a wonderful rich mix of cultures, and it has been good to celebrate some of those over the past year. I look forward to our doing more of this, and so demonstrate to the wider community the wonder of our unity in Jesus Christ. Our attempts to foster community cohesion in the parish must emerge from this loving community that we have amongst ourselves (which in turn flows from our being invited into the loving community of the Trinity). Our worship together, eating together (it is great to see people from all our churches at the First Sunday shared lunches), and the fellowship shared at Hothorpe Hall and New Wine have all helped in this.

Becoming Disciples – Much of our work with the Diocesan Transforming Church initiative (ably supported by Bishop Maurice Sinclair) has been contributing to our growing as disciples. We have focused particularly on developing a culture of growing and becoming as followers of Jesus, engaged in his mission. Early in the year we agreed several goals and have been working since towards their implementation.

- a) **To continue welcoming newcomers to our churches and helping them to feel they belong to our congregations.** We will soon all be involved with a course that we have identified called *Everybody Welcome* to help us do this.
- b) **To increase the numbers and capacity of leaders of all ages in our churches.** Since September we have been running an adult and a youth version of *Growing Leaders*, a one year course with 14 adults and 9 young people as participants.
- c) **To grow gifts in music within the congregations which will enhance worship for all.** A Guitar Club has helped greatly with this at St James and Aston Parish Church, as has further development of the Aston Parish Church Band, which now plays once a month.
- d) **Develop our capacity for youth and children’s ministry.** This remains our most challenging goal, and one with which we have been struggling. Some progress has been made, and we are exploring a couple of exciting possibilities to move things on more quickly.
- e) **To work towards every new Christian having 1:1 mentoring.** Some good progress is being made and we are also developing our mentoring abilities and capacity with the *Growing Leaders* courses.
- f) **To increase the number of people involved in ministry in our churches.** This is growing, though there are too many people who are over-stretched, and some significant “holes” with children’s ministry and our finances, for which we need to find the people that God has placed amongst us.

All Involved - As I have just written, within our Transforming Church goals we are trying to help people find ways to get more involved in serving. Thank you to everyone who serves in any way in or through our churches. Following Jesus is about being a participant, not a spectator. It has been great to see people moving on from Alpha into Triangle Groups. If you aren’t involved in one of these groups, they are a great way to get involved and work out and apply Jesus’ teachings to everyday life. They also enable us to develop deep, honest relationships to be accountable to other followers of Jesus about your life and lifestyle. They are also good places to discover and foster the gifts that God has given to us.

The reports in this booklet show just some of the ways that people are involved in and through our churches week by week. There are many more ways either unreported, or (as yet) unimagined. Feel free to find them!

A few words of thanks and other thoughts about our churches

St Matthew's - Great thanks go to Bill Perry for serving as sole church warden for the past year, and also to Joan, Hilary and Geoff, who enable so much mission and ministry in Nechells. Thanks too for all that Bill, Joan and Marcia have done alongside the clergy to strengthen links with our church schools, St Matthew's and St Clement's. St Clement's still needs prayers as the school seeks to escape from special measures.

In the past year there has been some progress on resolving the responsibilities of ourselves and the Diocese for St Matthew's building, and on making improvements to the Church Hall. To realise my hope of St Matthew's being "a church of the community, in the community, for the community" we need to be hosting more ministries, groups and lettings in the building (which will also generate income to balance the books). Hopefully the proposals being explored about Food Bank will help with this.

St James - Thanks go to Cephas and Ruel for serving as church wardens for the past year. Thanks too to Jackie, our Church Centre Co-ordinator, who has done a fantastic job in bring new groups of regular users of the church premises in the past year. We really missed her at the end of the year when she broke her wrist, and are relieved to have her fully back at work now. Thanks also to Maureen who masterminded a fantastic Caribbean evening among many other things. A key challenge for St James is to draw new people into positions of responsibility in the church and to foster effective ministry with children and young people.

The major event at the end of the year was Birmingham City Council's decision to end funding of the Advice Centre. As a result, the Management Committee issued redundancy notices to the paid staff just before Christmas. The Centre has served the local community for over 30 years, and we hope to continue in some way – though how is not yet clear. Making the staff redundant has also unearthed some tricky problems. Much praise is due to David Fletcher for bearing a heavy load during this ongoing season of uncertainty.

Ss Peter & Paul - Thank you once again to the church wardens, Gloria and Joe, the triangle group leaders, the readers, the finance team, children's and youth leaders, the welcome team, musicians, singers ... Like the other churches, a challenge is drawing new people into these roles, especially with children and finance.

Work on the church fabric seems a never-ending task, and Nigel Cripps deserves special praise for his dedicated work in fundraising and project management. After a year's, negotiating an even larger grant from English Heritage, the next contract for work on the church exterior will soon be signed and we can expect scaffolding around the tower for the summer. The next priority for most of us is upgrading the floor, heating and seating inside the church, and I am glad that a dedicated fund has now been established for this purpose.

Staff - *It is a huge privilege to lead our talented and dedicated staff team, and I am also really grateful for the fantastic support we receive from our office staff. We are truly blessed in the range of gifts and abilities we enjoy here. I was delighted with Fiona's appointment to her new role in Bradford in October at the end of her curacy – and to see the fantastic support from all the people from Aston and Nechells who went to her licensing. Our loss is truly Bradford's gain.*

Some final thoughts – *With the redundancies at the Advice Centre and the closure of Aston Link, our ministry with the poorest people in our community has been much diminished. Such ministry is not an option but an essential part of what God calls us to in sharing the gospel and being good news in our community. With these difficult economic times, this imperative needs to be added to all that we doing as part of Transforming Church. I trust that you are as inspired and passionate as I am about all that the Lord is doing and will do in us, among us and through us. It is a great privilege to be your vicar.*

Associate Vicar's Report - Revd Jenny Arnold

The oversight of the preaching and leading of services is one of my specific responsibilities and I want to thank our Readers and all who serve God in this ministry. The many different styles and gifts gives a richness to our services and we are blessed in Aston and Nechells. I am grateful for the commitment of our preachers and leaders who take their responsibility in this area so seriously both in terms of their preparation and their reliability. On behalf of all the congregation members, - a big thank you and "well done good and faithful servant". Over the year we looked at the book of Philippians and it's theme of Joy that is found in our union with Christ rather than on external circumstances. In the autumn of 2010 we looked at men and women of God from the Old Testament and this was followed at the beginning of 2011 by a short series on social justice. We are now beginning a series on the book of 2 Corinthians which will help us when we are facing suffering as we learn the secret of God's power made perfect in our weakness. During the year we had a training evening for leading intercessions and reading the bible in church, and following this we now have a bigger group sharing this ministry. Do please speak to one of the clergy if you would like to be included in leading prayers or reading the bible at any of our 3 churches.

As I look back over the past year there are so many things that have happened, - that it's hard to select any for special mention. But I'll have a go!

- The Parish weekend at Hothorpe Hall - God's wonderful provision of all we needed... and even some things we didn't think we needed like the early morning wake up - thank you Glenys! And, as Bishop Andrew said, we'd never thought before of the story of Elijah and prophets of Baal from the bull's point of view! June 15 – 17 2012 will be the next Parish weekend at Hothorpe Hall, - please note the dates.
- The Transforming church initiative. The goals we've set have helped to focus our aims and also highlighted the areas where we need to make further progress, - particularly relating to children and welcoming our many newcomers so they soon feel part of the church and are growing as disciples.
- The opportunities for mission through our contacts with schools. We are now doing weekly assemblies in both our church schools in Nechells and it's a real privilege to have such freedom to speak about Jesus to so many children – most of whom have no other opportunity to hear about him. Do please pray for St. Matthew's and St. Clement's schools.
- Closures. As I'm sure will be mentioned elsewhere there has been the pain of endings over the last year. Aston Link finished with a Christmas meal after 11 years of serving some of the most marginalised in our community. And currently we are considering finishing Big Breakfast after 4 years. Finishing is always difficult and yet things have to die so that new things can be born and I'm excited about the possibilities of an Aston and Nechells Foodbank opening this year to help people in crisis with food as well as Messy Church recapturing the original vision of Big Breakfast to reach out to families in Nechells with the Gospel.

Thank you for your fellowship and friendship, - and I look forward to what this coming year holds for us all.

Curate's report – Rev Beverly Watson

2010/11 has been a good and fulfilling year for me. I've enjoyed the fact that this is now my third year as a curate in Aston and Nechells, and I now feel much more established and 'part of the furniture' here. It has been good to extend my experience of the nuts and bolts of ordained ministry – preaching, leading services, baptisms, weddings, funerals – so that I now more feel more competent as a minister. Thanks again are due to Jenny for her wise and committed training of me over the past year.

I've also enjoyed the opportunity to explore and develop new things. Alpha has taken on new forms, with a morning group at St. Matthew's, an autumn group at St. James', and now a bilingual Punjabi/English course at Aston Parish Church. I've enjoyed working with new teams, and seeing a variety of different people come to Alpha and take steps of faith - and in some cases ask for baptism and confirmation.

The music across the parish has been another area which I've been particularly involved with over the past 12 months. The 'Guitar Club' drew in a number of new people, and most of the group are now playing regularly in our services. The band has also drawn in new folk, and I've enjoyed the diversity of instruments we now have. I hope that we'll be able to develop the range of music we can play in the coming year. Thanks to everyone who's put in so much hard work over the past year.

Growing Leaders has been another new development for me, and I've learned a lot through the CPAS material, and through the people who've come on the course. The monthly meetings at St. James' have helped us explore issues such as 'character', 'call' and 'competence' in leadership; and the two days away at Berkswell have deepened trust and understanding between us. I hope we will be able to run the course again in the autumn, and that it will provide others with the opportunity to grow in leadership.

I'm now working with others on the possibility of setting up something called 'Messy Church' – an after school event for parents/carers/children from St. Matthew's Church. I ran a similar kind of event in my last church, and it was a great way of drawing people into church who wouldn't have otherwise come. So watch this space to see how that develops....!

And a big thank you again to all of you at Aston Parish Church, St. James', and St. Matthew's. Thank you for your ongoing support, care, and understanding - both towards me and my family. We feel loved and cared for here.

Triangle Groups - Revd Jenny Arnold

Triangle groups are the main structure in our 3 churches for both pastoral care of individuals and also for growth as disciples. We would love to see every member of our churches in a triangle group, and if you would like to join a group do please speak with myself or Andy or Beverly. The triangle group leaders play a crucial role in caring for their group members and we are blessed to have such committed and faithful leaders, - thank you. I always appreciate our triangle group leaders meetings on a Sunday night bimonthly where we share and pray together. Those meetings confirm to me the crucial role that the groups play in the life of the church. Since last year there has been no change in the number of triangle groups meeting but there has been some change in the members and leadership in some of the groups. As we think towards next year, - we continue to work on helping those finishing alpha to quickly feel part of a triangle group as sometimes that transition can be a difficult one resulting in people dropping out of a group.

Diocesan Synod Report – Revd Andy Jolley

The Diocesan Synod met three times in 2010. In many ways, Finance dominated the business for the year – though without reaching any new conclusions. The March Synod was in a church school in Colleshill. This was very fitting, as the first main item of business was about church schools – looking at how they can support the mission and ministry of the church and how other schools can now become affiliated to the Church of England. The other main business concerned Common Fund - the amount churches pay into Diocesan Funds which is then used to pay for clergy and other costs. A working party had been looking at alternative methods for calculating how much each church should pay and the Synod was asked to give feedback on these options. A lively debate ensued! The final minor item of business was to agree the annual "Malawi motion", asking parishes to provide prayer and financial support to our link Dioceses in Malawi.

The July meeting was held at St John & St Peter's Ladywood (as it had been in 2008 and 2009). As usual, this Synod was taken up with the business of receiving the annual reports for 2009 and agreeing the budget for 2011. The approved budget would increase clergy stipends by 1.5% plus £300 from 1 April 2011 and increase Common Fund by only 0.09%. There was also a full report from General Synod and the progress on women bishops by Paula Gooder (one of our lay representatives on General Synod, and one of the working party on women bishops). The Synod was also memorable in that it was the first in a very long time to receive a motion from a Deanery Synod. This came from the Central Birmingham Deanery and was about encouraging the abolition or reduction in statutory fees for church weddings. The motion was sympathetically received, but massively defeated (only the proposer and seconder voted in favour of it!)

The November Synod was held at Balsall Heath Church Centre (which has now had solar panels fitted to the roof to generate electricity). The Synod began with the licensing of Revd Rhiannon Jones as the Transforming Church Co-ordinator (showing the Diocese is truly putting energy and money behind the initiative). There was then a presentation about the first year of the Transforming Church process. This was followed by a motion about Common Fund for 2011. Sadly, many synod representatives seemed to have forgotten what was discussed in March. They also did not seem to grasp the effect of increasing the “fixed element” (the amount churches pay for each full time vicar, after which a calculated amount depending on congregation size and wealth is added) to £12,000 – so the motion was easily passed. (An immediate impact on the Aston Deanery of this was an increase in the cost of the Deanery Pioneer Missioner post to each of the Deanery churches, such that we have sadly chosen to end that post at the end of 2010). Happily the motion also asked for continued work to review the formula for calculating Common Fund. After the refreshment break, Bishop Graham Cray gave an encouraging presentation about Fresh Expressions of Church.

Aston Deanery Synod report – Nigel Cripps

The synod met on two occasions and focused on,

- Transforming church
- Women in the episcopate

A great deal is going on across the Deanery in response to the Transforming Church initiative but there are common threads about developing leadership and welcoming and retaining new members.

The Church of England will soon be consecrating women bishops and nationally Deanery Synods have been asked to consider the process. The focus was upon the practical matter of developing a Code of Practice that would enable another Bishop to deal with a church that disagrees with being led by a woman Diocesan bishop and visa - versa

The Synod was asked to provide a briefing to the Diocesan Synod members. The brief given was,

- Support the Church of England continuing in its tradition of being all inclusive to those from a Protestant and Catholic tradition
- The proposed Code of Practice to help those unable to accept women bishops must be legally binding and implemented in all dioceses.
- The code of practice needs to be understandable and practical. Please keep it simple.
- Wish to see the Code of Practice as soon as possible, it needs to be discussed and should be circulated in draft form.
- Question how a Diocesan Bishop can be given authority and then give it away to the Bishop serving some churches in that Diocese.

PCC report – Nigel Cripps

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) met 6 times during the year, one of these was an extraordinary meeting. The Standing Committee met on 3 occasions.

Colin Howell was appointed the Treasurer and co-opted to the Council. Beth Jolley was invited to join the Council as an observer; Beth represents Aston Deanery on the Bishop’s Youth Council

The principal business transacted was;

Transforming Church – A significant proportion of the meeting time has been devoted to Transforming Church and the various developments associated with this. The developing leadership courses (youth and adult) have been particularly successful and it is hoped they will be repeated.

Finances – There are mandated requirements about the timely delivery of audited accounts and how these are presented. The 2009 accounts was delayed partly by the auditor experiencing problems with a business restructuring – downsizing and our continuing problems with modifying the accounting systems inherited from the three separate parishes. This led to the Standing Committee having to meet in August and followed by an extraordinary General meeting to approve the accounts.

The Aston Parish Church administrator is now dealing with entering the financial data onto a computer database. This has significantly improved the flow of financial information and for the first time has enabled the new parish to prepare a budget.

Supporting the poorest in this area – Towards the end of 2010 it became obvious that Aston Link and St James Advice Centre would be unable to continue. Public funding was not forthcoming so they had to close.

Aston Link – This was a joint project with Lichfield Road Methodist Church and based at the Methodist Church. Following the closure of the Methodist Church, Aston Link continued to use the premises but this arrangement finished in August when the premises were sold to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Aston Link did not fit with their proposed use of the building as a Regional Centre, consequently the shop closed at the end of August. The twice per week lunch club transferred to Aston Parish Church but this ended at Christmas.

St James Advice Centre – After 38 years the Advice Centre closed at the end of January this year. This followed receipt of a letter from Birmingham City Council advising that funding would cease at the end of March. The Standing Committee had two difficult meetings about this. Firstly the Committee decided that there was no option but to close the Advice Centre and make the staff redundant. The second meeting had to deal with some difficult residual issues associated with the closure. Fortunately the advice centre has been able to continue on much reduced hours using volunteers.

Support for the poorest – The PCC is extremely concerned that the two principal supports offered to the poorest residents had closed due to funding cuts. We have to find new ways of meeting this need and the idea of a food bank is currently being explored.

Summary - a busy and eventful year.

DIAL 2010 – Cliff Griffin

This is the telephone (and email) prayer chain for the 3 churches. We have once again prayed about a range of things - mainly for healing, but sometimes for other things too. Anyone can join - just phone me with your number (Mine is 240.7853) and I will happily add you to the list. Likewise, if you need prayer for anything - work, home, family, health, indeed any situation, just get in touch.

Electoral Roll Reports – Vanico James, Jackie Burton and Bill Perry

Aston Parish Church - The Electoral Roll for 2009/10 was 133. The Electoral Roll for 2010/11 is 135 (60 residents and 75 non-residents).

St James - The Electoral Roll for 2010/11 was 73. The Electoral Roll for 2011/12 is 77.

St Matthew's Church - The Electoral Roll for last year 2010/2011 stood at forty four (44). Seven of those on the roll are no longer worshipping here and/or have moved away from Nechells and have therefore been removed. However, we have one new member and so the roll for 2011/12 is now back to thirty eight (38).

Overall, therefore, the Parish total has remained at 250.

Alpha – Revd Beverly Watson

Alpha has continued to develop over the past year, and I'm particularly aware of the Lord's hand in that. Over the past 12 months we have run a morning course at St. Matthew's, an evening course at St. James', and now a bilingual Punjabi/English one at Aston Parish Church. A big thank you to all who have helped lead those courses so faithfully over the past year: Ricky Jolley, Glenys Veitch, Vikki Cosgrove, Natalie Ward, Flo Howells, Paul Lacey, Giyanow Kaur and Resham Kaur.

We've seen 20-30 or so people attending Alpha regularly over the past year, some of whom have then asked for baptism and confirmation. Some are now committed members of Triangle groups, or other groups which provide nurture and support. Our aim is that every new Christian in the church will have a mentor, and this is now beginning to happen.

A big thank you too to the Triangle groups for their ongoing support of Alpha in terms of hospitality and prayer – vital ingredients of the Alpha course. And please continue to pray for vision and direction for the coming year.

Growing Leaders – Rev Beverly Watson

Implementation of the CPAS 'Growing Leaders' course has been a new development across the parish in the past year. The goal of the course is to help people to grow in leadership across the whole of their life – at home, at work, in the community and in church.

Andy Jolley and I have led the course with 14 participants, including people from each of our 3 churches. The course seeks to enable each person to grow in character, competence and a clear understanding of their call as disciples of Jesus and leaders of others. We have been looking at issues such as firm foundations for leadership, the skills needed to lead, and how we keep faithful in leadership over the long term.

We meet on each third Thursday of the month at St. James' church, and have also had two days away together at Berkswell in the Coventry Diocese. Each member of the course has a personal mentor who they meet up with once a month, and who is helping each of the participants to put into practice what they're learning on the course.

'Growing Leaders' runs for a 12 month period, and we hope to be able to offer the course again in September with a new group of budding leaders.

Thank you to all who have been willing to take part as we've run the course for the first time. Thanks also to those people who've been mentors this year, and supported people on the course so wisely and faithfully.

Community Fun Days – David Fletcher

This report has in previous years been written by Fiona Robertson. Our fun days in Aston during the last three years have owed a huge amount to her efficiency, organisation, and willingness to get things done. We owe her a huge debt of gratitude.

Even Fiona, however, would not have anticipated the amazing number of people who turned out for our first community fun day of 2010, on 3 May 2010, at Yew Tree School. It was just as well that some of our visitors were driven away by heavy showers, because coping with 1,400 people stretched us to the very limits of our resources. We had the disadvantage of a cramped site and only just enough volunteers, and the team cooking hot food were more or less besieged (though never quite overrun) by hungry customers. But even with this level of pressure, it was wonderful to have opportunities to explain to people why we were providing these activities for them.

At the end of June, we once again took part in the annual Aston Pride fair, the last one of its kind. It was (thankfully) a less manic afternoon for the volunteer helpers, not only because the event itself was less crowded but also because our tent was slightly off the beaten track. As usual, the face-painting was the most popular attraction, and we gave away plenty of free literature and had some good conversations.

The third community fun day of the summer was at Nechells in July. Apart from the very blustery weather, this was a really good occasion, much appreciated by everyone. 1,386 people came, from all parts of the very diverse Nechells community; there was a good atmosphere, and good participation from the other local churches. As so often with these fun days, we blessed others with all the free things which we provided, but were richly blessed in return.

None of these events could have taken place without the help of a large number of enthusiastic volunteers from our parish and other churches, well over a hundred in total for the three events. We appreciated their commitment - and look forward to welcoming even more volunteers for this year's Aston fun day, which will be on Saturday 30 April at Manor Park School. There might also be one on 9 July in Nechells, if the churches there are prepared to fund it.

Healing on the Streets – Revd Andy Jolley

During the football season the Healing on the Streets team have offered prayer before 12 of Aston Villa's home matches (all weekend ones) outside Aston Parish Church. In total we have prayed for over 100 people or situations (though some were repeat "customers"). Many people continue to walk past us, although often with friendly banter, and it is frustrating seeing many with obvious physical conditions decline the offer of prayer. Very often we pray for friends or relatives of the fans. It is also common to pray for people's worries, grief, or problems with family breakdown or redundancy. Others ask for healing from physical conditions.

With many people being regular visitors to Villa Park, we have been able to see many of these people again. It is always encouraging to hear of situations or conditions improving after a prayer. For example, we have prayed on several occasions for one man's broken foot, and he has experienced relief from pain and his walking has noticeably improved. For tense "Derby" matches, we have also prayed for a peaceful atmosphere, and have been delighted to hear later from the police that there has been no trouble.

The team were also at the community fun days at Yew Tree School and St Matthew's school, and also the Aston Community Festival. At these three events, we prayed for a total of 66 people, many of them from Muslim families.

It has been encouraging too to share with others who are involved in healing on the streets. Many of our team have also joined with the Healing on the Streets teams from other churches to offer prayer outside St Martin's in the Bullring on the afternoon of the first Saturday of each month. It is another challenging environment with other faith groups also seeking to engage the shoppers. However, it is much easier to encourage people to sit down on a chair and receive prayer when they are not rushing to Villa Park with their friends, and it is rare that none of the six chairs is not in use. On most of these days, at least one person decides to commit or recommit their lives to Jesus having sat down in one of the chairs.

Following the Prophecy Training day we held at Aston Parish Church in the autumn we have been incorporating treasure hunting into our practice, asking God for clues about the people he specifically wants us to pray for. Finding one of these people is especially encouraging, and our accuracy is improving with practice.

I would like to thank the regular team members, who are drawn from each of our three churches: David Fletcher, Bill Perry, Joan Perry, Hilary Miller, Geoff Miller, Herma Lewis, Ricky Jolley, Gloria Powell, and myself. We are also joined by Belinda Wadsworth from BI church. We need to keep learning more of the privilege we have in the authority that Jesus has shared with us. We would welcome others who would like to join us in this exciting ministry. Thanks too to Joe Lewis, who kept us supplied with hot drinks during the cold weather of the football season, and also been available to welcome the considerable number of people who take advantage of Aston Parish Church being open to have a look inside.

ACT Schools Assemblies – Ivor Lewis

The Aston Churches Together team has developed assemblies for Christmas and Easter to take to our schools in Nechells and Aston.

Over the last couple of years the team has grown in number which has allowed us to be more flexible in the sort of drama we can do. The Easter themes was focused on the characters around the foot of the cross and the Christmas took in the impact of journey to Bethlehem and Jesus' birth for Joseph, Mary and 'their donkey'...



The ACT Team in action

The schools performed in over the last 12 months include Manor Park, Aston Tower, Mansfield Green, Deykin Avenue, Yew Tree Community School, St Matthew's, St Clements' and Prince Albert's J/I. At the time of writing we are putting together our Easter assembly.

New Wine '10 – Revd Andy Jolley

Last year, for the first time, we went north rather than south, to the New Wine North and East Summer Conference in Newark, Lincolnshire. It was our largest party to date (65 for the week and 12 day visitors) and for the first time we were able to welcome people from the parish coming as day visitors. A couple of the young people (Catherine Fletcher and Beth Jolley) helped out on the NW children's teams. We were also able to share something of what God has been doing in Aston and Nechells in one of the main evening sessions. We also helped provide the prayer stations in that venue for the whole week with two different displays. As ever, God did some amazing things with many of the people who went, and the weather was much better than in 2009. Sixty people are already booked up for 2011, but it is not too late to join them.

Website – Stephanie Fletcher

Having been in the administrator post for over a year now, I am now more confident in editing the website and keeping it up-to-date. At busy times of the year this was more difficult to keep on top of, but I have been able to put up photos from recent events, such as the Church weekend away in June and the Abseil and Garden party event. I have also started to learn how to put up downloadable documents on to the website. This means that I am aiming to put this Annual Report up on the website, in case anyone would prefer to have an electronic copy. Another thing that I will be aiming to do this year, with a large amount of support from Ally Butterwick and Stuart Middleton, is to start putting up the talks from each service at Aston Parish Church, so that people can listen to them who may not have been in the service that day. Watch this space for that.

Thanks must go to Stuart Middleton and Andy Jolley, who have both been incredibly helpful in suggesting what has to be changed and how best to go about it, and to all those who have pointed out things on the website itself that needs changing or have submitted articles to put on the website. Feedback and suggestions are always welcome.

ASTON PARISH CHURCH REPORTS

Youth Worker's Report – Ivor Lewis

Introduction

My work over the last 12 months has been divided up into two key areas.

Firstly to continue to...

- a) Build new forms of church among the young people of Aston which will enable them to make connections with God in their own contexts;

And secondly to...

- b) Undertake youth and community development work in the neglected Witton area of Aston and re-establish the Witton Community Centre as a community resource.

This years report looks at progress over the last 12 months.

OUR WORK IN ASTON

Young People's Discipleship

After New Wine last summer, I felt that we needed to look at our youth discipleship. A key reason was that whilst the work was encouraging there it was growing more difficult to manage the needs of a group where the youngest person was 11 years of age and the oldest was 23. I felt that the best way to meet the needs of both would be to have two groups. The young people aged 14+ were invited to attend Growing Leaders and to start a new mid-week cell group based at the Salvation Army (on the weeks in between) and those young people aged 11-16 yrs would continue to meet on Sunday mornings. There is some overlap and transition between the two groups for those young people in the 14-16 yrs.



Pancakes at Cell Group



Growing Leaders Training Session

Hope Unleashed...

11-16 yrs group is been run by Paul Lacey and myself. We are using 'the Grid' which is a Scripture Union resource. We are currently averaging 4-6 young people and are planning to re-establish social activities and trips out.

Youth Cell/ 'Growing Leaders' course (Youth Edition)

The 'Growing Leaders' course (Youth Edition) is for 14+ who want to grow in their ability to lead. We have a consistent group of 9 young people on the course and to date we have completed session 6 of 8 (including two weekends at the Pioneer centre). This has been done in partnership with the Salvation Army. A number of these young people are helping to run some of the youth clubs there and some of them will be helping out in children's church.

The Lounge

'The Lounge' is our bi-monthly event for young people aged 11+. Over the last year we ran an event at Christmas focussing on Jesus becoming one of us and as part of our Lent session we looked at how we might spend time with God. A real bonus this year has been the discovery that Adam Lacey has a real talent for putting together worship visuals and he will be helping some of the young people to develop these skills in as part of the Lounge and for our community Fun Day on 30th April.



The Lounge...

The dates for 2011 are

- 5th March (Lent)
- 22nd April (Good Friday)
- October (Light/Darkness)
- December (Christmas)

Other Worship Events

The Catalyst Youth Worship Events organised by the Diocese are taking place at the Cathedral. We are planning to take a group along. The dates for this year are

- 12th March
- 7th May
- 23rd July

I would like to say a huge *thank you* to Paul Lacey who has been a massive support and a real co-worker in this ministry.

The Salvation Army (Aston)

A key part of 'Building church around young people in Aston' has been working with the Salvation Army to establish youth ministry with young people from Manor and Salford Park. Andi Thomas is building a great team and establishing a fantastic programme and we are working closely to develop work with children and young people in Aston and Witton (See Witton below).

Schools work

I am still helping out at Deykin Avenue for two dinnertime sessions a week supporting the supervisors with the older aged juniors and doing classroom assemblies. This has enabled me to have more contact with the school and with members of the local community. There are also opportunities to develop in Broadway school that reading thing?

OUR WORK IN WITTON

We believe that the Lord wants to revitalise Witton spiritually, socially and economically. This includes being involved in developing Triangle Groups in the area and also working to re-establish the Witton Community Centre and the Witton Community Association as focal points for local community activity.

Witton Triangle Group

Again over the last year, our group has grown in numbers and there is the feeling that a number of the group are also growing into leadership and I'm sure will be leading a Triangle group over the next year. Over the next 12 months, I hope we will be able to focus on 'little outs' in the Witton area and looking at ways to develop mission in the Pod.

Witton Community Association

For some time we have been working re-establish the centre as a community facility for the Witton area. This has meant joining the Community Association and encouraging the involvement of local people. Over the last 12 months our focus has been in playing an active part in developing a community board for the Community Centre; on enabling the Witton Community Pod to be delivered and in supporting the relaunch of the Witton Flood Action Group.

The Witton Community Centre

The Community Centre was finally refurbished and re-opened in July by the Aston Pride Health and Regeneration theme group. However March 2011 will bring the NDC programme to a close and with that their involvement in the building. We are currently trying to set up a local board made up of representatives from local groups, key organisations and local residents who will try to ensure that the views of the local neighbourhood are taken account of by Birmingham City Council and any future tenants.

Witton Women's Keep Fit group

Over the last year the group was in-active however in partnership with Deykin Ave school and the Aston Extended Schools Cluster a keep fit course is scheduled to begin at around Easter at the community Centre.

The Witton Community Pod (Formally 'the Perry Barr Youth Pod')

The Pod has now landed in Witton. It is based in the grounds of Shiloh church. Its rental costs are currently being funded by the Perry Barr Ward until 2012.

A steering group consisting of the Shiloh Pentecostal Church; Witton Community Association; the West Midlands Police; the Fire Service; the Housing Department; Midland Heart Housing Association and the Perry Barr Ward Support Officer has been set up to oversee it and we are working on establishing a programme of events, drop-ins and activities to deliver from it including:

- After-school/homework clubs
- Councillor's Surgeries
- Housing/Tenant Participation Groups Meetings
- Parents Groups
- Youth and kids clubs
- Police Surgeries
- Fire-safety Sessions
- Holiday Schemes



Inside the Pod

Aston & Witton Summer Scheme 2010

Between the Monday 26th – 30th July (8-11yrs) and Monday 9th – 13th August (12-16yrs), the WCA in partnership with The Salvation Army (Aston) delivered a programme of activities to over 80 children and young people (aged 8 – 16yrs) from Aston and Witton. The project was based at the Salvation Army building in Gladstone St, Aston.

The programme consisted of a number of workshops and challenging activities. The Workshops offered were drama; Djing and Vjing; a media project; art & crafts; drama; Break-dancing and sports coaching and a healthy eating project.

We also took the children and young people out on trips which included the Cinema and Ten-Pin Bowling as well as going to the Snowdome in Tamworth to do swimming, ice-Skating, tobogganing and tubing. The older group also went Go-Karting in Walsall.



The Scheme Grand Prix

We are fully aware that it will become increasingly difficult to plan the scheme for this summer as many voluntary groups will be affected by the cuts in local government grant funding.

THE NEHEMIAH PROGRAMME

I am a participant on the Nehemiah Programme which was developed to train regeneration workers who want to make a difference in their communities. We have completed the formal training and are currently working towards a neighbourhood plan to 'enable lasting transformation...' This ongoing support is being delivered in partnership with 'Thrive' the Diocesan Community Regeneration Department.

CONCLUSIONS

There is much to give God thanks for with regard to our youth ministry. We took a risk in creating a new mid-week group for the older young people and use it to develop potential future leaders. We also have also been able to maintain the work with a much smaller but committed group on Sunday mornings. It has meant that the older young people are not around much on Sunday mornings but it also means that the young people have remained a part of the church with a group focussed around their needs.

With regard to our work in Witton, well... this time last year we didn't have a base for our work but this year we have the opportunity to develop activities out of two facilities on either side of the area. The first a now newly refurbished community centre and the second the Community Pod. The community centre's future is still uncertain but we have the opportunity to make sure that the local community has it's say and the Pod has the potential to make a difference in a part of Witton that we have previously been unable to be very active in.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has given up their time and energy to support this work over the last year.

Please continue to pray for us...

- As we seek to 'build church around young people in Aston'.
- As we seek to 'put the heart back into our neighbourhood in Witton'.

Thank you.

Aston Parish Committee Secretary's Report John Huzzey (Hon. Sec.)

Not too much happened in 2010 – 11. The baptistery and platform extension is now fully in use, with several full immersion baptisms having taken place during the year. As far as the rest of the building is concerned, much needs to be done to the interior to make it more suitable for community use: - i.e. educational use and public functions (concerts, bands etc).

Meetings took place regularly and usually finished on time with lots of issues raised, and in the main these were resolved after full and frank discussions.

As always, our main problem is still finance for restoration work. I regret that I cannot present a more upbeat report at this time due to the current international financial situation.

Worship Group Report – Rosemary Cripps

Worship and PA have been exciting throughout the last year particularly for the further development of the band, including new members on guitar, french horn, cornet and bongo drums. Younger members are supporting the singing on both first and third Sundays as a part of the church strategy to make these services more child-friendly.

We had a wonderful weekend music-wise in June at Hothorpe Hall as part of the church away weekend. Bishop Andrew not only led the study sessions but also led from the keyboard supporting learning songs in a wide range of styles with membership drawn from all 3 churches. Christmas Eve by Candlelight service also continued with the 3 churches worshipping together led by a combined choir and an amazing range of woodwind and brass instruments including 4 french horns to support the organ and keyboard. The resonance in the church and rich timbre of the instruments made a fantastic sound adding a whole new dimension to the service. Beverley's music leadership as part of her curacy led to the establishment of a Saturday morning guitar club for 10 weeks from September meeting at St James. From an initial group of 16 complete beginners or those who learnt many years before but needed to refresh their learning, 7 are still playing, 4 joining the band at Aston Parish and 3 helping to lead music occasionally at St James.

It is an answer to prayer that regular numbers are now too big to mention everyone by name. We are very thankful for the regular support of musicians and singers alike and value our diversity in terms of age and background. Our youngest is 8 and oldest into their 70s.

The range of music, power point, video and film in regular use has continued as in previous years with very flexible use in the evening "More" sessions and with continued introduction of new congregational singing material interspersed with more traditional hymns and use of the organ for the morning services. We are making regular use of the new keyboard although we are sure we could use more diverse accompaniment given confidence and time to master a wider range of settings. The sound quality is more consistent than previous best efforts placing a microphone inside the old grand piano.

During the year the PA team has received a grant to add speakers into the South Aisle. Ally has put in many hours of work to add a permanent facility for the PowerPoint and installed a radio internet connection in the Church and the Hall so that we can use You Tube in services. The new system has been used with a TV camera at Baptism services. Thanks to Ally for all the work he has done and for the loan of various key components from his former Roadie equipment.

We have experimented with a more sophisticated PA arrangement in the Hall for First Sunday. It was a useful experiment but there are no plans to do this permanently. The PA system in the Hall has severe limitations and we need to work out a cost effective way of making improvements. One successful change is that the teenagers now run the power point every first Sunday.

The PA Team has held steady in numbers in particular thanks to the continued leadership from Ally with support from his friends, Gee and others. The system is now too much for one person to operate, we need two every Sunday and to be honest they are stretched when Ally or Nigel are not available. This is an opportunity for some one who would like to know more to join the team. All new members receive full training.

Our vision is to encourage more people of all ages and backgrounds to join us and that we shall continue to grow in helping lead the services while having the joy of singing and making music together.

Music and worship at Aston Parish Church – Rev Beverly Watson

Firstly a big thank you once again, to Rosemary Cripps and Margaret Griffin for their long-term, faithful commitment to the music at Aston Parish Church. Thanks too for a willingness to encourage and support the continued growth and development of the music over the past year.

Perhaps the most significant new development over the past year has been the Guitar Club, which met on successive Saturday mornings between October and December. We set ourselves the goal of learning '6 chords and 6 songs in 6 weeks' – which proved a bit over ambitious! But we learned about 6 chords and a dozen or so songs over the course of those 3 months, and now most of the guitarists are playing regularly in our services.

About a dozen people came regularly to the guitar course, and those people included friends and relatives who didn't usually come to church. We had a wide range of ages – people aged between 10 and 70 – and about 8 different nationalities. Two groups of guitarists eventually emerged – one at Aston Parish Church and one at St. James', and our aim is that both groups will play in their respective churches on a monthly basis in the coming year. We also hope to develop the range of material we can play as time goes by.

Thank you to Geoff Miller and Andy Taylor who faithfully led those first sessions with me, and to Geoff who now leads the St. James' players. The St. James' players are also beginning to play on a monthly basis in our services.

The band at Aston Parish Church has also grown and developed over the past year. Apart from the new guitarists (Rosemary Cripps, Jason Williams, Nino Aptsiauri, and Frank Asoeybe) we've also been pleased to welcome Beth Jolley as our bass player, Lydia Watson as a horn player and occasional pianist, Lesley Butterwick as a cornet player, and Lance Palmer as a second drummer to Matty Jolley. New people are always welcome and we hope to continue to improve our skills and range of music in the coming year.

Our Christmas Eve service – Carols by Candlelight - was another musical highlight, where our choir and classical instrumentalists played under Rosemary's baton. We were pleased to have 4 horns this time, 3 cornets and a cello. Thanks again to everyone who took part and came to rehearsals despite the very challenging weather!

Project Officer's Report – Nigel Cripps

The last year has had helpful developments and disappointments. Much of my time has been spent chasing an ever diminishing grant aid pot for building improvements and activities that are principally maintenance.

When the curate's house became empty the opportunity was taken to have the cavities filled with insulation, the bathroom retiled (to stop a persistent leak) and the fences creosoted. Thanks to the volunteer working party that dealt with the fences and the garden. The best outcome was that a family from the congregation was able to move into the house to mind it until we need it for another staff member.

Various options have been looked into to improve St Matthews Church Hall. A major success was a team of unemployed young people redecorating the Hall. Funding for the much needed improvements continues to elude us.

NADFAS an organisation specialising in recording church monuments has been regularly visiting the church and we should soon have a complete inventory of the 50 plus monuments. A specialist firm has examined two of our stained glass windows that appeared to be in poor condition. One needs immediate attention and funds are actively being sought for this work.

During the Summer English Heritage funded a condition survey on the church tower. For this a hydraulic platform was hired. A significant problem is that past repair work has been poorly executed. At the time of writing we are waiting for English Heritage to advise the funds available for the restoration work and authorise the work to begin.

A small but complicated task that has been around for some time is to remove the platform from the Meeting Room in the church. A grant has been obtained for this work; it was one of the last awarded to anyone by Aston Pride. The funds are very welcome but the procrastination and bureaucracy of that organisation will not be missed.

The City Council has undertaken some overdue maintenance work on the trees in the Church yard. A number of unsafe lime trees have been felled, others severely pruned. The copse adjacent to the office that the Police have asked to be removed has now gone but it will be some time before the grass is established and the area is regularly mowed.

Aston Parish church is looking forward to the restoration work on the Tower this summer, the repairs to the Plevins window and continuing to look for funds to replace the floor and heating.

ACTS (Aston Church Trading Services) – Nigel Cripps and Cliff Griffin

During 2010 our activity settled into a pattern which for the first time reflected the actual activity at Aston Parish Church.

In previous years an outside organisation purchased catering packs of tea and coffee from us and there was no activity of that type during 2010. The reason the organisations are purchasing elsewhere is that the same fairly traded items are now available from 'high street' suppliers. We continue to encourage everyone to purchase fair-traded goods from normal sources; for example supermarkets; and this is significantly increasing the value of fairly traded goods sold in the UK.

A pattern is beginning to emerge where the specialist fairtrade organisations have a role in bringing new items onto the market and as the new item becomes established they will become available commercially and so we move forward. The consequence is that we will have to be more adventurous with more new items on the stall. This means that we will have to more actively promote the stall.

There has been a major change in the book supply arrangements. Our main supplier continues to be the Christian Literature Crusade organisation but there are now different arrangements in place.

The huge advantage of this change is that books can be purchased through the stall much more easily.

During the year Nigel went on a tour of fair-trade producers that was organised by Traidcraft. He now has more firsthand experience of the positive impact the fair-trade has for producers in the world's poorest countries

Balance sheet

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Bank (Opening)	637.37	Bank (Closing)	737.83
Cash (Opening)	118.15	Cash (Closing)	106.12
Stock (Opening)	271.44	Stock (Closing)	333.63
Sales		Purchases	
Books	427.41	Books	424.69
T Craft	1452.01	T Craft	1351.55
From reserve	47.44		
Total	2953.82	Total	2953.82

Finally. Thank you to our families who have to deal with boxes stored at home, to Pauline for help running the stalls and most importantly thank you for supporting ACTS.

Aston Way Stay and Play – Natalie Webb

Exciting news! We have managed to increase our stay and play numbers from one to a fantastic eight, aged between 5 months and 2 years. We are offering a range of appropriate aged activities and the chance for parents to meet and interact through play with their children. Sessions now run on a Wednesday morning from 9.30 am to 12 pm in term time only. The cost is just £1.20 per person, which includes tea and toast.

Stay and Play Annual Figures 2010

In		Out	
Creche	407.60	Rent	1300.00
T and T	73.29	Insurance	-
Grants	1300.00	Gifts and Misc.	50.00
Donations	55.60	Trip	300.00
Bank Balance 1 Jan '10	396.83	Food	146.63
Cash Balance 1 Jan '10	33.64	Bank Balance 1 Jan '11	421.83
		Cash Balance 1 Jan '11	48.50
Total	2266.96	Total	2266.96

Aston Parish Church Centre Management Committee Report - John Huzzey

Once again I have to report a poor year with regards to usage.

However, we are still financially viable, thanks to a grant from the Thomas Dole charity towards heating repairs and the cost of replacement chairs in the Higgins Lounge. However, we received a generous donation of good chairs from Manor Park School, so we have not had reason to use this cash for its original purpose. We still have a need to upgrade the suspended ceiling in the Higgins Lounge and corridor. Quotes have been received from three companies, all within about £200 difference across the board.

In November 2010 our long-term tenant Michael Gale vacated the centre flat, so it is currently available to rent. The whole flat has had a comprehensive refurbishment, including a new kitchen and utility room.

The letting of the flat will be handled by an agent, thus saving us the problem of tenancies etc. At the time of writing we seem to have a tenant moving in soon (subject to satisfactory references). If the tenancy goes ahead, the rent generated will vastly improve our financial status.

Children's church report – James Hicks

It has been a challenge over the last year to find enough helpers, which has been one reason that the children now stay in church on the third Sunday and are encouraged to be part of the worship group or participate in the service in different ways. Over the next few months we have some new volunteers joining the team including young people from the church, which is very exciting. We are grateful to Sharon who was able to lead a separate group with the 5-7's, she has now stepped down from this work so we are all together but the children do different age-appropriate activities.

The children in the 5 to 11's age group are lively and great fun to teach. We use Scripture Union 'light' resources and depending on the number of children (which varies a lot!) we will do a drama, craft and games to help teach the bible passage. We hope to see the children grow in confidence to pray together and read the bible. This has also been developed at the Xsite Birmingham event which is a child-friendly worship and bible teaching event, that we take the 7-11 year olds to every two months. Apart from Xsite we have our own special activities about once a term (although the Christmas party was cancelled due to snow). We are looking forward to the last weekend in May when we host a church youth group from Manchester – this will be a great chance for our kids to show them what's so great about Aston!

Churchwarden Report – Joe Lewis and Gloria Powell

Once again we would like to thank God for giving us the health and strength to carry out the work throughout the last twelve months. It has been an up and down year with us losing Fiona to Bradford and with Joe not being well for some time. So we thank God that things are much better now. Fiona goes with our blessings and Joe is back doing some of his duties.

It has been quite a year, our normal car wash was successful and all our events were well attended. So we thank God for that and long may He continue to provide the funds for all our outreach. The Meeting Room is not looking bad now, with the step removed, a new glass door to the church and a new carpet down and mosaic picture that June raised the money for in the meeting room; now that it's up it is looking lovely. We're still trying to raise funds for the floor and the heating, so please don't stop praying that God will make a way soon.

We thank Nigel for all that he does. A lot of his work is unseen but very effective. We'd also like to thank Ally for all that he does in and around the church. May God continue to bless Andy, Jenny and Beverly for all that they do in our church and around our schools and community. We will continue to pray for them and that God will continue to bless them in all that they do, I trust that the congregation are also praying for them.

I would also like to take this time to thank all the readers for all there hard work and I'd also like to thank Anant for all that he does, and finally a special thanks to you all, the congregation, for making our job so pleasant. May God bless and keep you all.

Guides' Report – Vicky Smale

To begin the year in February the girls went to Trefoil House to make their vibrant red costumes for the Centenary carnival later in the year. In Spring they were also involved in pizza-making, the Peace go-for-it, Mother's Day cards and Yasmin completed the Faith badge as part of her Baden Powell challenge.

During April and May, the Guides took part in many centenary celebrations. To start with, the Guides held a Penny Party to raise money for Division funds. They also enjoyed learning about the history of Guiding during themed decades evenings, which occurred throughout the year. They particularly enjoyed the 1930s evening when they made flappers' outfits out of newspaper.

One of the highlights of the year was the Carnival at Drayton Manor, which I'm sure the girls will remember for a very long time. To top this off, the girls also braved a 100-foot abseil from the top of the Aston Parish Church tower. The girls who weren't brave enough to abseil down climbed up and down the 100 steps and took part in the ceremony recognising the achievements of the girls who completed their Baden Powell badge.

During the summer the girls took part in many activities in preparation for the Aston Guides' reunion party. They also went to the Division parade and had a big water fight to finish the term.

In September the best behaved girls were rewarded with a trip to Alton Towers, where between them they rode 108 rides! The girls were also kept busy in September with outdoor cooking, a sports evening arranged by the Baden Powell Guides and preparing a dance, banners and a song for the Aston reunion party.

On the 20/10/2010 at 20:10 the girls made their promise at the grand finale, which was a very moving and memorable occasion. The Aston reunion party on 26 October was a great success as the girls performed their songs and dances for the guests. Previous Guides of varying ages enjoyed the evening greatly and it brought back many memories of when they were in Guides.

The guides completed their Go-for-it "parties" at the end of October and in November they celebrated Guy Fawkes' night with sparklers. The Baden Powell Guides organised two festival evenings that included Chinese and Hindu traditions. The Guides also participated in Christmas craft activities such as card-making and needlework.

In January, the Guides worked towards completing their Team work Go-for-it, before enjoying a toboggan session at the Snowdome in February.

Boys' Brigade Report – Jennifer Martin

Well, where do I start with 2010!! As you all know, on February 19th 2010 we celebrated our centenary as the 1st Birmingham. It was a very very busy year. Hoping we can have a bit of a break this year!

The main focus of the year was our fundraising for our trip to Switzerland. We had all ready spent the majority of 2009 working hard to raise funds but the work had to carry on. We wrote to companies for donations and had a great response, collected cans for cash and ink cartridges too. In April we held a Community Fun Day, at Trinity Rd Playing Fields, the first time we had done anything like it. Weeks before we were delivering leaflets and putting up posters to advertise. The preparations paid off. It was a fantastic afternoon. The RNLI joined us, so did The Air Ambulance, Officers from Aston Fire Station, with fire engine, local police officers and our local counsellor Ayoub Khan. We had a bouncy castle and inflatable assault course, games stalls, toy stalls, face painting, refreshments and a raffle, all the prizes were donated. We had a great turn out of people too. Everyone that supported us on the day said they would do so again if we decided to do another one. So not only did we raise money we made lots of contacts too.

In May some of the boys took part in the church Abseil and again raised money for our trip. In June we held a church breakfast, before the service. It was a huge success, the church members loved it and as well as raising us money it was a great opportunity to develop relationships between the boys and the church. We were asked if we could do it every week! I don't know why but I think that could be asking too much of the boys, and staff but we are hoping to do at least another two this year. Also in June, I along with two of our boys went along to Manor Park School to take part in one of their assemblies because they had agreed to hold a non uniform day for us. We now also have a good relationship with the school too.

All our hard work was worth it because on the afternoon of Friday 30th July 2010, 13 boys and 6 officers boarded a coach and headed off to Switzerland. We picked up a group of Girl Guides on the way and arrived in Adelboden 24 hours later, yes 24 hours later, all a little tired and snappy !

We had a fantastic very traditional chalet to stay in for the week. Food was delivered to us daily and all our trips were organised for us, what more could we ask for. We then had a week of early mornings and late nights. It was a fun filled packed week. We went tobogganing on a manmade track down a mountain. Yes we did have one collision so a trip to the local doctors was made and I missed the next day's trip along with the boy who had concussion. The rest of the group visited Murren and the Schilthorn, the famous revolving restaurant in the James Bond film. We also went swimming, rock climbing, enjoyed a chocolate fondue, visited the Jungfrau, Interlaken and had a boat trip on the famous Lake Thun. Then it was time to pack away on the Saturday ready for the 24 hour trip home. It was a fantastic way to celebrate our centenary and we will never forget it.

Hard work started again when we started back in September. We decided to hold a belated centenary party for past and present members on January 15th of this year. After many phone calls, emails, letters and advertising in the papers and on the radio, we managed to contact over 40 ex members. So with the present members of the company, parents and church members, there were around 60 people at the party. It was a great afternoon of fun, fellowship, memories shared and food. Also a great achievement was having, including me, 5 captains present. It was such a success that many people have asked for us to hold some more socials so that we can get together again. That is true BB spirit for you, once you have it, it never leaves you. Colin and I also had the pleasure of going over to Market Drayton recently to meet and go out to lunch with Tom Tibbles and his wife Doris. He is now 89 years old and Doris 86 so they were unable to travel to Birmingham for the party. Tom was in the 42nd Birmingham company, based at the Ellen Knox Memorial Hall so our sister company. He was in the company for 33 years, from the age of 13 and eventually became captain. The 42nd and 1st had a great connection. He donated his badges to the company and also the bible he was given, by Aston Parish Church for his dedication to the company, when he left. Another thing to come out of the party was an offer from our band master of the 60's to come back and be our band master again so currently our older lads are learning to play the drums.

In-between all of this we took part in the church Easter car wash and Christmas Fayre, table tennis competitions, pool competitions, went on a trip to Thorpe Park, attended the Divisional Parade and had a Christmas party.

Our other highlight of the year was that in April we gained another member of staff, Shreen. She has been and is a great asset to the company. She came in, in the deep end, but never complained, she just got on with things and helped out with as much as she could and still does. She also joined us in Switzerland.

An apology for the long report but 2010 was such a special year for us and we wanted to share it with everyone. We may be small in number but it hasn't stopped us doing great things and never will. All that we do isn't possible without the support of the church, parents and the boys. So thank you to everyone. Also a personal thank you from me too to the other officers, I couldn't do it on my own. Here's to another 100 years of the 1st Birmingham Boys' Brigade!

Asian Fellowship – Giyanow Kaur

Thanking God that we are still going.

Bell Ringers – Don Finnemore

Nothing much really to report this year. We are in desperate need of people to come and learn how to bell ring, as we currently only have a very small number of bell-ringers and so would really like to encourage new members to come and join. Please contact me if you are interested or know of someone who is.

Bread and Butter Gang– Mrs. June Huzzey

This year we have had several events that have been catered for:

- Ascension Day – We did tea for our friends from Barston and Hampton-in-Arden
- July – Supper for CMS evening
- September – A goodbye buffet for Fiona
- October – Refreshments for bereavement service and Kate’s party, which was enjoyed by all who attended
- December – Mince pies and drinks after Carols by Candlelight

We now have a coffee and chat morning on Wednesdays from 10 am till 12 noon. Please come and join us, everyone is welcome.

Crèche – Glenys Veitch

The crèche still remains a valuable part of our church, allowing parents with young ones freedom to worship. Now comes the but – if it were not for the few people who are on the rota, it would not happen!

Many thanks to those who helped out, and to the regular staff for your willingness to help out other weeks also. It would be sad if we had to stop the crèche due to lack of staff, when I know there are people in church who would be able to join us. It is a learning time for children, not just a babysitting service; a special time for us all in crèche. We still need your prayers and support.

First Sunday – Ivor Lewis and Andi Thomas

First Sunday is a monthly café-style worship event which takes place in the church centre on the first Sunday of every month. It starts and ends with worship. We also have a bring-and-share meal together in the middle.

Over the last 12 months, we have completed a series about some of the people who met Jesus. This group has included characters such as Martha and Mary; the woman at the well; the Roman Centurion and some of Jesus’ disciples. At the end of January, 1st Sunday became part of the main teaching programme. We have just finished a series on ‘Justice’ and we are now on Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth.

We want to say ‘thank you’ to Fiona Robertson, who took on the responsibility for developing First Sunday during her curacy. We miss her creativity. We also want to thank everyone who has helped us over the last year (especially those who help with setting up and clearing away; those who help in the kitchen and everyone who helps out in our worship). Hopefully that is everyone.

REPORTS FROM ST JAMES', ASTON

Report on Fabric – Cephas France, churchwarden

All the usual safety checks were carried out during 2010 including Fire extinguishers (February), the Electric PAT test (March), and the Gas Boiler Service (November). In July 2010 the carpet in the Meeting Room was professionally cleaned when quotes for a new carpet were found to be too expensive. In August a skip was hired to take away a lot of rubbish from the store room and shed. Thanks to all those who volunteered to help with this!

I'm pleased to report that there was no vandalism during 2010. One window in the kitchen had to be replaced. This was thought to be from damage sustained some time ago. In general the building is in good repair.

Church Committee Secretary – Sharon McDonald

St. James in the Parish of Aston and Nechells is an Anglican Church in the Heart of Aston, made up of people from in and around the local community. The Church Committee has eight members, plus clergy, who meet three or four times a year to discuss all matters concerning church life.

The past year has been successful in many ways. Financially we have had more money come in than has gone out, partly due to the amount of lettings and interest there is in St. James, though the current economic climate has caused one or two regular bookings to leave, we hope and pray that many more will continue to hire the rooms.

We have recently lost the funding for the Advice Centre that was very successful with the community. At present it continues to be run by volunteers who have a passion and a belief in the good work and advice they are able to give.

Through 'Transforming Church' we have looked at ways of inviting people back to church, and how those already attending can contribute not only to the church but also the services by attending the Growing Leaders Course. This enables the individual to know what is expected of them as a Christian and how they can lead by example. Those currently on the course have their own mentor. There is also a Youth Growing Leaders, the also have their own mentors.

The Parish runs regular Alpha Courses, usually for ten weeks. It gives people from many different backgrounds the opportunity to know more of the Bible, and of God. We believe God is truly working in our Churches, and also in our Community through events such as Community Fun Days held at local schools or Aston Pride, our three churches united services and outreach, and many social events including the Caribbean Evening, and trips to our link Parish of St. James' Colwall.

St James Advice Centre - David Fletcher

The mood of this report is very different from last year's. At that stage, we seemed to have recovered from the departure of our Director in 2009, and our staff were very busy dealing with the great variety of needs of our clients, at least 80% of whom live in Aston ward.

However, for almost all of 2010 we had hanging over us a cloud of stress and uncertainty. This was caused by Birmingham City Council's decision to review how advice-giving is delivered throughout the City, while "rolling over" our grant just three months at a time. The surprising outcome of this process, which we had not anticipated, was that last November they voted to stop their funding to all voluntary agencies (including ours) with effect from 31 March 2011, and not to put new contracts in place until July or August.

As a result, the management committee found that if we were to honour our financial obligations, we had no option but to make all our members of staff redundant by 31 January 2011. At the time of writing the future of the Centre is extremely doubtful, but I would like to pay tribute to my four colleagues who have continued to work on a voluntary basis for a few hours a week. We are all aware that if the Centre has to close, it will be our clients who will be most severely disadvantaged.

We are determined to stay open if we possibly can, and are not only applying for grants from different organisations but also looking at new methods of working, most likely with fewer paid staff and more volunteers. The work of the Centre is needed now more than ever, not least because of the impact of the government cuts on this already deprived area. Please pray that St James Advice Centre will remain open, so that we will be able to continue providing advice and assistance to all who need it.

Junior Church – Juliet Fletcher

Our Junior Church work this year has been less consistent than in recent years. As most of our young members are unable to attend regularly, the leaders have found it difficult to sustain a teaching programme. We discussed this situation in September and decided to offer a table with resources in the church each Sunday. This would provide activities for young people when they came. This is not an ideal situation as it does not provide an environment where a young person's faith can be nurtured in a way that is suitable for their age and understanding. We would like to offer activities more suited to their needs and will be reviewing the current situation again in the near future.

Some of our Junior Church members have attended X-Site, an exciting event for 8-11 year olds across the city under the auspices of the Scripture Union. The event is held every two months and offers an energetic programme of singing and activities on a Bible theme that introduces young people to the God who loves them. A group of volunteers have provided transport to young people across the parish and those who have gone have been enthusiastic about the event.

Thanks to the committed group of helpers that make Junior Church possible.

St. James' Treasurer report – Jackie Burton

The year has flown so quickly. Money comes in, and it goes out. And here we are doing the end of year accounts again. Thank the Lord that we have had enough come in to cover that going out. Pledge members, and those who give on the collection plate have been generous and brought in some £15,000 and other donations around £2,000. Thank you all very much indeed! We are also blessed with a multi-use building and rent has brought us in almost £25,000. Of course, the actual running of this busy building does have overheads. The running costs amount to approximately £40,000 for the year.

I would also like to thank the 'team' at St. James who count the money and make sure it gets banked every week. And all those who work behind the scenes to keep our parish finances in order.

Report on Men's Club – Cephas France

The Men's Club continues to take place at St. James in the Meeting Room alternate Tuesdays 11.00am to 2.00pm and alternate Thursdays 7.30pm to 10.00pm. We are a small, but faithful group of about 12 men. Our time together is usually devoted to playing dominoes. If more men would like to join us, that would be good.

Report on Social / Trips – Maureen France

2010 was a good year socially, we were joined on January 31st by our link Church from Colwall – sharing worship and lunch and taking them on a walk around Aston afterwards. We ended the day with evening prayer at Aston Parish. It was a very enjoyable day... as was our annual visit to Colwall for St. James Day on Sunday July 25th – after a service at Cradley Church we had a lovely lunch back at Colwall, outside in the sunshine, with live music played to entertain us. We all appreciate this link between our two churches.

Our annual seaside trip was on Saturday 14th August, and we went to Southport. The weather was very good and a lovely day was had by all.

We held a Caribbean Evening on Saturday 30th October. This was once again a huge success. Our compere for the evening was Paul Gordon. Sue Martin and myself did a comic sketch around the song 'soldier, soldier, will you marry me?'. And there were many memorable performances by our friends from the Baptist Church, Shiloh and others. We were also treated, once again, to a performance from the Puppeteers. After this a good meal was enjoyed by all!

REPORTS FROM ST MATTHEW'S

Churchwarden's Report – 2011 – Mr Bill Perry

This has been another eventful year for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the Leasing Agreement that we have been negotiating over the past two years, has reached a point where we are very close to agreeing the content with the Diocese.

Secondly, although the foyer has been re-plastered, re-wired, and re-decorated, we still have a problem with the ingress of water at the four corners of the roof. This is currently being dealt with. Additionally, you will have noticed that a lot of work has been carried out in the churchyard to clear away and open up the area, and along with CCTV cameras, additional lighting and repairs, this has helped to make the area safer. The Intruder Alarm system seems to be doing its job as we have had no further break-ins during the year.

We have also been joined by another church – The Regeneration Centre. However, because it has been a cold winter and together with the Hall heating system becoming blocked, the Regeneration Centre has stopped meeting until we fix the heating and/or the weather gets warmer!

The cleaning rota has been abandoned for the time being as the WWFC found that they could no longer support this because of other commitments, and it then became too onerous for some to keep going much more frequently. At present, the cleaning is done on an ad hoc basis by four or five of us.

St Matthew's Church Accounts Summary 2009 – Geoff Miller

The year began with uncertainty. God had met our needs for 2009.

However, Birmingham City Council's Neighbourhood Office advised that they would not be continuing the renting of the corner room and Shiloh United Church [who had been faithful users of the Church Hall for over 20 years] advised that they had purchased premises in Handsworth, which they moved into in January.

So we produced another negative budget for the year 2010. Not able to see how we would pay for our anticipated expenditure. But trusting God to provide.

We made some cut backs, terminating the cleaning contract and setting up a Church members cleaning rota. The new alarm system that was fitted in 2009 meant that it was not necessary to have a Caretaker checking up on the premises morning and evening, so this role was reduced to opening and closing the premises, with the cost being borne by the respective Church and Hall hirers.

Fortunately we have been spared payment for insurance of the Church premises whilst the agreement over the use of the Church has been resolved with the Diocese Board of Finance.

Over a third of our income came from renting the premises, despite the loss of 2 main contributors. Whilst our expenditure for the year dropped by over £1000, the savings from payment of wages were swallowed up by increased fuel costs. Common Fund payments have also gone up from just under 50% in 2009 to over 55% of annual expenditure in 2010.

And the end of year figures show that again we have just broken even. So we give thanks to God for his promise that when we honour him in our giving [we gave a 10% tithe of our giving to Rejuvenate World Wide and the Diocese Malawi Fund], he will provide all our needs.

2011 we continue to trust in God's provisions having again set a negative budget for the Parish.

Children's Church for St. Matthew's report – Hillary Miller

Four highlights this year, one being the addition of a fellow children's worker, Andrea of Lee Abbey Community. This is very recent. Second is the welcome of the Tyrol and Lydia as communicants. Thirdly, the attendance at X Site of some of our Nechells' children. Fourthly, various children accompanying our resident guitarist on percussion instrument, standing with him at the front.

This year we have struggled to maintain any children's group on Sunday mornings. As on Sunday mornings, Big Breakfast has been missing children.

Many weeks we have not had any school age children in church and it was delightful to have 3 weeks recently when we had four children.

Two of the children read the Bible readings in church very well before going out to their own group.

There are still a number of pre-schoolers who come spasmodically. They make use of resource table at the back of church sometimes supported by our resident musician. (Not playing instruments during the sermon!)

As you have probably gathered the congregation try to incorporate the children into our worship as and when they see an opportunity.

Prayer for more children please.