

**2008 was another memorable year in the life of St John's.** This was our first full year as a Church & Community Centre, and we were very aware of the expectation that all the work and expense would give St John's a new lease of life. The ERDF audit was a crucial hurdle to get over in March, with the possibility of some financial claw-back if we were unable to demonstrate that we had achieved our outputs as per the business plan. Thanks to John Hallaway's prodigious efforts, we were successful, and similarly later on in the year with the remainder of the award of Church Urban Fund (CUF) money to support our Project Development Worker. In the meantime, Phase II of the Project was successfully completed in July/August, being the award by BIFFA of some £40k to improve the south-side exterior, complete with drive-in, car-parking area, patio and re-seeding. All a great improvement. And then in November, the wonderful news that, despite strong competition, we had been successful in our application for lottery funding to re-roof the Church and complete the remaining work. In terms of activity, our main users of the building were Hot Gospel Choir, Slimming World and Why Weight?. I would also like to record our appreciation to Chris & Anne Clark (St Aidan's) and Julia Clapp (Youth For Christ/Label of Love) who from March-June ran a successful funded Youth project, called 'True Colours'.

Meanwhile, activity within the Church itself was beginning to build as well. On the worship front, we began to experiment with a new form of service (Morning Worship) - informal but to include a children's slot, sharing time, a short act of Holy Communion and healing ministry. This was well received, and has continued into 2009. Meanwhile, Breakfast Club+ was becoming less well attended, and was finally discontinued in November, to be replaced by Café Church, a new form of service run by Alisha Wilkinson and a team from within the Church. In September, we started our first Alpha course for many years, and this proved to be a turning point. Almost all of those attending converted to Christian faith, and discovered not only the joy of being Christians, but also new friendship and fellowship. Six immersion baptisms followed in January, and more recently we have started an Emmaus Course for those wanting to learn more about Christian discipleship, and in some cases to be confirmed. Other events in the year were the baptism of Bethany Wilkinson (also by immersion)

in September, the birth of our first Church baby (Aimee Robinson) for many years in November, our first wedding at St John's for more than 8 years in December, and sadly the deaths of Doreen Hill and her daughter Gwyneth in July & August respectively. We also produced our first newsletters for general distribution around the parish in July, September and December, and in conjunction with Tessa Oram (Faith in Education) a series of monthly youth events for David Lister children under the heading 'LIFE'.

2008 was also however a year of 'stepping down' for some. Sadly, Peter Crook our Project Development Manager had a literal step down in September resulting in a fall and partial hip replacement, and was unable to continue. John Hallaway also resigned from his role as Company Secretary at the year end, although he will continue with us on an informal basis to see through Phase III of the Project, and thereby bring it to completion. Recently, we have also received the news that both Steve Coupland and Sharon Finn will not be seeking re-election as Churchwardens, having completed more than 40 years in office between them. They have given many years of faithful service to St John's, and it is largely due to their hard work and tenacity not only that the Church has remained open, but that it now has an exciting future in prospect. All of us at St John's have cause to be grateful to them, and together with Sharon's husband Mark (who will also step down as Treasurer), they will be much missed.

Finally, I would like to record appreciation to Antoine Robinson who joined us at the beginning of the year with his wife Jo and daughter, Bethany, and has given us loyal support throughout the year as our key-board player. And lastly, to Ann who has cheerfully balanced being a mother (and soon to be grandmother) with doing a counselling course, managing the children's work, and giving pastoral care and support to a number of folk in the Church at different times. We look forward to another challenging year, for which we value your prayers.

*Revd Chris Grundy*  
16.03.09