**High Street Methodist Church**

**Witney**

**ANNUAL REPORTS**

**FROM**

**CHURCH GROUPS**

**2020**

**MISSION STATEMENT FOR**

**HIGH STREET METHODIST CHURCH**

**Jesus Christ who brings us to the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit is the foundation of our life together.**

**High Street Methodist Church aims to be a church, which is bringing Christ to our community and our community to Christ. We want to be dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ, devoted to each other, determined to serve our local community and to support our fellow Christians.**



**April 2020**

Greetings,

This is an unusual time to be writing some opening words to the annual church report. The church building is shut. Though I am still heartened by the words that kept appearing on my social media screens this Easter, “the church building may be shut this Easter, but that’s ok. So was the tomb”. This unusual time is focusing our minds on the great question of ‘what is church’?

Within this document will be some of the answer to that question. You see church is more than just a service on a Sunday morning, way more. The church has a mission to make the world a better place; to tackle injustice in all guises, to look after creation, to care for all people in a meaningful way, and to tell people the good news that not only are they loved by God, but they can also know God and celebrate the joy that that relationship will bring into their heart and lives.

I once remember reading a church’s website and noted that they refused to call their Sunday morning gatherings ‘services’. Instead they called them celebrations, explaining that the Sunday morning was simply the cherry on the cake. They had lived out being church for the other 6 days of the week, so on Sunday they gathered to celebrate who they were and what they had been able to do for God in their community. Hopefully within this document that same message will appear.

If you think that the above sounds a good idea, then come and join us. You do not need to be a committed Christian, you don’t even have to ever have walked into a church before! God loves you and that means we love you as well. Loving you is one thing though, but to get to know you would be even better! There is no audition, no entrance exam, just a request that you come as you are with no pretence or pressure. Come give us a try and come and join us on an exciting journey.

Blessings,

***Jason***

*(Rev Jason Cooke)*

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**Church Life**

**Pastoral Worker and Pastoral Visitors**

Pastoral care is most important in the life of our church and is essentialfor the care and wellbeing of the church fellowship.
Our objective is to show the love of God, give a warm welcome and show caring concern to everyone who comes to church.

Our aim at High Street is to try to allocate all members to one of the Pastoral Visitor team whose responsibility it is to keep in contact and give support to those on their list by looking out for them at church, telephoning and visiting. Leaflets and copies of In Touch are delivered by them at Christmas, Easter, Harvest and at other times.

We are most grateful to the 28 Pastoral Visitors and Linda Burbage in her role as Cradle Roll Secretary, for the caring they give to the 300 or so people listed in our church directory. We remember housebound members and those living in residential care at Christmas with a card and plant, flowers at Harvest and a special card at Christmas for those who have suffered a close bereavement in the year also on the first anniversary of the death of a spouse.
We are pleased that Linda Burbage has joined the team in addition to continuing on as our Baptismal Roll Secretary.
Margaret Jones has retired and we are most grateful for the many years of faithful service she has given to pastoral care in our church.

We try to share news of the church family, especially specific needs like bereavement or ill health but also rejoice in special birthdays and anniversaries.

**Pastoral Training**

There are bi-monthly meetings with Rev Jason Cooke where ways of developing and improving pastoral care are discussed and explored.

**The Prayer Chain** is an important way to communicate specific needs for prayer and also for information on the additional care and support needed. There are now 56 members on the email Chain and others receive messages by phone.

**Membership**

2 have transferred membership to High Street from other Methodist Churches ; Pauline Williams and Ros May. 2 have become members at High Street; Sandy Lewsey and Carol Port. 4 members who moved out of the area have transferred their membership . Two members ceased to meet.
Three members have sadly died since the last Annual Report.
Dorothy Woodcock, Alun Evans and Elsie Cobb. We give thanks for their long lives, all that they meant to us and their contributions to the life of our church.
Total membership is 192

We continue to do our best to follow the aims of the church Mission Statement. I keep in regular contact with Rev Jason Cooke and the Pastoral Team and we share news with each other in order to adapt and improve our pastoral care.

 ***Anne Crawford. Pastoral Lay Worker***

**Prayer Opportunities**

The Weekly Prayer Meeting takes place every Thursday morning 9.30 -10.10am with 3 regularly attending and others join in from time to time. We pray for the life of our church, those who are unwell, or experiencing other difficulties. We always include those prayers left in the boxes in the Prayer Corner and Coffee Bar and any current topic, either here or overseas.

***Anne Crawford***

**The Prayer Corner**

This area of the church is available for quiet prayer every day from 10.00am until 2.45pm. There is a Prayer Box and another in the foyer with special Prayer Cards for requests which are prayed for at Thursday morning prayers. We are very grateful to Jane Davies who has taken responsibility for creating an attractive and meaningful space in the Prayer Corner.

**Prayer Ministry after Sunday Morning Worship**

Two members of the Prayer Ministry team are available in the Prayer Corner to anyone needing prayers for themselves or others. It is used regularly and is appreciated by those asking for prayer.
We are pleased that Jane Davies has taken on responsibility for organising the rota and for encouraging the team in prayer ministry by calling regular meetings to develop, explore and adapt ideas for maintaining a lively prayer life in the church.

**Prayer Chains**

For church members who wish to take part in intercessory prayers for those in special need. There is an Email Chain and telephone calls for those without email. The prayers are sent by Anne Crawford and anyone can ask her to include needs as they arise. It is well used and gives important communication of comfort and healing. 56 members are on the Email Prayer Chain for receiving messages plus those using the telephone. Others are very welcome to join it.

**Church Prayer Diary**

Issued twice a year in January and June, listing prayer needs for High Street Church, its activities, users of the premises and others. We are grateful for Mike Limmer who compiles it.

**Space 2B for quiet reflective prayer**

Every Wednesday morning 9.20-11.00 am. Held at the home of Brenda Woods. Exploring different ways of praying.

**Churches Together Prayers**

Breakfast at 8.00am on the fourth Saturday in the month followed by an ecumenical prayer meeting held at High Street at 8.45am to 9.30am focussing on the life and witness of the churches in Witney & District.12 regularly attend, others come from time to time and more would be warmly welcomed to join for prayers even if it is not possible to come to breakfast.

***Anne Crawford***

**Leadership Team**

The church leadership team is made up of around 12 people who represent many areas of church life. It is our job to pray, listen and discern who God is calling this church to be in 2020/21, in 2025, in 2031 and beyond.

The leadership team really is commissioned to focus on the mission of the church and how we best live out our calling as disciples of Jesus. We had an away day planned to help us in this process, but unfortunately the Coronavirus restrictions hit us only days before that was due to happen.

I think you can expect exciting things to come from the leadership team in this next year as we continue to prayerfully shape this church into a dynamic body that wants to serve God and show Gods endless love to the community of Witney and beyond.

I want to encourage you to do a few things for us. Firstly, pray for us. Your prayers will make a difference so cover us with them. Secondly, please speak to us, tell us what is on your heart. God speaks to all people so it may be that we need to hear what you have to say.

Many thanks,

***Rev Jason Cooke***

**Stewards Team**

One of our previous Minister's final actions was to help bolster this team in preparation for Jason's arrival.

Unfortunately for a few years our Church had struggled with only having a few full stewards so we should all be encouraged that, in September 2019, 8 full stewards ably supported by 6 Sunday stewards formed the new team!

Even with this number we are always eager to bring new faces into our midst so if you believe God is calling you to try something different then please do speak to one of the stewards to learn more.

Since Jason's arrival in September we have tried to meet every few months to ensure we are all fully up to date with what is happening at HSMC.

It's also important to note that, apart from our Methodist traditions of attending many meetings, our stewards help out at funeral and wedding services and whatever else is needed to ensure all Church events run as smoothly as possible.

Above all our continuing mission is to serve HSMC to the best of our abilities and we would like to thank the congregation for their loving support.

***David Limmer - Senior Steward***

**Holy Communion Services**

Holy Communion (The Lord's Supper) is the central act of Christian Worship.

*We who gather around the Lord's table to receive the tokens of his love are empowered for mission, using the God given gifts and talents we have been blessed with, to live and work with the Holy Spirit to God's praise and glory* (quote from Methodist Holy Communion Book)

A team of 6 Communion Stewards take care of the four Communion services held monthly (Sophie Hickman, Marie Cotton, Geraldine Walker, Sybil King, Bill Seedhouse and Roy Cobb)

These vital acts of Worship continue to thrive as follows

8.30 am = 18-24 worshippers

10.30 am = 100+ worshippers

18.00 = 18+ worshippers

Midweek = 12-18 worshippers

The Communion Stewards always ensure gluten, wheat and lactose-free bread with alcohol-free wine is used so that no-one can feel excluded and they invite everyone who is able to gather around the Lord's table, noting those less mobile and offering to bring the elements to them.

Once a quarter a retiring collection is taken for the church benevolent fund, this fund is used by Reverend Jason in cases where desperate need is found.

***The Communion Stewards***

**Music**

**Music Co-ordinator– Rachael Prince**

**Regular organists/pianists/musicians: Rachael Prince, Keith Crawford, Peter Hunt, Katie Lowe, Jane Wilson, Laura Jones**

**Orchestra: Rachael Prince (organiser) plus 4-12 members**

**Singing Group: Rachael Prince (organiser) plus 15-20 members**

Our main aim is to produce worship enhancing music in whatever style is appropriate to the service.

Since Jason has joined us, we have looked at ways in which we can introduce new music into our worship. In November we held a music morning, inviting anyone who wished to come and explore new music together, some of which has been used in worship since then. After a break, the singing group returned at Christmas, leading the worship at our annual carol service. We were pleased to welcome new members and to be able to join with Adrienne Cooke in one of our pieces.

The orchestra continue to provide valuable support to our services and in addition to this we have established a weekly singing group to lead the congregation. This has enabled more members of the congregation to offer their talents in worship.

***Music Coordinator– Rachael Prince***

**Church Flowers**

The Church flower group provide fresh flowers to decorate the worship area every week. For Harvest Festival we also make around 24 mini decorations to be distributed to our housebound friends. At Christmas we put up decorations which include greenery and at Easter we fill the windows with spring flowers.

There are only 10 members in our group, we would welcome anyone who would like to buy a bunch of flowers to display or perhaps pick some flowers from their garden.

The flowers are donated.

***Mary Bradley***

**Display Window (Wesley Room)**

The window continues to be an important part of our outreach in telling people outside the church something about our church activities here at High Street. The displays also promote mission, which is such a vital element of our Christian message.

The displays are changed on a monthly rota with a variety of groups dressing the window to promote a Christian theme according to the time of year and the related activities that may be happening within our church.

The window always looks interesting and is, hopefully, also a source of inspiration. A very big thank you to everybody who contributes to the window displays.

***Tina Limmer***

**Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is an important aspect of our church life. It is essential that policies and procedures are in place to ensure that everybody in the church and those that use our premises are kept safe from any sort of harm and to prevent, as far as possible, incidents from arising and, if they do, to ensure that they are efficiently and appropriately dealt with.

The following is taken from High Street’s safeguarding policy:

‘High Street Methodist Church strives to ensure that its safeguarding policy…are brought to the attention of everyone and applied to everyone…This is not the same as treating each person as though they were under suspicion. It is more a matter of taking sensible measures to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults, and recognising that it is the responsibility of us all.

A robust safeguarding policy, if followed, also serves to protect those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults who may inadvertently place themselves in a vulnerable position...Malicious accusations can also wreck the lives of those against whom they are directed.

‘We are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God’s purpose for their lives, the life of the community and the life of the world. We seek to safeguard all members of this church community, irrespective of whether they are Church members, adherents or visitors, and irrespective of their age.

*‘We are committed to:*

* *the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults*
* *the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable*
* *the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.’*

The safeguarding reference group is made up of the minister, centre manager, senior steward, safeguarding officer, minister’s PA, a church member involved with children and families, a Newland representative, the pastoral secretary and a property representative. When a health and safety officer is appointed, they will also attend.

The group meets four times a year and as required. Its duties include:

* ensuring that High Street’s and Newland’s Safeguarding Policies are reviewed annually
* ensuring safe recruitment through role descriptions, DBS checks, required training etc
* ensuring that everything connected to safeguarding is recorded and monitored in accordance with Methodist Church guidelines
* ensuring that all those who rent rooms either have their own safeguarding policies or sign to agree to adhere to the church’s policy
* following through correctly and fully any safeguarding concerns

Group members attend District Safeguarding Days to ensure that we are updated as to best practice.

Ann-Marie Purkiss does most of the enormous amount of paperwork all the above entails. This is much appreciated.

However, in the words of the safeguarding policy, ‘it is the responsibility of each of us to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of all people on our premises or involved in any of our activities’, not just the Safeguarding Reference Group.

*Ruth Lapworth - Safeguarding Officer*

**Work Among Children and Young People – On A Sunday**

**Junior Church**

Junior Church meets on Sunday mornings at 10.30am, except on the first Sunday of the month, when our Junior Church members attend Messy Church in the afternoon 4-6pm. We currently have one group with around 6 children regularly attending and one or two others coming occasionally. We are using the Roots materials. We do not have the numbers to run a group for young people at the moment. Although it can be a challenge preparing materials for a small group of mixed ages, we have been encouraged to hear from parents that their children are keen to come along. As leaders we are enjoying building up relationships with the children. We have quite a small team of helpers. We would love to have a few more people willing to assist our leaders, even on an occasional basis.

***Helen James***

**Cradle Roll**

There have been four baptisms this year meaning there are a total of six children remaining on the Cradle Roll.

As in previous years these families are visited on the occasion of their child’s birthday until their third birthday and also with the seasonal church newsletters. Children are invited to join our Junior Church at the age of 3 and families invited to Messy Church too.

The last baptism was in July 2019 and we hope there will be more baptisms this year to celebrate with Jason once we are able to re-open our church.

***Linda Burbage, Cradle Roll Secretary***

**House Groups**

**Colwell Drive House Group**

The Group meets on a Monday morning and is quite well attended with regular attendees. We enjoy fellowship with each other and sharing our insights into the current bible study. New members are always.

***Elgin Crewe***

**New Yatt Road House Group**

**Numbers involved** We are a morning Group and this means that we have a high percentage of retired members but their loyalty to the group remains outstanding. We have 12 people on our list and an average attendance of 10. We meet twice each month. This year, sadly, we have lost Carmen Sherwood who sadly passed away recently. She was with us for **many** years and greatly loved.

**Aims** Like all House Groups we aim to grow in faith and understanding by fellowship and study in a home setting. There is the usual sense of responsibility for each other and a recognition that God can speak through all members in conversation and discussion together. An extended prayer time is central to our meetings.

**Progress** Our numbers stay reasonably stable but advancing age have inevitably have brought serious illness to a number of our members

**Church Mission Statement** We believe our meetings are fully in accord with the Church Mission Statement

**2020 Crisis** As with us all, the shut down just before Easter prevented the completion of our Lent Course but this was compensated by the inspirational activity of keeping in touch with each other and offers of help to our more vulnerable members .If confirmation for the bonding within House Group was needed, this is it.

***Ken Mumford***

**Thursday Night House group**

**Fortnightly @ 8pm, 235 Thorney Leys OX28 5NY 01993 773651**

**Group size: 9 New Members very welcome!**

Our main aims are to meet regularly during term time for fun and fellowship and to study. We like to choose material that is challenging and has a direct impact on our everyday lives.

More members are always welcome.

***Rachael & Ian Prince***

**Seedhouse House Group**

We continue to meet regularly on the first Tuesday evening of the month. Last year I was pleased to report that we had added two new members to our group and we are delighted that these two members continue to attend and indeed have offered a very, very valuable input into our group. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel a couple of meetings and indeed members have not always been able to attend for health and personal reasons but nonetheless when we do all meet we all appreciate each other and continue to enjoy the fellowship we share – our meetings continue to be very much blessed with laugher.

Our study of St Mark’s Gospel – using a study guide – has proved very interesting and we will continue with this when we are able to meet again.

***Val Seedhouse***

**Vanner Road House Group**

Vanner Road House group meets on the first and third Tuesday evenings every month except August, including the occasional social evening. We have 14 members and others would be very welcome to join us.

Our aim is to meet for Bible Study, prayer, and friendship. We enjoy lively, informal discussion, respect each other’s point of view, encourage each other in exploring passages from the Bible, try to apply what we learn for living in today's world and help each other grow in our spiritual journeys.

During 2019-20 we have studied The Book of Ruth in the Old Testament, "Talking of God Together" and working through Acts of the Apostles chapters 1-12.

***Anne Crawford and Mike Limmer***

**Witney View House Group**

We meet for prayer, Bible Study, coffee and fellowship on the first and third Mondays each month from 10.30am until noon, at Swinbrook Court.

We are currently working our way through the gospel of John. Before that we completed the *Talking Jesus* course.

For more information, please contact our hostess, Helen Mattinson.

**Women’s Fellowship**

The Fellowship has continued with the pattern of meeting on the 2nd and 4th Mondays during school term times as this is the preferred structure of the ladies, several of whom have family responsibilities in school holidays.

There are currently over 30 names on the membership list but, as previously several members are unable to attend the meetings because they are now house-bound, have family caring responsibilities, or health reasons.  They are prayed for regularly and are visited by other ladies from the Fellowship.

The meetings, which are open to all interested parties, continue to be lively and informal, but do reflect the caring nature of the Fellowship who pray for each other, for local issues and worldwide concerns.  The range of the programme is varied with the occasional quiz, member participation events, and speakers drawn from the circuit, other churches in the area and local charity organisations, with many having a Christian message.  The meetings usually end with ‘Tea, Chat and Cake’ in the coffee bar.

A collection is taken at each meeting and, after a donation has been given to High Street, refreshments costs covered, and a ‘Thank you’ gift given to speakers, a contribution is sent to Circuit Mission, other UK and foreign charities.

in November we were responsible for providing the refreshments prior to the Operation Christmas Child Celebration.  During the year, the ladies continue to contribute knitted hats, scarves, mittens and other items for the Shoe-Box Appeal.

Thanks to Anne Crawford for providing such a varied and interesting programme, to Shirley Simpson for managing the finances, Barbara Partlett for making the attractive birthday cards, Margaret Lawley for her musical talents in leading the singing, and to all the ladies who attend the meetings ensuring that is truly a ‘Women’s Fellowship’.

***Ann Worrall***

**Newland Methodist Chapel**

6 Helpers

26 attending

Our aim is to bless the people of Newland with a place from which to pray, spread the gospel and provide a venue where people can meet and find friends.

We have a meal and meeting with guest speakers each Thursday evening which includes worship, prayer and speakers on a variety of topics from Japan to Besom, Gaza and Open Doors . Jason asked us to give him a list of questions we would like to ask God – things we find difficult perhaps. He has been working through these with us and we have had some very good and challenging evenings with bible study, discussion and comments.

We have a drop in one Saturday morning per month for free tea, coffee and cake.

A formal act of worship is conducted on the fourth Sunday of each month preceded by a soup lunch.

We have a drop in for games, jigsaw and chat twice a month with refreshments.

Our Chapel continues to bring Christ to our community by being a loving inclusive fellowship, with a Christian wayside pulpit outside. The fellowship is very supportive to all who come. We invited the community to Carols and had a packed Chapel at Christmas. We were hoping to visit and invite people at Easter but we must pray that the light of Christ will shine in the area of Newland while the doors have to remain shut.

***Dave Richardson***

**In-Touch**

In-Touch is a free bi-monthly magazine by and for the three Methodist fellowships in Witney and is available at High Street, Davenport Road Methodist Church and Newland Methodist Church. In this way the magazine brings something of the Good News of Jesus to our community.

I’m the editor. Items may be slightly changed for reasons of clarification and space and most are reproduced. Opinions/thoughts expressed are those of the named contributor.

In-Touch is not only for us within the church, it also provides a window for non-churched and de-churched people as to what we are about as Christian communities and individuals. As such it is important to show that the Good News of Jesus is for everyone, that God loves them, that the Kingdom of Heaven is here and now and that people who call themselves Christians are people of joy and hope as well as being flawed human beings. It’s important to demonstrate that the Church and people of God are fully engaged in the business of the world – hence articles on Holocaust Memorial Day, World AIDS Day etc. In this way the magazine reflects High Street’s mission statement.

E-In-Touch is produced for those who want to view the magazine online. It is also put on the website, with contact details of individuals removed.

Thanks to all who contribute articles and ideas for In-Touch, particularly those who provide regular copy with news about members and activities in the church fellowships.

Whilst I am very happy to continue as editor, if anybody else would like to take the role on, please do get in touch.

***Ruth Lapworth, Editor***

**The Boys Brigade 1st Witney Company**

**Junior Section**

**1st Witney Boys Brigade Church**

**Membership & Staffing**

At the end of last session we were unsure if we could start back in September having lost 3 boys and 1 helper due to family problems. However we decided to continue and started back in September. We had a turnout of 5 members, this dwindled to 4 when Toby decided to leave the company after 9 years’ service to study on his school work.

We had a new member Rowan who joined in January making our membership stand at –

4 Juniors ( 8 – 11 years ) 1 Company Section ( 11 – 15 years )

We were also lucky to have Wayne Williams volunteer to become a helper to join Chris, Colin and myself

**Church**

The Company has attended 2 church parades, Harvest Festival in September and our own Annual Enrolment in January which had a full turnout by the boys, but not the staff. As normal we took part in the towns Remembrance Parade where we joined up with the GB.

During the session we have various members of the church come in and do a God slot with the boys on a Thursday evening usually once a month.

We have run a successful coffee morning raising funds for our own Company and were invited to the opening of The Meeting Point to promote BB.

**Competitions**

We have taken part in some Oxfordshire BB competitions including Juniors Ten Pin Bowling at Banbury Bowl where we came joint 4th plus Uni Hoc / Football which we hosted at High Street.

**Awards**

In September the BBHQ started a new Juniors badge scheme covering subjects: Get Active, Get Adventurous, Get Creative, Get Into the Bible, Get Involved and Get Learning. These have covered subjects from conkers, science experiments, crafts, world book day and of course games. Under the new scheme there are project badges so the boys are currently making bird boxes.

**Events**

Thanks to the help of Kings School letting us hire their minibus we have managed to take the boys out Ten Pin Bowling in Oxford and to the Fireworks Display at Witney Lakes.

For Christmas they enjoyed a meal at Pizza Express in Witney paid for by the captain!

**Future**

Like all BB Companies and Organisations the company is currently suspended, but the boys can still get involved doing their badge activities as BBHQ is producing weekly Activity Sheets called #BBatHOME. Their efforts are uploaded to our twitter and website feeds for everyone to see and members can keep in touch with each other through our Whats App Group.

I will over the next few weeks set up a Company Facebook Page to help with the current situation and promote BB.

The session as been challenging, with Colin taking timeout to look after his mother in law, numbers being low and now with the Coronavirous. We pray that every member stays safe and well and that when we return in the summer or September we can continue to Advance Christs Kingdom among boys.

Email – 1witney@boys-brigade.org.uk

www.1witney.boys-brigade.org.uk

Twitter - @1stWitneyBB

***Mark Tooley - Captain***

**2nd Witney Guides**

**Members**

The unit currently has 17 guides with 11 spaces for new guides to join aged 10 – 13.

The unit is run by a team of leaders Becky Raven, Sophie Raven and Allison Warren Julie Harris helps at the unit on a regular basis whilst Sophie Raven is at university.

**About Us**

*Guides have an exciting and varied programme designed to inspire and challenge girls from 10-14*

*Girlguiding Website*

We are continuing to work on the new Guide section programme which was launched in July 2018. The take part in a weekly programme of activities based on the 6 programme themes -

know myself express myself

have adventures take action

skills for my future be well

Activities we have undertaken in the last year include –

* Plastics promises where we looked at how we could reduce our plastic use.
* Devising and cooking healthy recipes, a workout with a fitness instructor and looking at how we deal with stress for our Be well skills builder badge.
* Planning food for our sleepover, choosing and learning campfire songs, designing our own campsites and practising pitching tents for our Camp skills builder.
* In October we had a Robots evening where the guides had fun programming mini robots.

**Development**

We aim to provide the guides with a safe girl only space in which to undertake activities both in and outside the meeting place. The guides take part in activities both as a whole unit and in their patrols. We currently have 3 patrols which are led by a patrol leader who is assisted by her patrol second. We encourage the guides to develop their leadership skills by becoming Patrol leaders and Seconders. We are also encouraging guides to lead games and activities.

**Achievements**

The Guides continue to work on the new programme and awards. The guides have completed the Life Skills and Be Well skills builder badges as a unit. Skills builder badges are badges which are gained by completing 5 activities based on one of the 6 themes as a guide unit or patrol.

In February 2020 we award our first theme awards, these are gained by completing the following -

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Guides need the following to gain a theme award  | Example for - Be Well theme award |
| 5 hours of unit meeting activities from cards  | Activities at guide meeting, residentials or activity days  |
| 1 interest badge  | Mixology  |
| 1 skills builder badge – completed at guides  | Be Well stage 4 Skills builder  |

Individual guides have gained mixology, meditation and fitness badges.

Becky Raven completed her going away scheme qualification which enables her to lead residential events.

**Special Projects**

In November 2019 we had an endangered animal sleepover at which the guides completed the ‘hang like a sloth’ challenge badge. The guides painted pictures of sloths, made sock sloths and donated money to adopt a Sloth at the Cotswold Wildlife park.

The guides asked if we could camp out in winter so they could gain their winter sleep out badge. On 29th February 2020 15 brave guides camped outside and gained their winter seasons badge. Fortunately, it wasn’t too cold!

**Church Mission Statement**

We have contributed to the mission statement of the church by serving our local community through community service projects.

We have taken part in the Church Shoe Box service, St George`s Day Parade and Witney Town Remembrance Day service.

The guides donated money to adopt a Sloth at Cotswold Wildlife Park.

Guides took part in an activity called ‘K is for Kindness’ where the guides thought about ways that they could help other people.

We have spaces for new guides age 10 to 14. Please get in touch if you are interested in joining the unit or finding out more.

***Allison Warren – Leader***

**Events & Social Group**

The events and social group has 5 members but are generously helped at events by our church family and friends. We have one representative on the leadership team and one representative on church council .

The Events and Social Groups has met every couple of months to plan and organise a programme of differing events with the aim of bringing together and enhancing the fellowship of our church family through social and music events and to facilitate an evangelical event.

These aims were added to following a discussion with our new minister and his wife after their arrival:

1. A clearer emphasis on mission and thinking of events that would appeal to non-church goers which everyone could be encouraged to invite their non-church going friends .

2. Arranging an opportunity bringing the church family together for teaching and fellowship and really getting to know each other .

2018/19 was a quiet year with the change of minister.

In June we ran another successful and well supported skittles evening and planned to run another in April 2020 which has had to be delayed.

We took our turn on dressing the church window.

We had a bring-and-share harvest supper with homemade entertainment in September.

It was decided not to run a winter event as there were many other competing event calls on people’s time in the run up to Christmas and the children’s theatre production and t would need some church funding.

We spent the time planning next year events.

Bournemouth was the preferred location in a poll of those who expressed an interest in a day out at the seaside. This was planned for June 2020 but has had to be delayed and may happen later in the year.

We have been looking for an event to bring friends to in October, a Christian comedian was one idea.

The idea of a church weekend away in 2021 and this was recently endorsed by church council.

We pray that with Christ, High Street and our new minister and his wife we can work towards bringing our community to Christ and provide another opportunity to show devotion and support to each other.

***Janet Buckle (chair)***

**Mission and Outreach**

**Children & Families Work**

**Toddler Groups**

**Wesley Baby and Toddler Group**

Number of organisers and helpers: 7

Number of those attending group: 20-25 carers plus children, (80 families on the register)

**Aims**

* To provide a safe environment for parents and carers of young children and babies to meet for play and social interaction.
* To share our Christian faith with the families attending the group.

**How we carry out our aims**

* The group has been meeting the needs of the local community for over thirty years. We provide a genuine welcome to all regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, mental or physical ability. Our volunteers are welcoming and friendly. We are trying to get to know our families, build positive relationships and trust.
* We select our resources and plan activities to meet the needs of visiting families. We evaluate the sessions – formally and informally - to improve the quality of what is offered to families and children.

**Progress and Achievements**

* We offer a good variety of resources and play opportunities to support young children’s developmental needs. The toys, craft activities and sensory play offer young children and babies an opportunity to explore different textures, colours and shapes, use their imagination, play alone as well as alongside others. Each session finishes with the nursery rhymes sung by our volunteers. The singing sessions are very popular with the families as they provide an opportunity to come together and participate in a shared activity.
* Since September we have introduced a weekly Bible story to which everyone is invited. We meet upstairs in the Radford room. Those who chose to come upstairs for the Bible story start with a reflective activity. We write or draw on a small piece of paper what makes us happy and gives us joy. Then we put our notes into the ‘Thanks’ jar. Recently we have added another dimension to this. We write or draw on another piece of paper what we are not proud of, or what we would like to say sorry for. Afterwards we usually play a game and sit down in a small circle for a very short Bible story and prayer, both are accompanied with hand actions. We have our mascot, Larry the Lamb, which helps us during the story time. We have 3-4 families who come regularly for the Bible story in the Radford room. At the end of the session we give the parents and carers the handout with the Bible story of the week as well as a more in-depth exploration of the Bible story for the adults. Some parents chose not to bring their children to the story time, and instead collect the handouts.
* As a church run group, we are committed to bringing Christ to the local community by serving the local families in the ways outlined above. We are keen to draw families deeper into our community through genuine love, support and friendship. We are also trying to introduce our families to our church by inviting them to our Sunday worship and church run events such as Messy Church. Our story time offers families an opportunity to explore spirituality and faith at the level appropriate to young children as well as adults with very little or no faith. As a group we need to develop more missional opportunities however long it would take. Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus Anna Pile has been in touch with the families via the group Facebook page. She has been posting ideas for the shared family activities which, inter alia, include simple interactive prayers.

**Witney Grandparents’ Group**

Number of organisers and helpers: 6-8

Number of those attending: 15-20 grandparents and approximately 20 toddlers

**Aims**

* To provide grandparents an opportunity to spend some quality time with their grandchildren in a safe and welcoming environment.
* To provide grandparents an opportunity to network, support each other and build relationships.
* To provide the young children with good play opportunities to fit their developmental needs.
* Initially the Grandparents’ group was not set up as a faith group. The church was merely facilitating it. While the group has been maintaining a secular ethos, its leaders have permitted the Circuit Children and Families Worker to offer the grandparents and children opportunities to explore Christian faith at the time of major Christian festivals, such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest.

**Progress and Achievements**

* The group enjoys a warm and friendly atmosphere. Many grandparents have been friends for years if not decades. There is a community spirit and genuine support among the members of the group. The grandparents take it in turns to provide snacks and craft activities.
* The Circuit Children’s Worker has been asked to help the leaders with ideas for craft and sensory play. Many of her suggestions were well received, and some became quick favourites (e.g. water beads). This helped the Children’s Worker to establish good relationships with the leadership of the group and allowed her to introduce a faith aspect into the group activities.
* On the request of the group leadership the Children’s Worker has completed a Paediatric First Aid course to ensure that there is a First Aider present at the sessions.
* Helen James and Anna Pile have been providing the group with practical support. They have been doing their best to meet the needs of the group and thus to communicate the message of God’s love through their actions. As the Children’s Worker was trying to build good relationships with the members of the group, she sought opportunities to be more intentional in sharing the gospel. Since she had joined the group, they celebrated Harvest and Christmas. During Advent the group welcomed the Posada (a travelling Nativity). Since recently during the outbreak of the Coronavirus all our activities have been shifted online. The Children’s Workers have been keeping in touch with the members of the group via Facebook providing them with the ideas for children’s activities at home. There has been some positive feedback by the time of this report.

**Messy Church**

Messy Church is held on the first Sunday of each month 4-6pm and is open to all! It’s an opportunity to find out more about God in a relaxed, informal atmosphere. We welcome people of all ages, including many young families. All members of our Junior Church come along to Messy Church when they can, but we also have other families and individuals, who attend regularly. Average attendance over the last 4 months since December has been 32 (15 adults and 17 children), with four new families having joined us at least once during this time. We have a committed team of over 25 people, who work together to prepare an inspiring and welcoming occasion for those attending. We are delighted that Jason and Anna have joined us in this exciting outreach work.

Each session includes a mixture of creative, reflective and more energetic activities, a short time of worship and a meal. This year in addition to celebrating Christmas together, our themes have included parables and stories about Jesus, such as the Lost Sheep and the wedding in Cana. At the beginning of this year we also celebrated the fourth birthday of our Messy Church!

Messy Church is free, but any donations given are shared 50/50 between our running costs and a charity. This year the charities have included Teams4u (shoeboxes), The Porch and Home Start Oxfordshire.

We are very grateful to all of those who have shared their gifts to help us build up and support this part of our church family over the last year. If you’d like to be part of our team we always welcome more help. At the moment we’d particularly appreciate anyone willing to help buy, prepare and serve food.

We pray that we will be able to continue to make Messy Church an exciting, welcoming and inspiring place to explore the Christian faith.

***Helen James, Pastoral Lay Worker, Children & Families***

**‘Experience’ schools visits for our 4 festivals**

We have a team of about 20 people, including some Anglicans and two from Dav. Road, who lead groups when schools visit, and another team of about 10 who prepare refreshments for the staff and children.

For each of the 4 visits we have 8/9 classes totalling about 260 children. Year groups come as follows:

*Experience Harvest*, year 4

*Experience Christmas*, year 3

*Experience Easter*, year 5

*Experience Pentecost*, year 6.

Thus each child could visit this church once a year over the 4 years of Junior school.

Springfield, the school for children with special needs, bring a group of children to *Experience Harvest* and *Christmas.*

**Aims**

Our aim is to tell the stories of our faith to primary school children, so that they might hear what Christmas, Easter etc are really about. Through these visits they hear of the significant events in the life of Jesus, and ponder how these stories connect with their own lives today. Each class comes with several adult helpers as well as the teacher, so they too hear the stories. We are sowing seeds though we may not see the harvest . . . It is also really important to us that the children feel welcomed and have an enjoyable experience in this church.

**Progress and Achievements**

Of course, we are very dependent on the generous giving of time from all of our team. Inevitably people leave the team for a variety of reasons, so we are always pleased to welcome new people.

Our new minister, Jason, agreed to lead a session on Pentecost for the team as some had felt they could not lead the children as they didn’t fully understand for themselves. Jason showed how various elements of the story in Acts linked with events in the Old Testament, and we looked at each of the scripts and amended them in the light of our studies. Everyone was able to attend and found the session very helpful – so helpful that we then organised another session to look through the scripts for Easter and amend those. It has been very disappointing that after all this preparation we were only able to have 2 sessions for Easter before we had to close due to Coronavirus. I was able then to deliver to each school the Easter eggs we would have given the children at the end of their session, thus I met the school secretaries who told me how much the children enjoyed their visits.

It has been good too to welcome Anna, our Children and Families’ worker, who has been very supportive of this work. Through her taking of school assemblies we hope that another school might join us in September.

In a normal year about 1000 children and over 100 adults visit High St church to learn about our Christian story and our faith, so this this work is a very important part of this church’s outreach in Witney.

At the end of each session, the children are asked to write on a Post It note the most important thing they have learnt, so here are a few gems:

* Everything is something to celebrate
* Caring for everyone even if you don’t like them.
* Christmas isn’t just about getting presents.
* The LOVE!

***Brenda Woods – Experience Co-ordinator***

**Coffee Bar**

What a difference a year makes! The Coffee Bar and kitchen is now completely refurbished and looking very smart. After a few minor adjustments, we can say that the volunteers and our customers are very happy with the light, bright, clean, airy surroundings that have been created. And it’s not going to stop here. We have plans to improve and enhance our service and outreach from the Coffee Bar in the year ahead and thereby promote the mission of the Coffee Bar as a safe and friendly **Meeting Point.**

May I take this opportunity to thank all our many volunteers, about 40 of you, and the Refurbishment Committee, particularly Isabel Lee, for her many hours of hard work. It has been a pleasure to work with you all.

***Tina Limmer – Coffee Bar Coordinator***

**Knit ‘n’ Natter**

Knit ‘n’ Natter began with three ladies eight years ago and now there are about 20 ladies of all ages that come regularly. They sit in the Coffee Bar area between 10am – noon each week. Not only is it a good way of meeting other ladies (gentlemen are welcome too, however!) but you can socialise while being creative. Knitting and wool craft has made a big come-back so get yourself some needles and wool and come and join us. You don’t have to be a knitter just come and natter if you want!

We have a mixture of people who are church members and people who are not. We do our own projects but also knit for the Special Care Baby Unit at the JR, CLIC Sargent, Christmas Shoeboxes and various other charities

***Knit’n’ Natter Group***

**World Church Committee**

This committee has 8 members and meets twice a year in Spring and Autumn. We aim to involve and educate members of the congregation to the needs of the wider world and in accordance with our mission statement: “determined to support our fellow Christians”.

We have continued to work with these aims during 2018 – 2019 through our involvement in:

**World Church Sunday**: On Sunday May 19th 2019Olubunmi Olayisade (Bunmi who used to worship at Davenport Road) joined our worship. She is the Partner Co-ordinator for Africa in ‘World Church Relationships’ and she told us about the work of the Methodist Church in Africa. We had some great fellowship together and learnt about the various projects funded by the Methodist Church.

Sadly due to Covid19 we are not able to hold the World Church service for 2020 which was due to happen on Sunday May 10th 2020:The service would have included a speaker from ROPE to will tell us more about this charity. Rope is a charity which has been going for 30 years and has 21 partners in 16 countries across the world. In the absence of the service you can find information on ***rope.org.uk.***

* **Christian Aid** collection: envelopes will be given out at HS on a suitable Sunday. As there are no house to house collections now in Witney, this is our opportunity to support this valuable work.
* **Teams4U** organisation went well in 2019. A total of **2,300 boxes were sent from Witney.** Teams 4 U sent **: 64,061** shoeboxes in total to displaced people in Bosnia; orphanages and poor communities in Romania; deprived communities in Moldova and for the first time boxes have been sent to Uganda.

More empty shoeboxes are needed & extra Saturday coffee mornings have been booked to raise funds.

* **Water Harvest**: We continue to give our small change on a Sunday morning in the large glass bottles, but there are boxes at the back if the church for those who would prefer to take a box home. Once full they can be given to Ken Mumford or Jane Heath to empty. This loose change goes to increase the availability and accessibility of water to the people in Rajasthan, India.
* **Fair Trade**: There is a vacancy for someone to promote this at HS. There is concern that the profile of Fair Trade goods needs to be raised. The supermarkets are now selling less Fair Trade goods than previously.
* **Besom:** Many at High Street give generously to Besom, buying a few extra provisions weekly with their own shopping, but this could always be increased.

50% of the coffee bar profits for last year were divided between the Street children in Kolkata (25%) and the Karibuni Trust (25%). The charity box on the coffee bar continues to raise funds for both Kolkata and Karibuni charities. The total sent to GNCEM Kolkata was £1927.82 (including a generous donation from Derrick King who gives all the profits from making his bird tables etc to help these street children in India) and to Karibuni was £1311.21. This money will make a great difference to the lives of children living on the streets in both these countries.

 If you have a heart for Mission we would love you to join with us in our work.

***Jane Heath***

**Christmas Shoeboxes**

**Administrative Information**

* Name of Group Shoebox Team
* Number of volunteers between 25 and 40
* We have 9 members in the Shoebox Team

**Aims**

The aim of the group is to organise the collection, checking and packing of shoeboxes to be transported to countries like Romania, Belarus and Bosnia where some of the children are living in desperate circumstances. The boxes are filled with toys, toiletries, writing materials, games and sweets to delight the children, most of whom have no possessions at all.

The team tries to involve as many people from our community as possible in this activity and promote a warm and friendly atmosphere in which to check the boxes.

* We invite churches, schools and local businesses to join with us and be collection points for the boxes.
* The team hold coffee mornings to raise funds for top up items and transport costs.
* Advertise in local village newsletters and on our website asking if anyone would like to be involved in knitting, donating, checking, packing or helping in any other way to please get in touch.
* The send-off evening involves the local Fireman, Police and volunteers to load the crates onto the lorry, refreshments are served and the Witney Town Band play carols for us.

**Progress and Achievements**

* The volunteers were brilliant and even though we are short of space at times everyone gets on so well and does a wonderful job. The atmosphere is always very friendly. We shared the worship area with a group of charity workers selling cards once again and that brought in extra people who came to see what we were doing. As a result we had some new helpers and more top ups.
* The Celebration Evening was arranged by Reverend Jason Cooke and Jane Heath, during the service all the boxes were blessed. The evening was well attended and a representative from Teams4U gave a talk about the affect the boxes have on the children. Thanks to Women’s Fellowship tea, coffee and cake were served before the event.
* Teams4U were really supportive and it was a great experience working with them once again. High Street Methodist Church has been sending boxes for over 22 years. Last year we sent 2,230 boxes full of love.

***Marie Cotton***

**Lunchtime Recitals**

The church hosted its 20th season of lunchtime recitals on five Thursdays between April and November 2019.

These recitals continue to be an important part of the church’s outreach; the number in the audience again averaged at about 50 per concert, mostly people who have no other contact with the church. They are all grateful for this opportunity to enjoy classical music in the informal and friendly, but acoustically excellent, setting of our town centre church. The age spread is wide, and both young children and the disabled can integrate easily within the audience.

The recitals, to which entry is always free of charge, are given by ‘Lunchtime Recitals’, an autonomous organisation which evolved in 2014 from the small group of musicians who had provided the artistic input to the recitals from their start. Its raison d’être is to put on regular lunchtime recitals by professional musicians at High St. The church provides the venue free of charge but ‘Lunchtime Recitals’ provides everything else, including all performance planning and costs. The artistic director is West Oxfordshire mezzo-soprano Annabel Molyneaux and it is thanks to her enthusiasm, ability, and generosity with her time and talents, that the recitals are able to continue. Her careful planning of each recital around a particular theme always ensures an inventive and entertaining mix of music. She, her regular pianist Peter Cowdrey, and her husband Paul, speaker and occasional bass, perform at all the recitals but with different guests each time. Last year’s guests brought to us music for violin, viola, viols, double bass, ukelele, flute, trumpet, piano and mezzo-soprano.

It is considered important by both partners in this outreach that the recitals remain free of charge. This means that ‘Lunchtime Recitals’ has to work hard to keep in financial balance, but both the District and Town Councils, recognising the importance to the local community, give invaluable grants. Individuals can (and do) help by becoming Friends of Lunchtime Recitals and there is also a small income from programme sales. Of vital importance too is the generosity shown by the musicians, all of them professional, in accepting fees that are significantly less than they could get elsewhere, and for this both ‘Lunchtime Recitals’ and the church are most grateful.

Finally, I’d like to thank Mary Perry who has continued to attend every recital to sell programmes and give a warm High St. welcome to audience members as they arrive.

***Tom Jones (High St. liaison officer with ‘Lunchtime Recitals’)***

**Methodist Homes for the Aged (MHA)**

Many thanks to High Street for continuing to support Methodist Homes in its work of caring for older people in care home and independent living schemes, including the nearby ‘Homestead’ at Carterton. Last year, High Street donated £161.50 out of a circuit total of £588.50 These amounts do not include gift-aid, which is dealt with directly by MHA.

MHA Sunday will be in the autumn this year, and new envelopes will be issued in due course.

Details to follow, when I know them…

***Hilary Ewing, acting circuit secretary/treasurer for MHA***

**Cream Tea Outreach (monthly)**

The ethos of the Cream Teas is to provide a place where people can meet, share conversation and form friendships while enjoying light refreshments. We see this part of the Church’s Outreach Mission, especially to the lonely, elderly and vulnerable people in our church and community. We are supported in this venture by generous donations from the Rotary Club and Witney Lions and we expend our gratitude to these organisations.

While we have a small core of patrons, mostly from outside the church family, it would be wonderful if more church members attended these teas to extend the love and warmth of our Christian fellowship to all attend.

Booking is essential as we would hate to run out of food! Details can be found displayed on the poster on the church notice board. We look forward to seeing you soon.

***The Cream Tea Team***

**Inter Church Relations**

**Churches Together in Witney and District**

Churches Together Council meets three times a year and at other times when needed. Lay and ordained representatives from most of the churches in the town regularly attend. 2019-20 Chair is Pastor Jason Huffadine of the Witney Community Church.

Ann Worrall and I are CTiW representatives for High Street. I am also its secretary. CTiW aims to foster and encourage ecumenical cooperation between the various denominations in Witney and District.

High Street always supports the annual events organised by CTiW including the Good Friday Walk of Witness and act of worship in the Market Square and the Sunrise Service on Easter Day held in the garden at the Congregational Church. Other events are organised during the year. There are usually some United Services held during the year..

Soup Lunches take place in various churches in Witney during Lent. High Street again hosted one on 16th March 2020 in aid of Christian Aid.

Street Pastors and the Late night Cafe in the Market Square also come under the umbrella of CTiW. Stevie Green, one of our members, is a Street Pastor.

There is a monthly Prayer Breakfast held at High Street on the fourth Saturday morning and more members of High Street would be very welcome to attend.

During 2019-20 CTiW participated in national prayer events and members of High Street were involved in 'Thy Kingdom Come' Ascension to Pentecost during a week in May 2019.. High Street is also taking part in the national HOPE prayer initiative 2020 praying every 20th of the month at 20.00 hours for 20 minutes.
Information about events taking place in member churches is circulated regularly to give the opportunity for attendance by those from all denominations.
Sadly events planned for Good Friday and Easter Day 2020 have had to be cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

***Anne Crawford***

**World Day of Prayer: March 6th 2020**

**Theme: Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk**.

The service this year was prepared by Christian women of Zimbabwe. We shared in this very beautiful and thoughtful service at 10.30am at Holy Trinity Church, Wood Green. We were encouraged to reflect on the difficulties and unrest that have plagued Zimbabwe for many years. The ladies shared the challenges they have met and their hopes for the future as they journey towards full reconciliation.

The World day of Prayer is a wonderful opportunity to share in worship with women all around the globe, all using the same service. In the UK over 5,600 services were held, on this same day.

A preparation day was held on 24th January, led by Judi Holloway, which was extremely helpful in giving us an understanding of this country. She also reflected on John 5 :2-9a a passage chosen to support the theme of Peace, Reconciliation and Love.

Please look out for information about next years’ service prepared by the women in Vanuatu themed: ”Build on a Strong Foundation”.

***Jane Heath***

**Property**

The Property Team meets monthly to deal with the practical details of maintaining and running the premises, with the larger Finance and Property Committee meeting three to four times per year to consider matters of policy.

We are grateful to our paid staff Mary Willis, Robin Edmunds, Malcolm Cartner, Jason Thomas and Graham Beechey who keep our buildings clean and secure. Robin Hambidge has recently left us and we are employing a contract cleaner in his place. We also appreciate the many volunteers (including Man Friday and the Coffee Bar helpers) who do so much to keep the premises open, tidy, safe and welcoming.

At the time of writing, our premises are closed due to Covid-19 and our paid premises staff have been placed on furlough. Like everyone else, we look forward to the time when these restrictions will be lifted and our activities can start to recover.

**Use of Premises**

We are pleased to host Volunteer Link-Up, Witney Talking News, U3A, Witney Music Society, the Women's Institute, Guides and Brownies and many other community activities and organisations.

The church flat is let through a managing agent with a one-year tenancy which finishes in November 2020. The tenant for our shop unit has a 5-year lease which finishes in January 2021.

**Major works and Refurbishment Phase 1**

Our buildings are generally in good condition, but with intensively-used premises of some complexity, there are always matters requiring attention. We have had our building and electrical quinquennial inspections during the past year. These highlighted the usual gutter clearing and decoration needs, but did not unearth any major unknown issues.

We are fortunate to have completed Phase 1 of our refurbishment program in January and the Coffee Bar and Kitchen now look beautifully smart and modern. We also installed CCTV to help with security, a new fob-operated office door, an automatic door into the Coffee Bar, and wifi throughout the building for our room users. This work was completed on time and under budget at a cost of £76,000 and was funded by grants from Connexion, District and the Circuit Model Trust Fund (from the sale of the Old School Building).

**Refurbishment Phase 2**

Phase 2 of the refurbishment program includes a complete makeover of the downstairs toilets, automating the front and back doors to improve accessibility, and bringing the audiovisual facilities in the Worship Area up to date. We hoped to start and complete this by the end of 2020, subject to funding, but the work may be delayed by the consequences of the Covid-19 shutdown.

**Health and Safety**

The Property Team ensure that items such as emergency lights and fire extinguishers are checked regularly, and that any property-related hazards are dealt with promptly.

The Church Council remains aware of our responsibilities towards the health and safety of all who use our premises and is still looking for a suitable person to take charge of this work.

***Keith Crawford - Property Secretary***

**The Organ Fund**

Our fine Hill, Norman and Beard pipe organ was opened on 3rd October 1919 by the organist of Christ Church, Oxford. Steven Grahl, the current holder of the post, gave an excellent and well-attended recital on 28th September 2019 to celebrate the organ's 100th birthday.

Harrisons have already renewed three of the five original air reservoirs. We have now raised £17,750 for the last two reservoirs and have placed the order with Harrisons. The work was scheduled for the second half of 2020, but this may be delayed by the virus epidemic.

The last stage of the work is being funded by the proceeds from two recitals and kind gifts from individuals, together with generous grants from the Richard Early Trust, the Bartlett Taylor Trust, the Redwing Trust and the estates of Brian Crawford and Elsie Cobb.

***Keith Crawford***

**Man Friday**

Every Friday morning, from around 9.00 a.m. until 12 noon, sees a gallant band of enthusiastic gentlemen [and a couple of ladies] going busily about their various tasks, designed to keep the church premises running as smoothly as possible.

Some jobs are easy, such as keeping the front & back entrances swept clean, free of rubbish & weeds. Others are more complicated, such as fixing a new fire extinguisher to the wall, repainting the white lines on the outside steps or checking the emergency lights. All jobs are channelled through one co-ordinator with her little list.

As with any large building, there are jobs to suit all the different talents of the members of the Man Friday Group, who have many skills … including chatting & putting the world to rights … and many thanks are due to them for the variety of works they carry out without any complaining!

One talent they all seem to possess is that of enjoying some beautiful cakes at tea-break, some even made by members, especially Phyllis & Harry. So if that tempts you too, we hope you will come and join their happy band. Don’t worry if you can’t make it every week - you will be welcomed whenever you can make it. Have a word with Harry, Keith , Tom , Malcolm , Phyllis, Mike, Margaret, Geoff, Guy, Fred, Robin, or Graham and they will tell you what fun it is!…….Corvid-19 permitting!

By keeping the building in good repair, and a comfortable & welcoming place, we can share the love of Christ with the local community, encouraging them to find out more for themselves.

***Margaret Wright***

**Treasurer’s Report & Accounts**

The accounts of the church have been prepared and are presented below in the format as required by the Charities Commission. These present the full picture of the activities of the church and combine both the normal church operation and the funds for the building projects.

The accounts show an overall surplus of £6,287 (2018: deficit of £828) with unrestricted funds showing a surplus of £7,542 (2018: deficit of £13,409) and restricted funds (mainly the organ fund showing a deficit of £1,255 (2018: surplus of £12,581).

Lettings are up by 6.9% (2018: down by 4.7%) Regular giving (offerings and tax credits) fell by 0.9% (2018: up by 12.9%). Costs, excluding those related to restricted funds, remain in control with a net reduction of 4% (2018: 1.1%) mainly as a result of lower circuit assessment now we are no longer paying extra for the deacon.

Overall church funds have improved over last year with the amount in unrestricted funds increasing to £56,473 (2018: £48,931) which represents 23% (2018: 20%) of annual expenditure. This remains low but is a consequence of the additional funds that have been spent supporting our deacon.

The restricted funds of £16,451 are primarily the funds raised to support the work needed on the organ.

The accounts have been audited and are presented below.

***Ian Prince, ACMA
Treasurer***





**Reserve Policy for High Street Methodist Church for the year end 31st August**

**2019**

We will commence the new financial year with £48,701 Reserve Fund held at CFB and maintain our General Fund of £22,295 held locally with an additional £4,138 of debtors. In 2007 Church Council agreed a Fund target of six months average expenditure (approx £119k) although in recent years we have maintained a position short of this target. Counting only unrestricted funds it is now only 47% of the target. Whilst this can be managed at present it reduces our ability to react if there was an emergency need.

**Policy for Restricted Funds**

Following a review of different donations that we have received, we have identified restricted funds relating to the Organ Fund, The Benevolent Fund, The Cream Tea Fund and the Shoe Boxes. Monies held relating to these funds totalled £16,451 at the 31st August 2019. The monies are held within the general church funds but identified separately within the monthly accounts reporting with income and expenditure allocated accordingly and the outstanding value protected.