

WOOTTON NEW LIFE METHODIST CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT YE 31 AUGUST 2017

The passage of scripture that came to mind for us as I write my final introduction to an annual report as minister of Wootton New Life Methodist Church is this:

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

¹² Brothers and sisters, we ask you to show appreciation to those who are working hard among you and those who are your leaders as they guide and instruct you in the Lord - *they are priceless.* ¹³ When you think about them, let it be with great love in your heart because of all the work they have done. Let peace live *and reign* among you.

¹⁴ Brothers and sisters, we strongly advise you to scold the rebels *who devote their lives to wreaking havoc, to encourage the downcast, to help the sick and weak, and to be patient with all of them.* ¹⁵ Make sure no one returns evil for evil, but always pursue what is good as it affects one another *in the church* but also all people. ¹⁶ Celebrate always, ¹⁷ pray constantly, and ¹⁸ give thanks to God no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. (This is God's will for all of you in Jesus the Anointed.) ¹⁹ Don't suppress the Spirit. ²⁰ Don't downplay prophecies. ²¹ Take a close look at everything, *test it*, then cling to what is good. ²² Put away every form of evil.

²³ So now, may the God of peace *make you His own completely and set you apart from the rest. May your spirit, soul, and body be preserved, kept intact and wholly free from any sort of blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus the Anointed.* ²⁴ For the God who calls you is faithful, and He can be trusted to make it so.

The Voice

It sums up for me what I believe to be at the heart of all we are called to do as individuals and as a church. I am hugely grateful to God for the faith, commitment, effort and sheer hard work that is represented within these pages and carried out by you as we seek to minister to those who live in our growing community.

Personal highlights for me have been

- experiencing the joy of Rock 'n' Roll Messy Church with many children and their parents and occasionally grandparents and a committed team of leaders/helpers,
- seeing new people coming along to worship, growing in faith and taking part in the life of the church,
- working ecumenically with the other churches in Wootton and Stewartby with prayers during Lent, a stall at the Fun Day, the open-air service held at the Lower School on Harris Way
- receiving Mitch and Chris Randall into membership
- and, more recently the baptism of Luna Mamanemuno with so many of her family present and enriching our worship

I pray that the ministry and mission of this church goes from strength to strength. Know that my love and prayers are with you.

Every blessing,

Caroline

Leadership

The leadership team is responsible for the leadership of the church working as a team along side the minister and is responsible for developing the vision & strategy that is approved by the church Annual General Meeting (AGM). It is responsible for ensuring effective delivery of the strategy and, through the church council ensuring effective day to day management of the church.

At the time of writing this report the members of the leadership team are: Rev Caroline Weaver (Minister); David Goodson (Lay Pastoral Leader & Senior Steward); Suzy Goodson (Lay Pastoral Leader); Kath Pawlett (Pastoral Secretary); Brian Pawlett (Treasurer); Thea Lee and Jeremy Sear (Stewards).

The appointment of the stewards and the leadership team is confirmed each year at the AGM. During 2017 Dave Shore stood down from his role as Steward and also Youth Hub leader. We are grateful to Dave for his service in these roles.

Membership

As a member of the Methodist Church we are called to

Worship within the local church, including sharing in Holy Communion and through personal prayer.

Learning & caring, through Bible study and meeting for fellowship, so that we may grow in faith and support others in their discipleship.

Service, by being a good neighbour in the community, challenging injustice and using my resources to support the Church in its mission in the world.

Evangelism, through working out our faith in daily life and sharing Christ with others.

The Methodist Church is Britain's fourth largest Christian denomination and part of the worldwide Methodist family of over 60 million committed members and a further 20 million adherents. As per the latest count in 2015, there are 188,000 people who have made and sustained a commitment to Christian discipleship within the Methodist Church of Great Britain and are active members of a local Methodist church.

On 1st November 2017 our membership total was 43 and an estimate of the many other people who are part of our church or with whom we have contact came to 248. I believe there may be many more but it's hard to keep track!

Some of those people may say: I go to church so surely I already belong as a member of the congregation?

Yes, you do belong. But the Methodist Church also offers you the chance to show another step of commitment by being 'confirmed' and 'received into membership'. This means that you make promises - these are the same promises that are made when someone is baptised. A prayer for the work of the Holy Spirit in that person's life is also said in both services. Becoming a 'member' is a way of saying that you belong to and support your local Methodist Church and that you want to do this.

The promise of mutual support is one of Methodism's strengths. When you become a member a pastoral visitor or a class leader is responsible for visiting you and offering spiritual support, encouragement and challenge.

I encourage those who are not yet members to think and pray about whether God is calling you to make that commitment and those of you who are members to think and pray about how you might encourage others to take that step.

(Caroline Weaver)

WORSHIP AND TEACHING

Sunday morning worship

For many years Wootton New Life Church has attended the New Wine Summer Gatherings for Worship and Teaching. It is always the aim to bring back to the Church Family anything that God is saying to us. Although there is a difference between worshipping with thousands of others at a Summer Festival and in our village Church setting each week, we still worship the same God and seek to hear Him speak to us.

In July 2017 the main speaker at New Wine was the veteran RT Kendall and the focus of his teaching was 'Word and Spirit – the Church God wants', balancing openness to the leading of God's Spirit with faithfulness to His Word. We headed up our Autumn Teaching Series as Word and Spirit to reinforce this truth.

Our Teaching Series in the Connexional Year 2016-17 included our Seasonal Teaching in Advent (Characteristics to seek as we prepared for Christmas) and Lent (The "I am" sayings of Jesus). At other points we studied the Book of Jonah and our Mission Statement. In June we joined the national Bible Month to study the Letter of James and in our Summer Café Services we looked at the Life of Peter using the holiday club material 'Seaside Rock'.

Our style of worship is informal and interactive and we hope that people of all ages feel welcome. Our Group for Children is now called S-Club and our All Age Gatherings are now termed Café Services.

Our weekly Worship would not be possible without the dedicated commitments of a team of people and we are grateful to those who set out the Church, provide flowers, welcome others, serve coffee, operate the AV system, play in the band, lead worship and preach. Speak to David and Suzy if you feel prompted to help in any of these areas.

(Kath Pawlett)

Sunday morning children and young people's work

In my report last year I reminded you of our vision & strategy where we say as a church that everyone matters from the youngest to the oldest. I asked you to not accept the status quo of only a few children coming to church on an irregular basis. I asked us all invite families to join us in our morning worship and to pray and in particular that I could report that there had been growth. Alleluia, God is good.

During the year to 31 August 17 we have had the privilege of having more children join us in our Sunday morning worship and they have come on a more regular basis.

We have now rebranded our Sunday school and call the group S Club. We meet whenever there isn't all age worship.

I would like to thank Luke Tresidder who continued to help throughout the year, he was a real blessing and will miss him as he went to university in Southampton in September 18. Carey Miller continues to lead on a regular basis. I would also like to thank Hannah Short who also helps us.

S Club continues to meet in The Hub and always follows the same theme as the adult worship. We learn about God, Jesus and what it means to be a follower through the use of modern technology (film clips from YouTube), reading stories, painting and other crafts. We sometimes play games such as giant snakes and ladders (showing that there are consequences of taking the wrong path!) or use the parachute which certainly demonstrates that working together helps!

The age range is wide from a baby to a tweenager. I personally see this as real blessing as they are able to learn from each other rather than just the leaders. Yes this gives us challenges as topics and activities need to be accessible to everyone but then our overriding aim is to let the children know they are loved not only by the church family but by God and Jesus. We provide a safe place where they can be and express themselves at the same time as understanding that we are one big group where everyone matters. Being ourselves and remaining true to our values means this is very rewarding and more importantly fun.

We have also seen more families and children come to our all age services as members or both the Girls and Boys Brigade have come with their parents to both parade services and our normal all age worship.

Children have so much to teach us about faith. They hear, they believe, they react. As they get older they challenge, they consider, they decide for themselves. I am always amazed at some of the things they say and how they have a sense of belonging to our church family.

Please continue to pray for this exciting and rewarding work.

(Suzy Goodson)

Small groups

Small groups take place during the week and are where we get to know each other better, build relationships and support each other and study the Bible. They meet at various times throughout the week and have different styles. They provide an invaluable opportunity for you to explore God's Word, issues raised during Sunday morning worship in more depth and/or every day matters and issues that affect you and your faith journey.

We would encourage you to join a small group to deepen your faith and your relationship with God. All groups are open to anyone they are currently:

- **Tuesday small group**

This group continued to meet on Tuesdays in The Hub. It is a time of fellowship and Bible study mixed with singing and laughs. Everyone is welcome to come and join.

- **Wednesday small group**

This continued to meet at the home of Suzy & David at 8 Summerfield Drive.

We meet on alternate Wednesdays during term time and now meet at 7.15pm by sharing in a light meal, usually home made soup and salad. The Bible is full of stories of Jesus eating with his followers as he teaches them about what it means to be a follower of him. We believe this is an excellent model. Feed the stomach, feed the mind, feed the soul.

We share what's been going on in our lives during the past few weeks over our meal before moving to our study/ more formal discussion time at about 8.15 pm. We close with a time of prayer before finishing somewhere between 9.30pm and 9.45pm.

Whilst we have looked at particular books of the bible we now mostly follow on from our Sunday Morning themes because this allows us to go deeper or pick up on things that we thought of as a result of what we heard or what happened. We do this in such a way that it doesn't matter if people aren't always able to come to church on Sunday morning.

We had the great privilege of having Dan and then his wife Dawn join our group as he came from America to work at Cranfield University as he researched his book on asparagus. We were blessed as we were able to share and grow together as we explored what is meant to live our lives as Christians and in particular as we looked at the book of James.

There is an open invitation to anyone who wants to come along on a Wednesday evening to explore God's word in more depth. Please free to invite your friends and neighbours. It is not just a group for those who regularly come on Sunday mornings.

Please see David or myself for details.

(Suzy Goodson)

PASTORAL CARE

As a relatively small Church family we seek to know and care for one another in a natural family way. During the year September 2016 - 17 there have been a great range of needs, joys and sorrows. Some have moved on and others have moved in. A recent Teaching Series about the Culture of the Church began with the Culture of Welcome, and while constantly challenged by this, it is always our aim.

In addition to our informal caring we are grateful to our team of Pastoral Visitors for their care within our Fellowship. Each Pastoral Visitor has their own way of supporting those on their Pastoral List. In September 2017 most of our Pastoral Visitors were able to share in the Safeguarding Training Day at Wootton.

Please do see Kath Pawlett if you would like to know more about the Pastoral Groups.

(Kath Pawlett)

PRAYER

Prayer is a vital part of our discipleship and the church life. We have a prayer book for prayer requests that are read out on Sundays and at our weekly prayer meeting on Tuesday mornings at 9.30am.

We have a prayer chain for emergency prayer request that gets passed on by phone, email and texts. We have held prayer nights on Sunday evenings where we have: prayed for the specific needs of our church life as it continues to seek God's guidance to carry out his mission through our church fellowship; prayed for our village as it expands and therefore creates both opportunities and challenges as we seek to serve in our local community.

The worship team always meets and pray with the preacher prior to service. Prayer is always available after our Sunday morning worship. Please see any one of the leadership team if you would like us to pray with and for you.

(David Goodson)

MISSION AND OUTREACH

The Hub

2017 continued to be another busy period for The Hub but without the help and support of all the volunteers who give up their time to serve refreshments etc. to regulars and the wider community we would not be as successful as we are so a big thank you to you all.

The Hub continues to be a hive of activity before and after the morning Sunday services where God's fellowship is much in abundance.

An additional coffee machine was donated to the church for use on those Sundays breakfast is served; the coffee machine sits on the breakfast tables with the thought process being to take the pressure of those serving coffee behind the counter.

Sunday breakfast continues to be hugely popular with a slight change in the food offering to make it more 'Continental'. Thanks go to David, Gary and Jeremy for their support in producing, setting up and serving of this.

The Hub 2017 daily numbers were slightly down on 2016 but the average spend remains the same.

Thanks should also be given to Gary Chester who as our resident photographer regularly changes the pictures within The Hub to give a seasonal and upbeat feel to the walls. (Any one of the pictures can be purchased from Gary).

Gods Spirit is felt by the many groups / parents who use the church with drinks always available for them.

(Jeremy Sear)

Ladies Ministry

We have continued to meet on a quarterly basis for Girls' Night Out on Friday evenings where the aim is to share, talk and eat. Thank you to Callum Pope as he cooked us all an amazing barbeque at our summer gathering. All ladies and their female friends are welcome to join us.

Some of us went to a New Wine Women's Day at All Saints Church, Milton, Cambridge in April 17 when amongst other inspirational ladies we heard Becky Harcourt, the wife of Paul who is the leader of New Wine, give her testimony. The whole day was incredibly powerful. We listened to women sharing how they had overcome personal tragedy including bereavement and abuse whilst finding God and experiencing healing which didn't always happen at once and actually was a continual process. Forgiveness of themselves and others featured in their testimonies.

Listening to others' stories sometimes proved painful and brought up issues within our own lives where we needed spiritual healing. Some of us were able to receive this from both our own group and those on the event's prayer support team.

It was an amazing day and I for one will never forget that day and will always be grateful to those who shared it with me. It was very special.

Please look at for details of other ladies events. If you see any advertised and think we should go as as church please let me know.

(Suzy Goodson)

Families, children & young people

Our vision and strategy clearly states that we are a church family from many different backgrounds and where everyone matters. We demonstrate this through our work with families, children and young people.

We have worked ecumenically with the other churches within Wootton and Stewartby.

On 31 October 16 we held an ecumenical Halloween Alternative at the new lower school in Harris Way. The school hall was packed. This year we went big and bold and hired Steve the Juggler to lead the event where children got the chance to learn circus skills. Steve gave a talk whilst juggling (sometimes with knives!!) as he spoke about how Jesus came to save us, he was and is the light of the world and that we didn't have to fear the dark. The children enjoyed pizza and chips before going home with a party bag generously supplied by the Rainbows. This was a fantastic village event organised by the churches within Wootton and Stewartby.

We continued with Rock 'n' Roll Messy Church and Girls' and Boys' Brigades, details of which can be found below.

It is both exciting and encouraging to see our church building continue to be used throughout the week for people of all ages to enjoy.

Pat-a-cake

Pat-a-cake is our group for pre-school children with their parents, grandparents, or childminders that meets on Thursdays from 1.30-3.00pm in Term-Time. Carey Miller and Kath Pawlett remain the 'face of the Church' on alternate weeks in the group and we are grateful for Nicola Tresidder's help setting up on some Thursdays.

The Christmas Party is always a popular event with a welcome visit from Father Christmas bringing Christmas books to share with the children. We are always a fluid group and at the end of the summer term 2017 we said Goodbye to a number of children moving on to school. Since then there has been a growth in the number of babies in the Baby Corner. With new families moving into Wootton we are glad to be a place where people can meet others in similar family situations and we have been pleased to see some of our families at Rock & Roll, Messy Church.

Do keep spreading the word about our group to any families you meet with little ones and pray for our families. If you would like to help on Thursdays please speak to Carey or Kath, as a second person would mean we could spend more time in conversation as well as sharing the practical tasks.

(Carey Miller and Kath Pawlett)

Rock 'n' Roll Messy Church

Rock 'n' Roll Messy Church continued to meet most months during 2016 – 17. The format includes craft activities then a talk and song linked to a theme this is then followed by a meal. In December we joined with 'Deck the Halls' and had breakfast. Thank you to everyone who helps either on the day or providing food.

Rock 'n' Roll also met to have picnics in the park during the summer holidays.

Thanks must go to Jo Pope and Celia Shore for starting Rock 'n' Roll Messy Church, both Jo & Celia have decided that they are no longer able to lead this group. A number of others have got together to make sure we are able to continue to meet but we really need one or two people to take the lead and co-ordinate this valuable group. If you are able to help in anyway please speak to David.

(David Goodson)

Youth Hub

The Youth Hub which started in September 2015 continued to meet on alternate Friday evenings during term time throughout 2016 - 17 with assistance from the Circuit Youth Workers (Monica & Rebecca). Attendances averaged between 10 to 12 each night with those attending willing to invite along friends.

Some of the group also attended the monthly evening Circuit Youth Services & a Circuit residential time away at Feldon Lodge.

For the first time, some of the group attended the national youth event, Soul Survivor which in August 2017 was held at the East of England Showground near Peterborough & so was much easier to access than when the event was previously held in Somerset.

Sadly the group has now finished at the end of 2017 due to lack of Leaders to run the Youth Hub. However there are some of the group who still attend the Circuit Youth Services, attend residential & are hoping to go again to Soul Survivor in August 2018.

We are still keeping in contact with some of the Youth Hub group & will continue to do as part of our strategy as set out in the updated Church Mission 20:20 Statement which states:

"We need to prayerfully consider how we can strengthen our non-uniform work with young people and continue to encourage involvement in services and national events such as Soul Survivor both as an individual church and as part of the Circuit and/or ecumenical partnerships".

(Brian Pawlett)

1st Wootton Boys' & Girls' Brigades (BB & GB)

Following on from our encouraging 1st session, numbers in the BB were bolstered with 14 members transferring from 2nd Bedford (which closed August 2016). Unfortunately most of the youngest did not stay as the year went on, with the journey being too difficult/too late for them to stay up. This was a little disheartening, however, the older boys did & that allowed us to start our older age groups for school yrs 7-13.

As a result of that, we entered Luke and Michael into the National 10 Pin Bowling Championships, although we only had a team of 2 (rather than 3 bowlers), so were always at a disadvantage. They made it through the group stages and then through the knockouts to reach the Grand Final, where they won our first National Trophy. A 4th Place.

We were also delighted to welcome Daniel Young (from 2nd) who also transferred also to us, and immediately headed up our Junior Section.

We further welcomed 4 parent helpers to the staff team, Rebecca Lant & Lucy Reader (Anchor Boys), Helena Cooper (Juniors) and Liz Healy (Company/Seniors).

Likewise the GB, welcomed Cat Godfrey to help Suzy in the Juniors, along with parent helper, Amelia Brown and youth helper Ellie Nicholson also joining the staff team. Numbers have remained steady in the GB. The Explorer section is still a little light, although the Juniors have been thriving. The target next session is to bolster the staff team further and then add the top age group in GB also.

Both BB & GB enjoyed sleepovers leading up to parade services, this saw good numbers at the respective parades. A number of children from Brigades have also started attending WNL Rock 'n' Roll Messy Church.

2 Boys (Luke & Michael) and Allan & Nicola attended the MK Summer Camp at York. Further camps are being planned for 2018.

We raised £150 for the RNLI (from our Pirates Night), £100 for BDCPS, carried out Litter Picking around the village, joined in events such as Operation Christmas Child & Macmillan Cancer care.

We acquired a lot of resources from 2nd Bedford BB, which has given us a strong platform to run our programs. That was further complimented by the acquisition of Marching Band equipment (hoping to start Summer 2018) and we received a grant of £1000 from the Gale Trust, from which we purchased Puppets and Staging, to allow us to start a Puppet Ministry (also 2018)

We have now surpassed 50 members. This is very encouraging, and with the village growing demonstrates that a bright future awaits.

(Allan & Nicola Tresidder, BB & GB Captains)

Open the Book

The Open the Book Team continue to lead Assemblies at Wootton Lower School (Bedford Road Site) on Wednesday Mornings. The Team is led by Margaret & John Robertson from St Mary's and we are glad to work together as local Christians. Although established in Bedford in 1999, Open the Book merged with the Bible Society in 2015. The aim is simply to present Bible Stories from the Old and New Testament on a three year cycle, using the scripts from Bob Hartman's Lion Storyteller Bible, using good props and costumes and letting the stories speak for themselves. These presentations are Ofsted Approved and we are grateful for the welcome we receive at Wootton Lower School. We are often encouraged when we meet children out of school who are able to tell back to us the stories they have seen.



Please pray that the children will see and hear something about God's love in these stories and will at some point in their lives want to know more of what they mean. At present there is a need to increase our team and also find a new home for the costumes that have been well housed and cared for by Maureen Copperwheat for both the Wootton and the Lower Shelton Teams.

Do speak to us if you would like to know more or can help in any way.

(Kath & Brian Pawlett)

FINANCE & GIVING

1 Chronicles 29:6 - 9

Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly. They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly.

The Leaders in this passage displayed a right attitude towards their money by giving willingly to God's work. This same attitude is described by Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 7 which describes how God loves a cheerful giver. When we are generous because we are thankful, this can inspire others.

This hopefully can inspire us in our future giving. As you will see from the attached 2016 - 17 accounts we made a surplus which will we need to draw on in the future due to various pieces of work arising from the quinquennial inspection over the coming 3 - 4 years, the potential loss of letting income if the Parish Council moves its office to the new Community Centre & upgrading work which is needed to our acoustics in the Church.

In respect of the latter the Church Council has decided to have a Gift Day to help fund the cost of acoustic panels for the Church. Our current estimate is that this will cost approximately £11,500. When that work is completed then a further assessment will be made as to whether to upgrade our multimedia sound system.

Please consider prayerfully the response to the Gift Day & in respect of any giving, where able please also consider Gift Aid to enhance our income. Also if possible I would encourage using Standing Orders for giving as this enables easier control of the budget.

Thank You

(Brian Pawlett)

Our church giving

We continue as a church to give away (Tithe) 10% of our offertory.

We regularly support Prebend Street (a day center for the homeless) by giving an annual monetary donation, regular food offerings given through our community food box and any surpluses we have after our church meals and warm clothing when requested.

We also give regularly to the Bedford Women's Refuge at Christmas time through our gift service.

Some of our church members give of their time on Sunday evenings to feed the homeless in Bedford and we support them by giving paper cups, tea bags, bread and cake. Please pray for Kath and Brian and Tracey and Grant as they carry out this work and ask how you can support them with their work.

(Brian Pawlett)

Wootton New Life Methodist Church, Cause End Road, Wootton. MK43 9DE

woottonnewlife.org.uk