

WHEATLEY URC

Annual Reports 2020



Annual General Meeting
Thursday 24th September
7pm via Zoom

Worship Ministry Team

Pauline Main

The Current Situation

Life during the year began as normal, then in March 2020 came Corona virus, lockdown, Zoom worship and the need to learn new skills whilst still maintaining in some form the worship life of the church. Huge thanks to all our worship leaders – Cara Heafey, Colin Thompson, Laurence Devlin and Richard Bainbridge - for adapting to this new world and being prepared to experiment and to deliver worship online. Many thanks too to church members and friends for participating so enthusiastically, and of course to Phyllis for her expertise and support.

A good number of our regular congregation have been able to join in the Zoom services, and we have been glad to welcome folk from our sister congregations at Summertown and Marston, and also old friends who have moved away.

Despite being on-line, we have tried to continue with regular aspects of worship:

- Holy Communion is celebrated twice a month, with people sharing bread and wine in their own homes;
- on June 7th we were delighted to welcome Debi and Keith Kidd, and Herthe Thompson, into membership;
- our Church Anniversary service on July 19th was led by the Revd Helen Garton, minister of St Columba's and Cumnor;
- Marston worship group led a service in May;
- we have one or two other visiting worship leaders lined up for future services;
- no coffee together, but there has been time for chat, and an opportunity to meet new friends, in small groups after the service.

There have also been regular Zoom get-togethers on Wednesdays, with a short time of worship and an opportunity to share news, attended by around ten people from across our three churches.

Folk have been keeping spirits up in other ways, with a regular “thought for the day” coming into our in-boxes, via Malcolm Benson. Many thanks especially to Christine Bainbridge, for her creative use of the notice board outside church, providing inspiration and reflection, both for ourselves and for passers-by.

As the situation has eased, elders have been thinking how to open the church premises for prayer and/or worship. As a first step, the church is being opened for quiet reflection for an hour on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons.

Advent and Christmas 2019

Back in the “old normal”, we celebrated Advent and Christmas in the usual way. Writing this on a hot August afternoon, it is difficult to think back to that time, but I will do my best!

Looking at photos on my phone reminds me of the interesting and creative Advent ring, made by Pauline Shelley and based on recycled materials to remind us to our connection to and responsibility for the whole earth.

Christmas services went well and according to plan. We were able this year to avoid a clash with the village carols and hold our own Carol Service, led by Colin, in the evening. As usual this was a highlight of the season.

The service on Christmas Day was again held at the earlier time of 9.15am, to enable me (Pauline) to go on to Marston for a joint service there with Summertown. This early time doesn't suit everyone, so the arrangement will be reviewed in 2020, depending on the overall situation about meeting for worship.

A service for *The Longest Night*, was held on December 19th, particularly aimed at people who find Christmas a difficult time. It was much appreciated by those who attended, but attendance was poor, and a suggestion was made that an afternoon might be a better time for some of the older people (e.g. from our lunch clubs) who might appreciate the service.

On the Sunday after Christmas, December 30th, worship was led by a team organised by the elders, which was much appreciated by the congregation, who were joined by some members of St Mary's

Harvest 2019

The Harvest service, with a “Seeds” theme, was led by Laurence. Everyone was invited to bring offerings in kind, which were be collected before the service and displayed in front of the communion table. Non-perishable items were sent to the Emergency Food Bank, and perishables sold after the service for a small donation. After the service the Care for the World Ministry Team provided some entertainment, at which monetary donations for Christian Aid were also received.

Lent and Easter 2020

Plans for Lent and Easter were disrupted by coronavirus. Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday services were both via Zoom.

The Lenten meditations had the theme “the things Jesus did”, loosely based on material from a book of that name by Bishop Stephen Cottrell. They were led by our own worship leaders, each producing an individual reflection which was posted on the church website.

The Lent study group used the book *The Heart's Time*, by Janet Morley. A variety of leaders chose poems from the book, or their own favourites, to aid our reflection. As I recall, we began by meeting in the Mulberry Room, but later meetings were via Zoom.

As we were not able to meet together publically in any act of Easter witness, WAC invited people to create an Easter Garden in their garden or window, and provided reflection material for youngsters.

Shared Services

A service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was held in January at the primary school, organised by the Community Church. Sadly we have not otherwise been able to meet together “in the flesh” for the present, but we keep in touch in other ways with our friends from the other Wheatley churches.

“The team”

Many thanks to so many who have contributed to our worship during the year, both physically in church, and virtually via Zoom. I've already mentioned our worship leaders, but many others are involved – the Worship Team, especially Laurence who organises the preaching rota; Frances our organist and Jeff Clarke, who also plays for services; Ann Gadja who has organised our singers; artists Christine Bainbridge, Pauline Shelley and Jill Cansell; Allison Towner and those who support her, for the flowers; Phyllis Williams and Tom Goss for the audio visual.

We go forward in faith, and look forward to being able to meet together again in our church, in the fullness of time.

Church Secretary's Report

Phyllis Williams

In October last year we chose as our theme ***New Life New Hope*** and indeed we were full of excitement and hope. We had spent over a year and a half planning bringing our premises up to 21st century standards as a starting point in expanding our mission to the community and were just beginning to use the new Mulberry Room. We planned a Celebration Weekend was held on 11th/12th January. This was a great success involving all our members, ministry teams and church and hall users in a full programme of events across the weekend culminating in a Dedication Service on the Sunday afternoon.

There was further celebration in January when our student minister, Cara Heafey was ordained and inducted in Summertown URC. She is minister for mission development within the Oxford Group of URC churches with an initial focus on Wheatley, Summertown and Marston and associate minister at Summertown.

We began to plan the ways in which we could use our new premises to expand our mission to the community. Our youth group, Pulse, began to use the Mulberry Room for their discussion evenings and our Dementia Friendly Church Working Group began a monthly Memory Café. But almost immediately we were overtaken by events. The pandemic now known as Covid-19 which had been spreading across Asia had reached the UK. In an attempt to stem the spread, the government decreed that from 23rd March all public gatherings and meetings must cease, including church services and all community activities.

We responded by continuing to do what we do best, to offer pastoral care to all in our community and beyond. We began to worship online forming a virtual community. We continued to pray for ourselves, our neighbours and the world. We found new ways to connect and we continued to plan for the future. We have changed from thinking that this is a temporary event to realising that we need to consider this a New Normal. Now five months on and still in the grip of special regulations we are just beginning to be able to use our premises again but still with stringent restrictions and hygiene safeguards.

Our elders' meetings, church meetings, ministry team meetings have continued. Our Ministry Teams have continued to function where their work is relevant, and their reports will show how much has been able to be achieved and how much creativity there is in this community.

Through the year we have increased our membership by welcoming into Membership on 7th June Debi and Keith Kidd, Herthe Thompson (at 96 Herthe is

now our most senior member). We also celebrated the life of Doris Sinfield who died in October. We now have 50 members plus 7 adherents and the average attendance at Sunday Worship by Zoom is around 40 connections (with about 15 of those being couples). This includes friends from Summertown and Marston. It is a joy that we have come to know members of those churches so much better through this challenge!



Pastoral Care Ministry Team

Ann Bettess

From September 2019 to the lockdown in March 2020 the Pastoral Care Team continued with the Monthly Teas. As ever, we continued to support the Not-So-Young Club. This is a long established village club for retired people (mostly women) which was meeting twice a month for an afternoon of games, chat and tea. There were also invited speakers, trips to the theatre and other places of interest, and a Christmas Lunch in January.

Visiting to the Triangle Nursing Home had been resumed, with the intention of supporting the Vicar's monthly services. Team members visited people in the community who they knew to be lonely or vulnerable.

There was much interest in the idea of a Dementia Friendly church and in the new Memory Café, and several members of the team assisted at the first (and so far only) session.

Just before the lockdown we were challenged by Age Concern to consider a voluntary transport system to bring housebound people to social events. We intend to consider this more closely when there are safe events for the frail elderly to attend.

Since the Lockdown our activities have been confined to telephone calls and socially distant chats out of doors.

Cogwheel Project

Mark Williams

Following our successful Celebration Weekend and Dedication of the Mulberry Room in January 2020, our Cogwheel Project Working Group came to the end of its work and Church Meeting released the Project Steering Group from its responsibilities. The Elders and Ministry Teams will continue to look after the Mulberry Room and to ensure it and the rest of the buildings are used to their full potential to fulfil our mission to the community.

Chris Shelley has previously reported that the funds that remain in the budget are committed to the final payment of Savvy's (due this autumn, 12 months after completion), and any funds remaining thereafter will be available to the Maintenance Ministry Team for the work in the church that was not possible to do as part of Cogwheel.

The Project Team wish to thank all those who contributed financially and in so many other ways, and also in putting up with the inconvenience without fuss. Thanks also to Laurence Devlin for keeping a photographic record of the project and Nathan Bainbridge and Jill Cansell for the art work that graces the Mulberry Lobby. The Team also wish to thank architects Brocklehursts and Building Contractor Savvy, both of whom proved to be a delight to work with on the project.

It only remains to give thanks to the project team and record their names, with gratitude for their skills and commitment.

The team:

Christine Bainbridge

Chris Shelley

Pauline Shelley

Tony Barry

Malcolm Benson

Roger Bettess

Robert Harding

Zena Knight

Pauline Main

Phyllis Williams

Ellen Webster

Bob Webster

Catherine Harding

Peter Devlin

Mark Williams (Convenor)

Children and Youth Ministry Team

Malcolm Benson

Once again the main focus of our commitment is the Pulse youth group, although as with all activities it has been a year of two halves. September saw a further increase in the number of youngsters aged 11 to 16 attached to the youth group which met on Sunday evening. Three of the older members, having reached the sixth form remained active as youth helpers. As in previous years the evenings alternated between a games evening and a discussion with the occasional outing or film night an added bonus.

The new Mulberry room provided valuable space for some of the quieter games and also for the films and discussions often revolving around a TED talk. The hall catered for more boisterous games, the sanctuary to 'hang out' together with music and the kitchen provided refreshments. At the beginning of the year, Mark and Phyllis, who initiated the group decided to step back after the youth led service. Sadly this had to be abandoned as Covid reared its head. Since then meetings have been 'virtual', organised and led by Dan Evenhaus. Online games feature alternating with the youth Alpha course ably led by members of the Community Church. It is not yet clear when we will be able to meet up face to face.

A new initiative is a proposal to appoint a Youth and Families leader, a project in which we have been enthusiastically supported by Phil Ray, Children and Youth Development officer with the Wessex Synod. Whilst some initial funding may come from Synod, additional support will be needed from our own resources and from outside grants. The main remit will be to lead and encourage an enhanced Children and Youth Ministry Team in its outreach to young people and their families helping them deepen and grow confident in their faith. In this respect our involvement is not simply financial but one of time and talents. Please give it your prayerful support.



Annual Maintenance Ministry Team

Chris Shelley

Team members: Tony Barry (Convener), Chris Shelley, Malcolm Benson, Tom Goss. We said goodbye to Bob Webster this year after many years of faithful service to this Ministry Team, for which we offer our grateful thanks and welcome Tom Goss as a new member, in his place. Should anyone else feel that their skills in this direction could be utilised to strengthen the team, they would be more than welcome to join us.

Following the completion of the Mulberry Room project we have been addressing our attention to some of the more routine jobs that have been on hold for the last year or so or we were, until Covid 19 shut us down!

In recent weeks we have been making progress with the following jobs:

Four new radiators: These will have been fitted in the chapel by Taylors Services of Wheatley, to replace the twenty year old leaky ones there previously. The sizes have not been increased, as the boiler, (which was only renewed some four years ago) is not of sufficient size to run any increased capacity, following the addition of underfloor heating and radiators in the Mulberry room extension. The expense of a new boiler at this time could not be justified.

Damaged internal chapel door/hinge: This will have been repaired and the door re-hung with new hinges, by Martin Whitworth (Carpentry/Woodwork Specialist from Littleworth/Milton Common). The sprung cast iron hinges were probably nineteenth century originals and would have been in constant service in the church for well over a hundred years! Hopefully, the new modern steel hinges will last as long?

Organ pedal board: This will have been overhauled by Ormatronix Organs Ltd of Kidderminster and some parts (reed switches) renewed so that it will function properly again. After twenty years of use some of these switches had ceased to work, which was making it nigh impossible to play properly.

Annual pat testing, fire extinguisher servicing and an emergency signage review: These have all been undertaken recently and where found to be lacking, have been put in order.

A new fire risk assessment survey: This has been carried out by SAFE IS and where some issues have been identified, discussions are ongoing with the company to find workable solutions. To meet current standards, an upgraded smoke detection system may now be deemed necessary for the secondary escape route corridor between the kitchen and the Mulberry Room exit/entry door, in view of the proximity of the boiler cupboard to that escape route.

A number of other items are under review for future attention, as follows:

Movement in west wall of chapel: Readings from tell-tales placed on the wall are being monitored prior to seeking an engineer's advice. **Movement appears insignificant at present.**

Damp/blowing plaster in chapel walls

Balcony shelf & balcony stair rail extensions

Solar panels: Taylors of Wheatley have been asked to give us advice for providing a solar panel system suitable for supplying electrical energy for use in the church buildings and feeding surplus energy back into the Grid.

Shared manse repairs: These have been identified and will be undertaken at some convenient date in the future when a suitable contractor has been found and in consultation with Pauline Maine.

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Thursday Prayer Breakfast

Ann Hardiman

The Thursday Prayer Breakfast group met as usual at 8am every Thursday between last September and March. In January we began to meet for prayer in the Mulberry Room and then adjourned to the Hall for breakfast. It's not a big group, usually between 8 and 10 people but sometimes we are joined by members of the Mindfulness group at breakfast if they happen to be early for their session. Most

of us bring a concern which we then offer as a prayer, prayer for people and places in difficulty, whether that be in the world, the local community or for individuals.

We are hoping that it will be possible to restart Prayer Breakfast in church again soon, probably without the breakfast though!



Communications Ministry Team

Phyllis Williams

The communications ministry team continue to support the activities of all our ministry teams through the production of the newsletter, maintaining leaflets and stationery, looking after our audio-visual systems, and ensuring our noticeboards and online presence are maintained.

Effects of the Pandemic

All of this has been very much affected by lockdown since March. We have not been able to produce or distribute generally a printed Newsletter or Sunday Link, all events have been cancelled, and our communications have moved online. It has been a steep learning curve and continues to be so.

Zoom Video Conferencing

We very quickly adapted to meeting using Zoom technology to support what we do including Lent Bible Study, Ministry Team meetings, Elders and Church Meetings. We have learnt to adapt to the possibilities and limitations of the technology and so have been able to continue a lot of the function of the church supporting worship, shared prayer, learning, social engagement, and administration. We are therefore able to offer online 'Dance Chapel' and 'Wednesday Gatherings' as well as Sunday Worship.

Sunday Worship by Zoom

Without apparently missing a beat we started worshipping online using Zoom. This was new technology to most and it is a massive achievement that most of our usual congregation have managed to join in worship this way. What is more we have been joined regularly by our sister churches of Marston and Summertown and old friends now living in different parts of the country. We have also been delighted to welcome visitors not part of our regular congregations, who have

begun to join us this way, we were particularly pleased to welcome some members of Marston's Link church in Zambia.

Taking time to socialise after Sunday Worship has always been an important part of the experience and we discovered the ability of Zoom to help us meet in small groups (breakout rooms) and this has become a regular part of the experience.

It has been a huge learning curve for our Worship Leaders, Pauline, Cara, Colin, Richard and Laurence, who have moved and adapted creatively to this new way of leading worship.

The only occasion on which we had to abandon the attempt to meet this way was found to be due to Zoom (a company based in California) choosing to upgrade their servers (due to the massive increase in demand on their services) in the middle of Saturday night (for them) which just happened to be 10am in the UK and thus caused a general failure of Sunday Worship by Zoom across the UK.

Website and Social Media

We continue to maintain our website wheatleyurc.org.uk and Facebook page [@wheatleyurc](https://www.facebook.com/wheatleyurc) publishing information about who we are and what we do. We have had to change the way we store and offer our database of recorded sermons but fortunately the archive is still available and has been of particular use to some who have not been able to join by Sunday Worship by Zoom.

Email Groups

Our all@wheatleyurc.org.uk has been used much more and to support a wider range of functions than in the past. The technology used to support this facility is not up to the task nor compliant with current legislation. We are therefore in the process of changing to offer new email groups.

Noticeboards

At our meeting immediately before lockdown we realised that all our notices of events and activities were redundant and needed to be cleared. The idea of posting some kind of "Wayside Pulpit" to give hope to passers-by was agreed and Christine Bainbridge volunteered to take this on as a project. So, since March, Christine produced a display in the noticeboard with inspirational quotations and artwork changing every fortnight. This has been appreciated by church members and also the wider community. We received the following message recently:

“Hi, I just wanted to feedback to whoever does the display board outside your church that I have really enjoyed looking at it over the lockdown period. I am not a church goer particularly, but I found it lovely, inspiring and wise and reflective. I often planned a walking route around that way to see what was on it.”

Newsletter

The newsletter has for some time been available through our website and a small number of correspondents regularly receive it this way. We immediately made this our default way of making it available by sending the link out to all with a few printed copies for those either not able to access it online or who requested a paper copy. This decision was as much driven by the difficulty of distribution as by the printers not being able to print it. We were sad to learn recently that one of the printers died of Covid-19 in April. His partner is continuing the business. The newsletter editors are a small team of Moira and Jim Watson alternating with Bobbie Stormont and we are delighted that Debi Kidd is shadowing the process with a view to becoming a third editor. Christine Bainbridge contributes the cover illustration every month and our thanks to her for this. Other members of the communications team contribute their skills in copy editing etc.

Since June Bobbie has been editing the newsletter and has developed it asking for contributions on various topics. Our thanks to her for the work she has been doing.

Village Newsletter

Each month a piece is submitted to the Village Newsletter giving the latest news of the URC in that publication. Thanks to Zena Knight for ensuring this happens. (and usually writing it!)

The Sunday Link

A casualty of not being able to meet physically in church has been the Sunday Link which has been produced by St Mary’s and the URC jointly over many years. Many people enjoyed reading the reflection and keeping up-to-date with the concerns of St Mary’s.

However it has been obvious for some time that it is increasingly difficult to ensure that it accurately contained the information from the URC that we wanted it to contain and St Mary’s didn’t feel there was enough space for it to contain all they wanted it to contain. The decision has been made to seek new ways to keep our

two churches close and we will no longer purchase the reflections from The Redemptorist Society. We are very grateful to Cara for producing and making available her weekly reflections.

Stationery and Posters

We continue to produce and maintain stationery and posters as required.

Christian Aid

Liz Barry

Christian Aid Week

The beginning of the pandemic was marked by various on-line features and here in Wheatley we were able to erect the distinctive banners and posters at the churches, encouraging people to donate online. It was good to be able to acknowledge and pray for the work of Christian Aid in our zoomed morning service, particularly this year. As part of a reorganization, their office has moved out of Oxford; the local organizer, Siobhan Grimes is taking up ministerial training within the URC.

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Hospitality Ministry Team

Catherine Harding

The team were involved with decorating the church for harvest, Christmas and the opening of the Mulberry Room as well as assisting with lunches and the tea following the opening. Our plans for Easter were scuppered by lockdown.

I shall be stepping down as convenor following the AGM, although I am happy to continue on the team. As yet we do not have anyone to take over. We would welcome some new members.

Flowers & more.... An Inside – Outside Church

Allison Towner

The first half of this church year saw worship enhanced by the beautiful displays of flowers created both by individuals and by the team. However, since we have ceased to worship in the building, it was decided to take our decorations outside so that they could be enjoyed by passers-by.

Mothering Sunday saw gifts of daffodils, Holy Week a cross and crown of thorns, and individual displays of flowers were added for Easter. New bunting was made, and used again to mark Pentecost.

While the building is now open for quiet time twice a week we will have still life arrangements instead of fresh flowers. The flower rota will not be in use until we meet together again on Sundays.

We all appreciated the flowers which were provided each week to enhance the decoration of the sanctuary and the porch. We look forward to the future when we will again have the pleasure of admiring the skill and dedication of our flower arrangers. We would be delighted to welcome anyone interested to join us when we are once again able to be in the church for services.



Adult Christian Education Ministry Team

Tom Goss

ACE Advent and Christmas study November 2019

An Advent and Christmas Bible study was organised by Pauline Main and held in November. Thank you to the leaders and to the attendees. It was well attended and much discussion was enjoyed by all. Thank you to Liz and Tony for opening their home up for us.

ACE Lent study March 2020

It was based on Janet Morley's book *'The Hearts Time'* a book of poems for Lent. There were readings and discussion based on the book. Pauline Main organised the leaders for each evening. The material can be used as an individual guide for study and prayer during Lent, for group study or indeed both. A big thank you to the Barry's who once again generously opened up their home for this series of discussions. **The book can be ordered online through Blackwell's and SPCK.**

The Team

A number of the ACE ministry team members left in the late months of 2019 and the early months of 2020. We put out requests at the time for new members to consider replacing us but despite early interest only one person made a definite commitment to join. So, when considering which ministry team to join please don't forget ACE!

Care for the World Ministry Team

Liz Barry

The Care 4 World team are fortunate to have members with specific skills and interests, who are each able to contribute to the whole. So, 2020 started for us with the serving of Saturday Soup Lunch as part of the Mulberry Room opening celebration. We were grateful for donations which we sent to Christian Aid, (See Christian Aid report)

Fairtrade Fortnight: This was marked by a presentation in Sunday service highlighting the progress made in the churches, village and Wheatley Park School, towards Fairtrade Village status. Now established, this is even recognized on the cover of Wheatley Newsletter.

World Day of Prayer: This was on the first Friday of March, as always, and was written and designed by the women of Zimbabwe. It was a simple and joyous service that celebrated their faith and culture. With help from other members of the congregation, Zimbabwean artefacts were used in a display that was then moved to the high street window during Art Week. 2021 is compiled by the people of Vanuatu.

Emergency Foodbank: Our support continues, previously through our monthly food donations, at present, through personal contacts.

Refugee Support: Informal contact continues with Wheatley Refugee Support, Asylum Welcome and Oxford Support for Refugees. CCOW - Christian Concern for One World - are holding a monthly (zoom) 'Prayer for Refugees and those walking Alongside'.

Commitment for Life: Inspired by the initiatives undertaken by Christian Aid with its partners in Zimbabwe and by the 2020 World Day of Prayer from Zimbabwe, the team have decided to make Zimbabwe our main focus of support and have published our first 'Announcement' on Zimbabwe to church members. We have been talking to the Commitment for Life team, and are in contact with other URCs who have direct links with Zimbabwe. We have been moved by stories of their struggles with failing harvests, poverty and now the pandemic but also uplifted by their stories from 'Art Peace.'

Buster's Jazz Appreciation Group

Tony Barry

Regrettably, due to last year's Mulberry Room development project at the URC and building works at 13 Beech Road, later followed by Covid restrictions, the group has only managed to have one formal meet during 2019/20. This took place on January 31st in the new Mulberry Room, which was much appreciated and admired by those members present.

The format for this meeting was "Members Choices" and folk were invited to bring a piece of music by an artist of their choice and talk briefly about why it was special for them. The music ranged from Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag & The Entertainer, to some Chicago Blues (Shirley Johnson & Big Bill Broonzy), to Be-Bop with saxophonist Ben Webster (Stardust) & pianist Art Tatum's (Night & Day), to some New Orleans style jazz with Bobby Hackett (Struttin with Some Barbecue), The Original Dixieland Jazz Band (Tiger Rag), The Chris Barber Band (Petite Fleur), Buck Clayton & Teddy Wilson/Lester Young with Billie Holiday (God Bless the Child & This Year's Kisses) and from across the genres – Oscar Peterson (Past Midnight), Peter Skellern (Putting On The Ritz), Hugh Masekela (Bring Him Back Home), Miles Davis (Sketches of Spain), George Benson (The Ghetto) and lastly some gypsy jazz by a local pub gig band, The Underscore Orchestra (Isa Muggin'). A good selection of finger food was supplied by members for the interval and with a few glasses of FairTrade wine, a happy time was had by all, with Benny Green and The Washington Brothers Trio from The Flat Iron Club in New York playing gently in the background. We were able to send, £60 in excess donations from the evening, to Love Music Help Musicians UK.

Sadly, this was to be Martin Tims' last evening with us, as his Parkinson's caused him to fall at home later in the year, from which he was unable to make a recovery. He and Ros have been faithful participants since almost the beginning of Buster's activities, over twenty years ago. We shall miss him at future gatherings and recall his participation with apposite and witty comments, often about the quality of the wine! We very much hope that Ros (and her excellent finger food contributions!) will feel able to continue to be part of our future events.

In the meantime, a number of our participants have been attending "live" and recorded zoomed jazz offerings from in and around Oxford including Alyn Shipton's weekly lockdown celebrity jazz quizzes, (most of the questions have been way beyond my limited knowledge!).

The usual single sheet quarterly gig finding publication issued by the Oxfordshire Jazz Federation called “Jazzfinder” has, of course, become much reduced in size, but is now available monthly, on line, for a paltry £5 per annum. This can be sent to you directly by OJF, if you let them have your e-mail address. Contact me if you would like to join or indeed become part of the Buster’s Family.

Background information is available from me about the aims and history of this fun loving, jazz orientated, social group formed in circa 1998/9 for members of the URC and beyond.

Hopefully, back to more live music, soon?

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Treasurer and Finance Ministry Team

Chris Shelley

The Income and Expenditure accounts and related schedules for our financial year to 31st December 2019, are included with the AGM reports. Also included is the Cogwheel Project Income and Expenditure sheet for the same period. For those who like detail, also included is a copy of the Cogwheel spreadsheet, showing all the income and expenditure since the start of the project up to 31st December 2019.

The Ministry Team members are Chris Shelley (Treasurer), Robert Harding, Bob Webster, Christine Bainbridge and Mike Matejschuk.

This report covers the main changes in the finances in 2019 compared with 2018 and should be read in conjunction with the accounts.

Our freewill offerings increased slightly compared with 2018 at £32,400 and the Gift Aid received (based on the previous financial year) was slightly lower at just over £6,000.

The special collections for charities increased in 2019 and this figure was boosted by our Oasis of Peace supper.

Our main expenditure was, as usual, our contribution to the URC Ministry and Mission which increased by 3.5% over 2018. The figures include the URC 1% Challenge, where Churches who can afford to do so, pay 1% over the actual target figure for their Church. The M&M payment goes towards the stipends of ministers

in local pastorates, Church related community workers, ministers working in special category posts and resource centres for learning.

Our energy costs were significantly higher in 2019, but we must bear in mind that it was our 'Cogwheel' year. We had our major refurbishment and rebuild and until the end of May when the hall was handed back to us, much more use had been made of the Sanctuary space which incurred additional heating costs.

The music/organ costs increased, and included repairs to the organ.

Most of the other general expenses were similar to the previous year, although the printing, stationery and postages reduced, mainly due to the timing of claims of expenses.

The Charities and Outreach figure shows a much higher figure compared with 2018. However, £4,109 from the 2018 charitable giving was not paid away until early 2019, hence the somewhat distorted figures for this element of our finances.

As you can see, the Gift Aid scheme is an excellent source of extra income for us and if anyone would like to sign up to the scheme or would like further information, please let me know. There is no additional cost to you and the main criterion, is that you pay sufficient tax to cover the 25% (slightly higher than the basic tax rate) of your annual charitable giving, which can be claimed back from HM Revenue and Customs, in any one year.

I am obliged to remind those currently in the Gift Aid scheme, that if your tax position changes, so that the tax you pay will not cover the 25% of your annual charitable giving that can be claimed back, you must please let me know.

Once again at the end of the year, our finances were in a healthy position, but I usually add an element of caution, as we never know what expenditure is around the corner. However, little did we know what would hit us early this year (2020). I cannot finish this report without a comment on how this Coronavirus pandemic could have had a disastrous effect on our finances.

However, due to the continued generosity of our members and friends, many of whom have changed the way they make their offerings to the Church, we have been able to cover our outgoings so far in 2020. We are now five months into this pandemic with no immediate end in sight, but I am hopeful that the positive financial situation we have found so far, will continue. A huge thank you to everyone.



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