



Annual Report 2020

The Trustees present their Annual Report and financial statements for September 2019-August 2020.

Main Events 2019-20

This has been 'a year of two halves' with the emergence of Covid-19 in the early months of 2020 and the consequent shut-down of church activities being the division between what was fairly normal for Wellspring and our continued operation during the global Pandemic.

This has also been the third year in the ministry of Revd Kevin Price and has been a time of continued consolidation with most of our Sunday worship prior to April led by Kevin or our own local worship leaders. We remained integrated into the Methodist Circuit Plan with Kevin also leading worship elsewhere once a month. Regular All Age services continued along with a popular café style service on one Sunday afternoon each month reinforcing our openness to diversity in worship. *Wellies*, the Sunday morning children's group, has become well rooted with the few young people who attend confidently sharing what they have been doing and leading the congregation in prayer.

Faced with the challenge of providing opportunities to continue worshipping *together* during the Lockdown which began in late March we began developing our online resources and explored other media through which we might be connected in worship. This has included a range of written guided reflections with links to external worship material together with home-made sung worship and musical accompaniments; full audio services; and even a complete video presentation. Conscious of those who are without internet access, printed worship material often accompanied by CDs has been distributed.

Whilst our building was closed, our prominent road frontage offered an opportunity to install seasonal displays for the encouragement of passers-by. Thus we are able to mark Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost in dramatic and visual ways, together with the usual Well Dressing weekend with some mini individual displays on our front steps, all of which was much appreciated by the local community.

Once it became possible for gathered worship to re-start a decision was made to aim for September once the necessary Covid-19 Risk Assessment, cleaning, and safety procedures were in place, and we were grateful for the expertise of one of our Trustees in compiling a thorough Risk Assessment document. As it was recognised that some members might not be able to re-join gathered worship other resources would still be made available.

During this year opportunities for prayer and Bible study together have continued. *Prayer Zone* meets weekly exploring various forms of prayer including a monthly 'prayer walk' around different parts of the town. Since the beginning of Lockdown this has become firmly established online using the *Zoom* video conferencing platform with a committed core of regulars. A weekly study of the Book of Ruth took place here allowing engagement with material provided for Methodist Bible Month in June. Before Lockdown occasional meetings were held in the style of *Listening to God* as an opportunity to review Sunday ministry and consider the question 'what might God be saying to us?' during a relatively unstructured evening service time; and before Christmas we enjoyed themed worship evenings engaging with *Taize* and *Iona* Traditions.

Also prior to Lockdown our midweek activities continued to grow in significance and numbers; *Coffee Stop*, *Memory Café*, and *Easy Meals* are now well established and have been greatly missed during the second half of the year.

During the last year Wellspring has continued to embrace the concept of *EcoChurch* through the coordination of one of our Trustees. '*Creation Season*' was used as a time to explore 'eco' themes from a Biblical perspective and in a variety of Sunday worship contexts. We were delighted to learn that we had qualified to receive the Silver Award from *A Rocha*

Crossways drama and music group rehearsed until March but was sadly unable to perform their show as intended. When other activities were possible the group was engaged in carol singing at local venues and also led a reflective evening service before Christmas and worship at *Sudbury Prison*.

Our combined mid-week *Girls' Brigade/Boys' Brigade* has remained popular attracting greater numbers of children and well supported by church members. *Brigades* have regularly been part of our All Age morning services. A '*Superhero*' themed *Light Party* was much enjoyed in late October. A weekly chat was set up using *Zoom* in order to address the challenge of keeping the group connected during Lockdown.

Jam Club, a one-day-a-week drop-in with drinks and snacks continued in school term time. Fortnightly *Guild* meetings attracted a good following with a variety of speakers and activities. However both activities have been suspended since April.

Our church and minister are fully committed to *Churches Together in Wirksworth and District* taking an active part in seasonal and civic events. Through this we are represented in all of the local schools where Kevin has led regular assemblies.

Where possible the church has continued to take a full and active part in the town's community events. For the *Art and Architecture Trail* weekend in September the church provided a venue for exhibitors as well as a much appreciated 'quiet space'. We were also able to host part of the *Wirksworth Model Railway Exhibition*; offered refreshments at the *Wizarding Weekend*, and hosted a *Christmas Indoor Market*. The cycle of 'regular' and 'one off' community events has been greatly missed during Lockdown.

In September the *Beanies* group for parents and toddlers was integrated back into church life, and run by a group of Wellspring volunteers. The twice weekly *Charities Plant Stall* run by one of our members remained very popular in the community until Christmas and therefore able to make significant donations to many local charitable causes including Wellspring.

Once again we were able to support the *Link to Hope* Christmas appeal with a good number of shoeboxes packed with gifts.

With regard to accessibility, a rota of private car drivers for Sunday morning together with the passenger lift on the premises continued to assist less active people to participate in morning worship.

All people working with children and vulnerable adults have received appropriate training, through the Methodist Safeguarding Scheme, with regard to the government's Disclosure and Barring Service. The church has read the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit, and is satisfied that the activities outlined above clearly demonstrate that the charity is providing a benefit to the public.

Recognising the increasing importance of digital communication our Wellspring Facebook page and re-designed website have been a source of information and inspiration through the year. Further information is available here: www.wellspringchurchwirksworth.co.uk.

Looking to the Future - Achievements and Performance

The Church does not measure success only in numbers, in terms of people or finance, but also in less tangible areas like fellowship and encouragement. 2019-20 has been a positive year in terms of growing relationships, commitment and caring, for members and others in the community, particularly during Lockdown with our minister integral to this. Wellspring is clearly known and accepted in the town.

The Trustees are grateful for the trust and support offered by the congregation and continue to work hard to encourage the church in seeking to fulfil our focus of ministry in terms of Worship, Pastoral Care, Reaching Out and Property.

Our church building based activities continued to thrive prior to Lockdown and a growing need for community space in the town is still anticipated. Very significant progress has been made during this year towards achieving our vision to enhance our premises with a new annexe. Since Planning Permission was granted in 2018 we have been delighted with the ongoing level of commitment and support shown through personal donations large and small; grants from several charitable bodies; and particularly the support of the Methodist Circuit, District and Connexion together with the East Midlands Baptist Association in making substantial grants and releasing funds for this project. We are especially grateful to the fundraising team who have worked extremely hard to secure this funding. Meetings with our architects continued and the project went out to tender in July attracting interest from 7 contractors. It is expected that a preferred partner will be chosen and some fine tuning of design, specification and other contractual matters finalised before construction is started in a few months' time.

Prior to Lockdown congregational numbers have remained stable with a few new attenders. There have been no new members or transfers but two members have died during the year. At 31 August 2020, the membership stood at 53. Trustees believe that outreach should be a primary focus of our ministry in the coming years.

Financial Review

We have been operating financially as Wellspring for six years now and supporting a full-time minister, Kevin, for just over three years.

Our Treasurer is pleased to be able to report that our income during the twelve months to August 2020 has exceeded last year's level (although it falls short of expenditure). This is despite there having been no social events or lettings of any kind since the end of March. In particular, people have continued, and in some cases increased, their regular weekly or monthly offertory payments during the period that the church building has been closed.

We do, of course, no longer receive the almost £9,000 a year income we enjoyed in the early years of Wellspring when the manse and the Bonsall cottage were being rented out to tenants.

On the expenditure side, the cost of Kevin's stipend and the Circuit assessment both increased and will do so again for the year just starting. Despite this, our overall expenditure was less than the previous year's because, in particular, we have had to spend less on maintenance at the chapel and the manse.

In February, we decided to top up the regular voluntary contributions we make to charities to roughly 10% of income by donating £45 to a different charity every month, wherever the need seems greatest.

In May, Trustees approved the drawing down of £10,000 from the investment interest we have been accumulating annually since the sale of the Baptist chapel. The aim of this was to ensure we have a reserve of £15,000 against unforeseen expenses during the very uncertain times ahead. This precaution does however mean that there now is £10,000 less available for the annexe.

Many of the expenses relating to the annexe have been or will be paid directly by those organisations which have promised us grants, which means that the £125,110 in our Annexe Fund at the end of August gives a very incomplete picture of the size of our annexe finances.

Our grateful thanks are due to Rob in his role as Treasurer; to Barbara for counting the money every week; and to Mike Sharpe for examining the accounts.

Status

The Charity is a Methodist/Baptist Local Ecumenical Partnership, governed by a Constitution approved by Churches Together for Derbyshire, as Sponsoring Body, and by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Methodist Church of Great Britain. It is exempted from registration under Section 30 (2) (b) of the Charities Act 2011.

The church has read the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit, and is satisfied that the activities outlined above clearly demonstrate that the charity is providing a benefit to the public.

Charitable Object

The principal purpose of the charity is the advancement of the Christian faith, including the advancement of education, community service and such other general charitable purposes in such parts of the United Kingdom and the world as the Church shall determine.

The Church occupies premises at 49 St John Street, Wirksworth, which are held by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, on Trusts which are entirely compatible with the above object.

Organisational Structure and Decision-making processes

Members of the Church are accepted in accordance with the Constitution which requires them to be or to have been publicly baptised as believers or confirmed as believers, professing their faith in Jesus Christ.

In accordance with the Constitution, the members appoint six of their number as Trustees, who together with the Minister and up to four co-opted Trustees are responsible for the day to day running of the church's work and witness, and the financial and legal aspects of the charity. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are appointed by the Trustees.

Members Meetings take place four times per year to review the life and witness of the church; consider topics relevant to its witness; receive reports covering all aspects of its life; consider matters brought to the meetings by the Trustees; and generally help the church's life, work and vision. Whilst in Lockdown we were unable to hold the meeting planned for May.

The Trustees have made an assessment of the major risks facing the church, and are satisfied that there are policies in place to minimise these risks.

Leadership

Minister: Revd Kevin Price

Trustees: David Butlin, Jenny Few, Paul Heppleston, David Hughes, John Proctor, Peter Slack (until July 2020), Sue Watts (until November 2019), Barbara Wilson.

Secretary: Barbara Wilson

Treasurer: Rob Few