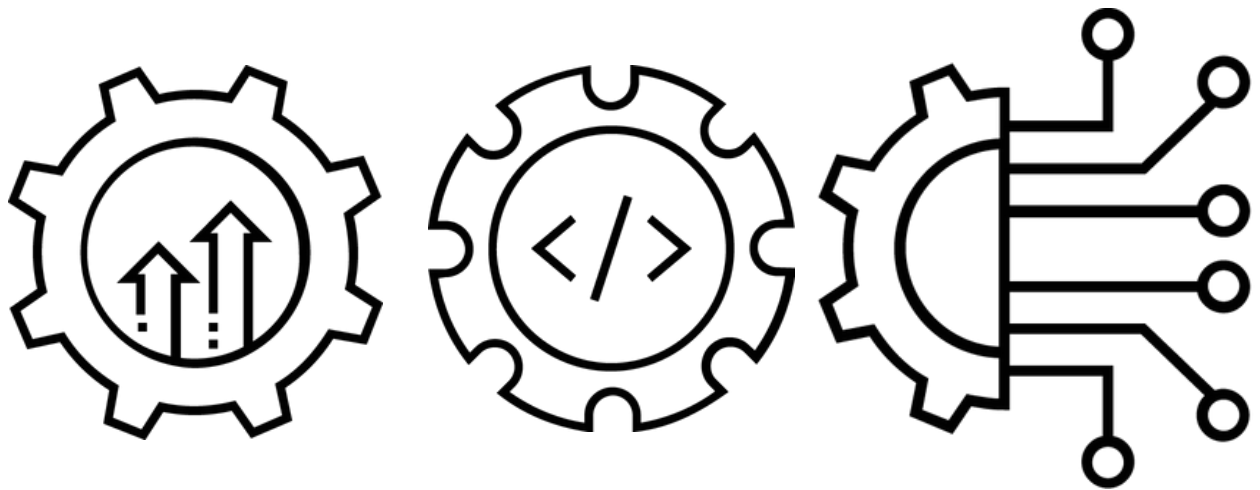


2020

ANNUAL REPORT



Foreword

2020 was certainly a year we'll never forget. As the building was closed for worship for the first time in hundreds of years, 'pivot' became a huge part of our vocabulary. Worship, teaching and fellowship moved online, and we all became familiar with YouTube and Zoom.

The year was not easy, but God has been faithful. In this annual report, we see again and again, stories and testimonies of God's faithfulness. We see how God has surprised us, encouraged us and strengthened us in this year of challenge. We see both the care and the creativity of the church family, and we sense God's hand upon us, shaping us through this unforgettable year.

Contents

- Rector's Report
- Wardens' Report
- Curate's Report
- Operations and Finance Report
- Children and Families
- Youth
- CAP
- Pastoral Care
- Small Groups
- AV Report

Rector's Report

Mark Pickett



Looking back on the last 8 months, three words spring to my mind.

The first is Generosity. In October, we communicated the need to raise our regular giving in order to continue on going ministry and your response was amazing. So much so that we were able to set a break even budget for 2021.

Thank you so much. As if that wasn't enough, in January we shared the possibility of buying the builders yard next door to the church and have raised £175 K in additional funds for this. As we go to press with these reports I have arranged a further discussion with the vendor and will keep you posted on the outcome.

The second is Care. Throughout the pandemic a group of people have faithfully kept in contact with around 60 people that we identified as vulnerable and having to isolate.

In November we distributed a cream tea to every one of these 60 and then early this year we distributed plants followed later by cards written by another band of volunteers in the church. I know that this has been so appreciated and folk have often mentioned how it has made them still feel part of the church family. So again a massive thank you to everyone involved.

The third word is Mission. Ian has commented elsewhere that this pandemic has forced us to look outwards in mission. It has given us the opportunity to go out to others because we cannot ask them to come to us! This is always the way it should be. Our services are watched by people as far away as South Africa and Ian has written elsewhere how we are building our digital presence for mission and discipleship.

I think we are on our fourth alpha group now. However, more exciting has been the way individuals have reached out to their local neighbourhood using the boxes of comfort and joy at Christmas, the valentine's chocolates and Easter cards. This easier way of giving opportunity for us to connect, build relationships and care for those we know will continue so that we will be ready to "give a reason for the hope that is in us."

But there is also a fourth word and that is Gratitude. I give thanks for our amazing, dedicated, creative staff team. I am honoured to work with our faithful, prayerful PCC. I am in awe of and grateful for all those who have sacrificially served in our tech team, worship groups and teaching team. I am immensely grateful to each and every one of you, who though different, have a common desire to know Jesus and make Him known. Finally I continue to thank God for calling me to this place and for His continued call to connect to Him, be changed by Him and to transform the community for Him.

Wardens Report

Mary Haworth

This past year for me has seen many changes - both physically and mentally. Isolation for 12+ months - no hugs, no meeting with people - and little connection with church - in other words, a new way of live and new challenges. I am sure it is the same for many of you.

However, God does not change. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever, and throughout this time, I have seen and felt his presence is different ways: a new hope to trust him for the future, to meet the challenges in different ways, and most of all, not to give up, because in the sadness, there have been many blessings.

I have seen massive changes in our church life. Who would have thought that in 12 months, most of us are worshipping through the Live Stream, meeting through Zoom, and keeping contact in other ways. Although I personally struggle with technology etc, I have been greatly blessed by our Sunday Services, as I know most of our congregation have been. Thank you so much to everyone involved.

As a church, we are moving forward, going deeper with God, being more dependent on him, and I want to encourage you all to be the person God wants you to be. Be who you are. Build your life on prayer, come to know God as your personal friend and saviour. Thank him for words of wisdom, for strength to face each new day, and for healing of body, mind and spirit.

Take time to be with God, praise him and give thanks. Time to be still and know that he is God. This is what matters: not the building, where we meet - yes we need to keep it in good repair, but God sees what is on our hearts, and calls us to follow him and have a relationship with him.

A massive 'Thank you' to everyone involved in St James: Leading, Preaching, Worship Groups, Small Groups, Teaching, Pastoral Care, Finance, DIY, Cleaning and maintaining the building.

To Naomi and the staff team, Mark, Ian and the lay ministers, the youth and children's

work team (you all know who you are), Graham and the CAP work, and a special thanks to the tech team for keeping us connected.

I'm really encouraged by our Youth Team getting more involved in general, through the technology, the worship band and sharing testimonies about what God is doing in their lives. Well done all of you, keep it coming!

Finally, a very special thank you to Keith Potts for all his hard work over the past 8 years. Thank you for your understanding, your wisdom and your spiritual support.

Many thanks to you all for the love, prayers and support you have given to Keith and myself over the past year. We could not have done it without you. We are family, working together.

As I rejoice and give thanks for all of you, let us encourage each other, as we prepare for the next chapter with great joy and excitement. God holds the keys to the future and he will show us which door to push. The foundation has been laid and is ready to build upon. This is a new start for his new people. Go forth with joy in your hearts, giving thanks to him and being obedient to him. We have a great future ahead. I'm so excited!

Curate's Report

Ian Sarginson

The last 12 months of my curacy has been very different to how I imagined it. During my training there was no module on 'ministry in a global pandemic', but as challenging as it has been at times, it has been a time of great learning, that I am sure will help shape my ministry going forward.

As part of that learning and as a someone that is serving in an area of leadership, I was involved in forming the response to Covid-19 and the restrictions that it brought.

Due to safety and restrictions there have been various changes to how we worship and serve during the last year. One of the main ways that this has happened was in the suspension or restriction of 'in person' services.

When this happened we noticed that often more people were watching online than we were having in person. This will have been for a variety of reasons.

As a team we felt that it was important to respond to this and identified this and that there were many people engaging with our services, many of who we didn't know.

We decided to be intentional with our online presence and content to engage with people as much as possible. We sought to make our social media more interactive and create a variety of content to engage and inform as well as our worship services and content from individual ministries.

We have done that through interviews, videos, questions, polls, short thoughts etc.

There has been an increase in engagement online and we have also got to know the identity of more of these previously 'hidden' congregation members.

It is our intention to continue to develop this area of our ministry, both in the current context and beyond.

Operations

Naomi Lynas

Like many of you, 2020 wasn't the easiest year. We started the year with big plans: at the end of February, I remember standing at the front of church talking about our financial challenges as we considered both the cost of the upgrades to the Oasis Room and the challenge of raising our regular income to cover our regular expenditure.

Then, Covid: school closures and lockdown. Those months homeschooling and trying to work full time were not easy! However, we saw our church family mobilised into action - ringing around, moving small groups to Zoom and embracing technology along with the rest of the world.

In many ways, coming out of the building has helped us to focus on what is important: keeping connected through relationship; deepening our understanding of God through discipleship; and looking at how we serve the needs of our community. Fully embracing digital church has made us more creative (and tested my video editing skills) and given us clarity around how we communicate. For me personally, leading an Alpha group was a huge highlight.

As we opened up the church building over the Summer, the words 'Risk Assessment' have been my most used phrase. Every time the legislation has updated, our procedures and risk assessments have to change as well.

In October, we had our month of prayer and fasting, which we called 'Beyond 2020.' This led into three focuses: a plan to increase regular giving by 20%; a plan to raise funds to purchase Seedle's Yard; and a review of our Leadership structure. Over November and December, we saw God's provision through his people as many in the congregation increased or started regular giving. In addition, we received notice in November of a legacy which would cover the proposed developments to the Oasis Room. Despite all the difficulties of this past year, we have seen that God is more than enough to supply all of our needs.

Finances Report

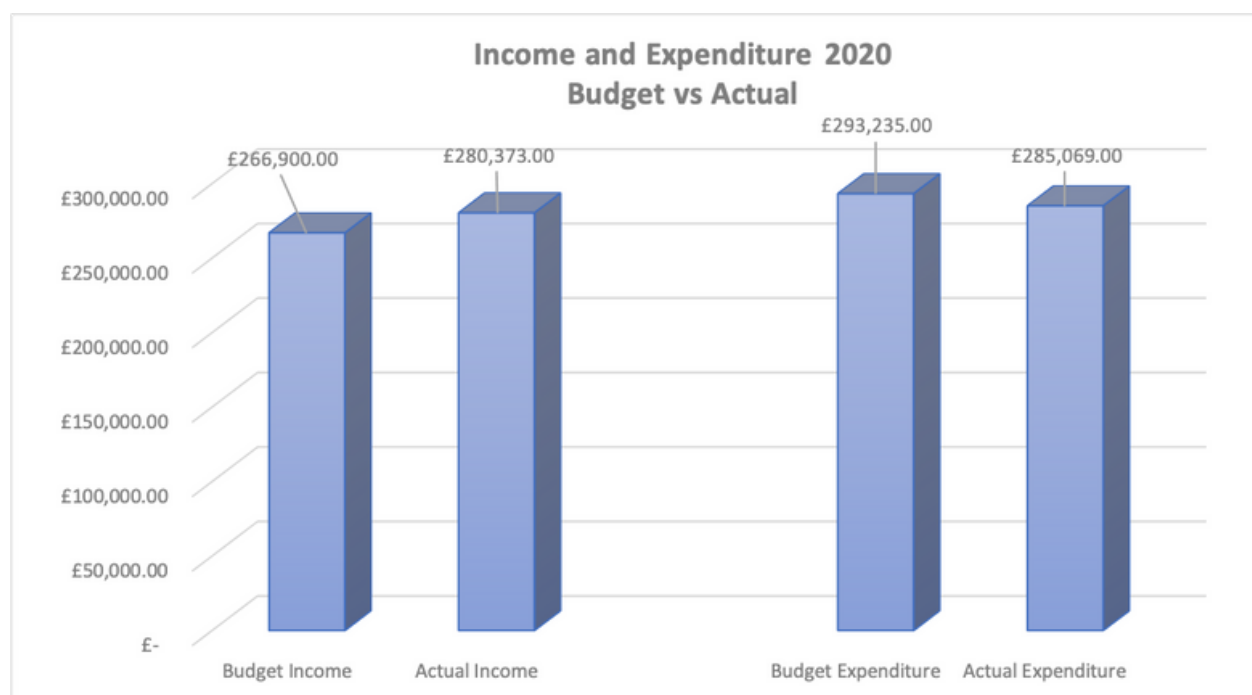
Naomi Lynas

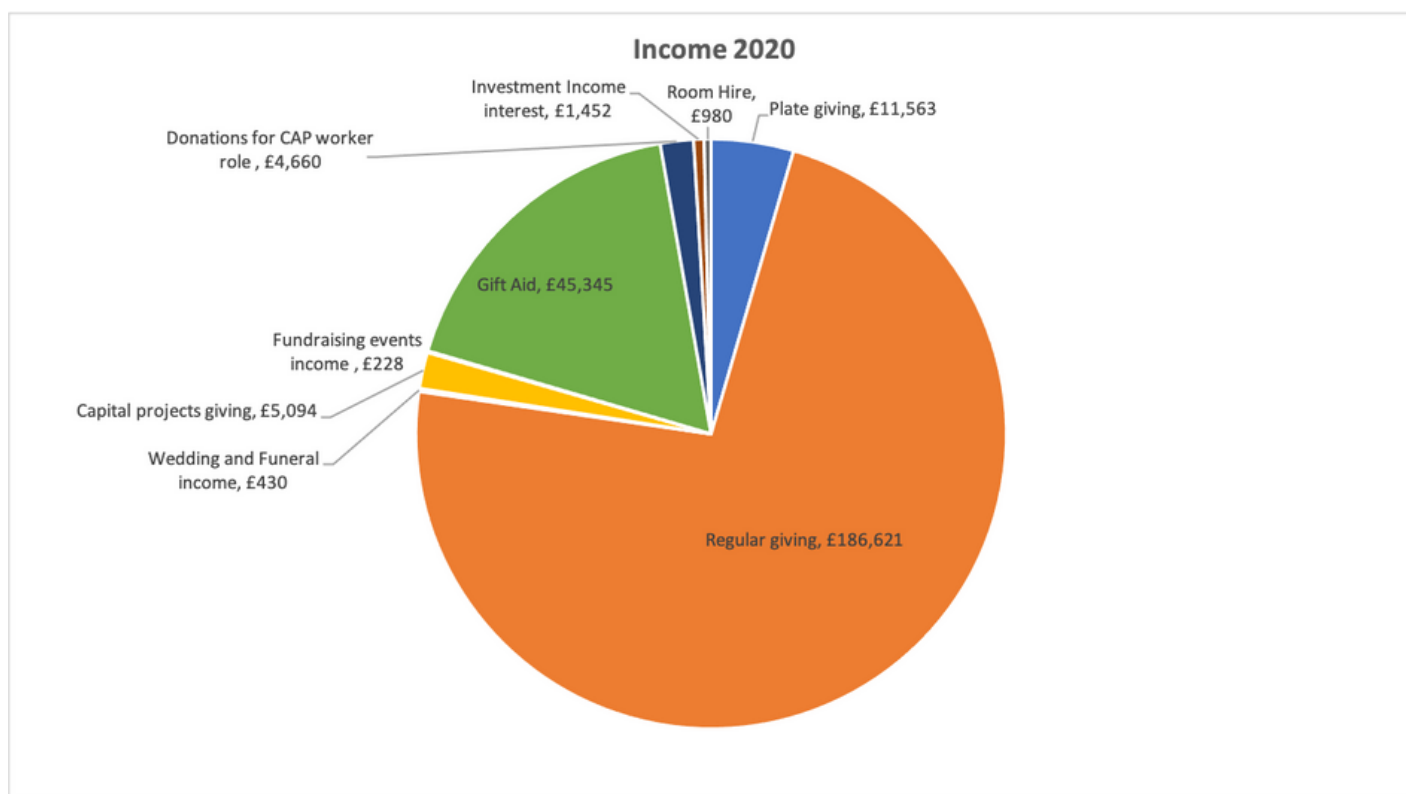
Like many organisations, we had no idea how the pandemic would affect our finances. We had some significant financial challenges at the beginning of 2020 and went into the year with a deficit budget, praying for God's provision.

Our regular giving stayed remarkably stable for the majority of the year, which was wonderful, and allowed us to continue employing staff while other churches were having to use the furlough system. Our plate giving and our room hire decreased, as our building was closed and services moved online.

As may be expected, some of our spending decreased: the obvious areas of savings were in catering and some events which couldn't go ahead, such as Mega Mondays, Love Clitheroe and Prayer Weeks. We did also furlough our cleaner, although we ensured that we 'topped up' his furlough pay so that he was always receiving his full salary despite being unable to work.

Some of the savings were re-allocated: Helen was able to purchase additional resources to help her set up Forest Church, and Lucy was able to use the underspend in the Youth Budget to give the Youth Room a make over and purchase resources for Youth Club. Nevertheless, our expenditure came in under budget.

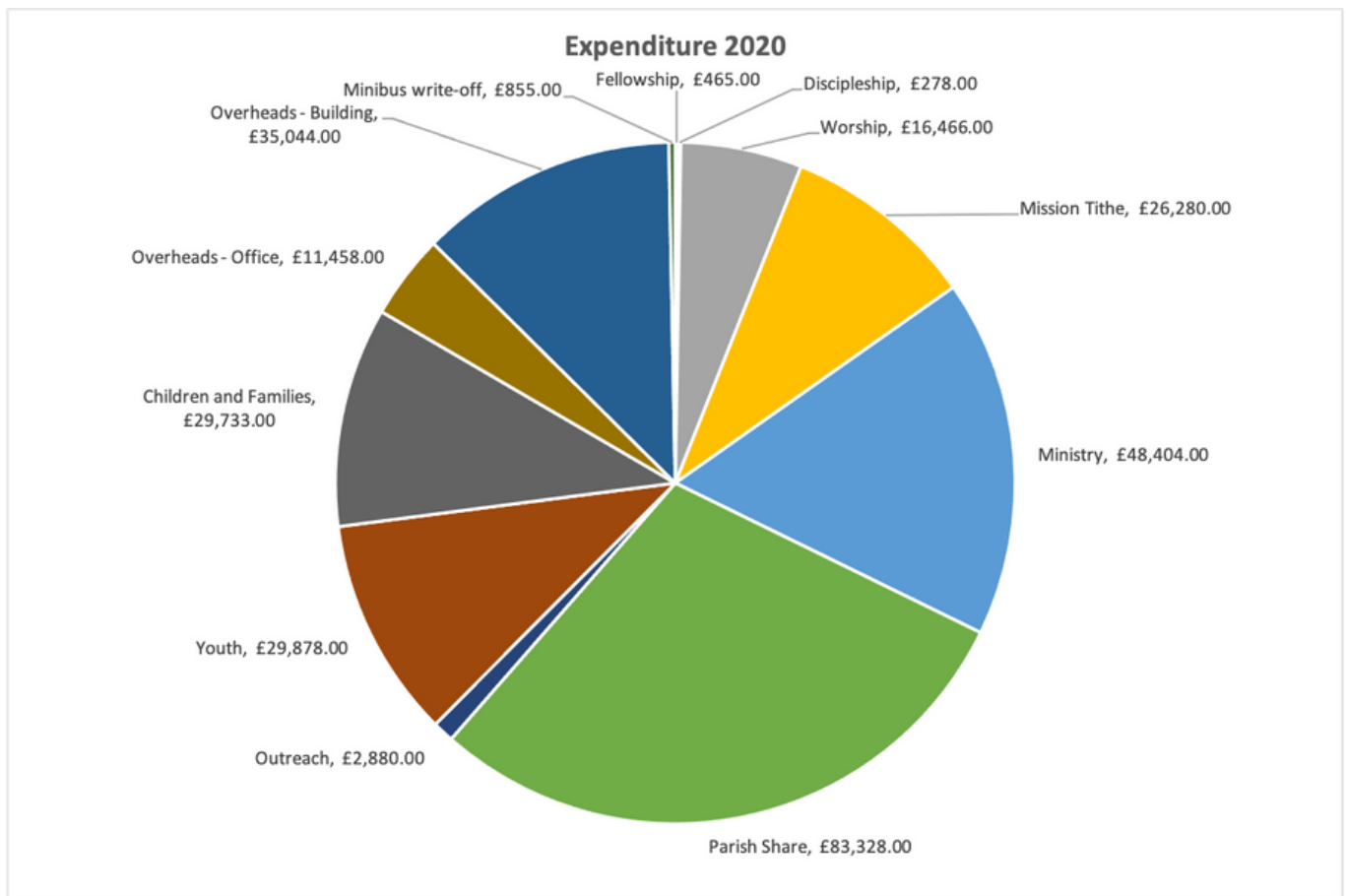




At the beginning of the year (pre-Covid), we set up a 'Capital Projects' cost centre. This was specifically for money given for capital projects such as the Oasis Room refurbishment. Following the Beyond 2020 month of prayer and fasting, we shared again our budget deficit and the need to increase our regular income by 20%. The congregation responded to this and regular giving did increase.

Our total income in 2020 was £280,373, against a budget of £266,900. You can see from the pie chart above that Regular Giving (annual total £186,621) and Gift Aid (£45,345) are our biggest sources of income, and this indicates a fairly healthy church, financially. £5,094 was given towards Capital Projects and this will be spent over 2021 on the refurbishment of the Oasis Room and the purchase of Seedle's Yard.

So despite the decrease in income from room hire, plate giving and events, we have seen an increase in regular giving which is wonderful.



Our expenditure (£285,069) was under budget, for the reasons explained above, and this led to a significantly reduced deficit: from a forecast deficit of £26,000, our actual deficit was £4,696. While this is great, in other ways, a deficit is still a deficit, and we aim to have a break-even budget for 2021.

Managing the budget, book keeping and reporting to the PCC every few months is a huge task, and this year, Jonathan Frank has come on board in the role of Treasurer. He brings real clarity and a sense of reassurance in his reports to the PCC. Sue Clark does the book keeping and the real leg-work of inputting all income and expenditure into Xero which takes several hours a week, and we are all incredibly grateful for the work of both Jonathan and Sue on the finance team.

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Children and Families

Helen Potts



It's been quite a year! A year full of challenges. Yet we know that challenges help us grow, help us rely on God more than ever and it certainly feels that this is the story of this last year. A year when everything has changed and nothing has stayed the same, yet a year full of God's generosity and blessing. In a year dominated by restrictions, it doesn't feel that this has stunted or stopped ministry, but rather it has created growth in many areas of this ministry.

Little Fishes could not meet until September, so connections were maintained with doorstep chats, where craft bags or blessing bags were delivered each week, in the summer there were a few picnics and then in September we were able to come back in the building in restricted numbers. This has led to the growth of the group to three sessions to allow as many as possible to come and so we find ourselves with 45 families coming along each week, instead of 20. We are always full and could fill another session. Families are so appreciative of the support and kindness shown, especially the new mum's who have given birth during lockdown. But now the challenge of how to

share the good news of Jesus, how to provide opportunities to ask faith questions and have faith conversations. We are hoping to start a morning mums group where this can happen. connecting with God.

Kingdom Kids and Families have not met in the building, but family faith has blossomed and grown. Early on the online services had many families doing faith together as they contributed to the online services. From last July we started meeting as Forest Church in the school eco zone, a congregation of families using God's creation to connect with God. This has supported and encouraged family faith as families talk about faith together, as they lead activities together.

Forest Church will hopefully develop into an outreach congregation for community families, where families can introduce other families to God.

Rockin has developed. The Rockin team are a stronger team than ever before, taking turns to lead activities and the essential bubbles creating teams where children feel supported and known. Team leaders doing a great job each week answering questions and praying with the children. Being Jesus models to the children. Over the last Lockdown leaders have all delivered weekly challenge bags to children and had doorstep chats to check on families. An amazing team.



School. Our connection has kept going, changing, but continuing. Although school has not had whole school assemblies, I have still had an amazing opportunity to produce a video assembly each week. It is obviously so much nicer to be in the hall with the wonderful children of St. James' school, but even so what an amazing opportunity, I have been wonderfully surprised by the number of parents who have watched these assemblies and enjoyed them!

TLG has continued with a couple of children, Jean French has been amazing coaching each week over the phone, building a wonderful relationship with one child and their family.

We were unable to put together an indoor prayer room at Easter, so we moved outside and created an outdoor sensory Easter prayer trail, that each class followed. We hope to repeat this for 'Thy Kingdom Come'. The wonderful thing was to know the children were using the prayer stations during playtimes.

Friday superheroes continued via video until July, but has not met back in the building. Friendships are maintained as most families connect with Rockin, or Little Fishes. At Christmas we dropped craft bags off to many of the families. Many joined in with The Mega Mondays Summer Challenge, following the treasure hunts each week.

As we move on, the question I keep asking God is, what do you want me to hold onto from this challenging time and what do you want me to let go of? Which strands shall I pick back up again and what do you want me to leave behind.

St James School Governors

Mark Clayton, Chair of Governors

I am sure every section in this year's church annual report will identify many challenges that that group has faced and that is certainly true of our amazing school. The staff have continued to work tirelessly both in school and at home to ensure the children are educated, developed, cared for and supported. They have cared for and supported children who have lost loved ones to this pandemic, who have seen parents lose jobs or face economic hardships, who have suffered periods of absence from their friends and school, who have struggled to learn and have had to adapt to new styles of learning, who have felt anxious and worried at times and who have, most heartbreakingly, lost a fellow pupil recently.

I have been lucky enough to be on the playground at the start or end of the day a few times recently and see smiling faces on the children, on the staff and (I think) under the masks of the parents and carers. I hope some of you saw the lovely story and photo of all the teddies in the school hall, lined up to greet and be given to each child on the reopening of school after the latest lockdown. The simple yet poignant message on the bears read St. James' School – Stronger Together.



St James Youth

Lucy Skelton

It has been a strange first year in post, not only have I had to work through all the normal things that come with starting a new one but of course in addition I have had the covid restrictions on top.

First half 2020:

We did two youth zooms weekly (one for younger youth and one for older youth), I also produced a video and downloadable content for the young people to use at home. We then discussed the content at our zoom groups. At first this was quite popular but as time went on the novelty began to wear off and the young people began to feel tired from home schooling. We moved to one zoom a week and continued to create videos and downloadable resources.

As summer approached the youth band were asked to record worship for a Sunday morning. This was a huge task, not only because a multi-track audio and video recording is a big job but also because some of the young people in the youth band I had not actually ever met! However, as they always do, the young people did a great job! This was the start of the youth band becoming a big part of the youth ministry at the church.

Over the summer the youth band were allowed to practise at church and they spent lots of time playing music together, learning new songs and developing their skills. We were also able to do outdoor youth work. So we arranged youth work sessions in the castle park. It was really nice to finally connect with the young people I had never met and those I had not had any contact with since my initial few weeks. Those young people who had continued with the zoom meetings also felt a great sense of joy being able to see each other in the flesh.

Second Half 2020:

Face to face youth work was allowed at the church. So Tuesday and Wednesday evening discipleship groups began. Unfortunately, Sunday morning youth group has not been able to happen since lockdown 1. Youth band has continued to grow. Meeting weekly for 2 hours. They learn to set up and pack down, techy things like cameras, easy worship, sound and lights. They also have time to practise songs for leading on a Sunday morning. It is a time of great encouragement and mostly a time for them to worship together.

In November in partnership with Chris Meyer, we started a cross-town/inter-church youth project called RVY. RVY is aimed at creating community with young people currently in churches and be a light in the wider

community. RVY has a monthly live stream where we talk about Jesus and the difference he makes in our lives, we also host a weekly online gaming evening. Find out more at www.rvyouth.org

With the second lockdown just before Christmas the youth were once again not able to meet, however rehearsals and recording could happen. So, together with the children of the church, the youth put together a Christmas Extravaganza - which you can still watch on YouTube. During the writing, rehearsing and recording the young people grew in their confidence, some of them were involved with the band, some with recording. Some choreographed a dance for the children to learn and one wrote, performed and edited her own spoken word about Bethlehem.

I give thanks and praise to God who has made it all possible, He has kept the youth going over this difficult year and has given the team and myself the inspiration, energy and motivation to keep on going. We look forward to what He has in store for us over 2021 and beyond!

CAP

Graham Haldane

The ninth year of our CAP debt centre saw lots of changes having to take place. With just a few days warning, the office was transferred from The Grand to Graham's home, and online models then had to be developed for both client appointments and the running of CAP Money courses. The shift to online working has not suited all potential clients, due either to limited IT facilities or more importantly to adding just one more pressure to the issues people have faced during lockdown.

Nationally, CAP and other debt charities have all expected a tsunami of people seeking help with unmanageable debts, but have found that this has not yet materialised; the normal 'bury one's head in the sand' response has been exacerbated by additional mental health stresses, home schooling, and just the need to 'survive' lockdown.

Despite the limitations above, we saw 10 new clients in 2020, and have already met another 4 in 2021. It was great to see 5 clients go debt free during the year, even if we couldn't celebrate that with our normal 'Mexican waves'! Graham and Will ran two online CAP Money courses, and Graham additionally ran some for The 180 Project and Recycling Lives.

In the spirit of our 'resource church' role, Graham was instrumental in setting up 'Keep Calm and Carry Online', a training session to encourage CAP Money coaches to run the online version of the course; 4 sessions were run, with 85 people attending.

As of April 2021, we've just started being able to meet clients face-to-face again, and have CAP Money courses planned for May and October. We're hoping that we will be able to pick up some financial education work in schools again in the 2021/22 academic year. With some of our befrienders and volunteers having decided to retire/discontinue following the break of the last year, we will be looking to re-launch and re-envision our volunteer team once a group training event is possible. Prayers for the work of CAP and all the vulnerable but amazing clients we meet are always appreciated.

Pastoral Care

Peter Williams

Jesus was The Good Shepherd, or the Good Pastor – and when he told the story of the Lost Sheep, searching out and caring for the sheep who went astray, he also made sure that the 99 who stayed in the fold were secure. He knew where they were. He knew the difficulties that faced them. He could provide care for them too, and when necessary bring in outside help.

Over the past year, the core of our pastoral work during these difficult times (knowing how individuals are, the difficulties they face, and supporting with care in both actual and spiritual ways) continues to be through small groups, where members know each other well and care for each other in an excellent way: thanks to all who ensured this continued over the last 18 months.

Thanks also to the team who provide additional pastoral care to many in the church family – ranging from anything between providing lifts to appointments, telephoning regularly to ensure those who are likely to be alone or feel isolated, shopping for those self-isolating, through doorstep visits delivering small presents and cards to the older part of the church family, to prayer-texting or phone-praying with those who have particular concerns or referring onward those who need specialist help (plus a great number of unseen but vital acts of love) – there has been a great bunch of disciples doing these brilliant jobs. It's Jesus The Good Shepherd's love in action; thank you all!

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Small Groups

Ali Groves: Small Group Co-ordinator

Well, here we are another year down the line.

For our small groups this year has posed a mass of new challenges. Who knew that so many of us would find that we could rise to the challenge of meeting remotely and master technology that previously we would probably have avoided like the plague?

I know that, as in all things, there have been as many different experiences as there are groups and people in them. For the leaders keeping their group together, fresh and meaningful has been an ongoing challenge and I, on behalf of all our small group members would like to thank the leaders for their love, dedication, creativity and resourcefulness as they have continued to seek to maintain community and grow relationships with God and with each other.

Some of the ways groups have stayed connected are that: they have WhatsApp groups keeping them connected between meetings, with prayer requests, encouragement and silly nonsense flowing freely to keep people encouraged and feeling linked in; they have played games, had quizzes, eaten 'together' and had parties; and another excellent solution has been to create mini groups to help build and deepen relationship in a smaller setting.

Not all groups have found it possible to meet on zoom but have spent time calling each other or meeting at a distance to make sure their members are doing ok.

As always, the commitment to community and encouragement of relationship with each other and God stands out in this report! Proud to co-ordinate this bunch!

Audio Visual

Mark Clayton, Chair of Governors

Who would have thought that our investment in our streaming hardware and training of people would have become so crucial so quickly?

The system we have in place has enabled us to stream services of a higher quality to all our church family and hopefully new people in our local and church community as well.

We have been challenged by various 'tech' issues throughout the year and have worked hard to overcome these. We now stream both the Sunday 10.30am and Wednesday morning services fairly reliably each week. We have also been able to support families by streaming funerals which could only be attended in person by limited numbers of people.

Our screen presentations in church have also developed and you'll now see camera shots as well as still images and videos on the large screen throughout the service.

I need to thank all the amazing operators who are committing more time to preparing resources and attending rehearsals to ensure that the presentations in church and the streaming online is of a high standard that aids worship.

We continue to look at training of both existing and new operators and it is inspiring that we have young people acting as operators especially when our youth worship group is leading. We are also looking at ways to enhance and develop our hardware systems.

We have been truly blessed in this area which has allowed our church family to stay in touch with our worship throughout the pandemic. I am sure we will continue to have a significant impact with people online even when the church is fully reopened.



St James'
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