



Abbots Road

Goodnews

AGM 2020 Reports



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CHURCH SECRETARIE'S INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORTS

It's been said that Christianity is a love story. The story of men, women and children who have found themselves called to respond to a love which will not let them go – the love of God in Jesus Christ.

The Church is a community of such people and the work and life of the church is built around loving fellowship. The church isn't simply a collection of individuals but a community that supports, challenges and renews each other as they proclaim the Gospel in word and deed to a broken world. It is a loving family, where the younger members respect and show understanding for the older, and the older members respect and show understanding for the younger, a place where everyone feels valued as a much-loved child of God.

The pages that follow contain a story of a loving family of Christians who work together in order to further God's mission. The many activities which take place on these premises, in order to show God's love to the community around us, are many and varied. It takes a lot of hard work and commitment to keep them going.

The Elders are aware that there may be some folk in our fellowship who would like to join in the work of the church but they won't because of they are too shy or maybe they haven't be asked.

Last December we gained another Elder, a first time Elder at that – Loreta Willbond - It would good if more folk prayed thoughtfully to see if they feel called to offer themselves to serve as an Elder.

We are, as ever, indebted to and thankful for all those who consistently give service to God through the work they do within Abbots Road U.R.C. – it couldn't happen without you!

God bless you all, may his love ever surround you and may we grow in love and service, fulfilling God's plan for our lives and our church.

Teach us good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give, and not to count the cost; to fight, and not to heed the wounds; to toil, and not to seek for rest; to labour, and not to ask for any reward except that of knowing that we do your will; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Amen. (The prayer of Ignatius Loyola)

Revd Pam Smith

PRAYER CHAIN

As well as our Prayer Book and our Welcome to Worship, Abbots Road URC also has a Prayer Chain. A prayer chain gives a more instant request for prayer. Ours is set up on WhatsApp and those who have joined get messages to pray for people practically every day.

We may be asked to pray for a situation that needs our prayers or someone who is ill or bereaved. We are also asked to give thanks for some good news e.g. someone who has recovered and is back to good health. We also pray for disasters in the world and other situations that are going on.

The Prayer Chain is there for everyone at Abbots Road to join, so if you feel you would like to join and you have a suitable mobile phone then please talk to Gus and he will let you know if you can have WhatsApp on your phone.

LADIES BIBLE STUDY

Last year after a Worship Song Group Service, Joyce Long felt The Lord was telling her to use her house for some Christian purpose. That purpose turned out to be a Ladies Bible Study. We meet once a month and we started off by looking at the Lectionary Readings for the following week.

So, we've looked at Gospel passages and passages from the epistles. Just recently we discussed stories from the news and thought about Bible passages might go with them.

The group is not meant to be highbrow theological discussions, they are for everyone, so if you want to come along and just sit and listen that's fine and if you want to come along to join in with the discussion then that's fine. Everybody's opinion is valid.

Revd Pam Smith

LUNCH BOX

2019 was the 17th year of Lunch Box serving meals on a Tuesday Lunchtime. It is now a well-oiled machine, maintained lovingly by 14 people on a weekly basis. 2019 was a good year when numbers of diners grew a little. We regularly serve 25 three- course meals and have a varied menu which is published well in advance. (See the notice in the Laburnum Room!)

There has only been one price rise in our lifetime, and the £3.50 consistently makes a profit for church funds and Lunch Box itself. (£1048.71 for each last year.) This is, of course, due to the members of the team who give their time and energy – and then buy their lunch!

Each week we have a raffle. This, over the months, raises a fair sum which enables both the Children's Holiday Club and Holiday at Home to be certain of paying for the coaches they book for outings and also offer the outings at a discounted price; an arrangement which has worked well since Holiday at Home was first set up. This year because we had a surplus of funds, we were able to organize a half day trip to include lunch at Kibworth Golf Club.

If you are free on a Tuesday lunch time and would like to share some company and a good meal, please feel free to join us. It would be really helpful, if you let either Irene or Dorothy know that you intend to come.

Irene Wren

COGS

We began 2019 with 6 children in COGs but a group of 4 of them attend regularly on a Sunday morning. Paul and I have led Cogs together for around 18 months and the dynamic and consistency of leaders is certainly working well.

The children are all an integral part of our church family and enjoy exploring the bible, praying together and sharing our thoughts and ideas with the congregation.

In August, after our Annual Church Holiday Club, I was approached by a parent, whose children had attended, to ask if the children could start coming to church. We were thrilled that the question had been asked and in October, we welcomed 3 new Taylor children to Cogs and their dad who joined the congregation for the morning service.

On December 23rd, 7 children took part with Paul and I to present Christmas Past, Present and Future to the congregation as an act of worship. This was a wonderful service and the children loved taking part.

On January 5th 2020, The Taylor family joined us as we welcomed the 2 younger children into baptism. What a wonderful year we have had together and we look forward to 2020 with a renewed sense of hope and direction.

Paul and I would like to personally thank all those people who have covered Cogs while we have been away and helped us during projects where we need extra support. We hope we can count on you to continue this support as we move into 2020.

Alison Hadley

THE ELDER'S MEETING

It is the responsibility of the Elders to oversee all the activities of the church and to know that all activities are appropriate to take place on church premises. They also oversee that worship and work with children are properly arranged and must be sure that the finances of the church are kept in good order. They liaise with other local churches and keep up to date with the work of the Synod and General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

All this is particularly important during a time of transition between ministers, and we are blessed to have church officers who care deeply about their tasks.

We began the year by giving thanks to Maurice Gardner for his long period of service as an Elder and Church Secretary. He had worked tirelessly for the church since his youth and still retains some tasks for our benefit. We also thanked Lyn Lakin for her period of service as Elder. Although quiet, Lyn had undertaken her role seriously, and usually worked in the background.

We welcomed back Paul Hadley, and also, Pam Smith, whose experience is valuable to us and Pam agreed to undertake the role of church secretary, although other Elders have shared the load by undertaking over some of the tasks.

During the year we have been focused on developing a Profile document which we believed would introduce ourselves honestly to any prospective minister who might want to learn about us. Finally, our efforts were accepted by the Synod Committee and our vacancy was declared for the November Moderator's meeting.

We have worked through the re-application for the Child Friendly Church Award, which was successful, so the plaque can remain on our wall.

We have been concerned for the security of people in the building at times other than worship and have drawn up guidelines for all church user groups as well as for individuals.

WE received the Quinquennial survey of our building undertaken for us by the Synod, and now the Management Committee are exercised to act on its recommendations. The list was not too long!

A call Group was set up, to work with the South Leicestershire Group of Churches, to oversee and deal with the logistics of a call being given to a new minister.

We have worked well as a team and have also benefitted from using smaller groups to deal with individual topics.

As 2019 has come to an end we thank Alison Gardner for her period of service with us and we welcome Loretta Wilbond, as a new Elder as she begins to explore how her talents can be used to serve our Lord.

We now look forward to 2020 and, hopefully, developing a new relationship with the South Leicestershire churches as we continue to explore how a Resource Church will function. We pray God's blessing on our continued work.

Irene Wren

The Ark Preschool

Whilst the Ark is a private business running at the back of the building, the ties between The Ark and the church remain high. Myself and Kate are both elders at the church and Helen comes along to some of our events and special services. We have children who have been at The Ark who are now part of Pilots and Messy Church and 3 Ark children who now regularly attend Cogs.



We welcomed 12 Ark children and their older siblings into our Holiday Club last summer and so the link is very important.

The Christian ethos that runs through The Ark is paramount to the work we do with the families we work with. The community spirit between the adults that work for the church and the children and staff is wonderful and the relationships that have been built are crucial and God given.

Some of our elders have volunteered with us and accompanied us on trips and events, one of which was our annual trip into the town centre on the bus to see the lights. This year, not only did we give out chocolate coins, we also gave jumpers, socks and woolly hats to the homeless on the streets of Leicester City. What a wonderful and valuable lesson to teach to the children about giving.

During the last week of term, Rev. Pam Smith came in to share the Nativity with us again at Christmas.

We pray as we enter 2020, that the ties that bring these communities together will grow in strength and love and more people will be touched by the message of good news through all that we do.

Alison Hadley

SOUP CLUB

This gathering was a new venture set up last year. The idea behind it is to provide an opportunity for anyone who lives alone to join with others for a light lunch and some cake and get to know others in the same situation. We now have a small nucleus of Ladies who are better friends and enjoy a chat together about anything and everything over some soup and cake.

From meeting twice a month, during 2019, we plan to meet just once a month during 2020, on the last Friday in the month. Perhaps this might appeal to you but maybe Friday is not a good day. Nothing is cast in stone; we could change the day to accommodate others. Think about it. If you decide to come, we are currently meeting at 131 Scraftoft Lane, and we have enough chairs for more to join us!

Irene Wren

Stay and Play – Little Borrowers Toy Library

Stay n Play runs on Thursdays during term time, 10 - 11.30 am! We occasionally meet during school holidays, when older siblings attend. Fees are £1.50 per family.

On register at the moment are 14 families (17 adults/21 children).

We have a wide range of adults - parents, grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, childminder. Ages of children: womb -4yrs.

Session comprises free play (covering all areas of development), crafts (sometimes adult crafts too) till 11am, then snacks and drinks, storytime/songtime. If weather ok, we use the outdoor area.

Book Bus visits once per term.

Children feed into The Ark Preschool.

The Ark supports childminders with training when available.

Visitors or volunteers always welcome!

Kate lee

HOLIDAY CLUB

2019 Holiday Club was another success! On the theme, Jesus the light of the world, 54 children aged between 3 and 11 enjoyed a week full of activity. 13 under fives had a room of their own but followed the activities going on in the big hall very closely; they joined in the singing and dancing, the story telling and craft activities with enthusiasm. 41 fives to elevens worked in groups to build lighthouses, aided and ably led by 5 young leaders. The older members of staff were able to take a more relaxed role because of their help. There was paint, glue, sticky tape, paper, felt tipped pens and scissors put to creative use as varied shapes of light house gradually took shape. Alison, too, was able to step back a little from the throng, to work with a group of 8 older young people who do not want to grow out of the Holiday Club week! They built the very large structure which stood at the front of the church for a few weeks.

An interested parent organized a visit to the Lifeboat station at Hunstanton which was enjoyed by all but the very youngest children. We basked in the sunshine and picnicked in the shadow of the Old Lighthouse, before families all went to enjoy the afternoon in their own way. Helpers enjoyed the stroll from one end of Hunstanton to the other, stopping for coffee at a number of tea rooms along the way!!

On the Sunday morning, breakfast was organized for children and their parents to come to prior to worship. This new venture brought 20 of the children and their families into the church for worship and the sharing of all that had gone on during the week with the congregation. Jesus certainly shone in our lives that week.

Irene Wren

Over 50s Carers Group

The Over 50s Carers Group meets in the Laburnum Room, 10.30 am – 12.30pm on the first and third Fridays of every month. There is always tea, coffee, biscuits and often an excuse for cake. It is a friendly group and a safe place to talk.

It began seven years ago, with the assistance of Age UK, to support those caring for family members with Alzheimer's, dementia or life limiting illness. Carers were brought by volunteer drivers while the person they were caring for went to a day centre, hospice or was looked after by a befriender from Age UK. We were able to access the services of Age UK and Macmillan for advice and support.

We continued to run the Group after Age UK and Macmillan moved resources elsewhere, so we could give support and friendship to those Carers still in that role, those who had been bereaved, and those who had the person they had previously cared for now in residential care. People come and go as their situation changes.

There are at present eight members of the Group. A lady who for a long time was a member, who has moved from Leicester, often rings during the Meeting to keep in touch. We have links with a lady living locally who cares for her very elderly parents, and on occasion she has brought them to meetings.

In 2019 we celebrated Easter and Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries. The Christian Aid coffee morning always falls on a Carers' Friday but no one minds paying for their coffee on that occasion. There is always interest in what is going on at Church and we love to see the Ark children, particularly at their Christmas nativity play.

Sadly, we attended the funeral earlier in the year, of a lady who died of cancer, who came to the Group with her sister. Her sister has returned to the Group after a successful hip operation and now sometimes brings her son-in-law.

The Group is open to anyone over 50 who find themselves in a caring role. They can be sure of a warm welcome.

Maurice and Alison Gardner

MANAGEMENT REPORT 2019

Management committee consists of Roy Hadley, Mark Hadley, Gus Webbe, John Allison and Rev Pam Smith with Irene Wren co-opted on. Assistance through the year was received from Paul Hadley and Gareth Hadley.

Part of the ceiling in the Laburnum room fell in during Januray. This was repaired and other plastering done at the same time.

A heater above the Abbots Road door was installed and we discovered that the Church electrics needed to be updated and this work was completed.

A P.A.T. test was also carried out on all electrical goods used in the Church and buildings and any items that did not pass were removed from circulation.

The toilets adjacent to the hall were not refurbished due in part to the firm that were going to undertake the work being about to enter liquidation. Further quotes will be sourced but the work can only go ahead during school holidays.

Various maintenance has been carried out as the need arose.

The Quinquennial Review was undertaken by a surveyor appointed by Synod. No major faults were found, although there is some general maintenance to be completed, none of this is urgent and will be dealt with before anything becomes urgent.

The Manse has a number of problems and I am happy to say that Irene Wren has agreed to oversee the organisation of getting these problems resolved.

My thanks go to all who have helped maintain and improve the Church and its' buildings.

Roy Hadley

Worship Group

2019 was a busy and productive year for Worship Group. We meet to sing each Friday night during term-time and we enjoy learning new worship songs as well as singing old and new hymns. We are always aware that we are asked to sing at festival services but otherwise we use our rehearsal time as a time of worship and prayer together.

In the Autumn of 2018, Alison put a proposal to the group. A suggestion that we sing Joseph and the amazing technicolour dream coat.

This suggestion was greeted with a degree of trepidation but also with much enthusiasm. Being a group of varying ages from 50 to 90, we knew this would be a challenge but we embraced it and began to learn the songs.

On Saturday 12th October we were ready to present it in church and we did this to a large audience who sang along and really enjoyed the performance. Having placed photos on social media, we were approached by a lady who helps to run the Christian Women's Fellowship conference every February and we were asked if we would perform Joseph at their conference in February 2020. We are delighted to be revisiting the songs and that we will get to perform it again.

We look forward to this next year and hope to do another project.

I would like to personally thank Mark Hadley for the gifts he brings each week to the group. Without his gift of music, we would not be able to sing.

Alison Hadley

Pilots

Pilots is a non-uniformed Christian organisation for children and young people. It is owned by the United Reformed Church. Pilots has been in existence since 1936. There have been many changes over the years which have kept the organisation relevant to those involved, but its core belief in the value of each Pilot and the respect for individual Christian nurture and growth has remained fundamental to the development of the organisation throughout its history.

Pilots believes that children and young people matter. Therefore, Pilots gives local churches the chance to share the love of God in the ongoing life of Jesus Christ by inviting children and young people on an exciting journey.

Abbots Road Pilots – Each Monday evening is busy with 29 young people, 1 helper and 4 leaders on the premises at any one time. The programme is varied to cater for all types of needs. Our normal evening starts with a game followed by an activity, a drink and biscuit then Crest time, then a game and finally Pilots prayer.

Crest time is part of the National URC Pilots programme which consists of

Prayer
Interest
Learning
Overseas
Talents
Service



Over the last year we have been covering our crest work as follows:

- **prayer** - through quiet time; candles; prayers that we know; balloon prayer and hand prayer.
- **Interests** – we explored the National URC One Body Pack.
- **Learning** – we have created various crafts to do with growing from potting, planting to creating. This finished with our ‘Grasshead’ competition, which was won by the picture here
- **Overseas** – we studied the National Pilots Overseas pack
- **Talents** - we allowed the children to bring in the things that they are interested in and explored how they will develop these talents.
- **Service** – we presented the Nativity

Currently we are working on our prayer crest and to make this interesting we have taken this back to basics, therefore during January and February we are focused on the New Pilots prayer, Pilots promise, chain prayer Lord’s prayer and Grace and discovering what they mean. The children are enjoying exploring these and have made varied items, for ‘keep sake’, so they can remember these more easily.

Whilst we at Abbots Road have experienced steady numbers over the last ten years the same cannot be said for the National Pilots. With a drop in Pilots companies of over 60% the national Pilots are looking at new ways to be Pilots. Therefore, please hold Pilots as a national URC organisation in your prayers.

Gus Webbe

Abbots Road Messy Church

Messy Church is very much part of our fellowship and Church at Abbots Road.

If you do not know much about Messy Church then here is a quick summary.

- **Christ Centred** - Messy Church helps people encounter God and Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Messy Church is part of the Bible Reading Fellowship which believes in the historic Churches, in One God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- **All age** - Messy Church is for all ages, adults and children to enjoy worship and fellowship together. Every element should be relevant and accessible to all.
- **Creativity** - Messy Church uses hands on activities to explore bible stories, to reflect a God of creativity and give people a chance to discover and explore together.
- **Hospitality** - Messy Church reflects a God of unconditional love and is a Church for all, providing an oasis of welcome and a safe place in which to thrive. Messy Church is about hospitality, expressed most evidently by being creative, worshiping and eating together.
- **Celebration** - Messy Church reflects a God of joy who wants his people to have a life in all its fullness.

At Abbots Road Messy Church we had a very busy 2019 with over 25 different families worshipping with us during the year. Normally we have around 40 - 60 people at each Messy Church and most of the organising is overseen by Kate, Gaz, Denise and Gus. We have been blessed with those who have helped us with crafts, activities and other areas during the last year. Therefore, we would like to say a big thank you to Pam, Jeanette, Irene, Dorothy, Brian, Pat and Roy.

During the year we have used the themes as follows –

January - We Three Kings
February - Lords Supper
March - Lion King
April - Easter
May - I am
June - Pentecost
July - Joseph
September - Beauty and the beast
October - God made all of these
November - Remembrance
December - Nativity and Christingle



We always finish the year with the Nativity and Christingle Service. December 2019 Messy Church there was over 140 people taking part in the worship and fellowship together. The traditional Nativity and the Christingle was very much appreciated by those who attended. From a personal note there were two highlights in 2019. The first is when a family looked on the National Messy Church Website and discovered us here at Abbots Road Church and attended our Messy Church. The Second is the Lightfoot family. After attending Messy Church for a year their two daughters were baptised on 1st December 2019 during morning worship, this was a wonderful and uplifting service and the family continue to worship with Messy Church and Pilots.

God works in mysterious ways and who knows where these Christ centred, All age, Creative, Hospitable and Celebration time together will lead to. We leave it all in the hands of our Lord and saviour.

Gus Webbe

Social Group

Social group began the year with a party filled with fun,
And fellowship and food for all to share.
And we enjoyed the company of folk from various groups.
We were really chuffed that they were there.

But later on that month, our group was dealt a bitter blow,
We lost a founder member, much loved Dave.
Each year we'd worked alongside him, from January to December.
We'd laughed and loved and often misbehaved.

But social Group continued with the programme we had planned.
Events to raise some cash and entertain.
An afternoon, delicious tea was served for Christian Aid,
And we were happy you all came again.

We made use of the garden, organised a BBQ,
With burgers and hot dogs and then ice cream.
The sausages were extra-large, they overtook the buns,
You certainly can't say that we are mean.

In April and November, it was Table Top sale time.
The stall holders have found a welcome here.
They feel at home within our walls, we treat them as our friends,
And some of them come back again each year.

Our annual Holiday at Home which seems to grow each time,
Was held with much success again this year.
And all enjoyed activities and those who entertained,
with company from folk both far and near.

We tucked into our fish and chips which Kathy served red hot!
Then our coach trip was to Splading URC.
Who served us with a lovely lunch and made us feel at home.
With friendliness and a welcome cup of tea.

We then drove off to Springfields to buy bargains from the shops.
And we were blessed with really super weather.
They loaded our shopping as we climbed into the coach.
We thanked God for a lovely day together.

The Churches 90th birthday was a day of celebration.
And social group served up a special dinner.
And afterwards a family quiz gave fun and entertainment.
And we felt that the evening was a winner.

The social group was originally formed 50years ago,
And we thought this was worth a celebration.
And so we shared a buffet lunch we didn't deserve ourselves.
And reminisced of every past occasion.

We've worked continuously through those years to serve our church
right here.
But we could not have done it without you.
Your support has been a blessing in our service for the lord,
And, so we pray that God will bless you too.
Dorothy Russell

Women's Institute.

The Women's Institute (WI) meet in the Laburnum Room, 2.30 pm,
on the first Thursday of every month (except August) and have been
meeting there for a good number of years.

Visiting speakers entertain with a variety of topics and refreshments
are always served!

They are a friendly group who welcome visitors and anyone who is
interested in joining them.

Kate Lee

Holiday at Home

Holiday at Home is a time for anyone needing company and to fill time. It's a relaxing time, when you arrive you're offered tea or coffee and biscuits and there's always someone there to greet you. There are things to do spread around on the tables like newspapers and magazines to read. There are jigsaw puzzles, games and handicrafts. Lunch is provided each day, Tuesday being fish and chips day which is very popular. In the afternoon there is usually some entertainment, or Bingo or you can just sit and chat whilst having a cup of tea. It is a lovely time, you can find new friends. We went on an outing to Spalding church where they provided lunch for us. Then it was off to Springfields for shopping. A good time was had by all. This year there will be a new programme, so come along and enjoy.

Edith Middleton



More details and photos relating to Abbots Road URC can be found on our website www.abbotsroadurc.com