



AGM Reports for 2012

Pastors report

I look back over 2012 with huge gratitude to God. By his grace we were at long last able to start the long planned refurbishment of the main hall and entrance area. At the time of writing, the first phase, which has totalled nearly £250,000, is nearing completion and it looks like most of the finance is in hand. Praise the Lord!

This building work has of course meant great upheaval and inconvenience to pretty much everything we do and I think we're all now looking forward to getting back 'home'.

Over the year, God was at work in peoples lives. It was a great joy to baptise seven people and welcome five of these into church membership. Along with the joys there has been much sadness, and over the year I conducted eight funerals.

My time since September has been dominated by building and refurbishment issues, taking up many hours (often as many as 20) each week. However, this always comes second to the spiritual life of the church. During the course of the year, I preached over 60 times and made over 150 pastoral home and hospital visits, as well as sending numerous emails, texts and letters.

Outside of the local church life here I've continued to serve as chairman of the Pastors Forum of our Association of churches – a role I intend to relinquish this year - and to represent the church as a Local Authority Governor of Whitton primary school. I've helped out weekly at the early morning Breakfast Club, as well as helping run our own ASK a further afternoon a week. In my role as governor I was able to join the year 6 children (10/11 yr olds) on their four day residential trip to a camp near Diss. I'm sure that this level of connection between ourselves and the school was a factor in them giving us use of the school facilities at half the normal rate during our refurbishment. Finally I've sought to represent the church at the monthly multi agency Neighbourhood Partnership Team meetings (these include County and local councillors, police, housing agencies, schools, children's agencies and the various religious groups in N/W Ipswich). These sometimes seem rather fruitless but it is a means of putting Christianity, and our church in particular, in the public domain and helps others see and hear what we are doing.

ASK

ASK meets on Wednesday afternoons at Whitton Primary School. Those who are able to come along meet at 2.45 pm at the school. We prepare games, crafts and refreshments ready for the children who start coming in at 3.15 pm. We always have a time of prayer before we start.

We then have a programme of board games, crafts, games outside if the weather is good, games inside if cold, quizzes and a story from the Bible. Stuart, Jon and Julia are responsible for the stories each week. Last year we encountered some discipline issues so we have adopted the school's traffic light scheme which rewards and disciplines with a coloured card scheme. This scheme has proved very successful. On average we have had 25 children each week and we have had great fun making all sorts of crafts and enjoying getting to know the children and their families. In January we began our 5th year at the school. We still count it such a privilege to serve God in the school and for the opportunities to talk about Jesus and his amazing love for them. Those involved are Stuart, Julia, Jon, Sue, Rose, Julie, Sally, Terry, Alan, Judith and Cat.

9th Ipswich Girls Brigade

Girls Brigade is progressing well as we are now in to our 5th month at Ashcroft Hall, and our thanks go to Ashcroft Christian Fellowship for their very warm welcome and use of their premises.

All girls are earning badges and we are pleased at our last Church Parade to have some of these presented during the service. Explorer badge work has included Our Community, Holidays, Special people and Our friends, while the Juniors, with a programme based on Bible characters, have looked at Perseverance, Friendship, Generosity and service. All sections have also covered Harvest, Christmas, Mother's day plus of course Easter, and as Girls Brigade nationally is 120 years old this year we look forward to local events planned to celebrate this.

We continue to thank God for His goodness and for the opportunity to share the Gospel with the young people as we "Seek, Serve and Follow Christ".

Maureen Austin. (Company Captain.)

Friday Club

Friday Club is for children aged between 4-8 who come for an hour of craft, games, snack and a Bible story. Friday club is on hold whilst the church building is out of action but before it shut it was going well with between 10-15 children attending each week. After the summer holidays we decided to meet each week rather than every other week which worked well. This year we have taught them stories about Moses and Jesus. We are encouraged to see the children listening and asking questions. The group has been led by Wendy Mason, Stephanie Bullock, Jamie Balmer with help from Stuart Frost. Steph and Stuart will continue but with Jamie off to university and with Wendy's future at Whitton uncertain the group really needs others to join the team if Friday Club is to restart as we hope it will. We often have kids in the playground ask when it will restart! Many thanks for your prayers for this group and the children it reaches.

CYG

Leaders : Julia Griggs, Chris Frost, Owen Clay, Sue Cobbold, Richard Cracknell, Jon Mason & Andy Beckett.

C.Y.G. is a youth group for 11-16 year olds (school years 7-11.)

Last year we were meeting fortnightly but with extra leaders joining the group this year we are now able to meet every Thursday between 7.30-9.00pm. When at the church the children are able to play games such as pool, table tennis, the wii, badminton, volleyball, organised games or just chat, but since our exodus we have been meeting at Whitton Primary School in the dining hall. Although limited for space we still manage to play games, do some crafting and a quiz. We have also been bowling, we had a small history lesson about our town with a McDonalds to finish and we went to a F.O.Y. event (Quizzer & chips) at Cauldwell Hall Road Baptist Church. We have dropped a little in numbers this year with 17 children coming through the doors but we have 12 regular teens turning up every week, every child comes from the Whitton estate and for most of them this is their only Christian Input. For our devotions Chris & Jon have been using DVDs from the Alpha course. Until we get back to the church we will still be meeting at the school, then during the

summer session we hope to go out & about doing activities such as boating, Quasar & Roller-skating and an evening at Felixstowe.

Primary Sunday School

Meeting at the school has been challenging but we have met every Sunday. When we have had just one child we have merged with the Junior Sunday school. Sometimes we have had one or two children and on other weeks, four to five children. Families have been contacted and we are assured their children will return when we are back in the church.

On a very positive note, after discussion, we changed our Sunday school material. This has been welcomed by the children and the teachers. The activity leaflets are more colourful and comprehensive, but more importantly, the children are eager to learn about Jesus through this new material.

We look forward to teaching, caring and helping these precious children to learn about Jesus and His love, as we return to the church. The leaders are Val Haslam, Rose Head and Stephanie Bullock.

Junior Sunday School

We have twelve children on the Junior Sunday School register and are very pleased that most are very regular in attendance. The majority are children of church families and we are encouraged by their faithfulness. We are also thrilled to see two or three others who come often by themselves. Since we moved into the school we have also had a couple of young people join us who would normally be in Bible Class so currently we have an age range from 8-13 years.

Kevin Scott & Alan Haskins continue to teach on a weekly basis and we are very grateful to James Balmer who has helped us on several occasions. Like some other recent younger teachers, James will be off to university soon and we again will be looking for some additional help.

We feel privileged to be able to present the gospel and teach the word of God to these young folk and ask for your prayers that the lesson told would make a difference in their lives. Please pray that they would come to know the Saviour while they are still young.

Kevin

Bible Class

Last year was a difficult year for Bible Class with the retirement of Brian Rowland after 58 years serving God in youth work at Whitton. Chris Frost came in to support Julia in the work bringing youth and new ideas. Unfortunately numbers have dropped so when we moved out of the church it was decided to have a break until we return to the church building, using the time to pray and look at new ideas in teaching and the way forward.

Bible Class teachers are Julia and Chris.

Women's Fellowship

Another year and The Lord has been good to us a fellowship of women. We get 7-11 ladies attending. In July we spent a very pleasant afternoon together at Corn Craft, and some of us also looked around Lavenham. While we were at the church, we had visiting speakers, but did not know what to do when the church closed. The Lord answered our need when Pam who had been coming for about a year, asked if we would like to meet at her house. The Lord is blessing our times together, and we share God's word, prayer and times of testimonies. Twice we have had a "bring and share" lunch, which have been very enjoyable. In March, Pastor Stuart came and shared communion with us. These have all been very special times, and we look forward to what The Lord has for us in the coming days.

Lorna Curtis.

Men's Afternoon Fellowship

We meet twice a month on a Monday, at 2.30 PM. Numbers were about 10, but some find it increasingly difficult to come due to ill health. We do enjoy our times of fellowship, prayer and bible study. On occasions we watch a DVD or video on Christian topics or missionary work like Tear Fund, Grace Baptist ministry, Samaritans Purse etc. Mr Banks opens up his home to us while the building work is in progress, and Harry Clay has also offered his home in the future.

David Curtis.

Senior Moments

The Senior Moments Group was only able to meet between May and July in 2012 before the Summer break. At our May meeting we enjoyed a visit from a representative from the Samaritan's Purse who gave an illustrated talk about a visit she made to one of the locations where some of the Christmas shoe boxes had been taken. In June we had a Jubilee Tea and concluded in July by joining with the Women's Fellowship for a very hot afternoon out at Corncraft near Lavenham.

Owing to illness and the Church building being closed, no further meetings were held between September 2012 and March 2013. We look forward to welcoming back our regular members when meetings recommence and pray that we will see new folk aged 55+ coming along.

Nigel & Janet Gutteridge

Tuesday Tots

Tuesday Tots is a great opportunity to get alongside mums, dads, grandparents and child minders and to share God's love and care for them. We have been very encouraged this year as a parent has shown a great interest in Jesus and the Bible and now regularly attends Church and life group and is very eager to learn about God.

We have been using the Meredith Children's Centre since the building project began. This has some great toys and facilities but is considerably smaller than the Church. The numbers of families that attend are between 10-15 a week at the moment and we expect that others that have stayed away due to the space restrictions will return when we are back in the Church building. We continue to have craft, song time, a healthy snack, tea and coffee and a good chat.

The group is led by Wendy Mason, Sarah Cracknell, Louise Miller and Julie Lawrence. We also have help from a mum who used to attend Tuesday Tots with her son but he now attends school. She is a great help and it's really nice that she feels she wants to give something back to the group.

Please pray for us all to have opportunities to share our faith within the group and to be wise when sharing our faith.

Ladies Evening Group

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month and it is for all ladies who are interested in a relaxed evening spent with other ladies. We have a varied programme which is anything from crafts, quizzes, meals out, walks, bowling and socialising. We have a regular group of ladies that come each month but since moving out of the church our numbers have dropped so hopefully once we are back in the church we will see an increase again.

If any ladies would like to know more then please speak to one of the leaders Sue Cobbold, Beverley Jolley or Teresa Backhouse.

Men's Evening Group

We did a couple of good social events at the start of 2012, but the men's group has taken a bit of a back seat this year. We had planned to do go-karting and Battlefield Live, but we cancelled them in view of the financial position of the church at the time. In addition, the re-start of Life Groups has made the need for the Men's Group a bit less pressing. Almost every event we have put on has had unbelievers attending – nearly half at the last curry night, making them a worthwhile outreach opportunity. But overall numbers have been rather discouraging. Currently involved in running it are; Owen, Bradley and Jon, but with Jon's future uncertain, so the future of the group is pretty uncertain too. If you have ideas or would like to help out, please speak with one of the team.