



WITH MONKS ELEIGH

# **BOOK OF REPORTS**

FOR:

## **ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING**

*June 2021*



# MINISTER'S REFLECTIONS

In last year's *Book of Reports*, I shared with you a collage I'd made a couple of years back which represented the potential for church to reconfigure itself (with the same resources), thus enabling it to become more dynamic.



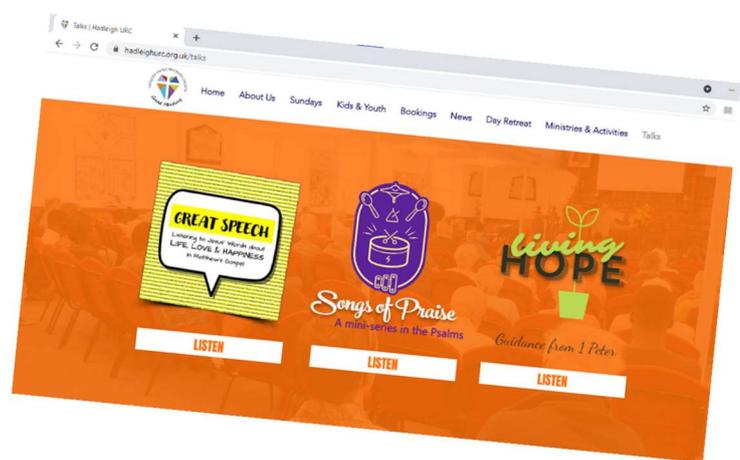
Well, at that point, no-one imagined how much we'd need to 'reconfigure' in the 18 months that followed! It's been a truly exceptional year due to the coronavirus and this year's *Book of Reports* will inevitably be shorter because of its impact upon our activities. Nevertheless, despite all the hardships over the last year, I would say that it has been vitally important for us to see and learn that the church can be flexible and adapt. Over the last year, we have reconfigured in order to continue worshipping God, fellowshiping with each other, reaching out to the community, praying together, studying the Bible and supporting the vulnerable (including the packing and sending of shoeboxes!). As we've said throughout this time, the church building may have been closed for much of it but the church has remained alive and active!

**Sunday worship** continued in three main ways during the three 'lockdown' periods. There was the *online service* via the HURC website – with video clips, hymns and worship songs, audio files, child-friendly activities, livestreaming of Holy Communion and the opportunity after the service to 'meet' for a chat via Zoom (we also broadcast three sessions of *Messy Church at Home*). To those unable to access online services on the website, we distributed *paper copies* of the service, or *CDs*. Many thanks to all those who have been involved in the preparation, printing and distribution of those services.

Although it's been strange and sometimes difficult to worship in new ways, it's also been a blessing. The online approach to worship has enabled us to provide services with a greater flexibility and choice in worship and some who were no longer able to attend in person on Sunday mornings have been reconnecting with us online, along with others from further afield. When we took a survey last June-July, it was clear that most would like the digital access to worship to continue beyond Covid.

Outside of the lockdowns, we've been able to try new things. In the summer, before resuming public worship on Sundays, we trialed a **mid-week service** as we took our first steps in creating a 'covid-secure' environment. A number of you also led **fellowship groups**, which provided some much needed face-to-face contact and spiritual reflection. And when we returned in person on Sundays, we started having **two services** – one at 10am in the church and the other in the Ansell Centre at 11am, which was more interactive and family-focused. Both of these have worked well. Again, thanks to all those who worked on Risk Assessments and safety guidelines and to those who have helped with the extra work needed to make these possible.

Whether at home or on site, I hope that the themes we have looked at through Sunday worship have opened up the Bible and been a blessing to you. We've explored *Living Hope* in 1 Peter, *Songs of Praise* in the Psalms, Jesus' *Great Speech* in Matthew's gospel, the *Solid Hope* of Isaiah's prophecies fleshed out in Jesus, and what it means to be *Pressing On* in our faith. If you'd like to revisit any of these, all the talks are available on the website.



In terms of serving others, many in the church immediately got stuck in to local community projects like '**Hadleigh Cares**' as well as providing **pastoral and practical support** to those within our congregation, including regular telephone calls. When I've spoken to those in our fellowship who've been shielding, it's been wonderful to hear how so many of you have been in constant contact with each other throughout the last year.

Although our buildings have been mostly dormant during this period, we were glad to be able to utilise them for a couple of initiatives of benefit to the town: the Community Room was used as a **lateral flow testing centre** in Feb-March and the former Leading Lives office space in the Ansell Centre is now being used by **Just Food** foodbank.

We noted back in January how the hiatus in building use has had a major impact on the **church's finances**. But even this has been an opportunity to seek God in faith; and with your ideas, prayers, and financial contributions, it's been

heartening to see how the short-term need has been met. And we are continuing to implement a number of actions as we look to our Provider God.

For example, a small working party comprised of church folk and ACC trustees has met three times to look at how we can 'relaunch' the **Ansell Centre** to the community after Covid restrictions ease. We've been able to formulate a mission statement for the AC – "*Serving the whole community as a hub to connect us and support our wellbeing*" – and are working on digital and print publicity.

At this point, we're all very much hoping that activities and services can soon fully resume. One thing we'll want to pick up again as a church is our **Thinking&Praying>>Ahead** series, where we were considering important topics related to the future of our church's life and mission. Before the first lockdown we were scheduled to discuss 'outreach and evangelism', 'same-sex marriage and related issues' and 'managing our buildings'. Certainly, as we emerge into what some have been calling the 'new normal', it will be a good time to take stock and see where God might be leading us in the next few years.

Despite all the positives of the last year, it has, of course, been a year of loss at a number of levels. Sadly, a number in our **church family** have died: Pat Goward, Phyllis Smith, Betty Beer and Di Double – and we remember Helen and Vince Gates as they continue to mourn the loss of Jemma. Given that Covid restrictions have meant we haven't all been able to take part in the thanksgiving services for these dear friends, we are planning a time of remembrance and thanksgiving in July, when we can all share memories and join together in giving thanks for these special people.

And what will the next year hold? Who knows! But as I look back over the various ministries and blessings mentioned above, I think we can rejoice that it has been a year marked by *imaginative worship, courageous faith* and *persistent pastoral care*. If we can retain and build on those qualities, then however life develops over the next few months, I believe we will be in a good place as a church.

May the Lord bless you and keep you and make his face shine on you,

*Bryn*

## **SECRETARY'S REFLECTIONS**

Well what a first year it has been! When I agreed to take over from Nigel as Church Secretary, nobody imagined that I would have a baptism of fire with so many challenges and changes to cope with. Fortunately, Nigel agreed that we would be joint secretaries until I retired from teaching at the end of August 2020.

First of all I would like to thank Nigel for his sterling work as Church Secretary and his knowledge and experience as an Elder. They are such large shoes to fill and I was and still am, somewhat daunted by following on from him. It is great knowing that he is only an email or telephone call away from when I need help. (He may not agree!)

Secondly I would like to thank Bryn and all those who have led worship during the last 15 months. We have learned again that being Church is not about the building but about our community of believers and we have tried worship in different ways. Our worship has been enriched by new opportunities to praise God and we are so fortunate to have been led by people who have gone the extra mile to record videos, prayers, readings, play music and prepare sermons, writing them in order for them to be printed and distributed. We have learned to Zoom and communicate with each other in different ways. The Church has always needed to change and adapt and this year has proved no different.

Finally we have all supported each other pastorally with telephone calls, cakes, cards, flowers, socially distanced chats on doorsteps, Zoom conversations and prayers. Thank you to everyone for proving that the love of God is shown through the love and care we give each other.

The worst part of the job so far – completing the annual return – a form with information about the Church for the Synod. The best part of the job – understanding more about the joys and needs of our Church family and seeing God's provision for us. The challenge for the next year will be only having five serving Elders. Jan and George have a well deserved sabbatical after many years of loyal service and we thank them for their hard work and ways they have led us. Please pray and think about how you could further help and support the life of our Church as we move forward from June 2021?

'Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go' Joshua 1:9

*Claire Coster*

## **MID-WEEK WORSHIP – PLUS...**

A sense of timing and remembering things in the order that they happened, seems to have eluded me over this last year. As we entered February 2020 Pause For Prayer was happening although numbers were on the decline. And then this opportunity of gathered prayer came to a sudden halt with us all locking down due to Covid. Coming out of isolation and trying to bring folk together and to overcome loneliness, we did have Fellowship Groups of various sorts during the summer. And at some stage - my eluding memory has forgotten exactly when - Mid Week Worship began, in the church, on a Wednesday morning – which was more about ministry and worship than just prayer. Vaccines seemed a very long way off – but cases were falling. We were cautious and real fellowship was being dissolved by distancing. Then Sunday worship returned – September-October-ish and then stopped again; was it November or December? At that time Midweek Worship, online, via Zoom, took over the Wednesday morning slot.

The sad thing I find about Zoom and this Mid Week Worship is that it is not inclusive. You have to have the internet; you have to be able to operate the digital stuff. And if you have a small screen mobile – fellowship, worship and ministry must seem small-sized.

Sorry I lament! But to lament as I have been reading of it,\* is to open our minds to God with our serious concerns, in a way that is open and honest, it is about being drawn in by faith, building faith in the lament process and end in hope with a declaration like as the lamenting Psalm 13 puts it.

*“But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.”*

So thank you everyone. Particularly thank you to Bryn for his ministry to the fellowship of Great Meeting, over these months of pandemic. And to all who have been part of Mid-Week Worship and the various other new forms of gathering discovered over this last year plus. Whether you were leading, contributing or just listening, thank you. No names because I would miss someone out. Just a personal thank you to everyone.

In hope let's look forward to a future of Mid Week Ministry in whatever form the Good Lord will reveal through trust in his unfailing love.

*Nigel Crisp*

\*reference 'Called to Lament' Idea Magazine of Evangelical Alliance May/June 2021

# FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Through summer and autumn, a number of small groups met socially distanced and in gardens to enjoy worship and fellowship together.

*Castle Rise Group*



*Angel Street Monday Morning Group*

*Be Still Group*



*Wednesday Group*

# MESSY CHURCH

Like all things this year, Messy Church has been very different!

During lockdown – for May, June and July 2020 – we had a combination of website, YouTube livestreaming and Zoom to create 'Messy Church at Home'. Highlights included a tent in our living room that acted as a whale to swallow Jonah! We were all quite new to the tech back then, so some of it was a bit blurry! But we were just glad to stay connected with each other.

When we were back on site, we adapted our usual approach to enable a covid-secure environment, with families staying in their bubbles around tables in the Ansell Centre. In October our session was all about finding light in the darkness (yes, torches were involved!) and then we had 'Christmas-in-a-box' in December and an Easter Story session in March.

It's been great to be able to welcome back families that have been engaging with Messy Church over the last couple of years. Although we've not been able to have the kids freely mingling together and running between Church and Ansell Centre for different parts of the programme as they normally would, we've still managed to provide an enjoyable time of activities, games, songs, Bible stories and crafts – lots of crafts!

Please continue to pray for this important time of worship and outreach – and for all those who attend it.



*Lilly & Bryn Rickards*

*Sophia with her beanie Jonah and Whale  
Messy Church at Home, May 2020*

*Bella making her Christmas-in-a-box,  
December 2020*





# **ANSELL CENTRE CHARITY**

This has been a very strange year for the ACC with very few events taking place.

We managed to provide various services to our members, albeit not in the usual way and generally not at the Ansell Centre.

Members of both the *Friday and Wednesday Lunch Clubs* were phoned regularly in order to keep in touch and make sure they were keeping safe. Both clubs held indoor and outdoor coffee mornings or afternoon teas during the few months it was allowed by the government.

The *Memories Cafe* delivered weekly newsletters and cakes to members. This enabled Sue Taylor, the co-ordinator, and the trustees to have a brief chat on the doorstep, particularly important for those who were feeling isolated. During the summer, five members were invited each week for coffee and biscuits in the URC garden. These occasions were much enjoyed when the temperamental weather allowed them to take place.

We were only able to show two films at the *digital cinema* during the whole year. On both occasions we had to hold an afternoon and an evening showing in order to maintain the required social distancing with just 25 seats available each time. Many people are missing these social events – we can't wait to get back to our normal programme as soon as possible.

In the meantime, we continue to do all we can to help our members feel connected and keep their spirits up until normal ACC service resumes.

*Jan Dicks*

on behalf of the trustees

# FINANCE REPORT

## SUMMARY FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

We opened the year with a total of £38,850 at the bank and ended the year with £31,953. Our major payments were £37,443 to Ministry and Mission, £8,788 on administrator and cleaner wages, £4,622 on gas and electricity and £4,048 on insurance. Income mainly consisted of £24,813 offering plus £3,187 refund from Gift Aid, £13,509 from lettings and £11,500 from the School House rent. We suffered greatly with the lack of income from lettings from April onwards due to COVID19 but were able to claim a total of £3,209 in 2020 from the government job retention scheme to help cover a large portion of our administrator and cleaner's wages.

It should be noted that the operation of the church's finances is very much a team effort. In particular, George looks after incoming payments such as banking the weekly offering, Sammy looks after outgoing payments, Mervyn looks after all our energy contracts, not forgetting Ronnie, who was active treasurer until March 2020 and has been a great support to me all year. I am very grateful to all of them for their constant hard work.

The following tables show a summary of income and expenditure for 2020.

*Tom Gordon*

	2020			2019		
	Opening Balance	Cash Flow	Closing Balance	Opening Balance	Cash Flow	Closing Balance
Current Account	£19,142	-£5,746	£13,396	£25,018	-£5,876	£19,142
Savings Account	£19,708	£17	£19,725	£19,669	£39	£19,708
Creditors Payable	£0	-£1,168	-£1,168	£0	£0	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£38,850</b>	<b>-£6,897</b>	<b>£31,953</b>	<b>£44,687</b>	<b>-£5,837</b>	<b>£38,850</b>

	2020			2019		
	Restricted	Unrestricted	Totals	Restricted	Unrestricted	Totals
<b>INCOME</b>						
Offering and Donations		£25,036	£25,036		£25,752	£25,752
Gift Aid Refund		£3,187	£3,187		£3,351	£3,351
Lettings		£13,509	£13,509		£27,307	£27,307
Rent		£11,500	£11,500		£11,500	£11,500
Funerals and Weddings		£180	£180		£140	£140
Miscellaneous		£6,425	£6,425		£2,879	£2,879
Educational and Young People		£375	£375		£421	£421
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>£60,212</b>	<b>£60,212</b>		<b>£71,350</b>	<b>£71,350</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>						
Ministry and Mission		£37,443	£37,443		£36,953	£36,953
Pulpit Supply		£140	£140		£280	£280
Ministry & Outreach		£1,211	£1,211		£2,320	£2,320
Charities		£515	£515		£4,560	£4,560
Training and Learning		£0	£0		£531	£531
Miscellaneous		£2,134	£2,134		£1,052	£1,052
Wages		£8,788	£8,788		£8,773	£8,773
Buildings Maintenance (Excluding Manse)		£1,550	£1,550		£6,308	£6,308
Buildings Maintenance, Manse		£182	£182		£10	£10
Insurance		£4,048	£4,048		£3,832	£3,832
Caretaking and Cleaning		£854	£854		£0	£0
Gas and Electricity		£4,622	£4,622		£6,445	£6,445
Communications		£1,969	£1,969		£2,460	£2,460
Water and Council Tax (Including Manse)		£3,653	£3,653		£3,663	£3,663
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>£67,109</b>	<b>£67,109</b>		<b>£77,187</b>	<b>£77,187</b>
<b>CASH FLOW</b>		<b>-£6,897</b>	<b>-£6,897</b>		<b>-£5,837</b>	<b>-£5,837</b>



*Hygiene Products  
for Refugees Appeal*



*Harvest Offerings  
for Foodbanks*

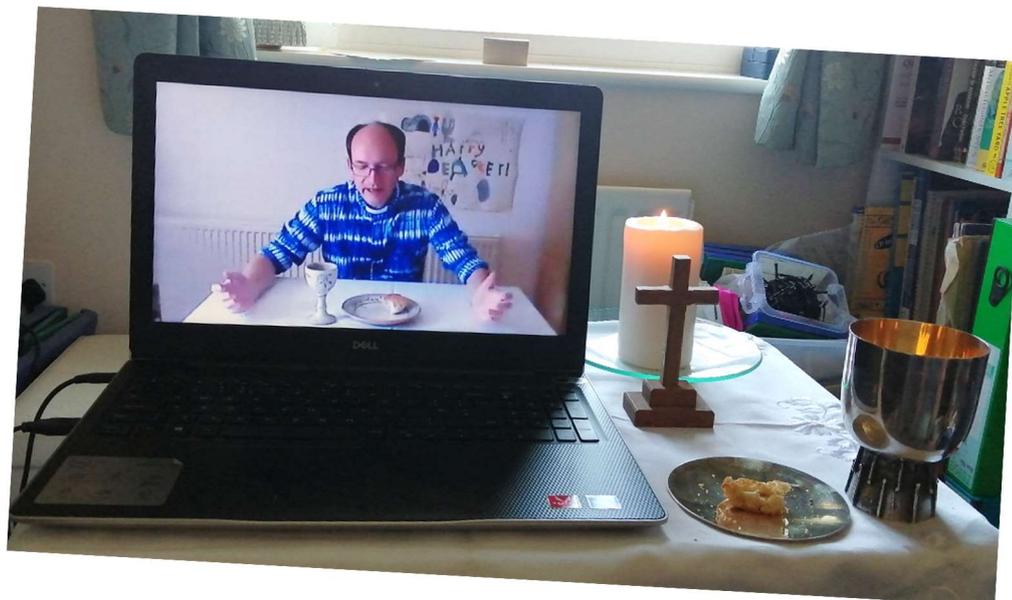
*Shoebbox Appeal*



*Pentecost Cupcakes  
taken to families, May 2020*



2020:  
*The year of Social Distancing!*



*Communion – online and in-person covid-secure!*





## *A Church at the Heart of the Community*

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