



Godmanchester Baptist Church

Annual Review of 2015



**For every house is built by someone
but the builder of all things is God**

Hebrews 3 v 4

godmanchesterbaptist.org

Welcome to our Annual Review of 2015 which outlines our activities during the year and brings much encouragement as we recognise God's many blessings over the last year.

There was a moment just after Easter when our building project, Oikodom, reached a crescendo. It was the point when we had to pause our normal activities and allow our contractors free and full access to our building to complete their work. Not that I know much about what happened as Karen and I were away on sabbatical for the summer term!



Did the life of GBC stop because the building was closed? Heck no! The church is not a building but a network of people forming a faith community living out their lives together. Much of this review, albeit organised by activities, tells the story of people whose lives have been significantly impacted by Jesus and by his people. It speaks of God's faithfulness in times of trouble and times of rejoicing, of prayers being answered, of needs being met. Our review demonstrates that ordinary people can encounter God in life

changing ways, often through the love and support of other ordinary people. If I find GBC a remarkable place, it is because of the people who make it what it is.

Did the life of GBC stop because I was away for three months? Heck no! A significant amount of our ministry here is done by teams of people committed to seeing God's kingdom grow.

My contribution is just part of what happens – and there was much richness in enabling others to take on my responsibilities. For Karen and me, it was an opportunity as well as a privilege to recharge our spiritual batteries for the next stage of our time at GBC. A time for which we are very grateful.

Our builders finished as Karen and I returned. Two further hectic months of final decoration and preparation saw the building ready for its opening weekend. And what a weekend, as we celebrated the amazing provision of God. We had been so grateful for John Stevens’

meticulous project management of the work. The Oikodom Project was always about rebuilding our facility to serve a new generation. And it is to a new generation we are turning our attention.



John Stevens



Katie Bradshaw and Rachel Thurley cutting the ribbon at the Grand Opening event in September

With church attendance generally falling, especially amongst younger people, we have been challenged to focus on reaching out afresh into our community. As the year ended we saw increased attendance on Sundays and throughout the week as we seek to go deeper in worship, to be happier together in community, to be bolder in our testimony, to be clearer in society and to be younger in our age profile.

So welcome to our review of 2015. If you are new to GBC, I hope you'll discover more about us in these pages. If you lived through 2015 as part of GBC, I hope you'll be inspired to give thanks to God for what he did amongst us and continues to do now.



Daniel and John

John Smith, Senior Pastor

CONGREGATIONS

Almost everyone at GBC finds a place to worship in one of our congregations: Sunday morning Celebration, Songs of Praise, and Generation Rising, or at Messy Church. The diversity of style and content of each congregation provides us with a meaningful place for worship, learning and prayer.

During the year many new people have begun to be part of our church family. Three people testified to their faith in believers' baptism and four people became church members, with a further eight being welcomed into membership early in 2016.

'The past year has seen my journey with Jesus develop and my heart develop a more serving attitude. Opportunities to serve the community have been placed in my path with the food bank and the local nature reserve. I applied for, and was accepted for Church Membership just a few months ago and the desire to participate in church life has grown stronger and I am being drawn to an, as yet unknown, opportunity to serve further. I've also been accepted into a new home group following work disrupting my home life. My Christian journey has meandered over the three years since being baptised but I am settled and content at the present time.' Colin



'My baptism was so far the best day of my life and I enjoyed it. It made me feel that day was more special than any other day because my friend came to church for the first time and everyone was especially kind to me and encouraged me lots. One verse that stood out from the rest was, "Through God we shall do valiantly." which reminded me of how God changed my life.' Felicity

We support World Mission across all our congregations, regularly sharing news of people overseas who are linked to GBC.

Many people enable us to celebrate the goodness of God, to share our lives with each other and to make disciples in all our congregations. We thank them for giving their time and gifts and for sharing their servant hearts.

'Acceptance – my disability, my lifestyle and my work all combine to set me apart. However it is a joy to feel accepted at GBC. Thank you to all who take the time and trouble to come and talk to me. Let us pray that people of very varied backgrounds and experience continue to feel welcome even as the fellowship continues to grow in size.' Connie

Parish Nursing



Laurel Fennell, Parish Nurse

On a weekly basis I have been busy attending Lunch Club and undertaking Home Visits and counselling. I have attended the Pastoral Care Team meetings alternate weeks and also the bi-monthly East Anglia Parish Nurse Cluster Meetings which provide an excellent

opportunity for peer support while picking up new ideas for development. On a regular basis I also receive both clinical and spiritual supervision.

Occasionally my work involves liaising with other health professionals and organisations. Last March I attended three study days in Northampton for the Parish Nurse Symposium on dementia which was both informative and challenging. During the summer term we ran a New ID course which lasted for 6 weeks and dealt with unhealthy

relationships with food, be they food addiction, anorexia or bulimia. We all felt that we had benefitted from the course and would highly recommend it. I was also involved with the two session Dying Well course which was well attended. As ever, there seems to be a never ending demand to complete paperwork and so my Parish Nursing day is very full!

Prayer surrounds everything we do, but from time to time we set aside specific times for concentrated prayer. Of special note were the early morning prayer times in Holy Week and some prayer walking we did in the Autumn.



Prayer Team members

It has been a privilege to pray with others after Sunday morning services during 2015 and to see how God answers. We sometimes pray as individuals, couples and even on occasions as a big group. We believe there is power in prayer. We long to determine when it's God's voice and when it is simply our own. Prayer is always confidential to protect those coming forward for prayer. Scripture tells us, "Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7 It also tells us to, "Come to me ALL you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 - what an invitation! I love being part of this ministry and would encourage anyone who wants prayer to simply come. *Liesel*

SUNDAY MORNINGS

Our Sunday Celebration continues to grow numerically and spiritually. During 2015, we took a detailed look at Jesus, explored how God sets us free, and began a significant series about church life beginning with the issues of hospitality and sharing our stories. Later in the year our communion services – often sharing ‘in-the-round’ – focussed on things of “first importance” in our faith. We have valued the faithful service of our worship bands, some of whom also lead services in other churches, as well as those who form our welcome and prayer teams.

SUNDAY EVENINGS

We believe that God heals. One of the key times each month when we pray for people’s healing is our evening Communion Service when in the context of worship and the Lord’s Supper, we seek the health and wellbeing of others.

A good number attended a Tuesday evening healing course in the early part of the year and grew in confidence as they prayed for healing for each other.

‘I received a last minute invitation to attend the healing course and said yes. Then I muttered, “Lord, here I am in bed. I do not go out when dark, neither am I good enough to ask for favours from you, but give me courage to ask for healing for my lower back and neck.” My joints were affected by a serious infection in 2000, this caused me unbearable pains especially at nights and when cold. I was prayed for at the course and during the second week I felt total peace and until this day I have had no pains – God has taken the pains away!’ VVV

SONGS OF PRAISE

At 4 o’clock on the third Sunday of each month (except August) the Songs of Praise congregation meets. The services include testimony, prayer, and a time of singing some older hymns usually chosen by

members of the congregation who give an explanation of why it is a particular favourite of theirs. Often too, we get an interesting explanation of how the hymn came to be written. Everyone is then invited to stay for afternoon tea with home made sandwiches and cakes, and there is a real buzz as folk chat together. And although listed under our 'seniors' activities' all are very welcome to join with us.

Time together – The Mix



Worship at The Mix

About 150 of us enjoyed a relaxing weekend at Burleigh Hill Farm, St Ives. Over half of us camped or caravanned on site, others coming as day visitors. The weather was reasonably kind to us and the catering team looked after us superbly with bacon butties for breakfast, pies,

cheese and salads for Saturday lunch, a bbq and strawberries and cream on Saturday afternoon, and chicken curry for Sunday lunch! Tea and coffee were on tap as well as plenty of biscuits.



Andy & Ian cooking lunch at The Mix

Our children and teens had plenty of activity and teaching while the rest of us enjoyed very relevant sessions led by Graham Wakeman who had been on the leadership team at Goldhill Baptist church. Graham taught into our theme for the year which was 'Going Deeper'. He challenged us all to go deeper with God in both intimacy and obedience. There was no short cut to going deeper, the secret was in Jesus and learning to come to the 'rock that is Christ' from whom flows 'rivers of living water'. Graham helped us to understand better who God really is, who we really are in Christ and how we see others. His relaxed style and moving testimony engaged us all.



Graham Wakeman

The majority of us joined Graham for a reflective session on the Saturday afternoon where we quietly meditated on Psalm 23. We enjoyed the peace and the opportunity to let God's work speak to us without being in a rush. The rest of Saturday afternoon was spent chatting, mixing, flying model planes and just being together. The final communion and feedback session on Sunday was a fantastic testimony to God's work in us over the weekend. We all came away challenged and encouraged, very thankful for the opportunity to go a bit deeper.

Dave



**Charlie and Felicity
at The Mix**

'The Mix is called The Mix deliberately as we all mix together – all scattered into a new collection of friends who we would not otherwise have the opportunity to chat to especially over meal times. I love the chance to chat to new people – going deeper in friendships as well as with God.' Jude

Small Groups

We continue to work out our vision of being a small group community in many ways with people 'loving, learning, doing and deciding' together – whether that is in a prayer triplet, a team working together in many of our services, activities and events, or a small group.

Small groups are the key to our pastoral care for one another. Our fifteen small groups meet for caring, sharing, praying, studying, worshipping and reaching out. They are a great place to form good accountable supportive relationships.

Towards the end of 2015, we began to explore how starting some missional communities could enhance our vision to reach neighbours and friends with the good news of Jesus. We also began to find a new way of connecting with 18-29 year olds.

'Our small group has changed several times in the last few years with new faces joining us in discussing, learning and trying to live out our faith in our daily work, our homes and all aspects of our lives. We laugh, we go off at tangents and have anecdotes galore that get told. We are not perfect, we are only human, and God is very patient with us as we are slow to learn. But we have recently looked at some Psalms, Ecclesiastes and the person of Barnabas. We try to mix up what and how we study: this term we have even had a go at writing our own Psalms.

This has followed on from the challenge to try to go deeper with God, be bolder in our faith, to be happy in who we are in community, younger in age and clearer in society. Not easy subjects as some refer to states of mind, some to attitude and some to a clear picture of ourselves. We have focused on Psalm 96 – and have been challenged again to rejoice and give thanks. We are all still learning and the buzz of being with others, and sharing that journey is fantastic, and a real blessing as we meet together.' Jude

Women's Ministry



'Why are you throwing shower puffs into the air?' you ask yourself! Well, because last year's Retreat focused on Hebrews 12:1-3, and if you 'run the race with perseverance', you can become hot and weary! So, we spent the day 'freshening up' and 'fixing our eyes on Jesus'. We were reminded that our journeys can look very different according to the gifts He's given us and how to keep going in God's strength. As Corrie Ten Boom said, "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off, you sit still and trust the engineer!"

The year's events have been varied, having fun and learning together. I am grateful to the team for all of their support and we hope to see you and friends at this year's gatherings, as we seek to 'guard the heart and grow the edge'. *Delia*

Men's Ministry

The men's ministry at GBC continues with its 'iron sharpens iron' mission of bringing men closer to Christ. How? By calorific breakfasts and a summer bbq. And by camping in a muddy field with eleven men from GBC, and two thousand others, at Christian Vision for Men's The Gathering event.



Sunset at The Gathering

We've also had a couple of Sunday evening testimony and sharing evenings where brothers have been able to really open up about



Cliff and Mark at The Gathering

evenings where brothers have been able to really open up about what's on their hearts. On another occasion a visiting speaker told his story of salvation – from a life of stress, mental illness, drugs and alcohol which caused his business to fail. Another talked to us about his journey from being a Copper to a Criminal to a Christian. We also had a rugby world cup

family night – the first community event held in the newly refurbished premises. It's a pity that England chose that evening to crash out of the tournament but never mind!

The result we most care about is men coming closer to Jesus – cutting through our sin, all the suffering around us and the struggles that hold us back – that’s where we all want to be isn’t it? Right at the cutting edge!

Paul and Mark

World Mission

We held a World Mission Sunday in June welcoming Richard Evans from All Nations as our speaker, and we have shared financially and prayerfully through the year in the work of

Anglo-Indian Concern in Chennai, India;

Cambodia Action;

Kathryn Thompson working at Rehoboth to provide educational support;

Mission Direct working around the world;

and **Rehoboth Children’s Homes** in the Philippines.

We have also supported a number of friends from GBC who went on a two week trip to Uganda in November with Mission Direct.

Seniors Ministry

HOLIDAY AT HOME

In July we had another Holiday at Home week for the older people in our community. Each day about 30 of us gathered to enjoy a morning of varying activities including crafts, music, entertainment from local schoolchildren, the owls and falcons from the St Ives Raptor



Rita and friend!

Centre, a showing of Gangsta Granny, beetle drive and bingo. All interspersed with numerous cups of tea and coffee, and quizzes. We were the first activity to use our new church kitchen, and Frances and her team did a wonderful job providing lunch which was followed by a short thought for the day spot.



LUNCH CLUB

If you were to come to the Small Hall about

11.45am on a Tuesday morning during term time you would find a steady trickle of guests arriving for our Tuesday Lunch Club. Lunch is served at 12.30pm but many like to arrive early to enjoy a chat with friends and a cup of tea or coffee. By the time everyone has arrived there is a real buzz of conversation and laughter. This is not a "drop in" and those who come are regular guests each week.

The marvellous kitchen team

For some it is one of the few times in the week when they are able to get out and meet with others, and Tuesday is looked forward to with anticipation. At the moment we are full to capacity and there is a short waiting list for those who would like a place.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated team of helpers, who set up, buy and prepare the food, cook and clear up, without whom we would be unable to operate. So a big "thank-you" to all who make Tuesdays such a success. *Tony and Rita*



Gladys and Olwen

'Lunch Club and Songs of Praise are so important to me. They fill a gap in my life. They are a highlight that I really look forward to.' *Olwen*

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

'We seem to pack a great deal into the hour we spend together on Tuesday mornings. Philip leads the Bible study but we are all welcome to join in, and we do. The relaxed sessions always start with tea and coffee when we have a short time to chat and share.' *Linda*



Linda and Bette

'I used to agree that growing old was not for wimps; but there are great compensations. Being a Christian for a long time has taught me how to hear accurately from the Holy Spirit and that is very exciting for me. I'm also very grateful for all that is laid on for us older folk at GBC. It is becoming a case of 'watch this space' Pat

SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

Many of those who attend Holiday at Home, Lunch Club and our Songs of Praise congregation live in the various sheltered accommodation settings in Godmanchester. It was good to be able to make our annual visit to those settings on some evenings in December and share carol singing, the Christmas message and some festive refreshments with the residents.

There is also an afternoon service on the second Sunday of each month at McCartney House.

Children, Youth and Family Ministry

2015 was the year that 35 young people camped for a week in Stafford, 14 young people had a weekend in a stately house in Norfolk, and 100 children built igloos and threw (paper) snowballs for a week. We had over 100 midweek opportunities for babies, children and young people to attend groups. We taught for about 150 hours during Sunday morning celebrations with different groups.

We have been part of 250 different individuals' lives and we have helped some to cope with hard situations; prayed with many; provided opportunities to explore their giftings, and given them a chance to smile. Daniel

We have 4 main age groups which we cater for within the children's and youth ministry: 0-5, 5-11, 11-14 and 15-18.

The Polar Explorers **Holiday Club** in the summer was very successful again with lots of children and families getting involved.

The **Acting Up** youth drama group gave an amazing Show Case performance in July!

The work in **Schools** continues to expand with assemblies and CUrious (Christian Union) at Hinchingbrooke and LOGOS lunchtime club and assemblies at St Anne's Primary School continuing.

Messy Church has met more often during 2015 and we continue to grow in number and in engagement from the children and their families.

The **Girls Only Project** to mentor our teenage girls and the **Da Lads** mentoring project for the boys continue.



Polar Explorers' Igloo

A large group went to **Soul Survivor** in Stafford in July.

In October, we took a group of Young People in school years 7–9 away for the weekend to **Fort Rocky** in Norfolk.

Monday evenings **Football Project** at Godmanchester Community School for those aged 11-20. This year we have partnered with the local council and renamed the group 'Street Sports'. This has helped with the promotion of the group and different young people have been getting involved.

Wednesday mornings **Littlefoot Club**, our Carers, Parents and Toddlers club, continues to be a happy, thriving group serving the local community and the wider



Children at the Mix

area. Our vision is to provide an oasis for adults and a safe and happy learning and play environment for children within a Christian atmosphere. Those who attend are really enjoying the improved facilities, especially the children



Littlefoot

as they love the extra space. Our new entrance has provided the opportunity to improve our welcome, so important when you are new. A team of 14 volunteers provide a wide range of activities and facilitate a welcoming and supportive environment.



Littlefoot Team

We thank God that we have the opportunity to impact on early years learning and community cohesion locally in this way.

In January, we updated our database and currently have 101 family groups registered

of which around 50-55 attend each Wednesday. At the moment, we have an influx of young mums with new babies, which is great.

We work hard to make the bridge between Littlefoot and other church activities, especially Messy Church, with growing success.

Developments for 2016

- Parenting course in the autumn term
- A monthly team lunch to share and pray, beginning in March
- Succession planning
- Better follow up for mums needing a bit of TLC, including offering prayer where appropriate.

Wednesday evenings **TOAST** for those in year 11 and over.

Thursday evenings **Explorers Children's Club** for those in years 3-6.

Friday evenings **Friday Night Project** for those in year 7+. FNP has had a great year with lots of young people attending. Highlights include: A special appearance from 'Mr Bear' at the Christmas party; lots of sweets and chocolate!

And here are some words from the young people themselves:

'FNP gives me space to talk to people. My favourite thing that we have done in the past year was the UV paint party.' *Jennifer*

'I go to FNP because it's fun. The best thing we got to do last year was definitely the Ready, Steady, Cook evening and also making sock monkeys. I love the crafts every week.' *Kayleigh*

'I go to FNP because you get to see your friends and the activities are cool too. The best part of the last year was when we made bags out of old jeans. I also love the craft stuff every week.' *Alex*

'I go to FNP to hang out with my friends. The best thing we have done in the past year was the cooking – I made a giant cookie. The funniest thing that's happened at FNP was when Daniel dressed up and did a performance at the Christmas party.' *Georgia*

'I go to FNP because it's fun and it gives me something to do. The best things we've done in the past year have been baking and hanging out with my friends.' *Holly*

'Coming to stuff at GBC is great because it's relaxed and you can be yourself. Soul Survivor was the highlight of 2015. I took part in the Christmas drama performance and really enjoyed it.' Ollie

'The highlight of 2015 was making it through Slum Survivor (which took place at Burleigh Hill Farm in June at the same time as The Mix church weekend). It was exasperating but I got to learn a lot about myself and how different my life is compared to other people in the world.' Dylan



**One of the exasperating
Slum Survivor tasks!**

Community



Foodbank The past year has been busy again in the foodbank. We have had over 20,000 kg of food go out in hampers with 1083 people fed including children. We also had 152 hampers go out at Christmas. The team has increased in size with distribution centres also now working out of CARESCO Sawtry and in St Peters Yaxley, under the GBC team. This is to try to reach a greater number of people in their localities without incurring further travel costs when money is already tight. I wish we were now redundant but cannot see that happening any time soon.

Many people coming to us for help are under 25 years old, many have benefit issues or delays as they wait for the system to catch up with their need. 20% of the people we see are in work but have such low



Foodbank Store

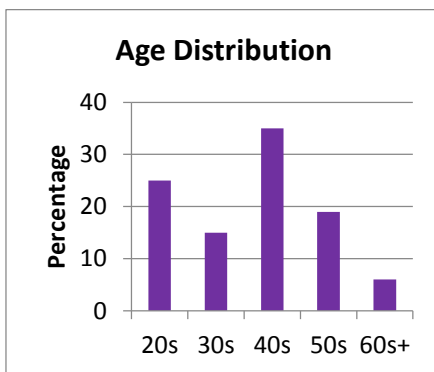
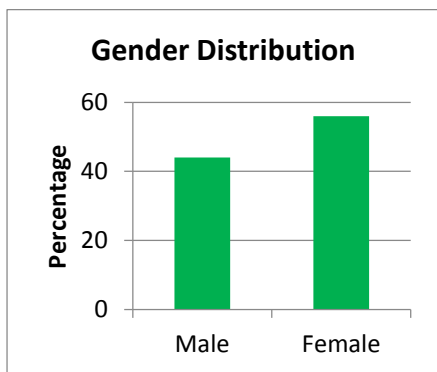
pay they cannot make the money last the time it needs to. A typical example would be a small family with 2 young children, when the husband went from a temporary weekly paid job, to a permanent job, which paid monthly – that 5 week gap between the pay slips put them in a tough place. We helped for 2 weeks, that is all it took to get them back on track. 80% of the people through the doors come only 2-3 times and then they can manage again, but that moment of need is scary for many, is lonely and hurts literally from hunger and feeling isolated.

The team who help us are FABULOUS – not only in the time they give, but the mugs of tea, the tissues, the listening ear all of which are equally as valid as the physical food. It is a joy to see God working across many situations, dealing with people's need and meeting them where they are – no strings attached. Thanks also to all those who pray for us and the people we meet – again, FABULOUS support and we are privileged to see God's amazing grace in action. *Jude*

Huntingdon Area Money Advice

It is now over two years since HAMA started seeing clients. In that time we have supported over 140 people, with around 30 currently active. Some we have taken through to a point where they are debt free; some to where they are now in control of their debts, making regular and affordable payments to creditors. In some cases we have been able to offer advice and guidance and the client has felt sufficiently empowered to sort matters with their creditors without our direct involvement. Sadly some ceased to engage with us before we were able to establish a suitable debt management strategy.

Client Distribution



As you will see from the graphs, although we see more female clients, this is not marked. The age distribution is interesting – peaks in the younger age group and people in their 40s (perhaps a reflection of children leaving home, resulting in loss of benefits and other changes in their circumstances).

While some clients self-refer, many are referred or signposted to us by other bodies such as the Huntingdon Children’s Centre, Huntingdonshire District Council, housing associations and Axiom

Floating Support, Inclusion, Learning Disability Partnership and Disability Huntingdonshire. The background and needs of many of our clients make our model of client support – face to face meetings over a period of time – particularly attractive to them.

Currently we have just 4 advisers and the workload is quite high. Others are involved as befrienders, administrators and trustees. If you have a heart for supporting people through this work and can commit to setting aside time to help in whatever capacity, please talk to the Centre Manager, Roger Hickling. *Roger*

Prison Visiting

'My prison ministry began some 4 years ago, following a traumatic attack on my son who suffered severe brain injury. The ministry is called Restorative Justice, under the name of The Sycamore Tree. I was asked to tell my story to some 25-30 prisoners. I felt this was a great privilege and an answer to many prayers of how I could use this miracle story of how God restored my son to complete recovery. The prisoners go through a 6 week course which concentrates on redemption, restoration of their self worth and a new hope.

I have been into 4 prisons, including a women's prison, and have been amazed and touched by how the inmates relate to my story and how they draw a parallel to the crimes they have committed. They genuinely feel remorse and wish to say 'sorry' to their victims. I have seen several prisoners come to faith, others who have had a knowledge of God, and some who are attending the prison chapel.

*The main outcome of telling my story is of forgiveness and how they can be forgiven in Jesus and find new hope and a new life in Jesus Christ. Being part of the initiative has been a great healing process for me, as well as giving hope, in a small way, and of touching the lives of so many prisoners. *Brenda**

Other activities in the community, many of them in co-operation with people from other churches, which individuals and groups from GBC are involved in, have included

- **Christian Aid Week Collection**
- **Cornerstone pregnancy advice service and Cornerstone PHSE lessons in secondary schools**
- **Gala Day and Worship in the Park**
- **Hospital Services at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital**
- **Mayor's Carols and Godmanchester Christmas Market**

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