



Godmanchester Baptist Church

Annual Review of 2022



BECAUSE OF THE LORD'S GREAT LOVE WE ARE NOT CONSUMED,
FOR HIS COMPASSIONS NEVER FAIL.
THEY ARE NEW EVERY MORNING; GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS.

LAMENTATIONS 3: 22-23

Welcome to our review of 2022

Hello everyone. I have had the privilege of being able to read this review already. It is full of many examples of God's faithfulness to us as a church and as individuals. There are so many things in our world that change, and we can feel let down by circumstances as well as people, but we will always be able to look to our faithful God.

In the verse from Lamentations on the front cover, we read that God's faithfulness is great. It is indeed great; greater than any other faithfulness we can know or experience.

I encourage you to take time to sit and read through the review of 2022, the activities and groups that have run, the congregations that meet, the people who care, serve and love others and consciously recognise God's faithfulness. He is to be praised!

My thanks go to Ruth who has wonderfully woven the review together to capture the family of GBC in such an amazing way, to Roger who has formatted and produced it, and also thank you to everyone who has contributed.

*God bless
Daniel*



2022 was a year in which we have been able to celebrate God's faithfulness to us at GBC in all sorts of ways. We hope you will enjoy reading all about it in this Annual Review of the year, and that you will be able to give thanks with us to our faithful God.

It feels like a long time ago now, but in the early part of last year we were still not completely 'back to normal' with all of our services and activities, due not only to the continuation of some Covid restrictions but also to the closure of our Worship Area while our OIKODOM 2 building project was completed.

However, we rejoiced in God's faithful provision for us as we continued to hold our Sunday morning Celebration services at Grace Fellowship – which, in early 2022, became ours when it was legally gifted to us. We were also thankful for the generosity of St Mary's church who lent us their building for some of our church meetings. We continued to make good use of our YouTube channel for



Daniel & Carolyn

broadcasting our Sunday Morning Celebration and Songs of Praise services and we used Zoom to enable various groups to 'meet'.

As the year unfolded, we began to be able to re-start some of our regular activities back on site at East Chadley Lane during the week and then in June we celebrated together as the building project was finished and our newly refurbished Worship Area was opened!

We are so grateful to John Stevens who has been our project manager for all the redevelopment that has taken place at our East Chadley Lane site over the last 9 years, including the recent OIKODOM 2 project.

John writes,

"OIKODOM 2 is the name given to the project for refurbishing our Worship Area and the Resources Room behind it. The name is from the Greek word meaning to build, edify or promote. It follows OIKODOM 1, completed some seven years previously, when the Small Hall, Kitchen and Offices were refurbished.



John cutting the ribbon

With much celebration we were able to hold our opening ceremony on 25 June 2022 for the refurbished Worship Area. The completed project includes new insulation in walls and ceilings, double glazed windows, air conditioning, a new corridor and chair store, new decoration and lighting, and a baptistry which is now incorporated into the stage."

In the following pages you will be able to read all about our life together at GBC throughout 2022. At first glance, much of it describes our services, activities and ministries, but really it's about the people who are the church. Some of those contributing to this review have been part of GBC for a very long time! Others have newly joined us. We hope you enjoy all of their contributions.

Stephanie Brown sums up well the challenges of the last couple of years and the sense of hope as we start this new year as she writes,

"I recently had the privilege of meeting two new church members and talking through membership of the church. We were given a guidance leaflet and here is the extract which struck me and led to these thoughts for the Annual Review: 'Most of us reveal very quickly what really matters to us. People notice our hobbies and interests. We show by our eagerness and commitment what is important in our lives.' After 37+ years of worshipping at GBC I feel this last year has been about rediscovering our church family, after 2 years of keeping our distance when it was difficult to deepen our relationships, and about seeing how diverse we are as a church fellowship. I have loved the new projects and the Toolbox options (see more later!) that we have started this year which have helped me to do this. GBC is my chosen family and I love the openness to new ideas, the church's adaptability, and the nurturing relationships that I continue to find here."

Congregations

GBC is a multi-congregational church family and it is our hope that everyone is able to enjoy being part of (at least) one of our worshipping congregations. It has been a joy during 2022 to have welcomed a number of new friends to some of our congregations. In February and October we held two of our regular Welcome Lunches – providing an opportunity for new friends to enjoy Sunday lunch together and to meet and chat with each other and some of our Leadership Team. In October we also offered two information sessions for those who would like to explore what membership of a Baptist Church is all about. They were well attended and a number of people have subsequently applied for church membership – a process which is now well underway.



Sunday Celebration

Our **Sunday Morning Celebration** is our hub congregation – where over 200 people of all ages gather for lively contemporary worship and Bible based teaching. Our East Chadley Lane site is full of life throughout the whole building from when the set up teams arrive soon after 9.00am until the last of the chairs, equipment, instruments, toys and coffee cups have been put away and we can lock up at about 1.00pm!

Our Celebrations start with the whole church family worshipping together – with the children actively involved in

action songs and using flags as they worship before they go to their groups.

We are so grateful to all those who serve on so many Sunday morning teams to enable us to be church together in this way. They include the refreshments team, the stewarding and car park teams, the children's and youth teams, the worship, preaching and prayer teams, the audio-visual team and many others. People's servant hearts and their willingness to use the gifts and skills that God has blessed them with in order to bring blessing to others has brought much joy to many of us. During 2022, preaching themes have included The gospel of Mark, Worship, The gospel brings peace, Psalms, 1 Peter – Confidence, and Mission Possible. We also regularly hear updates from representatives of all the missions that we support – locally, nationally and overseas. We share communion together each month.



Sunday Morning Celebration

crèche



We were glad to be able to run **crèche**, for under 3s, in the early part of the year when we were meeting on Sunday mornings at Grace Fellowship. But it has been even better to be back in our room at GBC since June and a real part of the whole big Sunday morning Celebration – helped by the marvellous IT team making it possible for the service to be broadcast into Room 5! We currently have a small group of babies and little children – with some more arriving soon!



Little Stars is our Sunday morning group for 3-5 year olds. Liz Webb asked Joseph for his contribution and he said,

"It's a group about friendship. My favourite people to learn about were Jacob and Nehemiah and I learnt that God is with me all the time. And Nehemiah is a funny name! I love Little Stars!"

When asked about Families Venture (see more later) and his best bit, Joseph said,

"I like the food there but learning about the Bible is better. I love the activities too! I loved the taste test game and the obstacle course where I scored a goal with a blindfold on!"

Liz writes,

"It's lovely to see Joseph so engaged and enthusiastic, learning and forming friendships, both with children and adults alike. There was one Sunday I didn't think he'd make it in as the previous day had been a very long one with a late night, but he was aghast at the thought of not going and insisted he must go to Little Stars and Families Venture that day still! A big thank you to all those involved in children's ministry!"



Joseph



Hayley Beckett heads up the **Kids Kingdom** Team and she writes,

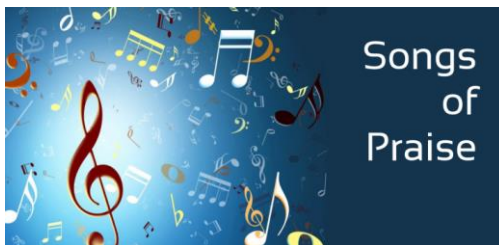
"Kids Kingdom is the Sunday Morning group for Children in Year 2-6 and we usually meet upstairs. This last year we have looked at The life of Jesus, Easter, Pentecost, Peter and Paul and the Armour of God. We have also made efforts to learn verses from the Bible which we are continuing into 2023."

When asking the children what their favourite bits of Kids Kingdom are they said they really enjoyed doing the Nativity at Christmas, they said it was fun. [Editor's note - we thought it was fun too: we weren't expecting that!] They enjoy the songs we do and especially learning a worship song in sign language. They enjoy being together, having fun and eating biscuits!"



Furnace is our Sunday morning group for 11-14s where the young people and their leaders look at faith issues and how they impact the young people in their day to day lives – particularly regarding how to live well as a Christian at school. The group grew in numbers in

September when a large group moved up to Furnace from Kids Kingdom. They have settled in and the group has bonded well.



Our **Songs of Praise Congregation** meets on the 3rd Sunday afternoon of each month where over 70 of us gather to enjoy a service with traditional hymns, readings, prayers and a talk – and then stay on to enjoy afternoon tea together.

Philip Thompson sums up the year as he writes,

"The year started with our monthly Songs of Praise services continuing to be pre-recorded and broadcast on YouTube. It was

exciting when we were finally able to meet face to face in our newly refurbished worship area in June. When we were broadcasting pre-recorded services Sam Heaton was a great help with all the technical side, but when he married and moved away, God in his goodness provided Christine and Paul Bradshaw to take on the audio-visuals. We have continued live services since June also supported by a new team of musicians and the faithful teams of caterers who provide our lovely afternoon tea afterwards.

During the year we celebrated Jesus' resurrection at Easter, Harvest which included thanksgiving for the Queen's long reign and Christmas with a contribution from our own children's Nativity. We also remembered with thankfulness a number of friends who passed away during the year, including David Taylor who had contributed to planning and taking part in Songs of Praise for many years, and Betty Whitney who we remembered with members of her family in November."

Sarah Duncanson-Hunter serves on the Songs of Praise team alongside her daughter Anna. Sarah writes,

"I enjoy being on the Songs of Praise team, welcoming people, singing, and helping to serve tea. This monthly event is the highlight for me in the life of the church and is my favourite service to be part of. It is such a privilege to serve in this way and to see it mean so much to those who attend."

Anna (aged 10) writes,

"I like helping because it is a fun thing to do and in the service I get to learn more about my relationship with God. We listen to testimonies of people who have been through hard times but always knew they had God beside them every step of the way. The songs are nice. It is a very welcoming community to be in. You are just as important as anyone else. After the service, there is a picnic tea for everyone to enjoy. You don't have to stay for tea. You don't have to be a Christian to go to Songs of Praise. It is for any ages mostly adults."



Sarah & Anna



Our **Families Venture Congregation** meets at GBC on the 2nd Sunday afternoon of each month for a time of creativity, crafts, games, worship and fun – finishing with a meal together. On the 4th Sunday afternoon each month there is an ‘out and about’ activity somewhere local e.g. scavenger hunts, litter picking, painting rocks etc! Lucy writes,

“I like Families Venture because families get to come together and meet others. We get to do activities together as a family and to eat together, it is a special time.”

Jo writes,

“I like the friendly people and the community feel of everyone. The children get to meet other children and everyone is able to talk to everyone else.”



Our **Young Adults Congregation** started in 2022 and Joe Warton writes,

“At the start of 2022, a group of young adults (mostly aged 18-25) began meeting at Joe and Bethany's house every fortnight. The three main aims of the group are to go deeper in faith; to learn how to integrate our faith more

into our day-to-day lives; and to grow in our ability to communicate our faith to others through our words and our actions.

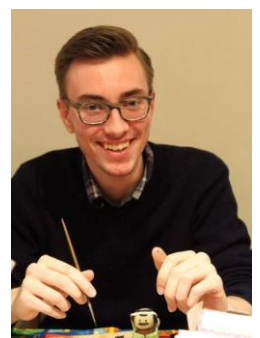
After some experimentation, we've found a format that works really well for the group. We start off by catching up and finding out how life's been over a meal. Then we spend the rest of the evening looking at some Scripture using a framework that gives people time to look at the passage by themselves, and then to share what they discovered with the group. The framework also helps us to wrestle with what the passage is saying, what we think God might be saying directly to us from the passage, and how we will live differently in light of what we've discovered. It's a place where we're getting to know each other, and we're growing together. It's a time where people can bring their whole selves into the group, and where we can apply the Bible to our whole selves.”

One of those attending writes,

“It has been a great encouragement to have a group where we can celebrate successes, but also journey through the difficult times together. Some evenings can be really vulnerable as we discuss how faith isn't always easy, but it is reassuring to know we are all navigating life and similar challenges together. My faith has grown through this group and my willingness to integrate my relationship with Jesus into my everyday working life has certainly grown too.”

Matt Bradshaw writes,

“I am hugely blessed to be surrounded by so many faithful people at Young Adults. It is amazing food, soulful company, with every session opening a new perspective on the Bible, God's word, and our place in the world. It's something I look forward to every single time, with every discussion being both a challenge and an encouragement to how I continue to live my Christian life.”



Matt



Our **Generation Rising Congregation**, for young people aged 15-18, meets every Sunday evening. Highlights from 2022 have included a Sunday evening where everyone was invited to join the GR congregation for ‘Secret Church’ and an evening near Christmas where the young people took gifts of chocolates and biscuits around the

neighbourhood to bless those serving our community.

Other ministries

There are various ways in which our teams serve others outside of our main congregations – again, using the gifts and skills that God has given them to bless others.

We are so blessed at GBC to have a number of Worship Groups and one of those groups regularly helps smaller churches by leading worship – at Trinity Free Church, Perry Baptist Church and Oxmoor Christian Fellowship.

Various services take place in some of the Sheltered Accommodation facilities in Godmanchester, including a monthly Sunday afternoon service at McCartney House, led by Colin and Hatty Borland. We were also glad to be able to visit Oak Tree Court, The Chestnuts and McCartney House in December to lead some Christmas Carol services.



Warren, Ian & Christine
Some of the Audio-Visual Team

We have mentioned the audio-visual teams and their essential support for our various congregations on site – but they have also enabled another vital ministry in making it possible to broadcast our Sunday morning and Songs of Praise services on our YouTube channel. For various reasons a number of people, even if they are local, are still not able to attend services in person – and others are just too far away. For all of them, the YouTube channel has continued to be a real blessing. Penny Bourne writes,

"I am incredibly grateful that Bible believing churches like GBC had the foresight to get involved with the internet. It gives us the opportunity to show our God to so many people who have never heard the true message, that our God loves us and wants a loving relationship with each of us. People need to know that

there are people who will be only too delighted to share our loving and delightful God with them. It gets more and more important as time goes by that we continue to pray for our leaders and volunteers; that every area of ministry in the church has our prayers and support. So, to everyone in our church in whatever way we are able, let us support each ministry, and especially the IT team because their work may well be the first ministry from Godmanchester Baptist Church that many 'shut in people' will see."

Discipleship

As well as belonging to a worshipping congregation, we hope that everyone at GBC is able to find a way to continue to learn and to grow in their journey of faith.

Some people continue to belong to a Small Group and find that this is the place where they learn best alongside others.

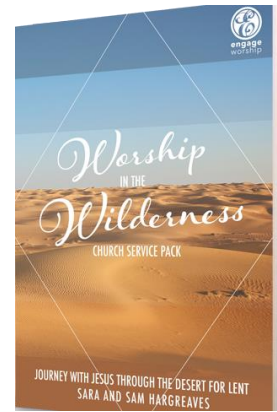
However, our primary model for discipleship now at GBC is Toolbox – a selection of different activities, courses and groups that meet at different times with varying regularity, aims and themes. The Toolbox model allows for different learning styles, different stages of life, different stages of faith, at different times of the week. Toolbox allows people to access what they can within their individual time restraints and to learn and discover in areas of study and discussion that they are interested in and want to know more about. Some Toolbox options are on-going but many are shorter courses – allowing people to commit to one topic for a defined number of weeks and then to choose something else for the next term. We encourage everyone, each term, to engage with something from the Toolbox.

Here are some contributions from a number of people who have enjoyed some of the 2022 Toolbox options:

Book Club

Stephanie Brown writes,

"I connected with a small group looking at a book called Worship in the Wilderness for Lent. The book looked at characters in the Bible who were going through tough times but still able to see God. I know this group of people well but clearly not as in depth as I thought. It was a revelation how honest everyone was, how much better I understand and know them now and how we can explore thoughts and ideas and value one another even physically distant on WhatsApp."



Freedom in Christ

Carolyn Keats writes,

"In September we started a Freedom in Christ course with 23 participants including the 4 strong team. Over the ten weeks it was a great time of learning, sharing and fellowship as we watched videos, discussed the material in small groups (a highlight for one of the participants) and worshipped together. We also had a whole Saturday together as part of the course. Many appreciated the opportunity to get to know brothers and sisters in the GBC family in a deeper way through the course. It was thrilling to see the Holy Spirit at work bringing revelation and assurance from God's Word and helping people walk free from things that had previously held them back. It's been great to hear testimonies of what God has been doing and see participants starting to live more confidently in the freedom Christ has won for them and in the light of what the Bible says is true. Praise God that He is faithful, that he promises to complete the good work he has started in each one of us (Philippians 1: 6) and that he wants us to be fruitful and fulfilled in every area of our life and service."



These are comments from some of those who attended the course:

- *I feel I'm a new person since completing the course*
- *I've learnt a lot about myself*
- *I have more trust in my walk with God*
- *It was well worth the effort of getting there each week*
- *My heart is so much lighter*
- *I feel blessed that I attended the course*
- *I would definitely recommend it*

Freedom in Christ is a great spiritual M.O.T for both younger and more mature Christians. We will be running courses regularly so do take up the opportunity and come along if you can!"

Podcast

Christine Bradshaw writes,

"Last year, a small group of us met together to discuss the 'Being Human' podcasts produced by the Evangelical Alliance. The theme was 'What is it to be human?' This is arguably the most profound, but also most contested question in our culture today. Amongst topics the podcasts engaged in were freedom of speech, cancel culture, freedom of religion, Identity, black lives matter, contentious elections, accelerating climate change and Artificial Intelligence. Not easy topics and there is a constant



cacophony of voices telling us who we are, what's true, what's real, what's wrong, what will make us happy, and how to get it. Voices telling stories, both big and small that shape how we live. I think it is true to say that everyone in this small group really enjoyed the podcasts even though it sometimes felt like quite a brain workout as we grappled with such a selection of topics! Having reached the end of the series we are continuing to meet in the coming year and are selecting other podcasts of interest to listen to and chew the cud over together."

Pastoral Care

As well as being part of a worshipping congregation, and finding a way to develop in our discipleship, it is a vital part of our life together at GBC that everyone is cared for. Jo Hitchins writes,

"When I've previously worshipped within a large church, I've been aware of how easy it is to 'feel invisible' and a bit lost. Having lots of people around doesn't necessarily make it easier to make and deepen friendships, or to ask for and receive help. As one body we are all called to support, care for, pray for, and encourage one another. It can be so hard asking for help so it's really important for each of us not only to look out for others, but also to know they themselves matter, and to feel 'safe' to ask for support.

Care & Connect is the 'bricks and mortar' of Pastoral Care at GBC and aims to empower us as individuals within church to both give and receive help and support as well as build relationships. Whilst we aim for everyone at GBC to have a named Care & Connect Leader, we know Pastoral Care isn't just the responsibility of the Pastoral Care Team, or of Care & Connect Leaders, but of each of us. A recent email reflects this: 'I must thank you for keeping a watch over me. I really did appreciate your kindness & also it had a knock-on effect, in that I want to do it for others who are suffering in any way.' This is just one example of many instances people have been encouraged to care for others because they have felt cared for. My prayer is that every one of us both gives and receives this love and care; that it will be as infectious as Covid, but in a positive way!

It's also been really encouraging to know many have gained in confidence in praying for others, whether face to face, on the phone or on Zoom. For many of us, the initial awkwardness of praying on the phone has faded and it now feels much more natural. As someone said, 'One very positive experience I had during the pandemic was praying with people over the phone for the first time! ... even more exciting was when one or two prayed as well and this has continued since the end of Covid, reminding me of Ephesians 6.18 'pray in the Spirit on ALL occasions'...'

Likewise, it has been so good over the past year to see relationships within the church that have developed, flourished and deepened because of the pandemic as God has enabled us to show his love to each other in new ways. That's worth celebrating, and we look forward with excitement to seeing how God continues to bless and use us."

Prayer

Prayer underpins all that we do at GBC. As individuals, many pray faithfully throughout the week for people and situations known to them. We share pastoral prayer needs each week from those who have asked for our prayers. In addition, there are various opportunities each week for people to gather to pray together. We hold prayer meetings on the first Sunday of the month on Zoom at 7.00pm for an hour, every Wednesday evening on Zoom at 8.00pm for an hour and every Friday morning at 8.00am for half an hour at GBC. There is also a Mission prayer meeting once a month for anyone who would like to meet with others to pray for all the various Missions we support.

For those who have read our previous Annual Review booklets, you will remember that during Covid we were able to make a prayer room available with thought provoking displays to guide our prayers. We have continued those displays – which are changed each month and can be found on the external noticeboard on the front of the building.

Mission

Alpha

Carolyn Keats writes,

"In early February due to popular demand, we started two Alpha courses a week, on Tuesday evenings and Wednesday afternoons. Up to twenty-one people attended each week over the two sessions. It was great to make new friends and explore life and faith together in a relaxed environment. Thank you to the dedicated teams working with me to make this possible – both in the sessions and also all those supporting in prayer behind the scenes and our wonderful cake bakers! Early in the course comments included:

'This is exciting, I can't wait to come back next week.'

'You all make it so understandable; I wish someone had told me this when I was younger.'

Some months after completing the course this is Gill Burnett's testimony:

'Going on the Alpha course changed my life. I felt a love from God which I'd never felt before which was really quite overwhelming. I feel like a new person now. I enjoyed meeting new people at Alpha and I'm more confident talking to people now. I would recommend the course.'



Di

Di Buttfield adds:

'I found the Alpha course enjoyable, interesting, and informative. It was presented in a most friendly way. Questions were always answered with knowledge and at no time did I feel under pressure. I would recommend this course.'

Since the course finished some of our guests have started attending other church activities and services. We plan to run Alpha courses regularly at GBC so why not invite someone you know to come and explore some of the big questions of life or come and have your own faith refreshed. All welcome."



Gill

World Mission

John Collinson writes,

"It is a privilege for us to support some organisations and individuals who are working in other countries to bring the light of the Gospel into dark places – often amongst the most poor, marginalised and vulnerable. What we do in regularly praying, giving financially, and raising awareness of the needs and challenges of the work, makes a huge difference. In Central Asia, through India and as far as the Philippines we have been able to contribute to caring in Jesus' Name for people who we will probably never meet. New practical initiatives and ongoing work includes children's residential care, schooling, teaching life skills, improving women's health, and care for seniors. Everything that is done is rooted in prayer, and the longing of all those involved is that the people they work amongst will come to know Jesus as their Saviour and Lord."

Local Mission

Community Sponsorship Project 2

John Pickersgill and Karen Smith write,

'For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' Matthew 25:34

"Well, 2022 has been quite a year of change and progress for the Community Sponsorship team!

The Syrian family of refugees who arrived in Godmanchester in 2019 have settled very well, are largely independent and have moved into their own new-build rented accommodation. With this in mind, we established a new team of sixteen (with some continuing) in 2021 to apply to the Home Office for approval to receive a second family for resettlement under the Community Sponsorship scheme. The start of the year saw preparation of application forms and making plans that could show the Home Office and the local councils that we were up to the task - a huge task!

By the middle of the year we had the approval to be matched with a refugee family chosen by UNHCR from the many millions in desperate situations around the world. The family offered to us were again among those who had fled the Syrian war, having been in limbo in Lebanon since 2013 in very unsafe and unsatisfactory circumstances.

Basel, Mariam, Rana (8), Ziad (6) and Rashed (4) moved out of the Godmanchester house in August, and our team, Hope into Action staff, and contractors pulled out all the stops together to refurbish and refurnish the house ready to welcome our new family in November – Hamada, Rasha, Imtisal (10) and Alisar (7). Their arrival day was very special.

Since November, the focus of the project has been the initial establishment of the family – helping with benefits, bank accounts, medical, optician and dental appointments, utilities, school places for the children, English lessons for the parents. The family have progressed really well, despite the winter weather, in a short space of time. It has been a privilege to get to know them and to have the opportunity to make a tremendous difference in the lives of one more family. Even if it is very little compared to the millions around the world who have been displaced from their homes, it is huge for this family. What a blessing for us!

Many people, some from the GBC congregation, some from other Churches, and some from the wider community, have played different parts during the year and we are very grateful for all the donations of time and money which have been given."

'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all, without finding fault, and it will be given to you. James 1v5'

"Please pray for us!"

FoodBank

Jude Lechmere, FoodBank Project Manager, writes,

"How quickly the New Year has come around and it has been another busy year within the FoodBank.

We have been busy supporting families across Huntingdonshire in need, and individuals also who can range from young adults coming out of the care system, women escaping domestic violence, to a sad situation of an older person who fell victim to a money scam. But what a privilege through partner agencies that we can be involved supporting people, both adults and children.

We have also entered into a partnership with Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire, CARC, so we can now offer CA support to people who need help to sort benefit claims, complete PIP forms, need advice for debt management and signposting on for further help from local agencies. Meghan and Clare, our CARC workers, are fabulous and are making great changes to those in need.

Christmas always brings a challenge on how to best help people, and this year we focused on Christmas Treat Bags for families through local schools, and if regular food support was needed we provided this too through the voucher system we have in place.





Peter & Lord Lieutenant

Our volunteers are amazing and two were recognised by the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire in Spring for their amazing work throughout the Covid years. Well done to Peter Levitt and Phil Jones who work so very hard for the FoodBank.

In the summer we had a pop up shop for families who were in receipt of free school meals as an alternative way to help them and this initiative was well received. And the Meal In A Bag scheme worked well again, providing for 80

families on a weekly basis through the summer holidays not only a healthy family meal but also a good simple activity for all to be involved with.

The level of community support and donations has been amazing from a variety of sources including Cubs and Scouts, the RAF Wyton Military Wives choir, the WI Swavesey, and the child who gave us their pocket money as they wanted to help someone else. We have been given everything from sacks of onions, to boxes of apples and pears, to 18,000 eggs (as the Co-op got an order wrong!) to weekly collections from Tesco, Sainsbury, Aldi, Lidl, Co-op and so many other places. A huge thank you for such generosity and donations, for the money donated too – it all makes the foodbank happen, and has served and supported over 3,500 adults and children.”



Phil & Lord Lieutenant

HAMA

John Pickersgill, HAMA Centre Manager, writes,

“Huntingdon Area Money Advice (otherwise known as HAMA) is a charity set up by Churches Together in Huntingdon and Godmanchester in 2013. Although not the only sponsoring church of HAMA, GBC has been the home church of many of the HAMA volunteers and Trustees over the years, as well as giving financial support and making rooms available for client appointments. We are very grateful for that support and encouragement.

The purpose of HAMA is to help those who find themselves in a downward spiral of financial difficulties and need help to know the best way to climb upwards again. During 2022 we were in contact with 125 clients.

Each client is different, but we try to find ways to maximize their income, reduce expenditure and then find the appropriate solution for any debts. Some of these solutions can only be provided through a debt advice organisation such as ourselves.

Our current small team of advisers includes several from GBC – Roger Hickling, Colin Borland and myself. We will soon start providing advice to FoodBank clients within the Monday FoodBank session. As well as this development we are also working towards resourcing two members of Cambourne Church to provide advice in their community, under HAMA’s wing. We are also continuing to provide a monthly session at Ramsey Library.

During the year, Roger, who has been the mainstay of HAMA since its foundation, achieved the milestone of assisting over 500 clients in 9 years. We held a lunchtime event to mark the achievement, inviting staff from many of the organisations who refer clients to us, as well as town and district council dignitaries, including the Mayor of Huntingdon, David Landon Cole.

It is a privilege to be able to help people in their time of need. In some cases we can provide solutions which make a big difference.

HUNTINGDON AREA
Money Advice
Free & confidential
debt advice service



Roger & John with the Mayor

- Like advising a client to claim on a payment protection insurance she didn't know she had, to write off a catalogue debt AND give her £3000.
- Like helping a client to increase their income by over £800 per month.
- Like helping a couple to make a fresh financial start by using an insolvency procedure, after they had made huge strides to overcome the drink and drug addictions which were a factor in them getting into debt.
- Like helping a client move into permanent social housing by addressing the housing related debts that were a barrier to their bidding for property

Not all cases have happy endings and it can be frustrating and challenging at times, but we do pray that the advisers are able to show the love of Christ in action as we work with them."

Regular Activities

Friday Night Project

FNP is our weekly youth club for years 7-11, every Friday evening in term time. A core group of young people come and find FNP to be a great space to be themselves alongside their peers and the team in a safe environment. They are regularly involved in the planning of the programme which includes games, crafts, pizza evenings, baking challenges and trips out. After many years, the favourites remain bench ball and the tuck shop!



Inspire

Carolyn Keats writes,

"After several months of planning, we launched a new initiative called Inspire in the autumn. Inspire is a space for adults of all ages to come and explore creativity. There are 3 zones – one for learning a new skill or craft, one for experimenting with different creative mediums – clay, paint, paper, glass etc and one for continuing and sharing personal projects brought from home. There's something for everyone however inexperienced or creative!"

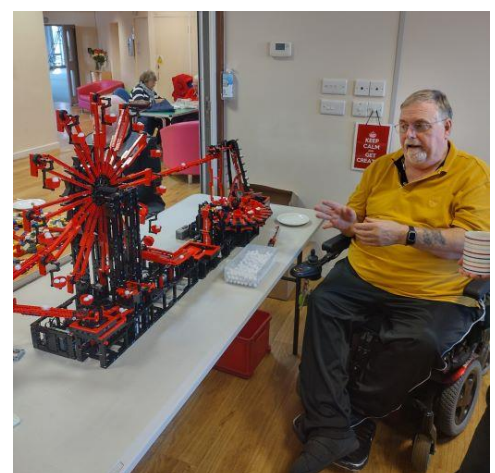
It has been great to see both men and women come along, and numbers grow so quickly. Many have enjoyed making new friends and 'having a go' at being creative in a relaxed, happy environment with the bonus of coffee and lovely homemade cake (thank you cake bakers!) These are some of the comments after the first term:

- *'I really enjoyed being part of Inspire. There was a good mix of people and a good mix of crafts on offer each week.'*
- *'The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly.'*
- *'I've learnt new things and can't wait to see what happens in the new year.'*

Thanks to the whole team who have made this project happen. Inspire runs on Friday mornings for six weeks each term. No booking is necessary – everyone is very welcome!"

Stephanie writes,

"Inspire was a new experience in 2022 that helped me find out much more about people whom I have met in church but



Paul and his Lego model



Inspire Decorations!

never really spent time with. We share a common interest in exploring creativity and learning new skills. It was so easy whilst doing something practical to share our own stories and listen to others. It helped me to understand a little more about the creative being God has made me and how he can use this to connect with me differently."

Littlefoot

Amanda Last writes for the Littlefoot team,

"From our point of view, it has been amazing to be able to welcome back first 8, then gradually 10, 12, 15, 20+ families. Everyone was very gracious and understanding about the need to pre-book a space each week at first, but now those on our register appreciate the spontaneity to come along when they can. The group continues to be inclusive and supportive. Our families make strong bonds here, and they all contribute in different ways to the group, for example helping to tidy away, leading the singing, welcoming new families."

A number of those who attend have provided contributions for this Review,



Jessie

"We enjoy coming to Littlefoot because it is such a warm and welcoming environment. The toys and activities are really lovely and we especially love the story and singing time (and snack too!) As a newcomer to the area, Littlefoot has given me a sense of community with other parents." Jessie

"We are very happy to have the opportunity to visit Littlefoot. It is a very good place to find friends and support. It is a very comfortable place for both mothers and children. Thank you all for the interesting toys and games, reading books and songs. And moreover, for the atmosphere of coziness and warmth."

Dina



Dina

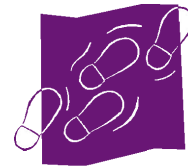
"We love coming to Littlefoot, it's a very friendly and sociable space for both parents, carers and the children. There are different activity tables every week for all to get involved in, the story telling and singalong at the end is a lovely wind down time for all. I am grateful that this is something I can bring my grandson to every week." Julia

"Rocky and I always look forward to our Wednesday mornings at Littlefoot. In fact most mornings Rocky asks me 'is it playgroup today?!' He loves the range of toys (the tools are a particular favourite) and I've loved watching him get stuck into craft activities too. Without a doubt the highlight is the three S's of story, snack and singing which round everything off. I hadn't realised how much he loves music until we started Littlefoot! For me the group is a chance for a relaxing morning mid-week, seeing friends from all over the community and having a coffee. More than anything though it's a chance to witness Rocky in a childcare setting. I never get to see him at nursery so Littlefoot gives me a window into his world as he plays alongside his friends." Vic



Vic

LITTLEFOOT



Tuesday Treat and Tuesdays @ 11

Nicky Rattigan writes about Tuesday Treat,

"2022 was a great year for us! We were able to hold our sessions indoors again and to reunite the community who had been divided into two sessions to allow for social distancing. We welcomed more new guests and several new team members so we are now 60 - 70 strong. We've had a lot of fun - throwing a big



Jubilee Celebration

party to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June, for which many dressed up in red, white and blue or wore festive hats and then hosting a full Christmas Dinner in December. We also introduced a "Meet the Team" spot, interviewing a different helper each week so folk could get to know them better and also allowing the team a chance say something about their Christian faith. We resumed our quarterly, short

worship services before the sessions and many of our guests attended. Several people signed up for the Alpha Course and the Freedom in Christ Course and have told us that their lives have been changed as a result. Lots of the TT people now come to the Inspire creative group and Songs of Praise too. We feel truly blessed."



Christmas Meal

Gerry Avril writes about his experience at Tuesday Treat, as well as some other activities at GBC,



Gerry tile painting

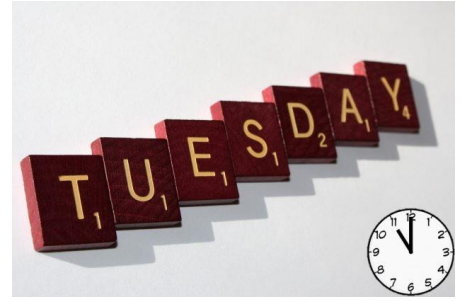
"During August last year I first attended Tuesday Treat. Beforehand I was not at all certain what to expect, just that a lot of people would be there. My granddaughter, Abi, introduced me and all my doubts about it disappeared within minutes. I was simply bowled over with the kindness of the people Abi introduced to me. Not only their kindness but their caring attitudes simply impressed me far beyond any expectations I may have had. Since that first visit I've attended every Tuesday. Tea/coffee and cakes are freely available. Not only that but also the Christmas meal was very special. Craft mornings have proved very entertaining and constructive. It has also served as an introduction to the church in general and I have enrolled on courses to find Jesus in my life."



Tuesday Treat Team

Carolyn Keats writes about **Tuesdays @ 11**,

"We were again able to run our special Tuesday meetings for Seniors through the summer which this year we called Tuesdays @ 11. We enjoyed a varied programme of activities including music and songs from a local entertainer, a talk from Godmanchester Community Nursery, a crafts and board games morning and some of us even had a go at line dancing! There was a lot of fun, laughter, and photos taken! Each week we were also led in a 'Thought for the Day' by members of the wider church. We're thankful to our catering team who provided us with delicious lunches each session as well as the wider Tuesdays @ 11 team for their tireless care, hospitality, and wonderful servant hearts."



Other Activities

Amen Ministries

Carolyn Keats writes,

"In October we again earnestly started collecting items for Christmas shoeboxes to be sent to needy families in Romania and orphans in Ukraine through the Christian charity Amen. Some of our knitters at Tuesday Treat put on a great show and produced bin liners full of homemade hats, gloves, scarves, and blankets which we were able to send alongside the shoeboxes, as well as small teddies ideal for putting in the boxes. We were also able to send items of baby care (Moses baskets, travel cot, highchair, baby bath etc) and baby clothes which were donated by members of Littlefoot and the wider church and community."

This year in total 2645 Christmas shoeboxes were sent from the UK to Romania and Ukraine (10% up from 2021) At GBC we contributed 36 shoeboxes, the other items already mentioned and 12 pairs of brand new leather shoes (donated by Russell and Bromley). It was a great effort and thanks to all in the church and community who contributed in any way. It is wonderful to be able to give from the abundance God has given us and bless those who otherwise would have nothing. Let's get knitting and collecting for next Christmas!"



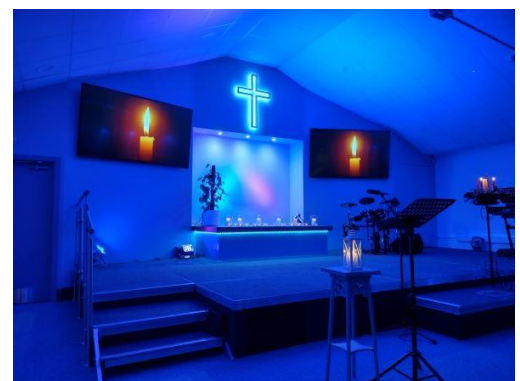
Christmas Shoeboxes

Blue Christmas

Carolyn Keats writes,

"An addition to our Christmas programme this year was a quieter, more contemplative, candlelit service called 'Blue Christmas'. The service provided an opportunity for reflection and a space just 'to be'; a time to ponder the hope of the Christmas message and find peace and focus amid the busyness of the season. There was also opportunity to light candles to remember loved ones and offer prayer for those experiencing daily struggles and challenges."

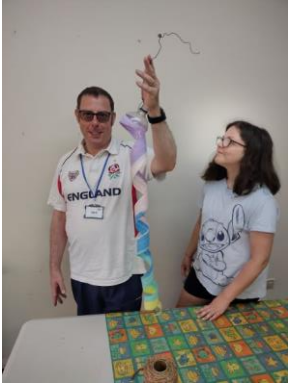
A big thank you to Christine and Paul Bradshaw for working so hard with all the technical side to enable this service to happen and Hayley Beckett for her help in making the worship area look so beautiful. The service was appreciated by those who came, and we plan to include it again next year."



Blue Christmas

Holiday Club

We were glad to be able to run our Summer Holiday Club for primary school aged children in August after a gap of a couple of years. The theme for the week was Wonderzone and much fun was had by all while we learnt about the wonderful world that we live in and the creator God who made it all. We learnt too about how this same God wants to be our friend.



Mark & Immy

Mark Whittle writes,

"Holiday club was a fantastic opportunity for our young people to explore God in a fun way. I was lucky enough to be able to join in supporting as a leader. I felt super proud of the young people who came along and engaged with the activities and staff. I was able to grow myself in my journey in supporting young people to engage with God. I learnt ways of approaching the questions and answering them with the support of other leaders."

The Mix

For many years now we have enjoyed occasional times when the whole church has been able to gather together for an extended period of time – sometimes a whole weekend and sometimes a whole day. We are grateful to St Anne's School for their generosity in allowing us to use their site and premises to facilitate our day away together on the first Sunday in September 2022. A large number of us, of all ages, gathered on a beautiful sunny day to worship together, to learn together and to eat and play together. It was so good to have



Daniel at The Mix

plenty of time and space just to catch up with each other as well as to join in some of the activities on offer if we wanted to. There were bouncy castles, balloon modelling, sports events, an area for creative crafts, and an opportunity to engage in an Out of the Box activity.

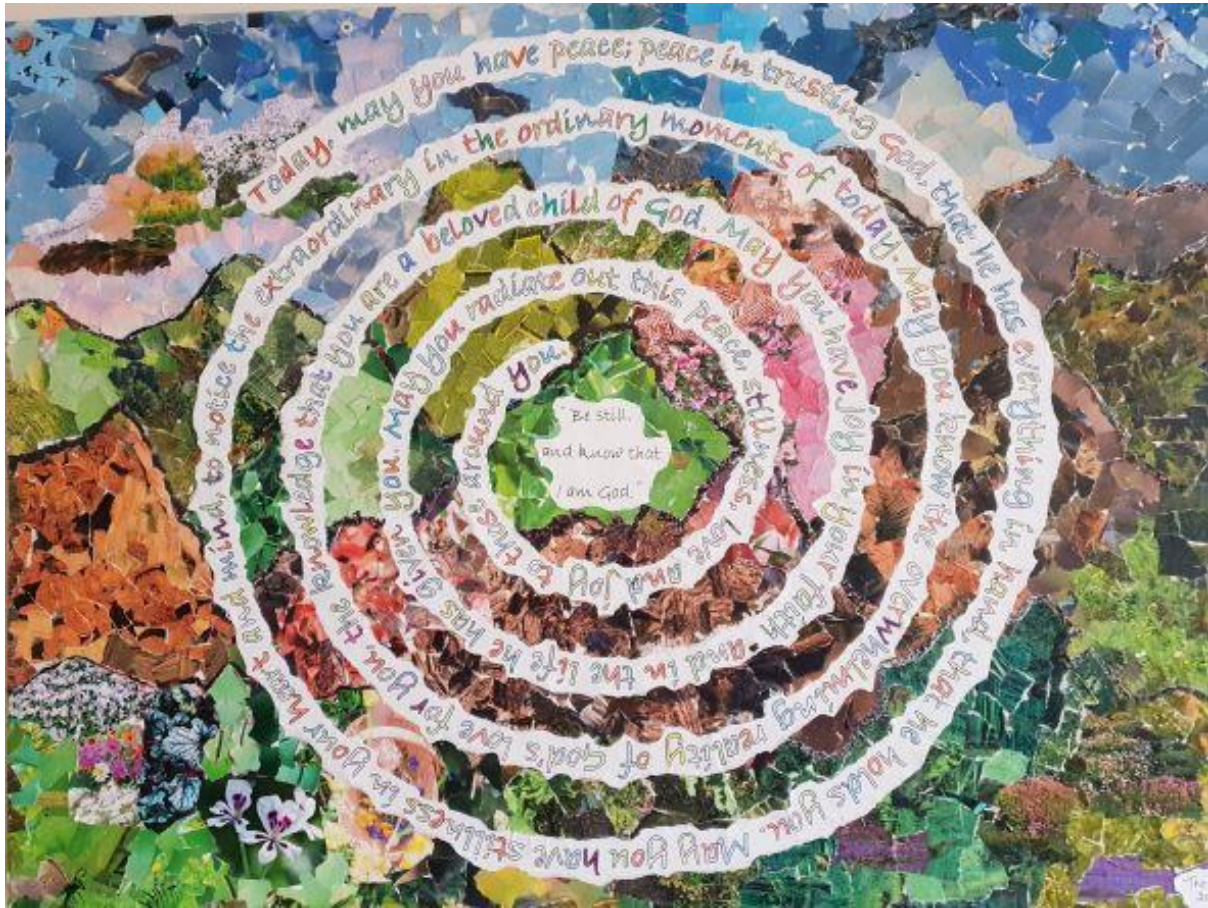
Anne Ambler explains,

"Out of the Box storytelling is a very different way of sharing and participating in stories. The stories are quite short and simple giving a prompt for personal reflection. The story I shared at The Mix was called 'An Idea' and presented a whole other way of considering ideas and our responses to the

ideas of others as well as our own. I shared the story twice, the first time it was heard by children who have their own unique way of interpreting and responding to what they hear and this is shown by what they all created having received the story - the children never cease to amaze me! In the afternoon it was all adults who came to share the story and what they took away from this time was profound and moving."



Anne at The Mix



The Mix: Be still and know that I am God

Schools Ministry

It is a privilege to be invited to serve many of our local schools, including the three Godmanchester Primary Schools and Hinchingsbrook Secondary School. We are regularly involved in assemblies, lessons and mentoring.

Warm Space

We have been able to join in with the national Warm Space initiative from November – February. Our Warm Space has run on Thursdays from 10.00am-2.00pm, offering a space to come and spend time with others enjoying hot drinks and toast and good company. Lots of games have been played – and jigsaws done! Stephanie Brown writes,

"Although the Warm Space group has been the smallest group of people I have met with this year – what an incredible group of people, who I did not know at all, but they have become very special. We grappled with a difficult puzzle, played board games, and laughed over toast and coffee. They have been so friendly and accepting of any newcomers including those seeking advice or volunteering at the Foodbank. I shall miss Thursday morning when it starts to get warmer outside!"



Warm Space jigsaw

Youth Residentials

It was so good, by April 2022, to have the opportunity to spend some time together and we were able to take our young people away for 2 days for an **Easter Sleepover** at Grace Fellowship in Little Stukeley. We enjoyed craft activities, pizzas, a treasure hunt, hide and seek in the dark and a fire pit!



Fire pit



Katie-Anne

Katie-Anne Buckenham was baptised in February 2023 and, as part of her testimony, she spoke about her time at a Youth Residential at **Letton Hall** last year. She writes,

"In February last year I had the opportunity to go to Letton Hall, a Christian residential run by a Christian youth organisation called CROPS. This is the place where my faith was solidified. In those 4 days I received information about God and worshipped with other young people, I got to make new friends and discussed faith with them and in the talent show I wrote my own rendition of Alexander Hamilton to tell the story of Jesus. One day we were encouraged to write a letter to our future self about what we had been learning about God. These are some of the things I wrote:

'Dear Future Katie-Anne,

I am writing to tell you the things I have learned in the past few days. The first thing that is really important, is that your life really matters. Even in the hard times remember that your life matters to your friends, to your family and most importantly to God.

Things to remember about faith:

Live courageously – God is always with you and will make you have courage to do anything.

Live obediently – Be obedient to what God wants you to do.

Live faithfully – have faith even if people look at you weird or it doesn't make sense. It will always work out.

If something doesn't go well, pick yourself up and try again. There will always be a light at the end of the tunnel. God doesn't value you any different, he thinks you're amazing no matter what you do.

When times get hard remember this lesson. Remember the time you had with your friends, remember all the prayers you were given and the fun time on the go-kart even if you crashed a lot! You can't go through life without bad events but remember you will get through them, and you will have nice times.'

I went home from that trip forever changed. I know I'm not perfect and I sometimes make mistakes, but I know that God loves me and forgives me because of what Jesus did on the cross. And I know he's always with me."

In the summer we were able to take a group of our older young people to **Satellites** – a Christian camping event at Peterborough Showground. It was great for them to meet up with young people from other local churches and to be part of a larger group as they enjoyed worship, teaching and seminars each day as well as plenty of opportunity for eating and having fun together!

As we near the end of our review of 2022, you will have noticed a few references to Grace Fellowship and the various ways we have used it so far. We are so thankful for this gift. We have spent much of 2022 seeking God's guidance in how he wants us to use this additional site in the future. In the short term we are already using it as a retreat and learning centre and we will be able to bring you more information next year in our review of 2023!

You will also have realised as you have read about all the congregations and activities that take place at GBC and beyond, just how many people are involved in sacrificially giving of their time, their skills and their gifts to enable all of these ministries to take place. Some roles in which people serve are 'up front' and noticeable. Others are behind the scenes and hidden. We are truly grateful to each one. [A challenge from the staff team – why not write a list and see how many ways of serving you can identify?!]

And in summary

Looking back over the past year what a lot has happened! From meeting online to meeting in person first at Grace Fellowship and then in our newly refurbished building in East Chadley Lane. Reading this review, I've been struck by how diverse we are as a church and just how vibrant and extensive GBC's programme and reach is. I've also been blown away by the number of people who contribute to the life and ministry of the church. As a Leadership Team we are so grateful for such a grace-filled church and for all those who serve so generously and sacrificially.

We thank God for the happy atmosphere at GBC and our enjoyment in being together. We must never take our unity for granted, and I urge you to continue to pray regularly for one another as well as the work, as we press on in our mission to – Love God, Love Each Other, and Make Disciples.

At a time when many in our nation are asking the big questions of life and showing more openness to exploring faith, I can only encourage that we 'keep on, keeping on' with all the good things we're already doing.

Galatians 6: 9-10 says 'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.'

As the congregation grows, let's continue to get to know one another, to show hospitality and care in whatever way we can and to spur one another on in faith, love, and good deeds (Hebrews 10: 24). Let's also continue to make the most of the opportunities we have to share the love of Christ sensitively with those in our sphere of influence.

It's been wonderful to see how God has been at work through this past year. There is so much to celebrate, and we give thanks for his loving and generous hand of blessing on us.

It's a privilege to be part of GBC and I forward to what the next year has in store!

Carolyn

Pastors, Leadership Team and Staff

It has been so good to have a full staff team for the whole of 2022 and to have appointed some new trustees in June when we held our first AGM as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). The photo gallery below will help identify who's who on the staff and Leadership Teams.

In September we said goodbye to Holly Carter when she completed her 18 months as our Business Administration Apprentice. We miss her, but are glad to report that she is enjoying her new full time administrative role in Grantham.



Daniel Beckett
Lead Pastor



Carolyn Keats
Associate Pastor



John Brown
Leadership Team



John Collinson
Leadership Team



Joe George
Leadership Team



Jo Hitchins
Leadership Team



Sue Houghton
Leadership Team



Brett Mickelburgh
Leadership Team



Andrew Shefford
Leadership Team



Ruth Blakey
Administrator



Jude Lechmere
FoodBank Project Manager

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