



Godmanchester Baptist Church

Annual Review of 2023



ENLARGE THE PLACE OF YOUR TENT,
STRETCH YOUR TENT CURTAINS WIDE,
DO NOT HOLD BACK;
LENGTHEN YOUR CORDS,
STRENGTHEN YOUR STAKES.

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Welcome to our review of 2023

Hello everyone and welcome to our Annual Review of 2023. In the following pages you will be able to read about the congregations, groups, activities and ministries that make up Godmanchester Baptist Church. It is amazing to read about all of the different ways in which we are able to live out our vision statement together – to Love God, Love Each Other, and Make Disciples.

But it is not just about what we do. More importantly it is about who we are – and it’s great to read about the lives of the many people who are represented in this review. Those who lead, serve, give – of their time, gifts and finance, and those whose lives are impacted.

I am thankful for our Leadership Team who serve as our Trustees. During 2023 two of our Trustees came to the end of their terms of office and we want to say a special thank you to them. Brett Mickelburgh has served as our Treasurer for many years, and John Brown has served us in a variety of roles including oversight of Governance, Buildings and Health & Safety. Thank you both. We welcome Cliff Broadhurst to the team who joined us in January 2024 as our Church Treasurer.

You will read later on about our Away Day together in September – The Mix 2023. The focus of our day and the teaching from Peter Nodding was the verse on the front cover. The planning team felt that God was directing us to this verse as our theme. I don’t think we knew at that time how significant this verse would become for us. God is asking us to ‘stretch’ – to move out from what we have known and what we have always done. It is difficult and a challenge – but God has brought us together for such a time as this and he will give us what we need. Last year’s verse reminded us of God’s faithfulness – and he has continued to be faithful to us. We can trust him as we go forward and we can ‘enlarge the place of our tents, and stretch our tent curtains wide’. One person’s reflection to me sums it up well, “We have everything we need, we have the tent, we have the pegs, we have the cords – now stretch!”

*God bless
Daniel Beckett
Lead Pastor*

In writing this review of 2023 we once again rejoice and give thanks to God for all he has done in our lives as individuals, as a church family, in our community here in Godmanchester and further afield in the ministries we support around the globe. 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.

This is the first time since our review of 2019 where we have been able to report on a complete year with no disruptions in our gathering together caused by the pandemic and building work – what a joy to have had a whole year fully back together and with so much to write about in our ministry and mission together!

Most of our gathering together, for Celebrations with our congregations and for our other activities, takes place at our site in East Chadley Lane, but as we reported last year we also now have our site in Little Stukeley which has been renamed as The Beacon Centre. This site was gifted to us in 2022 and there have been lots of developments there during 2023. A report follows later in the review.

In the following pages you will be able to read all about our life together at GBC throughout 2023. At first glance, much of it describes our gatherings in our congregations for worship, our activities and our 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.

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 2023 to have welcomed a number of new friends to some of our congregations. In July we held one 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. So many people have joined us since then that we have just held the next one!

Clive and Jacqui Joseph write,

"We started attending GBC during 2023 and became members in December. It is refreshing to be involved again in a vibrant Christ-centred church that is thoroughly grounded in the Scriptures and so outward looking. Thank you for your welcome as we continue to integrate into the life and mission of GBC."

Carolyn Keats, our Associate Pastor, has held regular information sessions for those who would like to explore what membership of a Baptist Church is all about and during the year, 20 people joined us as members. We also held two services of believers' baptism where two people publicly proclaimed their faith.

Carolyn writes here about Gerry Avril,

"I first met Gerry at one of our mid-week groups. He had recently moved to Godmanchester, and his family thought that Tuesday Treat would be a good place for him to socialise and make new friends. From the off he was keen for us to know that he 'didn't do religion'! He kept coming along largely because of the warmth and friendliness of everyone he met. After a while he signed up for an ALPHA course and then a Truth Unlocked course! Through these courses, he became (in his words) 'convinced that the Bible is the truth and that Jesus loves me and died for me' and he took a step of faith to 'give himself to Jesus'. From then on Gerry's life and faith changed radically. He became a regular at the Sunday morning Celebrations and Songs of Praise services, and enjoyed many mid-week activities where he also made a huge number of friends. In November, we had the joy of witnessing Gerry's baptism during which he gave a powerful testimony. 'In being baptised', he said, 'I want to show that I am following Jesus. I'm thankful to him for saving and guiding me and changing my life.' Gerry went to be with his newfound Saviour and Lord in January this year. He is much missed, but we rejoice in the hope God's children have of eternity with him."



Clive and Jacqui



Gerry



Sunday Celebration

Our **Sunday Morning Celebration** is our hub congregation – where 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 – which often includes opportunity for the children to be 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 welcoming and car parking 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 2023, preaching themes have included Spiritual Disciplines, The Minor Prophets, The Holy Spirit, Psalms, What we Believe, Mission Possible and Hope. We also regularly hear updates from representatives of all the missions that we support – locally, nationally and overseas, and we enjoyed a challenging talk from a visiting speaker on our Mission Sunday in July. We share communion together each month.

crèche



Our Sunday morning **Crèche** group is for our under 3s. Heather Smart heads up our Crèche team and she writes,

"But Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.' Matthew 19 v 14

Our Crèche group provides a fun, loving and safe space for babies and pre-school aged children on a Sunday morning. Through free-play activities, stories and songs, prepared by our caring team of volunteers, our littlest ones have the opportunity of a positive experience of the church and being an important part of his Kingdom. As a mum of two children in this group, I value the service this ministry provides in helping me persevere in my Christian mission. Makenna and Caleb are always excited to go to church and be a part of this group. It is our prayer that each child and their family feels like a welcomed part of Jesus' church and knows how deeply he loves them."



Caleb

Little Stars is our Sunday morning group for 3-5 year olds. Rosemary Steen, a member of the Little Stars team, writes,



"It is a privilege to be part of the Little Stars team. We have 3 to 5 children each week but welcome visiting children which swells the numbers. The children enjoy a Bible story followed by activities, crafts and games linked to the story. The children are keen to learn and talk about the story plus lots of other topics as well! The aim of the sessions is to have fun as we share together."

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

"Kids Kingdom is our Sunday morning group for children in school years 2-6 and we meet during the Sunday Celebration. During 2023 we have looked at the following stories from the Bible. From the Old Testament – Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Jonah, Esther, Abraham, Jacob and Moses and from the New Testament – the 'I AM' sayings of Jesus, how to pray, Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

We have also had some invited guests join us including Anne Ambler with some 'Out of the Box' stories and Delia Steer who taught us about worship and flags.



Our mornings are a mix of story, games and activities. When asking the children what they could remember doing and what they liked best they said, 'challenges where we have to work as a team to achieve something', remembering a session where the challenge was to build a track that would get a ball from one side of the room to another. 'Messy challenges' remembering a 'find the beads in gooey mixtures' challenge. 'Our amazing fun leaders who make our sessions great to be part of', 'the stories and activities are good' and 'taking part in the Christmas nativity play'."

Roshan enjoys Kids Kingdom and he writes,

"I really enjoyed being narrator in the Christmas Nativity – it was great to get the chance to speak in front of the whole church. The games we play in Kids Kingdom are also fun!"



Roshan

Furnace

Furnace is our Sunday morning group for school years 7-10. Each week during the Sunday morning Celebration a group of young people meet in the Small Hall. They are there together with leaders to try to understand what it means to be a Christian. How do you do it? What difference does it make? What can I do and what can't I do? Our sessions are a mixture of games and activities, biscuits and squash, lots of fun and looking through the Bible.

Our **Songs of Praise Congregation** meets on the 3rd Sunday afternoon of each month.

Philip Thompson sums up the year as he writes,

"Songs of Praise is held on the third Sunday afternoon of each month throughout the year with its mix of more traditional hymns, readings, prayers, and a talk, with a congregation of sixty plus on each occasion. A committed team of musicians lead the singing supported by a technical team to ensure that those present and those listening later on YouTube are able to fully take part in the celebrations. The year commenced with a series on God's plan for the world ranging from creation to the promised new creation encompassing God's guidelines for living, and including the biblical accounts of Easter and Pentecost and their significance. The Autumn started with Harvest and was followed by celebrations on the themes of faith, peace and hope as we approached Christmas. A number of different people take part each time leading, speaking, choosing and introducing a hymn, leading prayers and speaking from their own experience of their Christian walk. We are grateful also for those who spend time beforehand, and on the day, to make sure that the celebration runs smoothly. We always end with a splendid afternoon tea prepared and served by a dedicated team of caterers."



Cynthia Bird serves on the Songs of Praise team and she writes,

"For me being part of the congregation for the monthly Songs of Praise celebration is a lovely opportunity and a privilege to be able to worship with others. I find the format of the celebration very helpful as we sing favourite hymns, hear testimonies from different people, listen to the Bible being read, have teaching which helps me with my daily Christian walk, and pray together. It is a loving, supportive group of people just sharing not only in the celebration but also afterwards as we join with each other for afternoon tea, prepared for us by kind members of the church. Do come and join us in our Songs of Praise congregation and feel part of this loving, caring group of people who are finding out more about our Heavenly Father and worshipping him together."



Cynthia

Betty Storey enjoys being part of the Songs of Praise congregation and she writes,

"When you walk in the building there is an atmosphere there – you feel it – it's being wrapped in love. I do enjoy singing and if there are ever songs not written in

the Braille Books, then I can listen. Very often the hymns have repeated choruses that are easy and I can join in those easily. People are friendly and they say who they are when they come to talk to me – that helps a lot! We might not think we are important - yet Jesus says, “Come to me!” He loves us and we hear Him and feel valued”.

Our **Online provision** which we began in 2020, has continued for some of our services and you can find recordings of our Sunday Morning Celebrations and our Songs of Praise Celebrations on our YouTube channel.



Richard Owen leads our newest congregation at **The Beacon Centre**. He writes,

“Where is The Beacon Centre? It is in Little Stukeley, right next to the jet plane, but it is nothing to do with the jet plane. It was formerly known as Grace Fellowship and has now been renamed as

The Beacon Centre. The name is quite apt as it is a beacon set on a hill (c.f. Matthew 5:14-16).

Our new congregation at The Beacon Centre began on the second Sunday in September 2023. The first monthly service took place with a smallish number of volunteers from Godmanchester Baptist Church – East Chadley Lane (GBC-ECL) transferring on that Sunday to Godmanchester Baptist Church – The Beacon Centre (GBC-TBC). Since then, we have met regularly on the second Sunday of the month with a special event taking place on Christmas Eve at 10.30am, when we held our first Carol Service. We had leafletted the area of the Stukeleys and the Alconbury Weald telling neighbours about the Carol Service and we did see some results from the exercise. We are still praying that people local to the area will begin to come to the church on a second Sunday morning in the month. We need God’s guidance on this, please keep praying for us.



The Beacon Centre Auditorium

We would like to thank all those who are faithful to the Sunday service at GBC-TBC and also to those who volunteered as welcome team, looking after the refreshments in the coffee room, the tech team and the musicians. We too are grateful to the people that have worked hard to improve the fabric of GBC-TBC. You all deserve a big THANK YOU!

Being a smaller congregation than at GBC-ECL we do indulge in different ways of hearing the sermon. In one service the congregation split into small groups and each group wrote a ‘mini-sermon’ on a verse the group was given about ‘the light of the world’. The verses were John 8:12, John 9:5 and Matthew 5:14.

The themes have mostly been about beginnings with such passages as Genesis 1, John 1 along with others. We have been blessed by good speakers as we have been visited by Peter Nodding, our last moderator at GBC-ECL, and also by the esteemed Daniel Beckett.

Do keep praying for GBC-TBC that local people will come and that it will grow spiritually and numerically”



Richard

Families venture



Families Venture Party

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. Recently we looked at the parable of the great banquet – teaching that all of us are invited to the party! We made party ‘food’ out of playdough and wrote our thankyou’s to hang on the thankyou tree.

One of those attending Families Venture regularly says,

“I think it’s good that more people have come to church. It’s so great here with all the activities. It’s done in such a way that all different children can access church and it allows me, and other parents, to have time in church too.”



Thank You Tree

Young ADULTS

Our **Young Adults Congregation** started in 2022 so is still fairly new. Joe Warton leads this congregation and he writes,

“It’s been another great year of learning and growing together as a group. We focus on three main goals: Going deeper in our faith; integrating our faith into our everyday life and work; and showing and sharing Jesus with those around us through our actions and words. It’s a fantastic group to belong to. Here are some things I love about the way we operate as a group:

We focus on growth – while we all talk openly and honestly about the struggles and challenges of life, we share a ‘growth mindset’. It’s not just about ‘how do I survive this challenge?’; we help each other to work out how we can grow as disciples, and faithfully reflect Jesus in those situations.

Everyone has a voice – the way we study the Bible together gives everybody a chance to look at the passage for themselves, to see what they learn from it, and how God speaks to them. We listen carefully to what God is saying to and through each person.

We keep the Bible and real-life central – every single time we meet, God speaks to us through his Word. But we don’t let it float ‘up there’ – each of us must find connections from the passage to the actual lives we live. We learn so much this way.

We currently have 14 people connected to the group, and on any given night, there’s anywhere between 5-10 people around the table.”

Jenny is part of the Young Adults Congregation and she writes,

“HWAP (hanging with a purpose!), as we call it, is a place of love, fellowship and learning. It is a group I feel blessed to be a part of. It has helped me develop more confidence in sharing my faith with people in my day-to-day life. The group is also where I know I am loved and can share my challenges and achievements. Every meeting is filled with so much wisdom from the Bible, personal insights from young believers like myself, and challenging questions that promote growth in all areas of life. It also helps me explore British culture and food in a loving and comfortable setting.”



Jenny



Daniel writes,

*“During 2023 we started our new **Uth Congregation** on a Sunday evening for young people in school years 8-13. When we meet we start each session with a hot chocolate and an opportunity to catch up with how our week has been. During the sessions we want to create opportunity to learn what the Bible says and to think about the impact that has on our lives. Topics have included, ‘Who is Jesus?’ ‘What is prayer?’ and ‘What is faith?’ We find that it is good to be able to ask questions. No question is wrong! One young person says that they really appreciate the space for discussion about what the Bible says and how they can*

apply it to their life. On one of our Sunday evenings just before Christmas we went out and about in our local area taking gifts to people who serve us in our community, in order to serve as an example of God’s blessing.”

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, McCartney House and the new Saxon Manor Care Home in December to lead some Christmas Carol services.

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. At GBC we call our Discipleship programme TOOLBOX.

The concept of Toolbox is that we need different tools for different tasks and it’s really helpful to have a number of options so we can choose the right tool at the right time! We encourage everyone at GBC to consider whereabouts they are in their journey of faith and to choose the right tool to help in their discipleship and spiritual growth. Some people are exploring Christianity. Some are new to faith. Others have been Christians for a very long time! We know that people vary too in their personalities, learning styles and interests so we are keen to offer as wide a variety as possible in the types of groups and courses we run.

Small groups meet regularly and many people continue to find meeting in this way a very helpful part of their discipleship journey.

Others find it helpful to sign up to a shorter course for a few weeks at a time, and to have the option to join in with a variety of formats over the course of the year. The programme is produced at the beginning of each term with some groups being on-going and others being new just for one term.

Examples of other groups, courses and studies from our 2023 Toolbox programme have included:

- regular Bible Study groups meeting weekly and usually providing an opportunity to discuss the preaching topic from Sunday mornings
- a short series of Bible Studies based on the book of Job
- four practical sessions focusing on Spiritual Disciplines – following on from one of our Sunday morning preaching series
- five sessions listening to the Keswick Lectures on the theme of ‘How to thrive in a changing culture’
- a regular discussion group – focusing on various podcasts that those meeting up have listened to in advance
- a Book Club – gathering to discuss chapters of a chosen book – this time it was Help is Here by Jeff Lucas
- a Parenting Course
- the Marriage Course
- a preparing for Retirement Course (RePurpose from LICC, the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity)
- the Freedom in Christ Course
- Refresh Retreat mornings

- a Walk Through the Bible (Old Testament) Day
- Deeper – an occasional gathering offering an opportunity to spend time seeking God and being open to the Holy Spirit, in worship, sharing together and ministering to each other.

Here are some contributions from a number of people who have enjoyed some of the 2023 Toolbox options:

Walk Through the Bible

- *“Amazing, I could do the day 5 times over!”*
- *“It was so good to get all the bits of the Old Testament in place. It makes a lot more sense now.”*
- *“Excellent, Paul was such a great communicator.”*
- *“Brilliant, I thought I would need to go home at lunchtime, but I stayed all day.”*
- *“Really helpful.”*
- *“Wow, exhausting but good! There’s such a lot of material.”*
- *“I’d do it again and again.”*

The Marriage Course

Cliff & Vilma Broadhurst ran this course as part of our Toolbox programme and Cliff writes,

“During the Autumn, we ran the Marriage Course over seven weeks for couples from both within and outside of GBC. Nine couples attended throughout and enjoyed an excellent meal each week prepared by Hayley and her team in the kitchen.”

This is what some of those who attended had to say ...

“We loved the Marriage Course! When you're busy doing your work, juggling kids, trying to stay on top of the house, stay healthy (and all those grown-up things), it's possible patterns develop in your relationship that aren't exactly what you'd want. The Marriage Course gave us time and space to celebrate the things that are good, and to work on things we wanted to improve. It was a safe space to do this, and it definitely helped us draw closer and put some things in place to help keep our marriage happy and strong. It's really special too, because it's such a nice atmosphere, and the food is amazing!” Joe & Beth Warton

“We have been married 50 years but had heard such good things about the Marriage Course that we thought that we would give it a go. How glad we were that we did. No matter who you are and how long you have been married, you will find it thought provoking, maybe even challenging, but always positive and fruitful, leading to a deeper understanding of your partner and a better marriage.”

David & Mo Pickavance



Marriage Course Team



David & Mo



Freedom in Christ

Carolyn writes,

“In January we started another Freedom in Christ course, this time with 11 participants. Over the ten weeks it was a great time of learning, sharing and fellowship as we watched videos, discussed the material in small groups 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'm so glad I did the course, and I would say it was life-changing for me."*
- *"I've learnt new ways of reading and using my Bible and I'm getting excited for my future and God's plans for me."*
- *"The content was very useful and relevant."*
- *"I wasn't disappointed and would recommend the course to everyone."*
- *"We all bring so much baggage with us when we become Christians, and we need to deal with it!"*
- *"The course has given me a greater sense of God's unconditional love for me."*
- *"It was a wake-up call – instead of praying to God to help me change, I need to make the change!"*
- *"I feel calmer and generally more peaceful and as a result more compassionate."*
- *"I feel an increased awareness of the spiritual battle in the world."*
- *"The best bit by far was the 'away-day'. It was great to set aside a whole day to spend time with God."*

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!"

Refresh Retreat Days

As part of our Toolbox programme we run occasional Refresh retreat days. Tony & Rita Goodwin have written the following,



Tony & Rita

"During 2023 we attended two Saturday retreat days, one at The Beacon Centre and one at East Chadley Lane. We found these to be really inspiring and helpful. A time to meet and share with others, but mostly a time to spend quietly with the Lord. We were given a number of possibilities to use for encountering God, written material, meditations to consider and a walk through labyrinth."

So often in our busy lives (even when retired!) it is difficult to find time to spend a longer period in contemplation and prayer. There always seem to be too many distractions. These retreat days gave us a wonderful opportunity to 'Renew and Refresh' in our walk with God, and we look forward to more opportunities in the coming year. Highly recommended!"



Some of our TOOLBOX courses have been particularly relevant for those who are still exploring and discovering faith for the first time and these have included:

- the Hope Explored Course
- the Christianity Explored Course
- the Alpha Course

All of these courses provide an opportunity to ask questions, think about some of the big questions of life, and explore the Christian faith in a relaxed, non-pressured, friendly environment. Lovely cakes are an added bonus!

Alpha

One of those who attended the Alpha Course has written,

"I enjoyed the Alpha course very much. The leaders were so welcoming and friendly, and I felt I could ask anything, even basic questions were answered with sensitivity. Alpha has made me want to learn more about Christianity and I will be looking into other courses."

We plan to run ALPHA courses regularly at GBC so why not invite someone you know to come along or come and have your own faith refreshed. All welcome.





Hope Explored

Lorain, who attended the Hope Explored Course, has written,

"I attended the Hope Explored sessions. I found them very helpful, and they gave me lots to think about. I recommend the course to anyone who is looking for Jesus and wanting him in their lives."



Lorain

Pastoral Care

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

Jo Hitchins is our Pastoral Worker and she writes,

"Our Pastoral Care Team is led by Carolyn Keats, working alongside Daniel Beckett, Liz Webb and myself. As a team, we're very aware that for those worshipping in a larger church like GBC, people can sometimes feel a bit lost, find it hard to build relationships, feel part of the church and ask for help when needed.

In John 13:34 Jesus instructed his closest followers: 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.' And Paul reminded the church at Galatia (Galatians 6:2) 'Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.'

We want pastoral care to flourish at GBC, for everyone to be (and feel) supported and loved within our family. 'Care & Connect' continues to be one of the ways we put this into practice, empowering us as church and as individuals within church, to both give and receive help and prayerful support. We have a team of Care & Connect Leaders; mature Christians who are committed to praying for and supporting others and our aim, as far as possible, is for everyone to be linked with one of these people. Further details about Care & Connect can be found on the Pastoral Care leaflet on the reception desk, and on our website.

However, as we know, Pastoral Care isn't the responsibility of just a few of us, but of each and every one of us. We're all called to support, care for, pray for, and encourage one another; a vital part of our Church Covenant with each other. We perhaps also sometimes need reminding that carrying each others' burdens means we have to be prepared to share ours! It can be very hard to ask for help, so it's vital we're able to feel safe sharing support needs.

I am frequently encouraged by support given by so many within our church family, by people noticing when others have been absent and reaching out to check they're ok, by offering practical support and – so importantly – friendship. It is such a powerful message, both to those within the church, and those not, that every single one of us is precious, that every single one of us really matters. Thank you all so much for being part of that message!"

Together

TOGETHER is the name we use for our programme of monthly social events which are held at GBC, or in people's homes and gardens, or sometimes in other places such as the local parks. These events are ideal opportunities for us to spend time together having fun – and to get to know people from across our whole church



Murder Mystery Team

family and beyond. Our Sunday morning congregation is big and busy – and there is never time to speak to everyone we'd like to catch up with! Others of us meet in our various congregations that are held at other times (eg Songs of Praise, Families Venture, Young Adults, The Beacon Centre, Uth). So these monthly whole church fun events give us the time and space to get to know more people (and more about them – who knew the hidden talents of quizzers, chefs and murder mystery actors!) These events are also a great opportunity to invite family, friends and neighbours and others from our local community to join us just to have fun together. There's no expectation to come to everything! The programme is purposely varied to try and provide different events which will inevitably appeal to different people!

In 2023, we enjoyed two quiz nights, a murder mystery evening, some summer picnics and bbqs, two 'Guess who's coming to dinner' events in people's homes, a board games evening, and a harvest Ceilidh and supper.

Ann Shea enjoyed the Murder Mystery evening and she writes,

"Last year's murder mystery production was brilliant! The cast were all very good especially John who I think has a hidden vocation playing a baddie who was so credible and surprised all of us with his realistic portrayal! Well done GBC for a thoroughly enjoyable evening."

Why not come along to one of our 2024 Together events and see for yourself! Look out for our regular e-mails publicising the events – if you don't receive these currently, let us know and we'll add you to the list!

The Mix

Once again this year, on the first Sunday in September, we held our excellent 'The Mix' event. This is a day where we gather as many people from all the different aspects of GBC life together and enjoy each other's company as we worship together in sung worship, enjoy creativity and fun together, eat together and share life. We are very thankful to St Anne's school for letting us use their school buildings and grounds. New for 2023 was our cupcake competition!



The Mix Cup Cakes

This year our teaching was led by Peter Nodding following our theme of 'enlarging the place of our tent'. As we thought about stretching ourselves, Peter helped us to consider our understanding of leadership. Where has God called us to lead and how well are we being led?

Anne Ambler led the Story Tent activity and she writes,

"We were blessed to have found and been able to hire a 'yurt' for the day at The Mix in September 2023. It was used to share stories using the 'Out of the Box' storytelling tradition which includes a simple – but effective – story and then

community play in which everyone can explore the story further using all the things that come in the box.

This year we shared a story called 'The person who shouted'. Once the story was shared we all considered our response to it and how – or where – we might fit into the story. The story was received by children and adults alike and all took time to think about their response to the story and what it meant to them.

Having the lovely yurt to work in was brilliant and a great hit with the younger people – and some of the adults took the opportunity to rest too!"



The Mix Story Tent

Regular Activities

Many of our regular activities take place each week throughout the year. Others happen at particular times in the year. Our desire is that all of them are places of blessing for those who serve on teams and for those who attend. These are the places and spaces that enable us to reach out into our community sharing friendship and the love of God to those we meet.

Tuesday Treat and Tuesdays @ 11

Nicky Rattigan writes about Tuesday Treat,



Coronation Party Team

"I think I speak for all the Tuesday Treat team when I say that we have had a great year! The team has grown, as has the number of people who come to us on Tuesday mornings. We continue to offer a range of hot drinks and snacks, including a delicious range of home-made cakes. We have had lots of fun and enjoyed celebrating events ranging from Pancake Day to the coronation of King Charles. The team have excelled themselves decorating the Small Hall for special events and everyone seems to like dressing up and joining in. The Sing-a-longs have proved very popular too. Such is our love of special events that we had three Christmas events this year, starting with our annual Christmas Lunch. We have a generous

membership who have helped to raise funds for several charities by creating and buying a Tuesday Treat Recipe Book and the group contributed very generously to the Christmas Shoe box appeal. We have also enjoyed buying handicrafts in aid of Rehoboth and clothes in aid of the Norwich and Norfolk hospitals Chaplaincy Fund. Twice a term we have held half-hour worship services, Tuesday Extras, immediately prior to Tuesday Treat, led by Philip Thompson. Many of our guests attend these as well as Songs of Praise services. This year we were delighted by how many people attended various courses at GBC such as Christianity Explored and Alpha. One of our regulars was baptised recently having come to faith and several others have told us that their lives have been changed after attending these courses. What a blessing it is to be part of this group."

Carolyn writes about Tuesdays @ 11,

"We were able to run our special Tuesday meetings for Seniors again through the summer. We always have a lot of fun and laughter when we gather, and this year was no exception! During August we enjoyed a varied programme including board games, table quizzes, pool and carpet bowls, a talk by the Hartford Hedgehog Rescue Centre, and musical entertainment from a Ukulele band who got us tapping our feet, singing along, and blowing bazoorkas! Each week we were also led in a 'Thought for the Day' by members of the wider church. We're thankful as always for our wonderful catering team who provided delicious lunches as well as the wider Tuesdays @ 11 team for their constant care, hospitality, and dedication to this group."



Ukulele Band

Littlefoot

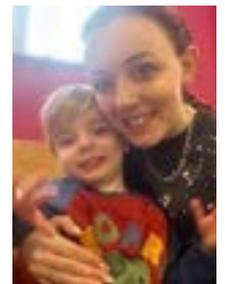
Littlefoot is our Wednesday morning club for babies, toddlers and their parents and carers. Some of the mums have written the following contributions.



Lucy & Ken

"Littlefoot is: a safe and friendly place to meet other parents and carers and enjoy time playing with the children; a friendly and supportive group that have become family; an inclusive group for parents, carers and children to have fun and enjoy each other's company." Lucy

"Littlefoot has been a part of my life for 8 years with my two children. Despite a 5 year gap between my children, I was welcomed back with big smiles, a shoulder to cry on if needed and unwavering support from all the volunteers. My son loves Littlefoot, lots of



Charlene

toys and friends while mummy has a cuppa! Carolyn on the guitar has been an amazing addition and the children all love her! Thank you to the team." Charlene

"Back in 2019, with a new baby and new to Godmanchester, despite knowing no one, I was made to feel extremely welcome. After COVID lockdowns, I returned to Littlefoot with

my youngest child and it is now the highlight of our week! I have attended many baby groups but never have I encountered such warm, welcoming and inclusive people as the volunteers at Littlefoot! The children are looked after beautifully with toys, craft activities, drinks, snacks and the adults (hopefully!) get the chance to sit down and enjoy a cup of tea in an extremely friendly and open atmosphere. There is a clear concerted effort to make sure that no one is excluded and to help anyone who might be struggling, irrespective of background, religion or need. My daughter and I have made friends for life and I shall be heartbroken when she starts school and I have to stop attending!" Gemma



Gemma's daughter

And Amanda Last and Claire Pitcher, two of the Littlefoot team, write,

"Our favourite day of the week... What a privilege to be involved with these young families."

Thursday Drop In

When our Warm Space Initiative, which had been running on a Thursday morning from November 2022 until February 2023, came to an end the group who had been meeting decided to carry on and they became the Thursday Drop In crowd! Others have joined them and they continue to enjoy the company, chat, coffee, comfy chairs, and the challenges – usually jigsaws! that keep them busy every week. Strong friendships have been formed and this is a special place. There's always room for more and everyone is welcome!

Marion has attended this group since it began and she writes,

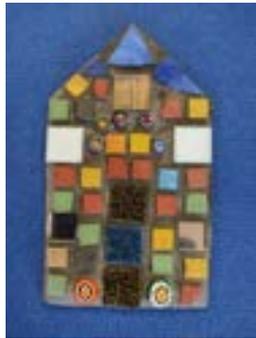
"I've been coming to the Drop In since it started as a Warm Space. Several of us sit and knit and others play games and, of course, there's the jigsaw on the go! Always with plenty of tea and biscuits. I look forward to the Drop In each week and enjoy the company."

This group is definitely a place where friendships are formed – and we are celebrating with Paul and Karen (two of the other founder members) as they prepare for their wedding in April!

Inspire

Carolyn Keats writes,

"Our INSPIRE creativity group has now been running for just over a year. During that time it has been great to see both men and women come along and numbers grow to a regular 20-25 guests. Each week we have a demonstration and the opportunity to try a new craft or skill, or people can simply experiment and 'do their own thing' using the variety of materials and creative mediums provided. It's all good fun! INSPIRE is a great place to chat and make new friends while 'having a go' at being creative in a relaxed, happy environment with the bonus of coffee and home made cake. We run on Friday mornings for six weeks each term. No booking is necessary. All are welcome – beginners and experienced crafters. Do come and join us."



Mosaic

At the end of last term, one of the team wrote,

"I have been inspired by what we have done these last few weeks. It is lovely to see how everyone helps each other and takes an interest in what others are doing. The demonstrations have been very interesting."

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!

The young people have said that they like:

- *"the opportunity to meet with friends"*
- *"the space to be away from the 'normal'"*
- *"playing bench ball and spike ball"*
- *"the amazing creative activities"*
- *"the tuck shop!"*

Ethos

Ethos is our group which meets from 5.00pm-6.00pm on the first Sunday of the month for those aged 11-18. It provides an opportunity to discuss how we respond to situations in our world and to consider what a Christian might do. We eat pizza as we talk!



Paul, Karen & Marion



Hedgehog Books

**FRIDAY NIGHT
PROJECT**



Schools Ministry

Daniel writes,

“It is a privilege to be invited to serve many of our local schools, including the three Godmanchester Primary Schools and Hinchingsbrooke Secondary School in a variety of ways throughout the year.

We are regularly involved in assemblies and lessons.

Our lesson topics for primary schools include, ‘Why are you a Christian?’ ‘What is the Bible?’ ‘What is church?’

Secondary school lessons include the opportunity to ‘grill a Christian!’ as well as year 9 students having the chance to ask what Christians believe about various topics.

We are also delighted to be working in partnership with THRIVE to run regular mentoring courses at Hinchingsbrooke School. One course, ‘Who am I?’ looks at the importance of identity. The second course, ‘What are my emotions?’ helps the young people consider how they can recognise what they are feeling and what that might mean in being able to respond in a healthy way. These mentoring sessions provide great opportunities to offer significant support to young people.”

Holiday Club

Daniel writes,

“We had a fantastic time in the summer being pirates as part of our children’s holiday club theme – Landlubbers. We looked at the biblical accounts of the life of Paul who travelled around different islands telling people about Jesus. Alongside the games and craft activities we spent time looking for treasure and learning that the best treasure in the whole world is Jesus.”



Carolyn & Daniel

Youth Residentials and Activity Weeks

As well as the weekly activities throughout the year, the young people also enjoy some special times at Youth Residentials and in Youth Activity Weeks.

Letton Hall (February)

In February half term a group of young people from GBC went to the Letton Houseparty organised by CROPS. There were about 70 young people in total spending 4 days in a converted Georgian hall in Norfolk. It was great to have a go at new things like go karting and hide and seek in the dark – don’t get caught by the torch! Each day started and finished with a time of worship and teaching.

Youth Activity Week (July)

When school broke up for the summer holidays we had a week of fun activities. The big list of things we enjoyed included:

- a bake along and a make along afternoon (cookies and craft)
- games on the Rec
- mini golf and a trip to MacDonalds
- a treasure hunt
- a film night
- canoeing at Houghton Mill
- a bbq and water fight!

Dreaming the Impossible (August)

In August the young people set off for another Residential trip – this time camping at Stafford showground for 5 nights in a grassy field. This was their first time to this event and they went with another local church. The camping was fun, and so were the fun and games including a pub quiz and a board games evening. But even better was being able to join in with thousands of other young people in worship and for teaching.

Special Christmas Events

Amen Ministries

Carolyn writes,

"In October we again earnestly started filling Christmas shoeboxes ready to be sent to needy families in Romania through the Christian charity Amen. Some of our Tuesday Treat regulars had been collecting items or knitting hats, gloves, scarves, blankets, and teddies all through the year. All the contributions from the church and community made up a wonderful array of goodies which this year filled 59 shoeboxes, (36 last year) which was a great effort! This year a team of volunteers gathered at The Beacon Centre to help pack many of the boxes – it was a great production line and I'm very grateful to them for their time and energy! We were also able to send extra bags of blankets to Romania, as well as baby clothes, equipment, and toys. The charity as always were very appreciative of our generosity, which brought light and joy at Christmas to these families who ordinarily have so little. Thank you for your support for this wonderful ministry."

Blue Christmas

Jude Lechmere writes,

"Between Christmas and New Year a number of us met for a time of reflection called Blue Christmas, where we looked back on the year and at difficult times in 2023, and looked forward to 2024. It was a timely reminder that sometimes life is not easy, it's lonely, can be isolating and we need to hold on to small pieces of joy."

We also looked at the nativity story and the challenge to Mary - pregnant, travelling with refugee status, then to give birth and escape from the threat of death from Herod. Yet the joy of a baby, safely born even after such challenges, God breaking into a harsh world.

We did not solve all the issues, but we took time to think, reflect, and hope for the year to come. By God's grace, it may have more bumps and difficulties, and yet the joy of Bethlehem also travels with us into this new year..."



Nativity Sets Display

In December we hosted a wonderful display of over 130 nativity sets from around the world. The exhibits were all owned by a local lady with a passion not only for collecting interesting depictions of the Christmas story but also for other people seeing them! Over 300 people, both children and adults, from the church and community came to view the exhibition through the week. The nativity sets were made of a variety of materials including clay, recycled paper, olive wood, bent wire, glass and banana fibres (which a 7-year-old took a



Nativity Sets

particular shine to). It was a fascinating, creative, colourful, and impressive display from

countries as far afield as S. Korea, Nepal, Guatemala, India, China, Zambia, Peru (with llamas), France, Mexico, North America (with a tepee instead of a stable), Italy, Germany, Tenerife, and the UK (to name just a few). It was a wonderful reminder of the real heart of Christmas. We hope to show the exhibition again in the future.



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 by e-mail 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 Wednesday evenings on Zoom at 8.00pm for an hour and every Friday morning at 9.00am for half an hour at GBC. There is 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, and also a small group that gathers to pray specifically for families.

Do look at the external noticeboard at our East Chadley Lane site where you will find a new thought provoking display each month to guide your prayers.

Mission

World Mission

John Collinson writes,

“It has been our joy as a fellowship this year to support some organisations and individuals who are working in other countries to bring the light of the Gospel into dark places – as they strive to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the most poor, marginalised and vulnerable.

Ministry areas include: children’s residential care, schooling, teaching life skills, improving women’s health, care for seniors, Bible story translation and video production.

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, amongst the Anglo-Indian community in Chennai, India and on the northern island of Luzon in the Philippines we have been able to contribute to caring in Jesus’ name for people who we will probably never meet.

Our Missions Noticeboard has been refreshed to show the areas we are supporting, and displays regular news updates, and items for Praise and Prayer.

Throughout 2023 we have met monthly to pray for those on these and other mission-fields, and have been able to contribute as a church to the financial support of the work and the workers.

A couple of highlights from the year include:

- in February, a few of our number joined a short-term mission trip to Zimbabwe to help with some practical building projects at a school near Mutare, and also to work with a children’s group*
- in July, we held our Mission Sunday. We were joined by a missionary and Christian advocate for greater freedom for women and religious minorities. She gave an engaging talk to the children involving flags and blow-up globes, and later brought an impactful message on the story of Hagar’s encounter with ‘the God Who sees’.*



James in Zimbabwe

We continue to pray that the Lord will be increasingly at work in the missions and ministries we support – and we join with those on the ground whose longing is that many of the people they work amongst will have an encounter with Jesus, and come to know Him as their Saviour and Lord.”

Local Mission

FoodBank

Jude Lechmere, FoodBank Project Manager, writes,

“2023 was another busy year for the FoodBank. We had fabulous support from the local community, including help from local companies with the stock take and with painting and building storage/racking systems at our storage unit. Harvest time saw many donations coming in which were used to support local families and individuals in need. Thank you to schools, churches and other local bodies for collecting food and supporting us.

We work closely with over 40 local agencies and will have helped nearly 5,000 adults and children by the end of the financial year in April. We would love to be redundant but sadly it will not be this year I fear.

We are well on the way with plans to develop the ‘Old Shop’ area of GBC, on Cambridge Road, as a place for FoodBank to meet with people and provide support through Citizens Advice sessions, Huntingdon Area Money Advice appointments and other agencies’ involvement to offer support and help for people in need. We have raised money through grant applications already and are waiting to hear from other grant making bodies about further applications. Planning permission is in, tenders are in from contractors and we will hopefully push the go button very soon!

I am always aware that I ‘look good’ as Project Manager because of the fabulous volunteers around me – ‘thank you’ often seems insufficient but the work, support, the laughter and kindness the team show to people in real need, to each other through life’s bumps and to me, is invaluable and vital. We laugh and cry together, despair at times of situations and ultimately make a great team across the 2 days we are open every week. I hope 2024 is calmer, but we shall all see!”



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, so in October we passed through the 10-year mark. 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 2023 we were in contact with 105 new clients – 200 including those we are still working with from previous years.

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 me. Roger was thoroughly deserving of the accolade of Hunts Forum Volunteer of the Year 2023. The photo is of Roger receiving his Gold Award from the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Mr Daryl Brown MBE LD.



Roger

Hunts Forum have also awarded HAMA their Good to Go: Good Governance Mark to show that the necessary policies and procedures are in place and fit for purpose.

It is always gratifying when we are able to make a significant difference to the finances of a client. In one such recent case we were able to successfully advocate for a pensioner client that some of his benefits had been stopped in error. A ‘benefit overpayment’ debt of £13,750 was rescinded, the stopped benefits were reinstated giving him an extra £170 per week in income, backdated to the time they were stopped with a lump sum of over £6,000. He could then use this to pay off his other debts which had built up. With just a bit of research into the rules and a couple of emails to argue the case, we were able to make a profound difference for this gentleman.

We have helped many other clients to get a fresh start free of debt, or set them on a plan to manage their debts and pay them off over time at a rate which is affordable. Not all cases have happy endings and it can be frustrating and challenging when clients don’t engage.

We do pray that the advisers are able to show to all clients the love of Christ in action as we work with them.”

CS2

Karen Smith (Project Lead for the Community Sponsorship Projects) writes,



“Our 2nd Syrian family arrived from Jordan in November 2022 and the last fifteen months or so has been all about providing practical support to enable them to settle down and integrate into life in the UK. Now, they are flying and they will be fine although there is still a long road ahead.

I thank God for our wonderful GP Surgery and hospital who have supported all of the family brilliantly. I’m grateful that we managed to find a dentist to treat them – often daunting for the family but always smiles all round.

One highlight must be the birth of their new baby, Omar, in March 2023. It was a rollercoaster of emotions for the family with anxiety and excitement in equal measure.



Another highlight for me has been being part of a team who are committed, invested, patient, kind, knowledgeable and generous. For sure, the right people have come along at the right time and it’s nice to be able to be truly yourself, serving together.

I’ve learnt so much about another culture and other backgrounds and experiences that have changed my world view and made me a better person. I feel very privileged to have had this opportunity to be involved and my life is much richer for it. It’s not easy but when we get out of our comfort zone we grow, for sure.

I've also learnt that compassion is not enough and to follow through we need pure grit and determination, bucketloads of patience, generosity and strength and to always fix our eyes on the prize, whatever that might be in this moment.

I'm so excited and quite incredulous as I look back and can see that God was both ahead, behind and around us every step of the way, answering prayers even before we prayed them, meeting needs even before we knew about them. We are so blessed to be in this community at this time and I'm excited to see what the future holds next."

Various members of the team reflect here on their experience as team members for the project.

Christine (Joint ESOL Lead) writes,

"I got involved because I wanted to do something in response to the need and be God's hands and feet for refugee families. I've enjoyed being able to be a small part of a team to help a family settle despite the odds, sometimes 1 step forward and 2 steps back! and to be part of their journey. It's been amazing to see God's faithfulness and provision even in circumstances that we thought were near impossible. And that God can use me whatever my skills!

It's been inspiring and also a little bit emotional to think about all that's been achieved. Things that immediately sprang to mind about God's provision was my throw away comment at the end of a conversation to a friend asking if she happened to know of any Arabic speakers which led to Hend, our wonderful Arabic speaking friend. I remember phoning Bell Language School only because Dorne had suggested I should. I was very sceptical and think I only did it so that I could say to her that I'd tried! We've ended up with a free place this year!

So much provision for our first family was even more miraculous because we'd not done it before and also because it was pre the Afghanistan and Ukrainian refugee crisis and so there was no local provision for a lot of the things that we needed."

Penny (family friend) writes,

"Why? Because I care deeply about justice for the oppressed and standing up for the rights of those who have no voices, and because I have a special interest in the region.

What I've enjoyed? Meeting such a courageous family and a group of such caring and dedicated people.

What I've learned? That God works in spite of me and brings me a reason to keep going - it's called Hope!

I realise, too, how much there is to learn through everyone and every situation I encounter! It makes life so exciting and unpredictable!"

Pam (Education Lead) writes,

"Why? – to use my skills now retired in a way that helps.

What I enjoy – friendships with family and team.

I have learned I'm very impatient when I feel support is not given as quickly or as well as I think it should be!"

Angela (Joint Health and Well-being Lead) writes,

"I joined to try and make a small, but positive, difference in the lives of those who have so little. I enjoyed the fellowship and friendship and I've learnt that I enjoy spreadsheets and that there is so much more that needs doing!"

Hazel (retired swimming teacher at Spring Common School) writes,

"I was very much in awe of the great work Karen and team had put in to prepare for the family to come over and all that entailed when arriving. So mammoth. When I heard that they hadn't been in a pool, I worked with a new Headteacher who agreed we could use the pool at my school. It was great then to meet the family. Yes, we struggled with language at times but it has been rewarding. Dad was joining in for a while as well. I'm not a confident person but in the pool I take on a different role. This project has helped me as well as the family. God has given me this talent and it's great to use it for this."

Maureen (joint ESOL Lead) writes,

"I got involved because I was convinced God wanted me to do something to help this family. I have been reminded that God can use even our weaknesses to demonstrate His love for others (like Angela, I have learned to love a spreadsheet!) I have enjoyed getting to know this strong & courageous family, been stunned by the generosity of people and the commitment and talents of the team. I have learned that, whilst there is still a lot to do, God knows what he's about 😊"

John (Family Finance Lead) writes,

“My faith journey has led to a deep concern for the injustice in this world. In particular I have been very upset about developments in the Middle East. The opportunity to help this family came at a time when I was more free from other commitments. I have been encouraged by the way the family have adapted to such an enormous change in their lives following those traumatic years since leaving Syria. I am particularly impressed how the family have managed to demonstrate a balance between their culture/faith and that of ours. I feel that my understanding of God has again been improved by getting to know this lovely family. I still have so much to learn and little of truth can be found if all we have for information is our news media!”

Sharon (ESOL teacher) writes,

“It was a joy and a privilege to be asked to be part of such a great scheme. I was surprised that I could do the teaching and help the family in a small way. It was lovely to meet some new people and spend time with people I didn't often see. I miss seeing the family and hope they are still doing well.”

Josephine (ESOL teacher) writes,

“I enjoyed being part of such a supportive team, starting the family on their journey to life here with basic language skills. I also learnt from the encounter with a different culture and look forward to following their further progress.”

Sarah (Resources Lead) writes,

“I got involved because the plight of so many displaced people across the world is so heartbreaking and it has been humbling to be able to be part of a team who has made a life changing difference to a beautiful young family.”

Our buildings

We are so grateful for the blessing of having our two buildings and that they are in use so much of the time for all our congregations, groups, activities and ministries. We are also grateful to all those who help to look after our buildings and grounds in all sorts of ways. This takes a lot of work and energy and oversight to keep everything functioning as it should. We have a regular maintenance programme to keep the buildings in order and to repair things as and when necessary. It is important that we are good stewards of both of our sites. John Brown has written below about all the work that has been undertaken at The Beacon Centre during 2023. We have also been able to achieve some good upgrades at our East Chadley Lane site – in particular the installation of Solar Panels and the fitting of LED lights which have brightened the space and reduced our utility bills.

The Beacon Centre

At the start of our review we mentioned our second site at The Beacon Centre at Little Stukeley and how grateful we are to God for this gift. John and Stephanie Brown have headed up a team who have worked extremely hard throughout the whole year to decorate and revitalise the place so that it can be well used. John has written the following,

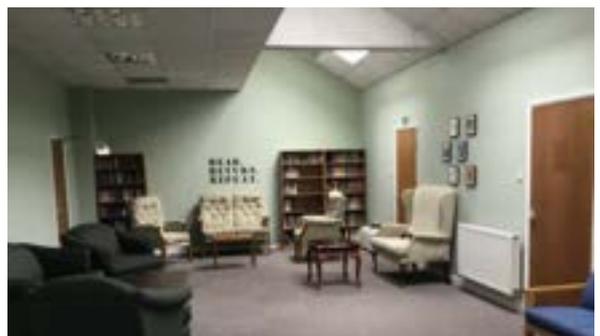
“2023 was a year of steady development for The Beacon Centre. Groups of generally willing GBC volunteers have been painting, tiling, mowing and cleaning throughout much of the year whilst everything electrical has been Portable Appliance Tested (PAT) and we have a wonderful mural on the wall in the entrance lobby.

In September a work party of employees from Urban and Civic (the developers of Alconbury Weald) spent a day on site. Some painted the rooms being used by FoodBank whilst others put in marvellous efforts tidying the grounds for which we were extremely grateful.

There is still much to be done to bring the building up to the standard we would like including improving the accessibility for those with mobility concerns, replacing the high-level windows in the main hall and creating a fully functional accessible toilet and baby changing space.



The Beacon Centre
Lounge - Before



The Beacon Centre
Lounge - After

However, we now have hot water and heating throughout and are beginning to have clients hiring the rooms. The Eastern Baptist Association have held courses and conducted interviews, HCR104fm had a board meeting and FoodBank continues to use three rooms for storage. We already have a number of bookings for 2024 including a group offering weekly dementia respite care, CROPS (a charity which provides educational and pastoral resources to schools through mentoring, RE curriculum input, and SMSC development) and Ely Diocese which has arranged a day conference in March – and we have had other enquiries.

So, we give thanks to God for providing this exceptional resource and pray that he, through all at GBC, will continue to provide all that is necessary to ensure that the building will become a facility at the heart of the community and one which stands as a beacon of his love poured out for us all.”

As we near the end of our review of 2023, you will 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.

In Closing

Reading this Annual Review my immediate reaction is wow! What a year we’ve had – so many varied activities and ministries, all made possible by such an army of servant-hearted volunteers. Thank you to you all.

Also, wow, to God’s blessing, provision and enabling and the evidence of his Spirit at work. What an awesome God we serve and what a privilege to be part of his plans and purposes for our community and beyond. Looking ahead to the coming year, let’s continue to ‘enlarge our tent and stretch our cords wide’ in expectation of the new and exciting things God wants to do in and through us.

As the church gets bigger, it also gets harder to know each other well.

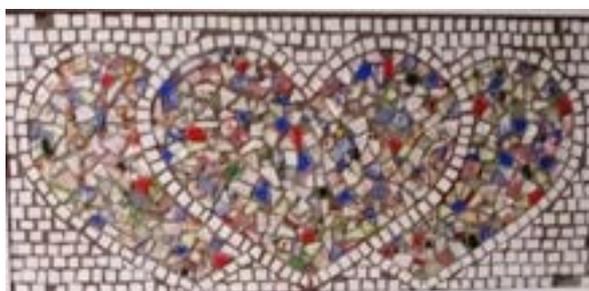
The heart mosaic that was completed at ‘The Mix’ reminds us that loving God means loving others too. So, let’s take up the challenge to be inclusive and to build even deeper friendships, so we can truly love and care for one another in meaningful ways.

In closing I can only encourage that we ‘keep on keeping on’ doing all the great things that are making such an impact on so many in the church, the community, and further afield - welcoming, caring, praying, giving, serving, and sharing the love and good news of Jesus.

Thank you for your part in making GBC the vibrant community that it is.

To God be the glory always,

*Carolyn Keats
Associate Pastor*



The mosaic above (completed at ‘The Mix’) reminds us to keep loving God and keeping him central as well as loving others in the church and those not yet a part of God’s family.

Pastors, Leadership Team and Staff



Daniel Beckett
Lead Pastor



Carolyn Keats
Associate Pastor



Cliff Broadhurst
Church Treasurer



John Collinson
Mission & Worship



Joe George
FoodBank & Buildings



Jo Hitchins
Pastoral Worker



Sue Houghton
Church Secretary



Andrew Shefford
Safeguarding &
Health & Safety

Staff:



Ruth Blakey
Administrator



Jude Lechmere
FoodBank Project Manager

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