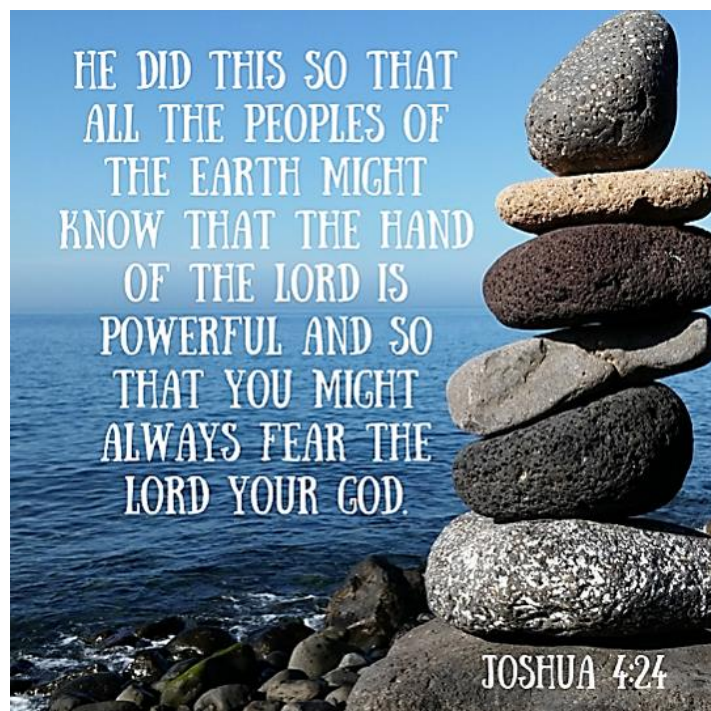




Godmanchester Baptist Church

## Annual Review of 2019





As we write this Annual Review of 2019 we thank God for his faithfulness and for his many blessings on our lives together at GBC. We began the year with lots of planning and preparations in the Spring term. We said goodbye and thank you to John and Karen Smith when John retired as Senior Pastor after 10 years with us at the end of March. We prayed and planned together to find the best ways to continue the many ministries that God has entrusted to us during this time of pastoral vacancy. In the Summer term we held a very helpful Listening Week in May where the church gathered to hear from God and from each other as we began the Search Process for a new Lead Pastor and, in July, our Church Profile was completed and sent off to our Regional Minister so it could be shared with those ministers in our Baptist family who are looking for their next pastorate.

We thank God for a deep sense of unity among us during this time as well as for the breadth and richness of our lives as a church family as this diverse group of people **worship together**, **share their lives together** and **serve together in ministry and mission**. There really is something for everyone in all ages and stages of life at GBC! We hope the narrative and stories and photos in this booklet will help to illustrate this as a reminder for those who have been part of the family for ages and as an introduction for those who are new to GBC.

As part of our Listening Week and again, more recently, we have asked each other the question, 'What do you love about GBC?' Here is just a taster of some of our responses to give a flavour of the warmth and richness which we will read more about in the following pages:

*we are different people with different backgrounds and experiences but there is a real unity and a warm welcome; there is something for everyone – different congregations and so many age specific activities; small groups offer an opportunity to grow in our faith and to support each other too; church meetings are lovely; there are friends who help each other – with meals, childcare, shopping, lifts; there has been wonderful support during a difficult time – this is such a caring church; it is like an extended family; it is a safe, peaceful place; this is a place where there is every member ministry – a high proportion of volunteers and so many servant hearted people; people are encouraged to discover and use the gifts that God has given them; there is real warmth towards GBC in our community – and a growing impact in the community through various ministries and friendships.*





We **worship together** at GBC in a number of different congregations.

All age groups are well represented at our **Sunday Morning Celebration** service each week, where we regularly have over 200 people worshipping together. We have enjoyed preaching series in 2019 on 'Who do you think we are?' (Ephesians), 'Jesus: The King' (Matthew), 'The Joy of God', Jesus' Manifesto (Luke), 'Rousing the Warriors'. On Mission Sunday, in September, our speaker was Werner, from Open Doors who shared with us insights from his own experience about the background and spiritual and physical battleground from which many refugee families in the Middle East have come. We are thankful for every single person who serves in all sorts of ways to make Sunday mornings possible, and particularly during pastoral vacancy to those who have led our services and preached.

We have welcomed 7 new members during the year; 3 babies and children have been brought for dedication and 3 people have been baptised.

Helen was baptised on 1 September and she writes,

*I have been attending GBC on Sunday Mornings since October 2010. My faith has grown gradually over the last 10 years. At the Mix weekend Christine, my sister, told me she was going to get baptised and asked me if I would be baptised with her and I immediately said that I had been thinking about it as we had been talking about it at bible study so I just felt that was the prompt that I needed to take the next step and get baptised. On the day of my Baptism I felt very nervous knowing that I would have to stand at the front and read my testimony as that was out of my comfort zone. However, when I walked into the Worship Area I felt a huge pouring of love and support from all my church family and peace just washed over me. It was truly an amazing day. Following my baptism I have also been welcomed into membership. I love being part of GBC as there is something for everyone of all ages. I have been very blessed that God has given me so many opportunities to help serve the community by being part of activities such as Monday Club, Tuesday Treat, Littlefoot, Messy Church and Songs of Praise as well as many other events held during the year. I also enjoy belonging to a home group and day-time home bible group and really appreciate the love and support from everyone. When I look back I can see how God has really been working in my life and I feel very blessed.*



Christine & Helen

Christine was baptised on 1 September too and she writes,

*I'm sure my baptism in September was quite a surprise to many, having been coming to GBC for twenty years and been following Jesus for all my adult life. I'd been confirmed in the Anglican church as a teenager and having committed my life to Christ, I was more than happy to affirm the promises made on my behalf, as my own decision and my choice to repent and turn from sin and follow Christ. I have known God with me throughout my life since, through many changing seasons of life. I'm not keen on denominationalism and have never wanted to be dismissive of my baptism as an infant and subsequent confirmation so hadn't felt it necessary to be baptised by immersion. But more recently I had felt God challenge me to consider baptism by immersion as an act of obedience. I'd been thinking a lot about God's call to obedience in general and had been mulling over the story of Naaman in the bible who had an encounter with the prophet Elisha. It had made me think that sometimes we are in danger of thinking that doing something relatively straight forward seems too easy – we expect what God is asking us to do to be harder than it is. Sometimes we can expect God to ask us to do something great and difficult and overlook doing the straight forward thing that he wants us to do because we don't realise that he wants us to do what he asks just because he is asking us, not because he is setting us a hard challenge. Once the decision to be baptised had been made I asked Helen, my sister, if she would be baptised with me. She had also been thinking about it and I was thrilled that we were able to be baptised together and share a very special day. That Helen was making a public declaration of her belief and trust in Jesus too, made it doubly special. We received so many lovely warm messages on the day and I would like to thank everyone here at GBC, past and present, covering many different areas of ministry, who have been so welcoming, supportive and inclusive to my whole family over many years.*

A number of families meet up each month on a Sunday afternoon for a time of creativity, worship and eating together at **Messy Church**. In November Claire brought her children for dedication on a Sunday morning and she writes,

*I had my children dedicated on 17 November 2019 at GBC. I had been visiting the church for many years just as a visitor to the children's club, Littlefoot. I was amazed by the wonderful people and kindness they all showed myself and each other. After time I started to attend the Messy Church and learned more about God. It was all very new to me. As a single parent I felt very comforted and safe whenever there and decided I wanted to be part of God's family and choose to bring my children up with these beliefs. It's the best thing I ever did! And I look back very fondly of that amazing day.*



Claire's Family



Pauline's baptism

About 70 people worship together at our **Songs of Praise** congregation each month on a Sunday afternoon at a shorter service with traditional hymns and songs, prayers, readings and a short talk. After the service we stay and have a proper afternoon tea all together. We were thrilled to hold a very special service of believer's baptism in July when Pauline shared her testimony and publicly proclaimed her faith in Jesus. Others often share testimony too when they choose a favourite hymn and tell us about why they love it so much.

**Generation Rising**, our Youth congregation, gathers every Sunday evening at 7.00pm giving our young people the opportunity to meet with God in a way which makes sense to them, with a mix of music, creative arts, question time, prayer, group discussion and teaching. The young people are encouraged to be leaders of their own congregation in a variety of ways. In their own words,

*it's somewhere to relax and learn; good friends are made and kept; it's somewhere I can be part of a band; it helps me understand my relationship with God in my teenage years.*

On one Sunday evening a month people worship together at our **Healing and Communion Service**, with opportunity for specific opportunities for prayer for spiritual, emotional and physical healing. Andrew writes,

*Our Healing and Wholeness service has been a regular feature of GBC's monthly calendar for many years. Between 12 and 20 of us gather, sing, reflect on God's word and share communion together. We particularly focus on well-being - physical, mental and spiritual - not only of those known to us or connected to our fellowship, but also anyone present who needs God's touch on their lives. Almost always at least a couple of people need God's specific touch on their lives: and we pray for them specifically. Many of us can testify that God has touched our lives through these services; many more are touched by God at other times in the life of the church. So come and join us and know God's healing touch on your life. But the important thing is interacting with The Lord, the giver of life, not the service itself!*

On another Sunday evening each month people gather for **Deeper** – an opportunity to spend time in God's presence, worshipping him and listening to what he says through his word and the Holy Spirit; expecting him to speak into our lives and take us deeper into our relationship with him and his purposes for us as his people.

A fairly new gathering for worship which is growing in momentum is our **Tuesday Extra** service – a short, half hour service, held immediately before our Tuesday Treat coffee morning. We have been thrilled to see so many attending and there is a real sense of enjoyment and gratitude for this opportunity to worship together.

Many of the gatherings outlined above take place in our Worship Area – our biggest space which on a Sunday morning at least is jam-packed full of people and chairs! Since we re-developed most of the rest of our premises 4 or 5 years ago into a bright, warm and welcoming space, it is even more noticeable that our Worship Area is old and cold and in need of an upgrade. We are so grateful to John Stevens for project managing the first phase of our re-development (Oikodom 1, completed in 2015) as well as the later project of extending and upgrading Room 5. We are now pressing on with the next stage. In 2019 our focus has been on preparing plans and raising the necessary finance for Phase 2 of the renovations to our building. The project is known as Oikodom 2 (Oikodom is taken from the Greek meaning to build/grow your church). The work involves refurbishment of our existing Worship Area and Resources Room. The cost of the project is £320,000. We have appointed Adele Borrowman, a professional fund raiser, to help with the task of identifying relevant grant providers and preparing the necessary applications. The first applications have been submitted and, if all goes well, we hope to start this work in 2020.

Some of our **worship** together takes place away from GBC. A team from GBC lead worship in the chapel at Hinchingsbrooke hospital 3 times a year. A group of residents at McCartney House gather on one Sunday afternoon a month for a worship service. A team from GBC lead carol singing evenings in December at three of the local sheltered accommodation facilities. Some of our worship groups regularly lead worship at Medway Christian Fellowship, Trinity Free Church and Perry Baptist Church, and a number from our congregation also support other local churches by regular preaching.

We **worship** God too as we pray together and for each other. We sometimes come together for special times of prayer – in prayer weeks and on prayer walks. Many of us pray for each other in our prayer triplets and our small groups. We also pray for each other when we gather for worship. Liesl writes,

*23 people currently serve on our prayer team that is available every Sunday morning. Prayer is very important to us, as individuals and as a church. We support and care for each other and consider it a privilege to pray for people and be alongside as God works in their lives. We are confident that God can do absolutely anything. 'Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.' (Ephesians 3:20). Life can often be hard and throw up many emotions and questions. Sometimes life's circumstances are shocking but God is never shocked by anything we are experiencing. We listen to each other; issues shared may be about health, work, family or life in general that is burdening people and then we pray, asking God to act according to His will. Sometimes people may have words or pictures and interpretations during the service, that provoke others to come forward for prayer. We seek to ask God to move in the lives of our brothers and sisters at GBC.*



Prayer Team

Two new members of the team share their thoughts:

*It is a huge privilege to stand with and enter into the lives of those who come forward, even if it is for a brief moment and it is great to see God at work; I feel it such a privilege under God to be able to pray for others and to be trusted by other people in this ministry. It is a great opportunity to serve others in GBC.*

As well as gathering for worship, we **share our lives together** at GBC in so many other ways.

A highlight of 2019 for many of us was our bi-annual trip to Burleigh Hill Farm in St Ives for **The Mix** – our church weekend away. For this, we take over a local farm and the camping fields and barns there and spend a whole weekend worshipping, learning, eating, ministering and having fun together!

Hayley writes,

*Over a glorious June weekend just over 200 of us gathered on the farm in St Ives. With the pitching of tents, arrival of caravans and the noise of laughter and excitement The Mix 2019 had begun. We kicked off with a BBQ, games of cricket and rounders for all ages and as the evening progressed, we lit firepits and toasted marshmallows and enjoyed the time sharing fellowship with friends. The sunset was stunning and shone with the brightest orange you could imagine.*



*Saturday brought in another good day. Lisa Holmes, our speaker for the weekend, spoke on Joshua and challenged us all that we had come this far on our journey we should be thankful for all that has happened and all that God has done, but press on into the future and what God has in store for us next. The young people and children had sessions that included prayer stations and a highlight as a parent was getting a glimpse of them being prayed for while standing inside a giant bubble, something that I am sure they won't forget.*



*The afternoon included a walk and space to be creative with new banners for the worship area back at GBC being created and opportunity to paint stones or together create a piece of artwork which now adorns the walls of the corridor at church. Coffee flowed and relationships with each other were deepened. The evening brought a lighter touch with a fun all age gameshow and a quiz.*

*All too soon it was Sunday and once again we gathered together for worship. And finished off with sharing a roast dinner.*

*The weekend is time out to spend as church being family together, we **worship together**, **laugh together**, **pray together**, **eat together**, **serve together** – the weekend is special as everyone comes and everyone plays a part and it couldn't happen without the part you play.*

*We look forward to the next one.*



Tom & Daniel

Our young people attended the last gathering of **Soul Survivor** in Peterborough in August and Kirsty writes, *Soul Survivor was an amazing experience and it allowed me to develop my faith. I thought it was a great opportunity to meet young people my age who were sharing the moment with me.* Some of our 11-14 year olds also enjoyed a few days away together at **Letton Hall** in October.

But we don't have to go away to **share our lives together** – there's plenty of opportunity for that back at GBC as well as in our homes and community!

On a Monday afternoon, a group gather to share friendship with each other as those who have experienced mental health difficulties support each other. Jane writes,

***The Club** is an informal group of friends who meet on a Monday afternoon. Over hot drinks and homemade cakes we share what is happening in our lives and those of our families, encouraging and caring when times are difficult and rejoicing with one another when we have good news. All of us have had mental health issues either now or in the past and offer mutual support to each other. Each week you will always hear sounds of laughter as we have a lovely joker in our midst. Last summer we had a boat trip on the River Great Ouse and hope to repeat it this year. We welcome new members and as one of our newest members said, she'd wished she had the courage to come earlier and now never misses unless she is away.*

On a Tuesday morning there's more friendship, laughter, coffee and cakes and much more as our **Tuesday Treat** crowd meet for their coffee morning. Probably about 50 (mostly) older friends gather for a good catch up and to share their lives and stories and this week's news! In their words, here are some of their thoughts,

*It's brilliant to meet people and have a laugh; it breaks the monotony of being on my own; I've made good friends here; everyone is so welcoming and lovely; I love it; I look forward to getting up on a Tuesday; it has the feel good factor; I go home skipping and feeling that life is great!*



Freda, Sue & Margaret



Jean & Pam

We also meet on Tuesday mornings in the summer holidays for **Tuesdays@10** – a longer morning with additional activities, music, crafts, games, visiting speakers, a thought for the day and then lunch together.

On a Wednesday morning we are at the other end of the age spectrum when the place is bursting at the seams with babies and toddlers and their parents and carers for our **Littlefoot Club**. This is the place for little people and their grown ups to share time playing, chatting, caring and supporting - all washed down with tea and toast and juice and biscuits.

On a Friday evening there's lots of children and youth activity taking place with [Outbreak](#), [Friday Night Project](#) and [TOAST](#). In their own words, here's what some of the young people and their helpers have to say about their groups:

*I have built new friendships and been able to help and have enjoyed bonding with everyone and doing the craft; TOAST gets me out of the house and lets me hang out with my friends more. There is always something new to do but you can also just chill if*



*you want; I enjoy FNP because it is a positive environment, and everyone is so nice and easy to talk to; I love helping younger kids and making a difference to their week; I come to FNP because of the workers that always try to talk and have fun with us; I attend on Friday night to relax, forget about school and to play with friends; I help at FNP to try and do some good in the community and hopefully be a good influence; I enjoy playing pool and always winning at FNP.*



Throughout the week, at different days and times, many of us [share our lives together in our prayer triplets and small groups](#). We worship God and we learn together, we care for each other in prayer and practical ways, and we enjoy spending time together. We have 18 small groups at the moment – one of which has been newly formed in 2019. Paul

writes about [BABS](#) (Beer and Bible Study),

*We started a new small group for men that meets for bible study in the local pub. It does what it says on the tin and reaches the parts other small groups can't reach. Men behaving honestly, sharing testimony and being serious about God - exploring the Bible together and looking at unlikely heroes of the faith. Just before Christmas we had a curry special and heroes quiz with wives and friends. Colin said, 'BABS is an encouragement, an education and a social event all wrapped up in one.' James adds, 'Babs is a nice place to come and meet up with friends.'*

As well as enjoying BABS, Colin writes more broadly about other aspects of his involvement at GBC,

*This year with GBC has seen a tremendous amount of teaching and learning and support in many ways. The introduction of [BABS](#) has helped to grow and encourage a number of men in the congregation on an informal setting on a fortnightly basis. My [small group](#) and the [Precepts Bible study group](#) have enabled and encouraged the teaching of the Bible in different settings and are playing an important part in my Christian life. [Tuesday Treat](#) is a real blessing to the more senior members of the community, offering a comfortable and friendly opportunity to enjoy each other's company over refreshments in a happy environment. Continued opportunities to serve each other are a real treasure to those being served and those doing the serving. God Bless Godmanchester Baptist Church!*



Colin & James

Another opportunity to [share](#) our lives came with the [SHINE](#) course in the Autumn. A group of women met each week in a supportive group environment to undertake a personal development course, equipping them to reach their full potential.



On a couple of occasions some of our younger women met together at [Empower](#) events. Rowena writes,

*This year, we led 2 days for girls aged 12-17, where we gathered together to play games, do crafts, eat dinner together, worship through prayer stations and hear a talk. The aim of these days is to create a community where girls can discuss the issues they face together and learn more about their God-given identity and the love that God has for them in a world that tells them lies about 'who' and 'whose' they are.*

Around the time of the church weekend some of our creative people got together and following their lead and encouragement for the rest of us to join in we produced new banners for the Worship Area. Jude writes,

*The cross behind the stage is made up of 250 small crosses, some overlapping, some spaced out, some bright, some almost 'dim' in colour – each has been stitched on sometimes neatly, sometimes not, in bright thread, matching thread, the wrong thread – why? Because sometimes we feel like we fit in church, sometimes we feel on the fringes, some of us jump in 100%, some are less sure of themselves and are still feeling their way into what church is about. All types of materials were used from special pieces of fabric to some knitted contributions – one piece has beads attached belonging to one of our church members who has died. We are all different people with different stories and different textures to our lives, hence the variety of materials, stitches, threads and spacings. The 4 banners round the walls represent the 4 seasons – reflecting the time of change we are in at GBC during pastoral vacancy. We hope they help us reflect on the reality that seasons change – but God is constant in all situations. Even when the tree is bare, new life is waiting.*



As **we worship God together** and **share our lives together** we also **serve together in ministry and mission**.

We are aware of our responsibility to care for the poor and marginalised and we are thankful to all the volunteers who work so hard to provide help through the **FoodBank** and **HAMA** (Huntingdon Area Money Advice). GBC also support **Cornerstone**, a charity working locally to offer counselling and support to those faced with an unplanned pregnancy.

Peter Levitt, FoodBank Administrator, writes the following update for the FoodBank,

*The **FoodBank** continues to see an increase in demand for service of around 20% year on year and food donation overall is increasing at the same rate.*



*Challenging life circumstances (low income, job loss, benefit issues for those in and out of work, illness, debt, rent rises and housing costs) continue to drive people to turn to the FoodBank for support. Over 42 tonnes (42,000 kg) of food passed through our doors in 2019 and this was used in making food parcels to support over 1800 adults and almost 1200 children as well as providing 180 Christmas Hampers for local people and Summer Holiday support for 40 families. In addition the FoodBank supported Breakfast Clubs in a number of local primary schools.*

*Our programme of opening and developing working relationships with newer local agencies has increased the number of opportunities for people to get food help. This work will continue in 2020 alongside our involvement and support for organisations like Grub Hub, Medway Christian Fellowship Love Oxmoor FoodBank, Huntingdon Volunteer Shop, Coneygear Court Housing and King's Ripton Court Housing.*

*The FoodBank is represented and involved in HCAP (Huntingdon Community Action Programme), Cambridgeshire County Council Child and Family Centre Partnership Steering Group, HDC Oxmoor programme and we continue to work with the Department of Work and Pensions in Huntingdon to monitor the impact of Universal Credit on vulnerable clients.*

*All of this work is underpinned by the great generosity of individuals, church congregations, schools and businesses in supporting our work across the whole county of Huntingdonshire.*

*The Volunteer Team make the Foodbank work, whether that is as part of the regular Monday and Thursday teams or by collecting food from store donation points or as part of the magnificent 'pop up' volunteer team that made Christmas Hampers in record time. Their contribution in terms of time, effort and their commitment to the FoodBank are of inestimable value. We said farewell to long-time volunteers Cecilia and Keith Doe in December and also to Jackie Hodgson and Peter Biggs in January, and everyone joins me in wishing them all happiness in the future.*



Rob Allott, Centre Manager for **HAMA**, writes the following report about HAMA's work,

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.*

*Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities*

*This has been a year of blessings and sadness for HAMA.*

*We rejoiced in appointing a new trustee, and a new adviser has just started training. We remain financially viable, thanks to the generous financial support from GBC and other churches, from personal donations and grants. Most of HAMA's volunteers come from GBC but we are mindful of the support and prayers we get from Churches Together in Huntingdon and Godmanchester. Huntingdon Community Church lends us an office and many facilities, our trustees come from GBC, local Anglican Churches, Medway Christian Fellowship and Cambridge Community Church. Our new adviser comes from Christ Church Huntingdon. However our greatest blessing is the way our advisers show the love of Jesus to those in need and cope with hearing about all the pain and suffering which our clients bear.*

*The sadness we have faced is around capacity. We have seen 144 clients during the year, up from 117 in 2018. This is a huge number of clients and each is an individual desperate for help. Whilst it is a great achievement for our advisers to see so many, we have not been able to see everyone as soon as they ask for help. We have had a waiting list of up to 10 people, waiting up to 8 weeks for an initial assessment and this saddens us. However, all the advisers have gone above and beyond their capacity and cannot take on new cases until the old ones are sorted. Our new adviser will relieve some of the pressure once she is trained, but we could do with yet more advisers to come forward to fulfil the need.*

*In another of his works, Little Dorrit, Charles Dickens vividly describes family life in a debtors' prison. Thankfully this physical prison is not what our clients and their families encounter today, yet they are in a metaphorical prison, unable to escape the shackles of debt which drag them into despair. It is a privilege for our advisers, in the name of Christ, to be able to use their training and knowledge to unlock that prison and show the client that there is a way out of the debt and the despair, bringing hope to a whole family.*

*Some people say to us, 'It must be their own fault; they must have over indulged to get into this mess.' It is true that some people have addictions to drugs, alcohol, smoking or shopping, but for many it is circumstances largely outside their control - illness, pregnancy, redundancy or benefit reduction. However even if some might think it is a person's own fault, that doesn't reduce the despair and the need for help. Jesus didn't say, 'I am not going to the Cross because it is your own fault - you sinned.' Rather, 'Whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' Romans 5:8*

*A big thank you to all our advisers, trustees, befrienders, supporters and all those who help in any way.*

Helen Turley, Centre Manager for **Cornerstone**, writes,

*Please thank everyone in the congregation for all the support we have had from GBC over the last year. We have truly had a very exciting year at Cornerstone, seeing more clients than ever before. We have found favour in the local community and are now receiving client referrals from social services as well as the NHS. In November alone we had 84 client contacts. Our dreams have become a reality and yet we have new dreams we believe God will fulfil. We really are making a difference in the local community. Women are choosing life for their babies, getting the help and support that they need to continue their pregnancies and receiving continued, ongoing support once baby arrives. Those who have been suffering emotionally following a termination have found some healing. Most importantly too these precious women are experiencing the love of Jesus. This year we have had clients asking questions about faith and life, telling us that they are beginning to pray, attending church, having babies christened and even attending Alpha courses. Thank you for playing your part and making this all possible. We have one prayer request: That if it be His will we will be able to open a Cornerstone Hostel as many of our clients find themselves in unsuitable and temporary accommodation at a most vulnerable time in their lives. We are speaking with a local organisation that may be able to purchase a property that we can pay a peppercorn rent for and use for this purpose. Rejoice with us in thanking our wonderful, great, always good, God for all He continues to do.*

HUNTINGDON AREA  
**Money Advice**  
Free & confidential  
debt advice service

 **Cornerstone**  
Pregnancy Advice Centre  
Care in Confidence

In all that we do as we **worship**, **share** and **serve** together we want to do it for the glory of God and we are committed to playing our part in God's mission. We long for more and more of those we meet to come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. We are thankful to God for his blessings on many of the ministries outlined in this booklet and grateful for opportunities to demonstrate the love of God and proclaim the good news of the gospel in word and deed throughout the year.

Daniel, our youth and children's pastor, writes about some of these opportunities in local schools:

*I have had the privilege of going into local schools to lead assemblies, take part in RE lessons and organise Prayer Spaces days. In primary schools I have answered questions from 10 year olds about why the Bible is so important to me. I have worked with 5 schools with a Christmas Prayer Space activity where the children met key characters from the Christmas story and thought about how they could learn from them. In secondary schools, alongside other youth leaders, we visited every year 9 class (13-14 year olds) and the students asked us questions about what we believe and why. This was a great opportunity to help young people who knew nothing about Christianity to learn about how people can have a relationship with a supernatural God.*

GBC also supports, in prayer and financially, the work of GenR8 who lead Christian assemblies in schools across the region.

More opportunities to reach primary school aged children with the gospel come with our annual **Holiday Club**. Daniel writes,

*In 2019 our theme was based around Jesus' last few days. We used Scripture Union material to teach the children about the different places where Jesus was in his last few days. We thought about the last supper, the garden of Gethsemane and his resurrection. It was great to help the children engage with the story of Jesus. Some would have heard it before but most would not have been aware of the importance of Jesus and the truth that they can be His friend.*

A team of volunteers from GBC took part in the annual door to door collection during **Christian Aid week** in May, and a number of individuals joined in with the annual **Operation Christmas Child** initiative to fill a shoebox for children overseas – our boxes in 2019 went to Belarus and Central Asia.

GBC supports a number of individuals and agencies engaged in **Overseas Mission** including:

Anglo-Indian Concern in Chennai, India

Cambodia Action

Mission Direct working around the world

Rehoboth Children's Homes in the Philippines and Kathryn Thompson working at Rehoboth to provide educational support

John and Stephanie Brown visited **The Gambia with Mission Direct** in the Autumn and they write,

*We have been humbled by and are grateful for all the financial, practical and prayer support that we received in 2019 from our GBC family for our short-term mission trip to The Gambia. This made our time away much more meaningful and helped us be a good witness to the faithfulness of God to those Christians we met. Although the purpose of the trip was to engage in a building project, as ever with these visits it is the new relationships and personal stories that have the greatest impact. It has been good to bring Gambian stories back to the UK to encourage us all, here at GBC.*



Everything we have already written about in this Review of 2019 takes teams of servant hearted people to enable it to happen. We rejoice when we see people **serving** in their areas of gifting and passion and we are so thankful to God for his gifting and to each other for obedient and sacrificial service. We recognise that we are all different so for some that might be leading worship or preaching; for others it might be leading a small group; for others it might be in the kitchen making coffee and cakes and other delightful refreshments; for others it might be practical things like getting the chairs and other equipment out, making the microphones work, monitoring the car park; for others it will be working with people – welcoming, caring, visiting, helping, befriending, praying.

Here's a bit of a photo-board of just a few of our volunteers. Please note that age is no barrier – we accept helpers of all ages! I've just had an offer to help with welcoming from a delightful 9 year old!

Katie (Messy Church Team) writes,

*I help at Messy Church because I enjoy it and find it fun to see what the younger children create. It's nice to see parents and children doing the activities together. Every month I choose an activity, prepare it and then lead the activity. I think I get a lot from going to church and Furnace so it's nice to contribute to something that helps other people to enjoy Messy Church as a family. This is part of being a family at GBC.*



Abigail & Katie  
Messy Church Team

Cliff (Stewarding Team) writes,

*I feel it is one way I am able to serve. It's great to be able to welcome people as they arrive.*

Mat (Refreshments Team) writes,

*it gives me a great opportunity to talk with cracking folk, just like Cliff!*



Mat & Cliff  
Refreshments & Stewarding Teams



Sarah  
Songs of Praise Team



Val & James  
Songs of Praise Team



Patricia  
Admin Team





Daniel  
Little Stars Team



Peter  
Projection Team



Carrick  
Sound Team



John & Paul  
Counting Team



Peter  
Kids Kingdom Team

As we give thanks for the many blessings of 2019, and as we enter in to 2020 with the challenge from our Covenant service on 5 January to 'give it our best shot and pray a lot' and to consider 'where do we grow from here', we look forward to another year of **worship**, **sharing** and **serving**!

2020 is going to be a special year in the life of GBC as we celebrate our 175th birthday and also the 40th birthday of our Littlefoot toddlers' club.

Rachel Thurley, who has been part of this fellowship for nearly 60 years, writes the following – which really helps us to understand some of the history of GBC at a time of further change and encompasses our themes of **worshipping together**, **sharing together** and **serving together in ministry and mission**.



Rachel

*Through 3 changes of church name and 3 changes of premises, GBC (as it is now) has always been where I have worshipped and found ways of serving the Lord. At first the congregation was about 20 older folk and there was no pastor. Weekly offerings were about £5. The first commitment I made was to support the Thursday afternoon women's fellowship – something I have done ever since.*

*Over the years I taught in what was then an afternoon Sunday School, then in a teenage girls' Bible class and we also had a girls' club in our garages (ably helped by Jenny Thompson!) In 1980 our minister's wife, Margot Cannon, and I started the Wednesday morning mothers' and toddlers' club (now Littlefoot). Pastoral visiting was always a part of my involvement in each of these. There always seemed to be the possibility of a new means of outreach, and people continued to join the church who could also be involved and eventually take over. By the time my husband, Tom, and I were called to work in India in 1987, I remember I had to find people willing to take over quite a list of things including the flower rota and book stall. I realise I should have allowed people to do many of these earlier – it was absurd to have so many diverse responsibilities when others could have done them. Since stopping my annual visits to India, I have found myself more and more wanting to reach out to older people (of whom I now am one!) with the love of God. The Lunch Club, Songs of Praise and now Tuesday Treat and Tuesdays@10 have given wonderful opportunities to get to know Godmanchester people who are not attached to our church. I have to admit that previously most of my friends were from the church. Only occasionally do I get an opportunity of specifically witnessing, but I can see that several of those I speak to are becoming more ready to talk about spiritual things. Thursday afternoons, now held in my home, are special times of fellowship. And though I do not have the energy to do as much pastoral visiting as I used to, I still fit in one or two visits each week. As we look for a new pastor I look forward to the next stage in the life of our church. With all the new building in the town there is so much to do out there, and much too in building us all up in our walk with the Lord.*



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