



Godmanchester Baptist Church

# Annual Review of 2021



[godmanchesterbaptist.org](http://godmanchesterbaptist.org)

***Welcome to our Annual Review of 2021. We give thanks to God for his presence with us throughout what has been another challenging year in many ways. I think many of us had hoped that after the significant impact of the Covid pandemic in 2020, we would enjoy more freedom from restrictions in 2021 and even be able to enjoy gathering together as we used to. While that didn't really turn out to be the case, for various reasons, you will see from this review of the year that our GBC church family and community have so much to be thankful for with many testimonies to God's faithfulness and much blessing to report! The photo on the front cover shows a plant pushing through concrete and we hope that as you read this review booklet you will find plenty of evidence of places where life has started to grow and blossom in unexpected places!***

***We have written our review as a commentary through the year, recording various events and activities as they happened. However, we should highlight our gratitude to all the individuals and teams who have worked hard throughout the whole year and have adapted so well to finding new ways to enable us to fulfil our vision to 'Love God, Love each other, and Make disciples'. 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.***

**Daniel Beckett  
Lead Pastor**

In January we found ourselves back in lockdown for a while, and we continued to make good use of technology in all sorts of ways. Our church members' meetings continued to be held using Zoom and, in January, we reported that GBC had become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 1 January 2021.



Sunday Celebration

How glad we were throughout the Spring Term that, despite not being able to meet together, we could continue to enjoy worshipping God as we watched our Sunday morning broadcasts every week, giving thanks for our service leaders, preachers, worship leaders and tech team as we learnt together through a preaching series on Nehemiah. Our children and young people also worshipped and learnt together online and using various technologies and worksheet packs.

Little Stars continued with their WhatsApp teaching videos and worksheet and craft packs delivered to each family!

Liz Webb writes,

*'The Webb household have enjoyed another year of Little Stars WhatsApp videos and activities and we're extremely grateful to the teachers who tirelessly produce the weekly videos.'*

Christine Bradshaw writes about Kids Kingdom,

*'Kids Kingdom was constantly adapting in 2021. At the start of the year we were still meeting on Zoom, and were looking at events in Mark's gospel. One week we looked at the story of Jesus healing the man with leprosy and also learnt about the work of the The Leprosy Mission today. We thought about how isolated people with the disease can feel when others don't want to be near them and keep their distance. As we weren't able to go to school or allowed to see our friends at the time, it helped us to understand how the man with leprosy in the story might have felt and how happy he would have been when he met Jesus.'*

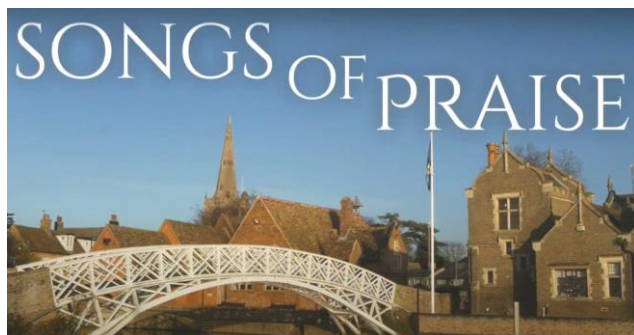


Joe's boat

During the Spring Term, Furnace, our Sunday morning group for 11-14s, continued to meet online. it was really important for the young people to be able to stay connected as a group even though it was in a virtual setting. We looked at the topic of 'How to share our faith story' and some of the 'I Am' statements of Jesus.

We also continued with our weekly small groups for young people. There were three groups meeting each week on Zoom and in different ways each group were using the Apply book resource to consider how different Bible verses apply to their life and how they can apply the teaching in the verses to their everyday living.

The Generation Rising Youth congregation also continued to meet online.



Our Songs of Praise recordings were also broadcast each month on our YouTube channel – with those unable to access this receiving the recordings on DVD or CD so they could also enjoy them. These broadcasts have been appreciated so much – here are just a few of the positive comments received:

*'Songs of Praise has been a real blessing. I have enjoyed the testimonies and hearing about why people have chosen particular hymns'*

*'I have enjoyed the Songs of Praise broadcasts – a big thank you to the whole team and a special thank you to Sam for the wonderful photos of Godmanchester and the skilful editing of the recordings.'*

*'I was so moved by David's thoughts that he shared recently with the lovely photos of crosses made from twigs'*

The Little Stars children were not the only ones to receive regular envelopes through their doors – our Songs of Praise and Tuesday Treat friends continued to receive a newsletter each month, usually with a lovely card too and often with a gift as well! These monthly distributions, with doorstep chats and phone calls in between were just part of the whole church pastoral care framework which ensured that everyone had someone looking out for them, checking that all was well and offering support and help where needed.



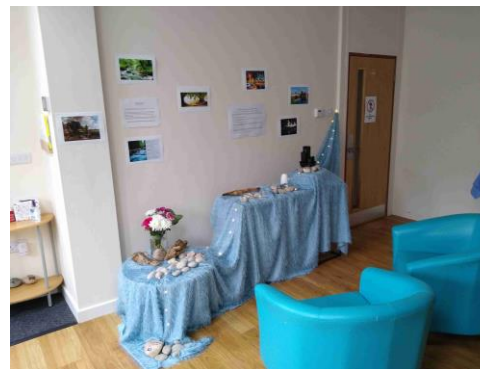
Twig crosses

One of our Tuesday Treat friends comments,

*'I am so grateful for the planning and hard work of the team who have regularly kept in touch with so many people – providing reassurance and the opportunity to ask for help if it has been needed.'*

Jo Hitchins writes more here about the pastoral care framework throughout this second year of Covid restrictions,

*'As we come to the close of a second year of Covid and all the challenges it has presented, I would like to thank all of you who have taken the opportunity to be light in what has sometimes been a very dark place. We've all had different experiences (same storm, different boat analogy again!) but it's fair to say that the past couple of years haven't been easy, and it's been so encouraging to see love in action in so many ways. Many have grown in confidence praying for (and receiving prayer from) others over the phone, Zoom or Facetime, streaming our services on Youtube has continued to reach many who had previously been unable to come to church as well as many more who hadn't had contact with us before, and we've learnt over the past couple of years to think outside of the box a little more. The Prayer Room which Stephanie set up so beautifully has been a little oasis of peace, giving space to be quiet and still (as well as pray!) and I for one have been very grateful for it. So many of you have spent so much time and effort in caring for each other, praying for each other, trying to ensure people remain connected with each other, deepening relationships with each other and encouraging each other. As well as all that has been done by Care & Connect Leaders, so much more (much more than I know about!) has been done by so many of you! So thank you to each and every one of you that has reached out to another, showing God's love in action. You are all so very much appreciated.'*



Prayer Room

Towards the end of the Spring Term, our staff team gained a new recruit in March when we appointed Holly Carter to the position of Business Administration Apprentice; an 18 month fixed term contract during which time Holly is offering invaluable administration support alongside completing her studies to gain a Level 3 Diploma in Business Administration.



March also saw the acquisition of an electric van for FoodBank use. Jude Lechmere writes,

*'We got an electric van in March 2021, for the delivery of food parcels to people in need. It has been easy to use and great to be eco-friendly as we go about FoodBank business. It has proved so useful for the collection of surplus food from the Co-op on occasion such as mince pies or milk, through to the delivery of the Christmas Hampers, and across the whole of the geographical area. We have had no issues over losing power or being stranded anywhere!'*

*Bob is our regular delivery man for Monday and Thursday FoodBank sessions, and he and the van are also used by others in between for a few church activities whenever food is used or needs to be relocated.'*



Bob & FoodBank Van

From April onwards, and throughout the Summer Term, we continued with our broadcasts online – and our preaching series for this term was 'How should we live? Up, In, Out'. We did see restrictions begin to ease gradually and we were able to use the freedom to meet outdoors for some of our activities, although still with restricted numbers for some.

We are grateful to St Anne's School for their generosity in allowing us to use their outdoor space for some of our children's and youth activities. Christine Bradshaw and Kath Pickersgill write about how good it was for the Kids Kingdom group to meet in person on Sunday mornings,

*'At the end of the spring and in the summer, we were able to meet outside at St Anne's. It was wonderful for us all to see each other and to be able to move about without being stuck in front of a screen. We were able to act out some of the Bible stories, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan. We were able to play some more active games and use paints to reveal Bible verses written in invisible ink. We had some fantastic sunshine too. The 45 minutes flew by and seemed to be over all too soon.'*

*'I enjoyed meeting the children on the school playground face to face for the first time. I was surprised how tall they had grown – the glimpses on Zoom had not prepared me for that! Their considerate attitude to each other was so good to see. One girl hung back at the gate, "I'm not going to play with the others yet because my new friend is arriving soon and I want to help her to join in". When I got stuck on a memory game they all chipped in ideas!'*

The Furnace group also really enjoyed meeting in the outside classroom at St Anne's. It was good to see each other and to enjoy the challenges that we did against each other.

It was also great to be able to start meeting together again with the young people from Friday Night Project and TOAST in a real setting! St Anne's school kindly allowed us to use their outside space which was great as it was a safe environment for us to be able to meet. There was a selection of games and activities with hockey and quick cricket becoming firm favourites. We didn't have to miss any weeks due to bad weather which was really good!



Marquee in the Car Park

As well as using St Anne's outdoor space, in April we set up our marquee in our own car park at GBC to provide a covered space for groups of people (only 6 at a time to start with!) to meet up and enjoy refreshments and chat together. Some of our Tuesday Treat friends made very good use of this provision.

Jude Lechmere writes,

*'What a hoot, and privilege, to be able to host the Marquee in the car park as the Covid restrictions changed last year. It meant that groups of up to 6 could book in for space to chat in the fresh air after a time when many people had not been able to socialise with anyone. I loved being able to meet new people as they often attend other services within GBC from me, or they were part of the wider community and we became a good venue for coffee, cake and a good chat. And the amount of laughter we had was*

*lovely in both sunshine and rain, and gusts of wind at times! Very quickly we went from just a few people to being booked out fully across the whole of a Tuesday morning, with a lovely mix of folk who came from all areas of GBC and Godmanchester. And so many ladies who had all known each other for years through clubs,*

*husbands and children's activities – every week felt like a fabulous episode of friends reunited! And what a great way to welcome new people in too as they were passing and wondered what fun they could hear and would ask and come back the next week to join in. So it has been my joy to be the 'Trolley Dolly' for our 'marquee in the car park' months until we were able to re-start Tuesday Treat indoors in the Autumn!'*

One of our friends for whom the marquee in the car park initiative came at just at the right time writes,

*'Joining the group meeting in the marquee was a life saver for me. I had recently been bereaved and I moved to Godmanchester during the lockdown at the start of 2021. GBC was a place where I found so many kind people and I was welcomed in and quickly made new friends. I have enjoyed watching the broadcasts and joining in with the Bible study group and Thursday Fellowship. I am looking forward to coming to church on Sundays when the Worship Area redevelopment is finished!'*

In May work finally started on our building project, OIKODOM 2, to redevelop and refurbish our Worship Area. John Stevens, our Project Manager, writes,

*'It seems a long time now since we first considered tenders for this project way back in May 2019. Since that time, the chosen contractor stopped trading but an alternative was chosen and the necessary finance was raised.*

*Work eventually commenced on site in May 2021 but the pandemic meant that progress was severely delayed, both through contractors' sickness and inevitable delays in obtaining materials. In addition, it was discovered during construction that deterioration to the concrete structure of the Worship Area needed additional repairs. A specialist firm carried out the remedial work but this led to further delay.*

*Since that time good progress has been made. A new roof and corridor to the Resources room have been constructed. The Worship Area now has new windows, air conditioning equipment, wall insulation and a new Chair Store. The suspended ceiling is currently being installed and we look now to the time soon when we will be able to worship together again in this room.'*

In July some of our children and young people enjoyed an online MineClub game. James Beckett writes,

*'I found MineClub to be a fun way to connect to young people in a way that I've not been able to do before. I enjoyed being able to*

*teach a game to them at the same time as being able to have fun myself and allow for them to let themselves be creative and work together. I'm really glad that the children were able to enjoy it themselves and have fun on the world that I had created myself. Everyone who built things built some really amazing builds and I was impressed with how well they engaged with the game and us and each other.'*

By July restrictions were beginning to ease and in mid-July we were able to organise a whole weekend to focus on a significant event in the life of our church – an interview

weekend for our potential Associate Pastor, Carolyn Keats. For us it was a great weekend where church members were able to join Daniel, Carolyn, and the Leadership Team in the discernment process, that had begun at the end of April, to listen to God and to each other and to decide whether it was right to call Carolyn to serve as our Associate Pastor. We heard Carolyn share her heart and her story on the Friday evening at St Mary's church, then we met her in more informal settings in the beautiful gardens of some of our church members throughout the gloriously sunny Saturday. Carolyn preached and led the prayers as part of our Sunday morning broadcast. Following a Special Church meeting on 22 July a unanimous vote in favour led to us extending a call to Carolyn to be our Associate Pastor and she said yes! You can read her own account of her call and Induction to GBC a bit later in this review. We are so thankful to God for bringing Carolyn to us.



Before



After



MineClub



FoodBank had worked tirelessly all year to support many in the community facing the challenge of food poverty, but July saw a special event for FoodBank with the launch of a new initiative: the summer 'Meals in a Bag' scheme which took place over seven weeks. This saw the FoodBank team, working with: the local Co-op based in Cardinal Park; 6th formers from St Peter's School; and local

volunteers, provide and deliver 'A Meal in a Bag' for 80+ families across the local area. This involved the creation and printing of recipe cards, provision of any utensils or baking sheets needed plus all the ingredients



Recipe Cards

required for a main meal and a dessert for the family. This initiative provided a minimum of 560 meals each week! Terrific feedback was received for the scheme and the FoodBank hope to run it again this summer. The initiative was a huge success offering support to families as well as providing good healthy meal options and encouraging family activities. This was particularly appreciated at a time when so many families had seen so much schooling disrupted by Covid and home teaching.



Meals in bags

By August it was becoming possible to meet in larger groups, indoors as well as outside – although lots of sensible precautions still needed to be in place. We were glad to be able to run our very popular Tuesdays@10 programme again. Philip & Jenny Thompson write,

*'A programme for Seniors during August was arranged which was tailored to the restrictions in operation at the time due to Covid-19. On three occasions small group meetings were held in gardens or indoors, depending on the weather, for coffee, cake and chat. Thirty to forty, including hosts, attended each time in four or five different venues and enjoyed spending time together. Two more structured occasions were held at the church with limited numbers using the small hall and corridor. There were about twenty guests together with a team of helpers each time. The first one was listening to a popular musical entertainer together with opportunity to engage in some simple craft activities. On the second occasion we heard talks from two members of the local HealthyYou team about keeping safe at home and healthy eating. Each time there were also table quizzes, games and a Thought for the Day ending up with a sandwich lunch served at the tables by the helpers.'*



Tuesdays@10

As we couldn't get away on a residential with young people in the summer, we organised a week of activities. We went for a walk to Houghton Mill and enjoyed ice cream; we went to Grafham Water and played games on the grass; we had a Craft morning and also a Bake along activity. And a fantastic treasure hunt around Godmanchester including looking for some specific doors! Unfortunately we had bad weather and were not able to go canoeing as planned.

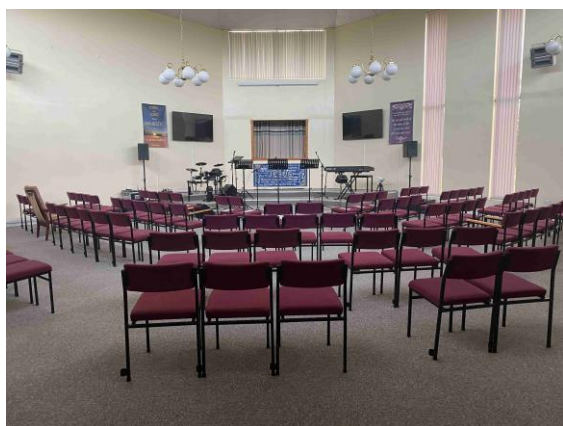
September and the Autumn Term saw further easing of restrictions and we began to be able to gather together more – although still with various restrictions in place. Outdoors was still the preferred option for larger groups and on the first Sunday in September we were blessed again with glorious weather for The Mix at Burleigh Hill Farm. How wonderful it was for so many of us to gather after such a long time apart to re-establish friendships, to welcome new friends, to worship God and to eat delicious food and have fun and fellowship together. Mat and Kayleigh Timmis write,

*'The Mix pop up was fantastic. A great way for most of the church family to come together and begin to reconnect face-to-face. The weather, relaxed atmosphere and no real expectations to 'do' anything was perfect. I wish we lived in sunnier climes so that we could do church like this every week! I do*



The Mix

*also remember how amusing it was when I was asked to move my car (by Daniel) and when I enquired as to why I needed to, at that precise moment, a mahoosive combine harvester came hurtling round the corner - enough said! The bouncy castle, balloon person, indoor lego station and outdoor games were really fab - there was clearly a lot of thought about how to include the young children. It was really great to see everyone after such a long time. Everyone was really warm and welcoming – the food was awesome and the jigsaw activity was a great icebreaker. We're already looking forward to the next Mix gathering.'*



Grace Fellowship

September also saw us starting to meet in person for our Sunday morning celebrations – not at GBC because of the ongoing building project, but at Grace Fellowship; an unused church building on loan to us at that time. We have rejoiced in being able to meet together for worship – although some are still not able to do that for various reasons. We have continued to record the services and broadcast them on YouTube so that those unable to be there in person can still be part of our worshipping community. Our preaching series for the Autumn term focussed on Colossians. Some of our children's and young people's groups were also able to start meeting in person again indoors in the Autumn Term. Kids Kingdom and Furnace have been meeting at GBC on a Sunday morning. Christine Bradshaw and Kath Pickersgill write,

*'In the Autumn term Kids Kingdom were finally able to move back into the church centre at GBC and use the Small Hall. We now have an extended session, giving parents the opportunity to attend the service at Grace Fellowship if they wish, which gives us more time for activities and time for the children to play together too. We have learnt several memory verses and a couple of new songs. We look forward to sharing one of those songs with the whole church when everyone is able to be back at GBC.'*

*'I like being in the Small Hall with the Kids Kingdom children now – they are so attentive when we read things from the Bible and I like it during craft times when they giggle during chatting – I have SO missed children's spontaneous laughter!'*

In the Autumn Term Friday Night Project and TOAST started meeting physically back in the building and it was very strange for us all including the young people who hadn't been in the GBC building for so many months. We started back with our much loved pattern of games, activities and the famous tuck shop. There may be many things that have changed through lockdown and COVID but young people still love sweets!

On a Sunday night we began gathering together again as youth church at Generation Rising.

After running a very popular (socially distanced!) toy library throughout most of 2020 and 2021, our Littlefoot toddlers group were also able to return to meet and play indoors on Wednesday mornings in the Autumn Term, albeit with much restricted numbers. Those who have been able to come have really appreciated the re-opening of this very popular weekly session, and in some ways it has been good to have more time and space for play and conversation. A couple of the mums write,

*'I believe the Littlefoot toddler group has become a key part of the community. The inclusive culture at the group welcomes anyone and anybody into it. Since attending the group I've personally become more independent and confident as a mum, to be able to speak to other mums about what we're going through and gain advice has been priceless. The support from the volunteers has been crucial, to provide support and direction. The group offers structure to parents and children, the various activities help stimulate the toddlers and provide them with opportunities that they might not have at home. The group provides a safe, warm environment. We are so thankful to the minister and volunteers who make this group happen!'*

*'I have two wonderful boys aged 6 years & 6 months. I was introduced to Littlefoot by a previous member until her son went to school. Both my boys and I love the interaction with other parents, children & volunteers. Also the support and advice that's always waiting with a hot cuppa! Littlefoot is so welcoming to everyone no matter*



Littlefoot Toy Library



*your background & that's what I love about the volunteers that set up various activities every single week. I truly appreciate everything they offer to all Godmanchester parents & children.'*

At the other end of the age spectrum, our Tuesday Treat friends returned in September to their comfy chairs, sharing tea, coffee, teacakes, crumpets, sausage rolls and cake all with lots of chatting and laughter. What a joy! As we write this review, in February 2022, we have just said a huge thank you to Tony and Rita Goodwin who have stepped down from leading Tuesday Treat after very many years of involvement and leadership with this group – and with Lunch Club before it. So many have been touched by Tony & Rita's love, kindness and thoughtfulness over all these years. There are so many things that go on behind the scenes to make sure ministries run smoothly and we are so grateful for all the hours Tony and Rita have tirelessly put in, both seen and unseen, to enable Tuesday Treat to be the welcoming and happy place that it is. We thank them both so much for their vision and dedication to Lunch Club and to Tuesday Treat. Tony & Rita write,



Tony & Rita

*'There are some verses in the Bible that start 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens'; they're in chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes. Have a look, they make interesting reading. So, seasons change and for us this seems to be one of those times.'*

*Just over five years ago Tuesday Treat was born out of Lunch Club, which for various reasons had to stop running, and this was quite a change for all of us who had been involved with welcoming guests to a hot meal week by week. We wanted to continue to be able to provide a place where friends could meet up for a chat, and we have been thrilled to be able to do just that. Actually, right from the start many said they appreciated the relaxed informality of Tuesday Treat, the comfy chairs, and plenty of time for a chat and a laugh together. Not to mention the homemade cakes, tea cakes, sausage rolls and endless cups of tea or coffee!*

*For us, handing over the reins is quite sad, but we are certain that God still has plenty for us to do in this new season. We have made lovely friends, whom we have got to know even better during the past two years of the pandemic, with phone calls and doorstep encounters. It has always been a highlight of our week to see a crowd of smiling faces pouring into the Church Centre on a Tuesday morning. We might not now be there every week, but we will try to pop in from time to time and catch up with you all. Thank you for making Tuesdays so special!'*

The Autumn Term also saw the launch of our Toolbox initiative. We offered a number of varied options for people to sign up to where they could study, learn, discuss and grow. People could join in with others who they were already in a small group with, or individually to become part of a new group for a few weeks or longer! This new initiative doesn't replace existing small groups: it offers additional opportunities alongside them. Autumn options included:

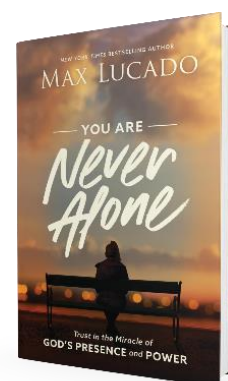
- A Bible study group – focusing in more depth on the Sunday teaching theme
- A discussion group based on the Being Human podcasts from the Evangelical Alliance
- A Book club – discussing Max Lucado's book 'You Are Never Alone'
- A session looking at 'How Covid has impacted us'

In October, Carolyn joined us as our Associate Pastor and we once again benefitted from the generosity of St Mary's Church as we held her Induction service there. Carolyn writes,



Daniel & Carolyn

*'I've been very privileged to work in some wonderful churches and live in some beautiful places over the years. My last church in Lymington was no exception. However, in October 2020 I sensed God stirring me to explore the possibility of moving on to a new church. After much prayer, in the Spring of 2021, the Baptist Settlement Board put me in touch with a church in the west of England which I initially thought was the church for me. However, despite a growing warmth and sense of possibility between us, God surprisingly didn't seem to give a green light regarding a future together. Some weeks later, I was prayerfully scanning the Pastoral Vacancies list having said to God that I would be prepared to go wherever he called me in the UK, even if it meant living miles from my family on the south coast.'*





*As I worked down the list, Godmanchester Baptist Church caught my eye and reading the church profile, annual reviews and looking at the website, I had a growing sense of interest and excitement. The ethos, heartbeat and ministries of the church echoed my own heart and passions. There was such a strong resonance that (after looking at a map to see where Godmanchester was!), I asked my Regional Minister to pass my profile on to the church. Very soon I was talking to Daniel on the phone and before long, plans were in place for me to meet the Leadership Team on Zoom.*

*From the start I felt strangely relaxed and 'at home' among the GBC family and driving into Godmanchester for the first time too. After enjoying an initial interview with the Leadership Team, I then had 2 weekends in Godmanchester meeting first the leaders and then the wider membership face to face. I remember that both visits were heatwaves and the welcome I received was also equally warm.*

*From early on Daniel and I sensed that God was in this, and it was a huge thrill following the Church Members' meeting to receive the invitation to become Associate Pastor (which I didn't hesitate in accepting!) My induction in October was such a special day surrounded by old friends and new, a happy memory for years to come.*

*All this seems a long time ago now, even though it's only four months. I've settled quickly and am loving life at GBC! I'm excited by what God is doing through the church and have enjoyed serving on the Littlefoot, Tuesday Treat/ Songs of Praise and pastoral care teams, in the Sunday services and wider leadership and church activities.*

*I'm also excited for what God has for us in the future. I pray he will use us to grow His Kingdom and make a real and ongoing difference in this community and beyond.*

*Thank you all for your continued warmth, support and prayers. I'm so grateful to God for bringing me to such a big-hearted and outward looking church family, and am looking forward to meeting more of you face to face as soon as we are able. Wishing you all much blessing.'*

Carolyn's Induction saw the fruitful completion of our Search Process which had begun when John Smith retired as Senior Pastor in March 2019. We have been so blessed to have Peter Nodding alongside us as our moderator for the whole of that time, and we are so thankful for his wisdom, preaching, care and humour as he has supported us in all sorts of ways as we firstly appointed Daniel to the post of Lead Pastor in July 2020 and then Carolyn as Associate Pastor in July 2021.

In November we had fun putting together 30 Christmas shoe boxes for Amen ministries to distribute to needy families in Romania. Tuesday Treat guests contributed very generously to this project, along with a number of others in the church. It was the first time we have supported this organisation which provides Christmas gifts not just for children but for whole families. The boxes are given out by local churches in Romania who have ongoing and good connections with

the families, many of whom are among the gypsy community. These simple gifts bring such joy to those who have so little. We were also able to send three sacks of infants' toys cleared out from our Littlefoot cupboards, as contributions to kindergartens run by churches in the same area. It was a great effort and thanks to all who gave in any way. Amen sent 2417 boxes last year and hope to send more this year – the need is great, so let's get collecting!



Family receiving shoeboxes



Shoeboxes for Romania

Despite the emergence of a new Covid variant towards the end of the year, and the subsequent need to respond quickly to adapt various plans that we had begun to make, December saw some great events helping us once again to celebrate the birth of Jesus, Saviour of the world.

The Advent Windows trail started on 1 December and Jo Collinson writes,

*'Following on from 2020's very successful Advent Windows trail, I coordinated a team of amazingly talented people who designed 19 wonderful Advent Windows for 2021. These windows, in different parts of Godmanchester, lit up the cold dark nights of December and filled them with Christmas fun and the wonderful message of Advent.'*

*The windows were delightful, all different and showing an amazing range of ideas from Christmas trees and bells to scenes from carols. For the final five nights of advent there was a fantastic display depicting scenes from the birth of Jesus in the front window at GBC.*

*The windows gave a lot of pleasure to those who took part in the trail; when one little boy saw one of the windows he was heard to exclaim "Look I've found it, WOW!" We also received lots of likes on GBC's Facebook page and one of the Facebook comments was: "Just as awesome as your services; keep it up legends"*

*The advent trail wonderfully illustrated the message of joy and hope in dark times that only Christ brings, and I'm truly grateful to everyone that took part – Thank you!*



Advent Windows

By week two in December, FoodBank had swung into action with their Annual Christmas Hampers initiative, ably led by Jude Lechmere who had been appointed to the post of FoodBank Project Manager in October. Jude writes,

*'This was the 10th year for this initiative. Our goal was to help families in receipt of Free School Meals, and we used the site at Grace Fellowship to 'build' and deliver 350 hampers in just five days. We had fabulous help from people in the community, who physically prepared the space for the food to be stacked, and then 'picked' the food for the parcels.*

*We delivered the parcels to the local primary schools who then passed them on to families and this helped with welfare checks and general engagement at the end of an exhausting year.*

*In addition, we supported HCAP (Huntingdon Community Action Project), a local community project, providing Christmas treats as well as a box of fruit and vegetables to go out to families with under 5's.'*

Little Stars held their Christmas Party on 12 December at GBC. Bethany Warton writes,

*'We had a wonderful time at the Little Stars Christmas party. The games and time together run by the lovely group of ladies was so appreciated and the children really enjoyed themselves. Being able to share together after such a long time apart was so special and our children were thrilled to be able to celebrate and be together once again learning about the Christmas message in such an accessible way for them - thank you so much'*

And Liz Webb writes,

*'We have also enjoyed attending some Little Stars parties this year! Joseph had a great time at them, playing games, listening to stories, meeting special guests and enjoying some yummy snacks. (Thomas also enjoyed the snacks and the chance to stretch his legs!)*

Tuesday Treat were able to hold their Christmas Special on 14 December, with Christmas quizzes, carol singing and a Christmas talk – all enjoyed along with turkey sandwiches and mince pies!

By the following week additional restrictions and cautions were in place which meant that we had to re-plan our events that we had hoped to hold indoors at St Anne's School on 24 December. Undeterred, Daniel reorganised things (seamlessly!) and Christmas Eve saw two brilliant events.

Anna and Sarah Duncanson-Hunter write about the Messy Church Nativity Walk,

*'On Christmas Eve GBC hosted a Messy Church Christmas nativity hunt. Lots of families came together and followed a route towards St Anne's primary school. On the way we had to spot people dressed up like characters from the nativity story. When we met a nativity character we had a question that was written down on a piece of paper that everyone received at the start of the hunt. The characters would answer the question they were given and we would have to write the answers.*



Christmas hampers



Philip & Jenny



We met:

- Herod
- The wise men
- The shepherds
- Mary and Joseph

*An example question, for the shepherds, was: What don't you like about being a shepherd?*

*They answered ... Because the sheep never say thank you!*

*When we arrived at St Anne's, we gave our answers to Daniel so he could check them. There were refreshments to celebrate finishing the hunt and the start of Christmas. We had hot drinks and pastries. Daniel got everyone together and he talked about how we all travelled to the school today and reminded us that the people in the story all travelled in different ways either to Bethlehem for the census or to see the baby. He then linked this with Jesus travelling to earth as God for each one of us and explained that we should be thankful that God made this journey for each one of us.*

*At the end everyone received sweets and a bag of activities.*

*This event was a brilliant way to learn more about the nativity and the birth of Jesus.'*

Stephanie Brown writes about the Outdoor Carols, held at St Anne's School on Christmas Eve,

*'Twas the night before Christmas and the presents were wrapped. The mince pies were baked. The pigs were warmly wrapped in blankets.*

*Something was missing!*

*I love Nine Lessons and Carols from Kings College, but I also love Carols by Candlelight by GBC. Would being outside be the same on this damp evening?*

*I needed to go because after all when I had heard the discussions about cancelling Christmas plans again including Carols by Candlelight in the school hall, due to the uncertainty of Covid, I had said "Why are we focussing on what we can't do rather than what we can do? Why do we need a building? Can't we sing somewhere in the public outside? The weather should not be a factor as we can dress warmly?"*

*I donned my hat, gloves and coat and resisted the temptation to carry an umbrella. St Anne's playground was the destination. It was special, fairy lights decorated the bandstand, and the musicians were wrapped warmly in their winter clothes. Lanterns adorned the picnic tables. Familiar faces emerged through the dark by torchlight and as we recognised one another we realised how long it had been. We sang all the best carols at the tops of our voices, young, old and in-betweens.*

*I do hope Godmanchester heard us as I am very sure God did. A tear in my eye whilst singing O Little Town of Bethlehem connected me with God as only sung worship can. It is important in this world of uncertainty to remember the constancy of God as well as our church family.'*

That sees the end of our account of various events at particular times through 2021. But there is more to write about! We've already mentioned the hard work of many who have used their gifts, often behind the scenes, to serve and bless others throughout the whole year. A number of charities, organisations and initiatives that we have links with and support with prayer and finance have continued their work through the challenging months of 2021. Some accounts from them of their work last year follow:

John Pickersgill writes about the Community Sponsorship Project,

*'A group of people, mostly from GBC and some from the wider community, have led on the resettlement and integration of a family of Syrian refugees in Godmanchester since March 2019. This is under the Community Sponsorship programme, run in conjunction with the Home Office and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). A big thank you to well over a hundred people who have supported our family in one way or*



Andrew & Jude



Outdoor Carols

another. They have had the best start possible to their new life in this country. They are happy, they have friends, and they are growing in many ways.

Supporting the family during the pandemic has obviously had its challenges and progress was delayed, but during 2021 Basel passed his driving test and was able to start up his business as a tiler (think bathroom, not roof), ZR Tiling Services <https://www.facebook.com/zrtilingservices/>. Mariam was able to complete 550 hours of English, including time at Bell College in Cambridge. She is now studying at CRC two days a week and volunteering alongside Christine Heaton at Creative English on Fridays for a group of recently arrived Afghan women. The three children are all progressing well at St Anne's School and The Bridge Academy Pre-School and are confidently bi-lingual. Rashed is looking forward to starting school full time in September.

Our formal responsibility for supporting the family for two years has now ended, but they are our friends, and we are still involved in their lives.

In September 2021 the work of Karen Smith and the team was recognised by our nomination for the Cambridgeshire Live Heroes 2021 award in the Community Action category. Not only did the project win that category, but also won the award for the overall winner! Although Karen's personal contribution is entirely deserving of the accolades, as she herself said, the awards are received on behalf of everyone in GBC and the wider community who have put prayers into action.

A new team has now been formed to apply again for approval for Community Sponsorship and receive a second refugee family. The CS2 team has some who were involved the first time, but also some new people from other Churches and the wider community. Our application 'in principle' is ready to submit to the Home Office. We are just waiting for letters of support from the District and County Councils which have been promised but not yet received.

Before we can receive a second family into our house, the first family need to move on to their own rented accommodation, which is proving difficult to find, but we pray that the right place for them will be provided at the right time.

Once the new application is approved, we will start to raise funds for the CS2 project, to redecorate and re-equip the house and to provide all the support needed by the new family. It's been wonderful to be partners together to make God's offer of a welcome to strangers actually happen.'



Cambridgeshire Heroes Award

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

John also writes about the work of HAMA,

*'For those who don't know. HAMA is Huntingdon Area Money Advice. We are a debt advice charity established as a social action ministry of Churches Together in Huntingdon and Godmanchester in 2013. We are a separate Charitable Incorporated Organisation, with trustees drawn from local churches. We are very grateful for the*

*prayer and financial support given by several Churches including GBC, which has also provided us with office space and rooms in which to meet clients.*

*We are affiliated to Community Money Advice, a national Christian organisation, which provides training and resources. There are other CMA centres in St Ives, St Neots, Peterborough and Cambridge, so we just cover the north-west corner of Huntingdonshire – not just Huntingdon & Godmanchester but also Ramsey, Warboys, Yaxley, Sawtry and villages between.*

*The 5 debt advisers are all volunteers, giving their time and skills to help those who find themselves in debt. Very often this is through unforeseen circumstances – illness (mental or physical), bereavement, relationship breakdown, loss of employment - any drop in income which means they cannot keep up with the financial commitments taken on in better times.*

*Very often such people don't know what to do to get out of a downward spiral. Their creditors are all wanting them to pay off their debts, sending bailiffs to recover what they can, and clients can be overwhelmed by demands that they cannot meet. We help the clients by looking at their situation holistically, either to suggest an affordable way of repaying the debts, or one of several forms of insolvency so that the debts are cancelled.*



*The aim is to demonstrate the love of Christ in action, empowering our clients to take control of their finances again, restoring dignity and hope to their situation, where before there was often a 'head in the sand' denial of the problem, or at worst a feeling of despair – even suicidal thoughts.*

*HAMA has established a good reputation with the Huntingdonshire District Council Housing Needs department and the local social housing providers, who often refer to us. Other referrals come from health and education professionals, from other charities and churches, or by word of mouth from previous clients. Some clients are helped at a single appointment, but others require help over many years. During 2021 we had 115 new clients and with another 66 from previous years, we have been helping 181 clients in the course of the year.*

*Here is feedback received from someone we helped through an insolvency process.*

*'The situation, when a person is in debt, especially when it exceeds the possibility of repayment, usually causes big stress and anxiety. People are often ashamed and embarrassed of their financial status and other problems, so they don't seek help, feeling abandoned and hopeless. I know this feeling. And I must say I was really surprised after my first appointment with the HAMA adviser. He is such a nice person, who doesn't judge, doesn't make you feel awkward or ashamed, but tries to help as much as he can. His professional approach, calmness and sympathy let us think that there is always a way to deal with problems. Since our first meeting, we stopped worrying about the future. He dealt with all the calls, letters and debt collectors, he helped us learn how to manage our home budget, so we wouldn't have any troubles again in the future. I would recommend HAMA to anyone I know, as it helped us to start a life with a clean page. I could never thank him enough.'*

*With the energy crisis and inflation, sadly we expect that many more people will need our help this year. We would love to increase our capacity by training new advisers. We are looking for those with a God-given passion for this ministry who also have the time and the skills to be an adviser. Please pray that we find such people.'*



Kathryn Thompson writes about Rehoboth Children's Homes,

*'Throughout 2021 Rehoboth has continued to provide a Christian home in the Philippines to about 30 children and young people and educational support to around 38 youngsters who live in the local*

*community.*

*Covid-19 has severely impacted life at the Home with various restrictions in place and it has been difficult for both the staff and children during this time. It is good that around 54% of adults have been fully vaccinated and also many 12-17 year olds too. For the whole year most schools and colleges have only been able to offer online and modular learning at Home, which is very hard to manage and not very motivating and fun. College students in particular have had to attend lessons online and write assignments using only their mobile phones and data. We have tried to provide extra activities to keep the residents busy and make good use of their extra time at home.*

*Kathryn has continued to provide support to Rehoboth from the UK including teaching the children on Zoom to help them with their studies. We celebrated Rehoboth's 40th anniversary in November and joined with friends and supporters around the world to give thanks to God for his faithful provision over the years and to say thank you to all those people who have helped us to give Filipino children a hope for the future.'*



Rehoboth children



Rachel Thurley writes about the work of AIC (Anglo-Indian Concern) and The Vine Charitable Trust,

*'Anglo-Indian Concern works in Chennai in South India, through a small charity – the Vine Charitable Trust (VCT). It was started 35 years ago to uplift poor Anglo-*

*Indian families so they might become self sufficient, especially by helping children to receive a good education.*

*During Covid times more families than usual have approached VCT for help with school and college fees. The breadwinners are often employed in the service industry because their first language is English, so they lost jobs*

*in hotels, beauty parlours, shops in the malls, export sales and as nursery teachers. Five new families with school aged children and five university students in danger of dropping out have had their fees paid in the last six months. For example, Tammy's father lost his hotel job and her mother lost her job in a kindergarten. She had just completed her 12th standard and was helped to go to college when VCT paid her fees. Children who have had to do lessons online have got behind in their schooling, as many have not got the devices needed, and often have parents with very little education themselves. VCT will be doing all they can to prevent these children from dropping out of education.*

*The other main area of aid given by VCT is in giving pensions to elderly Anglo-Indians. During lockdowns these have been sent by money orders, even to those who live on the street and those like Daphne who is both blind and deaf, who refuse to go into an old people's home. During Covid times when they have been prevented from going to the VCT office to pick up their allowances, they have missed the friendships that have grown up in the waiting room. Many have become very lonely and have welcomed a visit from VCT workers, Grace and John, who show God's love in all they do.*

*Anglo-Indian Concern also supports with prayer and encouragement the People of the Way fellowship which is led by David Shrimpton. This small church made up of Indians and Anglo-Indians, has managed to keep going through Covid by dividing into 3 age related groups. David oversees five other congregations, one of which has nearly finished building a new place of worship, helped sacrificially by the local people and generous gifts from abroad. Many have come to know the Lord through the faithful witness of People of the Way.'*

***And lastly, some thoughts from Daniel to bring our review to a close,***

***'Well done for reading all the way through and getting to the end of this amazing account of life at GBC through 2021! This week I have read an article by Robin Barden, Director of Innovation at Ridley Hall in Cambridge. In it he links church with running. Don't worry I am not going to suggest that we all go running! Here is what he said, "Running is a solitary activity undertaken by the community. In this sense, running is like church. It is always at every moment the focal point of many individual stories incorporated within the whole. For runners it is the individual stories, which speak of hope, doubt, pain and elation, that are caught up in the larger story of the race. Similarly, it is the individual stories of believers that are, together, caught up in the Grand Narrative of the Christian community, where they find fulfilment." We are all involved in church life each and every day. What we do in our individual settings makes a difference to God's kingdom. As part of GBC what you (and I) do has an impact on what we do. We must never forget that GBC isn't just the building on East Chadley Lane, or the events and activities that happen there or elsewhere. The life of GBC is part of what we all do every day in bringing God's kingdom as we live in the way that he calls us to live. I'm looking forward to the things God has in store for us through 2022 and beyond. Keep looking for where there is life, even in the impossible places!'***

### **Godmanchester Baptist Church**

East Chadley Lane, Godmanchester

Huntingdon PE29 2BJ

01480 458565

[office@godmanchesterbaptist.org](mailto:office@godmanchesterbaptist.org)

**[godmanchesterbaptist.org](http://godmanchesterbaptist.org)**

Registered Charity No 1188171