



Godmanchester Baptist Church

Annual Review of 2024

**'CALL TO ME AND
I WILL ANSWER YOU AND
TELL YOU GREAT AND
UNSEARCHABLE THINGS
YOU DO NOT KNOW.'**

JEREMIAH 33:3

godmanchesterbaptist.org

Welcome to our review of 2024

Hello everyone.

I have the privilege of reading this review as it is being put together.

What a great church family to be part of!

I am so grateful for so many people giving so much. As we know, church isn't a place or an activity, a church is a group of people all serving God and each other.

At the beginning of this year, I read a blog about seeing the 'Fingerprints of God' in our everyday lives. Evidence of God being present, answering prayer and stepping in. It can be the case that as we grow in our faith we stop noticing where

God is. As I read this review and spend time with GBC throughout each week, month and year I see God's fingerprints in so many places and in so many people. As you read the review see if you can spot his fingerprints. I also encourage you to look for God's fingerprints in your everyday life and when you see them to prayerfully thank him for being present.

If you read about something that happens at GBC and think that it sounds fun, then why not join in!



God bless

Daniel Beckett

Lead Pastor

In writing this review of 2024 we once again rejoice and give thanks to God for all he has done in our lives as individuals, as a church family, in our communities here in Godmanchester and Little Stukeley and further afield in the ministries we support around the globe. We hope you will enjoy reading all about it in this Annual Review and that you will be able to give thanks with us to our faithful God.

In the following pages you will be able to read all about our life together at GBC throughout 2024. At first glance, much of it describes our gatherings in our congregations for worship, our activities and our ministries, but really it's about the people who are the church. Some of those contributing to this review have been part of GBC for a very long time! Others have newly joined us. We hope you enjoy all of their contributions.

Congregations

GBC is a multi-congregational church family and it is our hope that everyone is able to enjoy being part of (at least) one of our worshipping congregations. It has been a joy during 2024 to have welcomed a number of new friends to some of our congregations. In February and October we held two of our regular Welcome Lunches – providing an opportunity for new friends to enjoy Sunday lunch together and to meet and chat with each other and some of our Leadership Team.

Zano & Tsitsi write, *'Since we started attending services at GBC in December 2023, our family have been truly blessed. We are so grateful for the love and support we have received from the church. It has been a joy to find a place where we feel at home, especially in a world full of uncertainties. We have peace knowing that our children are growing up with strong teachings about God, learning to live with faith, wisdom, and the fear of the Lord. We are confident that this is the right place for our family, and we look forward to growing in faith together.'*



Zano, Tsitsi & Family

Carolyn Keats, our Associate Pastor, has held regular information sessions for those who would like to explore what membership of a Baptist Church is all about, and during the year 10 people joined us as members. We also held two services of believers' baptism where four people publicly proclaimed their faith.

Andrew writes, *'My family has been in and around GBC since 2003. I used to come every Sunday growing up but I lost interest in church when I was around 14/15. Church wasn't something I was all that committed to, so when challenging things happened as a teenager, I stopped going. After 10 years away from the church, I picked up the Bible for the first time again. I'm an avid reader and have read countless books yet the Bible wasn't something I'd properly considered. Reading the Bible as an adult made me ask a lot more questions. Who wrote this book? Where was it written? Why was it written? I watched a video series on YouTube about who the authors could have been and that made me interested enough to do more research into different aspects of Christianity.'*

In June 2024 I watched a couple of videos about the historical facts of Jesus' resurrection. The information put forward supporting the resurrection really impacted me and made me far more open to what the Bible had to say. Over time I gave more and more consideration to these things and I came to believe the truth in what was said.

I came to believe in Jesus, that he died for me, that he rose again and that he's alive today. I find it hard to come to terms with the suffering he went through because of his love for me. I came to realise that people can do things with God that they can't do without him. Knowing all of this I decided to be baptised on October 13th 2024. I want to follow Jesus and baptism was the next step in my Christian journey.'



Andrew's baptism



Sunday Celebration

An exciting development for GBC in September 2024 was the move from a monthly to a weekly Sunday morning Celebration at The Beacon Centre – so we now have two Sunday Morning congregations meeting at 10.30am every week on our two sites.

Our Sunday Morning Celebration at East Chadley Lane (ECL) is still our hub congregation – where 200 people of all ages gather for lively contemporary worship and Bible based teaching. The site is full of life throughout the whole building from when the set-up teams arrive soon after 9.00am until the last of the chairs, equipment, instruments, toys and coffee cups have been put away and we can lock up at about 1.00pm! Our Celebrations start with the whole church family worshipping together – which often includes opportunity for the children to be actively involved in action songs and using flags as they worship before they go to their groups. We are so grateful to all those who serve on so many Sunday morning teams to enable us to be church together in this way. They include the refreshments team, the welcoming and car parking teams, the children's and youth teams, the worship, preaching and prayer teams, the audio-visual team and many others. People's servant hearts and their willingness to use the gifts and skills that God has blessed

them with in order to bring blessing to others has brought much joy to many of us. During 2024, preaching themes have included Staying Strong; Mission Possible; Living with: the shadows, the beyond, the unexplained, what we've been given, absence; Elijah; Philippians: A gospel mindset; Psalms; and Going Deeper. We also regularly hear updates from representatives of all the missions that we support – locally, nationally and overseas, and we enjoyed an update on them all on our Mission Sunday in September. We share communion together each month.

Jo Hitchins leads our **Sunday Morning Celebration at The Beacon Centre (TBC)** in Little Stukeley and she writes,



'Our congregation at The Beacon Centre started monthly in September 2023, and we were delighted to start meeting weekly in September 2024. There is a core of about 14 people who are committed to TBC as their weekly congregation, and several others who usually worship at ECL drop in once or twice a month. As a small congregation, there is an intimacy within our celebrations, which has encouraged and enabled us to grow deeper relationships. It is encouraging that people are blessed within our congregation at TBC and we look forward to more of this!

We also want to grow! We continue to visit door-to-door in the local area, to let them know about us and to try to find out how we can best serve them. We have a regular visible presence in the local village publications and their Facebook pages and are seeking God's way forward for us to reach out effectively.

We have had a variety of preachers over the past year and for our first term meeting weekly we focused on how God enables us to navigate different circumstances – important for us as individuals and as a congregation.

We also meet monthly for prayer, and this has been a real encouragement.

There is plenty to do at TBC, and we're so grateful to everyone sharing their gifts and abilities, whether 'up front' or behind the scenes – welcoming, serving refreshments, leading worship, preaching, making the tech 'happen', setting up, keeping the grass under control ... and so much more!'

Denise says, *'I love the peaceful atmosphere as you enter the church.'* Irene agrees, *'This place is special ... the atmosphere is quietly worshipful as you walk in, and God's presence is tangible even as we greet one another!'* Vlad and Daina particularly note *'the super-friendly atmosphere, the feeling of acceptance and the spiritual intimacy experienced there.'* Matt loves that TBC feels *'a real place of rest'*.

And so many have commented about the intimacy of worship, the deepening of relationships, particularly crossing the generations. Eileen sums this up as being *'a sense of Psalm 133:1'* at TBC. *'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!'*

Our Sunday's children and youth groups take place at East Chadley Lane.

Our **Baby Room** was a new development in 2024 – a comfortable space where parents and babies can gather, chill out, enjoy refreshments and watch the morning celebration on-line.



Heather Smart heads up **Little Stars**, our Sunday morning group for 2-5 year olds, and she writes,



'Each week our volunteers provide opportunities for the children to experience church, learn about Jesus and how they can be light to the world. This is done through sharing stories, learning from the Bible, enjoying praise and worship together, crafting and play. Our team strives to make each child feel welcome and loved each time they come.'

It has been a joy to see our little ones having fun, engaging with the lessons we teach and being more confident to share in group discussions.'

Makenna says, *'I love the songs! We learn about God'*.

Tommy says, *'I enjoy having a biscuit and playing with the kitchen. Sometimes there's Duplo too! I enjoyed the Zacchaeus story. It was so so good and I enjoyed making the craft'*.

Kids Kingdom is our Sunday morning group for 6-11 year olds. Hayley Beckett heads up the team, with Mark Whittle, and she writes,



'Our Sunday morning sessions are a mixture of learning, and activity. We have built towers, made boats, written poems and acted out stories. We started off 2024 looking at stories of Jesus, things he said and things he did culminating at Easter. After Easter we continued an Old Testament series we started in 2023. We began at Moses and worked our way through to David, looking at different individuals throughout the Old Testament, who they were, and how they linked to the big picture of the whole Bible. It has been fun exploring these stories and thinking about the characters. The year finished with the Nativity, which is always great fun and a chance for the children to be involved. This year it was based around the Magi's journey to Bethlehem and their arrival at Jesus' birth. We are very grateful for our team of leaders who without them the sessions wouldn't be half as fun.'

Nissi enjoys Kids Kingdom and she comments, *'So I think that Kids Kingdom is a lovely educational place to learn about God's Word. It is fun to go to a place that you can talk about the person who made us, who shaped us into the people we are today and who I think is the most important and amazing person in the world. I love doing all activities and really enjoyed participating in the Nativity. I was one of the Magis and I got to know what was on their minds and what they went through to get to their King Jesus and it was really fun to practice with everybody else from Kids Kingdom and some of the children from Furnace. I can't wait to be in Furnace because I know that I will do my best to try and learn more about God. I love that the staff members are so kind and helpful and they are always understanding.'*



Furnace is our Sunday morning group for school years 7-10. Each week during the Sunday morning Celebration a group of young people meet in the Small Hall. They are there together with leaders to

try to understand what it means to be a Christian. How do you do it? What difference does it make? What can I do and what can't I do? Our sessions are a mixture of games and activities, biscuits and squash, lots of fun and looking through the Bible. The young people have noted that the biscuits are important and they notice when they are forgotten (naming no names!) Seth says, *'I truly enjoy my time in Furnace. Everyone is kind, and the lessons are always fun, helping me understand what is right in the eyes of God.'*

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



'Songs of Praise is our regular monthly service when we feature more traditional hymns, prayer, a short talk based on a Bible passage and an opportunity to hear about someone's personal knowledge of God – all within an hour and followed by an opportunity to spend time together in a relaxed way over afternoon tea. Apart from the regular festivals, themes followed during the year included selections from the book of Ecclesiastes on subjects such as the purpose of life, wisdom and old age then a glimpse at different Bible characters from both the Old and New Testaments. One of the pleasing features of the services is the variety of people who take part, leading, choosing and introducing a hymn, providing the music, praying, reading the Bible, speaking both from the Bible and from their own experience as a Christian. All this supported by those with technical skills exercised on the day and later, so the service runs smoothly and can be heard and seen later on YouTube, not to mention those who prepare and serve the tea each time – truly an illustration of the Biblical principle of different gifts coming together to serve a common purpose. Everyone is welcome at this service on the third Sunday afternoon each month at East Chadley Lane. We would love to see you!

Our **Online provision**, which we began in 2020, has continued for some of our services and you can find recordings of our East Chadley Lane Sunday Morning Celebrations and our Songs of Praise Celebrations on our [YouTube channel](#). New on YouTube for 2024 were our Meet a Friend videos – short interviews with individuals from our congregations. A great way to find out more about people who you may not have met yet. Why not have a look – you may also find out interesting things about people you think you know really well! Also new for 2024 were some Worship videos, created and broadcast by some members of our Young Adults Congregation.

Our **Families Venture Congregation** meets at East Chadley Lane on the 2nd Sunday afternoon of each month. Sarah Duncanson-Hunter is part of the Families Venture Team and she writes,



'Families meet other families to join with each other in taking part in crafts, games, challenges, fun and worship before sitting together at tables for a meal.'

Families appreciate being part of something that is enjoyed altogether, 'inclusive fun for everyone,' said one parent. Another parent said they like 'spending time with my kids and with the church family'. A parent commented that there's a 'great family atmosphere where everyone is accepted as they are.' Children like the time to make friends, make 'stuff' and that it is a peaceful and calm atmosphere where they can have fun and learn about God.

Recent themes have included God's armour of light, running the race, and 'what is God like?'

Our **Young Adults Congregation** meets on a Sunday evening. Joe Warton leads this congregation and he writes,

'HWAP (Hanging with a Purpose!) is for those aged 18-30, and we meet once a fortnight – usually at The Beacon Centre. The three big aims of the congregation are to:

- 1. Grow in our faith (or find faith if we're still not sure about Jesus)*
- 2. Integrate our faith into our daily life and work*
- 3. Show and share our faith with the people we encounter in our everyday lives.*

On a typical meet-up, we start by eating together and catching up. Then we look at a section of the Bible, using a 'Head-Heart-Hands' framework. This helps us to grow in our understanding of the Bible, to be impacted by it at a deep level, and to draw connections between God's word and the life we



Catching Up!

live. Other highlights from 2024 include regular badminton socials, games nights, and a Christmas bowling social. In August, we had a celebratory feast, where we shared ways God had been good to us and provided for us over the past year. And a group of us attended Big Church Festival in Sussex. In recognition of the leadership function she was already exercising, Rowena Webb became co-leader of HWAP at the beginning of 2025.'



Big Church Festival



Daniel leads the **Uth Congregation** and he writes, 'During 2023 we started our new Uth Congregation on a Sunday evening for young people in school years 8-13 and it has continued very successfully throughout 2024. When we meet we start each session with a hot chocolate and an opportunity to

catch up with how our week has been. We use a resource called Yetti to do this – a huge collection of random pictures with each young person being given 6 which they then use to describe their week. This is a highlight of the evening for some of them! During the sessions we want to create opportunity to learn what the Bible says and to think about the impact that has on our lives. Topics have included, 'Who is Jesus?' 'What is prayer?' and 'What is faith?' We find that it is good to be able to ask questions. No question is wrong!

The young people appreciate the space for discussion about what the Bible says and how they can apply it to their life. They also see Uth as a chance to have fun at the end of the weekend before the school week starts again. They would like the sessions to last for longer! On one of our Sunday evenings just before Christmas we continued our new tradition where we went out and about in our local area taking gifts to people who serve us in our community, in order to serve as an example of God's blessing.'



Yetti

Other ministries

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

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

In 2024 our ministry to the residential homes in the area expanded as we were invited to start taking monthly services at Saxon Manor, a newly built care home in Godmanchester. The team from GBC have enjoyed getting to know the residents and staff on Sunday afternoons, singing old, familiar hymns and sharing truths from God's word together. A monthly service has continued at McCartney House, and we led Carol Services in both these and two other residential homes (Oak Tree Court and The Chestnuts) in December. A huge thank you to the teams who contribute to this important ministry.

Discipleship

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

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

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

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

Examples of other groups, courses and studies from our 2024 Toolbox programme have included:

- regular Bible Study groups meeting weekly and usually providing an opportunity to discuss the preaching topic from Sunday mornings
- a regular discussion group – focusing on various podcasts that those meeting up have listened to in advance
- a Lent Course – using the book, ‘Not a Tame Lion’
- a Parenting Teens course
- the Healing for Hurting Hearts course
- BABS (Beer and Bible Study)
- Mission Possible – Talking Jesus
- Refresh Retreat mornings
- a Walk Through the Bible (New Testament) Day
- Deeper – an occasional gathering offering an opportunity to spend time seeking God and being open to the Holy Spirit, in worship, sharing together and ministering to each other.

Here are some contributions from a number of people who have enjoyed some of the 2024 Toolbox options:

Parenting Teens

Sarah writes, ‘A number of us attended this course last summer, coming together to learn and share ideas and strategies for discipling our teens by journeying alongside them in their exploration and growth in faith. We were reminded that as parents we remain the significant spiritual influencer in our teen’s life, and that they need us to help them navigate the world and faith together.



It was hugely beneficial to be parents of teens together discussing the session content from the teaching we watched on DVD and how we might be able to implement ways in which we can take opportunities to help our teens connect with God. We looked at ways of helping them to ask and answer questions about God and to support their developing understanding of God and making sense of their world with Him in it. We particularly grappled with the challenges of our teen’s understanding and views about prayer and about the Church and explored how we might navigate conversations around not

wanting to attend church. For me the concept that has stuck the most is about us as parents being encouraged to actively create 'windows' for them to see into our own daily personal working out of our relationship with God. This then gives them opportunities to see glimpses into what and how a 'real' relationship with Him might be like, (in both the ups and downs, hard times and times of joy) in order to give them ideas about their own relationship with Him.'

Helen and Richard write, 'Last May we had the opportunity to attend the Parenting Teens for a Life of Faith course. As our children grow into teenagers and beyond, they are developing their independence and making important decisions. It was encouraging for us to know that we continue to remain significant spiritual influencers in their lives.

One of the most helpful things we took away from the course was about the power of windows. This is about letting your teens see brief windows into what your normal life with God looks like now. It is about providing little glimpses into the various aspects of your personal relationship with God. As an example, you can create a window into a tricky work situation you are facing and how you are trying to figure out what to do. You can share how you might pray for wisdom before going into a meeting. It was also great to have the opportunity to share our ideas and chat with others. We would thoroughly recommend this course!'

Refresh Retreat Days

Vilma Broadhurst, part of the Refresh team, writes,

'Refresh is a time set apart to meet, reflect and be refreshed, through quiet reflective prayer, with our God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Two to three times a year (it can be more) we set aside a couple of hours to meet with God on a very personal level. This is not necessarily a time to interact with one another, although we gladly do so afterwards at lunchtime. This is a time to meet with the Lord either through our own personal mode of prayer or through the various traditions of prayer on offer on the day. Carolyn, Delia and myself, meet to pray and discern the theme and Bible passages to focus on during this time.

Our key verse for our October meeting was Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not



know', with our guided meditation/reflection on Matthew 14:13-21. After this we went off to have our quiet time with our Lord. The Small Hall and other areas of our East Chadley Lane site were sectioned off with various reflective prayer modes for anyone that might find different ways of praying helpful. Our numbers were small but great were the blessings received by those who used the time to hear God speak into their lives and situation. We look forward to providing this space again this year and pray many will take time out to enjoy God's presence during our time of Refresh.'

Walk Thru the Bible

Liesl writes, *'I went to Walk Through the Old Testament and LOVED it, so when the opportunity came to walk through the New Testament, I was so excited. There was laughter and actions to learn as we went through the day, to help us remember the chronological order of events in the bible. Paul (the leader) was captivating, and I went home feeling I knew a little bit more about God's Word than I did before. I'd walk through the Bible anytime it was offered. It's an AMAZING day and the teaching is fabulous.'* And Liesl's enthusiasm was enough to inspire her mum to join her on the New Testament day! Vivien writes, *'I had the great joy of joining my daughter at the Walk Through the Bible day looking specifically at the New Testament. Even for an older person like me that has been reading the Bible since the cradle it was so helpful. The day was delivered in a really accessible way which meant that all attending could follow and learn together. It was a thoughtful and light approach but delivered a clear and thorough guide to the New Testament. Most worthwhile. Thank you.'*



Throughout the year we put on a number of courses for those wanting to explore the Christian faith for the first time, or for Christians wanting to revisit the basics, put their roots down deeper or learn how to be more effective in telling other people about Jesus. These included ALPHA, Christianity Explored, Talking Jesus, Hymns We Love, and a Beyond Belief taster session where we looked at the topic of 'Exclusive Faith?'

Hymns We Love was a new course which proved to be very popular. Each week we looked at a different well-known hymn and the key truths about God, faith, and the Christian message that could be drawn from it. It was also interesting to hear the story of the various hymn writers and how each hymn came to be written. During the sessions we watched a short video (which included singing the hymn) and then discussed what we'd seen & heard over tea and cakes. Through the course we looked at Rock of Ages, Amazing Grace, The Lord's My Shepherd, And Can It Be, and My Song is Love Unknown, with specials at Easter (How Great Thou Art), and Christmas (Hark the Herald Angels Sing). It was an enjoyable time and a gentle, accessible way of exploring the Christian faith/ reminding ourselves of the wonder of the gospel and God's heart and plans for each of us.



Frances G writes, *'Hymns We Love - Yes, we do love these old hymns but often lack any knowledge of the, sometimes, wonderfully moving stories behind them that actually brought them into being. What a joy it's been to discover these treasures and how beautifully the scriptures are revealed within them. So, yes, I've now learned to love them even more!'*

And Frances H adds, *'Each hymn spoke to us of the greatness of God and what a wonderful Creator and Saviour we have. After listening to all of the teaching about each hymn, we then had a time of discussion, followed by refreshments. It was all a real blessing!'*

In October we ran another new course called **Talking Jesus**, which was designed to inspire and equip Christians to share their faith in a natural and relevant way. Each session was based around a short video which unpacked the recently published 'Talking Jesus' research looking at the current state of faith in the UK and how people come to faith in Jesus, as well as giving testimonies and examples of people engaged in 'talking Jesus' in different ways. There was time for discussion and refreshments each evening too.



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

In addition to our regular termly Toolbox programmes, there are other opportunities for people to meet together for fellowship, to study together, to learn and to spend time in rest and reflection.

Rachel has sent us a photo of the **Thursday Fellowship** group – enjoying tea together!



Thursday Fellowship



Jo Hitchins writes about the opportunities that have arisen for **Teaching and Retreats at TBC** during 2024.

‘Part of the vision we have had about TBC is that it is used as a place of teaching, training, restoration and refreshment. As part of exploring that vision, we were delighted to host our first teaching day ‘Life in the Holy Spirit’ (led by Peter Nodding) and our first retreat day ‘Under His Wings’ (led by Jo Hitchins).

Those who attended the Teaching Day agreed: ‘I appreciated Peter’s honest answers to my questions’, ‘I’d like there to be another day to explore this further’. Many commented that they had felt free to share in this ‘safe space’ and that they had been enriched as they shared and learned.

Those who attended the Retreat Day commented they ‘received blessing through the simplicity and time given to reflect, the activities encouraging quiet reflection’ and that it was ‘a special place to meet with God without having any distractions’. Others noted it was ‘a great encouragement’ and the benefit gained ‘has persisted over time’. Annette comments ‘this was my first experience of a retreat and I look forward to the next one!’

Both of these days were advertised amongst local churches, and we have already planned a continuing programme of teaching and retreat days that are open beyond GBCers. Please do pray as we plan, and as we continue to develop the site (inside and outside) in support of these and other events/activities at TBC.’

Pastoral Care

Carolyn writes,

'In 2024 there were some major changes to the pastoral care of the church. After several years of heavy involvement in the pastoral oversight of GBC, Jo Hitchins stepped down from the Pastoral Care team to take up responsibilities in other areas of church life. We are indebted to Jo for all the love, care, wisdom and time that she gave to ensuring that the church was so well cared for during her time on the team. This was especially important during the long year of COVID when Jo and others were instrumental in implementing the 'Care and Connect' system that we still use today.

With a growing church, there was a need to expand the Pastoral Care core team which was then down to two – Carolyn Keats in oversight and Liz Webb expertly taking care of all the administration (thanks Liz!). So, in the autumn we welcomed Trudy Allan, Tony Goodwin, Paul Sibley and Adrian Woodbridge onto the core team, with our Lead Pastor, Daniel Beckett, also contributing when needed. It's been a delight to work with this gifted, caring and prayerful team who are now taking up responsibilities, organising rotas, and getting stuck in to visiting and ministering to others. We thank God for them all.

We now have over 40 people who are recognised 'Care and Connect Leaders' for the church family. We are so grateful to each of them for their care and pastoral oversight - some for 1 or 2 people; some for 15 or more! Their collective help and efforts mean that we can look after so many people across church life more effectively. We're also immensely grateful for the huge amount of informal caring that goes on in the church too. Huge thanks and appreciation for you all.

Sadly 2024 was a year of sorrows as well as joys as we said goodbye to many much-loved members of GBC who died during the year. We gave thanks for the life of Gerry Avril in February, and Danny Reid, Rita Goodwin and Marion Johnson in July. In the same month many of us joined with others at St. Mary's church for the funeral of our friend Martin Williams (husband to Carmen). We miss them all. We continue to uphold the families of all these loved ones as they continue to come to terms with their loss, as well as those in the fellowship who lost elderly parents and other relatives and friends during the year.

During 2024 we also had reason to celebrate too - with Ruth Bridge on

her 100th birthday and as we welcomed three new babies into our church family.'

As an illustration of how our church family care for each other, Peter writes, *'When my wife was called to glory last July, the family planned a tribute to her life. What we didn't anticipate was how not only the pastoral team, but many other church members, all pulled together to create a truly memorable and appropriate occasion. We, as a family, cannot adequately express the amazing support we received from all the participants - thank you all so much.'*

Carolyn continues,

'Recently after a number of the fellowship had been involved in practically helping one of our families, one of the Pastoral Care core team wrote me a message which said, 'Just letting you know that our church family are amazing! I am overjoyed at seeing such love in action - just had to share!' That's some accolade – and it's true!

Thank you for caring so well through 2024! Let's keep praying for each other and being the hands and feet of Jesus as we minister to one another and those we meet.'

Another contribution noting the importance of pastoral care, but also sharing some meaningful testimony from a challenging time in 2024, comes from Di. She writes, *'I feel that some of our year has been very public: for those who don't know why I will try to explain briefly. We were excited to set off for a two-week Cruise to the Portuguese islands of the Azores in April. Unfortunately the ship encountered very rough seas two days after we left Southampton. I had a frightening fall in our cabin bathroom ending up with very bruised ribs and a broken arm (complicated because I had a previous shoulder replacement). There followed four days in the ship's medical centre before we reached land; hospital, X-rays etc, a further seven days before reaching the UK; and finally surgery seventeen days after the accident. Those days were very painful and at times traumatic but we were aware of prayer and support from family and church family. Our daughter especially worked so hard with our Travel Insurers to get us back home...she was truly our Liaison Officer! The healing process wasn't*



Di

straightforward but I finally threw away my sling with permission to begin using my arm at the end of September. It all took six months out of the year. So was 2024 a wasted year? Hard, but definitely not wasted. We so appreciated folk at GBC who provided us with lovely meals for almost three weeks. Belonging to the church family meant so much: your prayers, cards, messages, visits and meals. Thank you! John will have his own thoughts about the year, but he did an amazing job as cook, carer, taxi driver, and companion. He was also a spiritual adviser and encourager, praying with me when I had no words.

Most important of all - where was God? We all know the answer: He was right there all of the time. Jesus said he would never leave us or forsake us - and he didn't. There were snippets of songs and Scripture that came into my mind especially during long painful nights - things like 'I am no longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God', 'God neither slumbers nor sleeps', 'God is my Rock, and my Fortress, a very present help in trouble', 'Be still and know that I am God'. The fact of being on a small rocky island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean with no way to get ourselves home made 'God is my Rock' so powerful and strengthening. A hard year for us both, but my sense of security in the 'everlasting arms' is forever stronger and certain. Thank you Lord.'

Together

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

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



everything! The programme is purposely varied to try and provide different events which will inevitably appeal to different people!

In 2024, we enjoyed curry evenings, two quiz nights, two board games evenings, a treasure hunt, some summer picnics and bbqs, a 'Guess who's coming to dinner' event in people's homes, a family walk, a picnic and games session at the park, and an International meal.

Mandy Wade writes about the **International Meal**, *'It was wonderful to attend and participate in the international meal/supper and taste the cuisine from our diverse membership. The meals were tasty, and the fellowship delightful as we shared just a snippet of the culture from our country of origin.'*

Suzy Monk writes about the **Family Walk**, *'With a very active son, opportunities to get to know other members of the congregation on a Sunday morning can be of limited duration(!) so we were very excited to join in the walk from The Beacon Centre to Hinchbrooke Park. We had fun catching up with some friends and getting to know others while enjoying some lovely sunshine and views. Well done to those who made it all the way to GBC; Joshua's bike just wouldn't have got that far - thanks for being flexible on distance. We'd highly recommend joining us next time as it was a really lovely way to mix and have fellowship together in the fresh air.'*



Enjoying a walk

Why not come along to one of our 2025 Together events and see for yourself!

Look out for our regular e-mails publicising the events – if you don't receive these currently, let us know and we'll add you to the list!

The Mix

Once again this year, on the first Sunday in September, we held our excellent 'The Mix' event. This is a day where we gather as many people from all the different aspects of GBC life together and enjoy each other's company as we worship together in sung worship, enjoy creativity and fun together, eat together and share life. We are very

THE
Mix

thankful to St Anne's school for letting us use their school buildings and grounds. Following on from our successful cupcakes competition in 2023, our cookies competition for 2024 was a very successful addition to the day! Highlights included our open-air worship together focusing on Jeremiah 33:3, 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know'. We also enjoyed the craft tent, the Lego tent, the prayer tent and the bouncy castles!

Regular Activities

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

Stay & Play (Monday mornings)

This is another new initiative that started in 2024. Christine Bradshaw heads up the Stay & Play team and she writes,

'Stay & Play is a baby and toddler group for parents, grandparents, and childminders to bring their 0-4s to The Beacon Centre on a Monday morning. The purpose of the group is to help build community amongst those with young children in their care and create opportunities for mutual support and encouragement.

Each week's session starts with time for freeplay for children to explore a range of toys at their own pace and includes a messy table activity, such as coloured rice, cornflour, kinetic sand, playdough or water play. Our 'tidy up' music has everyone helping to put the toys away ready for snack and story time. Each week we have a story, often a well known children's book that families may already be familiar with, to which we link a thought about how God loves us each of us. We finish our story time with a very short prayer of thanks.'



Having fun at Stay & Play!

Megan has attended the group every week since we started and writes, *'William and I love coming to Stay & Play every week. The group is lovely and inclusive, with a wide range of toys and activities.'*

Comments from other Mums include, *'Alanah and I have been enjoying attending Stay & Play since it started last summer. During that time she has really grown in confidence at the group and thoroughly enjoys herself! It's a lovely, relaxed group, full of very friendly people! There is structure and continuity to the sessions, which really helps the children know what's happening next, but the group isn't over organised, which allows the children the freedom to play and 'just be.'* Stay & Play is a great way for us to start our week and a definite highlight for us both! 'Liz. And Ashley described the group as, *'Friendly, caring & supportive. Thank you for being a part of our 'village.'*



I can see you!

Tuesday Treat (Tuesday mornings)

Nicky Rattigan heads up our Tuesday Treat team and she writes,

'Looking back on another year of fun and friendship at Tuesday Treat, I am delighted to say that we have welcomed more guests and some new team members into our fellowship; so much so, that we have outgrown the Small Hall and now meet in the Worship Area.'



Nicky & Carolyn

Our usual format is to serve hot drinks and tasty treats to our guests, creating a cosy atmosphere but we've also continued to celebrate special events and enjoyed short talks, charity sales, karaoke and a guest singer. At Christmas, over 60 of us



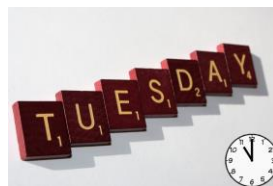
Christmas at Tuesday Treat

sat down to a traditional Christmas meal together. We now offer our Tuesday Extra service, led by Philip Thompson, three times a term, and these are very well attended. Several of our guests have joined courses such as 'Christianity Explored', 'Hymns we Love' and 'Alpha', and many tell us that they now feel that GBC is their church! After Christmas, Frances Hutt retired from kitchen duty after more than 40 years of faithful service at GBC. We are delighted to say that she still joins us on Tuesday mornings, bringing us her delicious cheese scones and home-made cake. Thank you Frances from all of us.'

Tuesdays @ 11 (Tuesday mornings in the summer holidays)

Carolyn writes,

'Tuesdays @ 11 is an offshoot of our Tuesday Treat programme. Over 3 days during the summer holidays we met for fun, activities and lunch together. This year's programme included a great singing duo 'KJ and the Catt' who got us singing along and several of us dancing too! We had a humorous talk about the great English seaside and some of the team entertained with a morning of 'Call my Bluff' when we had to spot correct answers among the made-up definitions (some of the panel were worryingly convincing!) We were also led in a 'Thought for the Day' and enjoyed relaxed time together over a meal. We're always thankful for the wonderful team who make our Tuesdays @ 11 possible.'



Thrive Youth Café (Tuesday afternoons)

It has been great to partner in 2024 with Thrive Youth Work and to host one of their many popular after school Youth Cafes at East Chadley Lane every Tuesday afternoon in term time. These cafes provide a safe space for young people to drop in on the way home from school for some food,

games and a place to chill. The young people say that, 'the milkshakes are amazing!' and 'the table football and ping pong are great!'

(Editor's note – the car park on a Tuesday afternoon often looks like a drop-in for bikes!)



Car Park – Bike Park!

Littlefoot (Wednesday mornings)

Littlefoot is our Wednesday morning club for babies, toddlers and their parents and carers. Parents and carers who currently attend Littlefoot with their little ones have written the following thoughts:



'I have been bringing my granddaughter to Littlefoot for a year now. She loves the singing and weekly craft sessions and is proud to take her handiwork home. The volunteers are really lovely and supportive to all that attend. It's a great way of meeting new people and making friends.' Trudi



Having messy fun!

'Littlefoot is a warm, friendly, inclusive and nurturing group which everyone looks forward to. It really does feel like a family. My children look forward to the group every week and talk about it a lot during the week. The structure of the playgroup is lovely and the weekly craft/play activity always goes down a treat.' Sarah

'We've been going along to Littlefoot for a few years now. It's a lovely group full of friendly, local faces of fellow parents and grandparents bringing their young children and babies to play. Each week there are lots of fun activities for the children to do including crafts/sensory activities (which are

always very popular), dinosaur toys, farmyards, easels for drawing, books to read, the slide and play kitchen. Grown-ups enjoy a hot drink and chat, the little ones enjoy snacks and story time with songs. It's a great way to start our Wednesday and we look forward to it each week. Thank you to all of the kind and amazing volunteers who run and organise the group, we love it.' Kayleigh

And Littlefoot lives on with people - a parent who hasn't attended for ten years said recently, *'Littlefoot is the stuff of legend!'*

Thursday Drop In (Thursday mornings)

The Thursday Drop In crowd enjoy their time together every Thursday morning. We asked a few of them what brings them here each week. Norman is the chauffeur – but also enjoys the coffee and biscuits!

Janet and Lorain discuss the latest knitting trends! Lorain knits scarecrows and Janet is currently knitting a Jacob for part of an exhibition of knitted Bible story scenes (36 stories in all), which is touring the country, and is being hosted at St Mary's church in

Godmanchester in March. Tony doesn't join in the knitting conversations – but is very happy in his role as Tony the tea boy – also providing upmarket biscuits! Others gather around the ever popular jigsaw table! And everyone agreed with Pat who highlighted how much she enjoys the time to just sit and chat – not always possible on a Sunday. There's always room for more to join the Thursday morning crowd – everyone is welcome!



Knitted Scarecrow

Inspire (Friday mornings)

Carolyn writes,

'INSPIRE continues to be a popular addition to the church programme. We only run 6 weeks of every term, so I'm often asked by those keen to join in, 'When is INSPIRE starting again?' It's an easy group to bring friends and neighbours to and we welcome everyone - beginners to experienced crafters. We've had a lovely mix of regular church folk and friends from the community through the year. We meet on Friday mornings to explore all things creative! We try new crafts, experiment with all kinds of mediums – paint, clay, paper, inks, felt etc and some people bring along projects they've been working on at home. This year we've had a go at decoupage mini bird houses, painting pictures using bubble wrap, encaustic art (using wax), pyrography (burning wood), making bath bombs, sashiko (Japanese stitching), Christmas wreaths...



Bird Houses

to name just a few! We always enjoy lots of chat, tea, coffee and of course, beautiful cakes! It's a fun, relaxed time and it's always great when our guests are chuffed with what they have produced!'

Friday Night Project (Friday evenings)

FNP is our weekly youth club for years 7-11, every Friday evening in term time. A core group of young people come and find FNP to be a great space to be themselves alongside their peers and the team in a safe environment. They are regularly involved in the planning of the programme which includes games, crafts, pizza evenings and baking challenges. After many years, the favourites remain bench ball and the tuck shop! Some of the young people's recent comments include, *'It's the highlight at the end of the school week'* and *'It literally gets me through the week'*. *'Ooh I love it there'* and *'It's full of friends, food, and sports stuff and it's super fun'*. *'I like playing chess with Daniel – but I've only beaten him twice!'* One of the young people recently completed a task linked to the setting up of a QR code for giving to GBC – by building the QR code in Lego!

**FRIDAY NIGHT
PROJECT**



QR Code

Schools Ministry

Daniel writes,

'It is a privilege to be invited to serve many of our local schools, including the three Godmanchester Primary Schools and Hinchingsbrooke Secondary School in a variety of ways throughout the year. We are regularly involved in assemblies and lessons. Our lesson topics for primary schools include, 'Why are you a Christian?' 'What is the Bible?' 'What is church?'

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

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

Children's Activity Days

We held two successful Champions events in 2024 for primary school aged children. Following many years of Holiday Clubs, for the first time in 2024 we offered a whole day in August in the summer holidays instead, to cater better for children's availability. They particularly enjoyed the sensory activities including looking for pictures from Bible stories in shaving foam and jelly balls! We then had a re-union afternoon in October half term.

Youth Residentials and Activity Weeks

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

Letton Hall (February)

In February half term a group of young people from GBC went to the Letton Houseparty organised by CROPS. There were about 70 young people in total spending 4 days in a converted Georgian hall in Norfolk. It was great to have a go at new things like go karting and hide and seek in the dark – don't get caught by the torch! Each day started and finished with a time of worship and teaching. Comments from the young people include, *'the coach ride is fun'*, *'amazing'* and *'I loved the games in the dark with glow sticks!'*

Youth Activity Week (July)

When school broke up for the summer holidays we had a week of fun activities. This is a great opportunity for young people who have just finished year 6 at primary school to start getting to know some of the leaders and older young people ready to join the youth ministry provision in September. The big list of things we enjoyed included:

- games on the Rec
- trampolining
- off road biking
- a bbq and film night
- canoeing at Houghton Mill
- a murder mystery and escape room

The young people said, *'Hanging out on the rec playing games was fun'* and *'Kayaking was good'* although it was noted by a leader that the inability to tell left from right while canoeing resulted in an unplanned collision with the river bank!

Dreaming the Impossible (August)

In August six young people and 3 leaders set off for another Residential trip – this time returning to camp at Stafford showground for 5 nights in a grassy field. The camping was fun, and so were the fun and games including a pub quiz and a board games evening. But even better was being able to join in with thousands of other young people in worship and for teaching. One of the young people said, *'such a vibe – so perfect'*



Camping at Stafford

Special Christmas Events

As always, December was a busy month with a huge variety of Christmas related events, activities and celebrations. It was real joy to be able to make good use of both our buildings as we celebrated with each other and our communities in Godmanchester and Little Stukeley. Many thanks to the teams, led by Hayley Beckett and Stephanie Brown, who decorated both venues so beautifully. We enjoyed the new additions to the decorations this year of large pink and purple baubles displaying the words, 'hope', 'love', 'joy' and 'peace' – all written in 19 different languages representing so many nationalities and cultures from within our church family.



Hope, Love, Joy, Peace



Lego Nativity

Another new addition to the Christmas décor this year were the many scenes from the Nativity story created from Lego. Thanks to the Lego masters for this initiative and to Pam Brown for the beautifully painted backdrops.

There were a number of opportunities to gather for Christmas refreshments and fun together including the Drop-In Café

at The Beacon Centre, The Youth Café at East Chadley Lane and the Families Venture Brunch at East Chadley Lane on Christmas Eve. Mat & Kayleigh write, *'Christmas Eve family brunch had the usual welcoming, relaxed atmosphere you can expect from a GBC event. We loved the layout for this event too - akin to a cafe in a church, less focused on looking to the front (chairs in a row) but set up to face inward around a small table, looking at the people who were sitting with you around the table. Great way to prompt conversation and community.*

The kids very much enjoyed the crafts (scratch art was a winner!) and the ability to eat their body weight in pastries. Good food. Good company. Great way to start Christmas Eve.'

Another new initiative for 2024, as part of the brunch event, was a Nativity based Escape Room experience!

As well as making good use of both our buildings in December, we also went out and about in our communities. It was good to be able to take the opportunity to leaflet every house in Little Stukeley to let them know about our Christmas events, as well as advertise them more widely in the surrounding areas.

A group of GBC musicians and singers took to the streets of Godmanchester, Little Stukeley and Alconbury Weald as part of a new national initiative called **'Shine Your Light'**. The idea was for as many churches and Christian organisations as possible across Britain to hold open air carol events in their communities on the same day. Unfortunately, as the day approached the forecast was predicting terrible weather, but thankfully it stayed dry (though quite nippy!) and we had good fun singing carols in the three venues. We plan to find a time and places with a little more footfall next year though!

People from across our congregations and activities contributed again to the Shoebox appeal from **AMEN Ministries**. Carolyn writes,

'In October we again started packing shoeboxes full of goodies to send to Romania to brighten the Christmas of needy families. Some of our members had been knitting during the year too, so we were able to supplement the shoeboxes with a sack of handmade blankets, and extra scarves, gloves etc. Once



Christmas Shoe Boxes

again, we sent the shoeboxes through the organisation AMEN, who then give them to local churches to distribute to families they know are in need. This act of giving strengthens the church's friendship with and presence in the community. This year we sent 61 shoeboxes from GBC which was a magnificent effort. Particular credit to Tuesday Treat members for filling so many boxes but thank you to everyone who contributed in any way. Your generosity is much appreciated by AMEN and the families receiving the parcels. It's a practical way of shining our light and sharing the love of Jesus with others.'

In the busyness of December it was good to be able to offer the opportunity for people to attend our **Blue Christmas** reflective service. Carolyn writes,

'For those who came it was an opportunity just to take a brief time away from all the busyness of the season to be quiet and reflect on the real meaning of Christmas. Those who wanted to also remembered and gave thanks for loved ones who had died and lit a candle in their memory. Here are a couple of responses to the event:



'I just wanted to say how much we enjoyed/got out of the Blue Service tonight. It was lovely just having the quiet, time and space to listen.' *'The lovely service last night gave time for thinking and reflecting, thank you.'*

Carols by Candlelight is possibly the best attended celebration service in the whole year as it draws friends, neighbours and families as well as 'regulars' and it has often been a real squeeze to fit everyone in! So it was a real blessing in 2024 to be able to use both of our sites so that we could hold the same service on two different days in two different places – allowing people to have more choice (and more space!) to enjoy this wonderful occasion together.

Prayer

Carolyn writes,



'We have continued to encourage prayer in a variety of ways throughout 2024. Regular weekly prayer meetings have been held on Wednesday evenings (on Zoom) and Friday mornings (in person) at East Chadley Lane, and more recently a regular monthly prayer meeting at The Beacon Centre. A group has also met monthly through the year to pray for World Mission and a termly meeting has recently started to pray for The Persecuted Church. We also have a weekly prayer email outlining the ministry needs and prayer requests of individuals in (or associated with) the church family. We continue to offer prayer at the end of our Sunday morning celebrations each week. We are grateful for the Prayer Team who have ministered faithfully in this way throughout the year. Liesl is part of our Sunday morning prayer team and she writes, 'It is so exciting seeing God answer prayer in people's lives. It is a privilege to come to him with other's prayer needs. People come for prayer and leave feeling more peaceful, as they have left their worries with God. God loves to hear our voices and always listens to our prayers.'

In the weeks leading up to Pentecost we again took part in the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative, praying individually and collectively about our part in God's mission and specifically praying for many people to come to know Jesus. In September at The Mix, we introduced our verse of the year from Jeremiah 33: 3, 'Call to me and I will answer you and show you great and unsearchable things you do not know.' We felt that God was giving GBC this invitation and challenge to seek him in deeper ways. This is something we have continued to encourage since.

In November we held a dedicated Week of Prayer which included daily prayer pointers, prayer walks around the neighbourhood, one-off prayer meetings and a Day of Prayer when individuals in the congregation signed up for a 30 min slot to pray for the life and ministry of the church. We thank God for the gift of prayer, and the many ways he has blessed us, provided for us and answered our prayers through the year. Let's take up the challenge and seek him in deeper ways in the year to come, anticipating all those secrets he wants to share with us and demonstrating our dependence on him for all that is to come. Thank you for praying.'

Mission

Global Mission



John Collinson, trustee for Global Mission, writes,

'Jesus said, 'The harvest is so great, and the workers are so few' (Matthew 9:37 Living Bible) – and this remains as true today as it was when Jesus spoke those words. Many in our fellowship personally support individuals and organisations that are on harvest fields in other parts of the world, working to meet the physical and spiritual needs of those who are often the most vulnerable, poor and marginalised in their society. As a church in 2024 we focussed our Global Mission support in 4 directions: firstly, an outreach ministry to seniors and young people in India (via Anglo Indian Concern), and secondly a children's home in the Philippines (Rehoboth). These ministries had their origins in the vision and passion of brothers and sisters in the GBC family many years ago – and last year the organisations continued to have personal links with us: AIC trustees Stephanie and Jude from GBC had a very successful trip to Chennai to encourage those working in the office and also at the People of the Way church. At Rehoboth Kathryn (once one of GBC's young people) continued her 'part-time' role working and teaching there for portions of the year – as well as raising funds to buy a beautiful new multi-purpose vehicle. Thirdly, we supported Grace from GBC who worked in one of the most challenging countries in Central Asia overseeing a number of social care projects. Completing our focus on overseas mission we supported the Hope* family, a couple working in another region of the same country as Grace. Amongst other things they have been central to a remarkable project translating Bible stories into 'unwritten' languages – and making them into audio recordings. Each month in 2024 we met to pray for the work of each of these brothers and sisters – and for others connected with our fellowship who are on different mission-fields. Financially, we were glad to tithe our income and used much of it to help support those mentioned above. Our desire remains the same, that those who have gone out to be workers in these spiritual harvest fields will be encouraged as they see lives change for the better – and primarily that many will be impacted with the good news of the Gospel and come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.'*

** Names have been changed*

Local Mission

FoodBank

Jude Lechmere, FoodBank Project Manager, writes,



'You may think that the Foodbank is all about food, as in a bag of pasta, some sauce and baked beans – yes but it is so much more! We have 25+ regular volunteers who turn up to staff the 2 open sessions each week to open the food bank, sort all donations and collections, date check every item, organise the stock into crates, then select and build parcels ready to go out. They process the paperwork and voucher requests, enter data on the system, and also record referrals made. They will give toiletries when needed for personal care, mugs, cooking pans, plates, can-openers, sometimes even dog or cat food. Last year we supported over 5,200 people with over 50,000 Kgs of food. We signposted many to CARC (Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire) or similar for financial review and applications for PIP, Attendance Allowance, Council Tax review or similar. The Teams of volunteers led by Peter and Phil are amazing, and once again I am so thankful that their hard work is great to see and benefits so many people. I may be Project Manager in name, but am regularly reminded that this is a Team event and I have THE BEST Team enabling me to look good and be so blessed by what goes on.'

HAMA

John Pickersgill, HAMA Centre Manager, writes,



'Huntingdon Area Money Advice (HAMA) is a charity which was set up by Churches Together in Huntingdon and Godmanchester in 2013. People from Godmanchester Baptist Church have been involved at the heart of HAMA throughout that time and we are grateful for the support and encouragement we receive from GBC. Our small team of trained advisers includes Roger Hickling, Colin Borland and me from GBC. Please speak to me if you would like to know more about possible ways of supporting the work of HAMA and their clients, or if you know someone who needs our help.

Throughout 2024 we have continued to work on behalf of clients. We work closely with other support agencies, including the foodbanks here

and in Ramsey, and departments of the District and County Councils. We have helped clients to be free from significant debts and to make a fresh start. We have helped our clients write off £1.2 million pounds of debt in 2024, the highest amount in our history. We have also advised clients on their eligibility for benefits or discounted rates for services, so that they are more able to manage. For some clients we negotiate affordable payment arrangements with their creditors.

Although the work can be challenging, it is also rewarding when we see the difference we can make for our clients. Here is some recent feedback from grateful clients:-

'Thank you so much for everything. You had inspired me to begin taking my family to church and since last summer we have been regularly attending local Sunday services and their Sunday school for the children. I have recently spoken with the vicar about being confirmed and having my children christened.'

'Mine has certainly been a challenging case but I am so grateful for all of the help my adviser provided to help me get me and my family out of debt which is something I had put off for a very long time! I feel so much more relieved, especially having moved into a new property with no worries of debts or collectors coming to mine and my children's home! Thank you so very much from me and my family!'

'Thank you so much for everything you have done to help achieve this for me, it really is appreciated and will provide a fresh start for me and so many aspects of my life. I can't thank you enough.'

Our buildings

As we have already noted, we are so grateful for the blessing of having our two buildings, at East Chadley Lane (ECL) and The Beacon Centre (TBC), and that they are in use so much of the time for all our congregations, groups, activities and ministries. We are also grateful to all those who help to look after our buildings and grounds in all sorts of ways. This takes a lot of work and energy and oversight to keep everything functioning as it should. As well as redevelopments and refurbishments over the years, some of which are ongoing at TBC, we have a regular maintenance programme to keep the buildings in order and to repair things as and when necessary. It is important that we are good stewards of both of our sites.

The Hive

Our latest building project, which took place during 2024, was to redevelop the old 'shop' site on Cambridge Street. That work was completed at the end of 2024 and the building there has been renamed as The Hive.



Jude Lechmere, FoodBank Project Manager, explains, 'When GBC moved into its present site in 1990, there was an 'old shop' on Cambridge Street next to what is now Flameboyant that had been used as a greengrocers by Krolls many years ago and then as a shop space by TansArt Print Factory. It had fallen into disrepair after use for mixed storage and Church camping equipment. Several times ideas had been pursued on how to develop the site and it had reached a point where the roof was falling in and as an asbestos roof this needed attention! I am thrilled to say The Hive has evolved from this, with grant applications made for funds for building restoration and refurbishment, and so from June 2024 to December 2024 we saw an ugly duckling move into being a swan in so many ways!

The building is currently for the Foodbank to use with 2 office rooms for CARC (Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire) staff to meet with clients to give advice, review their situations, and most importantly for folk to be listened to, to be safe and supported. For all of us it can feel like the wheels seem to be coming off in a situation often due to lost jobs, rises in the cost of living, debt issues, relationship breakdown or perhaps poor choices, but there for the Grace of God go any of us

Ultimately we want the Foodbank to be out of business and The Hive will be a space used by GBC and the wider community to meet and support people when they need some help.'

As we near the end of our review of 2024, you will have realised as you have read about all the congregations and activities that take place at GBC and beyond, just how many people are involved in sacrificially giving of their time, their skills and their gifts to enable all of these ministries to take place. Some roles in which people serve are 'up front' and noticeable. Others are behind the scenes and hidden. We are truly grateful to each one. A special thank you to Rich Raj for the front cover image and all his work this year on our graphics.

And as with anything in life, there are financial costs involved as well. Cliff Broadhurst, our church treasurer, writes,

'We have been blessed again in 2024. Through your generosity we have been able to fund all of the activities described in this review, grant over £30,000 to various missions and ministries at home and abroad, and complete the step free access at the Beacon Centre. Also, through your generosity, and alongside the many grants awarded to the foodbank, we were able to renovate and open The Hive, enabling us to serve the community through food distribution and financial advice. As a growing church, there will be many calls on our finances in 2025 and my prayer is that we will be able to meet all those challenges in our service to the Lord.'

Over the page you will see a photo board of our staff and Leadership Team (our trustees). Do always feel free to seek them out and chat about anything that's on your mind about GBC! Questions, comments, concerns, encouragement – all welcome!

In Closing

As this review comes to an end, we can only be thankful to God for his amazing faithfulness, grace and provision. His fingerprints are everywhere through these pages! It's been great to read the testimonies of those who have felt his touch in some way during the year, either directly or through rubbing shoulders with church people or engaging in church activities.

We have seen the work of GBC expand in 2024 – new ministries, new people coming along to services and activities, new volunteers and importantly new life in Christ.

It's been exciting to see our verse for 2023 from Isaiah 54: 2 continuing to play out across church life – 'Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.'

We are so grateful for the grants, financial giving and practical help that have enabled the refurbishment of The Hive and for everyone who has contributed to make The Beacon Centre the welcoming hub that it now is.

Most of all we are grateful for every person who has served in any way, however big or small, across church life during this past busy year. It's been a huge team effort. I feel enormously privileged to be part of such a generous-hearted, gracious and loving church family.

Our aim remains the same – to Love God, Love Each Other and Make Disciples. We can only do this with God's help, power and enabling. So, let's seek him even more deeply in prayer and take up his exciting invitation 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.' (Jeremiah 33: 3)

I'm excited to see what the next year holds as we press on in our mission to serve him and make him known. Thank you for all you are and all you do. To God be the glory!

Carolyn Keats
Associate Pastor

Pastors, Leadership Team and Staff



Daniel Beckett
Lead Pastor



Carolyn Keats
Associate Pastor



Cliff Broadhurst
Church Treasurer



John Collinson
Mission & Worship



Joe George
FoodBank & Buildings



Jo Hitchins
Minister in Training



Sue Houghton
Church Secretary



Andrew Shefford
Safeguarding &
Health & Safety



Sunil Tatiparti

Staff:



Ruth Blakey
Administrator



Jude Lechmere
FoodBank Project Manager

Godmanchester Baptist Church

East Chadley Lane, Godmanchester

Huntingdon PE29 2BJ

01480 458565

office@godmanchesterbaptist.org

godmanchesterbaptist.org

Registered Charity No 1188171