

# Cheltenham Network Church (CNC)

## Church Reports 2014

### 1.1 Ashley's Report

It seems that every year I have said, 'the last year has been a time of significant change'. Well, true to form, this last year has been one of significant change. In January we changed our name and re-launched with radio interviews and press articles. We built a new website and grabbed a new web address ([www.cnc.church](http://www.cnc.church)).

At the AGM in February we changed the whole way we lead the church and separated the council into two smaller groups. The Trustee group has concentrated upon governance issues, whilst the Vision Group has looked at developing a coherent program for us as we engage more and more in the South of Cheltenham.

A good sized group made it to Spring Harvest just before Easter (and an even bigger group this year!) and we enjoyed a lovely day as a church at Harnhill where Jon Soper and a team from Exeter Network Church encouraged us to press on into 'networks'. In September we started putting into practice the Strategy Document developed by the Vision Group and looked at 'walking across the room' (after Easter this year we will return to this theme), we partnered with C3 to show several of England's world cup games (least said the better) and built upon the success of previous years with our Advent schedule of Christingle, Wassail and Carol service. The latest addition to our annual program was a rousing Burns night with dancing, haggis and a wee nip of the 'water of life'.

A huge initiative was the birth of X:site. In collaboration with churches from across the south of Cheltenham we launched a five-times-a-year event for children from 7 years old to year 7 in the Pavilion at Hatherley. We have now run three events with around 40 children each time. In total 67 different children have attended including 17 who don't go to church, representing 12 different schools and 9 Cheltenham churches. This has been a significant project which will continue to bear fruit for a long time to come. Huge thanks to everyone who has invested their time in this. X:site is only one of the ways we have developed our strategic partnerships with the churches around us.

For many years Glenfall/CNC has spoken about itself as a 'resourcing' church and that has really come to the fore in the past year. I got to lead a Lent course about films for the South Cheltenham Team as well as presenting the 'Follow Me' course on behalf of Emmanuel. A small ministry team went to the Midlands On Fire day (an Anglo-Catholic charismatic network) to offer prayer ministry and support. We have been drawn into planning meetings with the South Cheltenham team and I now meet regularly with Jacqui Hyde and Maz Allen (the Church in Warden Hill) to see what we can benefit from doing together. Our week of prayer at the URC building was a fruit of this which is likely to become an annual event shared across the churches. We have also begun a new once a month combined evening service which will be creative and reflective.

The year has been a busy one for me personally with involvement in Diocesan Synod and an invitation to be a member of the Council of Reference for the diocese' Department of Mission and Ministry. I have continued to take regular assemblies at Balcarras which is a real joy and privilege and was delighted to be able to speak at their Christmas assembly. Another great privilege was to be asked by Simon Wheeler to be his chaplain for the day and lead the annual act of remembrance in Cheltenham town centre.

Throughout the year I have continued with my studies toward an MA in theology and also 'topped up' with the New Wine leaders' conference in Harrogate and the HTB leaders' conference in London. I hope that CNC has felt the benefit without me dumping too much thinky stuff on you.

I cannot write a report about the year that we have had without also remembering that it began in pain and loss. Of course, it has been felt the greatest by Clare and the family, but the death of Keith Holland had a profound impact upon many of us. His 'standing-room-only' thanksgiving service was a testament to the lives he had so deeply touched and its gospel focus truly celebrated his life of faith. We will continue to miss him.

As we move into 2015 it is true to say that we are a growing and vibrant church community and we look forward to see what God will do with us and through us. We are praying in faith that our growth will continue and are asking God that we would be a church of at least 150 of all ages by the end of the year. This is not a work for us to do but we should have our eyes and hearts open to join in with what God is doing whenever we become aware of it.

Thank you to everyone who has given so much to make this such a good year. May this coming year provide many stories for God's glory.

## **2.1 Trustee Report, Dick Tallents**

Trustees for the past year have been Angus Johnson (Angus started the year as Chairman but stood down owing to pressure of work) Dick Tallents (Current Chairman) Chris Hughes (now celebrating 25 years as Treasurer, Sue Tallents (who has now stood down as a Trustee) and both Sue Brown and Neil Plant who we have welcomed as new Trustees).

Special thanks and recognition need to go to Angus who, has had some major challenges over his ten years as Chairman. Through a combination of considered wisdom and calm presence of mind he has steered us through all of them. It is great that he remains a Trustee and that we are still able to benefit from his wisdom. As the only woman on the Trustees for most of the past 10 years Susie's level-headed wisdom has also made a major contribution to our meetings.

The work of the Trustees has taken on a significant change through the year following the decision at last year's AGM to disband the Council. Whilst the Vision Group have responsibility for assisting Ashley in drafting the future mission goals and activities of the church, the Trustees have taken on board things such as Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Risk Assessments (which had previously been handled by the Council) as well as their legal responsibilities to the Charities Commission for the proper running of the Church.

The Trustee meetings through 2014 have been dominated by work on the BMO (Bishop's Mission Order) with a large amount of work going into getting a complete understanding of what this entails and then drafting and re-drafting the document to make sure that it provides a sound basis going forward. Ashley has invested many, many hours in networking with everyone and anyone who can advise on the process and help oil the wheels of progress. These meetings he has reported back to the Trustees in detail and we Trustees are firmly of the opinion that the BMO provides a strong foundation for the future operation of the Church. We were very pleased that the overwhelming majority of Church members endorsed this view following our all-church meeting in January. We are hopeful that the order will be signed in the late Spring or early Summer.

It must be mentioned that by deciding to go down the route of a BMO we will of necessity have to break our special relationship with Trinity Church Cheltenham of whom we are currently "a congregation". This is a great sadness to us and special mention should be made of the generosity of Trinity in accommodating us and providing many services to us totally free of charge and also of the big role played by Mark Bailey in his role of ultimate overseer of the Church. However as we prepare to say goodbye to the old we have already had a great welcome from the new and in particular from Jacqui Hyde of The Church in Warden Hill who has been happy to work with Ashley to have joint services with us and also from the Paul Wilkinson (Team Rector) and the rest of the South Cheltenham Team Ministry, who has invited us to join in their planning sessions for the coming year. In 2015 there have already been three such meetings involving your Trustees and members of the South Side Team.

In the absence of an elected Church Council the Trustees were keen to move from being an appointed body to becoming an elected one. This move was also partly in reaction to comments at last year's AGM on the subject. Our Trust Deed is quite clear that, in common with most charitable trusts, the trustees should be elected. We have decided to adopt a common procedure to enable this whereby the Church elects a candidate for the Trustees to appoint. Theoretically the Trustees will always have the choice whether or not to appoint that candidate or, at any time, to alter the election process or timing. It is very unlikely that they would decide not to appoint a candidate against the wishes of the Church but an example where they might change timing would be if there were to be some major change in the church where they would wish to delay changing their structure until that period of uncertainty was past thus enabling an experienced team to continue handling that situation.

We have also decided to increase the number of Trustees back up to six including the Treasurer. The Treasurer will continue to be appointed whereas the other five Trustees will serve a five year term of office with one retiring by rotation each year.

At the AGM Ashley will discuss our new Safeguarding Handbook which has now been agreed and signed off by the Trustees. It has been a massive work and special credit needs to go to both Lyndsay and Ashley who have put an enormous amount of work into it. Safeguarding is critical in any organisation and, aside from the Trustees legal obligation to have ownership of our policy, it is important that every attendee of CNC is aware of our procedures/team which can be employed, not only in regard to attendees of CNC but also in the wider world. Over the 25 years that this church has been in existence I have known of four adults in our congregation who have had major problem is later life as a result of abuse in their youth, a schoolboy who was subjected to bullying/sexual abuse and finally a family who, had I been aware of a safeguarding policy at that time, I would have taken the opportunity to discuss with the Safeguarding team.

This year Ashley has adopted a new financial planning spreadsheet that has been a real boon to the Trustees in enabling us to maintain our watch on Church finances. It has long been a policy of the Trustees that we should maintain cash balances equating to a minimum of three months expenditure and it is good to report that we are doing this which means that we are financially "secure". However, overall, our income is actually just a little less than our expenditure. One reason for this has been taking on our Youth and Music Interns. Their expenses have been financed through special donations last year. However, if we are to continue to have these interns in future years it is important that we increase our income and that each of us should be prepared to dig a little deeper.

Another key commitment for the Church is that, like many of our members, we should give away at least 10% of our income. Under the watchful guidance of Frank Booth and Carole Whyborn, supported by Sue Brown and Dave Hatten, our Giving Group makes this happen. Recently, having consulted with the Trustees a three year term of office was agreed for members of this group with their members retiring by rotation. If you would like to be considered as a future member of this group please have a word with Frank.

Looking to the future the Trustees have a lot of work to do in the immediate short term as we prepare to take back the employment of Ashley from Trinity and set up a structure for Church governance. On our longer term agenda we need to consider the preparation of a new constitution for the Church for introduction as soon as possible after the BMO comes into effect and we are no longer subject to the governance of Trinity Church.

### **3.1 Trustees**

The trustees are currently made up of:

Dick Tallents (Chair)  
Chris Hughes (Treasurer)  
Sue Brown  
Angus Johnson  
Neil Plant

We are looking to elect one more trustee to bring the team up to six. Trustees serve a term of office up to five years. We are in the process of moving to a body where five of the trustees are elected by the membership, with the treasurer appointed by the trustees.

In the coming year the trustees will be looking at finalising the Bishop's Mission Order and developing a church constitution (amongst many other things).

## 3.2 Vision Group

Last year we elected six people for our inaugural Vision Group (AKA Strategy Group). We set a term of office of up to three years with two members of the group stepping down each year. At the first meeting the members of the group drew lots to see who would step down after one year, two years and three years in order to create the ongoing pattern. Each name below has a number next to it to show how long they will serve for. For the past year the Vision Group has been made up of:

Colin Brown (1 year)  
Angus Johnson (1 year)  
Dick Tallents (2 years)  
Carole Whyborn (2 years)  
Frank Booth (3 years)  
Sue Fisher (3 years)

This year Colin and Angus came to the end of their one year terms. We are incredibly grateful for all their input over the year, particularly as we were on such a sharp learning curve. The work of the Vision Group (which originally was called the Strategy Group) was encapsulated in the Strategy Document which was published last autumn.

Their work in the coming year will look roughly like this:

**Day Away March 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Church review: identify key broad objectives for 2016 and beyond.

**13<sup>th</sup> April:**

Identifying areas to be developed, projects, programs, events and Sunday teaching themes for 2016. Consider where proposals may need to be acted upon over successive years and what can be achieved in each year.

**13<sup>th</sup> July:**

Taking April aspirations, identify priorities and look at diary. Identify where teams need forming or projects need planning lead times. Set goals for each proposal and consider budget implications. Speak to stakeholders

**14<sup>th</sup> September:** Meet with trustees to discuss proposals

**16<sup>th</sup> November:** Confirm final plan with key stakeholders in big meeting

## 4.1 Prayer

Prayer continues to be foundational for us. We continued the pattern of monthly Thursday night prayer meetings which for a while met in the Niblett's house before walking in the area. From the autumn our monthly prayer moved into St. Christopher's and more recently the URC Church room. From March our monthly prayer meetings will be open to the Church in Warden Hill members and so will move earlier to 7.30pm but be finished by 9pm to make it easier for them to join us.

Our weekly prayer meetings every Tuesday and Saturday have sustained the spiritual life of the church throughout another year of change. Huge thanks go to all involved in these meetings. During the summer Angus Johnson and Dave Hatten organised prayer walks around South Cheltenham and the surround areas. The PrayerNet email network continues to allow us to rapidly respond to needs within the church and beyond with over sixty recipients on this mailing list. Frank and Grace Booth have done a wonderful job overseeing the prayer

ministry in the church and their team of leaders have made sure that every week, at every service, there are people available to pray with others.

In the autumn we introduced prayer bookmarks to encourage members to engage in ongoing prayer for those they new, primarily for those not yet Christian. In February we ran a week of prayer 24:7 in the URC church room. This is almost certain to become a regular feature of our calendar but in partnership with the Church in Warden Hill.

Thank you to all who have made (and continue to make) these things possible.

## **5.1 Worship**

The past year has allowed us to settle in a little to the Bournside venue. Initially the drama studio was a spiritually hard place to worship in and really through until the summer our services were a little hard work. However, since the summer last year we have had an increasing sense of God's presence and freedom in worship. We look forward to God continuing to move us forward.

Our monthly whole group practises for all the musicians involved on Sunday mornings have been enjoyable and helpful as we develop the core repertoire of the worship group and our skills as a team.

This Christmas was the second year we have had a choir for our carol service and it proved to be a great event. We are already looking at how we can move things to the next level for this coming Christmas. A huge thanks to everyone involved.

We are continuing to grow a regular PA team to help with set-up and tidy away on Sundays and would like to say thank you to those who have already volunteered. There is still plenty of room for others to serve in this area.

Our evening services at Brizen Hall have continued to be a real blessing and we have enjoyed the different style and feel.

It has been great to have a worship intern from the Worship Academy at Trinity and Fiona has been wonderful. It will be sad to see her go in the summer but we hope to see her doing lots more up front before then.

Worship continues to be a core part of our church life and we are committed to pushing into a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit and freedom in responding to him. At the heart of all we do is engaging in God's presence.

Thanks to our words team, worship leaders, musicians and PA team. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Dave & Sarah

## **6.1 Mission & Community, (3 faces)**

Often 'mission' can be a confusing term, meaning different things to different people. For some Christians there is only one mission and that is to bring other people to faith. Whenever they hear the word mission they hear 'evangelism' and judge any church mission work on whether people become Christians. For others mission is about going out and caring for a broken world, engaging in social action, hands on. When they look at a church's mission they want to know things like 'how have the poor been helped?', 'how have we healed the broken hearted?', 'who have we lifted up?'. For some mission is about transforming society, challenging unjust structures, fighting the big issues that cause so much brokenness and pain. All three of these aspects of mission are true Biblical faces of Christ's call to us. So to make sure we are engaging fully in the work of the kingdom we think it would be good to

specifically engage with each.

1. **Outreach** (Hospitality & Evangelism)
2. **Care** (Social Action, Mercy mission)
3. **Campaigning** (Peace and justice)

Some of the things we do will, of course, cover more than one of these areas.

## 6.2 Outreach (Hospitality and Evangelism)

Last year we had two big socials to develop our 'fringe' (and have fun). The Christmas Wassail was good, with 56 people attending, but the venue didn't quite fit the style of the evening. This next year we will need to find a more cosy place. By contrast the Burns night was perfect with nearly 80 people there. The only problem if we do it again in 2016 (and we will) is the venue may be too small! Our Kings' Kraft, Bookclub and Old Farts Fitness networks continued to build relationship with our friends outside the church.

In the coming year we will look to develop some more overt evangelistic activities and aim to run an Alpha course in early 2016.

## 6.3 Care (Social Action, Mercy Mission)

We ran the New ID (eating disorders) course again in 2014 and it was one of the biggest that we have had. The YMCA network is still taking some time out and discerning what is the next thing for them. Our full circle network has continued to meet regularly and offer invaluable support for those dealing with aging parent, particularly those suffering with dementia. Our Voluntary Sector Network has also met regularly to encourage and support those involved in volunteering. We also saw several church members host children from Chernobyl to give them, often, their first real holiday.

We have continued to collect for the food-bank at CCP. The box is there each Sunday and Carole Whyborn makes sure everything gets to those that need it. Don't forget, if you can afford a few extra bits with your shopping you can make a big difference. This year we took part again in the Christmas Hamper Scamper scheme and gathered a remarkable 16 hampers. Some were put together by small-groups or families and others were made up by Carole from cash donations. Our learning curve for next Christmas is that cash donations may have to be made earlier so Carole has a little more time to get the hampers ready.

We have also had a growing number of members becoming part of the Cheltenham Street Pastors team and we encourage others to consider this.

## 6.4 Campaigning (Peace and Justice)

We continue to be a Fairtrade church and took part again in Fairtrade fortnight in 2014. Several members were involved in fundraising for charities including Angus, Luke and Adam Johnson who cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats to raise money for various charities.

Well done to everyone who took part in these great activities.

## 7.1 Discipleship, pastoral & family

### 7.2 CNC Children's work

We continue to use the Energize material for our groups and this is proving very good. The feedback from both leaders and children is extremely positive.

This past year we expanded our use of the sports centre to include the small gym, which has given us some extra space, particularly when weather is bad. The children love being able to use the outside facilities at the school, weather permitting.

Currently we have 35 children (under 18) regularly attending across all our groups, which is wonderful, but we hope to see this grow over the coming year. With this growth comes an ongoing pressure for volunteers to serve this important ministry and the more we grow the more we must consider employing a children's and youth worker. It has been wonderful having Miriam with us as an intern from Cheltenham Youth for Christ and this has helped us to continue to offer such high quality kids work.

At the end of 2014 Neil Plant stepped down as kids co-ordinator to concentrate on his new trustee duties. We must say an enormous thank you to him for serving our kids so diligently for several years. We are also delighted to say that Michelle Niblett has agreed to take on this role and is already hard at work.

In addition to our Sunday groups we have also now had a year of mid-week discipleship groups for our older kids in Rock and Next Gen which have proved very popular.

A huge thank you to all our teams of volunteers who give their time to making our kids' work so vibrant and something our kids love to go to.

### **7.3 Pastoral Care**

After two years of running networks we continue to see their benefits. Networks allow members to initiate groups based around their passions and gifts.

We have 7 networks operating as traditional style small groups (Core networks) and these groups will need to start to consider how to draw in and engage new members over the coming months as the church continues to grow.

In addition to the Core Networks we have:

WOTS (Bible Study)  
Charlton Kings Cluster  
RockNet and NetGen (midweek discipleship groups for 11-18 year olds)  
Tuesday and Saturday Prayer Networks  
YMCA  
Book Club  
Kraft Club  
Old Farts Fitness Club (OFFC)  
IHA-UDP (Ethiopia charity) Supporters  
Voluntary Sector Network (VSN)  
Full Circle (support network for those caring for aging parents)

The church is very intentionally shaped around day-to-day pastoral care being picked up by Network leaders (particularly the 'core' networks) and throughout the year I have heard more wonderful stories of quiet acts of support and kindness that has come through the networks or through individuals. Well done and thank you for the way you care for each other.

We try and notice needs in our church family but sometimes we miss them. Please don't ever suffer in silence, asking for help is a gift to others because it gives them an opportunity to put into practice the love of Jesus. If you ever need any support of any kind give Ashley a call.

### **8.1 Financial Report,**

The end of year balance shows a decrease of £2,100 and although any deficit is not good we have remained with our three month operating surplus intact. Although we have seen giving reduce by a little over £1,300, our giving in 2013 had been boosted by some large one-off donations. The real challenge has been that after maintaining a freeze on expenditure in 2013 has had a knock on into 2014. There are some one off costs in terms of new software that had to be bought and we have cut back costs significantly in Ministry costs by reducing conference attendance (particularly not going to New Wine last summer) but three areas of

expenditure have seen an ongoing increase: rental costs have increased by over £1,600 a year, we have made good on our commitment to give away 10% of income (from 7.5% in 2012 and 9.7% in 2013) and we have the costs associated with our interns. The interns are extremely good value and we would love to be able to attract new interns each year but this will see an increase in expenditure of around £2,000 in total over a full year (the 2014 figures only include costs of interns since September). In the coming year we would like to be able to invest in some AV equipment for our kids groups and ultimately we still hope to be able to raise enough finance to fund a part-time children/youth and family worker.

On the positive side we have 'reserves' of £5085 allocated for mission work and the building fund now stands at £13,175.40. However, we are excited at the prospect of starting to dip into the mission fund as we run evangelism initiatives like Puzzling Questions and Alpha.

All in all our finances are good and stable but if we strip out one off gifts, our giving has remained largely static for several years. If we want to see our finance match the opportunities God is bringing then it is time to consider again our giving.

## **9.1 Mission Partners**

CNC again hosted the annual conference for IHA-UDP and we were blessed to have Jember with us to speak about the changes going on in Ethiopia. Now that the projects have become self-supporting the main focus of work has been an institute that is training other leaders and organisation in the founding principles of IHA-UDP and their holistic approach.

A growth area has been in the child sponsorship scheme but this has had some problems because of conditions imposed by the Ethiopian government. Alongside the child sponsorship there is also a developing project for sponsorship of the elderly.

More information is available on request from Chris Hughes.