

MAIDSTONE URC



ANNUAL REPORTS 2017

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Minister's Report

'A Good Year'

With my Christmas Book tokens I have purchased a book titled 'A Good Year', A number of well-respected ministers reflect on the Church Year and ask: 'How would a good Lent be spent? How can we journey through Holy Week fruitfully? How might we celebrate Easter well? What would a Christian Christmas look like? That has led me to think about 2017 and the life of Maidstone URC.

I think Maidstone URC has had 'A Good Year' and however you have been involved thank-you for your contribution to the life of the fellowship. It doesn't matter what you have done it has contributed to the wider vision and mission of the Church. Matthew ends the gospel: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' [28:19]. I don't want us to forget verse 20: *'Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the Age'*.

Matthew assures the disciples that however tricky the journey, they must hold on to what the scripture the 'word of God' tells them. So we, the 21st century disciples, can be assured that in what we do together as a Church in prayer and worship and in the power of the Holy Spirit, He will be with us always.

Waypoint:

In my report last year 2016 I reflected that we are about to enter a Waypoint year and now we are at the other end where Waypoint has happened. The churches in Maidstone have worked really hard to put on some major celebrations in the town.

We hosted: ‘Messiah from Scratch’, ‘500th anniversary service for Martin Luther’ and provided the central hub for the Live Nativity.

Under the Waypoint Banner we put on ‘They Came to a City’ by J.B Priestly. This was a joint project with St Nicholas, Allington. We are very grateful to Anne Carter for organising the event. It had its difficulties along the way, but it was a profound event which helped me connect with the Book of Revelation: ‘I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had vanished’.

What you may not have realised was how much demand was put on church leaders to enable the Waypoint projects to proceed. The demand for volunteer help when local churches were already at capacity. The constant stream of emails and requests for use of buildings, hospitality and assistance. I think as a Church (and individually) we did our bit to support the project practically but some of the requests left me feeling deflated and frustrated. Is this as a minister: ‘What I am here for’?

I hope that Waypoint has changed the way others from the outside look at the church. Not as a group of ‘religious

competing clubs' but working together to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. That the 'waypoint' (I am the way, the truth and the life) will point people to dedicate themselves to follow Jesus Christ.

Staplehurst:

One of the most significant events and adjustments to my ministry this year has been the call to become minister to Staplehurst as well as Maidstone. I am grateful for those in the fellowship who have seen this as a positive move to see the 'Wide View' and not been 'short sighted' when it comes to the demands of the deployment of ministry to local congregations. This gives stability to my ministry now and looking forward to the future.

Due to this additional piece of work I have relinquished my role as Ecumenical Officer and Synod Area Leader. It was a privilege to support the wider church in these roles and I think I did that with care and dedication which has been acknowledged by many people in the Southern Synod in the URC.

Staplehurst has been gracious to accept my ministry and has seen a significant change in the amount of ministry they received slashed from 75% to 25%. I have tried to work hard so that it doesn't feel any different to those within Maidstone. It means that once a month I lead worship at Staplehurst. It means that some months with holidays and training demands that I might only appear twice a month. it affects an extra 2-3 Sundays a year when I am not leading worship in Maidstone.

I have enjoyed getting to know the folk at the church and in the wider community. I am regularly taking assembly on a Thursday morning.

A colleague who preached at Maidstone in October described his ministry with 2 churches as 'It might be 75%/25% when it comes to the allocation of Sunday Service...but it is 100% for both churches the rest of the times'.

The relationship between Maidstone and Staplehurst and how I minister to both churches and how as congregations we work together is 'works in progress'. It has already begun and will develop over time so that we can support each other. I hope you will take the opportunities when they are available to encourage and support one another spiritually and practically.

Looking Forward:

I pray for another Good Year!

We have some hurdles to overcome as we need to make adjustments to the way we use the building while the installation of the lift takes place.

We need to be looking forward, with excitement and joy, to what we can achieve together when the building is back in full use.

We need to look internally at our structures so that we can free more people to do the work of sharing the Kingdom of

God...and growing one another as disciples and those on the edges and margins of our Church Life.

The United Reformed Church have launched 'Walking the Way' and we need to consider how we might respond in our own walking the way as disciples of Jesus.

We may have had a good year....Some in our fellowship have missed some really good events and opportunities that have happened in the Church because they have not felt included or it is not relevant to them.

It may be that we do too much and need to consider reducing what is feasible, to do, going forward.

Thank-you for your support this year... A good year... continue to pray and care for each other as we seek together what God is calling us to be and to do during 2018.

God of all, as Jesus walked this earth sharing love, grace and mercy, he fed the hungry with the bread of life and brought healing and hope to those he met. Renew us through the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we may do likewise. As we step out on this exciting, yet daunting, journey of discipleship, we pray that we will place our footsteps in yours and walk where you lead as we live out your life in our daily living for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Blessings.

Andrew Royal

Church Secretaries' Report

Our church year has seen the passing to higher service of a number of our congregation, Ernest Field, Dennis Birt and Gillian Booth.

Kelly Swaisland was received into membership in February. At the end of the year we had 87 members down two from last year.

The average attendance at services over the year was 60

Our retiring elders this year are Pauline Jones and Rod Cowell. Pauline has been in charge of our Pastoral Group and we appreciate her dedication to our church people. Rod has been looking after Outreach and the televisions in the front of the Church, our website and Facebook page are testimony to his work.

We are at the end of our second year as Joint Secretaries and the splitting of duties between us has again worked very well. Catherine continues the necessary work with Synod and WEKKSA, and some church administration, while David concentrates more on the day to day running of the Church.

We were very pleased to be at the induction of our minister Andrew as minister of Staplehurst Church as a joint pastorate with Maidstone. We also joined with the congregation of St Neots in Cambridgeshire for the induction of one of our previous ministers Rick Mearkle.

We were happy to have a wedding in church on Saturday 15th April. Sarah Webster, Granddaughter of Gwen and Derek Howe was married to Scott Hutchings.

We have been without a Property Steward this year and wish to record our grateful thanks to Jenny Robinson who covered much of the duties by expanding her role as Chair of the Administrative and Finance Group.

We are most grateful to Diana Tidball our Assistant Church Secretary for her support during this year. We are constantly amazed at her skill in taking minutes of both elders and church meetings!

We also appreciate the continuing contribution of Jean Cialis to the work of the church.

Catherine and David Johnson

Treasurer

Our financial performance against our Budget in 2017 was a good one. Whilst our regular offerings were below budget other donations made up the shortfall of around £1,400. Hall lettings met the budget figure of £19,000 despite the loss of a number of hirers through the year. We also had increased income from weekday coffee mornings mainly due to the support of those attending some of the new events on our premises.

Our expenditure during the year included new fire doors for the Dunning Hall, towards which the Fund Raising Group gave a £1,000 contribution. We also completed the external

maintenance and redecoration of our Week Street facade. The £11,000 cost of this work was included in our budget. We also, of course, dealt with the standard maintenance and insurance costs together with light, power and boiler maintenance. As part of the joint pastorate with Staplehurst they have agreed to bear 25% of our Ministerial and Manse costs. This meant that overall our expenditure was slightly under budget.

During the year we received a number of generous legacies which totalled £15,000 and meant that we had an overall increase in reserves, the first time for many years.

In 2017 we agreed to let Hi Kent have use of the shop to provide their services to the community from a central location. As part of this we agreed with Maidstone Borough Council that they should be registered as beneficial occupiers and thus make the necessary claims for business rate relief.

Throughout the year our members have supported many appeals and we have been able to send £1,427 to Commitment for Life, £672 to World in Need families, £1,600 to Zimbabwe, which included £1,000 in memory of Ivor Belcher, £384 to the Leprosy Mission, £433 to DEC East Africa, and £650 was shared between the URC Rohingya Appeal and PSP Research which were our two Christmas Charities this year, as well as money raised through Mid Summer Music, Friday Market, Fund Raising, Christian Aid.

Once again I would like to thank Jenny Robinson for all her help as Assistant Treasurer, I couldn't manage without her. She counts and records all our incoming funds and deals with the requirements of our bank to ensure the sometimes bulky deposits are made correctly. I am also grateful to Graham Wootton for being our Freewill Offering and Gift Aid Secretary. We have had several additional 'Gift Aid' events this year and it is not always easy to ensure that the envelopes are completed fully.

Rod Cox

Ministry Groups

Admin & Finance

A&F group are involved in church property matters, finance, lettings, boilers, first aid, IT and the Manse. This year has been another busy year and the group worked alongside the Property Development Group to prepare for the lift installation in early 2018 and ongoing plans.

Property covers a wide area including cleaning & drains, fire risk assessment, rubbish collection and clearance, pest control, as well as the usual items that would be expected light bulbs, leaking plumbing, keys, etc and the Manse.

Rod Cox our Treasurer has the task of keeping our finances in order and explaining to the membership how it all works. This role involves work you may not consider; looking for the best utility deals, applying for grants, dealing with MBC and business rates, reconciling our bank every week

including the letting income, liaising with Staplehurst URC, and Hi Kent re the shop etc. Rod also is a member of the PDG group and links the two groups together to aid our planning. Thank you Rod very much indeed.

David Lifford continues to set the two church boiler clocks every week and we are very grateful for his continued help, this is quite time consuming especially when lettings change.

David Johnson, joint Church Secretary, masterminded major clearance of out dated items in the church. To move forward we need to clear out. Thank you very much David.

What have we achieved in 2017:

- Storage cupboards under the kitchen hatch
- Outside security light and various electrical lights
- Fire doors replaced in Dunning Hall
- First Aid; box replacement and course completed by 12 members.
- Sanctuary painting – our thanks go to David Johnson & Keith Shave
- Outside painting of the East elevation of the church (front)
- Plumbing issues; ladies toilet, taps, etc
- Deep clean of Dunning Hall floor
- Hi Kent kindly decorated the outside of the shop
- Boarding up of the outside windows of the North elevation to protect against further wear and tear.

- Manse; lounge radiators, gas safety certificate, new outside security light, and garage roof to be considered.
- Drain clearance around the outside of the church
- Preparations made for closure of church areas in readiness for the lift.

It was great to welcome new members to the group this year; Kevin Thorne (serving Elder) and Graham Glazier.

Jenny Robinson

Education Committee

We have continued with the successful study groups. During Lent, we followed a course based around the film “The Way”. The film observes a group of pilgrims walking the Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela. As it followed their spiritual journey, the course examined Biblical accounts to help us consider our spiritual journeys. It was good to spend time with each other discussing our faith.

In the Autumn, the study group was about the history of the United Reformed Church where we looked at the influence of theologians such as Martin Luther. This course proved very popular and it was interesting to learn of our past. Thanks to Andrew for his support with all the study groups. Our next lent Study group starts on Monday 26th February 2018. It is a course recommended by Southern synod called “Life on the Frontline”. Your frontline is the place where you spend the majority of your time outside Church, where

you are in touch with non-Christians, where you are with people who need to know the love of God. It follows our normal format of short film clips, Bible passages, discussion and prayer.

In June, we ran a course to update safeguarding training. This was led by Tom Hackett from Southern Synod. We were very pleased that so many were able to attend both from our Church and from Staplehurst. Tom was able to update us on best practice and we were all awarded certificates to show that we had completed this important training.

In November, a course was run to update First Aid training. This was an excellent course which everyone found helpful. Thanks to Kevin Thorne for organising this.

We have continued to work closely with our Junior Church team and are glad that the children continue to attend and enjoy the sessions. Thanks to Jonathan Brown for continuing in his role as Junior Church Leader. Thanks to everyone who helps with the children on Sunday mornings. We have been using Roots teaching notes since the Spring and we are finding them very helpful as we prepare our lessons; they also follow the URC lectionary which means that the children are often studying the same things as the adults upstairs. As always, we could always do with extra teachers and helpers so please approach any of us if interested.

Maureen Miles and Anne Wates

Outreach Ministry Group

The Outreach Ministry Group have continued to look for ways of displaying the Christian message to people passing along Week Street and to develop our use of social media. Andy Twilley, Southern Synod Training and Development Officer, organised a one day workshop on Social Media for Churches at CPO (Christian Publishing and Outreach). This proved very enlightening and showed that there are still a number of opportunities for us to develop our use of social media to share our message.

The “Events” page of the website is maintained with posters of events and activities, and Contact is also published on the website each month. So even if you can’t get a paper copy you can read it on-line, and it’s in colour!

Friday Market have been using half of the Main Hall notice board to display the charities they are supporting, and the other half has had occasional displays on specific subjects.

The large display of Nativity figures was used again in the lower vestibule, this time combined with the Christmas displays on the TV’s.

All the display facilities including notice boards, TV’s, website and Facebook are available to publicise events. Outreach Ministry Group can help with the preparation of material or we can utilise existing posters, leaflets etc. Help us get the message out by sharing your events with the Outreach Ministry Group.

Rod Cowell

Pastoral Committee

During the first few months of 2017 the Pastoral Group were looking at how the group and pastoral visitors keep in contact with its church family.

So many people are on the telephone, email and a lot of us are on Facebook and many attend the various clubs, coffee mornings as well as attending church each Sunday, where Contact is made. There are many different ways of contacting people now, as well as visiting them, which is often not possible.

As a group we decided to change the name of the pastoral group to reflect the changing ways in which we keep in contact with our church folk. The name has now changed to the Pastoral Contact Ministry Group.

As mentioned in my piece in Contact, your pastoral visitors would not change, some would still be able to make visits, but a lot of the contact would be made by telephone, email or even Facebook.

We continue to provide news of our church family weekly, with help from those doing the intercessions prayers each month, and we thank all those who have contributed to providing the family prayers for us this past year.

The Harvest and Christmas gifts were delivered to our older folk and those who are not able to get to church often and were much appreciated. Our thanks go to Anne Wates who provided the beautiful flowers and bulbs and helped with the

delivery; to our minister Andrew and the Pastoral contacts who also delivered the gifts.

My thanks go to my other members of the Pastoral Contact Group, Margaret Cowell, Audrey Fermor and Betty Owen, who continue to deliver the family news and prayers each week.

If you would like to volunteer from time to time to provide the weekly family news, please have a chat with any one of us.

Pauline Jones

Worship

Our church family has been enriched by the spiritual leadership of Andrew our minister and this past year has seen his role within Maidstone change as he now has the responsibility of leading Staplehurst United Reformed Church too. Whilst Andrew preaches at Staplehurst and other churches in our Synod area we are grateful to Margaret Cowell, our pulpit supply secretary, for arranging for visiting preachers and members of our congregation to lead worship.

Our Easter worship started at Staplehurst on Maundy Thursday with a very meaningful service at 8.00pm. The Good Friday Walk of Witness saw people walking from the Catholic Church in Week Street via Fremlin Walk to Jubilee Square. Easter Sunday there was a sun-rise service at Blue Bell Hill before our service at 10.30 a.m.

Easter Hymns of Praise brought in 35 people of whom 9 were not church members. Summer Songs of Praise was well

attended with everyone enjoying the singing and tea and cakes. Tea, Cakes and Carols in December saw a full hall and a good Christmas celebration.

Our Harvest gifts in October were received by Maidstone Day Centre Food For Thought. We were told that the gifts would be helping those in great need within Maidstone. December 3rd saw a lovely array of Christmas gifts for the Salvation Army to distribute to teenagers in our community.

We are very fortunate to be blessed with members of the church who can play instruments in worship and would like to thank Freda Crispin for playing the piano, Anne Shave (piano and organ) and Keith Shave (guitar). We also appreciate having organists Jeffrey Gray and David Brock playing for us on an occasional basis.

Worship Group.

Children

Junior Church Report

Yet another enjoyable year!

It has been wonderful to see our young people growing together as a group of friends this year. Each week they are very enthusiastic – you may sometimes hear us during worship! We have changed our teaching material to ‘Roots’ and this gives us leaders a wider source of information and ideas to draw from.

We have had a few events which have involved the wider church family, including a 'bring and share' lunch and activity afternoon in November, which we feel was very successful. We also held our annual picnic at Cobtree Manor Park, it was a very hot day, but we still managed to play some games including the usual Kubb match (a wood throwing game from Sweden).

Thank you again to all leaders and helpers for your work with our young people and thank you to our young people for being such a joy to be with each week.

Jonathan Brown

Toybox

Toybox meets in the Dunning Hall on Thursday mornings between 9.45 and 11.30. This year we have held 33 sessions. Attendance varies but on average we have had 12 children each accompanied by at least one parent or carer. We have a 'core' of regular families, while others, for various reasons, come only occasionally. Each family pays a 'sub' of £1.50 per week. Adults are offered tea or coffee and biscuits and children have fruit and squash at 10.30. This is guaranteed to be the quietest time of the morning!

We are extremely fortunate to have Vanessa and Georgia (ex Toybox mums) manning the kitchen and doing the shopping for us, and Isabel (Palmer) comes to help when she can. Andrew now has commitments some Thursdays in

Staplehurst so we have seen less of him this year, but everyone appreciates it when he is able to come.

We are delighted that Lynn Clarke's baby grandson William, cousin of Joseph and Hannah, has joined us at Toybox, and has the distinction of being our only Week Street baby!

Of course, children leave us to begin their 'formal' education earlier than they used to. However, it is gratifying to know that most newcomers are brought along by current Toybox mums. We clearly have a good reputation!

It is really good to witness the firm friendships among the mums and we are privileged that they share their joys (and sometimes sorrows) with us. Hardly a week goes by without news of a family wedding, christening or birthday party. How useful mobile phones are for sharing pictures! We even had a family member pop in to show us her engagement ring. Hugs all round!

If you fancy a Thursday morning coffee and if you don't mind the noise, do call and see us.

Freda Crispin and Anne Shave

Committees:

Press and Publicity

Over the past year, we have been able to promote and advertise the various activities and functions that have been hosted by the church, in the various publicity channels that

are available. Some of the activities advertised, have included:

- Midsummer Music
- Book Sales
- Easter Services
- Friday Market

My aim for the year ahead as far as press and publicity is concerned, is:

- To continue to ensure that there is a continued high profile presence of the Maidstone URC in the various publicity channels.
- To continue to compile and publish “features” of the various activities and groups (e.g.: Friday Market, Toy Box, Open Circle, etc.) at regular intervals.

The building works, once underway, will present a unique challenge to the church. Hopefully, the media will be a good medium to convey progress made.

Our own website and Facebook page are up and running and regularly used and updated – this gives us another unique opportunity to explore ways of how this can be of benefit to the publicity of the church.

I am also keen to hear of any new ideas and am, as usual, open to any suggestions – so, if you do have any ideas, please speak to me at your convenience.

Ian McWalter

World Church Committee

It is easy to become absorbed in our own projects and problems, so your very small World Church Committee has attempted throughout the year to bring before the church, and ask your support for, those who live in poverty worldwide. Some 40 million have been forced from their homes. ; for many life is a daily struggle through violence, hunger, lack of medical facilities or natural disasters.

Though conscious of our own financial needs, we have asked your support on a number of occasions. As a result of Count Your Blessings, through Lent, we raised £371 for Christian Aid. A similar amount, £367.96 was raised in Christian Aid week in May from 2 coffee mornings, and the Easter Songs of Praise afternoon. At the year end our church Treasurer was able to send £1426.79 as our contribution from putting out envelopes for Commitment for Life in months when there were 5 Sunday's. Finally, £606 was donated for Zimbabwe to which will be added £1000 from a legacy thus letting Revd Imon Ndlovu and his church in Bulawayo know we have not forgotten them.

Bearing in mind our smaller congregation, and the financial needs of our church, we are most grateful for the generous support given, totalling £3,770 this year, for those far away, who we will never see. Be assured this money will make a difference to those who receive it.

As usual we arranged 2 services; the summer one was taken by Richard Baker, Church Campaigns and Youth Engagement Manager for Christian Aid, and the autumn one

by the committee, focusing on the 40th Anniversary of CWM) Council for World Mission).

In addition, Frank Alston has often put articles in Contact about situations overseas and we have distributed the Commitment for Life leaflets so that people are kept informed of the needs, and the work being done to address them in our partner countries. Please keep the needs of the men, women and children in so many places in your prayers and take every opportunity of becoming better informed of situations worldwide.

Connie Garrett

Mission Development Group

In 2016 the Mission Development Group produced our Vision and Strategy statements which were approved by Church Meeting. In 2017 we worked to see those strategies applied to the activities and events that were held during the year. So, here's a reminder of the Vision and Strategies.

Vision:

As a Town Centre Church build a strong and vibrant Christian community in Maidstone.

Strategies:

- Provide a place for Christian worship.
- Provide Christian worship in the Reformed tradition.
- Maintain an environment of Christian love for our members and all who visit our premises.

- Reach out to the community around us and show Christian love and care.
- Build relationships with community groups and charitable organisations.
- Provide an environment for community groups to interact with the church and with each other.
- Make our building accessible and welcoming to all.

We supported our Property Development Open Event in March and produced a leaflet for the Volunteer Fair in September.

The introduction of the possible full-time use of the Dunning Hall by Maidstone Homeless Care created a new opportunity to further engage with an established community care organisation in Maidstone. It's early days but Mission Development Group have been looking at what this might mean to the overall strategy for the use of the whole of the building and the impact and benefits it might bring to our existing users and ourselves. There is a lot more thinking to do but this could be the catalyst for opening up our building to more effectively fulfil our Vision and Strategies.

**Rod Cowell, Anne Wates, Revd. Andrew Royal,
Cathy Glazier and David Johnson**

Property Development Group

The considerable progress made during the year would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of my colleagues: Rod Cowell; Rod Cox; Catherine Johnson;

Tony Miles; John Williams and, of course, our Minister Andrew. I need to begin, therefore, with my thanks for all their support and hard work.

Much has happened over the year. Our Planning Application was successful. Our Party Wall Agreement is in place. The Lift design and provider are agreed. Final design drawings are completed, and Tender Documents have been issued to six contractors. The asbestos issue at the rear of the shop has been dealt with. Hopefully we are, now, very near to the commencement of the Lift installation and related works.

In excess of £200,000 has been raised in total. During the year, we have received a Grant of £50,000 from the URC Buildings Fund. Additionally, the Fund Raising Group has made generous donations from a variety of activities. Further monies were received from Mid-Summer Music, the Play Reading event and our Quiz. The support received from so many people is truly humbling. We are currently working on the requirements set by BIFFA Award in order to satisfy their conditional offer of £50,000 by way of a Grant.

Unquestionably, the new Lift will add a whole new dimension to our church family. Into the future, however, it is a stepping stone to attracting a greater number of visitors to and users of our building. We are here for our community. Accordingly, we are beginning to consider the ways in which our premises need to be upgraded in order to reflect such increased community use.

Graeme Wyles

Shoebox Report

LINK TO HOPECHRISTMAS SHOEBOXES

Over the past 16 years I have organised shoebox collection and in that time almost 2000 have been sent, initially through Link Romania and in more recent years under their new title of Link to Hope as the boxes have gone to Moldova, Ukraine, and Albania as well as Romania.

This year as you may have read in December Contact, I was responsible for helping load some 242 boxes on to the transport that came to take them to the depot at Worthing. I have enjoyed the opportunity to help make a difference to the poor in Eastern Europe but since I have moved to St Anne's Court, and am not as young as I used to be, I feel the time has come to stop. Thank you for your support over the years.

Connie Garrett

Housegroups:

Bearsted House Group

The group has continued to meet during 2017 on the first Tuesday of most months to enjoy times of fun and fellowship. During the year we were saddened by the death of Dennis Birt who was a much loved, cheerful and supportive member of the group.

We have had talks and discussions, enjoyed shared meals and celebrated significant birthdays and anniversaries. Throughout the year we continued our monthly donations to our current charity which is Water Aid.

Paula and John Williams

Open Circle

The members of the Wednesday Lunch Club have enjoyed the Open Circle speakers once a month, but we have been disappointed that few others have joined us. Armchair travels have taken us to the Stubai Alps and Brazil, as well as landscapes nearer home. We have heard of the changes in the Kent countryside over 80 years, along with old time Christmas stories and the more recent memories of a school teacher.

Variety was added by an afternoon on lace-making. Our charity speaker brought us up to date on Maidstone Street Pastors. Several of our members turned 90 this year and we celebrated in July with a musical afternoon of old fashioned songs and tunes from the shows with the group 'Anything Goes'.

We are grateful to church members who have come as speakers, and particularly to Robert Crampton who helps with teas. We meet at 1.30 pm on the third Wednesday of each month at Union Street Methodist Church. Do join us when the subject appeals and bring your friends.

Anne Wates

Bible Study / Prayer Fellowship

We continue to meet on the first and third Monday of each month. This year has not seen any increase in numbers, but we have a regular group of six to eight people attending.

Through the year the Bible passages and topics have been varied and over the last few months we have been looking at some of the Psalms. Following the study, we always have a time of prayer. We finish with refreshments when we chat and enjoy further fellowship together.

Madge Neads

Daytime Activities

Friday Market

At the beginning of the year Friday market changed its opening hours from 10.30 to 12.30 this attracted more customers looking for morning coffee at an earlier time and significantly increased our takings. Because of this we had to change the morning routine and that took a little adjusting, we still make time to start with prayers and this is most important to us.

Early in the year Robert Crampton joined our team and later in the year two of our long standing customers offered their help, this has meant we have cover for holidays and days off and we haven't had to ask church members to help out.

We have our regular customers and it has been good getting to know them better throughout the year, our aim is to provide a warm cosy environment for people to come and make friends and this seems to be happening.

We took part of the outreach notice board to promote the charities we were collecting for, we hope this is of interest to

church members and customers and may even bring in a little more money. Our final total for the year was £3,000 2017 has been a year of adjustment for our faithful band of helpers and I am grateful for their unwavering support I am also very grateful to the 4 young men who come each week to lift tables and boxes and carry to charity shops items we can't sell, without this wonderful team work we couldn't continue. We look forward to a new year of Friday Market.

Margaret Cowell

Coffee Mornings - Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

We opened this year after the New Year break, serving tea, coffee, hot chocolate and cold drinks on Monday Tuesday and Wednesdays weekly, until just before Christmas, with the exception of closures for the usual holidays and a few unexpected occasions.

The Loyalty Card is still popular with our visitors giving them the chance to have a free drink on a full card.

Takings this year were up on last year as extra bookings in the Dunning Hall gave us more chance to serve them. The total was a grand £1,854.05.

Our relationship with our visitors is one of friendship, where they enjoy the chance to have a good chat over their drinks and a free biscuit.

These sessions would not be possible but for the band of willing volunteers. I would like to thank most sincerely, both men and ladies, who loyally turn up regularly, some even working more than once in the month. The extra customers make their task that much harder work, Their loyalty to this job is very much appreciated in helping to keep the church open every day.

My usual plea is to ask if anyone else could spare three hours a month to help us, our numbers have decreased this year.

Audrey Fermor

Fund Raising Group

Almost £2,000 has been raised this year from theatre visits (£270), Book and Plant sales (£200), Tea in the Garden (£290), Saturday Coffee Mornings (£500) and our Smartie tube collection (£700). We are grateful to Church members and friends for supporting these initiatives.

We contributed £1,000 to the installation of fire doors for the Fremlin Walk entrance to the Dunning Hall, and £1,600 has been set aside for the purchase of a defibrillator.

Heart of Kent Hospice was the beneficiary of tithing this year and received £193.

Thank you for your support.

Betty, Carol, Cathy, David, Freda, Ian and Jean

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