



To Worship God To Know Jesus To Serve Others

HALL GREEN UNITED COMMUNITY CHURCH

Annual Report September 2014 - August 2015

Charity number 1162079

Letter from the Chair of Trustees

Dear friends,

It is my great pleasure to contribute to this Annual Report of the Hall Green United Community Church. The participating churches of our Local Ecumenical Partnership are Hall Green Methodist Church, Sparkhill United Reformed Church and The Birmingham Moravian Church. The URC and the Moravians had previously come together as a Local Ecumenical Partnership called Sparkhill United Church.

As you go through this report, you will notice the many and diverse ways in which we seek to serve the local community, be a place of hospitality and a sign of God's love, and share together in God's mission. It is mission that lies at the heart of our coming together as one Church. We believe passionately that we are able to do so much more together than we could ever do apart.

I would like to pay tribute to the huge number of people at Hall Green United Community Church who give their time, resources and talent to the life of the Church. As you read this report, you will be aware that behind each aspect of our life that is presented here, there lie many hours of dedicated commitment.

I commend this report to you, and the people that make Hall Green United Community Church the vibrant place of life and hope that God has called us to be.

Love and peace,

Rev. Nick Jones

Chair of the Managing Trustees

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About Hall Green United Community Church

The church was formed in 2014 by the coming together of Hall Green Methodist Church and Sparkhill United Church (Moravian/URC).

The two congregations have been worshipping together since January 2008 and unanimously agreed to form the new church in order to better follow our aims: "To Worship God, To Know Jesus, To Serve Others".

The original churches have a long history in this area. For more information about our past and the denominations of which we are a part of please visit our website, www.hgucc.org.uk. This also features regularly updated news.

The majority of our members hold joint membership of the Methodist Church, the Moravian Church and the United Reformed Church. We make every effort to be fully involved in the life and work of those denominations whilst recognising our responsibilities to the wider church and the community in Hall Green and across our city.

Managing Trustees

Elected Trustees

Pauline Astartjian

Peter Astartjian

Christine Bourne

Brian Dickens (Treasurer)

Leeford Dixon

Dolvis Ferdinand

Sarah Fidler

Joy Johnson

Nick Jones (Chair)

Blair Kessler

Norma Maynard (Secretary)

Colin McIlwaine (Vice chair)

Susan McIlwaine

Alan Perkins

Linda Ramdharry

Co-opted Trustees

David Harwood (Safeguarding Officer)

Julia Parkes (Pastoral Committee)

Keith Dennis

Other Offices

Access to building and bookings officer

Mark Thomas

All-age Worship Co-ordinator

Susan McIlwaine

Baby and Co

Julia Parkes

Bible Reading notes

Enid Allen

Brownie Leaders

Ann Ford

Alison Raybould

Christian Aid Co-ordinator

Vacant

Cleaning Staff Supervisor

Barbara Dennis

Communion Steward Co-ordinator

Margaret Lilley

Creche Co-ordinator

Barbara Kessler

Directory/Newsletter Editor

Blair Kessler

Disciples of Steel Director

Paul Fidler

Discoverers Co-ordinator

Vacant

Editor of 'The Magazine'

Pam Smith

Flower co-ordinator

Pauline Astartjian

Health and Safety Co-ordinator

Christine Bourne

Lotubai Project

Elaine Spencer

Musical Director

Val Dickens

MWA Circle Leader

Susan McIlwaine

Safeguarding Co-ordinators

David Harwood

Sarah Harwood

Traidcraft Sales

Valmai Crocker

Vestry Steward Co-ordinators

Enid Allen

Sue Sainsbury

Website Manager

Blair Kessler

Welcome Stewards Co-ordinator

Pauline Astarjian

Youth Club Leaders

Sarah Fidler

David Harwood

Sarah Harwood

David Moore

Activity Reports

AgeUK Info and advice

The church has links with AgeUK Birmingham with a view to providing information and advice for older people in the surrounding area. In the summer of 2015 the AgeUK Birmingham information and advice session increased from a bi-monthly to a monthly event held on the second Tuesday of each month. Enquiries have been slow to build up, but AgeUK is committed to continuing the service until the facility becomes better known.

Baby and Co

Hall Green Baby & Co, now in it's 28th year, is an informal stay and play group that meets in the Church hall on Thursday mornings during term time.

We provide books, toys and a safe environment in which both adults and children can socialize. Many new (and lasting) friendships have begun here.

In December we had a "bring and share" Christmas party with some lovely examples of food from around the world. We also had party games and a singing session. At the end of the morning all of the children went into Church to receive a gift from Father Christmas under the beautiful Christmas tree - it was lovely.

Our membership had declined somewhat in the September to December term because play groups are taking children from an earlier age and there are more nursery places available.

However, recently we have welcomed 7 new Mums with 10 children, the youngest only 7 days old. One of these new ladies had attended Baby & Co with her Mum and brother 25 years ago. So we hope this will be the start of a busy year.

The group has input from Chinn Brook Children's Centre who visit, provide information and advice and, occasionally, run a craft activity.

Our numbers vary from week to week as there is no formal membership, but we hope that we offer a welcome to all.

Brownies

110th Birmingham Brownies continues to thrive and over 20 girls aged between 7 and 11 meet regularly.

We began in September working towards new badges – Brownie Adventure and Adventure On. These encourage the girls to focus on you, the community and the world throughout the year. In December we combined the Road Safety badge with our good turn, walking to the Co-Op to buy chocolate bars for asylum seekers. We entertained parents and friends with Brownies Got Talent in July!

From January we have had an event each term to GROW OUR MONEY for the church building fund. We made and sold Easter cards and had a sponsored silence where the

Brownies were silent for more than 45 minutes! We are very grateful to our parents and friends for all their support.

We enjoy welcoming Fluffy (a former leader) for special events and have recruited another willing helper.

Pack holiday was an opportunity in July for 15 girls to spend some time at the Brownie House in Dodford with their leaders and we were lucky to be able to once again take part in the Variety Club's special day at West Midlands safari Park in October.

Disciples of Steel

Disciples of Steel (DOS), our resident steel band, continue to rehearse on a fortnightly basis and have a repertoire of over an hour, with a mixture of Caribbean, secular and Christian music. We have focused on learning new pieces and have also increased the size of the band through new members to 11.

The 'older band' is made up of children aged between 10-17, with the youngest member of DOS being 8. Older members are playing an important part, helping to train the newcomers pieces they first learnt, while they stay on longer into rehearsals to improve and learn more difficult pieces.

DOS have played at a range of events this year including playing in and leading some All-age worship services, HGUCC Variety Concert, and Kineton Green Primary School Summer Fair.

Discoverers

The Discoverers continue to ask questions and have fun whilst learning and working together to find out more about God. Children discovering on Sunday mornings ranged in age from three to twelve and a couple of older teenagers helped out in sessions.

We planned and took an active part of All Age Worship in February on the subject of Jesus the Carpenter's Son.

CHAOS (CHurch And Other Stuff 4 kids) gave everyone opportunities to meet with friends from Hall Green Baptist Church and Trinity URC. The three lively Sunday afternoon sessions, with activities and a meal, were on the themes of Light, Journey to Easter, and God is with us everywhere. We are looking forward to more meetings in the coming year.

After nine years as co-ordinator and many more leading Discoverers sessions, Alison decided to retire in July. With many thanks to everyone for all their help she is looking forward to hearing all about the exciting things done by the Discoverers in their feedback to the church congregation on Sundays.

Sparkhill Foodbank

The foodbank project addresses the needs of the most vulnerable within our community.

Professionals such as doctors, health visitors, social workers, Citizens Advice Bureau staff, welfare officers, the police and probation officers, identify people in crisis and issue them with a foodbank voucher. Clients take their voucher to the foodbank where it can be exchanged for three day's supply of emergency food.

We take a car boot full of donations from our church members to the foodbank every 2 or 3 weeks.

The project is also a catalyst for helping individuals by supporting them through other issues such as debt and housing matters, helping break the long-term cycle of poverty, isolation, deprivation, lack of opportunity, poor diet and health problems.

The Sanctuary

The Sanctuary is a Lottery funded, registered charity supported by St Chad's Cathedral and the Salvation Army. Started in 2010, it is a place of welcome and support for asylum seekers and refugees.

Thanks to volunteers and donors it is able to provide emergency help to desperate people. Donations from our church members are regularly delivered and gratefully received.

The sanctuary offers a range of support including English classes, legal and welfare advice, use of computers, food parcels, clothing, hygiene packs and household items.

Friendly Corner

Our Community Cafe known as 'Friendly Corner' is one of the main ways that the Church reaches the community.

On Tuesdays between 10:00 am. and 1:30 pm. we serve tea, coffee, cake and light lunches - to around 50 to 60 people - at very modest prices. We are run entirely by volunteers, several of whom are not from the Church congregation. Someone is on Pastoral duty, each week, to talk to the customers and most weeks, there is a short musical recital.

We make a small profit and over this past year we have made donations to: Send a Cow, The Church's Asylum Seekers' Fund, Birmingham City Mission, St Basil's, The International Centre for Reconciliation in the Middle East, Action Aid, and also contributions to the Church Funds.

There is a "Bring and Buy" Stall, the proceeds from which go to the Church.

We thank our helpers for their dedication and hard work.

House groups

Three bible study house groups meet in the homes of their members on average twice a month, holding their meetings on weeknights or during the day.

The groups choose their own study material including York Course Studies and other published material. These enable study of the Bible and provide questions which promote serious discussion among the members.

Meetings usually last for about 1 ½ hours and the sessions include prayer and refreshments. In some groups, members take turns to lead and prepare the material and programme for the evening.

Members of these groups also support the Hall Green Churches Together 'Lent Courses'.

Moravian Women's Association

The HGUCC Moravian Women's Association continues to meet after worship once a month for ten months of the year. We share a letter from the President or Vice President, a devotional paper and a home and overseas paper with questions for discussion. The theme for the current year is 'Messages from the Mountains'. Papers are forwarded to anyone unable to attend so that they can keep up-to-date with what is happening.

Our current membership stands at 18.

On 18th April 2015 a coach set off from HGUCC. for the MWA Away Day at Dukinfield (and a trip to Manchester for some). We had a great journey (arriving first!) followed by a fabulous time meeting up with old friends, sharing in worship and participating in workshops throughout the day.

We finished the year by making plans to have/provide a light lunch for the congregation after worship on 24th January 2016 and to host the next Away Day on 9th April 2016 here at HGUCC.

Property Maintenance

The autumn of 2014 saw the commencement of a programme of extensive work in the Church building and in October a contractor was engaged to carry out comprehensive roof and guttering repairs and maintenance. Central heating engineers were brought in to replace the heating system in the lounge and rear upper rooms and to repair pipes in the worship area.

Following the completion of this work, the lounge was redecorated and re-carpeted after which, refurbishment of the upper rooms began and continued throughout the remainder of the year. During the 2015 summer break, a builder was employed to convert upstairs space in preparation for the provision of male and female toilet facilities. Also, Phase 1 of the electrical rewiring work was undertaken which has enabled better use of the upper rooms and improved the letting possibilities.

During the year, all annual services and checks have taken place and general maintenance has continued, such as window repairs, safety issues, and any problems brought to our attention via the congregation or church users.

Much of the work completed this year has led to a substantial and pleasing reduction in the number of outstanding issues that were highlighted in the 2013 Quinquennial Report. Whilst it has been a very busy year it has been helped by the support and patience of the congregation and church users throughout considerable disruption.

Property - future plans

Before this year began, the church had committed itself to '2020 Vision' – a project to make the premises accessible, more attractive and usable by both church and community, while bringing them up to standard.

This would include essential repairs, amongst which was a major piece of work on the central heating pipes, and a costed programme of general maintenance. Those are described elsewhere in the previous report, but were the essential underpinning for '2020 Vision' which was itself divided into two sections – work to be carried out 'in-house' and work that would be professionally led. The 'in-house' project has completed an overhaul of the Church Lounge and begun work on a major redesign and refurbishment of the first-floor facilities at the rear of the church premises. The purpose of this is to enable us to let out space which has been largely unsuitable for church use.

Architects were invited to tender for a major project to create more facilities and usable rooms at ground floor level, to modernise the spaces ancillary to the main worship area, and improve flow around the building. Manalo & White commenced work as our architects in December 2014, and having thoroughly investigated our needs drew up initial plans which were then costed and presented to the church in June 2015.

The budget for the two sections of work was estimated at just under £563,000. Resolutions confirming the vision for the church and its premises were passed almost unanimously; giving permission to, with due diligence, seek grants and funding and to undertake the work.

The generosity shown by church members has enabled us to meet the considerable costs of this project during the year, and to have some funds set aside for the next phase of the architect's work. This, together with the immense hard work of those from within and outside the church community who have master-minded and laboured over the in-house project give us confidence that, under God, this building will finally become one better suited to the service of God and of the community for the decades ahead.

Youth Club

The youth club meets on a Tuesday evening, during term time, between 7:30 and 9:00 pm. It caters for young people from school year 6 upwards.

Over the last year the club has had an average of 20 young people meeting with us and enjoying a wide range of activities – pancake races, bucketball, volleyball, table tennis,

Wii, quizzes, table football, craft evenings, Easter egg hunts, Summer BBQ and stir fry nights to name just a few.

Additionally there have been trips to the bowling alley, laser quest and the annual New Year trip to the local Indian restaurant. We supported Comic relief with a 12 hour non-stop disco, we held a cake sale to support Birmingham Children's Hospital and had an asylum seekers awareness session which contributed to the church's Christmas appeal.

Our numbers are thinning slightly at the moment and we need a new input of younger members.

Safeguarding

As a church we have had a fairly quiet year for Safeguarding. The new DBS system which replaced CRB is settling down and we are now able to carry out our own checks on line.

We had to decide if we wanted to continue with the Methodist Church safeguarding system or move to the United Reformed Church system. As the latter required that we should all undertake new training, we opted for the Methodist Church system.

There has been a wealth of information coming through for church co-ordinators which culminates with a church self-audit which will be started over the next few weeks. The training covering work with vulnerable adults has been revised and improved.

There are a few people who have shown an interest in helping with Discoverers and who will require both DBS and training. A training session is being arranged at Shirley Methodist in Spring 2016.

The fifth anniversary of our initial training and CRB clearance is approaching. Therefore we will need to update our training and obtain the new DBS clearance.