

Ministry Report for Whiteley Church Annual Meeting 2020

Where have we seen God at work in the last year? .

Activities and Mission

For a small church we manage to do quite a lot! You've had an opportunity to read reports from Cornerstone School, Monday Minis and Open Door (representing some of our outreach) as well as from Amy as Whiteley Pioneer, our home group, prayer group, children's group, Re:charge and the tech team.

Being a small church congregation means that we need people to step up to help with or lead events and services, and you do that graciously and generously. Whether you lead or help with one of the groups, or are a Foundation Governor at Cornerstone, or a PCC member or Deanery or Diocesan Synod rep or a helper or baker for social events your contribution to the life and mission of the church is truly appreciated. Thank you!

Messy Church numbers have been lower throughout 2019. There is a small core group of families who prioritise Messy Church and value it very much but as their children get older there are more calls on their time and we don't seem to be managing to bring in new families. The simpler format in early 2020 may be the way to continue.

In **Lent** 2019 I shared the 40acts challenges across facebook and it seemed as though there was some engagement, but it's very difficult to measure.

Our first 'Live your best life' eco fair was a great success - thanks to all who helped, but particularly to Vikki who did much of the organising. There was such a wonderful atmosphere and buzz in the community centre as people came together focused on reducing our impact on the environment and improving the well-being of people and the planet. It was not intended to be a major fund-raising activity but to our surprise the amount raised was much more than we expected.

In November the poppies again drew positive comments at Remembrance and the service in Market Square was well supported.

In **Advent** we used the Church of England's #followthestar and had angels made of recycled materials to find in the trail round the shops. The 2 sessions of Carol singing in the shopping centre drew a few people to stop and listen and caused many to smile. This year it was 'the rude wind's wild lament and the bitter weather' which coincided with the downpour and squally wind! It was good to welcome the Tuneless Choir to our carols by candlelight, although we could have done without the authentic lack of heating!

Pam, Cat, and I continue to go in to **Whiteley Primary School** twice a term to tell a Bible story in assembly. I am at **Cornerstone** most weeks and our Foundation Governors are also there regularly.

Growing, learning and worshipping together

We have continued to reflect on God's story: our story, studying the book of Ruth at the beginning of 2019, focusing on some of Acts in Lent 2019 and using 3 of the lectionary readings each Sunday for discussion during August. The Monday evening home group thoroughly enjoyed the Bible Course in the summer and autumn and are looking forward to building on this with some more study.

In breakfast church there has been a bit more introduction and input on the theme before handing it over for discussion or further exploration. I continue to encourage everyone to think about how what we hear and talk about on Sundays is relevant to what we do in the rest of the week.

Finance and Fundraising

Rachel, with the support of David, has continued to do great work as treasurer. There have been a number of extra fund-raising events this year, including the 80s disco organised by Katie. Despite this we were still a long way behind with our parish share payments by September. After a phenomenal effort by everyone and some generous extra giving we managed to pay it all. As I said last year, we really need to find a way to spread our giving and fund-raising more evenly across the year so that we are not faced with such an impossible-looking target by the time we get to September! If you have very generously given an extra donation in December, would it be

possible to spread that throughout the year? Your help in supporting and publicising events is vital and as ever if you have any fund-raising ideas please share them with the church council!

Looking ahead

- The first residents moved in to houses in Whiteley Meadows in December. September 2021 is the current proposed opening date for Cornerstone (and the chapel space).
- We are working on our 'branding' ready for our move to the chapel space at Cornerstone School
- In light of the restrictions of COVID-19 we are always looking for new ways we can engage with the community and ways of re-imagining what we do - please do contribute your thoughts and ideas

Final Thanks

I'm very grateful to Suzie for her work as PCC Secretary this year, to Rachel as Treasurer and to the rest of the church council for all they have contributed in discussion, support and practically. Your churchwardens have worked very hard sometimes visibly, but often quietly behind the scenes. I am extremely grateful to them both, to Amy and to all of you who have stepped forward while I have been away. John has nobly stayed on in the role until this postponed meeting but he is now stepping back. Vikki is continuing as warden at the moment but she will need a break. Please consider whether you could shadow this year and think about whether you could serve in this role. We have mentioned many people by name in the reports but as I said at the beginning, in a church this size everyone contributes something to the life of the church. Thank you all for that you do.

The Rev Philippa Mills. Vicar of Whiteley