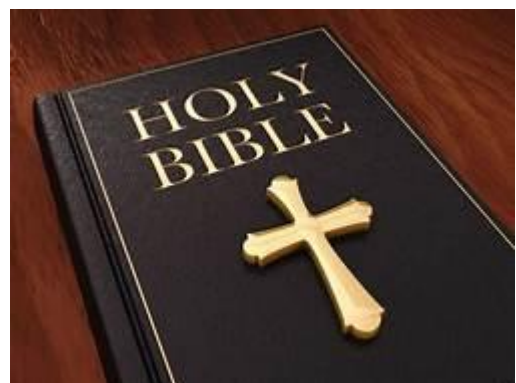


**CHRIST CHURCH LEWES (URC and METHODIST)**

**ANNUAL REPORT 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019**



The **Methodist** Church 

**Made to the Annual Church Meeting on Sunday April 14 2019**

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# CHRIST CHURCH LEWES (URC and METHODIST)

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## Minister's Report

Looking back over the last few months, and indeed to last summer, I am extremely grateful for the welcome I and the family have received from both the Cross Way Church (Seaford) and Christ Church (Lewes) congregations. Thank you. Moving from a very different role in the North West has been challenging in various ways, but of great significance for us has been the warmth of welcome into the life of two worshipping and witnessing communities of God's people.

Looking ahead we need to pray, and hold onto, the words of the apostle Paul when he writes to the Christians in Thessalonika:

*"We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess 1:2-3)*

The future, as for the early church, is challenging. Yet our vocation is still the same, expressed in the second part of our Mission Statement:

*"Our vision is to see God changing people's lives and transforming our local community and the world, and to play our part by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and by expressing his word in love and action."*

As a local congregation we will need to be very focused in understanding what our mission involves, because it cannot be everything, nor all that we remember from the past. In all areas of

life we will need to grow in our discipleship, and to look carefully at what will aid us in that development. In both mission and discipleship we will need to discern and prioritise what will most effectively enable us to fulfil our Mission Statement. The year ahead looks to be very exciting – may God guide us in his ways, and may we have the courage to step boldly where he leads.

**Reverend Andrew Mills**

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## **Secretaries' Report**

The highlight of the year has been the calling of Rev. Andrew Mills to serve as our Minister in a new pastorate comprising Christ Church in Lewes, Cross way LEP in Seaford, and the Alfriston Mission Project. Andrew joins us from the post of URC Provincial Moderator in north-west England.

The arrival of our new minister in February 2019 has already started to energise the church and we are looking forward to working with Andrew as he settles into his ministry here. Over the last couple of months, we have begun to take a fresh look at what we do and how best we organise ourselves to fulfil our mission in the local community and the wider world.

This has included looking at our pastoral care arrangements at Christ Church, our future work with children and families, opportunities to work with other churches in the pastorate, summer holiday activities, and how we best use our buildings to further the church's mission.

We would like to thank all the members of Christ Church who have “gone the extra mile” in keeping things going over the period from June 2017 to February 2019 , whilst we have been without ministerial leadership. This has involved everything from leading worship to taking on additional practical and administrative tasks. Our Christian witness, and work in the local community, has

continued to develop over the last year, as detailed later in this Annual Report.

We would also like to thank our two Interim Moderators - Jim Thorneycroft and Graham Campling - for their advice, support and encouragement along the way. We wish them both well in their “retirement”.

The process of calling a new Minister has seen us forging close links with Cross Way in Seaford and we hope that this relationship will continue to develop and reinforce the work which Andrew across his new pastorate.

**Neil Fisher Church Secretary**

**Lindsay Frost Administrative Secretary**

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**Treasurer’s Report** (to be read in conjunction with the The Financial Statements for 2018)

Our overall net receipts for 2018 were £1,776. We have spent just over £10,000 on refurbishing and maintaining the premises from the General account. This has been possible as we have had much lower contributions to the URC through the Ministry and Mission Fund. This will increase in 2019 following the arrival of Rev Andrew Mills. Our income from planned giving and loose collections has continued to decline which reflects the lower number of church members.

The income from letting the church premises to various community and interest groups increased to £24,730. This included some arrears and the estimated income for 2019 is around £20,000. This is a very large source of income for the church.

In the summer of 2018, we re-sanded the hall floor, redecorated the hall and concourse and cleaned the carpets throughout the

premises. We have also purchased two new sheds and a new photocopier.

We have raised the following for our charities (not all paid out in the 2018 financial year) – Christian Aid £3,763 (including emergency collections for disaster appeals), Homelink £975, Church Mission Society £1013, The Real Junk Food Project £1375 and the Food Bank £517. We continue to support Embrace Middle East also.

The General Fund stands at £60,862, which is an increase from last year as we have incorporated the Tots funds into the general fund. In the Legacies Fund we hold £89,264. It has been agreed this fund will be used to fund a Children and Families' Worker and we look forward to taking this forward following the arrival of our new minister, Rev Andrew Mills, in February 2019.

We, again, appointed Steve Brentnall to act as Independent Examiner to our accounts. We are extremely grateful for his help in assisting us to comply fully with the Charity Commission legislation in reporting our charity accounts.

**Irene Gannon**

**Treasurer**

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## **Mission Committee**

The remit of the committee comes under four headings.

- 1. To plan and review a programme of worship so that it provides for the spiritual life and needs of the existing congregation, as well as those currently on the periphery of the church family**

We are grateful to Norman Vance for the excellent job he carries out as Pulpit Supply Secretary, liaising with the Central Sussex United Area (CSUA) to ensure that there is someone to lead our worship each Sunday. This year, his job has become more difficult

due to the shortage of available preachers in the CSUA, with the consequent need for more Sundays to be filled by “local appointment”. In this respect, we are fortunate that Claire Bell has joined us during the year. Claire is an Accredited Methodist Local Preacher, and will join Gwyneth Watkinson on the list of preachers we can call on. During the year, Gwyneth was authorised by the CSUA to conduct communion at Christ Church when an ordained minister is not available. She is also able to conduct home communion for the housebound. Attendances at morning worship (excluding Messy Church) have averaged around 30 people over the year. Our fourth Sunday Messy Church has continued to develop.

The occasional evening services (**An Hour of Music and Prayer**) organised by David Smith and led by the choir have continued approximately every other month to provide for those who prefer a more traditional style of worship.

**2. To arrange outreach services and other events which will provide opportunities for people in the community to discover and explore the gospel message**

Carols on the Green, which first started in 2005, was held on 16 December 2018 on Nevill Green, at the slightly earlier time of 2pm (due to band commitments). In the absence of our own minister, Canon Richard Moatt from St. Anne’s Church again agreed to lead the proceedings, and an estimated 80-90 people joined us, despite the threat of rain and the earlier start.

**3. To help the congregation see how all its activities can be opportunities for mission, and to encourage all its members to bring the gospel message to the local community, so that they may ultimately make a commitment to Christ.**

The committee has oversight of Messy Church, which meets six times a year on a Friday and once a month on a Sunday as Messy Sunday, and this provides an outreach opportunity for families in



the area. Attendances at Messy Church services exceed those at our regular Sunday services. The Friday Tots (see report elsewhere) also provides an outreach opportunity for local families.

#### **4. To enable the congregation to discover the needs of our community and how to respond to them.**

The church continues to support the Fitzjohn's Food bank which tries to satisfy the ever growing needs of the surrounding community (see separate report). We also offered our premises for use by the proposed Lewes Night Shelter. This is an initiative of the Lewes Open Door project, and the plan is to operate a night shelter for homeless people in the town over the winter period, based in churches in the town, a different church each night of the week. We have offered the use of our premises on a Saturday night. Unfortunately, the project was unable to start in winter 2018/19 due to a lack of volunteers, but the plan is to try again in November 2019.

**Neil Fisher**

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### **Property and Compliance Committee**

Two formal meetings were held in the year, points discussed as necessary and at Congregational Meetings.

Items discussed/implemented were as follows:

- Emergency lighting in rear hall modified, sanctuary unit needs attention.
- Repairs to toilet locks completed.
- Replacement of plumbing and heating contractor done.
- Hedges cut twice and grass cut regularly
- Driveway widening to be costed:-outstanding.
- Two metal sheds bought. Carpark shed demolished. A shed erected in a temporary carpark position allowed for construction

of a concrete base which was damaged in laying but now restored. In March storm Gareth's winds tipped it over. Contents are OK, shed secured for early re-erection. The Tots shed base constructed and the new shed to be built at demolition of old building.

- Demountable oak apse rails erected in September.
- Fire extinguisher testing outstanding. Kitchen shutters fault to be traced.
- Fans for large hall to be sourced
- Carpets cleaned in August. Concourse carpet needs replacing.
- Concourse and large hall re-decorated in August.
- Large hall floor sanded and treated in July.
- Automatic and glass screen doors safety check needed.
- Fire alarm testing to take place
- New cleaner and regime in place.

Thanks to the committee members and church cleaners.

**Alan Pett**

**Convenor**

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## **Safeguarding**

Christ Church is committed to following current legislation and government and denominational guidelines in the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, including safer recruitment of workers. As regards denominational guidelines, Christ Church is a URC/Methodist LEP and as such has opted to follow the URC guidelines. Our formal safeguarding policy can be read on Christ Church website ([christ-church-lewes.org](http://christ-church-lewes.org)) in the **Safeguarding** section under the **Info** tab. The safeguarding policy is reviewed annually by Church Council and approved by the Congregational Meeting.

There have been no safeguarding incidents reported in 2018/19.

**Liz Lunt and Neil Fisher**

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## **Messy Church**

Messy Church is held at Christ Church on Friday mornings during the school holidays and half-terms.

On the fourth Sunday of each month, we have our Messy Sunday service.

Friday Messy Church has been well attended with an average attendance of 48, including an average of 16 helpers. We have several regular families attending and we enjoy getting to know them while sharing the bible stories through craft and celebration time. Our meal together at the end of the session is a good opportunity to chat.

We held three “Messy Summer” sessions at fortnightly intervals in August. Kerry Evans, Lloyd Cummins and Nairne Page from Brighton and Hove City Mission, led these sessions for us. Our final August session was followed by a family church barbecue.

Sunday Messy Church starts with breakfast, then a craft activity followed by celebration and worship. This has also been a good time of fellowship with some regular families attending.

Many thanks to Brenda Vance, Helen Chiasson and Claire Bell leading our Celebration time in church while we have been without a minister.

Our new minister Rev Andrew Mills and his wife Ruth have introduced some new ideas to our Messy Church and Messy Sundays. Their first session in February was a great success and we look forward to working with them.

Thank you to everyone who helps to make Messy Church a happy, fun time.

**Glenda Pett**

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## **Christ Church Tots**

Christ Church Tots meets Friday mornings from 9.30 to 11.30 during term time. This is a group for Mums/Dads/Grandparents/Carers to bring their babies and toddlers. There are toys, refreshments, craft, story and singing time. When the weather is fine and not too cold we use the grass area outside for riding bikes, jumping on the trampoline etc. or just sitting in the sunshine.

We have once again had a busy year. Some families come to almost every session and others not so regularly which means we can accommodate more in total and don't have to have a waiting list.

In November we raised £141 for Children in Need by donating the weekly subs of £1 per family and serving coffee with 'posh biscuits.

On 15 March it was Red Nose Day and we raised £110.71 for Comic Relief and the children made party hats and decorated party biscuit.

Some of our families also attend Messy Church bringing older siblings along too.

I'd like to give a big thank you to our team of volunteer helpers.

There have been some changes during the year. We said goodbye to Jane Armstrong at the end of the summer term. Jane had been helping at Tots since Tots started in 2008. In December, Hannah Sandford left us to join the Children's Centre in Ringmer as a volunteer there.

Linda Fisher joined our team in September. Linda organises the activity table each week, coming up with some great craft ideas for the children and adults to make.

**Glenda Pett**

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## **Junior Church**

With more families attending Messy Sundays, we have seen less children attending the church services on the other Sundays. However, our team of leaders are always prepared to welcome any children that do come on the other Sundays to a Junior Church session during the main service with stories, craft and activities. We use the Roots material which follows the lectionary. Thank you to Glenda, Graham and Alison for leading these sessions.

**Irene Gannon**

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## **Prayers**

Prayer is so important for building our relationship with God and developing as followers of Jesus. It takes many forms in our church as we pray in our worship together, individually or in groups

Those who can, meet at 9.45am on the second Sunday of each month to pray for those in our Prayer book in the Quiet Room. Prayer is also important in our house groups where we meet to share our concerns and learn more about the Bible. A few of us meet at 9.00am on alternate Friday mornings to pray for the prison and all those who live and work there. The Tots group leaders meet monthly to pray for their concerns and the families who attend.

We have a prayer leaflet so we can pray individually for all the members of our community on each day of the month.

Members of our congregation also contribute to the intercessions on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

It is a good thought that the baton of prayer is taken up by others as the world turns and we should always remember we are part of a

world-wide community constantly worshipping and praying to our Loving God

**Irene Gannon**

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## **Cliffe House Group**

The Cliffe House Group continues to meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday afternoon of every month at 28 St Thomas Court at 2.15 pm. We have 8 members and would be happy to welcome anyone who would like to join us. We begin each session with a time of sharing, accompanied by refreshments kindly provided by Daphne, followed by prayer.

Our study time lasts for about an hour and consists of a reading followed by discussion. The first part of the year we spent on 'The Upside-Down Bible' by Symon Hill, which we found very thought provoking. This was followed by the York courses 'The Psalms: prayers for today's church' and 'New World, Old Faith'. Each of these consisted of five sessions with an introductory passage which we all read in advance, followed by a set of questions which inspired our discussion. We have recently started a new course: 'Daring to see God now' which is based on Mark Chapter 1 and challenges us to think about what the Good News meant in Jesus day, and what it means for our world 2000 years later. Irene and I take turns in leading these sessions, but all members are encouraged to contribute, and we enjoy learning from each other as we grow in our faith.

**Janet Cooper**

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## **Nevill House Group**

The purpose of the Nevill House Group is to help us grow in our faith as individuals, learn about how we can put that faith into practice, and to provide prayer and support for each other, meeting once a month.

The group has around nine members, and currently meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, generally meeting on the Nevill estate at the home of Tom and Liz Lunt or Linda and Neil Fisher. Anyone wishing to join us in discussion and study please contact me or any member of the group.

At the start of the year, we continued our study of the York Course entitled “Tough Talk – the hard sayings of Jesus” which is a course of five sessions using a study book and an accompanying CD. This was completed in the spring and we then started another York Course entitled “New World, Old Faith”, which looks at how our faith relates to the modern world. This particular course has also been followed by the Cliffe House Group

**Neil Fisher**

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## **Ecumenical House Group**

Our membership is presently 11, comprising 5 from Christ Church; 3 Anglicans; and 3 Catholics. In the last year we have welcomed new members in each category. Our aim is to explore questions that there is no time for, within Sunday worship. We focus on our common Christian heritage and rarely discuss denominational differences. Input comes from prayers, sermons and articles written by people who are themselves seeking answers about their faith in the world they live in. We do not always reach firm conclusions but through our discussion and mutual support our understanding is taken a little further. Topics that have featured from Easter 2018 to Lent 2019 include the following.

- The empty tomb and the Resurrection
- Wrestling with God: our Jewish heritage
- The Sunni-Shia split in Islam
- Anglican-Catholic relations: Walking together in the Way
- The obligations of a churchgoer
- The nature of blasphemy
- The life of Thomas Cromwell
- Advent metaphors: the meaning of Messiah
- Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today and for ever
- The legacy of Oscar Romero
- Temptation and the concept of the Promised Land

**David Smith**

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## **Choir**

The choir, which currently has 12 members, meets regularly on Friday evenings and provides a relaxing start to the weekend for those who do not have regular social or family commitments. We go through the music for the subsequent Sunday and often are able to resolve minor problems over words and settings. Between April 2018 and March 2019, we have also arranged six evening services in our *Music and Prayer* series. The average attendance has been 20, (including 10-12 from the choir), with an overlap of about 8 with the morning congregation. We have sung a range of music from the Tudor period to the present. People in the choir, or from the wider congregation, have contributed as readers, and prayer- or worship-leaders. Use of the evening ('second') service lectionary readings has ensured that there is a coherent theme, as well as genuine scriptural teaching, and time for quiet reflection. Most of the congregation live alone or in families without relatives who live nearby.

We thank all who have participated in our worship, helped with refreshments, and given us encouragement. Much of our repertoire



has been built through our membership of *Free Church Choirs*. We thank Church Council for copies of the music for the next Biennial Festival in Guildford, which some of us hope to attend.

**David Smith**

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## **Think Tank**

Between April 2018 and March 2019, we held 10 meetings, with an average attendance of 33, including, typically, 6-8 from Christ Church. When we revised our mailing list to meet the new privacy regulations in May 2018, 120 people asked to be included. As in previous years our speakers, listed below, have been outstanding and many have prepared specific presentations to match our audience. We thank them warmly for their contributions, as well as Andrew Buxton and Mike Ramsey, who have sometimes chaired sessions.

The Thinktank shows that there is a large group of people in the community round the church, who care passionately about poverty, justice, immigration, climate change, etc.: all issues widely discussed in contemporary society. Our challenge is to convince them, and our Sunday morning congregation, that there is a link between these topics and the religion we proclaim in our worship.

Dr Frances Miley *Misery makes strange bedfellows: Accounting and Religion*

Rev Dr Richard Goldring *'Spiritual Care' in a Secular Context: Reflections of a Hospital Chaplaincy Volunteer*

Mr Alex Kirby *Where have all the kingfishers gone?*

Professor Liz Hill *Plastics in the Environment: an individual or societal problem?*

Dr Roberta Piazza *Voices from the Community of Irish Travellers*

Dr Sarah Pitt *Antibiotics: How to use them wisely*

Mr Jan Nawrocki *How surgeons think*

Debby Matthews *Thomas Mantell and the early Lewes non-conformists*

Canon Dr Peter Sills *Leadership from a Christian perspective*

Professor Avril Loveless *Refugee Tales: immigration detention in the UK*

**David Smith**

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## **Use of Halls**

Christ Church Halls remain busy, which is good because we now derive about half the income we need from them. But it is no longer sensible to think only, 'Can we fit this proposed booking in? Is there a room free?' We need to think about the effect bookings can have on the overall feel of the building, and in particular their potential impact on our core activities, worship and Christian teaching. We have to take into account pressure on our facilities, the kitchen, the car-park and the toilets, and ask whether our relations with the community at large, and with the friends who already use our building, will be advanced or damaged by changes we are asked to accommodate. The growth in size and scale of Fitzjohn's Food Bank on our premises, and the proposal to organise a Night Shelter in Lewes, which failed to get off the ground this winter, but will return for 2019 – 2020, both give rise to substantial concerns. Through this report, I would like to ask members to reflect on these matters. Any continuing agreement will affect the church community for years into the future and demands careful consideration

**Brenda Vance**

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## **Fitzjohn's Food Bank**

### **(Reports from Christ Church representative and from Food Bank Co-ordinator)**

Christ Church helped with the setting up of the food bank in April 2017, since when we have hosted it in the church every Monday (except Christmas Day 2017). The Food Bank volunteers very much value its links with Christ Church, and Christ Church equally values the work done by the Food Bank as part of our mission to the community.

At the end of the year, membership was 40 households (equivalent to about 120 adults and children), with a weekly average of 34 households attending. All members have to be referred to the food bank by local agencies. This number of families is near to the limit that can be accommodated given storage available at the church, even with the additional cupboard space which was installed in the small hall in November. With this in mind, representatives of the food bank have been speaking to church congregations in Chailey and Newick to try and help them to establish a food bank in that area, as a number of its members travel in from there.

In October, the Food Bank received a mention in Hansard after Baroness Kay Andrews contacted the Food Bank asking for data on food bank usage and other issues for a debate in the House of Lords, and it also received a visit from Lewes Town Mayor, Cllr. Janet Baah, who was very impressed with the organisation, volunteers' commitment, atmosphere and provision. She is also keen to make food banks accountable and 'official' in Lewes.

As would be expected, Christmas was the busiest time of year, providing extra meals, Christmas goodies, fruit, vegetables, chickens, sausages and bacon as well as cleaning supplies and toiletries to 81 households, serving 241 adults and children- double last year's number.

The Food Bank also supports The Lewes Open Door charity and provides fresh produce in term time to the St Pancras School's mini food bank.

**Neil Fisher,  
Christ Church representative on Food Bank Executive.**

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We are two years old! Time has gone very quickly in some ways but it seems that we have been established for ages now. Our membership continues to grow slowly, now standing at 58 households, with an average of 35 households collecting each week. Including the Open Door Project and St Pancras School Mini Food Bank, we have been feeding about 145 people each week. The St Pancras food bank has now closed and its families are being encouraged to come to us directly. This - and the impact of Universal Credit - means that we are anticipating a small rise in membership this year.

As our clients take away two and a half days' food and snacks, including eight to ten portions of fresh produce, we have provided over 45 000 meals over the last year. This is no mean feat but is made possible with the dedication and hard work of our band of sixteen volunteers and the support we get from Christ Church.

Due to all the donations we receive from the public: ad hoc, in money and goods and the collections from Waitrose, Tesco and the Nationwide, we have been able to reduce the size of our delivery from Fare Share, saving us £750 a year. This money and the produce we hope to gather from our vegetable garden that will be built in April, will put us in a secure financial position. We will continue to fundraise as it cost us over £16K annually to run the food bank. Due to the amount of money that goes through our books, we will become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation this summer.

We will continue to provide our clients with some ‘value added’ items and experiences such as cooking demonstrations, benefit advice and a variety of donated non-food items which they really appreciate. Many also look forward to the cuppa and chat on a Monday afternoon, something that the excellent Christ Church facilities allow us to do.

Do you, your friends or family have a stash of unused toiletries, hotel freebies and so on in your bathroom cabinets? Also do you have any kitchen ware in good shape that you no longer use? If so, our clients would love to have them. Please put any you collect in our donation bin in the Concourse.

Thank you for all your continued prayers and donations- they really do make a difference.

**Helen Chiasson**  
**Co-ordinator, Fitzjohn’s Food Bank**







## **Our Mission Statement**

CHRIST CHURCH (United Reformed and Methodist) seeks to proclaim the Gospel and serve the community around it. The Minister and Church Council Members would appreciate information about those who need pastoral care, and will endeavour to answer the questions of those who want to know more about the Church's life and witness here in Lewes.