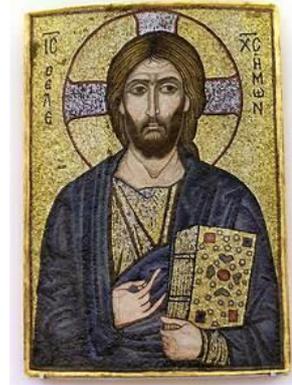


CHRIST CHURCH , LEWES

(URC and METHODIST)

ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020



The Methodist Church 



Report made to the Annual Church Meeting held on Sunday July 26 2020

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CHRIST CHURCH LEWES (URC and METHODIST)

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Minister's Report

Looking back over the last year it seems to have been an unexpectedly bumpy road for the Mills family. I would not normally want to start a report with news concerning me and the family – except that on this occasion I would like at the start to express my deep gratitude for the continued welcome and care you have shown towards us. In particular I have really appreciated the encouragement and support of our Church Secretaries, and all that they have done to help smooth out some of the “bumps” caused by my family issues in Scotland and my own health. And so, moving on!

The Church Secretaries' Report which follows this highlights just how much activity we embrace as a congregation. Two of the strengths of the congregation, in my mind, throughout the period of the pandemic and lockdown have been the desire to continue worshipping together and the care and support of one another. The use of the Zoom facility (with our deep appreciation of Neil's skills in enabling this) has meant that a good number, latterly jointly with Cross Way Church, have been able to join virtually each Sunday morning. The “coffee” groups after each Service, I know, have been appreciated with the chance to chat with friends and get to know some others more deeply than previously. Again, the use of technology (email/Zoom/phones) has meant that the pastoral care of one another has continued to be a tremendous support as we've all been locked in.

Looking forward we can see how these, and other areas, will see our future worship, discipleship, and mission as a congregation develop, for example:

- over the last couple of years, including in my former role, I have had an increasing concern about how we could provide a better worship and pastoral connection with those in nursing homes or who are housebound. I believe the insight of using Zoom weekly has highlighted the potential for technology to enable anyone to be more connected with the regular worshipping life of God's people, even when prevented from being physically present.
- our work with families is vitally important, and much thought and prayer is needed as to how we take this aspect forward. We are extremely appreciative for the many years that Glenda has led the toddler group, but with the hiatus of the closure of our buildings it leaves us seeking wisdom as to how we maintain links with young families in the future days. In addition, we are finding it challenging identifying how to use our restricted funds to employ someone to help us in the area of our children & families work. Much prayer needed please, by us all.
- there has been a lot of effort put into building a strong partnership with the Fitzjohn Foodbank, so that through their work providing for vital needs of people locally we too as a congregation are involved in responding to the serious situations many find themselves facing. The consequences of the pandemic will intensify this need – so we need to continue to build on all the good work of our Church Officers (and others) in seeing our partnership grow.

The pandemic has affected so much of our lives. Yet it has also revealed generally the many strengths we have, not least as our nation has thanked the NHS and others with a weekly clap for their

dedication and even sacrifice. I hope that as we look forward as a congregation it will be with a renewed sense of who we are as God's people, called by Christ to journey with him and to bear his light in our communities whatever the circumstances.

Reverend Andrew Mills

Secretaries' Report

We started the year on a very hopeful path with the arrival of our new Minister. Andrew and Ruth have brought energy and direction to the church's work, despite a very difficult year for them personally. We have maintained our Christian witness and have taken this out into the local community through expansion of our work with local people in need. We have also developed our links across the pastorate with our friends at Cross Way Church in Seaford.

Our work over the period since April 2019 has included:

- * consolidating the "Messy Sunday" service into our monthly programme of worship, developing new ideas to make the services more attractive to families and running a "Messy Summer" programme at the start of the school summer holidays
- * developing a "Holy Habits" programme to foster our Christian discipleship through bible study and prayer
- * strengthening our relationship with the Fitzjohn's Food Bank, which operates from the church on Mondays each week
- * hosting the Lewes Open Door winter shelter for homeless people on Saturday nights from November to February, with church

members also helping with daytime “drop in” and overnight support at Christ Church and other churches in the town

- * updating and improving our pastoral care arrangements

- * starting a review of the way the church presents itself to users of its buildings and passers-by, through a fresh look at our image, signing and communications. Ideas are being worked up and we hope to put them in place later in 2020

- * a further effort to recruit a part-time Children and Families worker in partnership with Cross Way using digital media. Unfortunately, this was unsuccessful and we are looking at new ways forward

- *raising money for worthy causes at home and abroad, and carrying out house-to-house collections in our local area during Christian Aid Week

- *starting to review our safeguarding arrangements for children and vulnerable adults

Thanks to all members of Christ Church for their efforts in planning and delivering a wide range of church activities which are outlined elsewhere in this Annual Report. All your efforts are greatly appreciated.

During the year, we lost one of our stalwart members when Richard Partridge passed away suddenly in May 2019. Richard is much missed for his huge contribution to church life. On the brighter side, our congregation has been bolstered by the arrival of several new members who are already playing a very positive role in the life of the church.

The year ended with the arrival of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic across the world and unprecedented changes to our daily

lives, aimed at slowing down the spread of the virus. This has been the biggest upheaval to British life since the Second World War. The emergency measures have included the closure of all church buildings across the UK and the suspension of almost all of our activities. Where possible, we have sought to use phones and computers to keep in touch and keep things ticking over.



At the time of writing (late April) , we do not know when we will be able to re-open the church and when "normal life" will resume, or whether the pandemic will forge profound and lasting changes in the way things are done. Whatever happens, our Christian faith remains a great comfort and support in these difficult times.

Neil Fisher Church Secretary

Lindsay Frost Administrative Secretary

Treasurer's Report

(to be read in conjunction with the Financial Statements for 2019)

We had an overall loss in 2019 of £6,563. This is largely due to the increase in our contributions to the Ministry and Mission contribution and also to the CSUA, which totalled £24,411 in 2019 and will be increasing again in 2020. We also had manse and minister's expenses of £3,860.

Our income from planned giving and loose collections has slightly reduced to just over £22,000 including Gift Aid.

The income from letting the church premises to various community and interest groups was £22,000 and so continues to provide a considerable contribution to the church's finances.

We raised the following for our charities (not all paid out in the 2019 financial year) – Christian Aid £3,630 (including emergency collections for disaster appeals), Homelink £2,118, Lewes Open Door £495, Fitzjohn's Food Bank £954, and our overseas charity Traidcraft £1,050. We continue to support Embrace Middle East also.

The General Fund stands at £54,891, which is a decrease from last year due to our deficit for the year. In the Legacies Fund we hold £89,264. It has been agreed this fund will be used to fund a Children and Families' Worker, but despite our efforts this is proving difficult to set up.

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

Mission Committee

We are fortunate to again have a minister, Rev Andrew Mills, to guide the committee as it makes recommendations on this most important part of the life of our church. 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. Although we now have our own minister, Norman's job has not become any easier due to the shortage of available preachers in the CSUA, with the consequent need for more Sundays to be filled by "local appointment". We are fortunate amongst our membership to have Claire Bell, who is an Accredited Methodist Local Preacher, and Gwyneth Watkinson, who is authorised by the CSUA to conduct communion at Christ Church when an ordained minister is not available. We are also grateful to Brenda and Norman Vance, who have stepped into the breach when the planned preacher has become unavailable at short notice (sometimes *very* short notice). Attendances at morning worship (excluding Messy Church) have averaged around 31 people over the year. Our 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

Our joint venture with St. Anne's church, Carols on the Green, which first started in 2005, was held on 15 December 2019 on Nevill Green. As our minister Andrew was indisposed, Canon

Richard Moatt from St. Anne's Church again agreed to lead the proceedings, and an estimated 70-80 people joined us, despite heavy rain earlier in the day.

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.

This year, to help us in looking at what it means to be *Living the life of Jesus today* we planned a number of study sessions using the resources produced by the Bible Reading Fellowship around the theme of "Holy Habits." The first sessions were held during November on a Wednesday morning, and looked at *Biblical Teaching*.

The committee also 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. In September, we moved our Messy Church services from the fourth to the second Sunday of the month, to try to avoid clashes with our Friday Messy Church services. In order to try to avoid a division between our Messy Church congregation and those of our members who prefer a more usual style of worship, we also tweaked the format to start slightly later at 9:30 am, with bacon butties and a quiz, followed by craft activities and then worship starting at the usual time of 10:30 am, followed by coffee. This has had some success. Attendances at Messy Church services are similar to 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 and congregation continues to support the Fitzjohn's Food bank, which tries to satisfy the ever growing needs of the surrounding community, and this year we opened our premises one night a week from November to March for use by the Lewes Night Shelter (see separate reports).

[**Corona virus footnote** Our final service in this reporting period was on Sunday 15 March. Subsequent Sunday worship services in the church had to be cancelled due to corona virus restrictions. At the time of writing, we do not know when or how we will be able to restart worship in the church, although we are fortunate to be able to continue to meet for Sunday worship over the internet using Zoom]

Neil Fisher

Property Committee

Formal meetings were held and reports made to Church Council & Congregational Meetings.

Items discussed/implemented were:

- Emergency lighting in rear hall – 1 unit replaced.
- Hedges & grass cut regularly. Spring flowering bulbs to be planted on the bank.
- Driveway widening completed.
- Car park shed re-erected on base and Tots shed constructed on concrete base too.

Both have since been damaged by storms (August & November 2019) Contents rescued and car park shed dismantled. Tots

shed to be dismantled and a single one built for Tots from salvaged parts and a replacement erected in the car park.

- New fire extinguishers installed throughout the building
- Storms also ripped tiles from the roof three times, now repaired. Some water staining on the apse ceiling now present.
- Concourse carpet has been replaced.
- Automatic and glass screen doors safety check needed.
- Fire alarm testing took place and back-up batteries in control panel and some emergency lights need replacing. Further fire separation works in electrical cupboard recommended.
- Main loft area now shelved for use by church and passion players for storage. A further wall to be built in the boiler room storage area.

Thanks to the committee members and church cleaners.

Alan Pett

Convenor

Safeguarding

Building on our desire to protecting people from abuse, harm or neglect, central to our Christian beliefs, Church members held a productive e-meeting on April 28th to discuss safeguarding issues.

Although there are several possible sources of guidance available, it was decided to adopt the **URC's "Good Practice 5 – Policy and good**

practice in safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk
“(January 2020) as a basis for the church’s work in this field.

We will create a Christ Church Safeguarding File that will contain all the safeguarding policies and relevant information and forms that will be kept in the church office, to be in place when normal services and hiring resumes.

We currently lack a ‘safeguarding incident reporting form’ through which anyone could raise a concern and pass it on to HC. Appendix A5 of the GP – 5 provides such a form. Copies of Incident Reporting Form will be in the Christ Church Safeguarding File. Anyone reporting an incident will need to pass on the completed form to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator immediately after the incident. She will then contact the reporter, before deciding whether the matter warrants referral to the Police or Social Services. Absolute confidentiality will be maintained throughout this process and completed reporting forms will not be publicly accessible.

All church members engaging with children and vulnerable adults, will be required to attend periodic refresher training at least every three years. There will be no personal training for the foreseeable future due to Covid-19.

DBS Checks will be required every five years for all members of Church Council and any leaders /deputies of church activities involving children or vulnerable adults. DBS checks are not required for helpers at Tots or Sunday Club.

When normal services and hiring resumes, and where relevant, hirers will need to supply a copy of their safeguarding policy, which the church will need to see and approve. The church is not

responsible for any detailed risk assessments carried out to cover the hirer's activities , such as dance or pilates.

There has only been one safeguarding issue reported to this year. The issue concerns one of the regular hirers. When the Covid-19 restrictions on holding classes are lifted, the Safeguarding co-ordinator will attend the session, make an assessment, raise the concerns with the hirer and report back to the committee. If further action is needed, we will follow the procedures set out in the URC's GP-5 policy document.

Helen Chiasson

Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Messy Church



Messy Church is a form of church for children and adults that involves creativity, celebration and hospitality.

Messy Church is held at Christ Church on Friday mornings during the school holidays and on the second Sunday morning of each month.

The Friday Messy Church has been well attended, with numbers between 40-50 people. The exception was in February 2020 when we dipped to 29. We have several regular families attending and we enjoy getting to know them while sharing the Bible stories through quiz, craft and celebration time. Our meal together at the end of the session is a good opportunity to chat.

In August we held Messy Church over three consecutive days at the start of the school holidays. Thursday and Friday followed our normal Messy Church pattern and on the Saturday we had a church family barbecue.

Sunday Messy Church starts at 9.30 am, with a bacon roll and drinks, there is a family quiz, crafts and activities, celebration and worship. This has also been a good time of fellowship with our congregation a few regular families attending although we are not currently attracting any new faces to our Messy Sundays. Some members of the congregation join us at 1030 for worship.

Glenda Pett



Making a model of Bethlehem



Pentecost celebration

Christ Church Tots

Christ Church Tots meets Friday mornings from 9.30 to 11.30 during school term time. This is a group for Parents/Grandparents/Carers to bring their babies and toddlers. Our aim is to provide a safe fun

space, where adults can chat and relax a bit, while keeping an eye on their little ones.

We were blessed with some sunny weather last summer, and able to get outside most Fridays. At the end of the Summer Term we said goodbye to several children who were either off to 'Big School' or nursery.

In the Autumn Term we averaged 21 children plus their Carers.

The playdough table is always popular, not only with the children but their Carers.



Our fantastic craft expert Linda Fisher continues to organise crafts each week and Amanda Gander, one of our Mums, often helps. Thank you both. Thanks also to all our volunteer helpers, Janet Cooper, Brenda Vance, Lesley Lane and Carole Chant.

Sadly, we have had to shut our doors this term due to COVID-19, our last session, only attended by five families, was on 13 March 2020.

One of our helpers, Carole Chant is a front-line nurse at Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath. We are praying she and her colleagues will be safe and keep well during the pandemic.

Glenda Pett

Junior Church

Messy Sundays are the time that we see most of our fellowship families. 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

Prayer

I am writing this while we are all staying at home and we are unable to meet together in person as we try to prevent the spread of Covid-19. However, we all continue to pray, and prayers rise up from all our fellowship wherever they are. We have a prayer leaflet so we can pray individually for all the members of our community on each day of the month. We trust in our God, who is our rock and our Redeemer, to comfort and sustain us through all the difficulties and dangers that we face.

Irene Gannon

Cliffe House Group

The Cliffe House Group has continued to meet on the first and third Thursday afternoon of every month at 28 St Thomas Court at 2.15 pm, although sometimes we have had to cancel due to ill health. We have eight 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. We have followed two of the York courses during the year. Each of these comprises five study sessions with questions, and we often spend two afternoons on each session. The first of these was 'Daring to see God now' which is based on Mark Chapter 1, and challenged us to think about what the Good News meant in Jesus day, and what it means for our world 2000 years later. We followed this in the autumn with 'Handing on the torch' which looks at how we can share our faith in post-Christian Britain. We had just started a new course 'In the wilderness', originally intended as a Lent course, before meetings were suspended.

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 explore our faith and seek to grow in our relationship with God.

Janet Cooper

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 meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, although that has been a bit problematic of late, as our November meeting was cancelled due to a clash with the Churches Together General Election Hustings meeting, our December meeting was scheduled for 25th and lockdown started on the Monday before our March Meeting. We were pleased to welcome our minister, Andrew Mills, to our February meeting. We generally meet either at the home of Tom and Liz Lunt or Linda and Neil Fisher, on the Nevill estate. We have around nine members, though during the year we were very sorry to lose one of our stalwarts, Richard Partridge, who died unexpectedly last spring.

At the start of the year, we began a study of 1 Corinthians, and we continued with Corinthians, moving on to 2 Corinthians, until our meetings were curtailed by the Coronavirus lockdown. We hope that we will be able to resume when we have adapted to the new normality.

Anyone wishing to join us in discussion and study please contact me or any member of the group.

Neil Fisher

Ecumenical House Group

The Ecumenical House Group has been active for 27 consecutive years. Our present membership is 10 (four from Christ Church, three Anglicans, and three Catholics). In the current year we have met nine times. Our purpose is to follow the worship of the four congregations to which we belong (and which share a common lectionary) into our everyday lives. We focus on prayers, sermons, reports and other writings from the Early Church Fathers to contemporary religious

journals. Through questions and discussion we link these to our own experience.

Topics for 2019-2020 include the following.

- Tertullian (165-220) on Prayer
- Pieces from *Reform* on Hymns
- Nigel Uden (in *Reform*) and Eric Varden (in *The Tablet*) on the Ascension
- Rupert Shortt (in *The Tablet*) on “Does religion do more harm than good?” and on “How not to read the Bible”
- Mother Teresa on Doubt and Faithfulness
- Shane Bishop (in the *Methodist Connexion*) on Discipleship
- Timothy Radcliffe on “What is the point of being Christian?”
- Eamon Duffy on Saint John Henry Newman; Newman’s Advent sermon on Equanimity
- Grigory of Nazianzen (329-390) on Incarnation and on Kindness
- The Methodist Report on Marriage and Relationships.

David Smith

Choir

Until mid-March, the 11 members of the choir have met regularly on Friday evenings. The curtailment of practices to reduce spread of the Covid-19 virus has shown just how much we miss this regular hour, meeting each other to sing music that has sustained the church for many centuries.

We have arranged four evening services, at Ascension-tide and Epiphany, and on Sundays in August and November, when members of the morning congregation at Christ Church and people from St Anne’s have joined us. A service scheduled for Passion Sunday was cancelled due to the virus. Our average attendance was 16. These

services have reminded us of the intricate links between music, prayer, scripture, and quiet reflection that make up the rich tapestry of worship across denominational boundaries and tradition.

We thank those who have participated as singers, worship leaders, and readers, and have helped in the preparation of refreshments.

David Smith

Think Tank

There were eight meetings of the Think Tank over the year up to the end of March 2020. A ninth meeting was postponed because of the Covid-19 virus. The average attendance was 32, about the same as last year. We are grateful to our speakers; almost all the talks have been meticulously prepared, well presented, informative and challenging. We thank Andrew Buxton and Mike Ramsey, who have chaired some of the sessions and Neil Fisher, who has liaised with speakers about projector equipment. Topics in the current year have been as follows.

- 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*
- Dr Sonya Baksi *The case for a Real Living Wage*
- Dr John Parry *Open spaces in urban environments.*
- Dr Martin Spinelli *What makes podcasting distinct from radio?*
- Reg Lanaway *Watching birds: lessons for society*
- Revd Dr Andrew Wingate *Multi-faith religion in contemporary society*

- Professor Julian Dunne *De-carbonising road transport: what can be done?*
- Dr Elizabeth Craig *Northern Ireland and Europe*
- Dr Susan Conway *Religion and society in Myanmar*

I am sometimes asked by Christ Church members what the point of the Think Tank is. “Where does it get you?” These are some of the points I make in reply.

- Typically one-fifth to one-quarter of Think Tank participants are from Christ Church. Meetings allow the congregation to talk, both to people from other churches and to non-churchgoers, about serious matters of faith and belief.
- As with other activities like the food bank, night shelter, tots and hall lettings, the Think Tank shows that the church is involved in the work of the community.
- The Think Tank offers recognition and support to education, government and health professionals, who worship in church on Sunday, but work on problems in society for the rest of the week.
- The Think Tank helps to keep the congregation informed about issues in contemporary society and to disabuse non-churchgoers who consider religion to be irrelevant to modern life.

David Smith

Use of Halls

This was a year of big changes. The Fitzjohn’s Food Bank underwent a significant organisational change and goes on growing. Open Door’s Night Shelter raised the support it needed and operated using

our premises on Saturday nights from the beginning of November 2019 until early March 2020, when it ceased operations with the regular guests all rehoused. Sussex Pathways has held many interviews and volunteer training sessions. Lewes Passion Play 2020 has used our Halls for rehearsals and our re-organised attic for costume-storage.

And, of course, we closed the premises mid-March following public health advice on the coronavirus outbreak. However, we have noticed that Use of Premises this current year brought in a larger share of income than did giving by members, and so was becoming increasingly important. We need to consider how to apportion the time available in our Halls after all our worship and other activities have had their share.

Priorities are tricky. Often the most commercial enterprises are the most reliable sources of revenue, rather than worthy grass-roots efforts. We need regular income, but it is good to have space to help, as when our friend Anna's Pilates studio disappeared in the castle wall collapse. Please muse on these things!

Brenda Vance

Fitzjohn's Food Bank

We continue, in a number of ways, to support the Fitzjohn's Food Bank in its work to relieve food poverty and support the local community. As well as providing use of our building at a peppercorn rent, and giving financial support, both from church funds and directly from our members, and support in terms of donations of food, a number of our congregation have roles within the food-bank organisation, as trustees (Rod and Alyson Owens, Neil Fisher) and or on the Management Committee (Irene Gannon).

The commitment and support of Christ Church was affirmed by a Partnership Agreement which was approved at our Congregational Meeting in October 2019. The practical aspects of our partnership are:

- as a Church we will be represented on the Trustees and the Management Committee of the Fitzjohns Foodbank, maintaining clear lines of communication and ensuring a fruitful collaboration.
- as a Church we are able to support this partnership through the availability of parts of our premises to enable the Fitzjohns Foodbank to function within our community on a weekly basis.
- as a congregation to support our partnership with Fitzjohns Foodbank through prayer, practical support and giving.

We have a liaison group which comprises representatives of the food bank and the church (or both), which meets regularly to exchange information and to build trust and confidence.

This last year has seen a number of changes at the food bank. The most important event has been the registering the Fitzjohns Food Bank with the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). With the growth of demand for the services of the food bank, this change will give the food bank a legal status and enable it to carry out activities in its own name, such as employing staff. The new status will also give more protection to the trustees. The new CIO has a board of trustees, who are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the food bank, and they delegate the day to day running to a management committee. Both of these bodies include representation from Christ Church.

Also during the year, Helen Chiasson decided it was time to step down from her roles as co-ordinator and then as a trustee of the food bank. Her huge contribution to its establishment and growth was recognised at the Messy Church service on Sunday March 8.

The food bank has signed a new set of letting agreements to formalise their use of parts of the church buildings and its new venture of a raised vegetable garden beside the top car park. Thanks in particular to Irene and Brenda for their work in drawing up the agreements.

Not surprisingly, Christmas was a very busy time and the food bank was able to provide seasonal packages to around 60 needy local families. They were very grateful to Christ Church for our assistance in accommodating the unexpected avalanche of donations which they received.

As the period in this report drew towards a close, the food bank, like everything and everyone else, had to accommodate major changes to respond to the corona virus pandemic. Social distancing meant that new working procedures had to be quickly put in place, and deliveries to clients replaced the throng of people queuing in the building to pick-up their supplies. Fortunately all other activities in the building have ceased, so that they are able to spread out to maintain social distancing, but it remains to be seen how their operations will be affected when, or if, there is a return to a new normality.

Neil Fisher

Lewes Open Door (winter shelter for the homeless)

The Winter Night Shelter opened on Saturday 9 November 2019 at Christ Church, providing shelter and refreshments to three guests that night thanks to the full complement of three helpers overnight. The other churches who have taken part include Westgate, Trinity Southover and King's Church. This has enabled us to open five nights a week.

It has been a huge undertaking with volunteers being recruited, trained and DBS checked and educated on the slightly different requirements at each church. The guests had to be pre-vetted by the local authority and the police to ensure they did not present particular risks to premises or personnel.

Despite a few hiccups, the process worked well until the New Year with Christmas being particularly well attended with the maximum 5 attending each night. Westgate gave us their premises for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day and we were able to provide a full Christmas dinner with donated turkey and all the trimmings, Christmas pudding and a mountain of chocolates, sweets, biscuits and cakes. One of our guests told us it was the “happiest Christmas day he had ever had”.

Unfortunately, in the New Year it became a little more difficult to open on the relevant nights because we could not get three volunteers or either no guests signed up, or they signed up but did not turn up. On 29 February 2020 we took the decision to suspend the night shelter as three of our most regular guests had been housed by the local authority, two in Seaford and one in Eastbourne.

We remained poised to reopen should the need arise but it did not and then the arrival of the Corona Virus meant we had to suspend our entire operation. We had planned to continue until 26 March so we were a month short of our intended closure.

Lewes Open Door would like to thank the members of Christ Church for all their help in the Night Shelter, for the premises, the facilities and the support of the congregation in so many ways and we hope to run again next winter should the need arise.

Claire Bell

Christ Church walks

We run a walk programme for church members and friends, usually after the church service on the third Sunday of the month. This gives us a chance to enjoy the Sussex countryside and good fellowship together.

In the 2019 calendar year, we had a very good run with the usually unreliable English weather. Every month, we seemed to be blessed with dry, and mostly sunny, weather. This led to some very good turn outs, with 10 or more of us out on a number of occasions.

Our walks included an urban seaside trail in Shoreham (where we saw a lifeboat launch to rescue a yacht in trouble off Hove); the Ouse Valley around Hamsey; the Downs above South Heighton; the Cuckmere Valley and the Rathfinny Vineyard; and the attractive countryside around Plumpton.

Our “weather luck” began to turn for the worse in the autumn. We couldn't avoid the impact of a very unsettled end to the year, which led to our planned walk around Alfriston being diverted due to flooding in October; a wind-blasted coastal walk around Seaford Head in December; and a very muddy walk over and around Kingston Ridge in January. However, the traditional New Year morning expedition to Mount Caburn was calm, dry and cloudy.



Mud, mud, glutinous mud a familiar sight on our walks during winter 2019/20

Our March 2020 walk was cancelled due to the start of the coronavirus outbreak and, at time of writing (April 2020) we don't know when we will be able to go out together again in anything bigger than a family group. We will resume the programme as soon as we can.

Lindsay Frost

**CHRIST CHURCH (United Reformed and Methodist)
seeks to proclaim the Gospel and serve the
community around it.**