

CHRIST CHURCH , LEWES (URC and METHODIST)

ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022



Report made to the Annual Church Meeting

held on Sunday April 24 2022

CHRIST CHURCH

United Reformed and Methodist

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CONTENTS	PAGE	CONTENTS	PAGE
Minister's Report	4	Cliffe House Group	18
Secretaries' Report	4	Neville House Group	18
Treasurer's Report	9	Ecumenical House Group	19
Mission Committee	11	Junior Church	20
Property Committee	12	Think Tank	21
Messy Church	14	Eco Working Group	22
Christ Church Tots	16	Fitzjohn's Food Bank	24
Safeguarding	16	Lewes Open Door	26
Hall Bookings	17	Christ Church Walks	27
Choir	18	Lewes for Ukraine	29

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MINISTER'S REPORT

This year we have no minister's report. Rev. Andrew Mills has been suffering from the severe and debilitating effects of long covid since he initially contracted the virus in March 2020, right at the start of the pandemic.

This has caused lengthy sickness absence over many months, leading Andrew to apply to the URC for early retirement due to ill-health in December 2021. His application has now been approved and he will formally retire from his post on 31 May 2022.

Our love and prayers go to Andrew, Ruth and their family in their long ordeal, along with the hopes of all at Christ Church Lewes that his condition improves and that his health may be restored.

NF/LF

SECRETARIES' REPORT

The last year has been dominated by the continued impact of the covid pandemic through into 2022. The pandemic has profoundly affected all areas of church life again this year through a combination of the Minister's prolonged absence through illness, a lockdown extending into spring 2021, and a gradual relaxation of legal restrictions as most people took up the covid vaccines. At the time of writing (March 2022), covid infection rates remain high, both

nationally and locally, with a number of our church members affected in recent weeks.

In the Minister's absence, we have been very fortunate that a number of members of the congregation have stepped up to lead worship in the church on a regular basis. Special thanks are due to Claire Bell, Gwyneth Watkinson, Tom Lunt, Brenda and Norman Vance – and on one occasion, the choir – for preparing and presenting a rich variety of worship. We are also grateful for the worship leaders provided by the CSUA, particularly Rev. Dr. Richard Goldring who has preached very regularly at Christ Church over the last year.

We also thank David and Marion Smith who have continued to produce commentaries on the lectionary readings for the Advent/Christmas and Easter/Pentecost seasons. These booklets have provided an insightful view of the readings, for our own congregation and for members of the Cross Way congregation and also for people outside of the usual church circle.

We had to close the church building for worship from December 2020 to May 2021 due to the extended national lockdown, and concerns for the particular age vulnerability of our congregation.



After May 2021, we returned to worship in church, albeit with a number of covid safety measures in place. Some of these measures

still remain at time of writing. In parallel with the return of worship in church, we have continued with online worship via Zoom in partnership with other pastorate churches at Seaford and Alfriston.

There has also been a regular CSUA Sunday evening service on Zoom, led by Rev. Barbara Evans-Routley. We are very grateful to Barbara for this, and for other useful guidance she has provided to us over the past year.

All of this has continued to strengthen our links with our sister churches in the pastorate, the wider CSUA, and with members of the church family who have moved away from Lewes. Not least, we have enjoyed regular Sunday morning Zoom contacts and monthly newsletter reports from Karen and Vivian in Thika, Kenya.

In October, we were invited to tea and cakes at Cross Way, Seaford, where we were able to see the newly renovated church. We were much impressed with the work, particularly the excellent new artwork they have commissioned inside the church. Some of these are illustrated below. Above all, it was lovely to see our Cross Way friends outside the little “Zoom boxes” where we have been meeting for many months.



Our Church Council meetings have remained on Zoom and have been held more frequently (monthly or even more often, rather than six

times a year as “pre-covid”). This is because we have had to manage the many complex issues caused by the ebb-and-flow of the pandemic with its alpha, delta and omicron variants; the ever-changing national regulations; and the particular needs of our congregation and other users of our buildings.

Inevitably, the pandemic has seriously disrupted the pursuit of our charitable objectives during 2021. Nevertheless, we have carried on our work as much as can, with a particular focus on assisting “essential services” in the local community such as the Food Bank and Lewes Open Door. Details of these services are set out elsewhere in this Annual Church Report.

Sadly, over the year, we have seen the passing of several members of the Christ Church congregation, all of whom were much loved and valued. We remember Alexander Bloomfield, Jean Craig, Margaret Shave, Tim Beech and Janet Jones. Our love and sympathy goes to their families in their loss.

On a happier note, it was lovely to host our first christening ceremony for some time in July 2021, when Andrew Byrne was baptised. Andrew is a frequent attender at our Sunday morning services and is now an “express crawler”, often seen heading up the church aisle with his mother, Alison, in pursuit.

In 2019, we commenced a review of how the church presents itself to users of the buildings ,and to passers-by, through a fresh look at our image, signing and communications. Whilst progress on the working up of larger, detailed and costed proposals has been delayed by the pandemic, a number of smaller, but very imaginative, initiatives have been carried out. Thank you particularly to Linda Fisher and Judy and Ian Christie- Miller for their work.

In late February 2022, a Russian military invasion unleashed terrible death, destruction and dislocation upon the Ukrainian people. This has resulted in the worst humanitarian crisis in Europe since the

Second World War, with millions of traumatised people fleeing the conflict. Our prayers are with the people of Ukraine in their suffering, and in urging peace and reconciliation instead of conflict.

We hosted a fund-raising concert – “Songs for Ukraine” – on March 13. In addition, many individual church members have made their own financial contributions to the DEC’s humanitarian appeal for Ukraine, or to the many other charities working to alleviate suffering there.

Many people in the UK want to help Ukrainian refugees fleeing from the war. A group called “Lewes for Ukraine “has started up in the town. Christ Church has hosted several of its inaugural meetings, at which local people could find out more about how to help. Lewes for Ukraine is bringing together people, organisations and local government together in order to create a practical network of goods, services and events to help the Ukrainian refugees mend and continue their lives.



May Peace come soon.

Neil Fisher - Church Secretary

Lindsay Frost - Administrative Secretary

CHURCH TREASURER'S REPORT

(to be read in conjunction with the Financial Statements for 2021, which are provided separately)

Our overall net receipts for 2021 were + £12,594. This was largely due to an insurance payment for loss of income from lettings the year before.

The planned giving has increased over the last year by about 10%. There were very few physical collections: most of the money has been received directly into the bank account.

The income from letting the church premises to various community and interest groups increased very slightly as the Covid restrictions were eased for a while last autumn. I am hoping that 2022 will see a further return towards pre-pandemic levels.

We raised the following for our charities in 2021 – Christian Aid £5,575 (including emergency collections for disaster appeals), Homelink £1,875, Beachy Head Chaplaincy (BHC) £2,266, and the Food Bank £394. We continued to support Embrace Middle East from unrestricted funds to the amount of £216. The BHC benefited from a “Sussex Folk Carols” concert held in the church in early December

The contribution to the United Reformed Church remained the same for 2021 as for 2020; and will remain the same for 2022. The CSUA contribution was reduced slightly and it will stay the same for the coming year.

The last two years seem to have caused big fluctuations in maintenance and running costs for the church.

At the beginning of 2021 we had a large credit on the Gas/Electricity account with Bulb and I reclaimed that back over the year. This meant that the amount paid in 2021 was much less than the year before. In November there were large increases in the fuel costs and Bulb went into administration. As a result, we changed supplier to Octopus Energy from 1st January 2022. However, this meant that we didn't get proper bills from Bulb for November and December until January (finalising the much more expensive fuel we used from 05.11.21 to the end of the year). There is still strong upward pressure on energy prices, partly as a result of the war in Ukraine, so I am expecting our running costs to increase significantly again during 2022

We didn't pay for gardening costs last year, but have done so at the beginning of 2022. Our cleaning costs were lower, as there was less cleaning as the church was not used very much for most of the year.

The sale of tea towels has been going on during the year, mainly to Lewes Tourist Information Centre. I have about 28 left. I have just received another £105.00 from the TIC, so we are now in profit from the venture.

The sundry income we received this year was made up as follows:

- A bequest of £1000 from Peter and Jill Cane, and also a donation from David Tory of £1000 which to be used for a maintenance project at the church (not yet spent).
- A payment of £10,223 from Congregational Insurance for a claim we made for loss of lettings income due to covid restrictions – the lettings of the building were very much reduced.
- A refund from BULB energy of £1100.
- A covid grant from Synod for opening up the building of £525.

The income of £19 for Tots was the petty cash held by Glenda finally being banked.

Irene Gannon
Treasurer

MISSION COMMITTEE

In April 2021, our worship consisted of Zoom services ,arranged jointly with Cross Way Church, Seaford, which had been much appreciated during the lockdown periods. Worship back in church began on 23 May, Pentecost Sunday, which was an appropriate day for the event. It was zoomed to Cross Way as well. We have continued to provide access by Zoom to our congregation and occasionally to Cross Way to ensure that those who are unwell or away are able to join. We have continued to be able to make our own arrangements for preachers for worship with Claire Bell, Tom Lunt, Gwyneth Watkinson Brenda and Norman Vance, and Richard Goldring, in the sad absence of our minister, Reverend Andrew Mills.

Messy Church packs were sent out every month to the families we had contact with but on the resumption of in church services when we attempted two Messy Church Sundays, despite efforts including leafleting local streets, we failed to attract families and a decision was taken to cease Messy Church Sundays and concentrate our Messy Church efforts on our Friday holiday Messy Church during school holidays.

This left a gap in our worship pattern once a month and we have now embarked on “Second Sundays”: an attempt to try some alternatives to the traditional “hymn sandwich” service. So far, we have had two second Sundays, one with Psalms as the theme which included members of the congregation sharing their expertise and enthusiasm for the psalms and a visual display, and the first one on

the gifts of the spirit. The aim is to allow greater participation from the congregation and some more creative opportunities for all.

“Carols on the Green” took place on 12 December 2021 on Neville Green with the Lewes, Glynde and Beddingham Brass Band and, despite very wet weather, was well attended. Thank you to Rev. Ben Brown of St Anne’s Church for leading the service

Think Tank has continued throughout the year with a very good attendance and very interesting speakers. Food Bank has been more active than ever as families struggled with additional pressures as a result of the pandemic. Similarly, Lewes Open Door have also used our premises on four lunchtimes a week for the past year, providing hot food and drinks and a safe space for vulnerable and homeless people to receive care.

The Choir continued to have social meetings throughout the year but have not been able to hold Choir Services due to the pandemic although rehearsals have now resumed.

A Lent Group has been held this year using the study guide provided by Marion Smith.

Claire Bell

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

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

Items discussed included:

- Hedges & grass cut regularly. More spring flowering bulbs planted on the outside banks.
- A new shed to be built on the “Tots” base from salvage.

- Fire extinguishers inspection was satisfactory.
- Large hall opening window had to be replaced at a cost of £2,795 + VAT ,mostly paid for from the Synod Covid grant,
- The entrance porch has been painted at a cost of £1,125+ VAT and including scaffolding.
- Fire alarm testing took place and is due next in May. Back-up batteries in control panel, probably all emergency lights and sounders need replacing as nearly 20 years old (apparently, they only had a 10 year life). Further fire separation works in electrical cupboard recommended to be done to prevent fire spreading over the corridor ceiling area.
- Further electrical safety work is being priced
- A further wall still to be built in the boiler room storage area and floor finished off to create additional space.
- The garden gate lock was replaced twice (now removed) as users couldn't make them work.

I would like thanks to the committee members and church cleaners for their work in maintaining the church buildings and grounds.

Alan Pett

Convenor



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

As reported last year we kept in contact, during the pandemic, with about twenty families by distributing Messy Church Activity packs once month. This started in November 2020. We continued to do this until July 2021, hoping things would be returning to in person Messy Church from September onwards.

Each pack contained a Bible story, craft activity, worksheet and sometimes a suggested game, all connected with the Bible story. The stories covered for the period relating to this report were:

April - The Good Shepherd

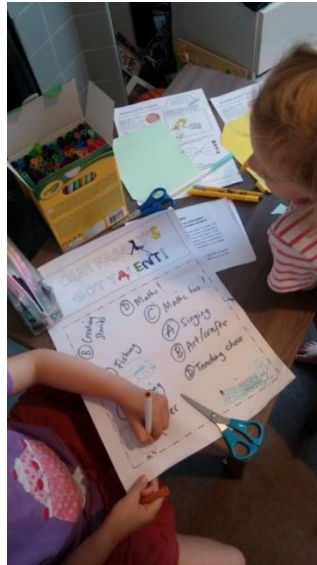
May – Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus

June – Parable of the Talents

July – Noah’s Ark

We received a lovely photo and message.

Just a quick message of thanks for the continued activities dropped off at our house. I've attached a photo of my girls completing one of the more recent ones.



Many thanks to Linda and Neil Fisher, Irene Gannon, Ian and Judy Christie-Miller for their ideas and various skills in getting each pack in place.

In September, at a joint meeting of the Messy Church Team and Worship Committee, it was decided to restart our second Sunday of the month Messy Church.

October -Harvest

November - Remembrance

December - Christingle

It was good to get back in person but mostly only our regular congregation members attended, although we did have a couple of families attend, one in October and one for the Messy Christingle in December

Thanks again to the team named above also to Claire Bell and Brenda Vance for leading the worship sessions.

Now we move onto the next chapter. It has been decided to suspend the Sunday Messy Church for now and resume our Friday school holiday Messy Church sessions, starting in the Easter Holidays.

Plans are now well under way. We pray that we can once again reach out to our neighbours and families in the area.

Glenda Pett

CHRIST CHURCH TOTS

Our Christ Church Tots sessions were aimed at pre-school children and their carers for a morning session. They were held every Friday in school term time, strengthening our links with young families in the local community and acting as a “feeder” into other church activities.

Unfortunately, the pandemic meant that we had to suspend these sessions in March 2020 .The vulnerable age profile of our volunteer leaders and helpers has made it impossible to re-start them in 2021. For the same reason, we were unable to operate a **“Holiday Club”** for older children during the school summer holidays.

Efforts to re-start Tots in summer 2021 by seeking volunteer leaders from amongst parents and carers of children were not successful.

SAFEGUARDING

Since the pandemic began, and throughout lockdown, all required legal and sensible measures have been taken to ensure the safety of all building users.

All regular hirers of any part of the Church premises have their own Safeguarding Policies. These have been reviewed by Brenda Vance, who arranges all the Church lettings, and all policies comply with accepted safeguarding standards.

Helen Chiasson was planning to arrange virtual training for Safeguarding leaders earlier this year, but it was cancelled and has not been rescheduled.

The church's existing Safeguarding Policy dates from of 2016, so needs to be updated. This will be addressed in the coming weeks and a revised policy will be brought for approval to a meeting of the Church Council and the new policy will be on the Church website.

There have been no safeguarding issues or concerned reported to either Helen Chiasson or Alison Byrne. In this case, "nil points" is what we aim for!

Helen Chiasson

HALL BOOKINGS

2021 – 2022 has been a strange year. We were closed at the beginning, except for the exempted support charities, Fitzjohns Food Bank and Lewes Open Door. Then children's activities were allowed to resume, and the dance-schools and Sing and Sign returned. Gradually our regulars, exercise groups, later choirs, everyone testing before attending, and eventually activities like the Bridge Class and the Lewes Stamp Club, returned. We acquired two AA support groups, and two extra Yoga groups. By the time the schools return after Easter we should have all our regulars back, plus the extras. So financially we're good. But we should be pleased too about the contribution our premises have been able to make to the quality of life of Lewes residents through the pandemic via exercise, recreation, and social contact.

Our bi-annual Three Quires Day took place, and early in December some of the same singers, re-constituted as "Shepherds Arise", sang traditional Sussex carols to a packed house and raised a substantial amount for our Beachy Head Chaplaincy appeal. I am grateful for the support of all from both church and community for putting in the extra mileage to keep everyone safe at a difficult time.

Brenda Vance

CHOIR

The pandemic led to the suspension of Friday choir practices for over a year. Since restrictions were lifted, ten members have met again, albeit masked and distanced, and have been truly delighted to sing some of the marvellous music that has been considered a vital part of worship over the last 500 years.

We were asked to prepare a service of Music and Prayer on 20 February 2022 and hope to sing at another service during the summer. We thank Norman Vance for the many years he has sung with the choir and welcome Rachel Cooper, who joins us on Fridays when this can be fitted in with her work.

David Smith

CLIFFE HOUSE GROUP

The Cliffe House Group has been unable to meet since February 2019. Since then, two of our members have passed away, and another is in a care home. Irene and I continue to keep in touch with the remaining members, but at present the prospects of our meeting together are slim.

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. Since the first lockdown in March 2020, we have been meeting using Zoom and have continued to meet that way as Covid restrictions have eased, although we do plan to meet together in homes when we again feel comfortable with the situation. We have around ten members, with an average of about nine people each session.

At the start of the year, we were studying a Tearfund film series for small groups on “Christianity and Climate Change”. This is a nine-part film series featuring Katharine Hayhoe, the internationally renowned Christian climate scientist. That was completed in October, and we followed that up with a couple of sessions on Prayer, led by Tom and Liz Lunt. We are currently studying a Lent course, though not over Lent, called “Growing Good for Lent 2022” provided by the Church Urban Fund. The Growing Good Toolkit is a resource that “equips your church to grow new connections and make a difference where you live”. We pray that it will.

If you would like any more information about our meetings or would like to join us in discussion and study please contact me or any member of the group.

Neil Fisher

ECUMENICAL HOUSE GROUP

Our group continues to meet about once a month by Zoom. The composition is unchanged, viz 4 from Christ Church, 4 from St Pancras, 1 from St Anne’s and 1 from Toronto. We usually have 6-10 participants. Our strategy is to circulate documents from a range of sources by email. At our meetings, we clarify difficult or controversial

passages and learn from each other. As in previous years, our aim is to link the liturgy of the Church with the world outside, as shown in the programme below.

- The new Archbishop of York's manifesto: Finding hope, taking heart and changing the world
- Ruth Kelly (former cabinet minister, now papal adviser) on Theology and Economics: Adding value to capitalism
- October liturgy and Anglican reports on the Nature of the Church
- Pope Francis and Rowan Williams on The Communion of Saints
- Jürgen Moltmann and Advent liturgy on the Second Coming
- Desmond Tutu on Reconciliation and Ubuntu
- Rowan Williams on Incarnation and Hope
- War (in Ukraine) and Theology

In turbulent times like ours, the media press the church to give simple answers to very complex questions. Church leaders sometimes appear to be thrown off balance. From the articles we have discussed we have been made aware that, within the Church, the difficult questions are being examined in the light of our 2000-year-old tradition. This gives us hope.

David Smith

JUNIOR CHURCH

Although we were able to restart worshipping together in our church, we have only been able to welcome toddler Andrew to our services. It has been wonderful having that young voice amongst us. We are hoping to begin to reconnect with families through our Messy Church worship.

Irene Gannon

THINKTANK

The thinktank has continued to thrive during Covid lockdown and the more recent period when we have cautiously moved back to church premises. Eight of our twelve meetings have been by Zoom only, so they have been accessible to people living at a distance from the church, and to people too frail to come out on wet winter evenings.

Four of our meetings have been streamed live from the church to Zoom participants so those attending in person have been able to meet each other and the speaker (an important advantage over Zoom). Our current strategy is cautiously to persevere with hybrid Zoom/in-person meetings in the hope that we can maintain the advantages of both forms.

We are especially indebted to our speakers, who have given their services free. Without exception, they have hit the right level for our concerned, but non-specialist, audience. We regularly receive appreciative emails, especially from people outside our church congregation, and seem to be developing a reputation as a source of concise, accurate information about issues in contemporary society. Most of our speakers allow us to circulate their slides after meetings so data can be kept for future reference.

The programme this year was as follows.

- Tim Locke - Christians, Jews, and the Holocaust: a family's journey through uncertainty
- Rev Dr Richard Goldring - ALL lives matter
- Dr Peter Holmes - Brexit isn't done yet. What comes next?
- Peter and Helena Shears - Teaching English in a Multicultural Society
- Chris Lawson and David Burke - Human Rights and Amnesty International

- Professor Liz Hill - Climate Crisis and COP26: Collaboration or Catastrophe?
- Ashley Price - The Pandemic and Lewes Businesses
- Nigel Baker - Electric cars: the future for individuals and society?
- Dr Farai Jena - Why is migration so controversial?
- Joy Mercer - Who benefits? A review of the welfare benefits system
- Professor Tony Fielding - Effects of Covid-19 on Internal Migration. What we can learn from Japanese experience
- Margaret Carey - From Remand to Rehabilitation: the work of Sussex Pathways

The attendance has ranged from 24 to 47, with an average of 36, about the same as last year.

Andrew Buxton, Mike Ramsey, and David Smith

ECO WORKING GROUP



The climate emergency has been prominent in our thoughts and prayers over the last year. In early September, Claire Bell led a “Climate Sunday” service. Christ Church also hosted an overnight

stay by the “Coat of Hopes” on its journey by foot from Newhaven to the COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow.

Representatives of the Lewes churches met together in late September to discuss setting up a joint environmental initiative. It was agreed that:

- Any initiative by the churches should be based on Christian scripture and focus on the moral, ethical and leadership issues raised by the climate emergency
- There is no need to duplicate provision of information on matters such as sustainable energy , travel and waste management, as that is already provided by many other agencies
- Individual churches will be responsible for “putting their own house in order” on climate issues through matters such as carbon reduction and “eco-church” accreditations, but other churches may be able to provide support and advice if they already have (or are on the path to) accreditation
- Considering, as a priority, initiatives to coincide with the COP26 conference in Glasgow. Prayer walks and a Prayer vigil were arranged

A second meeting of the group has been arranged for early April 2022.

For its part, Christ Church decided to seek “Eco Church” accreditation in November 2021 and set up an Eco Group to pursue this work. The Group has developed a programme of measures to improve the environmental performance of the church buildings (and our wider activities) in 2022 and beyond. We are starting to work on these measures.

An online assessment suggests that we already stand a good chance of a “bronze level” accreditation and a formal application will be

made in spring 2022, whilst we continue to work for further improvements.

Thanks to Tom Lunt, Ian and Judy Christie-Miller, and Alan Pett for all their hard work in moving things forward.

Lindsay Frost

FITZJOHN'S FOOD BANK

The Food Bank has had yet another busy year. We finally managed to get all the food that was stored in the small hall during lockdown sorted and reduced and our stores are now restricted to the small room off the apse and the cupboards in the rear hall.

We started to allow people to come and collect their food and have been hiring the main hall in the afternoon, so that people could socially distance while waiting to collect their bags, and also choose some things as well. This was well received by the clients though we are still delivering to some very vulnerable people, and may well continue to do so for some time.



Kate Sinar, our coordinator worked really hard to procure lots of vouchers for the families over the summer – free trips to the castle,

the Pells swimming pool, and the Depot. These were really well received and make a big difference to families who can't afford holidays away. The Depot give us (and the other two Food Banks) vouchers each school holiday and over the last half term week they reported that they provided 121 kids meals and 45 hot drinks to accompanying adults. 22 family cinema tickets were used with 100 people seeing a film. This was in addition to all the work of actually keeping the food bank doing the core job of providing food each week to around 45-50 families.

Kate resigned at the end of last summer and so there has been much work going on by the trustees to find a more sustainable solution and they have just recruited a new coordinator – Ruby Makepeace-Somerville – who will start at the beginning of April.

The food bank gave out Advent calendars donated by the church to all the families – one per family regardless of whether there were children or not. Easter eggs, including a small leaflet with the story of Easter, were also given to the children at Easter.

The food bank is looking to moving to self-selection of food again as it used to do over the next few weeks (rather than the pre-packing employed during the pandemic). As times get more difficult for so many people, the food bank remains an important way to help others – however much we might wish it was not necessary. It is also good to know that the church has hands on involvement with Neil, Rod and Aly as trustees and myself as a regular volunteer

Irene Gannon, Fitzjohn's Foodbank Volunteer

LEWES OPEN DOOR

Lewes Open Door is a charity which provides a drop-in homeless centre where guests can get a nourishing meal, wash, and collect clean clothes and bedding ; support with housing and benefits queries, filling in paperwork, access to the internet and contact details of agencies that may be able to offer additional support.

We were very grateful to be welcomed in to Christ Church running four lunchtimes a week, because the premises were being used by a much enlarged foodbank operation on Mondays and we were unable to obtain sufficient volunteers to run at the weekend.

We were very happy to see that volunteers were willing to come and help us run in a covid safe way with two volunteers per day, providing cooked lunches and hot and cold drinks to our guests. We also store a small number of items of clothing and other supplies our guests might need at Christ Church and have been permitted to store more clothing, bedding and other supplies at the Tourist Information Centre in Lewes.



We have continued, and expanded on, all the other work we were doing prior to the pandemic. We have engaged much more with the local council and other third sector organisations providing help to

homeless and vulnerable people in East Sussex. We have raised our profile by attending on line homeless forums and discussion groups. We have been able to help our guests with housing, access to disability payments and other sources of funding. We have also received opportunities to speak about our work from several schools and colleges who have supported our work by raising money for us.

We are also supported by several churches in the Lewes Area including Christ Church and Cliff Feoffees. We are continuing to receive new applications from people wanting to volunteer and we also have a trusty band of cooks who provide us with the home cooked meals so beloved of our guests, as well as the support we receive from Waitrose and Cook amongst others.

One of the notable events of the past year was the visit of the Duchess of Cornwall in March 2021 .She engaged our volunteers in conversation and was (as so many people are) surprised of the extent of the need for support for the homeless in our otherwise affluent area.

We held a successful summer volunteers meeting last year and will do so again once the weather improves.

Claire Bell

CHRIST CHURCH WALKS

Our church walks resumed after we emerged from lockdown in spring 2021. We have a good core group of about 6-7 walkers, who turn out most times, and sometimes we also attract a few more church members (and the odd dog) out to enjoy the Sussex countryside and coast. All are welcome.

This year our walks programme has been very varied and generally lucky with the weather. Our walks covered these areas:

- The Old Lewes Racecourse (May) ,

- Firle Park and Charleston (June)
- Offham and Landport Bottom (August)
- Swanborough and Kingston (September)
- Seaford Head (October)
- The Chattri War Memorial near Brighton(November)
- Westmeston and Ditchling (December)
- Mount Caburn (New Years' Day)
- Falmer Downs (January)
- Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve (March)

The only weather cancellations were walks in July (too hot! ... a first) and February (wet and windy... all too familiar) , so generally we have been quite lucky with our choice of walk dates.



Ideas for future walks are very welcome

Lindsay Frost

LEWES FOR UKRAINE

As in all communities in the UK, people have been greatly moved by the war and resulting refugee crisis in the Ukraine. It's clear that communities, organisations, places of worship, local government and individuals must work together so we can welcome, accommodate and serve the Ukrainian refugees who will come to live amongst us.

These people are fleeing all that they know and love. Their needs will be complex, and in some cases, huge. The newly-formed group: Lewes for Ukraine is bringing together people, organisations and local government so we can create a practical network of goods, services and events to help the Ukrainian refugees mend and continue their lives.

We've had three inaugural meetings to date at Christ Church and now have a website: <https://www.lewes4ukraine.org.uk> , pages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The website's pages include:

- An explanation of the sponsoring and visa process, with a list of the visa questions in English and Ukrainian. (Very helpful as the visa application has to be completed in one sitting.)
- Ways that people can help with a sign-up form where people can offer skills, expertise and resources to refugees and their sponsors.
- Useful information sites at governmental, county and district level, as well as information on other organisations involved in Ukrainian and worldwide refugee issues. This information is constantly updated.
- Areas for job offers and specific support such as free haircuts, transportation, language lessons etc. ...
- Updates of Lewes for Ukraine's work, activities and resources available as well as information of local events such as coffee mornings, sponsored events etc. ... that any organisation is holding in the Lewes area for Ukrainian refugees.



The website will evolve and contain more and more information, so please do check it regularly.

If you or anyone you know is considering becoming a sponsor, we recommend you look at the government's documents: Welcome! Guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK and Homes for Ukraine, frequently asked questions. These will help you decide if sponsoring is for you. You are also very welcome to contact me personally.

If you do decide to be a sponsor, you need to register on the government's Homes for Ukraine website. The government does not match sponsors to refugees so we recommend you register on the independent Ukraine Take Shelter site and take their advice regarding choosing the people you open your homes to. You will have dozens of requests and people are very polite if you say no.

Funding and fundraising will be an important aspect of Lewes for Ukraine's work. Though Ukrainian refugees, unlike other refugees, will receive special help as they can apply for and receive benefits on arrival and can look for and take up employment immediately, and sponsors can apply for a £200 grant per refugee they sponsor, people will be arriving at best with a small suitcase or bag so will need kitting out with basic things and more clothing and shoes. If you'd like to make a donation, please make cheques out to: Churches Together in the Lewes Area or via electronic transfer to account no: 37495460, sort code: 30-65-37 Churches Together in the Lewes Area and reference Lewes for Ukraine on the back of the cheque or with your electronic payment.

Many thanks are due to Churches Together in Lewes for offering this vital facility now, before we can arrange our own bank account.

Many, many thanks to the very busy Neil Fisher who brought the website into being!

Helen Chiasson

