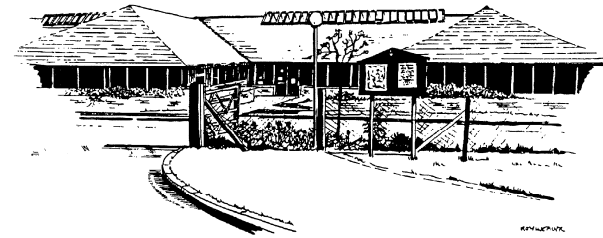




Westlea Church Annual Report 2019



West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership
Baptist • Church of England • Methodist • United Reformed Church
Registered Charity: 1141341



Summary

Westlea Church continues to serve the community and to reflect the multi-ethnic character of the area. Our membership has increased in 2019 and we have been able to offer support and encouragement to members and others in times of need.

During 2019 we continued to be encouraged by the number of our members and wider church family who continued to 'step up' to take on additional responsibilities, particularly in leading worship regularly. We have also continued to play our part in the wider Partnership through involvement on Partnership Council and other activities such as Messy Church, the worship planning group, daytime housegroup, schools work and the Emerge Project.

We endeavour to foster and encourage personal relationship with God and we believe passionately that prayer is a vital part of this. We have increased our focus on sharing of prayer needs and answers in both Sunday worship and housegroup, and have been encouraged by the responses. The housegroups have continued to be places where we have actively engaged with the Bible and current issues.

This report has been produced by the Leadership Team of Westlea Church, on behalf of the Members. We believe it gives a clear picture of the life of Westlea Church, the way in which our members have sought to fulfil our stated objectives and our aims for the next year.

Peter Gilder, Pam Ray, Chris Scarisbrick, Julie Scarisbrick, Andy Vernon, Richard Williams and Sarah Wilmott,

On behalf of Westlea Church, March 2020

Objectives

Our vision: A community of people worshipping in Westlea who believe in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Bible, and who accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Our mission: To take the Good News about Jesus to every person in Westlea and encourage them to receive Him as their Lord and Saviour. Care for and teach every Christian believer so that they can become mature disciples of Jesus.

Organisation

Westlea Church is one of four churches in the West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership. Governance of Westlea Church is by the Members and three of these members represent Westlea on the Partnership Council (PC).

Members are followers of Jesus Christ who wish to commit themselves to the life of the local church in Westlea. An application form is signed before a new member is formally welcomed during a Sunday Service.

The members of Westlea Church have the responsibility of cooperating with the wider Partnership in promoting the work of the church in the areas of Westlea and Eastleaze. Drawn from the members of Westlea Church is a team of elected Leaders, the Secretary and Treasurer.

Review of Aims for 2019

Last year we said we would

- Further encourage the skills of members of the Church family in all areas of church life
We have offered many opportunities for everyone to participate. People have responded enthusiastically and we hope this will continue and increase.
- Continuing to build our Holy Habits, looking for spiritual growth
We continued to progress this area of study, we are seeing signs of spiritual growth. We will continue in 2020.
- Remodelling our service to our children and young people.
We reviewed our Sunday children's work during 2019, children are now catered for with (mainly play-type) activities at the rear of the hall.
- Looking for further opportunities to develop our community outreach.
We have concentrated on our litter picking and school contacts and supporting the Partnership's work.

Members & Meetings

At the end of 2019 Westlea Church had 33 members

Of these members 29 are joint members of all the four denominations (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and United Reformed), 3 are Baptist members and 1 is an Anglican member.

The Leadership Team meets to discuss church business and make “small scale” decisions. They discuss major issues before presenting them to the Members at the Members’ Meeting.

During 2019 the Members met 5 times including the Annual General Meeting in March. The Leadership Team met 5 times in the same period and also once with the other leadership teams in the Partnership.

The Christian Community

Westlea Church meets weekly to worship in Westlea School, which we hire for the purpose. There is a morning service held at 10:00am. Year on year the average attendance across the year at the Sunday services remains largely stable although, with a relatively small congregation, numbers on a week by week basis can be erratic.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Adult attendance	24	25	22	21	22	20	20
Child attendance	9	9	10	5	5	4	3

On our Contact list there are currently 24 families with 14 young people aged 16 and under. There were no funerals for members of Westlea Church during the year. Regular attendees at Westlea Church cover a wide range of ages and originate from many different countries.

With the now small number of children and limited numbers of those available to teach them we reviewed our Sunday children’s work during 2019 and children present on a Sunday morning are now catered for with (mainly play-type) activities at the rear of the hall during our morning services

Our youth housegroup has continued to meet roughly fortnightly on Monday evenings, with an average attendance of 4 young people, including from other Partnership churches.

Two of our young people were baptised during the year.

We hold a Communion Service on the third Sunday of each month and we continue to meet together for occasional joint services with the rest of the Partnership. These services rotate around the Partnership Churches. We organised a 24 hour prayer initiative for the Partnership.

Looking Forward to 2020

As we head into 2020, we will be looking to:

- Continue to build our holy habits, looking for spiritual growth.
- Looking for further opportunities to develop our community outreach.

Material Resources

Our income totalled £18,606, a significant increase from last year. We hope to recover approximately £2,900 through Gift Aid tax claims, included in this is the final claim for the year which is awaiting payment.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Regular Gift Aid donors	17.5	14.5	16	16	16	18
Av. Gift Aid £/week/donor	£22.26	£18.86	£14.88	£17.08	£17.78	£19.83
Regular non-Gift Aid donors			5	6	6	4

We continue to rely on a minority of members for the majority of our income, and our cash flow can therefore be easily influenced by changes in the circumstances of individual members.

10% of our income is given away to the charities we support. Once our commitment to Toybox is covered, the remainder is divided between The Harbour Project and Christian Aid.

All our property is housed in our only building, a shed, situated in the school grounds. It is insured with Ecclesiastical Insurance for approximately £4,884, although it has no resale value. This is likely to need significant repair or replacement shortly. Our property contents are insured to the value of £9,149. We have Public and Products Liability insurance for £5,000,000 and Employer's liability for £10,000,000.

As a church we have continued to engage with the Partnership's Holy Habits discipleship programme. This guides our Sunday themes, and housegroup study. The congregation are encouraged to practise the Holy Habits and journal their experiences. Holy Habits will conclude during 2020.

We encouraged those with younger children to attend the Partnership's Nativity Service held at Holy Trinity, Shaw. Our Carols by Candlelight service, as is our practice, involved many of our church family and was again well attended by both church members and visitors. Similarly, our Christmas Day service was also well attended.

As a congregation we renewed our commitment to our safeguarding policies (Safe to Grow and Vulnerable Adults) at our AGM.

We have a home group meeting fortnightly on Tuesday evenings providing fellowship, Bible study and pastoral care for our members and friends. Each session is led by different members of the fellowship. During 2019 we followed the following themes:

- Holy Habits Biblical Teaching
- Holy Habits Prayer
- Holy Habits Giving
- Holy Habits Eating Together
- Holy Habits Breaking Bread
- Holy Habits Gladness and Generosity

At the request of our members we continued to hold a monthly pre-service prayer meeting and to devote 5th Sundays to prayer. We pray for God's guidance and help; locally, nationally and internationally. We also seek guidance on our Christian service and how to best reach our community. Prayer continues to be an important aspect of all our meetings.

During 2019 67% of our services and almost all of our other activities were convened by lay people. We are grateful to those who have made themselves available and sought to develop their own gifts and skills for the benefit of the church family.

We will continue to ensure all people who work with us have a clear understanding of their roles and regular review opportunities. We benefit from the sharing of knowledge and resources from our friends across the Partnership to help with this.

Outreach

We support the Emerge youth groups which are run by the Partnership, aimed primarily at young people with no church links.

Several of our members support the Partnership's primary schools' work including "Open the Book" Bible reading initiative and regular assemblies.

We have continued to develop our relationship with the staff at Westlea School, through regular gifts, and offers of prayer support. These have been well received.

As in previous years, we have delivered cards to households in Westlea and Eastleaze, inviting people to our Christmas events. We were pleased with the feedback from the cards and the subsequent attendance at our Christmas services. This year we delivered gift vouchers to a local women's refuge.

We supported the Partnership "Carols in the Park" event.

We encourage our members and regular attendees to speak to their friends and neighbours about Jesus and what He offers them for their lives. Through this personal witness by our members and in the church groups and activities we hope that God will continue to use us to reach out to the people with whom we come in contact, and nurture lasting Christian friendship with them.

Through our charitable giving we have supported the Harbour Project, Toybox, Christian Aid and Water Aid and the Swindon Food Collective which provides food for those who are in need throughout Swindon. We also supported this latter charity with financial donations collected at our harvest service. We held a Harbour Project themed service to become better informed about their work.

Christian Service

The church is blessed by the range and number of skills and gifts offered by its (comparatively small) membership. As we meet in a school hall the church equipment has to be set out and taken down each week. Many members contribute to this task, as well as being on duty, playing music, welcoming people, reading lessons, leading prayers, providing refreshments, and clearing up again afterwards.

We have continued to be supported by Rev. Cpt. Clive Deverell and members of the wider Partnership ministry team.

In the wider community we rely on our members to be "salt and light" in their workplaces and dealings with friends. Many members are involved with supporting local organisations on a voluntary basis and support neighbours during times of ill health or distress. Our members are also involved in school governance and we have a significant presence in local schools via both paid and unpaid work.

We have continued our practical support for the Filling Station, a local charity helping the homeless around Swindon, through preparing sandwiches and providing provisions and clothing, which are then distributed.

Our litter picking initiative in the local area has continued to thrive and been actively supported both by our members and others from the wider community and local councillors. Arising from this success, we have recently begun looking for other ways to serve our local community.

We remain dependent on the time and gifts that the members voluntarily give to the running of Westlea Church and its profile in the community. Some members are very active in the Westlea community and other examples are service for Harbour Project and Bible Society.