

## Christ Church, Warwick Presbytery Report – Paris, 2019

### Overview

We have had a busy and exciting few months with lots of positive changes.

Significantly we have ordained five new elders and also reorganized our Kirk Session with fifteen elders instead of the previous forty plus elders. This smaller group has been active and determined to reinvigorate Christ Church.



Four of our new elders – Arthur Wighman, Fiona Kelly, Ashlea Boyd and Bruce Sinclair (missing from photo – Jill Davidson)

We have carried out a significant amount of fabric work around the church and hall which is now looking the best it has for many many years and is almost ready for our 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations in April this year.

Financially we have also been very active, attempting to increase member giving and this has met with some success. At the same time we have seen the benefits of outsourcing the landscaping and reducing other expenses and have finished 2018 with a modest surplus in funds – the first time we have achieved this for many years!

We are seeing a small increase in regular attendance on Sunday mornings and are actively working to make Christ Church more attractive and relevant to a diverse range of people but with a particular emphasis on younger families.

### 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Our church was founded in 1719 with the gift of land from Sir Thomas Gilbert to found a church for those “...of the Presbyterian persuasion...” While we have a somewhat varied history the church building, of which the walls and foundation are original, was built starting in 1719. We plan to mark this milestone with a particular focus on the week immediately following Easter when the Rt Rev Susan Brown will be visiting in her capacity as Moderator of the General Assembly. We have a busy week planned!

Each year, as part of a local ecumenical movement, an alliance of churches in Warwick and Paget Parishes organize services once per week every Tuesday evening during Lent. Services are hosted by a different church each week and on the final Tuesday or Lent all the congregations will come to Christ Church to mark our 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

### Changes within the Kirk Session

The new fifteen person Kirk Session, which includes all five new elders, has been meeting and actively addressing what we want for Christ Church in the future. In particular we are looking to have strong appeal to a diverse congregation but particularly younger families. We also want to identify what we can undertake in the local community which will fulfill a valuable need and also help identify Christ Church within the community as being for the community.

We are also looking actively at how we can significantly improve the care for our existing church members as well as how to involve new members within the church. We are planning 'quick to implement' (less than 1 year) and longer term (within 3 years) action items. As noted above youth and community involvement are featuring prominently



The new fifteen member Kirk Session members

The five new elders are the first elders ordained for many years and they have quickly provided positive energy and initiative. Our plan is to rotate five elders off the Kirk Session each September and replace with either existing elders or ordain new elders.

### **Finance**

As we plan for many different internal, youth and community projects we have carried out in depth financial planning to ensure financial constraints do not prevent the dreams from becoming a reality. We are already well down a path of approaching church members to pledge more formally than in the past and this is proving quite successful. We have also reduced some expenses but there is only so much that can be cut without negative effects being felt. While we finished with a small surplus last year we cannot successfully continue to cut costs and ask members for more of their time and money for fabric and expect to have funds left over for major community and youth work.

As part of our financial planning we are actively looking at the possibility of selling the Manse. The

Manse is a grossly oversized property (about 5 acres) which is very underutilized. It is a valuable asset but it is a wasting asset which consumes tens of thousands of dollars each year to maintain an old building and keep the grounds cared for. Swapping this asset for cash which is placed in an endowment fund would, instead of being a drain of congregational funds, bring income and support the church's work for the future along with increased congregational giving. Naturally there is a strong emotional attachment to the property and a full consultative process within the church leadership and general membership is currently underway.

### **Outreach**

Outreach continues to be significant within Christ Church and notably we have a further overseas mission trip planned for July this year to Malawi. This trip is organized by Bermuda Overseas Missions (BOM), a locally registered charity which grew out of Christ Church. This will be the third visit to Malawi for BOM where additional mission work is financially supported, particularly schooling within the area. This has been very successfully supported by the congregation, it is clear people want to support tangible outreach projects.

Our Loads of Love shower/laundry programme still operates weekly on Saturday mornings. This programme for homeless people in Bermuda provides showers and donated clothing for ten to fifteen people each week as well as breakfast for thirty to forty.

### **Fabric**

The church, graveyard and church hall are looking the best that they have for many years. In the past couple of weeks several pews were removed, rotten flooring replaced and the pews put back, the interior of the church has been painted and hundreds of hours have been spent in the graveyard restoring the masonry graves. The church hall has been painted outside and the cedar wood doors have been sanded and varnished.

The new Fabric Conveners, John Ferris and Carl Soares, have carried out an amazing amount of work themselves and inspired other members of the congregation to assist. Professional help has only been used when absolutely necessary.

Sadly there are always more fabric projects which will require significant expense at some stage in the future. In particular the hall roof will soon need to be replaced, there is more rotten flooring in the church and we still have some leaks on a flat patio which forms the roof for the church office and some rented space below.



Apparently someone thought the top of the sign should be blue!

### Readership

Cindy Campbell, who attended Presbytery in Lausanne and will be at this meeting in Paris, has completed her Readership training. We are hoping to have her service of Setting Apart as a Reader in Bermuda during our Local Church Review to be held in May this year.



Cindy Campbell

### Social

A number of social events have been held, most recently a pancake lunch this past Sunday put on by the Christ Church Youth (CCY).



Christ Church Youth ready to assist to with pancake toppings

A new weekly coffee morning has also been started and has proved very popular for a diverse range of members from older people looking for a daytime social activity to young parents similarly looking for 'adult' time.



Organizer and new elder Ashlea Boyd with two participants (mother and daughter - both elders!) of the 'coffee morning' along with other participants.



### Newsletter

For anyone interested in our latest on line newsletter please check the following link:-

[http://christchurch.bm/images/Newsletters/Christmas\\_2018.pdf](http://christchurch.bm/images/Newsletters/Christmas_2018.pdf) Other past editions are available on the newsletter page of our website:- <http://christchurch.bm/index.php/quarterly-newsletters>



**HAPPY 300th ANNIVERSARY!**  
Let the celebrations begin !