

ANNUAL REPORT

1st January – 31st December 2020



**“Building a vibrant, Christ-centred community
with a vision for
extending His Kingdom”**

**Annual Report of
Ruislip Baptist Church
for the year 2020**

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Introduction

Little did we know it when we started 2020, but our world was going to be turned upside down as the impact of a disease that we were to describe as COVID-19 surfaced in the UK and the country entered its first lockdown in March.

The reports that you will read in the following pages tell of the impact that the virus had on our church life with temporary closures of the premises, the introduction of live-streaming of services, activities moving on-line and a host of other innovative ways in which our community has responded to the challenges of practising and sharing our faith in the changed circumstances.

As your Secretary, I get the benefit of reading the reports first as they come in one by one prior to collation and distribution in this Annual Report. And it's been such a great joy to read and see how our Lord continues to work despite the challenges thrown up. Indeed, one notable feature has been how our on-line provision has enabled substantially more people to share in our services and hear the gospel. For example, by my reckoning, over two thousand individuals have either been present or viewed our Christmas services, a massive increase on the past. And even our members' meetings that have been held electronically have had nearly twice as many attendees than before!

But the virus has had damaging effects within our own community as we have experienced the loss of loved ones, redundancies have occurred, and isolation has brought suffering. How good it has been to see the church fellowship respond pastorally with so much mutual care exercised through regular telephone contact, occasional distanced visits and in so many other ways.

It's a reminder of the power of God to work in his people for good and that whilst world events can be volatile and threatening, Jesus, our Rock, provides a solid foundation on which we not only find security for ourselves but also as a platform to reach out to others of all ages and offer it to them too.

Enjoy your reading...

Roy Bawden
Secretary

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2020 Vision

Lots of planning, preparation and prayer had gone into making 2020 a year where we could come together as a Church, and focus on growing and sharing our faith. Matthew 28:18 -20 was the verse Derek had chosen to take us through the year. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you".

However, as we have all had to change, adapt or cancel most of our personal plans so it was for most of our 2020 Vision plans. But, we did manage to run some and you may remember that in January, Derek challenged us to double the amount of time we spend in prayer each day. It is likely that during 2020 you had more time to spend in prayer, and I do hope that this opportunity to focus on prayer has not only become a regular part of your day but has also been a blessing to you.

Our focus in February was the 2020 Vision Prayer Blog. This ran throughout the month, and many folks fed back to say how much they valued it.

At the beginning of March, 35 couples enjoyed the Remade by Marriage course and workshops. Everyone who came thoroughly enjoyed the weekend and really benefitted from the opportunity to discover more about their marriage, listen to the teaching and enjoy fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Throughout March bible verses and reflections, written by members of our fellowship, were sent out to help us reflect and prepare for Easter. It is a real testimony that many of the verses and reflections had such an impact and were so relevant to our current circumstances. We reinstated the prayer blog, extended our devotions beyond Easter and the Covid working group was formed.

All the 2020 Vision plans we had for April and then onwards were cancelled, and our focus moved to ensuring we could continue to keep in touch with one another, support and encourage one another and how we could all celebrate Easter together.

Whilst we couldn't physically meet together for our Sunrise service or meet at Church, Derek recorded a video from the Lido and we began pre-recording our Easter services, and as they say the rest is history.

As I finish this report it would be good to remind ourselves of the last part of Matthew 28: 20 "And surely I am with you always, to the very end".

Helen Yarrow

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Community Outreach

Despite all the restrictions, we are so grateful to all those who have been praying for and keeping in contact with our local Community. And whilst it's not been possible to plan any events or activities, we know that so many folks have been reaching out to people within our community.

We have had prayer times for the NHS, we've written letters of thanks to our key workers, we've had people do shopping and collect prescriptions for those who've been shielding. People have been walking dogs, taking folks to hospital appointments, helping them access technology so they can watch our services online, either by offering technical support or donating computers or DVD players.

It would be an impossible task to list the different ways, the different groups or individuals who have been reaching out into our community, but I am sure each one of us, has in some way, demonstrated the love of Jesus to our neighbours, work colleagues and family through our words and actions.

“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.” Hebrews 6:10

Helen Yarrow

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Alpha



Nothing was quite the same as usual during 2020 and Alpha was no exception. When we decided to run Alpha online, we simply did not know whether it would work. We were asking *'Are people fed up with Zoom?'* and *'Alpha is based around building relationships; could that work online?'* We decided that unless we tried, we would never know. So, we set up our first online Alpha course beginning on Thursday 21 May 2020.

We had a cohort of about 10 guests who came to most, if not all of the sessions, with a few RBC regulars who came along to support their guests.

We had three discussion groups led by Geoff Easton, Christine Follett and Hilary Ross-Smith. Matt Easton was indispensable in helping with the technology.

Our guests settled into the routine quickly and by session three seemed to be very comfortable with the Zoom format.

We used the excellent Alpha videos in place of the talks, followed by the use of 'Zoom rooms' for the discussion. We set up a What's App group for those who wanted to join, which was well used and gave the opportunity for our guests to continue discussions and ask questions in between the weekly sessions.

It is always a privilege to be able to share the scriptures with those who are curious to understand more, and to share with them the message of love, hope and salvation found within. It is even more exciting to see the change in people as they understand the gift of life available to them through Christ.

Throughout the course, we received positive feedback from our guests and four of them joined an 8 week follow up course, when we dug a bit deeper into some of the topics covered during Alpha and the questions which had been raised.

We have a faithful God! We were aware of His provision and blessing during those weeks as we saw guests grappling with the claims of Jesus, but also seeing lives changed. We are so very thankful to the dedicated and faithful team of RBC prayers who upheld and supported us each week as we met. They prayed not only for our guests but also for wisdom for the leaders as we tried to share the gospel truth, sensitively but without compromise.

As we write, we are planning the 2021 online Alpha and look forward to another great course.

Geoff Easton, Christine Follett and Hilary Ross-Smith

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Global Partners

We give thanks for all our global partners who continue to serve the Lord and who have had to adapt to the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. The Global Partnership Support Committee (GPS) oversees our partnerships and network of support groups. Its current members are Angela Davies, Graham Durn, Neesha Soba and Andy Newton. The prime role of GPS is to promote and enable commitment to Christ's mission in the UK and overseas amongst the fellowship of RBC. It seeks to do this in two ways:

Encouraging and supporting people who are involved in mission by personal, pastoral and prayer support. We have continued to support a number of partners who are working in different parts of the world: Janet Souster (in Mali with Wycliffe Bible Translators); Shiv and Ryan Cole (in Papua New Guinea with Mission Aviation Fellowship); Sharon Rose (in Moldova with Church Mission Society); Daniel and Regiane Clark (in Peru with the Baptist Missionary Society); Matt and Farrah (in East Asia); Terry & Jackie Ascott (in Cyprus with SAT-7); Katy and Pete Myers (in Ethiopia with Wycliffe Bible Translators); and Joe and Denny Fleming.

During the year we had the privilege of supporting a number of our young people serving and studying in the UK: David Sharp (Oaks Community Church in Dronfield); Daniel Newton (Equippers Church in Chertsey); Josh Newton (Moorlands Bible College); and Hannah Dendy (DNA discipleship course and based with Life Church in Petersfield).

We have established a number of support groups for our partners. We are grateful to all those involved in these groups, who commit to praying regularly for the partner and providing pastoral care and practical support.

We have continued to support the work of Baptist Home Mission, helping local Baptist churches and other mission projects. We made an additional contribution to the Home Mission Fund during 2020 to help address the financial impact of the pandemic.

We continued to partner with ACTS Academy through the RBC Scholarship Fund which allowed seven students to receive financial assistance. We were also able to respond to an appeal from SIL International in Mali (with whom Janet Souster serves) to help rebuild their office roof that was badly damaged in a storm.

Promoting an active awareness and interest in mission. Throughout 2020 we partnered with the following organisations and profiled each one as a 'Mission of the Month': ACTS Group, Breadline, Christian Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, London School of Theology, Operation Agri, Spurgeons Children's Charity, Spurgeon's College, Tearfund, three:eighteen, Through the Roof and UCCF.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic we were grateful that technology allowed us to stay connected. We held our annual GPS Sunday in June and were able to share video messages from a number of our partners, many of whom participated in an online prayer meeting that allowed us to span time differences and link the fellowship at Ruislip with partners in Peru, Canada and Ethiopia! It was a wonderful opportunity to hear from our partners, pray together and celebrate all that the Lord is doing across the globe.

Andy Newton

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Small Group Network

What a year! I am so very grateful to all our small group leaders and members for how they responded to the pandemic when the Lockdown was announced in March 2020. Each small group is unique with people of different ages and varying ability to access the internet. This resulted in each group needing to adopt a tailored response in seeking to provide support to one another. A good number of leaders and members sought to get to grips with 'meeting up' on Zoom (and other video conference methods), and after some initial teething issues were glad to be able to 'see' one another again. WhatsApp groups have also proved invaluable during this time. Other methods of staying connected included more traditional methods of communication such as; telephone calls, text messaging and writing letters and cards, especially for those who do not have internet access.

Some encouragements throughout the year have been to hear about the level of care shown, and acts of kindness people have demonstrated to one another. A number of small groups decided to meet more frequently during Lockdown. Various people who had to leave their groups because of relocation to another part of the country, were now able to re-join their groups online. We had a small group leader's meeting in December on Zoom where leaders had the opportunity to take stock, share experiences, pray for one another, as well as consider a number of resources that could be used during the pandemic.

Perhaps the biggest challenges that small groups faced was not being able to be physically present with one another. People missed seeing one another. Unfortunately, a good number of more elderly group members who do not have access to the internet could not take part via Zoom but were able to receive phone-calls to stay connected.

Four of our small groups came to a close for a variety of reasons over the last year. We are very grateful to the leaders and members of these groups. In particular I would like to thank Maxine Goswell who led 'Illustrations', Gus Jones who led 'Refuel', Sara Jones who led 'Little Gems' and the members of 'A to Z' who all co-led this small group. I'm sure each group will have fond memories of the fellowship, and times of discipleship they have all shared together in recent years.

Our small group network has always played a vital role in the life of the fellowship here at RBC, however, the pandemic in 2020 has highlighted this even more so. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved for playing their part in keeping our small group members connected during this difficult time.

Barry Dore (Small Group Co-ordinator)

Pastoral Care

Acts chapter 2 highlights the importance of fellowship in the early church, and this remains vital for a healthy church today. During 2020, the way in which we fellowship together had to adapt as the pandemic changed the way in which we were able to interact with one another.

Pastoral care has always run through everything we do in church and in our community, as we seek to come alongside people in their journey through life. 2020 has been a very different year for us all, with many challenges. Through our pastoral care provision, we have sought to support each other throughout this time. Although we have been unable to visit people in their homes, due to government restrictions, as a fellowship we have made every endeavour to keep in contact with one another on the phone, through social media, messages and through good old-fashioned post - sending letters and cards to remind others that we are thinking of them during this time.

During this year, many people have found isolation and loneliness difficult to cope with, and as a church we have encouraged people to keep in contact with others regularly, so that even when we can't meet together, we can still support one another and encourage one another on our journey of faith. This has been happening throughout the church as people have sought to stay in touch with and support their small group and weekday activity group members, and as individuals have thought of others and have maintained regular contact with them.

Pastoral assistants have continued to care for those with ongoing or specific needs and although some of the usual activities such as visiting people at home, providing lifts for appointments or other practical things they may have normally done in the past, have not been able to happen in the usual way due to the pandemic and government regulations, maintaining contact has been vital. In addition to the 10 Pastoral Assistants and volunteers appointed by the church, everyone has been encouraged to pick up the phone and give someone a ring to see how they're doing. Pastoral care has been a mix of co-ordinated and spontaneous effort, with many people volunteering to help others during this time. This combined effort has helped people feel supported and very much part of the church fellowship and the body of Christ throughout this difficult year when we've been unable to meet together in church.

Some of the key elements of pastoral care – listening, extending friendship, praying for others have been undertaken every single day by many people across the fellowship. In addition, practical care such as providing meals, shopping for those self-isolating etc has been undertaken, in accordance with government guidance. We are very thankful for everyone who has offered and provided help in this way. It is a privilege to be part of this loving church family.

Jill Durn
Pastoral Co-ordinator

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Services in Care Homes: Boyne, Brackenbridge, High Meadows and Parkfield House

Boyne: Services 1st Sunday of every month at 10.15am

Team: Barbara Avery, Peter Cotterell, Diane Foster, Sandy Osborne

Brackenbridge

Teams: Joy and Philip Sims, Sandy Osborne

2nd Sunday in the month at 11am

Barbara Avery, Peter Cotterell, Chris Barry

4th Sunday in the month

High Meadows Services 2nd Sunday in the month at 11am, Communion monthly Thursday 11am

Team: Barbara Avery, Peter Cotterell with Gordon Webb, Jeremy Edwards, Peter Trowell, Ruth Steer

This was the pattern for the first two months of 2020, but when the pandemic started we were obliged to stop our visits to the care homes. The Activities Organiser Alan at High Meadows told me at the beginning of the year that some residents were leading their own service on the Sundays that we could not go there, but the words for the songs on YouTube were not clear enough on the screen to be read. I offered to provide them by email to be printed out, and then had the idea of sending a whole service with prayers, Bible passages, explanations by Peter Cotterell and songs, which I was preparing for the weekly Wilsmere House Care Centre 'Faith Matters' services on Fridays. When we were prevented by Covid-19 from going into the care homes, I decided to offer to send the programmes as well to Boyne, Brackenbridge and Parkfield House in Charville Lane West where I had happened to visit Miriam Hammond just before the lockdown. All the homes accepted the offer, so throughout the year I have sent in weekly services in the hope that an Activities Organiser or some other member of staff might be willing to print off the hymns, find the music on YouTube and read the Bible passages and prayers for the residents. When I send in the service I do so with my prayers and those of people at RBC that God would bless and encourage them.

The services follow the Christian calendar starting with the childhood of Jesus, his baptism, temptations, the events leading to the cross and his resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the activities of the disciples after that. A series headed 'Invitation to a meal' included stories from the Old Testament, events from the life of Jesus and several parables. There was a short series centred on Nehemiah, and another on 'Peter becoming a rock'.

Please continue to pray for these care homes, their residents, relatives and staff during these difficult days, that somehow the services might continue to be used to encourage and enrich the lives of all who participate.

Barbara Avery

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Peter Lyell Court

A team from RBC continue to take a monthly service at Peter Lyell Court, a social housing complex in the Manor. The services are very informal and consist of bible readings, testimony, a message and some worship songs and prayer. The year started well, and we had just begun a short series looking at the life of Elijah when sadly after our meeting in February the first COVID lockdown happened, and everything came to a halt. We have kept in touch by phone and a few socially-distanced visits. In addition, some of the Cafe Connect mailings have been delivered and have been greatly appreciated, especially by one resident who had run out of bread and was very grateful for the Christmas panettone – God’s timing is always perfect! It has been very encouraging to hear how our services and visits have been missed and neither we nor they can wait until we are able to meet up again.

Sadly, there have been a few deaths in the complex since lockdown, none of whom attended our services, however two were very well known to us and very much liked. Tragically a coronavirus outbreak also claimed the lives of two residents. This just emphasises the importance of spreading the gospel, particularly among elderly folk. There will obviously be new people moving into the empty flats in Peter Lyell and we would very much value prayer that we will be able to befriend them and attract them to the services where they can hear of God’s love for them.

Angela Davies

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Children's Work



At the start of 2020 I put together a vision document for the year for the staff team away day, the bible verse on this document was this *'Be strong and Courageous for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go' Joshua 1:9*. When I reflect on the past year, there are times when I'm sure we all felt at a loss and not very strong, but yet God has provided the strength and inspiration to continue to serve the children and their families through the difficult months.

At the start of the year a key concern for the children's work was staffing our activities both midweek and on Sundays; for various reasons people were unable to continue in their role or had less time to commit. Although Covid has meant we haven't been able to meet face to face it did mean that recruiting new members to the kids work team was put on hold, but we have still been able to teach, disciple and encourage children and their families through the wonders of technology.

Sunday Groups

Our Sunday groups of crèche, Stars, Sparks and Xtreme met during the first few months of the year and our groups grew with the arrival of new families to the church. On average we had 75 children attending our groups each week. The numbers in Stars were particularly high as the baby boom we had a couple of years ago moved up! These groups are staffed by a committed and gifted team all wanting to teach and disciple the younger members of our church family. In February we held an 'all age' Sunday session with children aged from 3-16, focused on the theme of prayer, and it was a great opportunity for the children and young people to learn together and disciple each other. When church closed in March, John Reynolds and I decided that producing one resource for the whole family would support families to have a time of worship at home. The resource contained worship songs, videos, activities and discussions questions aimed across the ages. This resource was sent out early on a Sunday morning until July. Over Easter some of the kids group leaders created videos of the Easter story to be shown during Holy Week, these were all so different as each person read and presented the next part of the story through puppets, props, lego and narration. A competition was run to create an Easter garden, lots of our families joined in with this and really appreciated the opportunity to create these with their children. A video of these gardens was put together to enable the wider church to enjoy these wonderful creations! We held 'zoom' calls during the summer called 'fun @ 4,' this was for primary school aged children and was 40 minutes of silliness, bible teaching, creative prayer and a chance to chat. We averaged 10 children a week on these calls. Xtreme also ran zoom calls during the summer for children aged 8-11.

During August we had a 'Summer Adventure' and this for me was a real highlight of the year. Each child received an adventure pack, one for 3-5's and one for 5-11's. Many of our kids group leaders contributed in providing material for these packs and delivering the packs out to almost 100 children!! The pack contained activities all based around the journeys of Paul. Each Sunday we visited a different place from Damascus to Ephesus, Athens to Malta and finally Rome, all places that Paul had travelled to and each pack contained craft activities, recipes, puzzles and more. A video accompanying the pack was streamed every Sunday 'on location', including worship songs, bible story and a weekly challenge. These were also uploaded to our YouTube channel alongside children's talks and assembly videos. From September our family resource was aimed for those with children aged 0 -11 years, often following the teaching series from our morning service creating opportunities for families to look at the same bible passage.

After extensive planning we were able to re-open church for the children for two Sundays in the Autumn. On one of these we ran socially distanced groups for children aged 5-11 years with 15 children in attendance across 2 groups, this session was very different to our normal Sunday activities but for the children who were able to attend it was a real blessing. On the other Sunday we held a family Communion service alongside the main service, with 10 families in attendance. This service meant all ages could attend easily together and share in the fellowship of communion.

Our first ever online Advent calendar was very popular, and each day revealed a video, Christmas carol or family activity. We held another zoom at the start of Advent in preparation for the Christmas season, we had 24 children on this call aged from 3 – 11. As ever the children were able to take part in the Christmas family service through the media of video, with a 'zoom' Christmas from Xtreme, a nativity dress up from our younger children, a youth video in how they were challenged to support others at this time of year and some beautiful pictures and readings from all ages. It was a huge blessing to also be able to have families attend the live service as well as watch from home; many of the children came dressed up as Nativity characters which made it feel very festive. Each child also received a gift from the church at the start of Advent. Members of the kids' team enjoyed delivering these and the opportunity for doorstep conversations!



Both our toddler groups were as busy as ever before lockdown! The average attendance for Action tots was 17 families each week but over 90 children attended in the first 3



months. For Adventure tots we had 25 children on register, a very long waiting list and an average attendance of 18 children each week. These provide such an opportunity to reach out and serve the community. A couple of our toddler families also started attending church on a Sunday, it was lovely to welcome them into the wider church family. We had introduced the 'sum up' machine at the end of 2019, this proved to be very popular amongst our young mums allowing them to pay using their phone, watch or card. When lockdown started, we understandably had to close. From April – July we held a weekly 'zoom story time', it was a pleasure to see the delight on the children's faces as they spotted their friends in another zoom window. The session ran with a bible story, singing and a simple craft or activity idea to do linked to the story – the wind chime was a particular favourite when we looked at the coming of the Holy Spirit. We had about 10 families who attended story time at some point during the summer. We chose not to continue this in September as many of those attending had now started nursery, as well as parents returning to work. We had hoped to start a group for new mums but with the restrictions constantly changing we decided to defer the plan. We have tried as much as possible to keep in contact with our toddler families, sending out books at Easter and Christmas to our non-church families and we had great fun with a toddler trail from the church in the summer, each family set off on a short walk around the local area spotting various objects. When they returned to the church, they were rewarded with a goodie pack containing a book, a toy, some bubbles and a craft activity. We had 15 very happy children!

Schools work

During the year we have had contact with 9 different schools in the area. Presenting Open the Book assemblies for many, we acted out parts of the story of Joseph and had just started to present the Easter story when lockdown was imposed. The Open the Book team was comprised of myself, John Reynolds, Hannah Dendy, Alison Dennis, Mike Harvey, Ruth Martin, Sue Kiltie, Lynn and Tony Strutt and Liz Thompson. I also have visited Lady Bankes Juniors to present assemblies and Bishop Winnington Ingram School to present assemblies and read bible stories to the younger children in their classrooms. The schools work is always a highlight of my working week, the opportunity to be able to go into our local schools and present Bible stories is a great privilege. For most of these children the bible and the life of Jesus is not something they really know about and it is much harder for teachers and staff in schools today to share their faith.



During the rest of the year, I have maintained contact with the schools through email to encourage them that as a church we are praying for the staff and the families. I have also created some assembly videos (with some great voice overs provided by John Reynolds) and these have been shared both in school and with parents. The 'It's your move' initiative by Scripture Union was shared with the year 6 children at Warrender and Lady Bankes Junior, rather than presenting an assembly in school the Scripture Union video was combined with a personal message from myself. We were even able to send out the accompanying book to many of the children who were in school at this time. Scripture Union also produce a resource called 'It's your next step' and this was sent to all those in church who had a child about to start full time school for the first time – 13 in total!!

To summarise the year, it has come with challenges and blessings, from learning new skills in video editing and to enjoying doorstep chats as packages are delivered. Thank you to all of those who have been involved in the kids work during the year; it has been so hard not to meet face to face but through the energy, talent and commitment of our great team we have been able to reach out to our families, to support them and continually pray for the young lives whose memories of being at church will have now faded.

At the start of this year as I prayed, I wrote down these words 'Sow the seeds of FAITH into the HEARTS of children, so that they are eager to discover GOD'S LOVE and SHARE it with others.' That will continue to be my prayer for the church as we seek to serve children no matter where they are.

Lucy Newton

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Youth Work

Like all areas of ministry at Ruislip Baptist Church, 2020 presented a number of challenges in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, as all of our youth provisions were effectively shut down from the middle of March onwards as the UK went into lockdown. A separate challenge for 2020 was, of course, the decision to change the youth worker role, which saw John Reynolds cease working at RBC in September.

Reflecting back on the start of the year, however, when Covid-19 was almost unheard of, our young people were meeting regularly on Tuesday (Refine, for ages 15 to 18), Thursday (Roots, for ages 11-14) and Sunday (Phase, for ages 11-16). While numbers at Refine were relatively modest (with an average attendance of approximately 8 young people), we spent time continuing to work through the “7 Essentials” series we started back in September 2019, focussing on Moral Boundaries, Healthy Friendships and Wise Choices before the pandemic hit. Attendance at Roots during this period was slightly higher (approximately 15 young people) and we covered similar topics to Refine, albeit more accessible for this age group. In Phase on Sundays, we averaged around 20 young people and covered a variety of topics, mainly using ‘Mettle’ notes produced by the organisation Youth For Christ. We were also blessed by Hannah Dendy’s involvement as she served RBC as an intern for DNA during the first half of 2020.

As the pandemic hit, our provision for our young people switched online, with a midweek teaching session and discussion groups held on Tuesday evenings for all youth ages (11-18). Talks were focussed on “Encounters with Jesus” and were given by either John Reynolds or one of the members of our youth groups and these were streamed via the RBC Youth Instagram and YouTube accounts, with an opportunity to discuss the content of this on Zoom afterwards.

These talks were excellent, and it was really encouraging listening to some of our young people teach from the Bible! While attendance was initially reasonably high (with an average of 12-15 on the Zoom session, and considerably more accessing the talks), this tailed off as the impact of ‘Zoom-fatigue’ took hold.

As well as the above, John Reynolds hosted a number of “Netflix Parties”, where our young people were invited to watch episodes of “AD The Bible Continues”, a show based on the book of Acts. We also held a small number of ‘socials’ online, aimed at engaging young people we hadn’t seen much of during the pandemic, while John Reynolds also met with some of our young people in smaller groups as the lockdown restrictions eased in the summer.

Following John’s redundancy in September, the youth volunteers sought to plan a return to church for our young people after the October half-term. Fortunately, we were able to meet in person (albeit only once!), and we were pretty much at capacity in terms of numbers. Sadly, the second lockdown in November prevented us from meeting in person again, so we returned to meeting via Zoom, where the focus was very much on providing an opportunity for our young people to relax and socialise (in as much as it is possible to do so on Zoom!), conscious that the previous few months had been challenging for them.

We had approximately 6-8 young people tuning in to the Refine meetings on Tuesday's, and 5-7 to the Roots meetings on Thursdays. The term ended in December involving Christmas pizzas, which fortunately we were able to hold in person at church.

Throughout the year, we as a leadership team have been encouraged by the way our youth have served the wider church, including leading worship at some of our family services, and by assisting with Holiday Club (by creating and editing videos, rather than being "gunged" like in other years!) and by serving on the sound desk and with some of our Sunday morning children's provisions pre-lockdown.

As always, it would not have been possible to achieve any of the above without the support of a number of volunteer youth leaders, and we are extremely thankful to all those who have served our young people's ministry over the past 12 months. This includes both Nikki Latham and Emily Minardi (our LST placement student) who took on responsibility for Roots during the second half of 2020, and to Karen Ingram, Michelle Harding and Louise Surridge, who together with myself have taken on responsibility for Refine. We are also deeply indebted to Gaynor Desai, Diane Foster, Evelyn Corrado, Chloe Jeanes, Crystal Dyke, Josh Newton and many others besides who have provided support, encouragement and prayers for our young people over the past year.

2020 was undoubtedly a really hard year for all of us, and especially our young people, as they spent time out of school, anxious about exams and exam results, separated from their friends, cancelled holiday plans (including Limitless, the summer festival replacing Soul Survivor) and also faced the disappointment of losing John Reynolds as their youth worker. That said, however, we were able to maintain good relationships with our young people and ended the year on a bit of a high with the ability to meet in person at Christmas. As volunteer youth leaders, we're really excited to see what God has in store for us and our young people in the New Year, which has started really positively building on some momentum gained towards the end of 2020.

John Bawden (on behalf of all the volunteer youth leaders)

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Young Adults

Report referent to January - September

As we all know the year began with a new challenge for us as a church and as individuals as COVID-19 hit. We had to learn to adapt in order to stay connected as we saw our lives changing dramatically once restrictions and lockdown measures were implemented. We saw the dynamic and fast-paced lifestyle that we had been developing with the young adults coming to a standstill and we were forced to move from in-person gatherings to online meetings.

Prior to the pandemic we had been spending time, energy and resources to develop the collective life of the ministry where we had bible studies, events and gatherings (parties and sharing food/fellowshipping) going on a regular basis. Along with the group setting meetings we had face-to-face discipleship meetings where I (Filipe Macedo) would be meeting weekly/biweekly and monthly with the young adults to check on them, to pray together and advise on any matters they needed council with. We were developing a strong knit connection with one another and as a group we saw considerable growth in the interpersonal relationships among the group.

This group had always been taught by example to pursue to building relationships where their personal relationship with God would be a firm foundation on which they could stand on and then see it influence their relationships with one another. The young adults were doing a great job at that and they became fountains of encouragement and care towards one another.

When the lockdown measures and restrictions on gatherings were implemented, we had to change dramatically how we functioned, and this was a challenge in itself. It took us some time, but we were able to promote Zoom meetings where we prayed together, encouraged one another and studied the Word. We had guest speakers ministering to us on Zoom and were able to stay connected even with the restrictions. We definitely felt a drop on motivation due to the whole pandemic situation but thankfully we were able to stay connected.

Throughout the months we managed to connect intentionally in person when the lockdown restrictions eased but we did see a beautiful new dynamic coming into action as the young adults began to call each other more often to check in on each other and encourage one another. We also were able to raise funds to buy toiletries and snacks for the youth Shannon works with at the shelters and that was absolutely beautiful. The guys really engaged in helping out and we were able to provide for three different shelters.

In September, I left the UK as the Lord directed me to attend school in California and return to the family. And yet I am so proud of how the young adults - especially the core group composed by Emma, Josh, Shannon and Daniel Newton - were able to take on the leadership together alongside Sook. I know this has been a challenging time to them all and yet they have been pursuing to navigate it the best way possible while pursuing to grow in their personal relationships with God which in turn has effectively influenced their love and affection for one another. I am in contact with the core group still and praying that the Lord would increase their hunger for Him as well as their love for one another. I know these are tough times and yet, He remains seated on His throne and He reigns.

I've asked Emma to complete this report with her thoughts and comments regarding the time since my departure to now. I do hope and pray that the hearts of the church will be strengthened and firmly grounded in confident hope that He is faithful to work all things for our good. Even throughout a pandemic.

Filipe Macedo

Since September, we have been very challenged by the current circumstances. It has been difficult to get into a regular routine and to continue looking at our screens! Lots of the young people in our group work online and are working (like others) throughout the pandemic. One thing that we have held onto is that we have God as our constant and that he will never fail us. We have kept in contact with one another, doing some social things such as quizzes. We hope to be able to return to our gatherings as soon as it is safe. We are looking forward to communing with others again and learning and growing in the Lord.

Emma Jones

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Rainbows

As you know our Rainbow unit, sadly, closed in 2020.

The beginning of the year started out with full numbers and a full waiting list and very regular attendance from all 15+ children. We had all the adult helpers we needed as Claire Cholewa (a former RBC Brownie and Guide) had joined the team before Christmas and we had a few willing parents who would help out if needed.

The year 2020 spring term saw a range of activities for our Rainbows including:

- Messy play (their request!) with gunge, slime, playdough, cornflour and marzipan modelling (not all at the same time I hasten to add!)
- Church parade in February
- Making (and eating!) pancakes with a range of toppings during Shrove Tuesday week
- Many lively games in the hall
- Healthy eating – making fruit sculptures.
- An impromptu and necessary session on how to kill bacteria and viruses and how to effectively wash your hands because of the start of something called ‘a corona virus epidemic’ (!) and the need to learn about how to live with it!!

It was all going so well when the dreaded Covid 19 put a fairly quick stop to things before the Easter holiday 2020. However, we wanted to keep in touch with the girls and despite their young age of 5-7 years, we decided to send them an activity to do once a week during lockdown, at the usual Rainbow meeting time, in term time. Many of these activities offered the opportunity to interact by emailing us photos or pictures of some of the activities they had joined in with. Some responded in this way but with home schooling etc., probably a lot of them (and their parents I expect) found it one extra thing too much!

We wrote to the girls regularly by email and sent them all a book about the Easter Story during the Easter holiday. Sadly, they missed out on a couple of planned activities that we would have done:

- A walk in Ruislip woods once the clocks changed, giving us more daylight hours to be outdoors in.
- A Mother’s Day activity. We did send them one of these to do at home so that the Mum’s (and Dad’s in June!) didn’t miss out!

As the year went by, in conversation with Kat Pead and Nikki Latham from Brownies and Guides, it became necessary to make the decision to close all the groups for a number of different reasons and we decided not to re-open in September. We stopped sending the online activities at that point once the parents had been informed of the closures.

It has been great getting to know many of our own church children, and those from some of our local schools and the community, by leading the Rainbows at RBC. It is a privilege to have had a small part to play in their development and learning and to see them grow and mature. They are lovely children, and we have all enjoyed being a part of their lives. I miss them.

Thanks to Nikki Dix and Claire Cholewa who have both been a great support in the leadership role. They are both so reliable and dependable and willing to have a go at anything! We all got on really well and I miss us meeting as a team as well as missing seeing the children. I wish Claire all the best as she joins another local Rainbow group and I'm sure she will be leading her own group someday soon!!

Thanks to the church for their support in running the group as well as in our decision to close. It has made a difficult decision much easier, knowing we had that backing. Things move on and change, and new opportunities open up.

Hopefully we will meet again some of the children we have got to know through Girlguiding. Hopefully we will be able to continue the good relationships we began with them and be able to share our faith in ways that help them to learn and develop a faith of their own.

Lesley Ferguson

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5th Ruislip Windmill Brownies and Guides

We started 2020 with lots of plans for the Brownies and Guides groups, but also feeling that we should take time to consider the future of these groups. This was due to various reasons but primarily because of the ever-increasing restrictions that Girlguiding's inclusion policy placed on us being able to share our faith with the girls through activities and church parades.

Our plans for 2020 included a Brownie Pack Holiday due to take place in April 2020, Guide Camp planned for May 2020 and a larger district residential event for July 2020. However, as you will be aware all of these had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. We started the year with full units (26 brownies and 20 guides) and a small waiting list. A few of the girls were from families who regularly attended RBC, but most girls were unchurched children.

We ran sessions up until mid-March 2020, when we had to stop meeting in person. We felt it was not feasible to run online sessions for the girls immediately and this gave us space to reflect on the groups and individually consider how leading these groups fitted in with our overall service to the Lord. In the meantime, we kept in contact with the families through email - sending out activities and receiving evidence of the girls' badge work. We also posted a card and activity to the brownies.

By the end of the summer term, after prayerfully considering the options open to us and having had time to discern where God wanted us to use our skills, we felt it was clear that we should cease running the groups. We held a 'socially distanced' meeting with the Rainbow Leader and both our Youth and Children's workers to plan the closing of the units. During this meeting we all felt that we were still being led to use our gifts within the Children and Youth Ministry at RBC. We have been discussing starting a new group for children/youth (boys and girls) to include some of the positive elements of Girlguiding but with the freedom to discuss our faith and teach about Jesus alongside our other adventures.



We officially closed the units during the Autumn term working with the other local Girlguiding units and division commissioner to find places for the girls who wished to continue in Girlguiding. We had some lovely feedback from parents and girls who were sad at the closure, but we have been able to find everyone who wanted one, a place elsewhere. The units could not have been run without the faithful help and support of our assistant leaders, young leaders and occasional helpers plus the support from parents and the RBC fellowship. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and prayers and in particular to thank Sarah Brown, Hannah Woods, Hayley Wash and our 3 regular young leaders Lucy Saava, Carys Wills and Hannah Latham.

So now as we start 2021, we can look ahead and ask God to guide us in how, when and where a new group should be formed. Watch this space!

Nikki Latham and Kat Pead

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Covid-19 Working Group

Immediately after the first lockdown in March 2020, a group of seven individuals drawn from the Trustees and others with relevant skills was established to spearhead the church's response to the pandemic. The group has since been meeting weekly and has completed some 130 actions across many different aspects of church life keeping a constant eye on Government and Baptist Union guidance that changes frequently.

A key activity has been ensuring that worship services continued even whilst the church premises were closed. This involved initially the preparation of a signed recorded service for transmission on YouTube via the church's website that soon became fully live-streamed. For a short while, it was possible to meet as a congregation although capacity was severely limited due to social-distancing requirements and communal singing was not possible. During this time, our children were also able briefly to come to church and participate in their aged groups and as an all-age gathering in the Main Hall. Interestingly, the worship services have been watched by many more folk than attended before the virus onset, with over 1,000 viewings (representing many more actual viewers) watching our Christmas services for example.

Regular weekly communications have occurred by email. These have been augmented by postal mailings and volunteer distributions that have captured our older typically off-line community including Cafe Connect. The group has also worked to support the groups and organisations within the church so that they can continue to function as best as possible and to provide a Zoom platform that has hosted a wide variety of meetings over the course of the year. This has included fellowship groups, prayer meetings, small groups, Holiday Club, members' meetings, trustees' meetings, youth and children's meetings, Alpha and much else besides. This platform has provided the ability for many folk to participate who would not have been able to physically include folk from outside the UK.

Although the church premises have been closed under lockdowns for much of the year, the premises have still been able to be used in service to our Lord and our community with them made available as

a 'Safe Space' for those in abusive relationships as an example, as a foodbank drop and also as a temporary location for NHS services.

The group has also looked to ensure that in consultation with church staff that pastorally folk are not being overlooked and that we continue to evangelise - our first on-line Alpha being a case in point.

Other activities have included the more bureaucratic tasks of ensuring that risk assessments have been properly completed and approved by the trustees for all activities taking place at the church including staff at work. These assessments can run to 30 pages; are extremely detailed and there are several of them as a different assessment is required for each activity.

We are deeply grateful especially to those group members who have ensured that the technical challenges in producing the on-line services have been met so well. This has only been possible after substantial and sacrificial time commitment.

Barry Dore, Alastair Moore, Derek Page, David and Gillian Rose, Helen Yarrow and Roy Bawden

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Safe House Ministry

The end of 2020 marks three years since the group started volunteering with Hestia and the ladies safe house and two years with the men's safe house. We have a group of 14 men and women who volunteer. 2020 started off well with visits to both safe houses but had to stop in March in the first lockdown. Communication with the ladies and men became difficult, however there were some Zoom calls during the year. The men received regular food parcels and the ladies a box of activities as well as seeds and plants in the spring so they could continue with the gardening project they started the year before.

During this period, it has given us the opportunity to reflect and pray about the future of this ministry and our role with Hestia. We have been in conversations with the Salvation Army, and they are keen for us to develop this work in three of their local safe houses. We have therefore made the decision to end our involvement with Hestia at the end of 2020 and to progress with volunteering with the Salvation Army in 2021.

As a church we were able to provide both houses with a Christmas hamper. We thank all those from the giving group that provided food and toiletries. It has not been easy to say our goodbyes, but we thank God for the way that He has used each one of us to build relationships, create memories and show His love and care. We too have been blessed by serving in this way and it has been a privilege to be part of the ladies and men's lives.

We continue to value the prayers of the fellowship, particularly during 2021 as we commence the volunteer process with the Salvation Army, and we pray that it won't be too long before we can start volunteering in the safe houses. We are excited to see how God is going to use each one of us.

Jane Golden

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Accord

As for all of the church organisations it has been a very difficult year. Being a member of a Choir has been hit hard during the Covid pandemic in that singing together in close proximity has not been allowed. Apart from online choirs it is difficult to see at the moment how and when choirs will be able to meet together again and enjoy the benefits of singing together.

We started the year on January 9th with a good turnout of 30 members and we began rehearsals looking forward to performing two concerts in the year. Our own annual concert for charity was timed to take place in November. We were also planning to join South Oxhey again for a concert on 4th July when the repertoire was to be American based, so we were learning music from American composers and favourites such as the Battle Hymn of the Republic and You'll Never Walk Alone.

We managed to meet 5 times before the half term break in February but on our return to rehearsals after half term we began to see a drop in numbers. At first, we weren't sure whether this was simply due to the time of year or whether the threat of the Coronavirus was having effect. However, numbers attending continued to go down and at our last rehearsal before lockdown we saw only 19 members attend but despite this, we had a very good rehearsal. Sadly, since then we have not been able to meet.

We hope that it will be possible to restart the choir sometime in the future and in the meantime continue to pray for the health and safety of all our members.

Mary Willoughby

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Craft Club

Craft Club started 2020 with just over 40 members on our books, this number swelling to 50 by the March session which, sadly, proved to be the last time we were able to meet in person. This came as a bit of a shock, as it did to everyone, but we felt the safety of our members was paramount. Sadly, during the year, we lost 2 of our long-standing members and will miss them very much when we are able to meet again.

Activities for 2020 had been carefully planned and the programme printed and distributed, but only one of those activities – a 3D heart card – had been carried out before we closed. It is hoped that at some time in 2021 we will be able to resume many of the planned activities.

In February we set up, in the church's main entrance hall, an attractive display of postcards in various media, designed and made by our members, to illustrate the four seasons and to show the sort of crafts carried out in our monthly sessions. This fabulous display included a brief, written history of

the group and extended an invitation to potential new members...unfortunately, this proved ill-timed, with only one further session before lockdown.

As we were unable to meet in person, we were keen to keep in touch with our members, to reassure people during uncertain times; to cheer up those living alone; and, where possible, to allow them to keep in touch with one another. Those members who have email have received regular communications during the year and those with mobile phones were invited to join a WhatsApp group – both of these forums have enabled members to chat, to show photos of the crafts they've been carrying out at home and to share humour and the highs and lows of life, not always relating to craft. Those without email or WhatsApp access have been telephoned regularly. In this way we have supported one another throughout a difficult year.

We felt our members deserved some craft activities to keep their fingers busy and their minds occupied, so we planned 3 activities for Christmas – 2 small, knitted 'cosies' to fit a Ferrero Rocher chocolate (robin or Santa hat), a decorated gift tag and a Christmas card. Members were invited to request one or all activity packs, which were prepared to order, free of charge, and hand delivered in good time for them to be made for Christmas. There was a good uptake and members expressed their delight in being offered these.

We pray for God's blessing in the year ahead, to keep our members safe and well and we look forward to being able to meet once again to enjoy fellowship and crafting together.

Eileen Runkel and Marilyn Burnside

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CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY (CAP) MONEY COURSE

The RBC Christians Against Poverty team once again ran a CAP Money Course in Autumn 2020. It was very different this year of course because we couldn't meet face to face, but we managed to do it on Zoom.

This course was advertised in all 27 local schools, Children's Centres, churches, lunch clubs Citizens Advice, Job Centres, Food Banks etc as well as here at church, the RBC and CAP websites. This year we sent out the information to schools by email and we know from feedback that several schools sent the information on to all their parents.

We were very blessed this year to have Matt Easton join our team who sorted out all the technical side of using Zoom. However, we went the extra mile and tidied up all our PowerPoint slides to make them look more professional and he added ice-breakers and games to each session too - these were certainly appreciated as it is not so easy to relate to people and build relationships in a Zoom setting.

The course consists of 4 money sessions plus an optional Biblical Session. The first money session teaches people how to build their budget, so they record in their CAP book or online all their income and expenditure. This helps them to clarify exactly where they are with their finances. Then we help them to balance their budget or enable them to save for those things they would like to afford by either increasing their income or decreasing their expenditure by cutting costs, cutting back or cutting out.

The rest of the course helps people to manage their money with the CAP system, to save for future and unexpected expenditure and to manage any debt they may have. Everything is confidential and clients do not have to reveal any of their financial details to us. The Biblical Session teaches what the Bible has to say about finances, which is a lot!

We had 15 people register for the course, but numbers did drop off due to genuine reasons like being offered some evening work, family difficulties and other pressing commitments. However, those who kept going to the end all attended the Biblical Session and the feedback on the course revealed that they had enjoyed the course and really benefitted from it. It was very encouraging that some people were going to refer themselves to CAP Money Plus for more help from head office financial experts and that will continue until the person is free of debt and stable financially.

CAP's catch phrase is 'Always Hope' and we try to bring this to our clients in response to God's calling to feed the hungry, provide for the poor, set the oppressed free and love our neighbour. It was a privilege once again to serve God and our community in helping people with such an important part of their lives, to befriend and encourage them and also to pray with them. We praise God that the team work so well together, and everybody does their role so well, so it all runs very smoothly. Please continue to pray for the work of CAP, our clients and the CAP team.

Ruth Martin

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Holiday Club 2020

It was a real privilege to be part of a team that looks at the pandemic and says how can we make Holiday Club work under these circumstances? And to be supported by a church fellowship that backs the ideas, contributes in a myriad of ways and prays for our children and young people faithfully. This year's club had the theme of an Escape Room! The premise was that the team were stuck in an escape room and each day had to try to work out how to escape.

We had great fun recording the scenes at Marianne's school (socially distanced of course) and huge thanks to Kesia, Claire & Ignus for their fantastic contributions to this. The craft ideas were as wonderfully creative as ever and relevant to the theme with some fantastic video guides made by Helen B, Helen S, Sook & Julie. The craft materials were made into a pack with the daily newsletter, and these were sent/handed out by Hannah, Helen Yarrow, Gillian and Marie to 70 children who signed up to take part. We had wonderfully acted bible stories from children and families in the church and a daily work-out video by Chloe & Hannah. We had inspiring testimonies, bible readings and an obstacle course from our wonderful youth and the usual songs included too.

Alastair and David did an amazing job putting it all together as a daily programme of approx. 45 minutes at 10am each morning to give the usual Holiday Club vibe for the children and it was such an amazing joy to see each evening the craft they had made and hear how they had enjoyed their morning. This was achieved by having an evening zoom, full of fun with David & Kesia, bible teaching from Ignus and group discussions with our wonderful group leaders who selected a star each day for a prize and built the relationships which are the foundation of the work of Holiday Club, answering all the children's questions and encouraging them to think deeply about God. We had almost 60 children on Zoom each evening and around 150 views of the video each day.

It was an absolute pleasure to be a part of Holiday Club 2020 especially in a difficult year and we are grateful for the support from RBC to allow Holiday Club to minister to so many: children, families, volunteers and ourselves.

Marianne Jeannes, Helen Yarrow and David Rose

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Holiday @ Home

Holiday @ Home has been an annual event at RBC for 10+ years and offers 3 days of friendship and fun for the over fifty-fives, within a Christian environment. It is open to RBC regular attendees and as an outreach to the community.

Planning for the event usually begins in February, when a small group meet to discuss ideas, the theme for the event and where the, very important, day trip will be.

In 2020, our initial meeting took place but in March, Covid-19 struck, and the country went into lockdown. As time went on, it became clear that, in view of the uncertainty and in the interests of safety for guests and helpers, Holiday @ Home 2020, in the form we had all come to know and enjoy, was cancelled. However, all was not lost!

The Church wanted guests to know that we are thinking of them and praying for them and most important, that they had not been forgotten! As a result, a booklet with contributions from familiar faces, was put together.

The booklet included quizzes, an article about the Chelsea Flower Show, delicious recipes from our talented cook and how to make the wonderful scones that guests enjoy for their afternoon tea. There were true stories and moving testimonies. Of course, it wouldn't be Holiday @ Home without creative craft and we had step-by-step instructions, with picture diagrams, on how to make a greetings card, a teddy bear knitting pattern and flower arranging. Photos of some of our contributors were included that added a personal touch.

The booklets were put together by Gillian and Marie in the church office and despatched with tea bags, so that recipients could enjoy a cup of tea, whilst reading the articles and stories and having a go at the quizzes and activities.

We are very grateful to all those that made a contribution and praise God that in times of adversity, folk are able to use their talents in different ways to bring joy to others.

Ros Monteath

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Café Connect



2020 at Café Connect started wonderfully, with an average of 70 guests attending every week. We begin at 10.30am every morning but find that many arrive earlier as they so look forward to coming. It is great to see friendships being formed, and people chatting and sharing with each other in a relaxed atmosphere.

Between January and March, we were pleased to welcome Ruth and Graham Martin who, through pictures, shared the beauty of the Canadian Rockies with us all. We are always thrilled to have Jane Rowland join us. Jane is a qualified Extend teacher, and regularly leads our guests through recreational exercises We never cease to be amazed by her routines: you had to be there to appreciate 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'! Another staunch favourite with many of our guests is our painting table. Again, huge thanks to Pauline, who shares her gift of painting and gently encourages our guests to produce some incredible paintings. Her table is so popular, we had to stop people reserving seats!

We were also thrilled to welcome Warrender pupils, who visited on a number of occasions. The guests love to see them, and it is always incredible to see how shy they are to begin with and watch them grow in confidence as they keep on coming. It is quite humbling to see our guests sharing stories and helping them with colouring and games, and no doubt try and sneak them one of the biscuits on the tables!

Then of course, March came along, and sadly Café Connect had to stop. This was and continues to be a massive disappointment to all our guests. We know that for many of them, Mondays were the highlight of their week, their only chance to meet with others. And so, it was decided, that we would seek to ensure that we kept in contact with each and every guest. The church office sprang into action, and we produced a database of all our guests and, with their permission, shared their names among the many volunteers who helped out at Café Connect, and since then guests have been receiving a phone call on a regular basis. In the beginning we were offering support with shopping, getting prescriptions, but as the months have gone on, friendships have developed, guests have been able to share their fears and worries, some have lost partners, and we have visited and sent cards and offered them support as best we can.

One of the highlights of Monday's were the quizzes and wordsearches that were put out on tables, and so it was decided that if our guests couldn't come to us, we would send them out to our guests. So, every month we send out 87 packs to our guests, always with a covering letter from Derek and full of activities, challenges and poems. Did you know that 18 sheets of paper in an A4 envelope just comes in under 100grams, so we make the most of postage cost!

Our most ambitious mail out was this December and has been named 'The Panettone Posting'. In addition to our Café Connect guests, everyone who had attended our Holiday @ Home or Senior Citizens Party was sent or had hand delivered an individual panettone, along with Christmas themed quizzes, a book sharing the Christmas Story and a Christmas Card, and a special Christmas message from Derek. It was a mammoth project but was gratefully received. Huge thanks to all those who helped with the packing and posting.

Café Connect wouldn't work without the support of so many; those who turn up faithfully every Monday, set up the hall, prepare the food, organise the quizzes, sit and chat with the guests, welcome them and more, and of course keeping in contact over the last ten months. We truly look forward to being able to open our doors again as soon as it is safe to do so, but in the meantime your continued prayers would be so appreciated.

Helen Yarrow

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Senior Citizen's Party – 4th January 2020

The 2020 Senior Citizen's Party seems a very, very long time ago now, before we'd really heard of Covid-19 and before we ever imagined we'd spend much of the rest of the year in lockdown. With this in mind, what a privilege it was to be able to host a New Year party for around 110 senior citizens from our church and our community. Guests were served an excellent two-course roast dinner followed by teas and coffees, while they enjoyed an array of musical and comedy entertainment. Hannah Dendy, who had project managed much of the party as part of her internship, gave an epilogue and told her testimony. It was a great night! Each guest was given a gift from the fellowship as they left.

It is always a blessing to be involved in the Senior Citizen's party, partly because of the appreciation of the guests but mainly because it's an incredible example of the body of Christ working together as one. Many hands definitely make light work with around 50 volunteers from church cooking, driving, serving, performing, and clearing up. Particular thanks for the success of the party must go to Hannah for all her efforts and to the wider Dendy family who hand-made over 300 chocolate-covered peppermint creams for the guests!

The party enables us to develop relationships and to show the senior members of our community that they are valued and loved by us and by God.

Project team: Hannah Dendy, Chrissie Dore, Pippa Durn, Tony Strutt, Roy Treadaway, Dak Yehambaram

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Springboard

We are a group of adults with varying degrees of additional needs. Until March 2020, we met monthly for a mid-week meeting, and on other occasions for Bible study and trips out.

There are usually about 25 of us, including carers, when all are there.

Due to the Covid 19 outbreak earlier this year, our last meeting of 2020 was back in February, much to everyone's sadness. We stayed in touch and each one hoped we would be back meeting together by the summer. This was not to be.

Early in the "lockdown" I sent every member a letter and a mask, encouraging them to keep well and to keep in touch with one another. We have mostly kept to that.

I tried to visit everyone at least a couple of times in the summer, we even had a few walks with those who felt brave enough.

We are thankful to God for keeping everyone free of the virus (several have underlying health problems). Most of the folk stayed in their own homes, but those in residential care, went back to be with their families, and are still there.

I try to phone everyone about once a fortnight and at Christmas, met up with them individually to exchange Christmas cards and gifts.

Most in our group cannot access tablets or computers so we could not meet on the "Zoom" platform, which was a shame. However, some can "Facetime" and chat on the phone which is great. One or two even watch the weekly streamed service from RBC.

I am currently getting some Easter things together to send to everyone, cards, booklets, stickers, fridge magnets and of course, chocolate. I know these will go down well and are a great reminder that although we don't know what the future holds, we know who holds the future, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Alison Dennis

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Tuesday Fellowship

What a strange year it has been for Tuesday Fellowship as it has for so many others.

The year began as normal with our regular weekly meetings occurring in Sapphire and Emerald rooms with a range of speakers both from within RBC and externally, numbers attending ranging up to 37. All of our speakers were so interesting and a special call-out for Ryan and Shiv Cole who shared with us and the Torch Trust, who focus on those with visual impairments including making the church more accessible. A real insight - no pun intended.

And then in mid-March, our meetings stopped due to COVID. Tuesday Fellowship did not stop though - in some ways it became more active as the leaders and members increased their level of mutual contact whether by telephone or distanced visit as we provided support to each other. Each member also continued to benefit from the free daily bible-reading resource that Tuesday Fellowship distributes.

In October as the position improved and Government Guidance permitted, the Group recommenced meeting weekly but now in the larger Main Hall with rigorous 2-metre spacing and the obligatory face coverings to ensure a secure environment. Numbers were understandably lower but still material given the circumstances, ranging to 20, with those attending expressing how valued the ability to worship and fellowship together was notwithstanding the social distancing demands. Newcomers were also spotted.

Our autumnal and winter programme included hearing from Sharon Rose on her ministry in Dancu, Moldova and our own candlelit carol service. We were also pleased that despite the restrictions, the group managed to produce an extraordinary 19 fun-packed Christmas shoe-boxes for Samaritan's Purse, particularly when we then heard from Sharon who has first-hand experience how incredibly valued these are by the poor children who receive them. It really is such a great privilege to see our Lord working through all circumstance.

Anne Bawden, Joy Sims and Roy Bawden

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THY KINGDOM COME

Last year in May as a church we took part in a prayer initiative over Pentecost called 'Thy Kingdom Come', which focuses on praying for more people to come to know Jesus. We had planned a few events for this but unfortunately, we were unable to do them due to Covid. However, even though it looked entirely different to how we pictured at the beginning of the year it still was a big success, the office received videos and photos of children opening their prayer boxes and having fun doing the crafts as well as encouraging words saying how Thy Kingdom Come journals had helped many of you pray for your friends and neighbours to come to know Jesus. The purpose of Thy Kingdom Come; to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ, to pray for 5 friends or family to come to faith in Jesus and to pray for the empowerment of the Spirit that we would be effective in our witness still happened and that's what matters.

I was really encouraged by how many people got involved in the prayer initiative using your prayer journal each day as well as the children using their prayer boxes and the youth tuning into the videos recorded by our youth workers. The power of prayer is incredible.

If reading this, you took part in Thy Kingdom Come last year why don't you go back to your journals or craft boxes and see if any of the 5 friends you prayed for have come to know Jesus or are starting to become interested in learning more about who Jesus is and why not continue praying for them? We are called to pray and evangelise, not only just 11 days of the year but 365 days, so I encourage you to continue praying for your 5 friends or family members.

Hannah Dendy

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Conclusion

I hope you enjoyed reading this report as much as I did. It may well become a valuable archive piece as, with the passage of time, we look back at an extraordinary episode in the life of our church and the way in which we adapted to serve our community as we continued worshipping our Lord.

As you place the report on your bookshelf after reading, or wherever it might find itself, I'd ask you to reflect on the individuals who have been part of the teams of people involved in the many ministries and activities that you have just read about. Whether paid Ministers, staff or volunteers, each has offered their service to the Lord, this fellowship and our community not on their own account but that of Jesus. And it's for His sake, that I'd like you to give a prayer of thanks, as you read these words, for their gifts and their use and that our Lord will have blessed their offering.

It is in that same vein, that as a fellowship we thank Lucy Newton and John Reynolds who served us so faithfully as Children's and Youth Workers during 2020. As they move on to different things that our Lord has for them, they and we can reflect on the positive impact they have both made on the lives of so many young people over the years of their ministries. We pray for God's continuing blessing on those who follow.

Our membership at the end of the year was 298.

Roy Bawden
Secretary

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