

CHRIST CHURCH MIC REPORT 2019-20

When looking back at the past year it is difficult to see beyond the past eight months of COVID lockdown and all that this has meant for the life of the church. However this report covers the period from our previous Church Meeting in November 2019 before any of us had ever heard about Coronavirus or pangolins in Wuhan. At that meeting we made the very significant decision to partner with U Turn and for them to use 16 Summerley Road as a home for people in their rehabilitation programme. The house parents Brandon and Candice Solomons and the first residents moved in just before lockdown and are now well established in what they have called Church House.

The year 2020 began with a significant focus around “Unblocking the Wells” of the Holy Spirit’s power and presence in each of our lives and in the church as a whole. It had an impact on many people’s lives and, in retrospect, I am sure God used it to prepare us for what was coming. Similarly with our Lent series and accompanying book of testimonies “Treasures of Darkness”.

Then, a couple of weeks before Easter, COVID-19 arrived and the whole year took a very different course. We were locked in our homes and were thrown on our own resources to sustain our faith. It was heartening to hear remarkable testimonies of how God was dynamically at work in people’s lives through lockdown, but for others it was very spiritually and emotionally draining. We began broadcasting our services online and the Christ Church tech team quickly learned to be proficient in this. By this means we maintained a level of ministry to those of our parishioners who were able to access our online content and we received many expressions of thanks and appreciation for it. We all also quickly learned to use Zoom as a basis for meetings and group discussions. Keenan and Alison used other platforms to engage with our youth and Children’s Church families.

As the year progressed and the lockdown levels came down a few notches, we were able to initiate more things. These are highlighted in the presentation that Ali Bourne has put together.

On a personal note, the two books I wrote on my sabbatical last year finally came through a protracted publishing process and were printed and became available from in the middle of the year. Lockdown conditions have made it really difficult to make them widely available, but a steady stream of people have been buying them and it has been very heartening to hear how powerfully they are speaking into the lives of many of their readers.

The major focus of the latter part of this year has been the work of the Search Committee seeking my successor as MIC after I retire early this coming year. I am well

aware of how much prayerful work this group undertook before they were able to announce the appointment of Rev Guy Axelson as the new Christ Church MIC. He, his wife MJ, and their four children will arrive sometime in the middle of next year.

In other matters relating to staff, we ended 2019 with a sad farewell to Claire May who relocated to the UK. Her big personality and influence in our office have certainly left a big gap. So too has the loss of her distinctive skill set. I am very grateful to the members of our staff team who are picking up the tasks Claire used to do in addition to their own. Sadly we will also be bidding farewell to Elsche as her contract comes to an end at the close of the year. I want to thank Elsche for all she has given to our Young Adults ministry and the special place she has had in the midst of our staff team.

This is proving to be a very different sort of final year for me, but it continues to offer many new channels of ministry and much fulfilment. Though we are still four and a bit months away from the final farewells, this is my last MIC report and I want to put on record my appreciation of the Christ Church community and thank you for the many warm friendships that have grown over these years and the rich shared experiences of journeying and growing as a community of Christ's disciples. My special thanks go to the amazing team of dedicated staff and the wonderful Wardens and Pastorate – it has been a real pleasure working with you.

Bill Hybels has always maintained that the local church is the hope of the world, and there is something incredibly precious about being part of a committed local church community, and Christ Church is certainly such a community and it has been a privilege for me to serve as MIC here, and for both Sue and me to offer our ministries within this church. This has been a significant season of our lives. We have always seen ourselves functioning as a partnership and I want to say a huge thank you to Sue for all she does for me and alongside me.

Much love to you all

Rob