



Billericay Methodist Church
at Herongate, Queens Park and Western Rd



Annual Report

2021

Forward

Please find, within these pages, a pen picture of the life of our church during the pandemic. The individual reports from the three sites are necessarily short and reflect the struggles, issues and solutions as we attempt to move on from the crisis. Inevitably some activities have ceased to continue for a variety of reasons and some new ones started. If you wish to add anything, or wish to help in any way please feel free to contact the leader identified at the bottom of each report.

Our thanks go to all those who have contributed in any way to the life of our church during this past difficult year.

INDEX

Report	Pg	Report	Pg
Christian Link activities	25	Men's Fellowship	25
Coffee pot & f4t (Fri) QP	26	Men's Supper Club	23
Cubs - 6th Billericay Cassini	19	Minister	4
Cubs - 6th Billericay Mercury	19	Moggies	23
Finance WR, QP & Herongate	7	Music Team WR	12
Flowers	13	Painting for Pleasure Art Grp	26
Food Bank QP	26	Pastoral Work	9
FROG home group	22	Prayer Chain WR & QP	12
Herongate worship	27	Pre-School	14
Inters	16	Property	5
Inters Extra	16	Rainbows 2nd Chantry	17
Inters Rock Solid	17	Scout Group	21
Kenyan partnership	15	Scouts 6th Billericay Tornadoes	20
Knitting Group WR	24	Sound Recording Team	13
Ladies Leisure	24	Toddlers (Monday)	13
Lunch Bunch	23		

Minister's Report

Dear friends – From the very start of the pandemic in March 2020 it was vital to stay 'Connected With Each Other' (CWEO). It remains one of the key challenges for us as individuals and as a church going forward. I want to say a word of thanks on your behalf to all those who enabled CWEO to be published, printed, uploaded and delivered each week. In the process we realised how minimal our support and contact with some sections of our church family had been, and were able to offer worship and other online and hard copy resources as never before, and again my thanks to those who continue to help with that. I hope that such far reaching provision can continue, hopefully on a circuit wide basis in time.

As I approach the final months of not only my time here at Billericay but my 'ministry before retirement', there is the hope once again of some 'return to normality' with the lifting of restrictions on meeting together in person. Whatever the future holds, the 'zoom meeting' will I think remain a valuable part of our pattern of both decision making and fellowship, and indeed for many of us, alongside things like 'Whats app.' etc. it is now a regular part of family life and meeting with friends far and near. It has been a joy for instance to meet with Rev Sammy and those in Kenya, and see and hear direct from them as they faced many dangers that we were spared. Are there ways in which those not on the internet can be further helped to stay in touch as part of an ongoing hybrid approach?

During the last two years there have been many aspects of normal church life that have not been possible, and that has been frustrating, but there have been positives as well, not least a renewed sense for some of being part of one church (now on three sites with St Andrews to be formally listed as part of BMC). We meet with, and know, those from other sites more than ever before, and this is surely the basis of then sharing together in mission opportunities. Two of which are FoodBank and the potential use of the Community Garden at Herongate as a possible base for supporting 'well-being' and mental health. The latter dependent on a new team to manage what has been established.

Ecumenical involvement with Churches Together In Billericay (CTB) has sadly been very limited over the years, but I pray that the Mission event in July, whatever form it now takes, will be actively supported by our church. I hope too that our support for Schools Ministry (SMB) will remain a vital part of our children's ministry, alongside anything we are able to do on site on Fridays and perhaps again on Sundays as the need arises, and if volunteers and leadership can be found.

Our new committee structure is now well established with a regular joint finance and property committee, alongside an occasional Leadership Team

meeting to look at more strategic questions. All of that will provide a better base for both QP and Herongate going forward. Pastoral care has been both difficult and demanding due to the pandemic, but my thanks to those who have formed 'bubbles' with particular people and kept in regular touch with those who are vulnerable. My thanks to all our church office holders who have 'kept going' in 'unprecedented times' during the pandemic with both imagination and energy. The church couldn't survive, let alone grow without you!

In terms of general pastoral fellowship, most if not all groups have resumed, but our 'knitting fellowships' and some house groups have also been actively involved in the church theme this year. Coffee mornings have restarted at QP, and the servery has at last been used at WR on a Sunday and is an extra resource for hirers of the church itself. It has been good to see new users of both WR and QP, and of course the associated extra income is very welcome as it will help us meet our agreed assessments in the coming years. My thanks to those involved in all the admin, safeguarding, licensing etc to do with that aspect of church life.

Rev David Bagwell

Property Committee

A major issue mentioned in the February 2021 AGM report was the severe negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lock-downs had on the use of the Church's properties and on the revenue generated from third party hiring of the halls and other rooms in 2020 and early 2021. The use of the buildings recovered quite strongly from the second quarter of 2021, with several new third party users hiring the halls regularly at both Queens Park and Western Road.

The Property Committee 'Covid Group' has continued to review changes in government COVID-19 regulations for use of the premises and to review risk assessments prepared by users.

The 5-yearly fixed wiring inspections at both Herongate and Western Road were completed by Roger Davison in 2021 and corrective repairs at both buildings are complete.

Several improvement projects were completed in 2021:

The project to install tea and coffee making facilities at the back of the Church at Western Road was completed, although use of the servery has been limited by COVID-19 restrictions.

Replacement of the old fluorescent lighting units in the Main Hall at Western Road with LED units was completed during the February half term holiday.

A major concern mentioned in the February 2021 AG report was the condition of the central heating boilers at Western Road. All 4 of the old boilers have been replaced by 3 new boilers. The boiler heating the corridor, vestries/office and Upper Room, which normally also supplies hot water to the kitchen and toilets failed at the beginning of 2021 and was replaced in February 2021. The 2 boilers heating the Church and the boiler heating the main Hall/Crush Hall were replaced by two new boilers and the two systems combined in a project that was installed in the October 2021 half term holiday period.

There are no major projects/repairs currently planned for 2022 but 3 projects that may be required in the medium term are:

The Dunham Bush convector heaters in the Main Hall at Western Road are an obsolete design. Roger Davison has repaired two of the units recently, but Dunham Bush has advised that it has no remaining spare parts in stock. If there are any major problems with these heaters in future, they will need to be replaced rather than repaired.

The single boiler that heats the Queens Park building is almost 20 years old. While the boiler is operating adequately at present, replacement will be needed to ensure reliable ongoing operation. Estimates have been obtained for a replacement in the range of £7,500 to £8,500, including VAT.

St. Andrew's Church at Herongate is wooden construction. Many of the cladding boards on the west facing side of the building have areas of wood rot, as do several window frames and the frame of the entrance porch. Estimates have been obtained for the options of local repair and repainting or replacement of the west facing side cladding, both in the range of £6,500 - £7,000.

The property stewards continue to carry out necessary decorating and repair to the Church properties where possible. Saturday mornings were previously the prime time for carrying out repairs/working parties but with regular third party users hiring both the Western Road and Queens Park halls on Saturdays in school term time, work has to be fitted in at other times now.

Ken Cowell (Property Committee Secretary)

Finance

The key elements of income and expenditure relating to the running of our Churches at Western Road, Queens Park and Herongate are as follows:

	Cash Flow		
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Actual	Actual	Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income			
Offertories including one off donations	84.4	77.5	78.5
Family, Youth and Children's Work	0.8	0.9	0.6
Tax Recoveries	20.8	17.7	18.0
Property Grants	0	4.5	2.0
Use of Premises	37.9	24.4	50.0
Interest	1.2	0.2	0.0
	<u>145.1</u>	<u>125.2</u>	<u>149.1</u>
Expenditure			
Circuit Contribution	69.0	65.0	70.0
Youth and Children's Work	0.5	0.2	0.5
Property/ Maintenance/Insurance	51.5	53.7	63.8
WR major projects	0	0	0
Signs/Publicity	0.1	0.4	0.5
Donations including SMB	5.9	4.1	5.0
Miscellaneous	4.3	3.3	7.6
	<u>131.3</u>	<u>126.7</u>	<u>147.4</u>
Net Cash Flow	<u>13.4</u>	<u>-1.5</u>	<u>1.7</u>
Y/End Unrestricted	<u>141.6</u>	<u>140.1</u>	<u>141.8</u>
Bequests	45.5	24.8	
Other restricted funds	8.0	5.7	
Y/End Restricted	<u>53.5</u>	<u>30.5</u>	
Y/End Bank	<u>196.1</u>	<u>170.6</u>	

We finished the year ended 31 August 2021 with a loss of £1.5K in our Unrestricted Funds. Our income from lettings was reduced following the closure of our buildings during the pandemic, so if £23K of our circuit contribution had not been waived we would have shown a much greater deficit. Adding Herongate's funds has made a big difference to our end of year balance but we need to be mindful that £30K is not for spend at Western Road or Queen's Park.

The proportion of our income which we give away:	In £'000:	
	2019/20	2020/21
Offertories and One-off Donations	75.8	77.5
Tax (Gift Aid) claimed	19.0	17.7
Funds raised and given away	20.3	26.5
Film Nights, Charity Lunches & others	2.1	0
Total Raised	117.2	121.7
Donations from our regular giving	5.9	4.2
Funds raised and given away	20.3	26.5
Film Nights, Charity Lunches & others	2.1	0
Total Given Away	28.3	30.7

PERCENTAGE OF FUNDS GIVEN AWAY = 25.0 %

(2019/20 24.1%, 2018/19 19.4%, 2017/18 22.4% and 2016/17 19.2%)

Going forward our budget projection for the current year (2021/2022) shows us just about breaking even, assuming current hirers continue now the restrictions of the pandemic have been lifted. We have agreed with circuit that should we have a surplus at the end of the year. This will be donated towards the reserves they agreed to use to help churches through this difficult year. Discussions with Circuit regarding the 2022/23 contributions will be at the February Circuit meeting, but Circuit cannot afford to use their reserves again to balance the books, therefore contributions from all of the churches will have to increase, or Circuit expenses will have to be drastically cut.

The end of year balance in our Unrestricted Funds is £140.1K which is over our Reserves Policy of keeping 6 months expenses (now 73.5K) in reserve at all times.

The Finance Team would like to thank everyone for their continued support and generosity at this very difficult time.

Lorraine Harris (Treasurer) and Maggie Kingston (Chair of Finance)

Pastoral Report

Pastoral work has continued to play a very important role within our Church and even more so since the continued restrictions imposed on us because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. At the end of December 2021 the membership stands at 154. During the year seven members from Herongate were added to our pastoral list along with one transfer from another denomination. One person ceased to meet, one person transferred to another denomination and sadly 5 members passed away. Additionally, there are now 50 adherents currently listed.

Our cell/home groups have reduced to 5 with adjustments to the membership over the year. One group has ceased to meet and another one is planning to re-start in 2022. Groups have remained in regular contact with each other throughout the pandemic by various means including virtual zoom meetings, telephone calls, meetings in gardens and other outdoor areas and, with the easing of restrictions, some have resumed face to face gatherings. These groups remain an integral part of our pastoral care providing much appreciated fellowship and support during this difficult time. Similarly, we have a number of pastoral visitors who, although not always able to make house visits, have continued to keep in telephone contact with folk on a regular basis providing friendship and comfort to those they talk to. Additionally, members from all three congregations have contacted each other to enjoy a chat and share news.

Two knitting groups continue to meet. The first, **Click & Chatter**, meets at Herongate and is made up of a group of ladies from a variety of faith backgrounds. They make blankets and garments for Stitches of Hope, Christian Hope International, a charity based at St. Peters Church Harold Wood. They send shipments on to Eastern Europe via Mission without borders.

The second group, **Knit and Chat**, began meeting at Western Road but during lockdown has been kindly hosted by a member. Throughout the Spring and Summer they enjoyed knitting in the garden before retreating indoors on wet and cooler days. The garments produced go mainly to charities both local and abroad. The range stretches from warm hats for seamen to clothes and blankets for babies, sometimes personal items too!

Due to the continued virulence of the pandemic all three of our Church buildings remained closed from mid-November 2020 until the end of May 2021. Weekly worship material has continued to be produced and this has been circulated electronically to those with an email address and printed and delivered in hard copy to those without an internet connection with the intention of bringing everyone together in worship at 10.30am every Sunday morning. DVDs have also been delivered on request. These services, starting at 10.30am, have also been transmitted through YouTube and are followed by a Zoom fellowship at 11.00am hosted by different Church members.

Alongside this, weekly notices, renamed CWEO (Connecting with each other) have continued to be produced by Ann Bagwell until she stepped down in April and since then by Pam Cottrell, David Ashworth and Rachel Gallehawk on a rota basis. We are very grateful to them all for preparing CWEO and to the small team of printers for printing the worship material each week. We are also indebted to those people who have continued to deliver or post it each week as we know how much it is appreciated by all who receive it.

On Friday 9th April a new initiative started at The Christian Link with the opening of a Foodbank Hub, currently receiving non-perishable food for distribution but it is hoped that eventually it will become a place to give out food parcels.

On 23rd May Western Road reopened and we enjoyed our first face to face service which included Holy Communion. Sunday morning services on this site have continued since then as has a weekly pre-recorded online service transmitted through YouTube and lasting around 35-40 minutes. This is also available as a hard copy service sheet and DVD on request.

Once the Church reopened, flowers have again been distributed to those celebrating a special occasion and to those who are unwell or in difficulties. These flowers bring great pleasure to those who receive them and we are very grateful to Janet Hibberd for creating such lovely arrangements for others to enjoy.

The Christian Link reopened for one service in June and Herongate reopened for two services, one at the end of June and one in July, both with limited attendance as many remained cautious.

At all services Government guidelines have been strictly adhered to and included socially distanced seating, the wearing of masks, a separate in and out entry and exit, hand sanitizer and the completion of a track and trace register. Windows and doors remained open and all furniture and equipment was regularly sanitised. In recent weeks these guidelines have been slightly relaxed.

In May two funerals took place and in July we celebrated one baptism.

At an Extra Church Council on Thursday 2nd September 12 Church Council members and 15 others met to discuss 5 key areas of church life. With 24 persons voting the proposals were on **Climate Change, Aspiring to be a Hybrid church, Complimentary patterns of worship** and a focus on **youth and children's work**.

All the above were approved by a large majority with only 1 or 2 voting against or abstaining.

The vote on the fifth area dealing with **The Marriage and Relationship report – ‘God in love unites us’**, and its conference approved resolutions, one of which allows churches in due time to apply to be registered for same sex marriages, was much closer. It was agreed that further discussions were needed before a way forward could be agreed.

At the Church Council meeting on 14th October 2021 the expected pattern of worship going forward was agreed.

Online Worship – A weekly pre-recorded service lasting around 35-40 minutes plus 12-13 minutes of pre-worship, broadcast ‘automatically’, on Premiere YouTube from 10.15am. Also available as a hard copy service sheet and DVD on request.

Western Road – a weekly service of worship on Sundays at 10.30am, lasting 45-50 minutes to include a slot for notices and the Sharing of News.

The Christian Link - a weekly service of worship on Fridays at 11.45am, known as ‘Pause for Thought’, lasting 20-25 minutes. This time of worship concludes a morning that includes Foodbank and Coffee Pot. CWEO notices available

St Andrew’s, Herongate - a service of worship on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month only at 10.30am lasting 45-50 minutes with music led off CD’s or equivalent. CWEO notices available

In September **Street Pastors** returned to patrol Billericay High Street on Friday and Saturday evenings from 7.00pm to 11.00pm and from November will remain on duty until 1.00am. School Pastors returned from mid-October providing support, mainly at lunch time, at Billericay School and Mayflower High School.

Many of the fellowship and interest groups have still not begun again and this applies most obviously to our children’s work with currently no Sunday morning sessions, Messy Church or Open the Book as previously. **Youth work** continues on Friday evenings, and there is one **Mothers and Toddlers** meeting. The **Contact Centre** has restarted, and **Pre-school** continues at Western Road.

At Herongate on Saturday mornings the **Community Garden Club** has continued to meet during the pandemic. It has however been severely depleted and weakened by the sudden and unexpected death of two of its key members and is currently exploring ways to re launch in the spring after the usual winter break. St Andrews celebrated its 140th anniversary in November.

Christmas events this year included a Parade and Toy Service, during which donations of toiletries and new toys were given to Changing Pathways. There was a united morning service at Queens Park on the Sunday before Christmas, and at Western Road we joined together for Carols by Candlelight, a Christingle on Christmas Eve and a service on Christmas Day.

This Christmas 20 volunteers from Emmanuel and the wider Community made a total of around 50 deliveries to people who would otherwise have been alone. Most people were visited twice - once with a bag of goodies which the Foodbank made available and secondly on Christmas Day with meals from Waitrose and Cook. Additionally, members of our Church reached out to 25 people and couples, some of whom were housebound and who, pre COVID, had received Home Communion visits – Telephone calls were made and Christmas cards and festive parcels were delivered by a small team who felt as blessed by the responses they got as those folks they visited and as a result some really lovely thank you letters and phone calls were received.

In connection with Christmas giving, again this year monetary donations were made to our three chosen charities, Changing Pathways, St Luke's Hospice and Action for Children.

Lyn Bowditch

Church Prayer Chain.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Another year has passed in which the Prayer Chain has been a source of great comfort and blessing to many people. With the COVID pandemic still with us, the number of prayer requests increased as more and more folk were in need of Christ's blessings and healing. Thank you for continuing to “Pray without ceasing,” for them, and circumstances and events around the world.

May God bless you all and keep you safe as you continue in your prayer ministry for Him.

Geraldine.

Music Team (Western Road)

Since the opening up during the summer and the recommencement of weekly congregational worship we are pleased to have been able to cover most services with a live musician. Many thanks are due to Pam Cottrell, Gordon Reynolds, and Ann Bray for making this happen.

We hope and pray that the time will shortly come when we are able to worship and sing without face coverings, and the Masked Singer will once again only be a game show on ITV rather than a Sunday morning health and safety restriction.

Mike Hawkins

Sound System

If you have read this report and it sounds familiar it is because it is almost the same as previous reports.

I continue to be served by the same team as the last 7 years plus.

I thank Brian Carter and Dave Rogers for their efforts during the morning services together with back up from David Ashworth. Sadly for health reasons we have missed help from David Westcott.

I also appreciate the amount of time David Ashworth has put in concerning maintenance of our sound system.

We need someone else's input. You only need to be able to climb the stairs and you do not need to be named David !!

Please let me know if you can help. Thank you

Vic Hare

Church Flowers

Due to the ongoing Pandemic and limited arrangers, flowers were low key this year, usually a simple vase of flowers on the communion table when a service allowed. Thank you to those that contributed to the flower fund, which was greatly appreciated.

Janet Hibberd

Monday Toddlers

We started Toddlers again at the beginning of September 2021, after not meeting earlier in the year due to COVID-19 restrictions. We decided to set a maximum of 25 families at a session. We have not really advertised but we have averaged about 15 families with over 20 on some occasions. The sessions have been very well supported by our volunteers, with Sue Hawkins, Sue Ball, Susan Cooke and Renee Moss helping most weeks, with Lorraine Harris covering when we are short. Thanks also to Mike, Martin and Ken for their help in setting up before and clearing away after the sessions.

The families are very appreciative and supportive of our fund raising for Kenya, the Foodbank and Changing Pathways. We have just provided funding for a Kenyan student. The atmosphere is very friendly and we have a good mix of mums, dads, grandmas and child minders.

Margaret Cowell

Pre-school

We currently have 26 children on the Register, of which 12 children are due to leave in July 2022 as they will be starting school.

At Easter 2021 we held our Easter Bonnet parade and sang our songs to the parents with the children at the entrance to the Foyer and the parents watching from the car park. During the summer term we continued to operate as two groups, the Lions and Tigers. The older children, the Lions, were able to take part in activities to prepare them ready for school, for example practicing changing into PE outfits and help clear the plates after snack. They also completed All About Me books. One of the early years teachers from Quilters School was able to visit our Pre-school and observe the children who were going to Quilters in September 2021. This helps in their transition from pre-school to mainstream education.

In July we held a leavers party which was enjoyed by all, and the children were presented with their folders on the steps in the car park, where the parents were able to watch as we sang 'Happy School Days' to them.

In September 2021 we implemented the revised Early years curriculum and also returned to operating the Pre-school as one group with everyone entering the hall from the opposite side to the car park to help with congestion at the beginning and end of the sessions. We have adapted back to working as one group, with the older children and younger children being taken out in groups to enrich their learning. The children have all settled in well. Throughout November and December we were keeping a close eye on the coronavirus guidelines but decided our Nativity play could go ahead this year in the main church building. As always this was enjoyed by the children and their families who came along to support them and a surprise visit from Father Christmas was a highlight for the children. This also gave us an opportunity to formally thank Vince Loss who stepped down as Treasurer, Marianne Innocenti who left us at Christmas and Loraine Copsey who is leaving at February half-term. Marianne and Loraine will be greatly missed and we thanked them for their dedication and commitment to our children's play and learning.

We were very pleased to welcome Caroline Warner as a volunteer and she joined us in September. We are also very grateful to Sophie Nye for her continued support as a kitchen volunteer. Gill Turnbull, our Manager, submitted her resignation and was due to leave us at the end of this academic year, however due to health problems she has had to step back from her role as Manager. We are aware how much she has contributed to the success of our Pre-school since taking on the Manager's role and she will be greatly missed. We are currently advertising for the post as we will need a Manager in order to remain open after July.

Finally thanks are due to all the staff for their ongoing support and commitment to our Pre-school, they have continued to work throughout the pandemic and, due to their vigilance and care, we have not had to close and this has been greatly appreciated by the families of our children.

Gill Rogers

N.B.

It was with great sorrow that we learnt of the death of Gill Turnbull in February 2022. Gill had led our Pre-school for more than 15 years and was still working until the day before our Nativity just before Christmas. Her dedication to our children throughout this time was outstanding, ensuring that the play and learning offered was of the very highest level. She always put our children and their welfare and happiness at the centre of all she did and will be sorely missed.

Liz Read

Kenya Partnership

The Grace Centre and Bio-Farm Project. During 2021 we have continued to help with the development of this excellent resource. We have sent donations to purchase further building materials, including a borehole and water pump- so vital in this drought-ridden country- as well as basic items such as compost, an incubator, seeds and chickens. Thanks to one very generous donation, we were able to supply the project with a farm truck- essential for transporting vegetables, eggs etc to sell in the markets and to schools.

Within The Grace Community Centre training continues for young people in essential life-skills such as dressmaking, hairdressing and computer skills, and we have sent money to purchase items including study-books and fabrics.

With all these projects we have liaised closely with Rev. Sammy Kagwi who works tirelessly with the community there. In Sammy's own words- *"Grace Farm is dedicated to fighting hunger, malnutrition and poverty.... by growing resilient food crops that will be a source of nutrition. The farm has created employment opportunities, helped in generating incomes and in the efforts to reduce poverty among the dumpsite community."*

At Easter and again at Christmas we held special appeals to raise money to send to Sammy to purchase food-parcels of basic cooking items to give to the desperately poor families living around the Mwakirunge Dumpsite on the outskirts of Mombasa. As always, we were amazed and very grateful for the wonderful response from our Church Family.

Student Sponsorship. We have continued to support between 8 & 10 young people through school, college or university. Each is recommended by our contacts at the Methodist churches in Mombasa and all are either orphans or

come from struggling single-parent families. For this we rely on regular monthly or annual donations as we have to make a commitment to see each youngster through that period of their education. We are always in need of new sponsors to replace those who move away or can no longer continue with their support. We'd be delighted to tell you more about this wonderful way of giving a few young people the best start in life.

Thank you, as always for the interest and support we receive from our Church family here in Billericay and Herongate.

The Kenya Support group - Maggie, Geraldine, Pam and Heather

Inters

Inters was closed for the school year 01.09.20 to 31.08.21 due to COVID-19 and because of the number of children and their ages it wasn't possible to keep in touch on zoom. However I did send out regular emails to the parents.

I am delighted to report that we restarted Friday evenings indoors in September 2021 and will report on their progress in next years' report.

INTERS meets normally during school term time only, between 6.15 and 7.30pm. Numbers averaged 45-50 each week, taking School Years 3 to 7 (ages 7 to 12), with a waiting list of hopeful youngsters who would like to join us.

Lorraine & all the Inters Team

Inters - Extra

Despite the problems caused by Lockdown, Inters Extra continued to meet on the 3rd Friday in the month. Whenever possible, we met outside in the BMC carpark but when restrictions applied, we met on Zoom. We generally had between 8-12 young people, aged 12-16 who regularly attended. The session started with the young people sharing their 'Good week/bad week.' This was followed by a short 'God slot' where we looked at a Bible verse or aspect of being a Christian. The rest of the time was spent playing lots of games- Hide and Seek in the church carpark, being a particular favourite.

Pam, Spencer and I felt very privileged to have such a group of committed, caring and motivated young people in our group. The parents were all incredibly supportive. As our younger youth moved into Year 8, our young people were also able to attend 'Rock Solid' which ran after our face to face meetings.

In June, due to increasing commitments, I no longer felt able to run the group beyond August and as our group was now old enough to attend 'Rock Solid' which Spencer helps run, we decided it was the right time to close the group.

We had a lovely final session playing rounders in the park, followed by pizza and ice-cream in the carpark.

My thanks go out to Spencer, Pam, the young people and their parents who all made Inters Extra such fun. Thanks are also due to Dave Rogers who oversaw our many Risk Assessments for meeting outside.

Heather Blunt, Pam Atkinson and Spencer Lynn

Inters – Rock Solid

As with all of the church groups we were unable to meet in the hall during the 2020/21 school year, however Nathan and Katy ran zoom chats once a month for the 15 youngsters in the group, also playing various online games with them. During the summer term they also met in the church car park with a film night, games of various types and also board games one evening.

I am delighted to report that we restarted their meetings indoors on a Friday evening in September 2021 and will report on their progress in next years' report, but numbers have increased significantly and the group continues to thrive.

The evening runs from 7.30pm until 9pm –on the second and fourth Fridays in the month.

Lorraine, Nathan, Katy and the RS Team

Rainbows 2nd Chantry

We started back on Zoom in around March last year with girls that were due to start in the near future as the parents of existing Rainbows had stated they only wished to return to Guiding if we were meeting face to face. We were emailing meetings out to all girls on our register but because most were receiving schoolwork electronically additional screen time was not desirable.

Once we were able to conduct face to face meetings again a complex risk assessment was agreed by Girl Guiding.

Due to the restriction on numbers at the church we recruited to bring our numbers up to 12 but had difficulty retaining girls for a variety of reasons. one girl did achieve her bronze award despite the limited number of meetings attended.

Following the Guiding programme has been challenging but manageable and several of the girls have achieved their first Aid stage one, camp stage one and communicate stage one. We are now working on the Lead stage one which should bring us up to Easter.

Due to restrictions, especially around toilets and hand washing visits out have been limited to the community garden however the girls enjoyed bug hunts and cooking smores over candles while they were there. A particularly magical promise ceremony was conducted while we could use the field which had a wonderful real life fairy ring which the girls all stood round and parents could see the girls without having to break social distancing rules.

The meetings the girls particularly enjoyed were 2 science-based ones making lava lamps(indoor fireworks) and non-Newtonian fluid a first aid one which involved a relay race and treating toy animals with wipes, plasters and surgical gloves.

St. Andrew's day was celebrated in style with the girls bringing in kilts, trying weaving, designing a tartan kilt, as well as crafting a Scottish flag and highland cow.

We had a Christmas craft day as well with at least 4 crafts that the girls could complete.

This term we are hoping to complete the BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH badge involving making bird feeders, fat balls, bird identification and looking at what birds eat and having a few themed games along the way.

Currently we are still at 12 girls but once Government elects to put Covid -19 on the same footing as seasonal flu we hope to increase back to 15 to avoid having to tell 3 girls they cannot attend if we have to socially distance.

The leadership team remains as Maxine for running meetings, Helena for managing the accounts and waiting list and transfers to Brownies. Sophie as assistant leader at meetings mainly in charge of games and songs, and Helen who is working on her leadership training and deals with the updates on our Facebook page, emailed meetings and Zoom meetings. Emma, who is at uni helps out on Zoom and comes to meetings when she is able.

Just recently we have been joined by two D of E girls who have been really helpful and are popular with the Rainbows.

Hopefully going forward we can get back to running trips out and having external visitors come to the meetings.

So far we have only had to cancel one meeting at late notice due to leaders testing positive.

The waiting list is still healthy.

Maxine Bloom Leader in Charge

6th Billericay Cassini Cubs

Cassini cub pack has now completed its 7th year as a group. We managed to meet back in the hall, where we had restrictions, but as always, the cubs were rising to the challenge. As we come out of lockdown, and because of the restrictions still in place I split the group up into 2 groups and were having fortnightly meetings. During that time, a lot of badgework was completed, even though it was socially distanced.

We managed to get out and about to complete some badge work, including a trip to the local library, and a lady from the Guide Dog association coming to the hall. The cubs were overjoyed to see each other after being on zoom for a long time.

We finished off the year by coming together with Mercury cub pack to do an activity day at Belchamps, going to Base Jump with the scouts and a group activity to the panto.

We managed to get 4 cubs to complete their Chief Scout Silver award and send them up to scouts.

I feel that the young people have blossomed and adapted to the constant changes throughout this difficult time.

We currently have 10 cubs, 4 leaders and 1 young leader.

Angela Crucefix (Cub scout leader)

6th Billericay Mercury Cubs

The second half of Spring term 2021 and we were in our third national lockdown. Cubs continued on zoom with 100% attendance. We had a music quiz evening, an "escape room" experience themed on going to camp and a family fortunes game. The cubs took over zoom in March and created their own quiz as part of their team leader badge. Finally the last meeting before Easter we had a celebration evening going over everything we'd managed to do over the last 2 terms albeit over zoom. Badges were pre-delivered to houses and were presented by parents and siblings. We also invested 3 cubs over zoom with parents putting on scarves and awarding badges.

Summer term arrived and we were finally allowed to get back face-to-face. We split the pack in half and ran a 2-week programme so that we could maintain social distancing. We started off with a board games night, finished our navigator badge which we'd started in 2020, played cricket, completed the athletics badge and played a wide game at Sun Corner. The two groups also came together for a hike in Norsey Woods combined with a scavenger hunt.

Our last meeting of the summer was at Thriftwood for Cresta Run and Go Karting for all the cubs.

During the Autumn term we brought the pack together as our numbers were slightly lower, plus social distancing regulations had eased. We kicked off with a games night followed by team building activities. We completed our road safety badge combining it with a hike around Billericay to look at road signs and different types of crossings. Steve Clarke kindly helped the cubs achieve their Emergency Aid level 1 and 2 by running a first aid evening.

We participated in the church's Climate Change activities by thinking about consumerism and how it affected climate change. Each six made a collage, which were displayed in the church and the high street. The cubs also undertook a climate change challenge at home to try and think of ways they could save energy.

Fireworks night was celebrated with sparklers and hotdogs, our young leader created a quiz and ran the whole evening, we also undertook some fitness, cooking and decorating biscuits. Finally we joined the Scouts and Cassini cubs at a group outing to Basejump.

Most of the Cubs went to the district pantomime trip at Towngate theatre and we had an outdoor activities day at Belchamps, which included Christmas Dinner, again this was a joint trip with Cassini Cubs.

Spring term 2022 arrived and we were able to continue meetings in the hall. This term we will be tackling the disability awareness and money skills badge. We will also be having a Chinese New Year themed evening.

Mercury is currently at 15 Cubs, 5 adult leaders and 1 young leader. Since last year's report, 6 Cubs left us to go to Scouts – we were proud to present them all with their Chief Scout Silver Awards- very hard earned as they spent a lot of Cubs in lockdown

Thank you to everyone who has helped over the past year and to those who will be helping in the future.

Kerry Munn Cub Scout Leader

Scouts

We have had another challenging 12 months of Scouting, but things are starting to return to normal. We started the year with weekly Zoom meetings, then during the Easter term we meet every other week to keep the group size down and since returning after the summer break the whole troop has been meeting.

There have been a number of practical challenges with the Scouts having to wear faces coverings, but in the main they have taken these in their stride. While on Zoom we were able to finish the Air Activities badge, which we had started before lockdown with a trip to Duxford and some local knowledge.

Once we started meeting together, we did a local hike to put into practice some of the local knowledge from the previous term. We managed to cook pizzas in cardboard box oven and to finish before the summer break we did a chip shop survey. The unanimous winner was Billericay Fish & Chips on Western Road.

It was a sad start to the new school year with news that one of our leaders, Tony, had passed away. He was a much valued member of the team, and a good friend. His contributions to the troop and the wider Scout family will be missed.

With COP26 taking place this term was based around environmental issues, we the personal impact we could have. This included an interesting visit from a local beekeeper.

We were fortunate to have one of our current and one former Scouts selected to attend the 25th World Jamboree in South Korea in 2023. This will be a fantastic opportunity for both.

Dan Large SL

6th Billericay Scout Group – Group Scout Leader

As reported separately by the Cub and Scout sections our 56th year in existence saw a welcome return to the face-to-face Scouting that we had all missed during the first year of the pandemic. I remain immensely proud of how the young people and adults in the group have adapted to the challenges we have faced and the enthusiasm that they have shown as things have slowly returned to somewhere near normal.

At a Group, highlights in the year have included the selection of two of our members as attendees at the next World Scout Jamboree which is due to be held in South Korea in the summer of 2023, they now have a daunting fund-raising task to complete which they may well ask for your assistance with. The awarding of a Medal of Merit to Kerry Munn in recognition of all she has and continues to do for Scouting and was also a chance to thank not just Kerry but all the Leaders for their work.

It is always a pleasure to witness a young person on their journey through the movement. Louise Fail joined as Cub, was one of our two attendees at the World Scout Jamboree in America in 2019 and I was delighted that on turning

eighteen she confirmed that she wanted to become an adult leader with the Cassini Cubs and continue her journey within the movement.

We were shocked by the news in late summer that Tony Clark a long-term supporter and member of the group, most recently as a Scout Leader, had lost his brave battle against the side effects of diabetes. On a personal level I had known Tony for more years than either of us would have cared to remember and I miss his friendship, support, advice, the work he did for so many young people and finally his propensity for injuring himself in bizarre and amusing ways. He remains the only person I know to break his own arm whilst giving a safety talk before an activity for example.

Thank you to the Church for its continued support and to all those who help with the work we do in any way especially those who serve on the Executive Committee of the Group. We look forward to 2022 with renewed enthusiasm and anticipation of the opportunities it brings.

Stephen Clarke – Group Scout Leader

FROGs Home-group

The F.R.O.G. (Fully Rely On God) Home-group has continued to meet weekly during this past difficult year. When allowed, we met face-to-face, otherwise by zoom. Several of our number were “shielding”, so the weekly support from others of the group was invaluable. Some of the frogs had serious health issues, so the contact there was important too. In September we gained two new Frog-members and from then on were able to be together, meeting in David G’s “pond”- otherwise known as his Summer-house. We have been using for our studies the York course entitled “Caring for Creation”, which has been an excellent resource. It has given us many useful practical suggestions for ways in which we can each do our part to protect our fragile planet: Reduce- reuse-recycle. Negotiations are underway for the group to purchase a tree in the spring as part of the Government’s “Plant a tree” campaign. We can highly recommend this course as a positive way for showing us how to protect our environment.

Towards the end of the year, our group helped to plan and lead an act of worship, firstly at Herongate church and later at Western Road. This was a real blessing for those who took part.

Home-groups are a wonderful way of deepening our Christian Faith as well as developing relationships with members of our Church Family. We can commend them to you all!

Yvonne, Geraldine, Sue, Ruth, Pam, Linda, Heather, David and David.

Lunch Bunch

The 'Lunch Bunch' have not met since February 2020 and during this time we have sadly lost some folk who used to meet for a meal once a month at The Forge.

We have not restarted as the Covid19 pandemic has continued to cause concern for many in the group. However, we have some ideas for going forward with an alternate venue – watch out in the Notice Sheet.

Geraldine H and Pam C

Men's Supper Club

The Men's Supper Club, after having last met in February 2021, prior to lockdown, recommenced our meetings, under strict Covid rules, in October 2021. Meetings then followed in November, and a special Christmas meeting, with our Ladies, was held, for the first time in many years, in December. We now commence our 2022/2023 session on Monday February 7th 2022, with monthly meetings on a regular basis, apart from August, September and January, when we do not meet.

The main change to our monthly meetings, after 52 years, is that we now meet on the first Monday of each month, and not on Wednesdays any more, as previously. Our other major change is that we no longer provide a 3 course meal, as previously, and now just enjoy light refreshments, tea/coffee, biscuits etc, during our talks. However, our fellowship remains as solid as ever, and we thoroughly enjoy our evenings, provided by a variety of guest speakers, who give of their time and expertise for our enlightenment. We have had the privilege of welcoming a number of new members over the last few months, and our membership remains strong after so many years now.

We are a very friendly and easy going group and, as always, new members will be made most welcome and, for the princely sum of £5, will enjoy an evening of great friendship and fellowship.

Brian Phillips.

Moggies

Moggies continued to meet fortnightly on Tuesday evenings, with one of the gatherings in a local hostelry and the other for a meal in a local restaurant. During the year we were very pleased to welcome back Ian Brown who was one of the founder members of our group; one of Martin Ball's old work colleagues has also joined us.

Ed Harrison

The Western Road Knitting Group

We originally met on a Wednesday morning in the church, knitting items for good causes. When I first joined, they were knitting little pouches for orphaned baby kangaroos and bats that had been burnt in the Australian Outback fires! Seaman's hats were another project and knitted figures for nativity scenes at Christmas. Palm Sunday and Easter displays too. The garden at Herongate was decorated with charming birds knitted by a member of the WR group. Most of the goods have gone directly to charity while some of the novelty items were sold and the proceeds donated. The group is very encouraging to each other to improve our skills and teach others like me, as I am a complete novice. We also have fun and put the world to rights.

When the pandemic started, Brenda Brothers very kindly invited us to meet at her house. We met in the garden and shivered through the winter and sizzled through the summer, or met indoors as covid rules permitted.

In the Autumn Julie Cristin thought of the idea to make a knitted Christmas Tree for Herongate Church. We thought it was such a brilliant idea that we decided to knit one ourselves for our church, especially as the theme for this year is to go green, so we started knitting squares in all different shades of green. Such is the power of the Western Road Knitting Group, that friends and family from all over the country got involved and made many of the squares. Members of the church family and Herongate also contributed. It's really caught the imagination, especially when they heard that after Christmas, our tree and Herongate's would be dismantled and made into blankets, some of which will go abroad to Eastern Europe. They will be given to Christian Hope who transport them to a 2nd charity, who are able to cross borders. The tree has been greatly admired and photos of it have gone right round the world!



Our latest project is to make trauma teddies for emergency services to hand out to children caught up in serious incidents. They have an amazing affect on the children. We were inspired by a member of our group, who has already made over 350 teddies for the police!

Once the pandemic has passed and we are able to meet at the church, we would welcome new members whether they would like to learn or share their wealth of experience with us.

Coral Neale

Ladies Leisure Group.

Not much to report from our group. We've not been meeting through lockdown and, having lost friends who have moved to live near family, we are now down

to only 4 regular members. The future of the group seems rather uncertain at the moment and after discussion we have decided to take a short rest during the Winter months and review the situation towards the start of Spring. If any ladies would be interested in joining us for Scrabble, Rummikub & chat on a Thursday afternoon we'd be delighted to welcome some new faces.

Maureen Davies

Men's Fellowship

Like all other Church activities the Men's Fellowship was obliged to close at the first lockdown in March 2020 and unfortunately has never resumed activities due to diminishing numbers and the age profile of the few remaining active members, all of whom are in the "Highly Vulnerable" age range.

Should it prove possible to resuscitate the Group there is considerable enthusiasm among those remaining to do so, any progress will be reported in next year's report. Meanwhile any man who is free on Friday afternoons and enjoys a frame or two of snooker and tea break discussion should contact Peter Goodyear (Chairman) or Geoff Forward (Secretary)

Geoff Forward

===== Queens Park =====

Christian Link Activities

We were able to welcome back our regular hirers when the government guidelines permitted and it was lovely to see the building in use again.

We have a number of dance and drama groups for children and also, we welcomed The 2nd Buttsbury Guides to the church for the first time in November, It was lovely to have a uniform group back at QP. We have an after schools' maths and English tutorial group which holds classes twice weekly. The building is buzzing most afternoon/evenings.

There are groups for health and wellbeing and also yoga and a fitness group for adults and a new one for last year is a menopause support group which meets once a month on the 2nd Monday. We also have our regular AA group that meets each Friday morning with many members becoming firm friends with the church family.

Church services on a Sunday morning have not been able to start back, but we offer our Pause For Thought service each Friday morning at the end of Coffee Pot which is very popular.

Helen Hacker

Friday Coffee Pot

Coffee Pot has undergone several changes since the Pandemic. We resumed on Friday 17 September 2021 and Thursday and Friday Coffee Pots have been amalgamated to just one day - on Fridays. Elizabeth and Pauline have joined us from the Thursday Group and with Eileen, Jude and myself we make a good team. Coffee Pot has gone from strength to strength and it is good to see so many people attending. Everyone has a good time catching up with friends and just having someone to talk to. Several new people have also joined. We finish off at 11.45 with Pause For Thought which is a lovely way to end a busy week.

Coffee Pot is a great outreach to the Community.

Susan Cooke

Food Bank

The Billericay Food Bank at Queens Park every Friday morning has been going from strength to strength since its start date in March, 2021.

We have a group of around a dozen volunteers from BMC who have generously given up their time on a rota basis to assist with the running of the Food Bank. The donations have been extremely generous on a weekly basis, particularly over the Christmas period where there was a bumper number of items brought forward for distribution.

The re-introduction of Coffee Pot at Queens Park on Friday mornings has also helped spread the word about the Food Bank and increased awareness about what we're doing.

At present, the Food Bank at Queens Park is for donations only but the plan for the future is to hopefully include collection of parcels too, on a weekly basis.

Jon Waldron

Wednesday Art Group

The art group now in its 19 th year was , as with all other meetings in Queens Park , unable to meet for 18 months .During that period we kept in regular contact by email. Most weeks 22 of our members received an email often chatty and amusing and which encouraged replies in similar response . We continued painting at home and every month had a mini virtual art gallery where we shared our paintings. We chose a subject and then sent via email our paintings to Jihan, one of our members who cleverly produced a virtual gallery showing our paintings which she sent out ,again by email to all 22 members .

In January 2021, the Light Initiative, which was a Methodist initiative within our neighbouring counties encouraged us to produce paintings on the theme of light, and 23 paintings were collected which we emailed to Belfairs Methodist

church in Leigh. There the paintings were printed, laminated and displayed both in Belfairs and Queens Park churches and were even on the Southend and Leigh district web site.

The Climate Change Conference (COP 26) prompted us to produce a variety of paintings on that theme and these were displayed for several weeks in Western Road church.

We have adjusted our times slightly, and we now we meet for 2 hours from 10 am each Wednesday, but do not meet for 2 weeks at Easter and 6 weeks over the school summer holiday.

Pat and I were delighted that 19 of our members returned and we have also had 3 new members join us.

Pat Crabb

===== **St Andrews Herongate** =====

Herongate Worship

At the last AGM held at St. Andrew's just prior to the general lockdown brought about by the Pandemic, Herongate became part of the Billericay Methodist Church. The timing was brilliant! Our ageing and rapidly declining congregation were extremely grateful & relieved to be brought under the care of the leadership team at Western Rd.

Since 'opening up again' we have been able to hold morning services on the 1st, 3rd, & 5th. Sundays of the month with the support of David & the local preachers. The annual St. Andrew's Day service held on the nearest Sunday to November 30th was a particularly special occasion last year (2021) as we celebrated 140 yrs of witness in the village.

As many already know the building belonged to the Anglican Church originally before being taken over officially by the Methodist Church in 1977 when Rev. Trevor Allen was the minister. Methodist services had began back in 1966 while still owned by the Anglicans.

The knitting group, Click & chatter, continues to thrive. We meet on Tuesday mornings 'open to all' making garments mainly going to charity but not exclusively. It's a very friendly mixed group who enjoy coffee/tea & chat while sharing our various skills. Anyone wanting to join, regardless of skill level, is most welcome - feel free to come along.

We are indebted to Jennie who continues to clean the church, look after the lettings & generally keep an eye on the much loved building.

Julie Cristin

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