

Review of Activities & Achievements in 2008

The main event in our church life during 2008 was the beginning of the ministry of Revd. Ian Wiseman at our church.

The start of 2008 saw our church operating without the support of a minister following the planned retirement of Revd. Clifford Wilton the previous March and the movement of our Associate Minister, Revd. Chris Ford, to serve the new pastorate of the South Trent Group of Churches. However, after many months of frustrating lack of information and apparent progress, the Elders had been able to advise members that a potential minister had been invited to our church to “preach with a view” early in the new year.

Revd. Ian Wiseman B.Th. Dip.HSW came to lead worship and meet the congregation, accompanied by his wife Suely, on Sunday 3rd February 2008 when a congregational lunch was provided. Following this, the Church Meeting on 6th February issued a call to Ian to become our minister, which he was pleased to accept. Ian, Suely and Leticia moved to Nottingham in late May after a number of visits to choose a suitable house to become our new manse.

The induction service, led by our Synod Moderator Revd. Terry Oakley, was a very special occasion. We had a full church on the afternoon of Saturday 21st June when Ron Kenyon, Chair of our Vacancy Committee, introduced Ian. The sermon was preached by Rev Dr Iain Whyte B.A., B.D., S.T.M., Ph.D. and our choir and Junior Church made wonderful, moving contributions to the service. We were pleased to be joined by friends from other local URCs and representatives of our city centre partners as Ian signed the ecumenical Declaration of Intent. The church also expressed its thanks to our Interim Moderator, Revd. Derek Gardiner, who had helped to guide our church through the vacancy, with a token gift.

Although the vacancy lasted just over a year, our church remained vital and active during this period. We are fortunate to be served by so many able and committed members who give such positive leadership in the various aspects of our church life. We were also very well served by our pulpit supply secretary, Jenny Jones, who was able to provide a good degree of continuity in worship because of the willingness of Revd. Louise Gee and our members Revd. David Turner, Revd. Gordon Hastings and Ron Kenyon to preach regularly. We are very grateful to them and others who filled our pulpit so ably during the vacancy.

We have held services on Sunday mornings throughout the year and, after discussion with our new minister, Elders have agreed that we will not return to having regular Sunday evening worship at present. We now celebrate Holy Communion at worship on the first Sunday of every month. As we move into 2009, however, we have committed ourselves to holding monthly mid-week services of prayer and meditation, as we feel these will be more likely to meet the needs of our modern lives than a Sunday evening service. We also intend to establish weekly lunch-time communion services. In order to ensure that the communion elements are accessible to as many people as possible, the Elders and Church Meeting agreed that we should offer wine and a non-alcoholic alternative together with gluten-free bread.

Our congregation benefits from well planned and thoughtful teaching, based on scripture, and worship is enhanced by a high standard of music led by our choir, directed

by Jerry Morris, and our organist, Madeline Allington. Visitors are made welcome at worship. Members of the Duty Teams endeavour to greet anyone new to the congregation, we observe an open table at communion and serve coffee after Sunday morning services to provide an opportunity for members of the congregation to get to know any visitors as well as to meet and chat with each other.

With the agreement of the Elders and minister, Revd. Clifford Wilton conducted the marriage of our member Helen Worley to Dominic Elliott-Smith and Revd. Ian Wiseman has presided at infant baptism and invited expressions of interest from those considering church membership. The minister and Ron Kenyon have both conducted a number of funerals during the year and, as an expression of our continued care for those who have been bereaved, after discussion and planning with the Elders, the minister led a bereavement service on All Saints Sunday to which those who had been bereaved in the past year were specially invited. This service was very well received and it is intended that it will become a regular feature of our church calendar.

We have shared worship with other local United Reformed Churches on two Sundays during the year and, in April, hosted the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Two Counties Ecumenical Service. This was another splendid occasion, with a large congregation, contributions from our own choir and that of St. Mary's and a sermon preached by Red. Canon Wesley Blakey, Chairman of the Notts. and Derbys. Methodist District. During this service, denominational leaders renewed their covenant. Our church family picnic was also opened to any members of the churches of our former Nottingham District Council. In addition to families from our own church, over twenty members from five other United Reformed Churches attended this event which was held at the Djanogly City Academy. Our church has continued to be properly represented at URC Synod meetings with representatives reporting to the Elders' Meeting and/or Church Meeting.

We strive to offer a high standard of pastoral care for our members, adherents and young people, maintaining regular contact and offering particular care to those who are unwell or elderly. Our new minister has given considerable time and energy in this element of his ministry and his visiting has been greatly appreciated. Although we no longer have a direct link with a chaplain at Nottingham Trent University, our church remains concerned about university students and staff.

A number of international students, mainly from the Far East, attend Sunday worship regularly and we continue to make our premises available for use by student groups when appropriate. The students of the Nottingham Chinese Christian Church City Fellowship meet in our halls and we hosted the Law School Carol service again this December. We hope that some students will be attracted by our services of Prayer and Meditation, which will include Taizé-style music and we have successfully applied for a grant to help fund a research project to explore how we, as a church, might respond to the needs of students in Nottingham, with a particular focus on international students in the first instance.

The children and young people are an important part of our church. After joining the whole congregation at the beginning of worship, they receive teaching and share in activities to help foster their spiritual development and grow in faith. As in recent years, a number of our older young people also participated in youth activities organised by our East Midlands Synod, including residential weekends and two of our young people serve on Synod youth committees. Our own Junior Church camp was an extremely successful event once again this year and the Saturday Club, organising a variety of social and

sporting activities for our young people on a monthly basis, has continued through the year. The musical production in June was, again, one of the highlights of the year. Our church has written and adopted a Child Protection Policy and our Junior Church and Youth Leaders have been subject to CRB checking and are kept up to date with Child Protection Matters. The church is indebted to our team of dedicated and imaginative leaders and the Elders have been pleased to appoint Fiona Logan to work alongside Mark Hodgson as Junior Church Co-ordinator.

In addition to the teaching provided during worship, adult members of the congregation have had the opportunity to grow in understanding and faith through the two programmes of house group meetings, in Lent and in the autumn. We are grateful to the members of our Christian Education Committee for developing the programmes of study for us. Interest in purchasing books from the church bookstall (which was opened after worship on most Sundays) was not felt to be sufficient to be worth the effort to organise stocking and manning the stall. This has therefore been discontinued although members are still offered the opportunity to order Bible Reading Notes, the URC Prayer Handbook and Diaries. Towards the end of the year, the Elders were pleased to learn that one of our members has expressed an interest in learning more about the opportunities for training as a lay preacher and has attended an event in Leeds designed to inform potential candidates.

The church has a great commitment to our outreach activities which serve the wider community. Many of our members are involved in running the Nottingham Child Contact Centre and the Nottingham Stroke Club who meet on our premises. In addition, our members are significantly involved in the running of the Abbeyfield Society in Nottingham and our church is a committed supporter of Christian Aid, The Leprosy Mission and Compassionate Friends. We support a wide range of self-help groups by making our halls facilities available at a nominal charge. We undertook an important upgrade on our buildings during the year in response to new fire prevention and safety regulations and guidelines. Following a detailed risk assessment and professional advice, a suitable fire alarm and emergency lighting system has been fitted in our halls and we have also had emergency lighting installed in the church itself.

During the latter part of the year we have made an appeal to the congregation, inviting the members to review their giving to the church and it is anticipated that this will lead to a significant increase in income from members. This was felt necessary as the proportion of our income arising directly from members has been declining in recent years. At the same time, the Management Committee and Finance Committee are holding a detailed review of our lettings practice and the charges we make to different types of groups. Members have been contacted individually in connection with the appeal and we are grateful to them for their generosity towards the church which enables us to maintain and develop our work. The treasurer, together with the Managers and members of the Finance Committee are also working to prepare us for registration as a charity, to comply with changes introduced by the Charities Act 2006.

GDJ Jennings
Hon Secretary