

Whitefriars Church Rushden, Vicar's Report 2017

2017 was a year of much change in the life of Whitefriars (both our church and the school in which we meet). There were numerous staff changes; we began to implement our Growth Action Plan (GAP), which included the launch of The Well – our Missional Community; and this happened against a background of the infant and junior schools amalgamating to form Whitefriars Primary School, with a new head teacher for us to establish a relationship with. In this changing context, we acknowledge the constancy of our heavenly Father and *Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and forever.* (Hebrews 13:8)

Staffing

During the year our longstanding and faithful Ministry Resources Manager (MRM), Sharon Clarke, took up a new job after 10 years of working for the church. I am extremely indebted to her for all she has done in this time. We re-shaped the responsibilities and made the treasurer's role a voluntary one once again. I am grateful to Lynda King for taking this on for a short time and to Jon Kemp who will become our treasurer in 2018. Eve Bundock was appointed as our MRM in November but decided during her probationary period this was not the right job for her and Sara Owst became our MRM in 2018. Eve's most significant achievement in her short tenure was to launch Church Suite, a contact database for church, for which I thank her.

In addition, soon after completing the Heritage Lottery Funded Young Roots project, our Children's and Young People's Minister Nicola Mizon also found a new job and moved on after the end of the year. It was sad to see her go, but I was so pleased that she left this ministry in good shape and well planned for the start of 2018. Both Sharon and Nicola and their families remain part of the church. One of the most significant tasks of 2018 will be to appoint 2 part time ministers to cover the full age range, providing we can increase our giving as a church significantly. Much of our previous provision has been through grant funding and benefitting from the diocesan intern scheme.

Throughout 2017 the parish has been served by Julie Whiteley, our Family Support co-ordinator and you can read her report below. Significantly, we took the opportunity of employing Imogen Allen for a year from the end of her time with us as an intern, with responsibility for various aspects of our GAP making a huge impact across the life of the church. We were all delighted to hear that Imogen has been accepted to train for ordination, beginning in September 2018. You can also read Imogen's report below.

Growth Action Plan (GAP)

After a well-attended Vision Day in February, we created a GAP to summarise where we believe God is calling us as a church. We have made significant progress in many of the areas, but there is still more to do. With a vision of ***Lives being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ*** we set goals in the three dimensions of:

- UP – our relationships with God;
- IN – our relationships with one another; and
- OUT – our relationships with the wider community.

A brief summary of

- progress to date, and
 - work to be done

is outlined below.

UP – our relationships with God

- Through Imogen's leadership we have established a discipleship group for our older teens
- We continue to involve our children and young people in the life of the church. There were two youth led service during the year and this will be a focus of our new Children and Families Minister
 - We will look to develop and establish a model of linking our children with adult mentors to assist with their spiritual growth
 - We will equip families to support faith development in the home
- We carried out a spiritual survey and I will outline some of the key findings at the AGM
- The Fruitfulness on the Frontline series provided more teaching on growing as disciples
- The Well have focussed their teaching on Practicing the Way of Jesus
 - We will increase confidence in sharing our faith and develop a culture of invitation
 - We will review our Sunday Worship structures

IN – our relationships with one another

- Under Imogen's leadership, we have created a team for oversight of pastoral care in church
- The Well have made significant progress in creating strong, supportive, yet challenging relationships with one another in the missional community
- The proportion of church members in, or associated with a small group has increased
 - We will further develop the capability of our small group leaders through training and increase the depth of relationship within our groups
 - We will continue to work on our partnership with Whitefriars Primary school, in particular over any plans to develop the site

OUT – our relationships with the wider community

- We have established The Well, our missional community, to serve the northern part of the parish under the leadership of Phil and Liz Elphick, Richard Holley and Chad. I am so grateful to them for the huge amount of time and energy they have invested in The Well
- The Well are developing a pattern of meeting in organised and organic ways to develop whole life discipleship. They remain relationally and structurally connected to Whitefriars
- Under Simon King's leadership, we completed a Christianity Explored course in the autumn term. All six course members have continued to meet with others as a weekly home group
- Our financial giving has increased, enabling us to bless the local community in addition to our charitable giving
 - With a further increase this year there is the distinct possibility that our children's and youth ministry staff will be fully funded by congregational giving
 - We will conduct a review of the effectiveness of our Stepping Out groups
 - We will continue to engage with the other churches as we work together to support the various developments around Rushden

So you can see there is a lot happening at Whitefriars. I am so thankful for the many people who commit time, energy and money to serving Christ through the work of His church. It is not possible to mention everyone in this short report, but you are all appreciated. It is also right to report the sad loss of two pillars of the church: Bill Cummins, who died in Feb 2017 and John Underwood who died in March 2018. They were godly men, faithful servants of the Lord and will both be missed.

Chris Youngman. March 2018

Imogen Allen: a summary of my work

Over this past year I have had the wonderful role of furthering a section of the church's growth action plan. The areas that I focused on were: to establish a discipleship group for ages 14+, to create a team to have oversight of pastoral care within the church and to develop our confidence in sharing faith. I have made progress in all three of these areas and have especially seen fruit in the faith development of our 'older teens' and in the communication now happening within a pastoral care team. I have had oversight and leadership for several of our youth ministries. These have included: Lego, Fruit and 'The Way'.

In Fruit we have seen a number of young people from outside the church community engage with the group and find their own place. We have particularly seen a group of young boys who we first met through our contact with year 6's at Whitefriars but are now year 7's in a couple of secondary schools. The use of sport and craft have helped fruit to keep a steady average number of around 15 a week and created a core of young people that we regularly see. There is still a use of a 10 minute 'God Slot' where a topic of faith is shared in a relevant way. We hope that this is slowly influencing our young people, but would appreciate prayer as we look to minister to the young people holistically.

In Lego I have taken on the role of oversight this last term. The group has on average 6 to 7 members a week and keeps a relaxed, fun atmosphere. We play games and look at areas of faith that are linked to school, friends and being a teenager. The group has space for a couple of others to join and will hopefully be growing in September when our year 6's move up.

'The Way' is the older teens group that I have established this year. The group has 4 members and regularly will have 3 present. The group have been following a discipleship series called 'The 9 Beats', which looks at the beatitudes and turns them into practical challenges. I have seen the group develop over the year and really challenge the members. Although the group is small, it has managed to maintain contact with an age group that can often go missing in church.

The pastoral care team was established over this past year and now has 6 members who have different roles within pastoral oversight. The group has created a stronger structure for home visits and prayer chains, alongside care for new church members. I am now handing over leadership of this group to Sarah Fitch.

I have continued in my schools work this year and have been present in Whitefriars school with my role both in 'Prayer space' and 'Moral maze'. Both settings have allowed me to talk about the church and faith to the children and have shown our enthusiasm as a church to serve the school. In addition to this I have kept my contact with Rushden Academy by being a part of the lunch time club called 'The Outlet'.

In my other ministry responsibilities, I have been furthering our outreach by establishing 'The Sunday Salon', which now meets regularly and has been able to engage with some of the fringe members of our church.

My role over this past year has been quite flexible and diverse as I have taken on a couple of projects and helped to keep things going.

Imogen

Julie Whiteley reports: I have now held the role of Family Support Co-ordinator within Whitefriars Church for eighteen months. I have very much enjoyed both the undertaking of the role, and getting to know the congregation of Whitefriars Church.

Over the last year and a half, I have developed close working relationships with primary and secondary schools in the local area. Many of my referrals come from schools, where my main point of contact has been with Parent Advisors (PA's). PA's are the first point of call for children and families who are experiencing problems. PA's are extremely busy, but there is a limit to the nature of the work that they can do. Therefore, filling this gap is where much of my work has been directed. I have provided 1:1 support work to young people between the ages of four and eighteen. This includes both befriending work, and more structured programmes of intervention, such as Protective Behaviours and Anger Management. My work to date has been focused upon working over and above the support and care that schools are able to provide, and within the gap whereby a referral to social care is necessary. On the two occasions where a referral to social care has become necessary, I have successfully worked in partnership with social care and both cases were eventually 'stepped down'.

My work is both variable and flexible and if there is an identifiable need with which I can assist, I will aim to provide support to families and individuals in any way possible. This has meant working with diverse situations and with varying levels of need. To date, I have worked to support eighteen families in Rushden, in addition to a significant number of individuals and parents.

As part of my role, I have organised two events which were directed at both the children and young people whom I am/have been working, and also young people who are involved with Whitefriars Church or Fruit. The first event, in July 2017, was to Wellingborough Lazer Maze. This was fully subscribed. The second, larger event, in December 2017, was to Kids Play in Kettering. This was attended by 35 young people. One of the aims of these events has been to introduce as many young people as possible to the Church. Feedback from both events was extremely positive and I hope to run another similar event this summer.

Also as part of my role, I have been involved with running various groups which provide targeted support. I currently assist with the running of a self-harm group at the Ferrers school. This group is attended by young people from years seven and eight. After Easter, we will begin running a second, almost identical group at this school, aimed at years ten to twelve. I have also co-run a well-being group at Rushden Academy and plans are in the pipeline for a self-harm group to commence at this school.

At present, Sarah Thompson-Fitch and I are running our second parenting group which is based on the Solihull approach. This approach aims to help parents understand their child's behaviours and feelings, and supports them to create positive and responsive relationships with their children. Feedback from parents who have attended both groups has been resoundingly positive.

Developing the volunteer base at Whitefriars Church is an on-going part of my role. I have created a directory of skills and abilities that people are able to offer and which may assist families. I will continue to add to this directory and to expand this resource. The vision continues to be that Whitefriars Church will not only support, but will walk alongside families and, through support and example, introduce Jesus into the lives of people who may not otherwise have known him.

Julie