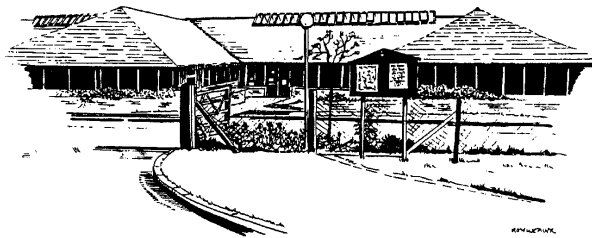




Westlea Church

Annual Report 2008



The Partnership of West Swindon and the Lydiards
Baptist • Church of England • Methodist • United Reformed Church

Objectives

Our vision: A community of people worshipping in Westlea who believe in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Bible, and who accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Our mission: Take the Good News about Jesus to every person in Westlea and encourage them to receive Him as their Lord and Saviour. Care for and teach every Christian believer so that they can become mature disciples of Jesus.

Organisation

Westlea Church is one of five churches in the Ecumenical Partnership of West Swindon and the Lydiards. The trustees of Westlea Church are the Members and three of these members represent Westlea on the Ecumenical Church Council (ECC).

Members are followers of Jesus Christ who wish to commit themselves to the life of the local church in Westlea. They sign an application form, before being formally welcomed at a Sunday Service.

The members of Westlea Church have the responsibility of cooperating with the Partnership Staff Team in promoting the work of the church in the areas of Westlea and Eastleaze. Drawn from the members of Westlea Church is a leadership group of four elected leaders, the secretary and treasurer along with representatives of the staff team.

Meetings

The leadership group meets to discuss church business and make “small scale” decisions. They discuss major issues before presenting them to the members at the Members Meeting.

During 2008 the Members met four times including the Annual General Meeting (Feb). The leadership group met 4 times in the same period.

At the end of 2008 there were 25 members of Westlea Church.

Of these members 21 are joint members of all the four denominations (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and United Reformed), 3 are Baptist members, and 1 is an Anglican member.

The Christian Community

Westlea Church meets to worship week by week in Westlea School, which we hire for the purpose. There is a morning service held at 10:00am. Average attendance at Sunday services in 2008 is constant although erratic.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Adult attendance am	22	22	22	21	20	22	22
Child attendance am	18	21	15	14	12	11	11

Following a review, numbers on our Contact list are down slightly and there are currently 56 adults (of whom 25 are members) and 27 children. No births were celebrated at Thanksgiving Services or baptisms.

Our youth work on Sunday mornings has continued to be a priority, but numbers have decreased again slightly during the year. We also renewed our commitment to our 'Safe to Grow' policy. We continue with our monthly swap over service.

Our "First Steps" group for pre-school children and their carers meets once a week for an hour and a quarter of singing, stories and craft on a Christian theme. It currently has 7 carers and 11 children on the register but numbers fluctuate widely. Four church members help to run it and make coffee.

We have reduced to one home group meeting every two weeks during the evening providing fellowship, Bible study and pastoral care for our members and friends.

We hold regular monthly prayer meetings, at which we pray for God's help with issues of concern to the church. We also seek guidance on our Christian service and how to best reach our community. These prayer meetings have not been well attended of late. However, we continue to make prayer an important aspect of all our meetings.

Outreach

Several of our young people attended "The Phaze", a youth group run by the Partnership on a Friday evening. This merged with Café Base West from the

autumn to become REMIX. Also several young people attend the G2G youth meeting held on Sunday evenings and aimed at school year 10 and above.

We have supported the Ncounter Partnership and support a Youth Café at Holy Trinity Shaw) previously called Café Base West, now REMIX which meets weekly on Tuesday evenings. This has been increasingly well attended by a variety of young people, many of whom have no church links

As many of our First Steps carers are not in regular church attendance encouragement is given to them to join us, especially at our Christmas events.

Our Men's Might group meets occasionally, when we meet together with some on the fringes of the church for social activities. We see this as a way to reach out to those with whom we already have connections.

As in previous years, we have delivered literature to every household in Westlea and Eastleaze, inviting people to our special activities at Christmas. Again, as on previous occasions we have been especially pleased by the attendance, including many visitors, who joined us for the Children's Crib Service, held on Christmas Eve. We also had several visitors at other services.

We have also delivered prayer cards to all the houses above sharing the fact that we are praying for a particular set of streets each month. We have had several responses requesting prayer, and we shall continue the activity in 2009.

We encourage our members and regular attendees to speak to their friends and neighbours about Jesus and what he offers them for their lives.

Our national charitable activity was the Emerge project. We continued our financial support for Tear Fund, the evangelical relief and aid organisation which aims to help poor and oppressed people in many countries around the world providing for both physical and spiritual needs.

It remains our hope that the personal witness and influence fostered by our members, church groups and activities will continue to be used by God, to reach people with whom we come in contact, and nurture lasting Christian friendship with them.

One of our more successful outreach activities has been our church walks which have involved several friends who do not usually attend church.

Christian Service

The church is blessed with the range and number of skills and gifts offered by its (comparatively small) membership. As we meet in a school hall the church

equipment has to be set out and taken down each week. Many members contribute to this task, as well as being on duty, playing music, welcoming people, reading lessons, leading prayers, providing refreshments, and clearing up again afterwards.

We have been greatly blessed by the help and assistance of our shared staff team. We have 2 staff members Revd Mike Dilly and Revd Dick Gray. Both are non-stipendiary, and contribute both to worship and service in Westlea, the partnership and further afield.

A number of our members are actively involved in work with young people, both within our church, teaching in Sunday Club, and in the wider youth community by leading the Phaze (a club for children in school years 7-9) and helping with Cafe Base West/REMIX.

During the year, one of our members served as treasurer for the Partnership and another as Chair of the ECC and we have members involved with developing the ECC Constitution and maintaining the Partnership web site.

Members also serve on the steering and management committees of the Partnership Emerge Project.

In the wider community we rely on our members to be “salt and light” in their workplaces and dealings with friends. Several members assist with such organisations as the Swindon Autistic Support Group, Girlguiding UK, a committee member of “The Harbour” an asylum seekers support group, and many who help in school classrooms and clubs. Our members are also involved in School Governance and Parent Teacher associations and one serves as a Special Constable with the Wiltshire Constabulary.

In the wider church we have members involved at Synod and national committee level in the URC.

We continued to sponsor a child, Anita, through the Toybox Charity (which works with street children in Guatemala). We have continued our support for the Filling Station, a local charity helping the homeless around Swindon, through preparing sandwiches and providing provisions and clothing, which are then distributed. We also contributed to Operation Christmas Child donating presents in shoe boxes for children in Eastern Europe.

As in previous years we supported Christian Aid Week by undertaking a collection in our local area.

Material Resources

Our financial position has remained relatively stable in 2008. The total value of planned giving is little changed. Our income totalled £19,495 a small increase over last years. This represents an average of £14.95 per member per week. We recovered £915 through gift aid tax claims, although the final claim is pending.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Regular Gift Aid agreements	14	14.5	15	15.5	14.5
Av. Gift Aid £/week	£17.40	£17.50	£16.04	£16.62	£16.83

We still rely on a minority of members for the majority of our income, and our cash flow can therefore be easily influenced by changes in the circumstances of individual members

10% of our income is given away to 3 charities, 4% each to Tear Fund and Emerge, a youth project ongoing between the Ecumenical Partnership and Ncounter, with the remaining 2% to a charity nominated on an annual basis. The charity in 2008 was The Harbour Project.

All our property is housed in our only building, a shed, situated in the school grounds. It is insured for approximately £2,400, although it has no resale value. Our property is insured to the value of about £5,700. We have Public Liability insurance for £5,000,000.

Targets for 2009

We shall continue to focus on Mission in 2009; giving particular focus to outreach amongst those connected with, but not yet a part of our church community. This has led us to continue on an irregular basis “Men’s’ Might” a meeting for the men associated with our church, with a predominantly social and inclusive agenda.

We shall continue to support outreach through First Steps to families with young children, and to continue our Sunday Club, as far as we are able, meeting young people where they are. We shall also support Remix and the Partnership Emerge project reaching out to young people with limited connections to church.

We believe that in the economic climate that prevails our key goal should be to be a caring church with particular emphasis on the Swindon Foodbank and will make regular donations a part of church life.

We believe that with the changes in the Partnership, prayer will continue to be an area where we need to focus significant attention.

Summary

Whilst our regular adult attendance numbers have varied significantly during the year, we have welcomed some new faces. We look forward to reaching out to the community with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

This report has been produced by the leadership group of Westlea Church, on behalf of the members, in line with the terms of the Charities Act 1993 and its updated recommendations (SORP 2005). We hope it gives a clear picture of the life of Westlea Church, the way in which our members have sought to fulfil our stated objectives and our aims for the next year.

Westlea Leadership Team

On behalf of Westlea Church. March 2009