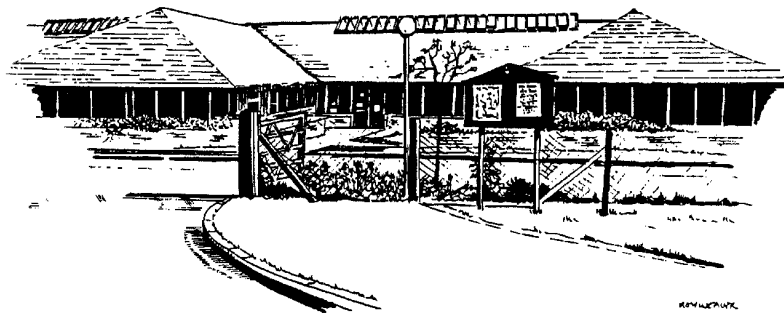




Westlea Church

Annual Report 2009



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 Partnership Council (PC).

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 2009 the Members met four times including the Annual General Meeting (March). The leadership group met 6 times in the same period.

At the end of 2009 there were 28 members of Westlea Church, who fulfil many roles both within the Church and within the Partnership.

Of these members 23 are joint members of all the four denominations (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and United Reformed), 4 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 2009 is constant although erratic.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Adult attendance	22	22	21	20	22	22	22
Child attendance	21	15	14	12	11	11	12

On our Contact list there are currently 33 families with 51 adults (of whom 28 are members) and 48 young people. No births were celebrated at Thanksgiving Services or baptisms, although there was 1 believer's baptism that was celebrated at the Partnership's joint Baptism and Confirmation service.

Our youth work on Sunday mornings has continued to be a priority; numbers have remained constant with new children joining as the older members have left during the year. We also renewed our commitment to our 'Safe to Grow' policy. We continue with our monthly swap over service where the children have the opportunity for a more active session in the hall while the adults meet in a classroom.

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. Over the last year it had on average 8 adults and 8 children. Currently there are 13 children on the register but numbers fluctuate widely. Four church members help to run it and make coffee.

We have a 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 are not particularly well attended. Prayer though is an important aspect of all our meetings.

During the year we had a study day led by Paul Stokes who is an Evangelism and Renewal Advocate within the United Reformed Church. Following a service led by Paul, we then had a workshop on the working of the Holy Spirit, looking in particular at the life of Philip the Evangelist and how that relates to us. As well as looking at how we can use this message in our lives, we were encouraged to see what we were already doing.

Outreach

We support the Ncounter Partnership and support REMIX which meets weekly on Tuesday evenings. This is well attended by a variety of young people, most of whom have no church links. Several of our members help run these sessions and members are also involved in the running of the project with Ncounter. No younger members of our church attend this at the moment.

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. Activities Men's Might have been involved in include repair of our shed and creation of scenery for the Church's nativity service.

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 continued to deliver prayer cards to all the houses above sharing the fact that we are praying for a particular set of streets each month. We did not have many responses requesting prayer this year but shall continue the activity in 2010.

We encourage our members and regular attendees to speak to their friends and neighbours about Jesus and what he offers them for their lives. Through this personal witness by our members and in the church groups and activities, and we hope that God will continue to use us to reach out to the people with whom we come in contact, and nurture lasting Christian friendship with them.

Some of our outreach activities have included opportunities to meet together to eat including barbecues and walks that have involved several friends who do not usually attend church. Although this year we have not managed to undertake as many walks as in previous years, we had a successful walk amongst the Bluebells of West Woods along with other members of the Partnership.

Through our charitable giving, we have supported the Emerge project and the Ncounter Partnership, 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 and we have also

supported the Swindon Foodbank both with financial and food gifts. The Foodbank provides food for those who are in need throughout Swindon.

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, both of whom 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 helping with REMIX and serving on the steering and management committees of the Partnership Emerge Project.

During the year, one of our members served as treasurer as well as Chair of the Partnership Council and we have members involved with developing the Partnership Constitution and maintaining the Partnership web site. As highlighted above members have helped with REMIX and served 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, NCT, Lower Shaw Farm Children’s Project 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, through the Toybox Charity (which works with street children in Guatemala). The children are encouraged to help support this child through their own giving with the Church. 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

As with many others, our financial position during 2009 has deteriorated with income reducing and expenditure remaining constant.

The total value of planned giving is little changed. Our income totalled £17946.69 a small decrease on last year. This represents an average of £12.32 per member per week. We recovered £3316.39 through gift aid tax claims, included in this is the final claim for the year that is awaiting payment.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Regular Gift Aid agreements	14.5	15	15.5	14.5	14
Av. Gift Aid £/week	£17.50	£16.04	£16.62	£16.83	£17.20

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 the charities we support. Once our commitment to Toybox is covered, of the remainder, 40% is given to both Emerge and Tear Fund with the remaining 20% to a charity nominated on an annual basis. The charity in 2009 was Swindon Food Bank.

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 2010

We shall continue to focus on Mission in 2010; giving particular focus to outreach amongst those connected with, but not yet a part of our church community. This will include continuing “Men’s” Might” on an irregular basis 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 continue to support

Remix and the Partnership Emerge project reaching out to young people with limited connections to church.

We believe that in the continuing economic climate our key goal should be to be a caring church with particular emphasis on the Swindon Foodbank and will continue to 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 Sunday attendance has remained constant, 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. February 2010