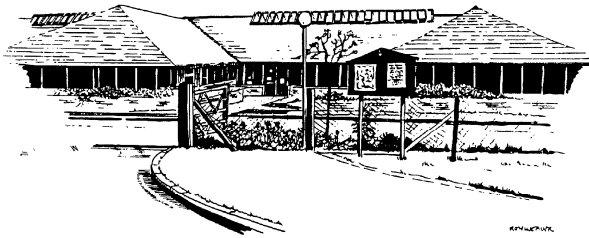




# **Westlea Church**

## **Annual Report 2012**



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 West Swindon and the Lydiards Church Partnership. 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 2012 the Members met 6 times including the Annual General Meeting (March) and 2 extra-ordinary meetings. The leadership group met 5 times in the same period.

At the end of 2012 there were 26 members of Westlea Church. Of these members 21 are joint members of all the four denominations (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and United Reformed), 4 are Baptist members, and 1 is an Anglican member.

Their roles within the Church and Partnership included:

- Leadership Team, Treasurer, Secretary, Child Advocates, Church Safe to Grow Co-ordinator, Sunday School Superintendent, Gift Aid Secretary, PC Representatives, PC Chair, PC Secretary and Partnership Safe to Grow Co-ordinators.

## ***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. Year on year the average attendance at Sunday services in 2012 is constant although can be erratic on a weekly basis.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Adult attendance	20	22	22	22	22	23	24
Child attendance	12	11	11	12	11	11	10

On our Contact list there are currently 25 families with 16 young people 16 and under. 1 birth was celebrated with a Thanksgiving Service there were no Baptisms. We have wide variety of ages and ethnic backgrounds that regularly come to Westlea Church.

Our youth work on Sunday mornings has continued to be a priority; 19 young people attend regularly and are split between Sunday Club (primary school) and Godzone (secondary school). We meet on the first and third Sundays of the month. On the fourth Sunday we have 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.

Since September we have had the pleasure of the Partnership's Trainee Youth Worker helping to lead Godzone on a monthly basis. All have benefitted from the input.

This year's Nativity service was a scratch performance with roles taken on by different members of the congregation. As a congregation we renewed our commitment to our "Safe to Grow" policy and many took part in the training organised by the Partnership.

We have a home group meeting every two weeks during the evening providing fellowship, Bible study and pastoral care for our members and friends. Each session is led by different members of the fellowship and is normally preceded by a meal. Over the year we have followed the following themes:

- The book of Hebrews
- The Partnership's Lenten studies based on being a Welcoming a Church."
- The Apostles Creed.
- The bible a historical context.
- God, science and the search for life.

We hold regular monthly prayer meetings, at which we pray for God's guidance and help; locally, nationally and internationally. We also seek guidance on our Christian service and how to best reach our community. Although these prayer meetings are not particularly well attended, they have a number who regularly attend. Prayer though is an important aspect of all our meetings.

As a follow up to last year's "Healthy Church Check", Westlea Church carried out a "Prayer 24 hours" this included corporate and private prayer both in members' homes, at places of worship, walking around the community both during the day and overnight. Highlights included a dawn prayer walk and a very successful youth prayer session held at one family's house. It was calculated during the 24 hours there were in total over 100 hours of Prayer.

During the autumn, Dick Gray was on sabbatical. This gave us as a church a chance to begin to look at how we would develop once he retires in September 2013. This process of discovery has coincided with staff team changes within the Partnership and the examination of how the Partnership should change. This process the whole membership has been involved in and resulted in two extraordinary meetings which were both very well attended.

## ***Outreach***

We support the Emerge youth groups that are run at a Partnership level, including REMIX which meets every Tuesday evening. REMIX is well attended by many young people, most of whom have no church links. Several of our members help with both the running of REMIX and the Emerge project. One younger member of our church currently attends REMIX.

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 garden clearance work, repair of our shed and other practical and social activities around the church family.

As in previous years, we have delivered literature to every household in Westlea and Eastleaze, inviting people to our special activities at Christmas. We were pleased with the feedback from the Christmas cards and the subsequent attendance, at many of our Christmas services. We also encourage those who are not in regular church attendance to come and join us at our Christmas events.

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. This year we held a "Fun Day" in Lydiard Park which we invited friends, family and neighbours to. This included a "bring and share" lunch and barbecue. Unfortunately the weather was not amenable so few attended. We did feel though that this was an activity that we would try to repeat in future years.

Along with some of St Mary's, Lydiard Tregoze we again had a successful visit to the scarecrow festival at Urchfont (near Devizes) and one of our members organised "Walking the Bounds" of the Partnership. A number from Westlea as well as the other churches in the Partnership took part in this event.

Through our charitable giving, we have supported the Emerge project and 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; who are both non-stipendiary, and contribute both to worship and services in Westlea, the Partnership and further afield. This includes going into Westlea School on a regular basis to take assemblies.

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 Emerge as well as serving on the steering and management committees of the Partnership Emerge Project.

During the year, one of our members served as Chair of the Partnership Council and another as Partnership Secretary and we have members involved with maintaining the Partnership web site. Two of our members are also the Partnership Safe to Grow co-ordinators and have helped revise the Safe to Grow policy in line with the latest guidelines and begun implementation of our Partnerships policy on the protection of vulnerable adults.

Three of our members have assisted, and others have helped from time to time with the Partnership organised Messy Church during the year.

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 National Autistic Society Swindon and District parent support group, Girlguiding UK, 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.

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

We continue to support the Toybox Charity which works with street children in Central America. The money we donate goes to a specific project represented by a Child Ambassador; during 2012 our Child Ambassador represented the Rescate project in Miramonte, El Salvador. The mission of the project is to provide much needed support for children in the community, who face challenges such as gang involvement, crime and family breakdown. They are currently supporting 35 children. We will look again in 2013 as to the best way to support this charity.

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 2012 has deteriorated. Gift Aid and Regular Giving have remained similar to 2011 but there has been a reduction in the weekly Collections.

The total value of planned giving has decreased. Our income totalled £18,005.48 a decrease of around £1,370 on last year. We hope to recover approx. £3,000 through gift aid tax claims, included in this is the final claim for the year that is awaiting payment.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Regular Gift Aid agreements	14.5	14	12	12	12
Av. Gift Aid £/week	£16.83	£17.20	£22.18	£21.42	£21.41

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, the remainder is divided between Emerge and the Swindon Foodbank.

All our property is housed in our only building, a shed, situated in the school grounds. It is insured with Ecclesiastical Insurance for approximately £4,175, although it has no resale value. Our property contents are insured to the value of £7,824. We have Public Liability insurance for £5,000,000.

## ***Targets for 2013***

Our targets for 2013 are as follows:

- Church Structure - With Dick's retirement, the wider Partnership changes and the "Healthy Church Check" of 2011, we will look to determine how Westlea Church can change to reflect the needs of the church community and the local area.
- Youth and Children's Work - We will continue to work towards the Youth Work Charter and achieving the Child Friendly Church award and look to see how we can get the younger members of the Church more involved.
- Mission - We will work to reach out to those connected with, but not yet a part of our church community. This will include seeking how we can make the church more visible in the community, continuing "Men's Might" on an irregular basis with a predominantly social and inclusive agenda. As well as the membership acting as "Salt and Light" to our community.

## ***Summary***

Westlea Church continues to serve the community and to reflect the multi-ethnic character of the area. Our membership has remained largely stable in 2012 and we have been able to offer support and encouragement to members and others in times of need.

The Prayer 24 Hours was a successful event which we need to see how we can develop further and with adjustment the “Fun Day” is also an event we wish to repeat. Dick Gray’s sabbatical this autumn has given as an opportunity to identify some of the many tasks he carries out that most are unaware of as well as giving us a chance to consider how the church will grow and change not just with his retirement in September 2013 but also in the context of the wider Partnership review.

We are a church that believes passionately in prayer being the core of our individual and corporate relationship with God, and we endeavour to foster and encourage personal relationship with God through sharing of prayer needs and answers to prayers received in both Sunday worship and house group. Our house group has been a place where we have actively engaged with the Bible and current issues.

We have continued to see good numbers of young people and are blessed with the way they involve themselves in the many activities of the church, especially those who have grown up within the family of Westlea Church and are now relating that to the adult world.

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 Church Leadership Team.

On behalf of Westlea Church. February 2013