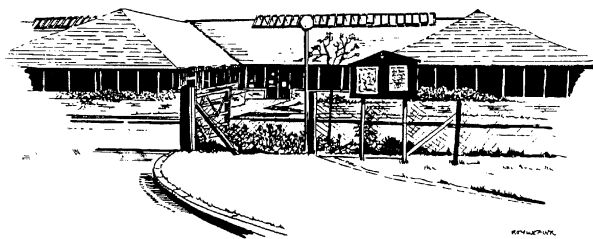




Westlea Church

Annual Report 2013



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 five 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. With the changes within the Partnership and Reverend Dick Gray's retirement, the leadership team was increased at the 2013 AGM to 5 elected members. They discuss major issues before presenting them to the members at the Members Meeting.

During 2013 the Members met 4 times including the Annual General Meeting (March). The leadership group met 5 times in the same period.

At the end of 2013 there were 31 members of Westlea Church. Of these members 28 are joint members of all the four denominations (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and United Reformed), 2 are Baptist members, and 1 is an Anglican member. A total of 31 is an increase from the 26 at the beginning of 2013.

The Members' roles within the Church and Partnership community included:

- Non-stipendiary minister and member of wider Partnership Staff Team
- Church Leaders
- Church Treasurer
- Church Secretary
- PC Representatives
- PC Chair
- PC Secretary
- Partnership Safe to Grow Co-ordinator
- Church Safe to Grow Co-ordinator
- Child Advocates
- Community Advocates
- Sunday School Superintendent
- Gift Aid Secretary

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 across the year at the Sunday services has remained constant although on a week by week basis can be erratic.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Adult attendance	22	22	22	22	23	24	24
Child attendance	11	11	12	11	11	10	9

On our Contact list there are currently 26 families with 16 young people 16 and under. There were no Baptisms and unfortunately there were two funerals for members of Westlea Church during the year. Regular attendees at Westlea Church come with a wide variety of ages and originate from many different countries.

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). Sunday Club and Godzone meet on the first and third Sundays of the month. On the second Sunday of the month we have an 'all-ages welcome' family service and 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.

As part of the reorganisation within the Partnership, in September, Westlea Church moved its monthly Communion Service from the first to third Sunday of the month and we continue to meet with others in the Partnership on the 5th Sunday of the month.

We have continued to be grateful for the assistance of the Partnership's Trainee Youth Worker to help lead Godzone on a monthly basis. All have benefitted from her input.

Those at Sunday Club and Godzone were asked what memorable activities they as part of the Church were involved in. Their comments included:

- Doing the Christmas nativity
- Having discussions
- Planning the Mothers' Day service
- Sunday Club talks on a wide range of topics
- Meeting together
- Playing with the younger children

As can be seen the younger people enjoyed participating in the life of Westlea Church.

This year's Nativity service, "The Shepherd's Convention" was written by members of the Church and looked at how the Christmas message is celebrated around the world. It was performed by members of the Sunday Club and Godzone and was enjoyed by all. Our Carols by Candlelight service had involvement from, many of our church family and included music performances by several of our young people. It was again well attended by both church members and visitors,

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 Miracles of Jesus
- Ephesians.
- The early church.

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 continues to be an important aspect of all our meetings.

In September Reverend Dick Gray retired having provided many years' service to the Church and Partnership. This has introduced different challenges within Westlea Church and with the changes within the Partnership, particularly in the reorganisation of its structure, the responsibility of the membership to provide leadership at services has increased. The aim is that Westlea Church will provide from within its community someone to lead at least one service a month.

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 has been attending 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, 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.

Through our charitable giving, we have supported the Emerge Project, 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 which provides food for those who are in need throughout Swindon. We have supported this charity with both financial and practical gifts.

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. With the retirement of Reverend Dick Gray, pastoral oversight has passed to the Reverend Clive Deverell and we are also closely supported by Reverend Mike Dilly, who is non-stipendiary, and contributes 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 regularly assisted, and others have helped from time to time during the year with the Partnership organised Messy Church.

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; who represents 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 2014 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 by the charity.

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

We are dependent on the time and gifts that the members voluntarily give to the running of Westlea Church. It is estimated in 2013 just under 50% of our activities were convened by lay people (the rest by clergy). This will grow in 2014 (we anticipate to approximately 85%) as more lay people take more roles in Christian Service. We will ensure all people who work with us, have mentoring and supervision, clear understanding of their role and regular review opportunities. We will look to our partners across West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze to help us with some of this.

Material Resources

During 2013 our income has increased slightly. Gift Aid and Regular Giving have also increased, but there has been a reduction in the weekly Collections.

The total value of planned giving has increased, but this will be temporary. Our income totalled £18,750.86 an increase of around £750 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	2013
Regular Gift Aid agreements	14.5	14	12	12	12	14.5
Av. Gift Aid £/week	£16.83	£17.20	£22.18	£21.42	£21.41	£17.17

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.

Looking Forward to 2014

With a new head arriving at Westlea School in January 2014, Westlea Church will look to see how they can continue to support and work with the school. We look forward to working with the other churches within the Partnership both as we discern how the Partnership will continue with its reorganisation and as we take part in many joint activities. The reduction in ordained ministers within the Partnership means that there will be greater opportunity for lay involvement in many activities both at a Partnership and Church level. We will also seek to involve those on the fringes of the Church through social activities such as Men's Might.

Areas for focus for 2014

From our view of 2014 the areas for focus for 2014 at Westlea Church are:

- Leadership and Skills - Develop the skills of members of the Church to lead services and support one another by the development of their gifts
- Youth and Children's Work - Continue to work towards achieving the Child Friendly Church award and look to see how the younger members of the Church can get more involved.
- Mission - Develop the role of Community Advocate and reach out to those connected with, but not yet a part of our church community. Look to see how we can support the school. Encourage the membership to act 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 2013 and we have been able to offer support and encouragement to members and others in times of need.

During 2013 while the Partnership continued its consultation regarding the future of the West Swindon and The Lydiards Church Partnership, and as we said 'goodbye' to our minister Reverend. Dick Gray as he retired at the end of September, we also reviewed our mission. We considered many options for our future including disbanding or continuing purely as a housegroup attached to another church for Sunday worship. It became clear we wished to continue to exist as a distinct family within the wider partnership.

The review at a Partnership level resulted in the mutual decision that All Saints Lydiard Millicent would leave the Partnership at the end of the year leaving the four remaining churches to form the West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership.

Dick Gray's retirement service was a well-attended joint service which served as an opportunity to celebrate the contribution that Dick and his wife have made to the church, and also to say a fond farewell.

We also said a sad goodbye to 2 of our Members who sadly passed away in 2013.

2014 will be an interesting year as we reflect on how we can develop the gifts of the Church Members to continue as a thriving church and as our lay members take on the responsibility for leadership.

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 2014