**Church on the Heath General Overview 2022**

Firstly an apology from me for getting this “Vicar’s report” out so late before our church AGM – a mixture of bad organisation on my part, as well as perhaps some mitigating circumstances!

This past year in the life of COTH has seen us settle for Sunday Worship in the school hall of Kings Heath Primary Academy, and has been a real blessing in many ways. The rent is not cheap, but the utility bills have gone down to zero(!), which has been a helpful bonus in these more expensive times.

We have continued our pattern of expository preaching working through different books of the Bible, or sometimes more thematic topics. It has been good to add Jan Jones to both our Leader and Speaker rotas as she continues on her Lay Ministry course which will lead to her being licensed by the Bishop this coming September. It has also been good to see our Kings Kids group become a bit more settled and consistent in attendance.

We have continued to use Zoom for our monthly prayer meetings as well as the meetings of the Leadership Council. The Friday coffee morning has consistently had good numbers attending and been a good place for fellowship and support, and more recently has seen a widening of venues. I have again been really encouraged by people’s generosity in giving, both in terms of our regular giving on a weekly/monthly basis, but also in terms of special appeals, at Christmas or at the beginning of 2022 for the Lord’s work in Ukraine.

As I have said previously, the absence of having a working physical building of our own sometimes makes us less visible in the community, and so we have to work a bit harder to be seen. Examples of this have included all-age activities outside the St Augustine’s building leading up to Easter and after the death of Her Majesty the Queen, being present at the Kings Heath Fun Day as it took place for the first time since the pandemic, and outdoor worship on Park Square for Remembrance Sunday and Carols on the Square.

I personally have had lots of opportunities to lead assemblies and other spiritual activities in both primary schools on Kings Heath, and in particular I rejoice at the increasing open door at Kings Heath Primary to go in there.

I have also continued to attend regular Partnership meetings run by the local council’s Community Safety and Engagement Team, along with others who are from the statutory agencies and other community groups working on Kings Heath. It is good to represent the local church in these discussions, to provide a more local perspective, and get involved where I can.

On the building front, 2022 has been a very frustrating year with a definite lack of progress in moving forward on the legalities so that the refurbishment of St Augustine’s can begin. Various shoots of hope haven’t really led to anything, and so we need to renew our faith and trust in the Lord over these matters, who knows everything, and whose timing is always perfect.

However, as a church we did manage to buy another house, 1 Witham Walk, with the money from the sale of the Manse, and so whilst the leaseback arrangements continue with Victory Bible Church for the Manse for another 3 years or so, we now have 2 rental incomes coming in.

When I look back at 2022, it is also a reminder to me personally of my own health issues, and I am very grateful for the love, concern and prayers for me and Sue during this uncertain time. And we were also very shocked when Dave Talbot’s health took a turn for the worse in such dramatic circumstances, but are grateful to the Lord for his recovery, and that he is back with his family, and with us.

We also mark in 2022 the passing of church member Mary Hyett, Sharon’s Mum, who in recent years was unable to attend church, as well as Joe Story, former minister of Kings Heath Baptist Church, as well as instrumental in the formation of Church on the Heath and my Baptist colleague when I arrived here. May their loved ones continue to hold on to the hope of Christ and His resurrection in their loss.

I am never quite sure whether this report is meant to cover a calendar year, or the 12 month period between AGM’s. However, I did want to end by saying a few words about the first few months of 2023. The small but steady arrival of new people, adults and children, to our Sunday services, some visiting, some staying, has been a real encouragement to me, and I hope to you too. What a glorious burden to have to put out more chairs in the hall! I hope we can continue to give people a welcome, and draw them (or draw them back) into the life of faith, as well as the life of the church.

And a special example of this was of course Easter Day when due to unforeseen circumstances we met in the St Augustine’s building with no utilities and just a few chairs, and had to think on our feet about how to lead a service in such a situation. Our attendance that day was 44 adults and 11 children! However, what a picture of Resurrection and new life that was, as well as a vision of what could be - hopefully soon!

As a Leadership Council, we have been challenged too by our recent online attendance at a Leading your Church into Growth course put on by the Diocese. We pray for wisdom and the Lord’s help as we try and put some of the lessons learnt into practice.

As ever, there will be an opportunity at the Annual General Meeting to ask any question you like about the life of the church.

Roger Woods

On behalf of the Leadership Council – 25th May 2023