

End of year reports for 2007

MINISTER'S REPORT

In 1882 a group of people, calling themselves General Baptists, meeting in the upstairs room of a local coffee house, determined to establish a Baptist Church in the area of the North Sheds in the rapidly growing town of Crewe. In 2007 we in Union Street Baptist Church remembered and celebrated that fact and marked the 125th Anniversary of that decision being taken (it took them another two years to actually build the church). We gave thanks for the faith and commitment that had not only prompted the church's founding, but had sustained it over that time and had thereby created the church – both the building and the fellowship – that we have today. Our celebrations were particularly focused on our November Anniversary weekend, when we were pleased to welcome as our guest for that weekend Revd. Jonathan Edwards, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union. It was a wonderful weekend: we marked our railway heritage with a visit to the 'Railway Age' centre; we shared and declared our faith through music with the Fiona Simpson Band on the Saturday evening and with our own augmented choir on Sunday evening; we rejoiced in worship with all our fellowship in the Anniversary Parade service on the Sunday morning; we welcomed friends old and new.

The message we were given was that whilst it was appropriate to celebrate the achievements of the past we should never forget that God calls us to travel forward with him, and we should keep ourselves looking to the future. And we have done that. The excellent modifications made to the staging in the church open possibilities for yet more imaginative worship, and we are now planning to engage with the next major phase of the development plan. The Year of Talents, now running through to Easter, is building up initial funds for this, though more is required and the Fund Raising Group is looking at the wider options for attracting grants. We cannot stand still. Those who established this church would barely recognize the town and the area (where are the North Sheds?), and change is non-stop. Recognising what is unchanging, the loving and seeking nature of our God, we must take that to situations that are changing.

Our fellowship changes, and we have been sad to lose two stalwart members in Nancy Lythgoe and Yvonne Chetwood. We remember them with great affection and enormous gratitude for all that they did. Both served the young people of our fellowship, and we are pleased that this remains an important element of our church life, not least through the work of the uniformed organizations.

During 2007 we also maintained a programme of Holiday clubs in each of the half-term holidays, an opportunity to reach out to both young people and their parents. We seek to do that also through our continuing links with Edleston Road School, whom we have been pleased to welcome into the church at least once each term.

2007 has also seen significant moves within the churches of Crewe, to the extent that on 22 January there will be signed a new Covenant amongst the churches, proclaiming all that unites us in Christ, and committing ourselves to do all we can together. And 2008 gives us an excellent opportunity to give that practical expression as we share in the Hope 08 mission campaign.

Any review of a year has to acknowledge and appreciate all that goes on within the life of the church, week by week, often barely noticed. The remaining reports will give some glimpse of that, and give us all the chance to express our gratitude to those who serve on the Diaconate, tend and maintain the property, provide the music, raise funds and attend to our accounts, work with our young people, help with T-Club, provide countless cups of tea and coffee, prepare Messengers and news sheets, lead worship, attend Bible studies, and sustain a ministry of love and care across the fellowship. All are contributions to our work of Kingdom-building. We commit them to God for his blessing as we ask that he will bless all our endeavours in his name in the coming year.

Andrew Taylor

CONTACT CLUB

Contact Club have had some interesting and varied speakers this year, though our numbers have been reduced. We were sorry to lose Janet when she moved to France, and we miss Nancy who died in September. Nancy was a faithful member of the Contact Club, and always supported our meetings and events.

We thank God that we are able to carry on with our meetings each month with our regular members and for the organisation carried out by our committee members. It would be encouraging to have more support from the members and congregation, and we would welcome more ideas and suggestions for our future programme.

All are welcome to join with us on the last Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m.

Hazel Dodd

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Here we are at the end of another busy year at Union Street. We have enjoyed organ concerts, garden parties, barbeque and musical concerts to name a few. We held holiday clubs in February, June and October, which were well attended and enjoyed by all who joined us. In April we visited Southport to attend the North Western Baptist Association Spring Forum at the Floral Hall. In July we celebrated the wedding of our member Chris Bates with Tony Nichol, the first wedding for Andrew to conduct.

We prepared for our 125th. Church Anniversary in November which was very successful.

On Saturday 3rd. November we started our weekend at the Railway Heritage Centre, which had opened specially for us. Rev. Jonathan Edwards arrived there and contributed to the proceedings. It was great to have so many of our uniformed organisations members with us and we learned how the church was built when the railways were building the town of Crewe to accommodate its workers. Later we enjoyed tea together and then listened to the Fiona Simpson band and Jonathan again made his contribution. On Sunday we welcomed a large congregation for our church parade service together with Jonathan. That was a very uplifting occasion and our weekend ended with our choir performing Roger Jones' 'Angel Voices' on Sunday evening. It was a busy weekend but everyone agreed very enjoyable and fitting for such a celebration.

Since then we have enjoyed our Christmas services and again the choir's performance of 'Stargazers' Our choir has been busy visiting other churches throughout the year with their performances and have been well received.

During the summer we were able to have Eastfields Joiners in to church to extend the dais as we planned our re development of the building ten years ago. The church is ready for the final stages of the new vestibule now. The resulting effect has been well received by all and agreed to be a big improvement. Edleston Road School found the extra space useful when they used the church for their Harvest and Christmas services. We hope to hold a variety of concerts in the church now we can accommodate them.

We were all very sorry to hear of the death of two of our dear friends and members Nancy Lythgoe and Yvonne Chetwood during 2007. They each had given many years of faithful service to our church and had a strong faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. They were shining examples to us all. We as a church extend our sympathies and prayers

to their families. We have some members and friends who are unwell and we ask God to surround them with his love and care.

May I thank all who contribute to the work here at Union Street Church. Every job however small helps towards our service for our Lord. I hope you all can do whatever you feel able and we rely on volunteers. So if anyone has some spare time we can gladly accommodate you, just speak to any of the deacons or Andrew Taylor. We need to keep ourselves 'on the map' so that outsiders notice we are a lively church and are eager to spread the gospel. Our Annual Church Meeting will be held after the service on Sunday 24 February and we hope all members will attend.

Helen Birtles

ORGAN CONCERTS

Since they started in October 1998 Organ Concerts have raised £11,880 for the Buildings Development Fund. Whilst the early concerts were very productive in terms of nett proceeds – the first three raising £700, £500 and £414 respectively – the average per concert is still £360. The original ticket price of £5 has only been increased once – to £6, but organist's fees rise and attendances fluctuate, unfortunately over the last year falling to below 100 for each of the four concerts.

It would be good to see more support for these evenings, and those that do attend regularly are complimentary to the whole event upon leaving, so the word may need spreading a little and your help – and attendance – would be welcomed by the benefiting Fund. It would be good to see those popular '125' numerals appearing again in this anniversary year – 125 people in the audience, and lifting the overall total beyond £12,500!

The four celebrity organists for 2008 are booked: Tony Whittaker, Phil Kelsall, Michael McAneny and Chiho Sunamoto, so please come along and bring a friend or three for a great evening's entertainment, with refreshments included, all for a ticket price of only £6!

Thanks to all helpers involved in these fundraising evenings.

Malcolm Riley

CHOIR ANNUAL REPORT

The choir has continued to thrive during the last twelve months, under the guidance of our director David Greatbanks. Early in the year, the choir was "on tour" with Graham Kendrick's *The Gift*.

Also, we learnt and performed the Roger Jones' work *Angel Voices*, which was new to all of us. As well as presenting it as part of the 125th anniversary celebrations in November, we also went on tour to Nantwich, Audlem, Haslington, Minshull Vernon and Middlewich. Over the Christmas season, we performed Roger Jones' *Stargazers* here at Union Street, but also at Haslington and Minshull Vernon.

Sadly, one or two members have decided to have a rest from singing and we thank them for their commitment over the years. We have however, been pleased to welcome some new faces to the choir, which has helped to maintain the choir's overall balance in all sections. Future events will include taking part in the 200th anniversary celebrations at Haslington URC.

Choir practice is good fun and we all look forward to our Tuesday nights. We are also looking forward to the year ahead, to new musical challenges, but most of all, continuing to serve our Lord through music.

Annette Elliott

PROPERTY

We began the year basking in the extended, carpeted and very warm comfort of the Friendship Room, resolving at a church meeting to continue with the 'bite-sized' approach to the completion of the buildings development scheme. Our building surveyor provided some 'ball-park' figures for the remaining phases and with some pruning the target of £125,000 was settled on to see the completion of the scheme, which was very appropriate being our 125 anniversary year since the formation of this church.

The continuing need to raise funds was in mind when we decided to commission the enlargement of the dais, since the benefits of greater worship flexibility would be complemented by an opportunity to promote more concert usage. It has been good to see materials recycled in the dais scheme to provide wall boarding, handrails and lectern. As the Baptist Union issued the listed building authorisation for all the alterations in the buildings development scheme, they have to be kept informed on a regular basis of our progress via a 'before and after' photo record. Their reply was most welcome "...It is good to see

that the work continues to be completed in line with the Certificate and that the church is fundraising to achieve completion of the project. The photographs show the work that has already gone into the project and it does look to have enhanced the church premises.....".

Life has its low moments, too. One night of mindless, malicious vandalism resulted in sixty broken panes in the rose window. Our insurers were able to meet the costs of replacing these, but the culprits remain unknown and therefore it was felt essential to complement the glass repairs with protection grilles which unfortunately we had to finance. We also had to finance the premature surfacing of the car park, as it appeared that stones from there had been used as missiles. The car park was due to be surfaced when our building extensions were complete.

Some window frame replacement has been done this year – more is needed, as is painting of others to prevent further decay.

The manse drain problem has been identified, and repairs carried out. Wall cracks are still being monitored to assess whether the assumed subsidence problem is now rectified. Both bay windows have been re-roofed during the year.

Regular maintenance is the key to a sound future for the church buildings, and there is much that can be done by members on a voluntary basis. Age is a problem not just for the buildings, and there are obviously parts of the maintenance task, which this ageing problem prevents, so please encourage younger folk to come on board!

Malcolm Riley

MUSIC GROUP

Once again, Music Group has played its part in worship at Union Street. We have been pleased to take part in regular morning worship, harvest, and parade services. It was also a pleasure to be asked to play at the 125th anniversary celebrations at the beginning of November.

Always happy to welcome "guest" artistes, it has been great to welcome some new faces to the ranks. Our thanks as always go to Andrew, for introducing us to lots of new music, thus increasing our repertoire.

There has always been a strong musical tradition at Union Street and in its small way, Music Group is seeking to continue it. Sometimes there are only a few of us, yet our main objective is to serve our Lord in music, to assist others in their worship and to praise His name.

Annette Elliott

7TH CREWE RAINBOWS AND BROWNIES

We have had a good year with new members joining; of course it is always sad when girls have to leave.

The Rainbows have been busy working together on the 'Right to be happy' challenge they made happy books, looked at what makes them happy and how they can make others happy. They made helping hands and bookmarks to give out in church. They have looked at Rainbows in other countries. They have completed the new Rainbow Roundabout 'Rainbows keep healthy' where we made healthy faces out of fruit, tasted different varieties of milk, learnt about healthy hair tried to see if a cup of water would last a day, played paper plate tennis and made smoothies and sang a smoothie on a trampoline.

Rainbow Sunshine Day saw us heading off with the other Rainbows in the district to Monkey Forest at Trentham Gardens. They had a great time, as there were many babies unfortunately they couldn't bring them home.

A lot of our Rainbows will be Brownies in 2008 so we shall be looking for new members to help us celebrate the 21st anniversary of Rainbows.

Brownie numbers are lower at present as the older girls have left, but we are looking forward to an invasion from Rainbows.

Like the Rainbows the Brownies have completed the Right to be happy challenge, making happy books, writing postcards to people to make them happy. They made a large monster called Zorga who they pulled apart and then put together

again. We talked about how they felt pulling Zorga apart. They then wrote nice things about other Brownies on paper to make others happy. We have worked on three interest badges 'Science Investigator' 'World Culture' and 'Disability Awareness'. We have held a pyjama party, bin bag fashion show and a soft toy pet show.

One of the highlights is of course our annual Brownie Holiday, this year it was a week in Barmouth where our theme was 'I'm a Brownie get me out of here'. We were pleased that Andrew and Pamela were able to come to visit and spend the day on the beach with us. During the week we did lots of challenges and visited King Arthur's Labyrinth.

We celebrated thinking Day with a service at St. Andrews Church joining together with the rest of the district.

Brownie Revels was spent at Eureka in Halifax where they were able to investigate the body, help in the garage, go shopping and visit the bank. All had a great time.

The year ended with our usual concert to entertain parents and hopefully raise some money towards Census, which has to be paid in January.

We are pleased to welcome a new helper in Rainbows. Melanie one of our Brownies has come back as a Rainbow Helper. Hopefully when she is old enough she will start on the Leadership scheme.

Leanne is now getting on well with hers and hopefully she will complete it and become a fully-fledged leader.

Nicola and I are now joint Leaders of both the Rainbow and Brownies.

Yvonne Farmer (Brown Owl)

PLAYAWAY

Once again we have had a year of ups and downs both in leadership and attendees. Over the year we have had contact with over 30 children, numbers varying each week from 2 up to 20. Several of our older youngsters left in September for school or Nursery, but we now have several new Mums, Dads, Carers and babies. Since September we have had an average of 7 children each week and though this is fewer than we would like it forms a very friendly and supportive group. If you know of any under fives who would like to come along, do encourage their carers to bring them along.

The death of our dear friend Yvonne has left a huge gap in Playaway and we give thanks for all the time, enthusiasm and support she gave to the group since it first started. Clare has had to take a backseat role since September with young Theo to look after but is able to be with us most Mondays. We look forward to her being able to take a more active role again in the near future. We are very grateful to Dena who was able to help for a few weeks whilst looking for further employment and are pleased to have Maxine occasionally and Doreen regularly along to help.

A big 'Thank You' goes to all those who help on a Sunday to prepare the upstairs and downstairs rooms – it saves so much time for us on a Monday morning. Also, thanks to the carers who put everything away, before we have our music session and 'quiet!' story time. Singing and playing musical instruments is becoming more popular each week, I am certainly learning new songs. Long may Playaway continue to flourish, providing support, fun and friendship for young children and their carers.

Pamela Taylor

J CLUB

Although regular members are still few in number each Sunday, our children and young people show interest and enthusiasm throughout all their activities. Their willingness to participate in the Sunday service is a joy to see and the congregation have gained much from seeing their knowledge of Jesus and the Bible stories increase over the year. The church rejoices as attendance awards are earned on a regular basis. Thanks to Andrew and all the J Club staff for their time and commitment each week – I'm sure that they would agree that their own faith is strengthened as they seek to discover varied methods of teaching to keep the children eager to learn more about Jesus as their best friend.

We have all been inspired by the Holiday Clubs throughout the year, which have been attended both by J Club members, Uniformed Organisations and children from the local community. We give thanks for God's continuous guidance, the enthusiasm of our leaders and the way in which the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts and lives of our children and young people. We pray for direction in planning a new theme for our Holiday Clubs in 2008 and ask for God's Holy Spirit to guide us as we plan ecumenically and use the Hope 08 challenge to pool our resources for young people's mission in the community. Our challenge as a church is to consider other ways in which we can encourage children who know little or nothing about Jesus to join with us on a regular basis. This may mean moving away from the "norm" and offering activities at different times and improving our mission and outreach work with young people.

Gill Lindop

AGE CONCERN T CLUB

T Club has had another enjoyable year at Union Street, although tinged with sadness at times with the passing of some regular attendees.

Fran continues to display her ability to organize the afternoon's events with apparent ease, but that's the gift that Fran brings to us, and much enjoyment is had by all, plus of course much tea and cake consumption!! Our thanks as always to the team of cake makers.

The T Club meets fortnightly in the Friendship Room for a couple of hours on a Monday afternoon for a chat, quiz or a visiting speaker or musical artiste - and an annual outing for a (hopefully!) summer lunch venue.

Thanks also to the transport team who make a visit to T Club possible for those who might otherwise be unable to attend.

With best wishes to all for 2008.

Sandra Riley

15th SWC SCOUT GROUP

This has probably been one of the most momentous years in the history of the 15th South West Cheshire Scout Group at Union Street. The sad loss of Yvonne Chetwood, one of our Beaver Leaders and full member of the church, was poignantly marked by a celebratory funeral which saw the church full to the brim, upstairs and down, with many having to stand. Yvonne's legacy of caring for children and of always making time for others in need, will stand any test of time. We shall miss her dearly. God certainly has called in one of his Angels.

During the year, we welcomed two new Scout Leaders to the team, Paul Rowland and Kevin Lawton. We were also delighted that yet another of our former Scouts, Carl Thorpe, decided to join us as an adult helper. We wish them well in Scouting here.

2007 saw the Centenary of Scouting and the 15th SWC certainly took part in the international celebrations at every level. Each member of the Group, from the youngest Beaver to the most experienced adult leader, proudly wore a second Centenary neckerchief for the whole year to mark this unique milestone. Add to that, a total of 55 members of the Group managed to actually visit the World Jamboree in Essex during August and met up with over 50,000 Scouts from more than 48 countries! This was a 'once in a lifetime' experience that combined summer camps in London and the Lake District that our Cubs and Scouts will never forget. We were there!

International links were enhanced once again as members from our sister group in Germany came over and shared the Summer Camp and Jamboree experience. Another amazing international scouting story followed the Jamboree, which, for many of us, was the pinnacle moment of the year.

We had searched the Jamboree site in vain, looking for members of the small contingent from the Gambia, in the hope that we could link up with our contacts that we had made through Mrs Mae Winterton's 'Schools For Gambia' charity. One week after we returned from the Jamboree, we received an email from Momadou Bah, a Scout Commissioner who was from the very village we have been supporting each year. He was staying with a Scout Leader in Leeds for ten days after following the World Jamboree and had found his way to tracking us down in Crewe! He arrived for an overnight stay on the Friday as our guest, and met all sections of the Group and even came back to see the Beavers at breakfast time on the Saturday morning, as they were

having a sleep over. One of the lasting memories for me, will be when Momadou met Yvonne and Roy Chetwood at their home to personally bring them the thanks from all the Scouts in Farafenni village for the petrol generator which had transformed the lives of so many in this tiny African village.

It has been a typically busy year for the group with an average of 65 young people and children regularly attending with the support of the Leadership Team

We would like to thank all at Union Street for your continued support of Scouting in this place, and look forward to 2008.

May we also take this opportunity of inviting everyone from Union Street to our Group AGM on Friday 14 March 2008, starting at 7.15 pm. Feel free to come along that night and hear about what happens in the group at all levels.

Wish best wishes from us all in the 15th.

Paul Boskett - Group Scout Leader