

Fellowship Report

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH



2023

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Roles within the church

Minister	Revd Bob Adams
Secretary	Sue Hope
Treasurer	Wendy Whistler
Youth and Families Worker	Marianne Holt
Deacons	Becky Dear Sam Holmár Marianne Holt Sue Hope Wendy Whistler
Designated Safeguarding Person	Becky Dear
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Person	Dawn Mills
Worship	Wendy Snead
Pastoral Care	Bob Adams
Property	Wendy Whistler
First Aid	Charlotte Holmár
Rotas	Mary Adams
DBS admin	Mary Adams
Church hire	Sue Hope
Caretaker/Cleaner	Austin Day
AV Desk Coordinator	John Snead

Pastor's Report

Pastor Bob Adams

Another brilliant year of hard work, and, as ever, I hear in the local community that the fellowship are promoting a positive testimony; this is a real boost knowing that the foundations for sharing the gospel are being laid well. As with last year's report let me encourage you to keep on building the bridges of friendship into the lives of others, there will come a time to carry the gospel over it.

It is encouraging too that everyone continues to be sacrificial of their giving in time, talent and finance. Thank you for your investment in the Lord's work here at Bethel.

Let me encourage you ...

¹Peter 1:3-4 Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! We were also given absolutely terrific promises to pass on to you — your tickets to participation in the life of God after you turned your back on a world corrupted by lust.

⁵⁻⁹ So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus. Without these qualities you can't see what's right before you, oblivious that your old sinful life has been wiped off the books.

[The Message]

Visits

These are ongoing around the fellowship; thank you for your kindness as you welcome me into your homes. I am also visiting the folks in residential care.

I am grateful to the pastoral support team as they continue give much of their time visiting and passing on any pastoral concerns so that I can react effectively.

Preaching

We have worked through a series in Acts in the last year. As we start the new session the plan is to start by spending some time looking at the theme of Christian identity working from different texts; later we will look at some short series. Sermons are recorded and available on YouTube and sermon scripts are available.

Baptisms

It was such a great encouragement to see Kate baptised, there are more planned for this year.

Initiatives

Joint services with St Andrews. We enjoyed our joint worship opportunities at Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas, but the drive to really engage seems to be lacking. St Andrews is now in a period of pastoral vacancy; they have a temporary clergy team in place, and these folk are working extremely hard. Please pray for them.

Local Ministers fraternal. Meets monthly for prayer.

Baptist Ministers fraternal. Some improvement here: the areas in the EBA have been reorganised and so we started fresh from December 2023.

Swavesey and Fen Drayton Primary Schools. Marianne and I are active in the schools. Marianne has been leading assemblies and I have been reading in the classrooms, year 4-5 at Swavesey and year 5-6 at Fen Drayton. I am also on the Governing body at Swavesey Primary.

It is good to be about the Lord's work.

Secretary's Report

Sue Hope

I ended last year's report with this sentence: "*Our prayer for 2023 is to continue to seek His vision and to grow the Kingdom in this place through our witness in what we do and say each day.*"

2023 has been a year of consolidation and building on what we do for the community. Club Vintage, Little Lights and The Hub are all growing and meeting needs of our locality.

Our fellowship has seen departures of friends and welcoming of new faces. We mourned the loss of three people who went to be with their Lord; Gordon Young, Pat Turner and Perry Childs. Our prayers are with the families as they continue to grieve.

Others in our Bethel family have been dealing with various health issues and we continually pray for God's healing hand on them.

Having completed the annual return to the Baptist Union, you may be interested in the following figures:

Number of people the church is in regular contact with:

Members: 40 Baptisms: 1 Adults: 80 Young People: 30 Children: 20

These average figures included Little Lights, The Hub and Club Vintage

Numbers of people in regular church attendance:

Seniors (65+): 25 Adults (31-64): 26 Young adults (18-30): 0
Young people (11-17): 11 Children (0-10): 7

We rejoice at the baptism of Kate Wilson and the large numbers we are in regular contact with.

We observed the King's Coronation and opened the church to share the service with others in the community. As part of the Coronation weekend, we celebrated with a community picnic on the village green and many families joined us for a very enjoyable afternoon.

We observed the usual festivals of Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas. Two services were joint with St Andrews, and the Village Carols were very well supported by the community. Thanks to all those involved to make these happen successfully, especially Bob, Marianne and Charlotte Holmár.

At the Deacons election in April, both Sam Holmár and Sue Hope were re-elected. John Porter had decided not to be re-nominated.

In October Terry Crump stepped down from his roles in Compliance, Property and Health & Safety, as he and Mary prepare for their move away. This was recorded at the November church meeting and a huge thank you was extended to Terry for all his hard work in these areas over the previous 3+ years.

I make no apology of repeating the ending of my report from last year as it is still relevant for 2024: Without you, the fellowship, taking on different roles and tasks, we would not be able to fulfil God's vision here at Bethel and in the community. Thank you all for all you do, whether up front, behind the scenes or supporting with prayer and encouragement. We all have God-given gifts to be used according to His Will and for His purpose.

God bless you all and may He use us to bring more people form our community into His Kingdom.

Finance

Wendy Whistler

The finance information and accounts reflect the work of the church which can be found within the individual group reports, and so this is a brief summary of the main things that have affected our finances.

Property

Having carried out quite a lot of repairs and maintenance the year before, 2023 saw much less activity in this area. Quite a lot of work was carried out within the Manse – various plumbing and water issues! Apart from ongoing compliance work, the two main items of spend were the driveway and gate and the purchase of a noticeboard. The driveway and gate were funded through a donation specifically for that purpose and the noticeboard should hopefully be installed soon. Whilst the actual money spent was lower, we should thank the property team members for the work that just “gets done” and without cost - their service to the church is invaluable.

Thanksgiving Day

We received almost £5,000 for our gift day. By adding the value of the gift aid, we had a total of £6,164 to consider what to give to. We were able to send £500 to Alannah in Guatemala who was very poorly and needed costly medical care, £150 to GENR8 and £388 for study books for the year 6 pupils at the primary school. These accompanied the Bibles that were given by another church in the village. The balance of the money raised was added to the “Youth Lounge” project.

Employees

We have had a full year of employing a minister and we continued to support the cleaner and youth worker. The administrator role continues to be done by others, mainly the church secretary.

Hire

The building continues to be well used by community groups and for private functions. Along with the church-run activities it is a busy building!

Giving

We always aim to give money to other causes as a proportion of our income and in response to need. We’ve already mentioned to giving as a result of the Thanksgiving Day. We also gave to the St Ives Food bank, DEC Earthquake appeal, and the Cambridge Churches Homeless Project. We also increased our giving to home mission.

Income

As you will be aware, apart from a small amount of hire income, running the church and employing and supporting our minister is funded solely by donations and offerings from the church congregation. We are very tax efficient and maximise the amount of gift aid we can claim from these donations. This year's income has been increased with a few one-off donations and an increase in hall hire. The regular giving by church members tends to fluctuate as people's circumstances change, but on the whole, they are at a similar level to the start of the year.

WHY GIVE REGULARLY?

- We want to give thanks to God for His mercies towards us and His provision
- As an act of thanksgiving and worship, we want to be a generous people with our time, prayers and finances
- It is our responsibility as a congregation to fund the stipend and associated costs of the minister and his/her family
- If we want to have a limitless vision, we need to match this with resources
- Giving is our response to God's amazing grace and the indescribable gift of His Son to us.
- Generous giving blesses others and supplies the needs of God's people; it is also an act of obedience and trust during these uncertain days – in doing it we are saying that it is God, not ourselves or anyone else, who ultimately provides for our needs.

Accounts

With regards to income, we exceeded our budget in all areas. As mentioned previously we had a large donation that was specifically for the driveway and we had a few other sizable donations over and above the regular giving.

The biggest impact on our year end position though was a reduction in spend on property items. If you take out the driveway and noticeboard, we spent less than £3,000 in this area.

As a result, we ended the year with additional funds to carry forward to next year rather than the deficit we budgeted for.

The accounts are reported below. We had 4 restricted funds, where income for that purpose can only be used for that purpose: A Heart for the Homeless, Carols on the Green, Club Vintage and Time Banking Team. The General fund is unrestricted and makes up the main part of the accounts. A Heart for the Homeless is now at zero and will not therefore be reported on in the future.

/continued over

Income and Expenditure

Swavesey Bethel Baptist Church

For the year ended 31 December 2023

Account	2023 Total	AHFTH	Carols on the Green	Club Vintage	Time Banking Team	General
Income						
Donations	8,043.03	0.00	0.00	50.00	84.10	7,908.93
Events	5,641.33	0.00	1,177.76	2,931.72	0.00	1,531.85
Gift Aid Tax Refunds	12,642.76	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,642.76
Interest Income	288.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	288.16
Lettings - Church and Halls	3,924.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,924.00
Offerings	62,601.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	62,601.97
Total Income	93,141.25	0.00	1,177.76	2,981.72	84.10	88,897.67
Income	93,141.25	0.00	1,177.76	2,981.72	84.10	88,897.67
Expenditure						
Church Services	1,740.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,740.07
Cleaning	5,857.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,857.11
Equipment	740.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	740.61
Event or Activity	4,591.26	0.00	514.83	2,754.42	0.00	1,322.01
Giving	4,015.00	1,192.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,822.38
Insurance	2,396.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,396.21
Minister	32,536.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	32,536.02
Mission	6,353.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,353.30
Office Expenses	2,130.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,130.84
Pastoral Needs	349.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	349.00
Repairs & Maintenance	11,340.57	0.00	0.00	120.00	0.00	11,220.57
Subscriptions	413.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	413.30
Utilities	4,423.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,423.04
Youth Work	6,788.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,788.08
Expenditure	83,674.41	1,192.62	514.83	2,874.42	0.00	79,092.54
In Year Balance	9,466.84	(1,192.62)	662.93	107.30	84.10	9,805.13
Opening Balance	26,967.07	1,192.62	682.90	1,455.75	91.80	23,544.00
Carry forward to 2024	36,433.91	0.00	1,345.83	1,563.05	175.90	33,349.13

2024 Budget

A few key decisions that were made at meetings towards the end of the year were:

- To increase the stipend for Bob to above the recommended minimum.
- To increase the pay of other staff by the same rate the national living wage has risen.
- We will continue without an administrator at present.

A couple of other points upon which the budget is based:

- Offerings have been calculated based on the level of giving in December 2023

- Gift Aid has been calculated on the tax efficient giving of 2023
- We expect the cost of utilities, cleaning products and general supplies to continue to increase
- We need to ensure we have funds to tackle property issues and purchase of equipment as necessary to be safe and deliver services.
- Part of the property budget includes the funds for the "Youth Lounge" project

2024 Budget

Swavesey Bethel Baptist Church

	Budget 2023	Actual 2023	Budget 2024
Income			
Donations	900.00	7,908.93	1,100.00
Events	500.00	1,531.85	1,000.00
Gift Aid Tax Refunds	12,500.00	12,642.76	16,850.00
Interest Income	13.43	288.16	250.00
Lettings - Church and Halls	3,000.00	3,924.00	3,500.00
Offerings	55,000.00	62,601.97	58,000.00
Total Income	71,913.43	88,897.67	80,700.00
Income	71,913.43	88,897.67	80,700.00
Expenditure			
Church Services	2,300.00	1,740.07	2,300.00
Cleaning	6,000.00	5,857.11	7,220.00
Equipment	1,000.00	740.61	1,000.00
Event or Activity	2,000.00	1,322.01	2,000.00
General	880.50		0.00
Giving	1,000.00	2,822.38	1,000.00
Insurance	2,300.00	2,396.21	2,500.00
Minister	35,770.00	32,536.02	35,770.00
Mission	6,500.00	6,353.30	6,500.00
Office Expenses	1,500.00	2,130.84	1,500.00
Pastoral Needs	1,000.00	349.00	1,000.00
Repairs & Maintenance	8,000.00	11,220.57	10,000.00
Subscriptions	510.00	413.30	550.00
Utilities	3,500.00	4,423.04	5,000.00
Youth Work	7,000.00	6,788.08	7,500.00
Expenditure	79,260.50	79,092.54	83,840.00
In Year Balance	-7,347.07	9,805.13	-3,140.00
Opening Balance	23,544.00	23,544.00	33,349.13
Closing Balance	16,196.93	33,349.13	30,209.13

Worship group

Wendy Snead

Leader:	Wendy Snead	Singers:	Wendy Snead
Keyboard:	Jo Cayley		Charlotte Holmár
	Claire Ludlam		Connie Wilson
	Eden Ludam		Sue Hope
Guitars:	Sam Holmár		John Snead
	Yinka Opaleye	Violin:	Skylark Ludlam
Drums:	Pete Holt	Cello:	Anjo Opaleye
Percussion:	Pat Turner	AV Desk:	Jason Dear
Flute	Connie Wilson		Sam Holmár
	Flynn Ludam		Pete Holt
Recorders:	Genny Silvanus		Jon Mills
	Rhiannon Silvanus		John Snead
	Jo Cayley		

Some definitions of worship to consider

“Worship is a believing heart’s response to the work of the Holy Spirit, not an emotional response to the quality of the music.” **Matthew Westerholm**

“True worship is constant, inner praise to the God of scripture, expressed in prayer, in song, in service, in giving, and in living.”

“True worship is a valuing of God above all things.” **John Piper**

Over the last year, we as a “Worship group”, singers and instrumentalists, have experienced much for which we are thankful!

The provision of the inspiration of His holy word, the fellowship we enjoy with each other on a Wednesday evening during practice, the support of each other through difficult times and the love we all share for our Saviour who knows us and prompts us by His holy spirit to use the gifts He has given us to serve Him faithfully!

The difficult times were felt keenly last year when there were losses within our group and family members of the group. Namely, Pete’s father-in-law Gordon Young, and our dear friend and percussionist Pat Turner! Pat’s passing left a huge void in the group and we miss her amazing tambourine and bells accompaniment and her sense of humour!

The percussion section of our group has been more than adequately enhanced however, by Pete Holt whose drum/percussion playing has gone from strength to strength and he now leads us competently by setting the pace for most songs.....Thank you!

Each member of the group demonstrates commitment and willingness to develop and learn the difference between “performing” and playing/singing worshipfully and for that I am grateful.

Eden and Rhiannon have over the past year used playing in the group as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award and have then stayed on to play with us regularly. They have been a great asset to the group.

On a personal note, I would like to thank all who supported me during a time of uncertainty health-wise. Thanks especially to all who stepped up and led extra services and kept things going across the months I felt unable to lead the group!

As I look back, we have again had an incredibly varied year of worship at Bethel.

Café churches led by the youth and others were well received and often challenging and thought provoking!

In services we have had a brief look at Solomon and the temple, continued in the book of Acts, focused on the Cross in Lent and at Easter. We had a visit from the Cape Town Diabetes project team, Godmanchester refugees project and “Hope into Action”, Guatemalan missionaries, Kate Wilson’s Baptismal service, visiting speakers Jane Baillie, Adrian Woodbridge and John Smith, a Harvest service (led by Polly Wilderspin), celebration of the Kings coronation, and the year culminated in an Advent series using the theme of “Jesus the Light of the world”.

The highlight of the end of the year is for us as a group the “Carols by Candlelight” service. This year we were joined again by Claire Ludlam who played keyboard for us, and in addition her son Flynn and daughter Skylark on flute and violin respectively, and so we say a huge thank you to the Ludlam family for joining us! We were also joined by Anjola on Cello who did an amazing job! So, with 16 of us in total we were able to sing carols with a more varied accompaniment and even managed the “Carol of the Bells” which was enjoyed by all, players and listeners alike! Thank you to all who took part; singers, instrumentalists and those who read and demonstrated that Jesus is “This One Light”.

As we move forward into 2024, prayer for us all in the group would be appreciated as we juggle our other life, work and church commitments and prioritise to serve God in this way at Bethel, and that we

“... encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing”

1 Thess 5:11

Anyone who would like to join the group this year would be most welcome and just needs to come and chat to me, whatever age or musical ability you are!

Tuesday Homegroup #1

John Snead

Our group meets most Tuesdays although like most other groups we take a break during the school holidays, or if a majority of us can't make it that week. There are eight regular members; we'd welcome anyone who wishes to join us!

A good part of our evening is spent sharing what's been happening in our lives since last meeting. But that's not just idle chit-chat about where we've been and what we've done – although there is a lot of that of course! We share concerns and issues that are troubling us and our families, and this provides seeds for our prayers later in the evening.

Looking back to last year's report, I see that we only covered 4 different study subjects through the year; this year has been the same.

Charlie Mackesy

Many people will recall an animated film shown at Christmas 2022 called "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse", based on a book of the same name by Charlie Mackesy. Charlie is a Christian who has spoken at many meetings, sometimes at Holy Trinity Brompton, and several videos of such talks are available on YouTube. Well, if you know anything about our home group you will know that we like videos, so we spent the first few weeks of the year watching him and then talking about the points he had made.

This was a new style of study for us, and one that we have embraced and continued with, where we don't follow a specific set of questions to answer, but just let our thoughts be prompted by what the speaker has said and see where that takes us. During these sessions and in later meetings through the year we have had some really good times letting the Holy Spirit guide our conversations in the way He wants them to go.

The Lectio Course

We next undertook The Lectio Course, a five session video series with Pete Greig and guests exploring the ancient practice of Lectio Divina (Pete Greig, you may remember, wrote and presented The Prayer Course that several home groups have done in recent years). Lectio Divina follows four steps – Read, Meditate, Pray and Contemplate, and can best be practised today with the help of a smartphone App – several members of Bethel regularly use this.

The 7 signs of John

Next up was a true Bible study in the usual sense – with no videos this time! We looked and discussed seven miracles described in the gospel of John that point to Jesus' divinity:

1. The turning of water into wine (John 2:1-12)
2. The healing of the royal official's son (John 4:46-54)
3. The healing of a paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-17)
4. The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14)
5. Jesus walking on water (John 6:15-25)
6. The healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-41)
7. The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-46)

Each time we explored what the account says firstly about the people involved and secondly about Jesus. Then what it says to ourselves and how we should recount this to others.

Romans

After the summer break, we reverted to video, this time the Bible Society's 10 session course on the book of Romans, presented by Andrew Ollerton. We originally thought this would take us nicely up to Advent, but since each session is in 2 halves and there is a lot to cover (16 chapters!) we ended up splitting each session into two. As the new year starts, we are about to do session 7, covering Romans 9-11, so this will take us at least 2 weeks I expect and we'll be butting up to Easter by the time we finish the whole course! As before there are some guide questions to start the discussion going but plenty to talk about.

And so...

We've enjoyed the different courses we've looked at, and for my part leading the group has never been easier as we've broken away from the fixed nature of a series of questions to answer, and people chip in their thoughts as and when it seems appropriate.

Please contact me if you are interested in joining us, at 7:45 most Tuesdays, usually meeting at our home, 2 Hobbledodds Close, Swavesey.

Or just turn up!

Tuesday Homegroup #2

Sue Hope

Members: Sue Hope, Hazel Adamson, Jan Marland, Wendy Whistler, Margaret Blackburn, Ruth Lorman, Genny Silvanus

We meet most Tuesdays at 1930, having a catch up over tea and biscuits and then study and prayer time.

Topics we have used during 2023 are:

- Uncovering the life of Jesus in the book of Luke
- Facing your giants by Max Lucado, looking at the life and experiences of David.
- Started the Be Still series from 24/7 Prayer

Other weeks have been chats when low in numbers attending and we have had our enjoyable socials:

- Celebrating Hazel's 70th birthday in February
- Celebrating Hazel's retirement in October

We are pleased that previous members have joined us for these celebrations – Austin and Ruth and John Buthfer.

We have been delighted that Jan has been able to join us for several meetings and socials. And some members, Hazel particularly, have regularly visited Joyce in the care home.

Last year we said we would "pray in" some new members and since November we have been pleased to welcome Ruth Lorman and Genny Silvanus. We have also celebrated answered prayers through the year as we have prayed for our own family members, church family and activities and world situations.

Our prayer for 2024 is that we continue to develop our own relationship with God and each other, and that anyone not already in a home group will receive a warm welcome to join us.

Thursday Afternoon Homegroup

Mary Adams

The group meets every week at 2pm in the church building and there are between 8 and 9 of us.

We have been studying and just finished the book of Genesis and we are starting the book of Exodus.

We normally cover a chapter each week and after we have discussed it we have a time of prayer for each other, our families and for the members of the church.

Thursday Evening Homegroup

Janet & Ed King and Becky Dear

- Bible Studying
- Video watching
- Ideas debating
- Lifts providing
- Child transporting
- Food sharing
- Faith deepening
- Babysitting
- Sympathy providing
- Hobbies encouraging
- Joyful celebrating
- Teenage tutoring
- Church group serving
- Youth lounge planning
- Walk guiding
- Den building
- Christian holidays sharing
- Prayer supporting
- ...

We are an intergenerational support network. We are the Bethel Thursday evening home group!

Prayer

PrayerMail

Noreen Morgan

As I sit down to write this report, I have a hymn line going through my head. The line is "What a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer". The hymn is as you all know "What a friend we have in Jesus", written by Joseph Scriven.

On the eve of Joseph Scriven's intended wedding day, his bride-to-be was tragically drowned. Later he emigrated from Ireland to Canada. Once again, he became engaged to be married, only to lose his second fiancée after a brief but fatal illness. He spent the rest of his life helping others, in spite of loneliness, poverty and his own precarious health.

As Christian sisters and brothers, we can share our prayer needs with each other. Whether it is to praise God or a request for help in difficult times. We can support each other through our petitions of prayer. Thank you all for your support as we intercede for each other.

Sunday Prayer Meeting

Steph Tabram

Bethel Prayer group meets via Zoom every Sunday between 9 and 9.30am. At present, we are a small group of Bethel worshippers who meet to offer each other support and encouragement in our faith journey by praying for each other, our communities, the Church and the World.

During our prayer time, not only do we ask God for direction in our and others' lives but we also reflect and rejoice in the way God answers prayer. God truly moves in mysterious and mighty ways, working in the lives of us all. All are welcome to pray either aloud or in silence.

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Matthew 18:20

Zoom login details:

Username: 5823778260

Password: Bethel2020

Direct link: [Bethel Zoom Login](#)

Club Vintage

Sue Hope



Leaders: Wendy and John Snead, Sue Hope

Volunteers: Judith Kitchener, Leigh Clements, Trisha Howard,
Mary Adams, Miggy Firth, Jan Marland

Driver: Sue Ellington

We have continued to meet every week on a Wednesday afternoon, apart from 27th December when we took an unusual break!

Our programme contains the regular Love to Move exercise sessions, our Laughter and Lyrics singing and occasional crafts to fit the theme of a festival, including 5 Nov (we tested the smoke alarm by having indoor sparklers! It works!). Other activities have been:

- The boat trip on The Ladybird, an adapted boat on the river from Hartford Marina to Brampton and back
- A demonstration from the line dancing group
- A visit by the primary school who sang carols for and with us
- A singer/dancer to entertain us
- A visit by the Norris Museum when we all learned about some very interesting and unusual artefacts

We celebrated the King's Coronation by showing the service at church for those who wanted to watch with others. This was preceded on the previous Wednesday with a Coronation tea party and followed by a Coronation lunch. We love celebrations!

It was lovely to see some members and volunteers at our Christmas services and Village Carols.

During 2023 we have had 10 new members, said goodbye to 7, including remembering Pat Turner and Perry Childs as well as three going into care homes. These are always sad occasions and we share memories with each other. Our average weekly attendance is 20 and we have 33 on the register.

It has been a joy when Jan has felt well enough to join us, and members regularly ask after her.

We celebrate birthdays through the year, including those of the leaders and helpers. Here are some comments from the volunteers and members:

- "Club Vintage is very welcoming, especially to those not part of the church, for both club members and volunteers"
- "Club Vintage is meeting a local need"
- "There is no judgement and you are not made to feel you have to join the church. You practice what you preach!"
- "Amazing organisation by Wendy, John and Sue"

Youth and Families

Marianne Holt

This has been another busy year for Youth and Families in Bethel with new initiatives and a clear growth in faith and confidence amongst our wonderful church family young people. I wrote that last year and it still stands.

We sent off our yet more mountains of plastic pens - an easy environmentally friendly little charity fundraiser we can do on the side of everything else we do. - another 33 kg sent off to date.

Sunday School has adapted to the wonderful addition of a new young family in the Church and now we have 3 age groups. We have a small hardworking dedicated team of leaders and we're hopefully moving into getting some of the older teens to help and lead the youngest group. We always need more volunteers and leaders in Sunday School.

Schools - I have still been going into Swavesey Primary school on occasion - ending the year with a rather too raucous 12 days of Christmas nativity song assembly! It's great to see kids from the school at other events and this year has felt like we've really started to create those relationships between church events and community groups - Little Lights, The Hub Youth Club, Messy Church, Brownies etc

2022 saw The Youth Bible study get up and running - and in 2023 we're still going regularly with a couple of new group members too. We're planning to hold the group in the Youth Lounge soon and may have to adapt our timing to fit! We've changed from having a full meal together to just pudding as we were using most of our time to eat!

The Hub is growing and we see 20-30 older kids and teenagers every week. We definitely need 3 leaders per week now and if we get even more young people along, we'll need more! What a problem to have eh?! Our older "Church" teens are pretty much all young helpers now, running the tuck shop and helping pack away most weeks. As ever a massive THANK YOU to the volunteer team who give up precious Friday evenings. (especially Polly, Charlotte and Sam who have done the double whammy of Little lights and then the Hub several times which is hard work!) The end of term summer fire pit and Christmas silent disco were particular highlights!

The Lounge is finally underway and we're so excited to move on with that. It's getting all the groups noticing and talking which is a good thing in itself. Now to get decorating and having a good think about a better storage system for the equipment for all our Youth and families' activities because it's a complex challenge to get to everything we need!

Little Lights Toddler group is going from strength to strength, becoming quite the place to be - with even more potential - see Charlotte's report.

Even more Church families went along to Big Church Festival in 2023 and yet more are booked for 2024!

Summer holidays obviously saw the Youth Group go along to the FANTASTIC 'Satellites' Festival again - although it VERY INCONVENIENTLY moved from Peterborough to The Bath and West Showground! (Thank you, Wendy, for driving a ridiculous number of miles!) We did a feedback Sunday service again and many of the older teenagers are already booked to volunteer on team at Satellites in 2024 which is exciting - moving from partaking to serving.

December was a whirl of Christmas parties for all groups again, and lots of Christmas events for Bethel and the community. Everything seemed to run smoother and be better attended - so positive growth that can be built on. The Swavesey Carols in Market Street deserves a particular mention as it was run by a new team (Becky was chief steward don't you know!) and I did my Road Traffic Management course successfully which was not as boring as I was expecting! I could therefore do the road closure myself and save us over £800!

Sadly 2023 was impacted by my Dad's death and I needed quite a bit of time off to deal with all that goes with that (and obviously I still am!). I thank everyone who stepped in and filled my place as needed and kept things going seamlessly.

So, 2023 had many ups and a few downs but God is faithful and so very good to us! 2023 felt like a year forging connections between the families and young people coming to lots of Church events. Thank you is never enough to say to everyone who has given prayer, time and effort to the work that has gone on and I pray that as we are surrounded by an uncertain world, 2024 will see more people feel they belong to our family that is Bethel and see Christ's love in all we do.

Little Lights

Charlotte Holmár



Wow, what another busy, fulfilled and fruitful year it's been at Bethel for Little Lights.

Little Lights has well and truly become a haven for parents/carers and children in Swavesey on a Friday morning. With our team of 7 regular volunteers (Marianne, Charlotte, Miggy, Janet, Margaret, Mary & Anna) we have the privilege of sharing and providing a safe space, coffee and snacks, music and dancing and lots of chatting with many local families.

We are starting 2024 with 158 children now registered with Little Lights, coming from over 112 families with at least 40 of the children being regular attendees. Still, a year and half in we are getting an average of 2 new children a week, which just feels astonishing, especially after losing a group of our regulars in September to start school. But it's such a joy to see their smiling faces return to us in the holidays. We have also seen an increase of weekly attendance rise 25% in January!

We are so utterly blessed by the support we received in raising funds by the sale of our recipe book "Little Light Bites" to provide some soft play for the children to use during our group. They absolutely love jumping over all the new equipment and launching balls out of the ball pit with the cheekiest of grins! We do still have plenty of copies of the book left so please do get in touch if you would like copy.

We have a fairly relaxed schedule for the 2 hours, people can drop in and out as they please and then within the last half an hour we have a parachute and song time. This is usually led by our wonderful Marianne, where the children can join in, dance around, play some of the instruments and pop bubbles - it's always an absolute hit! We also have a group of very helpful parents/grandparents who use this time to help us put toys away so our tidy up regime has become a lot less strenuous.

Our entry fee for families has remained at £2 per family, regardless of the number of children. This is a lot cheaper than most parent & toddler groups making Little Lights remain accessible and affordable. People are also offered a loyalty card so from time to time get to claim a free session. Because we have been so blessed by numbers, this fee more than covers what we need for each session. We are able to purchase new equipment/toys as and when we need them and are now beginning to gift some money back into Bethel.

We finished this last year with another fantastic Christmas party. We had a bring and share lunch, a game and secret Santa for the parents/carers, lots of Christmas music and a visit and gift from Father Christmas (with special thanks to Charlie Wilson, we all thought you did great!) for all the children. It was a really special time together. And we were so happy that some of our Little Lights families chose to come and join us for our Messy Christmas this year and they all seemed to love it!

We are so grateful for all the continued prayer and support that we receive for Little Lights. We know that God is doing some wonderful things through the conversations at the coffee bar, the friendships being made and all the fun that the children are having. Please pray for us as we navigate how to cope with the increasing numbers. And please do consider if you could come and join the team.

Compass Café

Ruth Day

Compass Cafe has been running for over ten years now with Bethel hosting the first Thursday in each month. We have a very experienced team of willing helpers: Judy, Mary and Terry, John and Noreen, Mary and Ruth. The cafe took a severe knock as result of lockdown and it was sometime before regulars returned. We can now expect to be serving around thirty customers with groups of cyclists joining from time to time. All our cakes are home-made and we would welcome any offers to add to our range.

We have recently received some new lively patterned aprons made by Janet which have helped to create a cheerful environment for both customers and servers.

Members of our team do need to be away sometimes so if anyone else would like to join and provide backup we would love to hear from you.