

TRINITY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, WIMBLEDON

Church Secretary's Annual Review – for the year to 31st December 2018

The Minister 2018 was not an especially easy year either for Trinity or for our Minister. Dominic had planned a three-month sabbatical leave at the beginning of the year, looking forward to spending one month of this on a scholarship in New Zealand. Unfortunately, an accident and a broken ankle on New Year's Day put paid to these plans, and instead he was on sick leave for the first three months of the year, managing a short holiday before returning to Trinity on Palm Sunday.

In the Summer it became clear that Dominic was suffering from depression, leading to a further period of sick leave from early September. He returned to work part-time between October and the end of the year. Trinity was, therefore, effectively without its Minister for almost half of 2018.

Between these difficult times, Dominic continued to lead Trinity's worship life with insight and care, and challenged us to renew our priorities and goals for the church, relating all our activities to our mission statement and these priorities.

Associate Minister The Chinese-speaking group in particular, but all at Trinity, greatly value the ministry of Revd Ernest Yu. A very regular attendance of around twelve gathers every Sunday morning in the Old Hall for worship in Cantonese, with Mandarin translation. Ernest leads a busy life, with further preaching commitments on Sunday afternoons after leaving Trinity, and with heavy responsibilities for his grandsons during the week. We are very blessed to have him and this group as part of our Trinity fellowship.

Membership During the year no baptisms were celebrated. We received two new members during the year.

Two marriages were celebrated during 2018. In April Trinity became the first church in Wimbledon to solemnise the marriage of a same-sex couple, Chris Jeffery and Adrian O'Dwyer.

We record with sadness the death during the year of two members, Mrs Hilda Thomas, at the great age of 106, and Mrs Alison Dixon.

The number on the roll at 31 December 2018 was 166 (a decrease of 18 over 2017).

Joint Church Secretaries In March, Sam Elliot, resigned after 3½ years as one of our two Joint Church Secretaries. We are immensely grateful to Sam for all that he brought to the position, and the time and dedication he gave during his time of office. Sam continues to play an important part in Trinity's life as an Elder and as Pilots' Captain, and in many other ways. The position remained vacant for the remainder of the year.

The Eldership The pastoral care of Trinity's members and adherents is shared between the Ministers and Elders, each Elder having responsibility for a group of members. The Elders' Meeting before each morning Communion Service is primarily a time to share pastoral news and concerns.

The Elders met for a half-yearly meeting in June, and then for their annual one-day conference held in October when the Revd Andy Twilley (Training & Development Officer for URC Southern Synod) challenged us with the title, "Growing as a 4-D Church", (being Devoted to Christ, Dedicated to one another, Demonstrating the Kingdom, Declaring the Kingdom), a reflection of authentic discipleship and our vision for growing the Church.

Andrew Sutton has continued to serve as Elders' Secretary, ensuring the smooth organisation of our Communion services, and of the Elders' Sunday duties each week – a task for which he deserves our particular thanks!

Our thanks are also extended to Alison Trehearn, our Synod Representative, who attends meetings on our behalf and reports back to Elders' Council. Alison is also the minute secretary for Elders' Council.

Elders' Council The Council met eleven times during the year. In March, under the agreed procedure for the election of Elders, Church Meeting elected Alex Woo and Sandy McLeish to serve for a period of three years. Alex was ordained to the eldership and, together with Sandy, was inducted to serve on the Council during the Service on Easter Sunday.

Trustees The Elders' Council (the Minister and elected elders) acting as the Trustees of Trinity United Reformed Church (Wimbledon) Charity, were responsible for the general oversight of all Church objectives and activities and specifically for the financial administration of the Church, together with the care and maintenance of the Church premises and the manse. They met once during the year, with Elders' Council meetings also dealing with Trustee matters.

Teams The work of our Teams (Children & Youth Work; Communications & Publicity; Finance; Lettings; Mission & Outreach; Pastoral & Membership; Worship & Faith Development) continues week by week. They have each met quarterly, reporting to Elders' Council.

A review of our team structure had been planned for 2018, but regrettably this was not achieved. It continues to be a major concern for the Minister and Church Secretary that we have been unable to find new leadership for some of the teams. Without dedicated people willing to undertake these roles the work of our church is severely disadvantaged. We would ask all members to give serious consideration to any requests for help; in most cases this will not represent a big demand on your time.

The Roll Review Group and a Calendar Planning Group also each met twice during the year.

Church Meetings Five Church Meetings were held during the year (two on Sunday mornings and three mid-week), with attendances of 17, 54, 43, 66 and 18 – between 10 and 39 percent of the total Trinity membership. The low attendance although a slight improvement on last year's figures, continues to concern the Minister and Elders' Council, and attempts are continually being made to encourage members take seriously their full responsibility of membership.

Trinity's Priorities It was time for the priorities established for Trinity in 2016/17 to be revisited to ensure that they were fit for purpose and an appropriate basis to guide our church life until 2020. At the start of the year, Elders' Council devoted a considerable amount of time to reviewing and reflecting upon our future work and witness.

A document "2020 Vision", with seven agreed Propositions emerged, incorporating measurable goals, forming a Trinity Mission Plan. This was commended to Church Meeting in May with a view to obtaining the full support and participation of the whole church. Finally a detailed Church Mission Plan for 2018-20 was agreed, incorporating comments received at Church meeting, focussing on three areas: Strengthening faith (a commitment to nurture and develop the faith of Trinity folk); Service (a commitment to serve God through service to our local and global community), and Witness (a commitment to be witnesses to our Christian faith at home and in the wider world).

Worship & faith development Communion Services were held monthly on the first Sunday morning of each month, on Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunday and Christmas Eve.

In Dominic's absence, we welcomed a range of visitors to our pulpit:- Revd David Marshall-Jones; Revd Alistair Cumming, Church of Scotland (on three Sundays); Linda Mead, Programme Co-ordinator of Commitment for Life; and Revd Craig Bowman, URC Secretary for Ministries. Closer to home, our Services were also led by the Revd Ernest Yu, and Mark Dennis to whom we are especially indebted for his leadership of seven services. Four Services led by several of our own Elders were also much appreciated.

Average adult attendance at morning worship was 86. The largest congregations of the year were for Carols Among the Trees at the close of the Christmas Tree Festival (121), Easter Day (117), Carols and Readings by Candlelight (116), January Communion (111) and the Nativity Service (110).

There was All-Age worship on three Sunday mornings, with Junior Church involvement on Mothering Sunday, Easter and at Harvest.

Members of the congregation have continued to prepare and lead Prayers of Concern each week, and our appreciation goes to all of them for the thought they put into their prayers. Similarly, a rota of Bible readers provides participation by a good number of members of the congregation each

Sunday. Our thanks go to them and to Pam Rostron and Joyce Sarpong who organise the respective rotas.

Holy Week evening meditations were again very poorly supported this year, but the Minister led moving services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day which were much appreciated.

On Good Friday, The People's Passion was brought to Trinity for the first time. A mix of theatre and worship, this involved the audience as part of the Passion story in a powerful new presentation. Our thanks to Katrina Clifford for introducing and organising it.

From Pentecost until the end of July, the Minister based his sermons on Andrew Roberts' 'Holy Habits', (linked with the URC's 'Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today' vision) nurturing discipleship for every day through the ten practices or habits we see in Acts 2 vv 42-47.

Rededication Sunday, held annually on the first Sunday of October, was this year led jointly by Mark Dennis and Dominic. As always it provided an opportunity to celebrate and renew our shared participation in Trinity's work and witness.

Remembrance Sunday, this year marking the 100th anniversary of the WW1 Armistice, was especially poignant. Each of those named on our church war memorial was remembered individually.

A Blue Christmas service was held for the first time just before Christmas. A quiet and reflective service, it was particularly suitable for a small group of those who find Christmas a difficult time.

Christmas is always a very busy time at Trinity - from 'Carols Among the Trees' at the close of the Christmas Tree Festival, through the following Sunday with an original children's nativity play, (written and produced by Katrina Clifford), Carols & Readings by Candlelight, Christingle Service (led this year by Claire Wood), Communion by Candlelight, and Christmas Day Celebration Worship.

A series of four well-attended training seminars led by Revd Andy Twilley begun at the end of 2017 continued into February, with the aim of equipping existing and potential leaders of small groups, as well as exploring what small groups can offer to the life of a local church. Subsequent activity has been limited, but developing small groups remains one of our mission priorities.

A Lent course exploring 'Life on the Frontline', Christ's call and commission for the whole of life for 'ordinary people' was studied by two house groups.

During Advent a small group met to explore the message and meaning of some favourite Christmas hymns and carols.

The weekly Prayer Group now in its second year, meeting on Thursday evenings, has continued to run regularly with some new members joining.

The Queens Road house group (studying St Mark's Gospel) and the Church & Society group (addressing a wide variety of topical issues) have continued to meet monthly. Both these groups would welcome new members.

An increasing number of Trinity people are reading and recommending the URC's free Daily Devotions online.

Three Messy Church sessions were held during the year, on Palm Sunday and in July when the themes were Easter and Joseph respectively. Children and adults enjoyed a time of worship, craft activities, fellowship and a meal together.

Music Music plays an important part in the worship at Trinity. We are most grateful to everyone who has been part of this year's music making, and especially to our enthusiastic and energetic Director of Music, Andrew Davies. Highlight services during the year, were Palm Sunday, when the choir performed excerpts from Stainer's 'Crucifixion', and the Service of Carols & Readings by Candlelight, when the choir was joined by Cloud 9 brass.

The choir has led our singing and performed anthems each Sunday (excluding the first of the month). The numbers in the choir are sometimes modest, and Andrew Davies is always on the lookout for new members, so please get in touch if you are interested.

During 2018, Andrew has led all aspects of our music including a Sunday lunchtime trumpet and piano recital, a Music & Movie Night, participation by the band in a Summer Concert in aid of Faith in Action, and by the choir in Merton SingFest, and also arranged music for the Christmas Tree Festival.

Children's & Youth Work (written by Claire Wood) Work with the children and young people at Trinity has continued to be a happy, fun and rewarding experience for all those involved. Thanks to the commitment and hard work of team members and other volunteers, we are able to provide provision both on Sunday mornings and across the week for all aged children and young people.

A team of 9 volunteers provides care for our youngest children in the Creche.

Junior Church continues to bring together several children and young people, averaging between 8 and 10 (aged 0-15 years) each week for worship and activities on Sunday mornings across the year, as well as participating in, and leading, All-Age Worship, including Harvest and Mothering Sunday. The annual Fireworks party was enjoyed by many, despite the somewhat damp conditions.

Sarah Elliot, Katrina Clifford and Claire Wood lead three groups on a Sunday; they are ably supported by Sam Elliot and Janet Young to provide cover and 'days off' for them.

We continue to provide opportunities for our children and young people to meet at times other than Sunday mornings and to involve their friends in Trinity's life.

Trinity Toddlers meets every Friday in term time, led by Miriam Grant, Susan Collins and Janet Young. It goes from strength to strength with 30 children on the register and a waiting list of 19. The Old Hall can accommodate about 22 children comfortably with their parents or childminders, and occasionally, very reluctantly, latecomers have to be turned away. A session lasts one and a half hours and includes a story, playdough or a craft activity and a singing session led by Miriam on her viola. Coffee, tea and biscuits are available throughout the morning served by a loyal rota of six helpers. From the small weekly charge Toddlers is able to make a termly donation to Trinity and has also supported Children in Need and Comic Relief.

Pilots continues to meet fortnightly during term time, enjoying a mix of games, craft and Bible stories for primary age children. Sam Elliot succeeded Gillian Jones as Pilots captain in January.

Friday Fellowship's faithful, committed and regular group of boys has been joined, since September, by an enthusiastic group of girls, taking weekly attendance to between 13 and 15 which makes for lively and fun evenings, with much laughter and good fellowship. Taking suggestions from the young people, leaders continue to organise a range of activities which this summer including a very enjoyable Treasure Hunt around central Wimbledon and an evening baking a range of goodies for a Trinity Bake Sale in aid of the Freedom from Torture charity. They held a summer BBQ, organised by Pam and Guy Rostron, who also run a film night for Friday Fellowship.

Film Club met regularly twice a month and the young members continued to watch a wide variety of films, both old and new. Two of the members won a film-making competition and had their film screened at BAFTA. Both hope to study film at university and find careers in the business.

All of the above groups took part, with very creative ideas, in the Christmas Tree Festival and several children and young people attended the Christingle Service on Christmas Eve.

Sadly, Trinity's musical group, Supersonic, stopped meeting on a regular basis this year, but members performed at the 'Trinity's Got Talent' concert in the summer and helped to raise funds, by Carol Singing in Centre Court, for the London's Air Ambulance charity.

We ran a Holiday Club during October half term, with thanks to Sarah Elliot for leading this and to all those who helped. Although numbers attending were low, it was very much enjoyed by those who did attend.

Members of the Children and Youth Work Team undertook an excellent First Aid Training course in May.

We finished the year with our Nativity Play, written and directed once again by Katrina Clifford. Taking the children's thoughts about the Christmas story as her starting point, Katrina wrote a very

engaging play centred around how the media might have reacted to the birth of Christ. As ever, the Christingle service continued to prove popular on Christmas Eve.

My thanks to all who give their time and energy to children's and youth work at Trinity. We would always welcome more volunteers to share in this key area of the life and work of the church.

Outreach & Ecumenical links On Sunday nights from January to March we again hosted the Merton Winter Night Shelter. A good team from Trinity helped to complete our seventh annual shift, and up to fourteen guests were given a hot meal, overnight accommodation, and a cooked breakfast. Our thanks to all the organisers, especially Ralph and Robin Goodchild, and to all who took part in this very worthwhile project.

As has been our custom for several years, we joined St Mark's Church of England for an Ash Wednesday service, this year held at St Mark's where the preacher was Mark Dennis.

The founding assembly of Merton Citizens, an alliance of eighteen faith, education and community institutions working together for the common good, was held in April. Several of our members have been involved in the agreed priority areas of housing and homelessness, mental health, refugee welcome, and rubbish depositing/fly-tipping.

Christian Aid was supported by the annual house-to-house collection and car boot sale during Christian Aid week in May, and by carol singing at Raynes Park station. We again supported the URC's Commitment for Life collections during Lent.

In May Tahir Khalid, minister of religion from Mitcham's Baitul Ehsan Mosque, accepted our invitation to come and speak to us, giving us an 'Introduction to Islam'.

We continued to support the work of Faith in Action and the Wimbledon Foodbank throughout the year. Our Harvest giving was again devoted to the Foodbank, and a raised profile during the year has led to a rise in regular donations being made each week.

Our fourth **Christmas Tree Festival** was held over the second weekend of December. A Friday evening preview for invited guests proved successful and was a good means of bringing our neighbours, sponsors, representatives of other local churches, faith groups and organisations with whom we have links, into the church. An extremely successful Craft & Gift Fair took place on the Saturday attracting still further visitors from the local community and beyond. Sponsorship for the Festival was obtained from Trinity members and organisations, local businesses and our premises hirers, enabling us to donate £3,500 to London's Air Ambulance. A good number of Trinity folk were involved in the planning and organisation, but further commitment to take on particular roles is urgently sought if a fifth Festival is to take place.

Property matters We are fortunate that we have in the Mansel Road Centre such a versatile building that is also in great demand by external groups, but this means we need to maintain and update it so that people can continue to use and enjoy it. Day to day property matters are now overseen by the Church Administrator, and our caretakers carry out a lot of regular maintenance to keep the buildings in good order.

However, long-term planning and strategy for property matters have continued to be a matter of concern for the Trustees. Throughout the year we were still without a Leader for the Property Team, and the Team itself has ceased to function.

During April the 1960s electrics in the church were replaced to meet current safety standards, necessitating two Sunday services to be held in the Old Hall.

A serious crack in the walls of room 1 of the Mansel Road Centre is being monitored by a building surveyor.

Our application to Synod Property Committee and LBAC for permission to install a shower was approved, subject to some practical conditions being met.

Organ Project It is only possible to summarise here a project which began seven years ago. The Organ Project Group was established in 2017 to undertake a thorough assessment of the current organ and Trinity's needs in this area, and to develop a proposal for its refurbishment or

replacement. Over fifteen months, extensive research, professional advice, visits and much discussion were carried out by before presenting to Church Meeting in July this year its recommendation. It recommended enthusiastically that acquiring a digital organ was by far the best, affordable option for Trinity for the foreseeable future, and Church Meeting agreed unanimously. In September, Elders' Council made a formal decision on the Johannes Ecclesia D740 instrument to be supplied by Church Organ World.

A full proposal was submitted for the replacement of the existing pipe organ at Trinity to the Synod Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, and approval was granted in October. Our order for the new digital organ for Trinity was placed in November, to be installed early in 2019.

This brief summary represents a considerable amount of time and effort by the members of the Organ Project Group, but especially its chair, Sandy McLeish, to whom we are enormously indebted for his care for and devotion to the project.

Social activities During the year we held a few social events: Chinese New Year Supper (February); Spring Bank holiday walk in Surrey (May); Summer Bank holiday brunch (August); Quiz Night (October); Christmas Crafting Afternoon (November).

These events were organised to bring people together, and they were enjoyed by those who participated. However, with the exception of the ever-popular Quiz Night, numbers attending these social events was disappointing, and a Harvest Afternoon Tea (October) was cancelled through lack of support.

Coffee time after Sunday morning worship does offer an opportunity to meet and catch up with others.

The Wednesday Social Group, meeting nine times a year on the first Wednesday afternoon of the month, continued to be enjoyed by a group of around twenty-five mainly retired members. A varied programme of speakers and music, together with excellent teas, has been arranged. In December, Edelweiss Dunfield-Prayero who has been the Group's organiser for nine years, stepped down from the role.

Publicity & Communications Our membership and those beyond our doors are kept in touch with our life and events through a variety of communications. The weekly Notice Papers, Church Directory and Calendars of Services and Events were published during the year. Our thanks go to Anne Broadbridge who each month devotes much time and effort to produce *Trinity News* – contributions are always welcome. A new notice board at the front of the church was designed and organised by members of the Team.

A significant number of visitors find us via our website (www.trinitywimbledon.org). Twitter (@TrinityWimbledn) and our two Facebook pages ([trinitywimbledon](#) and [manselroadcentre](#)) have all been active this year. Do check them for up-to-date church news and comment.

Mansel Road Centre The Centre continued to be used extensively by church organisations and by private, commercial and community hirers. Under Elizabeth Scharinger's administration the Centre remains a very popular venue in great demand by local organisations. Income from lettings now represents 48% of our total income.

Although our two part-time caretakers cover much of the stewarding load, we are indebted to our small band of volunteer stewards without whom we would be unable to let our facilities and continue to raise vital income.

None of these things – worship, service, witness and friendship – could happen without the support of so many people. My thanks to everyone.

Catherine F Paul
May 2019