

TRINITY UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, WIMBLEDON
“Rooted in Christ; growing in faith; sharing and serving in love”

Church Secretary’s Annual Review
– for the year to 31st December 2019

Trinity’s Priorities Agreed by Church Meeting in 2018, three priorities continued to guide and direct the work of the church at every level this year. They were:

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
Witness – a commitment to be witnesses to our Christian faith at home and in the wider world.

The Minister Throughout the year Dominic continued to give thoughtful and challenging Biblically-based leadership through worship and a variety of other devotional resources, introducing new initiatives and hymns. His preaching of the Word was wide-ranging and thought-provoking. Of particular note were the inspirational Festival celebrations of Easter and Christmas.

Dominic’s pastoral care of the congregation was carried out in a typically discreet and unassuming way, much appreciated by those who have benefited from it.

On our behalf he has attended meetings of the URC Southern Synod and has interacted ecumenically with local clergy in Wimbledon. He has also become involved in the Borough through the work of Merton Citizens.

Our thanks also go to Miriam for her share in Dominic’s ministry and, in particular, for the considerable contribution she has made to Trinity’s music throughout the year.

A Ministerial Review was undertaken at Trinity during the Summer. This was a long-planned exercise, scheduled for the seventh year of the Minister’s service at Trinity – which, in the experience of many churches, is a good time to be taking stock of all that’s happened and looking ahead to future plans. Synod-appointed facilitators met with a review group of Trinity elders, and with Dominic, to help us identify achievements, recognise challenges and grasp opportunities for our church and its mission.

The Review’s findings will help shape the work of Trinity’s elders in the coming months; and Dominic also found its framework immensely helpful in clarifying his own thoughts about what course of action may best serve Trinity’s interests and promote future development. He concluded that the time was right for him to end his Wimbledon ministry in 2020. This was a decision taken by Dominic, and accepted by Trinity’s review group and Elders’ Council, in faith that it may lead to fresh growth for all concerned.

Associate Minister Revd Ernest Yu continued his ministry at Trinity, concentrating his attention on the loyal Chinese-speaking group. A regular average attendance of eleven gathered every Sunday morning in the Mansel Road Centre for worship in Cantonese, with Mandarin translation, re-joining the main service for Holy Communion each month.

Joint Church Secretaries Catherine Paul continued to serve as Church Secretary, while the position of the second Secretary remained vacant throughout 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 their annual one-day conference in October under the leadership of the Minister. Important issues for Trinity’s present and future life were addressed under the title, “Elders: The Church’s Guardians”, and every elder was challenged to confirm their commitment to their responsibilities as pastor, evangelist and leader.

Our thanks are again extended to Andrew Sutton who continued to act as Elders’ Secretary, ensuring the smooth organisation of our Communion services and of the Elders’ Sunday duties each week, and also to Alison Trehearn, our Synod Representative, who attended meetings on our behalf and reported back to Elders’ Council. Alison also acted as minute secretary for Elders’ Council.

Elders' Council The Council met eleven times during the year. In March, under the agreed procedures for the election of Elders, Robin Goodchild and Dodie Khurshid were inducted to serve for a period of three years. Cathy Dundee stepped down after serving for the full six years, and Mike Smith resigned on removal from the district.

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 manse. Trustee matters were generally dealt with in the course of Elders' Council meetings; there was also one dedicated Trustees' Meeting during the year together with the Finance Team and our Independent Examiner.

Membership The number on the roll at 31 December 2019 was 163 (a decrease of 3 over 2018). During the year the Sacrament of Baptism was celebrated for one infant and one adult. We received five new members. No marriages took place.

We record with sadness the death during the year of two members, Miss Rosalie Bolland and Mrs Kathleen Shipton.

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

The Minister, Church Secretary and Team Leaders met several times to review and attempt restructuring of the Teams. Frustratingly, the review did not lead to agreement on a way forward, largely owing to our inability to attract new and enthusiastic leadership. Several Team Leaders have served for many years and have indicated their wish to retire.

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

Church Meetings Six Church Meetings were held (one on a Sunday morning and five mid-week), with attendances of 28, 57, 24, 19, 24 and 21 – an average of 28.3 per meeting or approximately 17.6% of our total membership. The low attendance, despite renewed attempts to encourage church members to participate, is disappointing.

The February meeting was addressed by Major Nick Coke of the Salvation Army who spoke of the scheme for Community Sponsorship of Refugees, and the experience of his local congregation in Raynes Park in welcoming a family from Syria.

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

During the year we welcomed to our pulpit the Revd Nigel Uden (Moderator of URC General Assembly); the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith (Moderator of URC Southern Synod); Revd Alistair Cumming (Church of Scotland); and Mark Dennis who led our worship on three occasions. In November, an elder-led service was also much appreciated.

Average adult attendance at morning worship was 86 (the same as in 2018). The largest congregations of the year were for Carols and Readings by Candlelight (128), Easter Day (125), Nativity (111), and Carols Among the Trees at the close of the Christmas Tree Festival (101). Surprisingly, the attendance on Christmas Day (66) was disappointing this year.

There were four all-age worship services on Sunday mornings with Junior Church involvement on Mothering Sunday, at the Children's Favourite Hymn Service in June, and at Harvest and the Nativity play.

Three Messy Church sessions were held in March, July and November, when the themes were 'Thank you', 'Kindness', and 'Lights' which included fireworks. Children and adults enjoyed a time of worship, craft activities, fellowship and a meal together.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of elders leading our Prayers of Concern during morning worship. Our gratitude goes to them, and to all those church members who later joined the rota, for the thought they put into their prayers. A good number of members and young people also form

the rota of Sunday Bible readers, and we thank them too. Our thanks and appreciation also go to Su Lambert who writes the weekly Trinity Angelus.

As has been our custom for several years, on Ash Wednesday we joined with St Mark's Church of England for a united service, this year held at Trinity with St Mark's Team Rector, Revd Clive Gardner as preacher.

For five Sundays in Lent we worshipped in the Old Hall while the church was out of action for organ work. Dominic preached a series of sermons on 'Giving' – acknowledging God's call to offer money, time, skills and attention in Christ's service. Also during Lent a group met each week under the Minister's leadership for Bible Study and discussion following the "Life Source" course on Prayer.

In place of our Holy Week devotional times held previously at the church, Dominic wrote and narrated three audio reflections on aspects of the theme 'Friendship with Jesus'. Each reflection featured interview contributions from people in the wider community.

The Minister led moving services for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The Good Friday morning service was followed in the afternoon by 'The People's Passion', a mix of theatre and worship involving the audience as part of the Passion story, which was brought to Trinity for a second year.

On Easter Day our celebration worship was joined by the Revd Nigel Uden who preached the sermon and also dedicated the new organ on that day.

A series of confirmation classes was held after Easter. We had the joy of seeing three of our young people confirm their faith and enter into membership of the Church, along with two others already confirmed at school who were received into membership.

During the Season of Creation leading up to Harvest, Dominic preached on different aspects of our relationship to our environment as a church and as individuals. Earlier in the year we were awarded a Bronze Eco-Church award by the Christian environmental charity A Rocha, and this was presented to us on Pentecost Sunday by Revd Nicola Furley-Smith.

Rededication Sunday, held annually on the first Sunday of October, provided an opportunity to commit ourselves afresh to share in Trinity's worship, work and witness. This year every member received a card reminding them of the promises they made on admission to membership and Trinity's Mission Priorities.

For Advent, Dominic prepared a series of eight podcasts with the theme, 'O come, O come Emmanuel', which were made available to subscribers and on the church website.

December is always a very busy month at Trinity – from the start of Advent, the Christmas Tree Festival and 'Carols Among the Trees' at the close of the Festival, through the following Sunday with a simple and clear children's nativity play which was well received (written and produced by Sarah Elliot), Carols & Readings by Candlelight, Christingle Service, Communion by Candlelight, and Christmas Day Celebration Worship.

The Queens Road house group (this year studying St Mark's gospel) and the Church & Society group (addressing a wide variety of topical issues) have continued to meet monthly. A Lectio Divina group began in April and ran regularly until the end of the year, and in November a new Bible study group began to meet on the first Thursday afternoon of each month. Developing small groups remains one of our mission priorities, and all these groups would welcome new members.

A heartening number of Trinity people read and listened to the URC's online Daily Devotions.

Music Music continued to play an important part in worship at Trinity. We are most grateful to our Director of Music, Andrew Davies, and everyone who participated in the music making. Highlight services during the year were Palm Sunday, when the choir performed excerpts from Bach's St Matthew Passion and B Minor Mass, and the Service of Carols & Readings by Candlelight with choir and brass quintet.

The choir led our singing and performed anthems each Sunday (excluding the first of the month). Andrew Davies is always on the lookout for new choir members, so please contact him if you are interested.

Organ Project After very many months of thought, discussion and planning the organ project came to its conclusion in 2019. Our old pipe organ was dismantled and transported to Poland where it will be refurbished and installed in the Church of St Michael the Archangel near Warsaw. Immediately afterwards, a new Johannus Ecclesia D740 digital organ was installed at Trinity in April and dedicated by the Revd Nigel Uden on Easter Day. We are grateful to all the members of the Organ Project Group, and especially its chair, Sandy McLeish, for their time and devotion to the project.

A very successful and much enjoyed inaugural concert was held in September when three organists, Prof Ian Tracey, Karol Szwech from Poland, and Andrew Davies performed a wide variety of music to show the organ's versatility.

Children's & Youth Work A report has been written by Claire Wood (Team Leader) and is available separately. Our thanks to Claire for all she has continued to bring to the work with young people this year, and to all her team members.

Outreach & witness As one of fourteen faith based organisations in Merton who share the Merton Winter Night Shelter, Trinity again hosted the Shelter on Sundays from January to March. A good team from the church helped to complete our eighth 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.

A group from Trinity attended South London Citizen's Assembly at Southwark Cathedral in May. We were represented at Merton Citizens events and meetings looking into refugee welcome, housing and mental health.

During Christian Aid Week in May, Trinity members raised almost £2,500 through street collections and donations, and took part in the annual car boot sale; further fundraising for Christian Aid was achieved later in the year by carol singing at Raynes Park station. We again supported the URC's Commitment for Life collections during Lent.

The work of Merton's Faith in Action (FiA) for the homeless and the Wimbledon Foodbank was supported by our members throughout the year, with several members helping at their centres each week. Our Harvest giving was again devoted to the Foodbank, and regular weekly donations were made by Trinity and those using the Mansel Road Centre. At Christmas the congregation donated gifts for the homeless at FiA.

A Fairtrade stall was run monthly on Sunday mornings by Cynthia Betts and other volunteers.

In October we welcomed John Goddard (Coordinator of Merton Street Pastors) to speak about their work.

Our fifth **Christmas Tree Festival** was held in early December. This major event, which involved a good number of Trinity folk during the three days, has become one of our largest projects for outreach to the community. The church once again looked stunning with forty trees decorated to represent our theme of 'Anniversaries'.

An evening preview for invited guests again proved successful as a 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. Musical entertainment was provided by a range of musicians who kindly donated their time and talents, including the Barnes Concert Band.

Sponsorship for the Festival was obtained from Trinity members and organisations, local businesses and our premises hirers, enabling us to donate £13,750 to London's Air Ambulance. Our thanks to everyone who participated, but especially to the planning group.

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 were overseen by Elizabeth Scharinger our Church Administrator, and our caretakers carried out a lot of regular maintenance to keep the buildings in good order.

In the absence of a Property Team Leader, a small consultancy group was convened to ensure the buildings continued to be properly maintained. Longer-term planning and strategy for property matters continued to be a matter of concern to the Trustees.

Several large projects were carried out including the refurbishment of the Mansel Road Centre toilets during the Summer, and the restoration of the Old Hall floor.

In the church, the stonework of both the pulpit and font was transformed from very grubby to beautifully clean once again, funded from the Kenneth Young bequest.

We continued to monitor the crack in room 1 of the Mansel Road Centre, and progress on the installation of a shower was held up for planning reasons.

Social activities The church social events were few this year: Chinese New Year Supper (February); Church Family Barbecue (June) and Christmas Crafting Afternoon (November).

Elders' Council recognised the importance of such events in bringing people together for fellowship, and encouraging people to get to know one another, but attendance has sometimes been disappointing, and a planned Wimbledon Treasure Hunt in August was cancelled through lack of support.

Coffee time after Sunday morning worship offered a brief opportunity to meet and catch up with others.

The Wednesday Social Group, met nine times on the first Wednesday afternoon of the month, and continued to be enjoyed by a group of around twenty mainly retired members. A varied programme of speakers and music, together with excellent teas, was arranged. We are grateful to Alan and Janet Young who stepped in to maintain the Group's programme during the year. Volunteers to help share the organisation and to provide transport would always be welcomed.

The Book Club continued to meet every two months, with a small group from Trinity and beyond.

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, and a digital screen was installed the Mansel Road Centre to inform hirers of our events. Our thanks go to Anne Broadbridge who each month devotes much time and effort to produce *Trinity News* – contributions are always welcome.

A significant number of visitors find us via our website (www.trinitywimbledon.org). Twitter (@TrinityWimbledn) and our two Facebook accounts (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 remained a very popular venue in great demand by local organisations. Income from lettings represented 50% of our total income.

Although our two part-time caretakers covered 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 Trinity people, far too many to list here. My sincere thanks to everyone for all that they have done in 2019 and all that they continue to do to support the work of Christ's church here in Wimbledon.

Catherine F Paul
April 2020