

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

Church Secretaries’ Annual Review
For the year to 31 December 2021

As 2021 began, the Church again ceased in-person worship in response to Government and URC guidance for the COVID-19 pandemic. Worship services and meetings were held primarily through online videoconferencing until Pentecost – Sunday 23 May. The second half of the year was a time of rediscovering cherished practices, retaining new innovations, and rebuilding participation and outreach.

Ministerial vacancy

Following the departure of the Revd D S Grant in October 2020, Trinity was without a Minister for the whole of 2021. The Vacancy Team, convened by Sandy McLeish, met four times during the year, and led the important work of consulting the congregation and preparing Trinity’s Pastorate Profile, an essential document to enable the call of a new Minister. The Revd Stephen Lewis (Minister of Twickenham and Hampton Hill URCs) continued to serve as Interim Moderator.

Joint Church Secretaries

Sam Elliot and Catherine Paul continued to serve as Joint Church Secretaries.

The Eldership

As agreed by Church Meeting, no elections to the Elders’ Council were held in 2021. Alissa White resigned from the Council in December on her return to the USA. The Council met 14 times during the year, from January to June by videoconference.

Trustees

The Elders’ Council (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 (held online) together with the Finance Team and our Independent Examiner.

Membership

The number on the roll at 31 December 2021 was 150. We record with sadness the death during the year of two members, Mrs Joyce Rochez (Elder) and Mrs Carolyn Nowell. One new member was received. No baptisms or marriages took place.

Worship & Faith Development

During the year 34 services were held in the church and 22 virtually. The church was closed for 20 Sundays from January to May. We celebrated our return to the church building at Pentecost. During the closure services were held by videoconference, with the text of the service being sent each week to those without internet access. The Musical Director, Andrew Davies, provided recorded music for online worship services.

In the absence of our own minister, services were led by a mix of visiting preachers (Revds Bridget Banks, Bill Bowman, Alistair Cumming, Clive Gardner, Roger Jones, Stephen Lewis, Alex Mabbs, David Marshall-Jones, David Skitt, Kevin Snyman, Bruce Stuart and Andy Twilley, Major Nick Coke, Dr Stephen Tomkins, Messrs John Ellis and Dan Morrell), Revd Ernest Yu and Trinity’s own Elders (notably Mark Dennis). We were pleased to welcome

the URC General Secretary, Revd Dr John Bradbury, and both Moderators of General Assembly, Revd Clare Downing and Mr Peter Pay to lead worship during the year.

The Southern Synod's Training and Development Officer, Revd Andy Twilley, provided additional training in leading worship to Elders. Katrina Clifford continued to train as a Synod Accredited Lay Preacher, and successfully passed her assessment in late 2021.

The Queens Road House Group resumed meeting online to provide Bible study and mutual support. A selection of Lent resources was recommended, and an Advent Bible Study Course on the Gospel of Mark took place online.

At Christmas we were able to restore festive traditions such as the Children's Nativity play (with a small exhibition of Christmas cribs this year), Carols and Readings by Candlelight, a Christingle service, midnight Communion on Christmas Eve, and a Christmas Day celebration service.

Church Meetings

Four Church Meetings were held in 2021, with online meetings in January, March and May, and our first in-person meeting since February 2020 taking place in November.

Congregational Survey

A survey of the congregation was conducted in May to help inform the Pastorate Profile and establish the views and needs of members following the COVID-19 pandemic. This not only helped shape the job description and person specification for a prospective minister, but also encouraged us to place a new focus on whole life discipleship in our worship and wider church life.

Children's & Youth Work

Junior Church returned to meeting in person from May 2021. Film Club resumed its Friday night meetings. Messy Church continued online with an Easter session in March themed around New Life.

Property matters

A reconstituted Property Team was formed under the leadership of Dodie Khurshid. Repairs to the two flèche spires were finished in the first part of the year. The design, construction and planting of a new garden at the rear of the Church was completed in May. The Old Hall floor was replaced during the Summer. A quinquennial property survey was undertaken and issues identified addressed.

Communications

Communication continued to be essential while the congregation was unable to meet, using the church website, Facebook and Twitter accounts, and regular update emails to those who have subscribed. In addition, palm crosses, Easter and Christmas cards were sent to all members and delivered to some of our neighbours, and "we've missed you" cards were sent to those who had not yet returned to worship. Trinity News was published throughout the year.

Outreach & Witness

Trinity volunteers supported the Merton Winter Night Shelter project in a different way this year due to the pandemic, assisting a smaller number of guests at self-contained accommodation, rather than hosting the usual larger number at the Mansel Road Centre. Fundraising efforts focussed on the URC's Commitment for Life, Christian Aid week, and Trinity's annual Gift Day. The work of Merton's Faith in Action for the homeless and the Wimbledon Foodbank were both supported by the church, with our harvest donations being sent to the Foodbank once again. The Sunday morning Fairtrade stall, run for many years by Cynthia Betts, was relaunched by Elizabeth Scharinger.

Mansel Road Centre

The Mansel Road Centre was once again significantly affected by national COVID-19 measures, with reduced lettings in the first half of the year.

Chinese Group

Although Revd Ernest Yu retired in 2020, he continued to lead worship for the Chinese Group each Sunday morning. Attendances increased with the arrival of several families from Hong Kong.

This has been another challenging year for Trinity, our first full year of being in vacancy again, with a further period of church closure, and many months of strict safety measures being in place in our buildings, including during Sunday worship. It was a great joy to return to in-person worship, and cause for celebration as members of the congregation received their COVID-19 vaccinations. We look forward to 2022 hopeful and optimistic as we work to restore and sustain our local church and bring God's healing word to our communities.

Sam Elliot & Catherine Paul
May 2022