

Annual Report 2014-15
Astcote Methodist Church
High Street, Astcote, Towcester, NN12 8NW

Introduction:

The Chapel was built in 1874. A new two-storey extension was completed in June 1995 to replace the original school room and provide two meeting rooms, kitchen area and toilets (one disabled). Current members live in Eastcote, Astcote, Pattishall and Hunsbury West. There are 12 members ranging in age from teens to 70+. There are approximately 50 people connected to the church, with 13 named adherents who attend regularly aged from 2 to 80+ years.

Administrative Information:

Correspondence to Mrs Ann Atkin, Church Secretary,
31 Gayton Road, Eastcote, Towcester NN12 8NG.

Managing Trustees are:

Kate Stretton
Ann Atkin
John Atkin
Jackie Bell
John Bell
Steve Boenke
Fiona Hysom
Jeanne Gulliford

Aims & Organisation:

To spread the GOOD NEWS of JESUS by serving the community and offering times to worship and draw closer to God. The Church has a particular calling to work with young people, but also welcomes people of all ages and seeks to provide for the needs of the village community.

Review of progress and achievements:

The Church in the Community

The building is a comfortable and welcoming place for Sunday services and for some village organisations who occasionally or regularly hold their meetings at Astcote – the WI, Book Club, Gardening Club etc. This is encouraging and also helpful from the financial point of view. The monthly Lunch Club continues to be a welcome social event for the retired folk who attend. The various fund raising events held also give an opportunity for local people to socialise. These include two Fairtrade Sale/Afternoon Teas held at Christmas and during Fairtrade Fortnight, and a Plant Sale in June. Card making workshops have been a new addition and have proved popular. Adherents of the congregation are involved in running the Village Youth Club at the Parish Hall. One member is a Street Pastor in Northampton on a regular basis.

The Church and the Children in the Community

The Chapel has had educational visits in connection with Religious Education topics from both Pattishall and Rothersthorpe Primary Schools. The local Beaver Scouts spent an evening at the Chapel working for their Faith Badge. The annual workshops at Christmas (Christmas Cracker) and Easter (Easter Eggspllosion) were held, organized by the congregation to give primary/junior aged children an insight into the Christian faith at these major festivals. Assemblies are regularly led in 9 primary/junior schools in the local area by our Lay Children & Family Worker.

The Church and Pattishall Primary School

The after school Monday Club was launched in February 2008 and continues as a week day 'Sunday School'. Wednesday Club for children in Key Stage II is a popular lunch time bible study using 'Friends and Heroes' material and runs for most of the school year. A total of 40 children attend these two clubs which are organized by members at Astcote, and Holy Cross, Pattishall. Youth Bibles will be provided for 22 school leavers in July, funded jointly by these two churches. Assemblies have been taken regularly by our Lay Children & Family Worker and the Vicar at Holy Cross. Our Lay Children & Family Worker is Chair of Governors at Pattishall Primary School but will be standing down later this year.

The Church and Holy Cross, Pattishall

The congregation work with members at Holy Cross in several ways. The termly Messy Church held at the Parish Hall is planned and run jointly, and some of the older pupils at Pattishall School are interested in helping. An ecumenical ladies group – The Well Group – meets monthly at the Chapel for lunch, followed by a talk from a Christian speaker.

The Church and the Circuit

John Atkin is a Lay Children, Family & Schools Liaison Worker for the Northampton Methodist Circuit and is also District Schools Officer for the Northampton District. Members are active representatives at the Circuit Meeting, Circuit Policy Meeting, Finance & Property Meeting and the Invitations Committee.

The Church and the wider world

Our links with other organisations and support of charities has continued. We are affiliated to the Christian Motorcycle Association and have two members actively engaged in evangelical activities with the CMA. We continue to support a child via sponsorship with World Vision. The Sunday offering is given to various charities at certain times of the year. Groceries have been collected during the year for the Towcester Food Bank and the Hope Centre in Northampton.

Finance: Finance Report for year ending 31st August 2014

Income: When the year end accounts were completed the income against budget was only £56 beneath expectations (so less than 1%). However there was an expectation to receive £1,505 from HMRC, which only materialised into £644. So full year income was actually down by £705 (9%).

Expenditure: Overall expenditure was £1,372 over budget, mainly due to the one off cost of £1,065 for Pointing which was completed in the summer. The single biggest expenditure still remains the Circuit assessment which was £4,856 for last year.

Summary: The overall end of year accounts showed a bank balance of £12,144.34 (once expected money from HMRC was excluded), which looks a healthy balance. However from that there needs to be the payment of the windows (£9,011); money put aside for Messy Church (£177); and money for the Youth Fund (£350). This therefore left a balance of £2,581 at year end.

Reserves Policy: Our reserves policy is to hold cash in hand or equivalent for at least four, but not more than six months expenditure. For year ending August 2014 there was just less than 3 months, 3 weeks worth of expenditure, so less than is preferred by the Circuit. The recommendation for this current year is only holding a minimum of 3 months expenditure.

Outlook: The total income for this year is favourable. Lettings are up due to the NHS hiring the Chapel for a week last month. However, expenditure has also increased – an unforeseen electrician's bill (over £720) has had to be paid. The final cost of the windows was £9,472. So it is more than likely we will once again fall short of our reserves policy, and that is without any money put aside for decorating the inside of the chapel.

Our ideal situation would be for the collections and HMRC monies to pay for our everyday expenses, thus allowing our fundraising activities to go towards enhancing the church and community itself. The total expenditure i.e. Circuit and running costs is @ £7,300; while our offerings and gift aid are @ £6,700 – so ideally a further £50 per month bridges this gap.

On a positive note, we raised over £577 from three services, for external charities; and also donated £350 to various Methodist charities – so we continue to give.

World Vision Sponsorship: Our collections on Sunday morning for our sponsored child in Mozambique have been generously supported allowing us to continue our regular monthly donation of £25, in addition to extra gifts of £50 at Christmas and £300 for an emergency appeal. This totals £650 over the last 12 months. These funds are kept in a separate bank account to church funds.

Property:

In November 2014 the Quinquennial Report was completed and several repairs were prioritized. Some of these were already being addressed by the replacement upvc windows, and pointing of the lower brick work of the Chapel. Other items of work will need to be completed over the next three years. We have a detailed report of these requirements.

In February 2015 Methodist Insurance inspected the building and made a number of stipulations regarding the property. Goodson Electrical carried out

an inspection of equipment and installations and some remedial work is necessary. This work has already incurred considerable cost.

A fire risk and health and safety assessment must be carried out as soon as possible as they are overdue.

All the electrical heaters have been replaced.

The frost protectors in the toilets remain a cause for concern as does the organ vent in the kitchen. This problem should be addressed by the work carried out by Goodsons.

The locks on all doors have been replaced following a burglary at the Circuit Office. Keys on stretch key rings need to be attached near both rear doors in the new extension to allow safe exit from the rear of the building.

The interior walls of the Chapel need repainting and this work will be undertaken when funds permit. The external railings need attention and it is hoped that David Gulliford and John Bell will undertake this work in the near future. The stale smell in the cupboard under the stairs seems to have been resolved.

Looking to the Future:

Astcote Methodist Church aims to continue nurturing children and young people. Our intention is to sustain and grow the work in schools both numerically and in spiritual depth. This focus is rooted in a vision for young people coming to Christ.

Our monthly Family Service has attracted a few local families through our links with Pattishall School and Messy Church. We now ensure we can cater for children and families at any service where they are present.

The church will always be seeking the growth and nurture of existing members and adherents and encouraging new people to worship and learn about the Christian faith in whatever way is appropriate for them. Under the guidance of Rev Romeo Pedro we are looking at ways to enhance the mission of the church.

Conclusion:

The gifts of the members of Astcote Methodist Church continue to be the greatest asset for the continuation of spreading the Good News of Jesus in this locality. Not only are the gifts numerous but they are willingly used in God's service.

Worship on Sundays offers a deep and meaningful experience for those who attend with a blend of traditional and modern styles but always with an eye to expanding the spiritual experience of those seeking to live a truly Christian life.