

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Oxford Street
Cheltenham
GL52 6DU



ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS
2020

Highbury Congregational Church

**Making connections in friendship. faith and mission,
with Christ at the centre and open to all.**

Ministry Leadership Team

Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Worship	Maureen Williams	worship@highburychurch.co.uk
Children	Andrea Lacey	children@highburychurch.co.uk
Youth	Mary Buchanan	youth@highburychurch.co.uk
Discipleship	Cynthia Hawkins	discipleship@highburychurch.co.uk
Pastoral Care	Lorraine Gasside, Louise Middleton, Rachel Jacques	pastoralcare@highburychurch.co.uk
Mission & Outreach	Karen H, Neil Saunders	mission@highburychurch.co.uk

The Diaconate

Secretary	Iain MacLeod	secretary@highburychurch.co.uk
Treasurer	Roger Gregory	treasurer@highburychurch.co.uk
Deacons	Adrian Blazey, Susan Cole, Nephesha Mary N Michael, Janet Partington, Angela Pickles	deacons@highburychurch.co.uk

Others

Highbury News	Susan Cole	news@highburychurch.co.uk
Safeguarding	Nephesha Mary Michael	safeguarding@highburychurch.co.uk
Church Office	Team of Admin Help	admin@highburychurch.co.uk 01242 522050

**Highbury Congregational Church belongs to
the Congregational Federation and is in partnership with
the Council for World Mission and Churches Together**

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

THE CHARITABLE OBJECTS OF HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The principal purpose of the church is the advancement of the Christian Faith according to the principles and usages for the time being of Congregationalism and in accordance with any specific requirements in the foundation trusts. The church may also advance education, relieve need and carry out other charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Governing document, THE DECLARATION OF TRUST, was adopted by Congregational Federation Limited on the 13th day of June 2009 as a recommended governing document for Congregational Churches who are members of the Congregational Federation and for whom Congregational Federation Limited are appointed as holding trustees, the form having been previously agreed between Congregational Federation Limited and the Charity Commission and also having been approved by HM Revenue and Customs, and it shall henceforth be known as. and referred to as, the **APPROVED GOVERNING DOCUMENT.**

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is consonant with our Charitable Objects (as above):
Highbury Congregational Church is a community connecting in friendship, faith, and mission with Christ at the centre and open to all.

REPORT OF THE DEACONS (The Managing Trustees)

Our history and governance

Highbury Congregational Church began in 1827 and is an independent Church that is part of the Congregational Federation.

Whilst we work closely with other Congregational Churches, all we do is decided and funded by our own Church Members.

We do not have any outside source of funding and we do not have any outside body over us.

All who belong are welcomed into church membership on confession of faith in God and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Quarterly (and as required), Church Members meet for Church Meeting to seek the mind of Christ in shaping the life of the Church and setting the future direction of Church life.

The Deacons serve the Church as Managing Trustees and ensure all the Church does is in keeping with its Charitable Objects as a Congregational Church and with reference to finances, safeguarding, health and safety, disability, employment and other legislation.

We are part of the Congregational Federation and are registered as a charity 1159085.

We have adopted the Congregational Federation's Declaration of Trust as our Governing Document together with our own Working Practices Document (April 2015).

REPORTS TO THE ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING January 2020 - December 2020

MINISTER'S REPORT

I have written and re-written the opening sentence to this report several times over. I am resisting words that 2020 has taught us: unprecedented, social distancing, COVID-19 Secure, 'Hands-Face-Space', furlough, lockdown, tiers, 'eat out to help out', 'clap for carers', uptick, 'next slide please' and on and on. There! I got those out of the way. You will add more I am certain.

It was a year of two halves, although the first half was only two and half months in duration. A Highbury rhythm was beginning to develop as I settled into a new ministry: two services on a Sunday, Hy Tec, Thursday Café, Explore, delivering assemblies for St. John's Primary School, and meeting up with the Head at Pittville Secondary School.

Preparations for the Annual Church Meeting, including the nomination and election of deacons, were made. I found my way around Cheltenham on a dark, wet night, delivering nomination letters.

Richard Cleaves took the funeral of Joan Gardner and joined with me in the funerals of Ellen Baylis and Jocelyn Bell.

HyTec had a youth weekend with our area worker, Joy Howell, from 14th-16th February. Youth leaders were climbing the walls! To be fair, HyTec-ers were too, as we went to a climbing centre near Northleach. The young people led us in an amazing act of worship on Sunday morning.

As the news of the coronavirus was growing louder, we had a well-attended Ash Wednesday service in the Morton Brown Room. 'From dust you came and to dust you will return' were spoken as foreheads were marked with the ash of Palm Crosses.

Our Annual Church Meeting was well attended. People commented to me that there was an air of excitement and purpose. The financial challenge of repairing our leaky hall roof was juxtaposed with the vital work of CAP (Christians Against Poverty). With the new deacons elected, we were ready for the year ahead. Holy Habits was going to be our focus in the coming months.

The 15th March was a watershed moment. The church was busy with 70 plus in the morning service and a good number in the evening. We celebrated communion with cling film covered trays. There was a portentous mood. For many in our congregation, it was the last time they would worship in the building in 2020.

Churches were mandated to close that week.

Dazed by the extraordinariness of it all, the Leadership Team met via Google Hangouts. A plan was put in place for online worship and pastoral care with Lorraine, Rachel, and Louise spearheading efforts.

Adrian stepped up to support me in delivering a high-quality act of worship. The aim was to include as many people from across the congregation as possible.

Over the following weeks, Sharon set up a Zoom Coffee Morning after our online worship. This has been a vital replacement for the social contact we enjoyed with in-building worship. In the autumn, Cynthia kickstarted a socially distanced, bring-your-own-flask-and-a-biscuit Thursday coffee morning. This was forced to cease with the second lockdown. The few sessions were much appreciated.

It was a challenging time for our staff, with Julie Lane and Bridgette Seabourne furloughed and Andrea taking on administration responsibilities. Julie continues on furlough and Bridgette has taken redundancy. Bridgette's long service and dedication to keeping Highbury ship shape is enormously appreciated. She continues as part of the Highbury family. I am deeply grateful for the understanding and graciousness of Julie, Andrea, and Bridgette in this extraordinarily difficult time of change.

The Connect@Highbury sheet was redeveloped in format and has become the main tool for communication with the congregation. It was emailed, printed, and delivered every week by a number of faithful volunteers. From July, the Connect@Highbury sheet has been printed in A3 format for display in the notice board. This followed a constructive observation from one of our Highbury family members.

Sue Cole kept Highbury News going. At first it was sent by email only and then we managed to plug the gap with hard copies for those who do not have email.

Initially, I provided a daily reflection and prayer on YouTube. This was intended to sustain and encourage church members but soon began to reach a much wider network. Immediately after Easter, a rota of church members provided reflections for Wednesdays and Saturdays. This continued until the end of August. Mary B. organised this and it was a rich sharing in community.

Andrea met the challenges of lockdown by stepping out of her comfort zone. She soon became our own 'Blue Peter' star with her co-stars, Megan and Hugo. She organised Messy Church online with her team and, when it was permitted, we held a couple of in-building events in a COVID-19 Secure way. It has been a delight to work alongside Andrea in re-establishing the Parent and Toddler Group on Tuesday and the Junior Church meeting in-building on a Sunday.

The Church Leadership Team took the decision not to return to in-building worship until September. A COVID-19 Secure task force was formed. Mary B., Rachel, and Peter were key to developing the risk assessment. Viviane has been co-opted onto the group to support its considerable responsibilities.

Once I returned from three weeks annual leave in August, preparations began for in-building worship. Rob Lacey provided equipment and expertise gratis and, with Adrian, Iain, and Darryl, we are now in a position where we are able to provide livestreamed worship whether in-building worship is allowed or not.

Since re-opening the building for worship, we have had two funerals of church members: Vera Williams and Sheila Grimes. Funerals in these circumstances have been extremely distressing to families and that they were able to have the funerals in the church building was a consolation.

Central to my vision is inclusion. The congregation meets for worship both online and in-building. I ensure that people are able to participate on site or via recordings. Maureen has provided support in organising worship during my leave and also with readers and pray-ers.

Celebrating communion has demonstrated that even when we cannot physically share one loaf and one cup, by the Spirit of Jesus we are fed and united in God's love. We have received 6 new members at our Communion services in October and November, both in-building and online. This has been ground-breaking stuff which would have been unthinkable prior to the pandemic. God is teaching new things.

We have managed to continue Church Meetings via Zoom. Reports have been circulated well in advance of the meeting and, it has been a sign of the strength of our congregation, that the meetings have been very well attended. We have been on a constant learning curve and are thankful to Iain for facilitating those who do not have Zoom to enter the meeting via telephone.

I am indebted to our organists and to HySpirit. During the first lockdown, Richard S. and Alan, faithfully recorded the hymns for us. Richard has not been able to play for our in-building worship and we look forward to when that is possible again. Alan has taken on the lion's share of responsibility for music and I want to thank him for his willingness. Ian J. has played on a couple of occasions and we look forward to his continuing involvement in 2021. Hy Spirit has been providing us with a great range of worship songs. Thank you to everyone in the group for playing your part, though special thanks go to Adrian who has thrown himself into pulling it all together.

A huge achievement of 2020 is the coming together of our Discipleship and Mission and Outreach Ministry leaders to create the Connect Groups: Disciples Growing Disciples. Our meetings have been inspiring. I am grateful to Karen H. for enabling us to get the plan in place. Helen did a fantastic job of the survey and compiling the responses. Then Helen and Cynthia worked hard to get the first groups up and running.

At the end of October, all the Connect Group leaders met for resourcing and joined each other in envisioning how the groups would develop. My vision is that Connect Groups would spawn new Connect Groups and that Highbury disciples would grow in their own faith and in sharing their faith that others would come to know Jesus and grow as his disciples. Please continue to pray for this critical part of our church's ministry.

I am indebted to the commitment of our Treasurer, Roger. He invests a significant part of his time into his role. Being a treasurer is always a high commitment job but this year has required so much more. Roger has guided us through the process of reducing our expenditure whilst, at the same time, working closely with Ted and our fundraiser on grant applications for the roof fund. These efforts are beginning to bear fruit.

John leads the maintenance group. A quiet man with an ever-present smile, he has ensured that Highbury has new boilers. He has continued to do work in the Church and Manse.

Since returning to in-building worship, Karen W. and Marion have beautified our worship space with dry flower arrangements. Marion, always concerned about the ministry of flowers, put together posies for several weeks when I was allowed to go and visit folk.

It is impossible to mention everyone. I am grateful for Iain, our Church Secretary, who is wise and prayerful. I am thankful for a team of deacons who are working hard to fulfil their responsibilities as Acting Trustees. I am inspired by my Ministry Leaders, who have a vision for what Highbury is and is becoming.

What is clear to me is that God has allowed me to be your pastor at this moment in time. The Boyd family has experienced your welcome, warmth, and love throughout this year, and for that we give thanks to God.

I have made every effort to study scripture and life so that I am able to preach faithful to the Good News of Jesus Christ. I have attempted to be realistic: creating space for lament, nurturing hope, and encouraging faith. Preaching to a phone-camera in an empty church building and now to a video camera livestreaming to an online and in-building congregation has stretched me. Thank you for your patience and flexibility in all of this. I want you to know that I have prayed for you and covet your prayers.

I do not know what 2021 will bring. What I do know with certainty is that we go with God.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JASON' above a stylized 'Z' or '2'.

Jason c. Boyd

TREASURER'S REPORT

Accounts to Year ended 31st December 2020

Background to year

Last year we reported a year of change, challenges and opportunities, following the appointment of Jason in September.

This year has changed in many ways we would never wish to experience again. This has put a severe personal strain on our congregation and room users as well as the church ministry and leadership team. A lot of work has been done by all those connected with screening and recording services, and those keeping us safe in the church. Thank you for all your dedication.

Covid 19 was declared a notifiable disease in England on the 5th March 2020.

On the 23rd March the government ordered the closure of all places of worship and banned all gatherings of more than two people in public and social events, including weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies.

On the 2nd April we made a claim under our insurances to cover loss of income from expected cancelled room bookings.

However, in line with the UK insurance market, we were advised that our policies are designed to cover standard risks and will not respond to losses arising as a result of a national epidemic or global pandemic.

Overview to year

We were faced with a big hole in our expected income for the future, as well as raising funds for a replacement flat roof over the hall and adjoining rooms. In addition we were required to replace the boilers in the church and this expense has created a huge deficit in our Fabric Fund reserves.

So the real challenges were to continue limited church services and activities, whenever and however possible, to fund our day to day activities and plan to fund the replacement flat roof.

We had a very generous response for these appeals, and your "one off" gifts and increased standing orders have made a tremendous difference to our day to day finances and the new Flat Roof Fund.

We have had to look very critically at our costs, and particularly our staffing costs to help offset the loss of room booking income.

We furloughed Julie our administrator and Bridgette our cleaner from the 1st April, and they have remained furloughed throughout the year.

However under the Government's Job Retention Scheme we have been able to pay them 80% of their salaries and reclaim up to 80% under the

Scheme. We have retained Julie on furlough into the new-year and will review her employment situation when things return to near normal again. Bridgette was offered reduced hours, reflecting the reduced need for non-furlough cleaning, but chose to accept redundancy instead. Andrea, our Children's and Family worker has accepted a 35% reduction in her hours from 1st January 2021. She has been key in maintaining our communications, particularly through Connect, in the absence of Julie.

I produced a **forecast** income and expenditure for 2020, based on a "normal" year, with a full year ministry, room bookings and complement of staff. This produced a deficiency of £650 on the day to day activities included in the **General Fund**.

Not surprisingly the actual results show wild swings from the forecast.

However I have continued to use this forecast throughout the year to highlight the many changes to our finances.

The financial year produced a **General Fund** surplus of £3,887, which is £4,537 better than forecast. This surplus will be used to shore up the Fabric Fund so we can contemplate carrying out limited maintenance in the New Year.

There were many variances from the forecast, and the major ones include;

Income;

- Main core income of standing orders and envelopes and loose change improved by £5,727 – thank you
- "One off" gifts were £7,375 – thank you
- Gift Day and Harvest receipts were £3,139 less than forecast
- Furlough income was £6,607 – thank you to the UK government for planning this and to you and future generations for funding it!
- Room hire income at £5,950 was £10,597 less than forecast.
- Outreach income from café and lunches etc. was £3,156 less than forecast.

Expenditure;

- Minister salary and expenses were £806 less than forecast
- Preaching costs for visiting ministers were £507 less than forecast
- Savings of £1,292 were made on organist fees – all our organists generously declined their fees until we get back to normal services
- Outreach expenditure on café and lunches etc. were £1,457 less than forecast.
- Church utility costs of gas and electric were £1,223 less – reflecting reduced demand.
- Non-minister salaries showed savings of £2,238, from our 80% furlough payments

- We incurred redundancy costs of £3,456
- We employed a professional fund raiser to help with funding our flat roof replacement and incurred £2,400 fees in the year

• Giving to Others

Giving to others in the year amounted to £5,400 which included £1,700 mission contributions to the Congregational Federation, with all other monies given by church members using the church as a posting box; CWM birthday, Christmas appeal to CHIKS, but monthly communion offerings only for the first three months of the year.

The Finance Group's review of the Year End recommended that the church make up the shortfall on the expected collections for the Harvest and Christmas appeals.

This giving is 5% of our total income.

Review of the accounts - Income & Expenditure, All Funds

Below is a summary of overall financial performance:

	Year 2020	Year 2019
Incoming Resources (£s)		
Offerings	60,278	57,690
Legacies	11,450	0
Gifts	22,053	0
Room letting	5,950	16,547
Investments and other income	4,027	11,470
Furlough income	6,607	
Total Income	10,365	85,707
	2020	2019
Resources used (£s):		
Charitable objectives	-50,065	-34,327
Support costs (£s):		
Maintenance	-19,358	-1,589
Project costs – Manse	0	-25,582
Other support costs	-31,784	-29,332
Total Expenditure	-101,207	-90,830
Excess of Incoming Resources over Resources used		
Net movement	9,158	-5,123

Total net movements of £9,158 include: General Fund £3,887, Fabric Fund -£19,358, Flat Roof Fund £25,128 and Gift and Legacy Fund -£500

Movements in other funds, apart from General Fund include;

Fabric Fund

- Expenditure of £19,358 included; new gas boilers £15,974, flat roof investigation and repair £1,770, car park white lines £450 and Manse gate and fencing £780
- It is recommended that we transfer in £3,500 from the General Fund surplus to allow routine maintenance to continue in the year ahead

Flat Roof Fund – newly created in 2020

- Total receipts of £25,128 include;
Legacy from Richard Newton's estate – which specified that "such monies are added to the church's fabric to be used for repairs to the church building" – value £10,450
Gifts from the congregation of £14,678 – thank you

Gifts and Legacies

- Receipts include David Rogers legacy of £1,000
- Payments made for Harvest and Christmas shortfall of £1,500

Summary of all Funds

- **Closing balances were;**

General Fund £40,350

Fabric Fund £-525

Flat Roof Fund £25,128

Gift and Legacy Fund £14,612

Total balances are £79,565, which are £9,158 more than last year, in anticipation of funding the flat roof replacement

Unrestricted Funds

All the church funds are unrestricted.

The trustee policy is to retain at least 3 months expenditure as “free” reserves within the General Fund to meet future shortfalls in income, or unexpected expenditure for 2021. The balance at 31st December represents 6 month’s current day to day General Fund expenditure.

Progress in replacing our Flat Roof

The church is having to replace the flat roof which covers the hall and adjoining rooms, and which are largely used for community purposes.

Ideally the work will be done in three stages in the spring/summer of 2021.

The estimated cost of this is in the order of £95,000, which we cannot afford without major outside funding of 70-80% of the cost.

Ted Horsfield and I started preparations for grant applications by producing a justification paper including; a summary application, flat roof history, use by the community, governance, benefitting people in our community and benefitting people through church. This would then be used as a template to cut and paste according to the grant provider’s ethos.

However fund raising has now become very exacting and professional, and with the extra demands from charities affected by Covid-19 issues we felt we needed to improve our chances of success by engaging a Professional. After discussions with other churches we engaged Anthony Oliver Consulting.

Subsequently we have been promised firm grants from the following bodies;

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust - £8,500

South West Midlands Area of the Cong Fed - £3,000

Other applications include;

Allchurches Trust - £5,000 applied for

Garfield Weston Foundation – £20,000 applied for

In addition there are 9 other prospects which are being researched and planned for applications.

We were unsuccessful in applications to;

Severn Trent Community Fund – “not enough community impact”!

Summerfield Charitable Trust – they make a blanket contribution to the Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust, who recommended we try there – good advice!

Joseph Rank- “the Trust does not consider applications for church roof replacements or replacement boilers”

Enovert Community Trust - “As is now the pattern, the meeting was many times over-subscribed and unfortunately your project was not one of those selected for funding on this occasion”

Against a target funding requirement of £95,000 we now have £36,628, which means we are 39% of the way there – so still plenty of work to do!

Report by Roger Gregory (Treasurer)

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED

31ST DECEMBER 2020

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Independent Examiners Report

Highbury Church

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

12 months to 31st December 2020

INCOME Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR £	TOTAL LAST YEAR £
Offerings, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Envelopes & loose change	1101	1,897	4,063
STO & single cash/cheque	1102	41,818	34,774
Tax refund	1103	10,128	9,279
Gifts	1121	22,053	0
Legacies	1122	11,450	
Gift Day	1123	6,325	8,807
Harvest	1124	110	766
Grants received	1200	670	4,811
Furlough income	1201	6,607	0
Miscellaneous income	6110	688	1,102
Total - Incoming resources		101,746	63,602
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
Other room hire	1141	5,450	15,447
Church users room hire	1143	500	1,100
Weddings & Funerals	2801	420	185
Highbury News income	3402	880	576
Highbury News advertisers	3403	265	301
Congregationalist income	3514	0	63
Scouts insurance	6105	155	148
Photocopier income	6613	0	
Outreach income	6700	792	3,950
Total - Incoming activities		8,462	21,770
Activities for generating Funds			
Fund raising	1131	8	
Investment Income			
Dividends & Interest	1151	149	336
Total Income		110,365	85,708

EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
<u>Ministry salary etc:</u>			
Minister's gross salary	5101	26,436	8,658
Minister's employers NI	5102	0	
Minister's pension EE and ER	5103	2,969	972
Employers Insurance	5104	0	
Car mileage allowance	5401	208	151
Children's Worker gross salary	5801	14,245	13,857
Children's Worker employers NI	5802	0	
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Preaching	2101	333	3,222
Junior Church/Sunday Special	2302	91	265
Video licence	2304	490	426
Organist	2501	374	1,666
Music	2502	0	
Organ Tuning etc	2503	0	
Pastoral	3201	0	5
Pastoral gifts	3202	75	197
Ministry Leaders exps Worship	3210	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Children	3211	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Youth	3212	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Discipleship	3213	86	30
Ministry Leaders exps Pastoral Care	3214	12	45
Ministry Leaders exps Mission & Outreach	3215	0	3
Ministry Leaders exps Joint	3216	0	
Highbury News expenses	3401	0	21
Publicity/advertising	3404	0	
Neighbourhood cards	3405	0	132
CF affiliations/SW Midlands area	3501	1,816	1,479
Other affiliations	3502	1,600	310
CF Ministry & Society CWM Boxes & B'day	3504	880	800
Congregationalist expenditure	3513	0	112
Pastoral	5111	50	
Worship resources	5115	18	132
Church equipment/furnishings	6109	0	
Miscellaneous expenditure	6801	86	90
Outreach expenditure	6800	296	1,755
Total - Outgoing activities		50,065	34,328

EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Support costs			
<u>Ministry expenses:</u>			
Stationery	5112	0	
Telephone	5113	0	155
Postage	5114	0	
Travel, excluding Car	5116	0	
In -service training	5117	0	
Subsistence	5118	0	12
<u>Manse expenses:</u>			
Manse insurance	5301	233	261
Manse - gas	5302	0	70
Manse - electricity	5303	0	139
Manse - water	5304	171	293
Manse - community charge	5305	2,607	1,229
Manse - maintenance	5307	780	
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Project	6100	0	25,583
Church - Maintenance	6101	18,578	1,589
Gas	6102	3,844	4,290
Electricity	6103	1,778	2,686
Insurance	6104	2,410	2,280
Trade disposal	6106	357	351
Housekeeping	6301	98	186
Cleaning materials	6302	843	677
Administrator salary	6401	4,645	5,329
Caretakers gross pay	6501	8,709	5,802
Assistant Caretakers gross pay	6503	394	1,104
Stationery/directory	6601	52	42
Postage	6602	123	124
Telephone	6603	868	874
Office equipment	6604	638	270
Payroll costs	6606	288	96
Photocopy hire/copy charge	6611	1,459	1,419
Photocopy paper	6612	110	194
Bank charges	6701	197	395
Legal costs	6702	0	
Recruitment costs	6703	0	53
Training non Minister	6704	-440	1,000
Professional fund raising	6705	2,400	0
Total - Support costs		51,142	56,503
Total Expenditure		101,207	90,831

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

Income/Expenditure Header		TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Income			
Incoming resources		101,746	63,602
Incoming activities		8,462	21,770
Fund raising		8	0
Dividends & interest		149	336
Total Income		110,365	85,708
Expenditure			
Outgoing activities		50,065	34,328
Support costs		51,142	56,503
Total Expenditure		101,207	90,831
All Funds surplus/(deficiency)		9,158	-5,123

Highbury Congregational Church

Balance Sheet As of: 31 December 2020

			2020	2019
Fixed assets				
7101	Manse		170,301.00	170,301.00
7106	Church Building		2,101,240.00	2,101,240.00
7111	Church Contents		118,701.38	118,701.38
7116	Outbuildings		33,175.00	33,175.00
Total Fixed assets			2,423,417.38	2,423,417.38
Current assets				
7506	Lloyds Current Account		20,457.96	11,129.58
7520	Charinco		0.00	0.00
7522	War Stock		0.00	0.00
7523	Petty Cash a/c		281.94	106.66
7524	Santander		0.00	0.00
7526	COIF Deposit Account		58,970.08	58,814.76
7527	Standard Life Investments		0.00	0.00
Z05	Accounts Receivable		9,431.00	7,630.79
Total Current assets			89,140.98	77,681.79
Liabilities				
3207PB	Gift Presentation		0.00	0.00
3505PB	M & M box & Birthday scheme		0.00	0.00
4101PB	Communion Collections		0.00	0.00
4102PB	Coffee After Service		0.00	0.00
6699	Agency collections		2,520.63	2,540.49
6910PB	flower account		0.00	0.00
6911PB	HyWay		0.00	0.00
8010	un-cleared cheques at Year End		0.00	0.00
Z04	Accounts Payable		8,446.31	6,124.82
Total Liabilities			10,966.94	8,665.31
Net Asset surplus (deficit)			2,501,591.42	2,492,433.86
Reserves				
	Excess / (deficit) to date		9,157.56	(45,785.13)
8100	Accumulated Fund		15,254.90	15,254.90
Z01	Starting balances		2,477,178.96	2,522,964.09
Z02	Gains and losses on investments		0.00	0.00
Total Reserves			2,501,591.42	2,492,433.86

Highbury Congregational Church

Notes to Balance Sheet

as at 31st December 2020

- 1 Fixed Assets are valued as per Insurance valuation of 2006.**
(However the assets are insured at current day values)

2 Sundry debtors include:	£
Gift aid reclaim	4,191
CHIKS Christmas appeal	100
Flat Roof gifts	500
Manse grant - Cleeve Hill Church Fund	400
Insurance prepaid for 2021	2,586
Room booking - donations	500
Scout insurance	155
Furlough claim	766
Other debtors	233
	£9,431

3 Sundry creditors include:	
Utility costs	-885
Tax and NI	-1,995
Other payroll - redundancy etc	-3,536
Cong Fed payments	-1,760
Void Projects - roof investigation	-270
	-£8,446

4 Agency (PB accounts) include:	
CWM Birthday	-200
CCP - general funds	-690
Flowers in church	315
Toodler group	-77
CHIKS sponsor money	144
Christmas appeal - CHIKS	-1,473
Brunel	-197
Hytec	-443
Bible Notes	100
	-£2,521

HIGHBURY CHURCH

Summary of Funds/Reserves actual as at 31st December 2020

	General Fund £	Fabric Fund £	Flat Roof Fund £	Gift & Legacy Fund £	SOFA Total all Funds £
brought forward 01.01.20	£36,463	£18,833	£0	£15,112	£70,408
December 2020 movements:					
income	84,236		25,128	1,000	110,364
expenditure	-80,349	-19,358		-1,500	-101,207
sub total - surplus/(deficiency)	£3,887	-£19,358	£25,128	-£500	9,157
final surplus/(deficiency)	3,887	-19,358	25,128	-500	9,157
Year end transfer	-3,500	3,500			0
carried forward 31.12.20	£36,850	£2,975	£25,128	£14,612	£79,565

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	From To	01 January 2020 31 December 2020	01 January 2019 31 December 2019
General - General fund (Unrestricted) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used			
Incoming resources			
Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Envelope & loose cash		1,897.28	4,063.13
STO & single cash/cheque		41,815.78	34,774.00
Tax repaid		10,128.47	9,278.96
Gifts		7,375.00	0.00
Gift Day		6,325.00	8,806.51
Harvest		110.00	766.48
Grants Received		670.00	4,811.00
Furlough Income		6,607.42	0.00
Miscellaneous income		688.05	1,101.64
		75,617.00	63,601.72
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects			
3rd Party Room Hire		5,450.20	15,446.89
Church users room hire		500.00	1,100.25
Weddings & Funerals		420.00	185.00
Highbury News Income		880.00	576.00
Highbury News Advertisers		265.00	301.00
Congregationalist In		0.00	62.90
Scouts insurance		154.91	147.80
Outreach income		792.17	3,949.85
		8,462.28	21,769.69
Investment income			
Dividends & Interest		156.94	336.68
Total Incoming resources		84,236.22	85,708.09
Resources used			
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects			
Preaching		275.75	3,222.35
Junior church		148.42	265.18
Video Licence		489.00	425.99
Organist		374.00	1,666.00
Pastoral		0.00	5.00
Pastoral Gifts		75.00	197.02
Ministrey Leadres exps Discipleship		85.91	30.00
Ministry Leaders exps Pastoral Care		12.16	45.07
Ministry Leaders exps Mission Outreach		0.00	3.50
Highbury News Expenses		0.00	20.88
Neighbourhood Cards		0.00	131.76
CF affiliations		1,816.00	1,478.50
Other affiliations		100.00	310.00
CF Ministry & Mission Fund		880.00	800.00
Congregational Ex		0.00	112.00
Jasons Gross Salary		26,437.84	8,657.70
Pension for Jason		2,969.67	972.40
Worship resources		67.46	131.88
Car mileage allowance		207.90	150.75
Pastoral Placement payment		14,245.14	13,856.60
Outreach expenditure		295.60	1,755.17
Miscellaneous expenditure		85.81	90.20
		48,565.66	34,327.95

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	From To	01 January 2020 31 December 2020	01 January 2019 31 December 2019
Support costs			
Professional Fund Raising		2,400.00	0.00
Telephone		0.00	155.00
Subsistence		0.00	12.09
Manse - insurance		232.10	260.50
Manse - gas		0.00	70.02
Manse - electricity		0.00	138.64
Manse - water		170.38	293.07
Manse - community charge		2,607.05	1,228.83
Gas		3,845.60	4,290.26
Electricity		1,776.20	2,686.03
Insurance		2,407.31	2,280.47
Trade disposal		359.45	351.00
Housekeeping		97.75	186.20
Cleaning Materials		841.80	676.92
Adminstrator salary		4,643.73	5,328.93
Caretakers Gross Pay		8,708.94	5,801.80
Assistant Caretaker Pay		394.50	1,104.00
Stationery		52.90	41.73
Postage		122.60	124.08
Office telephone		869.67	874.63
Office Equipment		638.30	269.93
Payroll		288.00	96.00
Photocopier hire		1,460.61	1,419.36
Photocopier paper		109.97	193.73
Bank charges		196.48	395.86
Recruitment costs		0.00	52.74
Training non Monister		(440.01)	0.00
		<u>31,783.33</u>	<u>28,331.82</u>
Total Resources used		80,348.99	62,659.77
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used		3,887.23	23,048.32
Transfers to/(from)		(3,500.00)	(23,000.00)
Brought forward balance		36,462.90	36,414.58
Carried forward balance		36,850.13	36,462.90

training - Training budget (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Resources used			
Support costs			
Training non Monister		0.00	1,000.00
Total Resources used		0.00	1,000.00
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used		0.00	(1,000.00)
Transfers to/(from)		0.00	1,000.00

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	From	01 January 2020	01 January 2019
	To	31 December 2020	31 December 2019

Fabric - Church Maintenance (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Resources used			
Support costs			
Manse - maintenance	780.00		0.00
Project	0.00		25,582.85
Maintenance	18,578.17		1,588.85
Total Resources used	19,358.17		27,171.70
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used	(19,358.17)		(27,171.70)
Transfers to/(from)	3,500.00		23,000.00
Brought forward balance	18,832.47		23,004.17
Carried forward balance	2,974.30		18,832.47

Gifts - Gifts and Legacies (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Incoming resources			
Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Legacies	1,000.00		0.00
Total Incoming resources	1,000.00		0.00
Resources used			
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects			
Other affiliations	1,500.00		0.00
Total Resources used	1,500.00		0.00
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used	(500.00)		0.00
Transfers to/(from)	0.00		(1,000.00)
Brought forward balance	15,112.49		16,112.49
Carried forward balance	14,612.49		15,112.49

Flatroof - Flat roof refurbishment (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Incoming resources			
Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Gifts	14,678.50		0.00
Legacies	10,450.00		0.00
Total Incoming resources	25,128.50		0.00
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used	25,128.50		0.00
Carried forward balance	25,128.50		0.00

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	From	01 January 2020	01 January 2019
	To	31 December 2020	31 December 2019

Fixed - Manse, church building, car (Restricted) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Incoming resources	Brought forward balance	2,422,026.00	2,422,026.00
Donations	Carried forward balance	2,422,026.00	2,422,026.00
	Envelope & loose cash	1,587.28	4,063.13
	STC & single cheques	41,815.73	34,774.23
	Tax receipt	10,128.47	9,275.95
	Gifts	7,375.00	0.00
	Gift Day	8,325.00	8,806.51
	Harvest	110.00	780.45
	Grants Received	570.00	4,811.00
	Furlough income	2,927.42	0.00
	Miscellaneous income	486.08	1,101.54
		52,917.96	63,801.72
Activities in furtherance of the church's objects			
	2nd Party Room Hire	3,480.25	15,448.89
	Church away room hire	595.00	1,100.25
	Weddings & Funerals	420.00	183.00
	Highbury News Income	550.00	576.00
	Highbury News Advertisers	255.00	501.00
	Congregationalist In	0.00	82.50
	Service Insurance	154.81	147.50
	Carnival Income	752.17	3,846.75
		6,157.23	21,706.89
Investment income			
	Challenger & Interest	135.34	330.82
		64,234.52	85,798.08
Resources used			
Activities in furtherance of the church's objects			
	Preaching	275.75	3,272.35
	Junior church	148.42	260.18
	Video Licence	420.00	420.00
	Organist	374.30	1,025.00
	Pastoral	0.00	0.00
	Pastoral Gifts	75.00	197.50
	Ministry Leaders exps Discipleship	23.37	30.00
	Ministry Leaders exps Pastoral Care	12.18	45.07
	Ministry Leaders exps Mission Outreach	0.00	3.80
	Highbury News Expenses	0.00	20.00
	Neighbourhood Cards	0.00	121.00
	CF affiliation	1,470.00	1,473.00
	Other affiliation	150.00	310.00
	CF Ministry & Mission Fund	880.00	890.00
	Congregational Ex	0.00	112.00
	Jasons Gross Salary	20,437.84	9,887.70
	Pension for Jason	1,261.57	972.40
	Yarnup relocation	27.45	151.68
	Car mileage allowance	207.50	150.70
	Pastoral Placement payment	14,245.14	13,850.00
	Outreach expenditure	256.00	1,753.17
	Miscellaneous expenditure	81.51	90.20
		46,435.66	34,327.90

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Highbury Congregational Church

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the Examiner

As Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Accounting Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) issued in March 2005, UK Accounting Standards and the Charities Act 2011. As Trustees, you consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to; ☐

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Trustees and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the Act and the Regulations have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed Brian Sneddon

Date 8.2.21

Brian Sneddon
28 Chardwar Gardens
Bourton-on-Water
GL54 2BL

MINISTRY LEADERS REPORTS

WORSHIP MINISTRY

Report by Leader Maureen Williams

It has been a difficult year, not least for our minister, Jason, who has been remarkable in the way he has kept our Church family together. For those of us able to be in our Church building when it has been allowed to be open, it has been a great blessing but of course with all the restrictions it isn't as we would like it to be. For many, especially the more infirm of our congregation, the separation has been difficult and I know they have missed the fellowship of our Church community.

Apart from three Sundays in the Summer, Jason has been with us throughout the year. We were privileged to welcome Rev Dr Janet Wootton, David Waters and our previous minister Richard Cleaves and his wife Felicity to conduct our services on line while Jason had a much-deserved holiday.

We are indebted to our organists who have been with us and made music throughout the year; Richard Sharpe who sadly is still finding it difficult to play, but who we hope will be with us again later in the new year; Alan Berry who has been at the helm most of the year and always raises our spirits with his playing; and Ian James who has kindly agreed to help with the rota. Our thoughts and prayers are with Frank Guppy and his wife Annie as we remember his commitment as organist and member for so many years. We give thanks to them all for their continued service to the Church.

We are also grateful for the contribution to worship given by the HySpirit group.

Without the Technology team none of the services could have been on line and we are so thankful for all the hard work that goes into organising that, especially as we know these are busy people with important jobs as well as families to consider.

I would also like to say a big thank you to all our Church members as well as friends, who have so willingly agreed to take part in our Worship by giving the readings and saying the prayers. Finally, when we appointed Jason to be our minister, none of us realised what would be in store for him. Indeed, he did not know what awaited him and all I can say is I think we have been so fortunate to have him leading us and caring for us throughout this difficult time. So, a big THANK YOU JASON for all you have done for us your preaching, your guidance and your kindness. In a calendar I have been given by my Christian Brother friend for next December it says...

Wherever you go in life, Go with Love in your heart, Hope in your soul, and Joy in your mind, for LOVE, HOPE and JOY will take you far."

That is my hope for our Church family as we travel through 2021 together.

Church Flowers

Report by Karen Wilkes and Team

With the curtailments of services in March we have had little opportunity to utilize our skills. However, we have tried to adorn the church with silk and dried arrangements for the times we have been able to worship. Marion has been thoughtful in making up posies for Jason to take on visits, which I understand have been well received. Let's pray that there will be an improvement across the country so that later in the year we are able to return to a new normal and enjoy our country, wildlife and flowers once again.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY

Disciples making Disciples

Report by Leader Cynthia Hawkins

This year has seen the development of small groups of members, who meet regularly for prayer, study and fellowship. Under Jason's leadership, 'Disciples making Disciples', and with practical help from Helen Bloxham, we now have 6 Connect Groups.

Prayers for Highbury, under the leadership of Katherine Stanley, has been working for many years. While lockdown

restrictions meant meetings had to be out of doors, numbers increased. Now they use a Conference call system, meeting each week.

Prayer Triplet: Judi Marsh has kept this group going, with each member taking it in turn to select a subject, and produce prayers, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month. Communication has always been by e-mail.

The Monday Morning Connect group started with Coffee Morning members agreeing to keep in touch, as soon as lockdown meant the Coffee Mornings had to close. It was agreed that each member would take it in turn to choose a passage of scripture, which would be read on Sundays, at 10am. After a few enjoyable sessions meeting for coffee and discussion based on the readings, a Conference call at 10.30am is used on 1st and 3rd Monday of the month.

The Monday Afternoon Group, with Jean and Roger Gregory, meet via Zoom, starting at 4pm. The 2-hour session provides fellowship, time for discussion of preaching by the Minister, and prayer

The Tuesday Group with Helen Bloxham and Viviane Boyd meet by Zoom, fortnightly.

The Saturday Group is led by Kate Blazey, once a month.

Using either Zoom or a Conference call, removes the restriction on numbers in a Group. We look forward to the time when we can develop not only links between Groups, but with others in the neighbourhood.

MISSION & OUTREACH MINISTRY

Name of the lead person: TBC

Report by Karen H

Aim of ministry or group: to make Jesus known in ways relevant for these times

Report of activity for 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic caused us to re-think our priorities. With an increased emphasis on "people" and "connections" rather than "buildings", we worked with the Discipleship team to introduce the new Highbury Connect Groups.

Connect Groups are small groups of people who meet regularly, to get to know each other better and to explore ideas together. They meet at different times of the day, on different days of the week, in gardens/homes when lockdown rules allowed and currently via on-line Zoom meetings or the phone, with meetings typically lasting an hour.

We encourage everyone to participate in a Connect Group. Please contact the church office for more information and find one that would suit you.

Planned activities for 2021: We hope established Connect Groups will introduce some social meetings suitable for inviting friends and/or family members along.

Many thanks to everyone who has been involved in starting the Connect Groups and for all those who have been praying.

Hy-Speed

(Highbury Digital Scalextric Club).

Team headed up by Adrian Blazey and Iain Wallington.

Report by Adrian Blazey.

Aim of Hy-Speed:

Our Mission is "to demonstrate God's love in the local community through slot car racing". Our objectives are:

- a) To build and strengthen relationships between Highbury Congregational Church members and between HCC and the local community.
- b) To provide space for a shared activity between parents/guardians and their children and strengthen family bonds.
- c) To create a non-judgmental, accepting environment in which everyone can relax and have fun racing slot cars.

2020 Activity: Having had a break to regroup in 2019 we relaunched in February 2020 with a positive race meeting including a mix of familiar and new faces. In early March with the looming global Coronavirus situation, we took the decision to cancel further meetings for the safety of all involved. Unfortunately, we were unable to return for the remainder of 2020.

Plans for 2021: Once it is safe to do so we aim to restart our race meetings at Highbury and continue to build relationships whilst having fun racing slot cars with those who attend. We would hope to take our track to the UK slot car festival when this event is next able to go ahead.

Thanks must go to our group of helpers including Sharon, Grace, Jason and Jeremy. As ever offers of help are greatly appreciated; please contact any of the team for more information.

Open the Book

Report by Jean Gregory

Our Open the Book sessions in Oakwood School began well in 2020, but came to an abrupt halt in March with the first lockdown. We have been unable to go into school since. We have kept in touch with school though, and we know that they are missing us as much as we are missing them!
When we can, we will resume our Thursday morning input to assembly time. Meanwhile our links with the Bible Society and the Open the Book training and news sharing remains virtual, as well as a focus for our prayers.

Community Café

Report by Angela Pickles

This is an important part of our community outreach, offering companionship and an opportunity for all ages to meet friends from church and the neighbourhood on Thursday mornings. Like many other groups it came to a sudden stop in mid- March. Cynthia did organise a social gathering in October where up to ten people could meet in the dining room, bringing their own refreshments and sitting socially distanced, but this only ran for four Thursdays before the second National lockdown came in.
We look forward to restarting when it is safe to do so.

Wednesday Lunch

Report by Jean Gregory

During 2020 the team has hosted only two of our planned lunches – January and February. Katherine Stanley has hung up her apron after many years of wonderful cooking – thank you Katherine! We were delighted to recruit Helen Bloxham to the team, and in April we were shocked and saddened to hear that our helper Janet had died very suddenly.
We anticipate restarting the monthly lunches when we can, and look forward to welcoming everyone to a sociable lunchtime again. We have missed seeing you all!

Cheltenham Street Pastors

Report by Susan Cole

Lead Person: Nigel Bennett
Aim: Witness of active Christians on town streets interacting and supporting, if necessary, those participating in night-time economy 10pm – 4am Fridays and Saturdays. Support by teams of Prayer Pastors.
2020: Much reduced activity by teams due to closure of venues. Often 2-hour patrols only. Some nights none.
2021: Hopes and prayers to return to normal service and to recruit more volunteers.
Thanks to all involved with planning, circulating reports and COVID-19 information.

PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

Report by Leaders Lorraine Gasside, Rachel Jacques, Louise Middleton. (Deacon support/mentor Mary Michael)

During 2020 our main focus has been to keep contact with as many of the church family as possible within the restrictions imposed at the time. Visits have been made when it safe and practical help offered when necessary and safe.

Many of the church family have been happy to help and have willingly agreed to keep in touch with a few people each for which we have been grateful.

Rachel has been very involved with the COVID-19 safety group ensuring we can meet safely in the building to Worship. We thank her for her dedication and hard work on this task.

Louise has been working from home but has still managed lots of visiting and some shopping for church friends and again we thank her for that.

Lorraine has continued to send out the prayer message each week to encourage us all to uphold each other through these difficult times.

As a Team we would like to thank everyone for their support, encourage you to keep it up please.

Planning for 2021 will be to continue as we are and, in time, to resume face to face visiting when it is safe to do so and with the people that are able to help. We would always welcome offers of help from new visitors.

Please keep our work in your prayers. God bless.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MINISTRY

Report by Leader Andrea Lacey

Aim of ministry: To help children share Christian Friendship, explore Christian faith and enter into Christian Mission as a full part of the Church family. To help the Church to be fully supportive of children, as a child friendly Church, with Christ at the centre and open to all. Build on and develop children's work, build on relationships with other appropriate local links, such as uniformed organisations.

Report of activity for 2020

The year started off so well. Then, COVID-19 hit and we were all thrown into uncertainty of how to continue.

The family film afternoons were deemed impossible due to the numbers of people involved and the March film was the first casualty of that. It has not been possible to rejuvenate this outreach over the course of the year which ultimately impacts on the number of families I make contact with. Family films were a way of maintaining contact with families from toddler group, but also wider than that, providing outreach to the local community as well. They provided a good opportunity to make conversation with families before or after the film, which is not always possible at other times. I feel this is a great loss of outreach.

In an exhausting and ever-changing response to restrictions, we adapted services to suit.

ExploreTogether: ExploreTogether (SU initiative) is all-age and allows for differences in styles of learning and worship. We had already planned an ExploreTogether service for Passion Sunday on 29th March, and we were able to adapt this to run online.

We then ran another ExploreTogether in July, which focused on Matthew's version of Jesus walking on water (Matt 14, 22-33). Peter stepping out of the boat in an act of faith which faltered when he took his eyes off Jesus. At this stage of the year, this was an important point of focus as a congregation.

Then, on 22nd November, we held another recorded ExploreTogether service. The focus was on journeys and included some information from the Congregational Federation on the journey of the Mayflower 400 years ago. Our service also visited other journeys in the Bible. We found ourselves thinking about the journey that 2020 has been with the end still not in sight. So, the ExploreTogether service led us to focus on our own journeys and where we saw God on those journeys.

Sunday worship: Our first online service was 22nd March taking place on Mothering Sunday. Not knowing how long this period would continue for, I put together, and delivered packs to our families which contained some craft materials to support the Sunday activities we had planned.

We quickly had to adapt to recording videos from home for the Sunday services. I aimed to engage children with a hands-on activity where possible. These activities needed to be practical and inclusive, allowing children to be occupied

during the service whilst parents listened in. We appreciated that not everyone has access to a printer for activity sheets, and crafts need to use everyday household materials. The all-age address was supported by a subscription to Roots which provided worksheets and other material. Our budgerigar Hugo became quite popular during recordings

At the start of September, children started to return to school and it was exciting to be able to start to gather again in person. We continued to include an all-age focus in the service. Sadly, even though we could meet in church, activities in the hall were postponed for children to gather together. The Department of Education then ruled that junior church would fall into an 'out of school setting' classification, and follow similar rules as schools.

At the end of October, we were able to invite children and their families to join us in church. We shared in the communion service using the big screen as it was livestreamed.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, not all of the usual Junior Church helpers were able or comfortable to come to church on Sundays. When we were able to meet, I provided the all-age address and then took children to the hall for further activities. By November, restrictions were back in place and we were not able to meet, but then, reflecting the rollercoaster that 2020 was, worship services were able to run. Despite this, families felt more comfortable to stay at home.

With many of the outreach activities struggling to continue within COVID-19 restrictions, and the administrator being furloughed, I was asked to take on some of the necessary administration responsibilities required to support the functioning of the church. This became a roughly 15:5 hour split for my work and admin. I was grateful to Highbury for the value placed on the work I do, particularly at this time. In January 2021, reflecting reduced income to the church, my hours were reduced from 20 hours to 13 hours per week.

In view of this, some of the activities I coordinate are being combined to make the best use of my time. Previously my work only covered the second **Nativity Service:** This was a recorded service again, but included members of the congregation of all ages taking part. A script was used which gave families the opportunity to take a page and present it in their own way. The script sewed together and this was an amazing collaboration. Particularly inspiring was a Lego stop frame animation produced by one family.

By January we were again under high restriction (Tier 4), and it was decided not appropriate to meet for Junior Church.

Easter: Holy Week was approached with a Messy Church style of daily reflection, with a song and an activity for each day. This was an adaptation of the Messy Easter session we had planned. It reflected Matthew's gospel with a focus on how we live our lives, being fair and honest, actions speaking louder than words and how we share gifts and generosity. As a means of keeping connected with members of the congregation, I contributed to daily reflection and prayers when Jason was on leave. It was a pleasure, but somewhat daunting to step into this role. It felt like a valuable means of supporting the Highbury Congregation in much the same way as we did during the interregnum. There was a realisation at this stage of the year that whilst screens and technology created a bridge to keep us going, they are a poor substitute for seeing people in the flesh. As a congregation, we became aware of the need to learn about ourselves and understand what aspects of our life requires prayer.

Messy Church: Messy Church continued for the duration of the lockdown period, with the first being on 24th March. We rapidly came to terms with appearing on YouTube and Jason and myself recorded the celebration and introduction with a handful of activities easy to do with material at home.

We continued to produce a Messy Church service each month (apart from August), where people could join in at a time to suit themselves. There was then the opportunity to join together on Zoom in place of our usual meeting time. Half of our families joined us on Zoom, and the remainder decided their children were easily distracted and confused by not seeing people in person. We were very pleased by the engagement received.

Planning meetings were carried out using Zoom. Although BRF supplied ideas for Messy Church at home, our Bible study of the verse often leads to a slightly different thread.

In September, we were in a position of being able to meet in church, albeit under restrictions. We continued to present the service and craft activities on YouTube and we enjoyed a Messy Church bring-your-own picnic in the hall. This was a joyful occasion and all of the families really appreciated the opportunity to come back into church after such a long time; there was a real sense of congregation.

With so much to consider in October, together with the school break, we postponed the planned Messy Church. We planned to meet instead on Tuesday 3rd November and roll November's over a week to take place on 1st December with a Christmassy theme. Again, restrictions changed and the November meet up was cancelled and instead held over Zoom.

For December we felt the strong urge to take Messy Church outside to embrace the missed Christingle as well. This took the theme of sharing the light and we were able to meet in the car park, socially distant and light home-made jam jar lanterns from a single source.

Baby and toddler group: We were sad to have to close with immediate effect in March as lockdown was announced. I kept in touch with many of the families during this time. Their desperation to be able to meet back up lead us to having a Zoom call with a small number. This was coupled with telephone calls from social services asking if our group was running again, for the support it provides and for new mums as well. With this in mind I was keen to get the group started again. Plans were drawn up to meet under COVID-19 secure procedures and we started to meet a maximum number of 6 families on Tuesday mornings. According to guidance given, it was clear that baby and toddler groups were able to continue during lockdown as they were classified as support group for parents. It was a pleasure to be able to offer this to a small number, as many groups decided not to run at all. We expanded into a second group based on demand, but still adhering to COVID-19-safe rules.

Following the lockdown announcement in January, the group meet-up decided for itself, and in the spirit of national lockdown, we decided not to meet at this time. Instead, we maintain contact and Zoom meet once a week, sharing a song and story with the children. It also provides an opportunity for meeting both groups together and catching up. A large part of this group is about building conversation and connections.

Light Party: In previous years we have acknowledged Halloween (31st October), with a Light Party. I held a Scripture Union trail around the church, in a similar style to the Experience Easter Outside, celebrating Light and Hope. The weather took a turn for the worse so I am unsure how this was received.

Nativity Trail: As it was hard to meet up for Christmas events at church, Mary and I (but mainly Mary) set out a Nativity Journey in the area round church to help to make connections – with each other, with the story and above all with the amazing love of God. Thank you to Mary B for the hard work involved organising this and the many people who contributed to the window displays.

Planned activities for 2021 *Changing role*

Sunday of the month for Sunday Special, with remaining Sundays being carried by Angela, Elaine and Laura. Moving on, the all-age part of the Sunday services will involve more members of the Junior Church volunteers. Instead of Sunday Special we are trialling the combination of Messy Church with our Sunday and Tuesday congregations.

January 2021 was the first time we have brought Messy Church to our Sunday Service and this will become a regular format for the 4th Sunday of the month. Messy Church is an all-age expression of church. Everything about our lives feels messy at the moment, so what better way than to share than with a Messy Church service!

I have been in awe of Highbury Church in delivering weekly services online and we should applaud ourselves in what we have achieved. One of my early reflections considered this period to be one of a gift of time with our families, although this has not been completely the case when grandparents have been shielding.

I hope that my endeavours have kept families connected with Highbury and engaged with church life and teaching/learning in the absence of being able to meet in person. I am grateful to Jason for his Ministry, guidance and support for my work during this period. Thank you to Mary B as my line manager and her commitment to our combined works. Thank you to the regular Messy Church team (Jean and Roger, Mary, Cynthia and Marguerite) and for those who help as required! Thank you also to the Junior Church Team, Angela, Laura and Elaine and for everyone who adds in their time and skills for ExploreTogether.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Report by Leader Mary Buchanan

Aim of ministry: To provide a safe space for teenagers and young adults to develop potential and explore Christian faith.

Activity in 2020: The main activity within this area of ministry is HyTec. With themes of 'Connections' and 'Creation', the highlights of this year of two 'halves' (before March/after March) are, in no particular order:

- **Connecting** with each other at a sleepover and climbing walls (at Far Peak, by Northleach)
- **Connecting** with the world through food (including Palestinian falafels, Canadian pancakes (when Sweep beat Chris in the final eat-off), fish and chips, Swedish meatballs)
- Celebrating HyTec's **creativity** with a bake-off and the summer lockdown challenge

- **Connecting** with **creation** and former HyTec-er Emma Rendle who came to talk about eXXpedition and plastic in the oceans
- **Connecting** with others for justice through supporting Black Lives Matter
- **Connecting creatively** to take HyTec on line; keeping **connected** even across 100s of miles
- **Connecting** with **creation** through making volcanoes, exploring space, finding out weird things about animals; through walks on Cleeve Hill and Lineover Woods
- **Connecting** with others in Highbury through making cards and participating in services (without having to get up for 10.3012)
- **Connecting** with each other and God in a magical glowstick prayer time

For all its hardships and tears, this has been a rich year in discovering more about each other, our world and our God. Planned activities for 2021: Planning in these times is hard – but our theme for the winter term is 'Resilience'. Mutual support and encouragement in uncertain times is crucial. We will continue to meet on line with safe gatherings in person when we can.

Thanks to

- HyTec Leaders and assistants: Matt Winton, Ruth Wyatt, Jason Boyd, Grace Blazey, Naomi Boyd, Jeremy Boyd, Eilidh MacLeod
- Everyone who has prayed for us and encouraged us
- Parents who have helped out and supported us
- All the young people themselves who are the very salt of the earth

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Charities 2020

Report by Nephesha Mary Michael

You really don't need me to tell you that we weren't gathering together during 2020! Not doing so meant that we couldn't take up collections for our monthly charities. This is something that Highbury has been doing since long before I came into membership and reporting on the chosen monthly charity was my first regular rôle as a member. My first interview was with Listening Post and I trotted along with my notebook and pen like a proper cub reporter. How times have changed!

It has always been a privilege to represent Highbury to the charities we have supported. Time and again people have been touched by our desire to represent Christ in our communities and have valued our prayer support as well as our financial gifts. Whilst our usual actives have been suspended we have made use of one of our new members to give some of our charities a degree of publicity and support. Richard Atkins has been glad to invite some of "our" charities onto his Sunday morning radio programme. Where possible he has tied this in with the month when Highbury would have supported them.

Some months ago, I asked if we needed to rethink our giving. As I asked then, Highbury is needing to raise money for our roof repairs so should we be focusing our giving on raising the funds we need? This is something that I hope that we will be able to decide at our Church Meeting. There will be many opinions to consider so I ask that you give it prayerful consideration in advance of our meeting.

Christian Aid 2020

Report by Laura MacLeod

Highbury Congregational Church supports the Cheltenham Christian Aid group to raise awareness and funds for the work of Christian Aid worldwide. Christian Aid is a global movement of people, churches and local organisations. We stand together for dignity, equality and justice to enable people to live a full life free from poverty. To find out more

visit <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/about-us> and also <https://www.cheltenhamca.com>

Sadly in 2020 the usual fundraising events such as door to door collection, soup lunches, Autumn Fayre and Carol singing could not take place because of COVID restrictions.

In 2021 we are planning an organised a sponsored walk with Christian Aid Cheltenham. More plans to follow once we are out of lockdown. The hope is that some other regular fundraising events will happen this year but we will just have to wait until it is safe to do so.

Many thanks to Louise and Marguerite who support the Christian Aid Cheltenham committee and to Highbury congregation and friends who continue to donate to Christian Aid during these difficult times.

Safeguarding Report

Report by Nephesha Mary Michael

The main body of Highbury's Safeguarding policy remains as it was agreed at the AGM in March 2020. Since the COVID-19 restrictions have curtailed much of the face-to-face contact with children and young people there has been a greater reliance on social media platforms. In the light of this we have a draft supplement drawn up relating to the use of social media and developing the existing section of our policy. This will be submitted for approval at the AGM. In the meantime, I am confident that all aspects of best practice are being followed.

I am concerned that the avoidance of face-to-face contact means that I have not been able to renew DBS checks. I will address this as soon as it is safe to do so.

Maintenance Report

Report by John Pickles

Urgent reactive maintenance has been required this last year to replace faulty boilers and make the hall roof watertight; further work being necessary.

A big thankyou goes to David Roberts, who has repaired the Manse fence and replaced the gates.

In 2021, much work will be necessary to catch up on repairs which have been delayed by the pandemic. Among the items needing attention are the porch at the Manse, and refurbishment of the hall including a lintel repair. We are going to be busy in 2021; there is always something needing attention. If you would like to help when it is safe again, please let me know.

Highbury News

Report by Susan Cole

Aim: Dissemination of news and reports to Church and other interested parties. Also, to inform, encourage, and notify.

2020: Eleven magazines published. Distributed to most recipients by email. Few printed copies delivered by hand or mail.

2021: Continue to produce monthly.

Thanks to contributors, to Andrea for printing and to those willing to deliver particularly through lockdown periods.

Community use of Highbury Rooms

Report by Peter Harrison, Room Booking Secretary

Due to COVID-19, room bookings in 2020 slumped to their lowest level for many years.

For the first three months things were normal but from April onwards all bookings, apart from Toddlers and Support groups (Narcotics and Gamblers Anonymous), were brought to a halt. However, because of room number restrictions, even Narcotics Anonymous had to cancel their meetings.

After the first lockdown the Upholstery Class were able to meet again but the second lockdown in November brought an end to their classes.

Under the current circumstances there is little more to be said and we can only hope that the situation will improve in the not-too-distant future.

Beaver Scout Colony, Cub Scout Pack, Scout Troop

No reports received.

11th Cheltenham (Highbury) Guides

Report by Tania Ashdown, Guider

2020: An unusual year for Highbury Guides, as we have gone through the ups and downs, changed plans, learnt new skills and found new ways to keep in touch.

In January we began as usual, working on badges and activities in the Guide Programme and making our plans for the year ahead including camps, sponsored swims and a trip to Disneyland Paris with Gloucester Guides.

On 2nd February, with Highbury Church, we welcomed Dr Emma Rendle (a previous Highbury Guide) to give a talk about plastic pollution on the ocean and her upcoming participation in the eXXpedition voyage to investigate this.

We also put up the displays from our 100th Birthday celebrations the previous November to share with more people.

On 21st-22nd February we joined with other guides from Battledown for a sleepover and then Brownies and Rainbows from the District to celebrate Thinking Day at the Guide Headquarters at Cowley. We all had a great time completing activities inside and outside from the Worldwide Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts Thinking Day Challenge 2020. On 6th March the Guides took part the Women's Day of Prayer service at Highbury Church.

And then we went into lockdown...

In discussion with the other leaders, we decided that as the unit had managed to continue meeting for the previous 100 years we were not going to stop now, so on 27th March we ran our first virtual meeting via Zoom. We have continued meeting through the year and started again on 8th January 2021.

I would like to thank the Highbury Guide Leaders – Kate, Eilidh and Mrs Ashdown, who have continued to support all of our meetings, particularly Kate, who first found Zoom and has found many of the activities and ideas for us to use.

I would also like to thank all the guiding (and scouting) leaders who have organized and shared their online activities during the year which have given us some very enjoyable meetings. Our virtual meetings have also meant that some of our leaders who have moved away from Cheltenham have been able to join some of our meetings.

The number of guides joining the meetings during the year has varied but most of the guides have been able to join in some meetings and activities. Two guides have joined us from Brownies and three have made their Promise via Zoom. In our meetings we have played games, had quizzes, cooked together, tried various paper crafts (including origami), completed virtual Escape Rooms and worked on badges together.

Dr Emma Rendle returned to talk about her voyage and in November we joined guides around the country for a virtual meeting run by Norfolk Guiding Resource Centre to commemorate Remembrance Day.

Although we were not able to go camping Girlguiding Gloucestershire leaders created a Virtual Bubbs Hill Bash in June – a weekend full of online activities for everyone. Some of the Highbury Guides and Leaders took part (camping in their gardens or inside dens) and we held Zoom sessions to share what we had been doing. A similar weekend was arranged in the summer.

When restrictions were eased in the summer we were able to meet outside, and had a couple of meetings – one at Cowley playing Frisbee golf and the other (in torrential rain) at Holy Trinity School.

We were starting to plan for meeting inside again when the second lockdown started. We hope we will be able to have some face-to-face meetings again in the spring, but until then will continue our virtual meetings.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the Highbury Guide Leaders for all they have done this unusual year, and add our thanks to the guides and their families for tackling the technology and joining in our activities. We would like to thank everyone at the church for their continuing support.

The original guide laws said "A Guide smiles and sings under all difficulties"- we may not have managed the singing on Zoom, but we have had many laughs and smiles and (as in our current laws) we have "faced challenges and learnt from experience" and will continue to do so in 2021.

We are happy to welcome any girls between the ages of 10 and 14 to Guides to join our activities this coming year.

Please get in touch if you are interested in finding out more about the unit. Contact us at 11cheltenhamguides@gmail.com

7th Cheltenham Brownies

Report by Christine Lodge (Brownie Leader)

2020 started well with the girls completing the Network stage 3 Skills builder and choosing which skills builders and unit meeting activities they would like to do next. We joined the District at Deer Park to celebrate Thinking Day with various crafts and activities both inside and out, based on a challenge badge Living Threads. After half term we had 3 new girls and worked in sixes to make a room box. We started Make a Change and Communicate Skills builders. Then came lockdown. We encouraged the girls to join in virtual events organised both nationally and by the county and suggested they may like to do Adventures at home which was available on the national website.

When we were at last able to meet in person, we held 2 meetings at Deer Park in August doing nature hunts and making/flying kites. In September we were able to meet in the playground at Holy Trinity School in 2 groups, as we were limited to 15 girls in a group. 3 girls had left us and 1 moved away but we also had 4 new girls. We managed to complete the Skills builders which had been started, did some trails in the dark and the new girls were able to make their Promise in the dark and wet. Unfortunately, out of 7 outdoor meetings, we had 4 wet ones but the girls still turned up. After half term we moved on to virtual meetings. We have done crafts, a scavenger hunt, singing and some adapted Unit Meeting activities.

2021 is going to be a new era for the Unit as both myself and Marion are 'retiring' after 46 and 23 years respectively. There have been many changes and challenges over that time but the last year has been the one of the most challenging years. The unit is going to carry on in the safe hands of June, Caroline and Ruth and I am sure the girls will have great fun and learn lots of new skills.

11th Cheltenham (Highbury) Brownies

Report by Corinne Hending

2020: We started 2020 by working on some new badges and welcoming some new Brownies to our group. We worked on different skills builders during the first term including Lead Stage 2 and Live Smart Stage 2 (Skills for my Future) and Feel Good Stage 2 (Be Well). These included lots of fun activities and games. We also managed to get a trip in to the Ski Slope in Gloucester where we went Tubing. A couple of Brownies made their promise on the Ski Slope which was a special evening.

When the world stopped and went into lockdown, we were all disappointed to have to stop coming to Brownies. Between March and August we did some of the Girlguiding's Adventures at Home and some of us completed some interest badges.

In September we started our Virtual meetings and we have been playing lots of fun games and have been enjoying different types of experiences online. We had a 'meet my pet' evening and we also had an evening based on 'What I am Thankful for'.

It has been a very different year for us but we have enjoyed still being able to spend time together and keep our guiding adventures going!

Planned Activities for 2021: We are starting 2021 as we ended 2020 with our online meetings. We are hoping that we will be able to meet again face to face soon when it is safe for us to do so. We are looking at how we can adapt activities that we would normally do at Brownies so we can still access and enjoy them at home. We look forward to being back in the Hall soon and having lots more fun!

We would like to thank everyone involved in the running and upkeep of the Church and Hall. We look forward to seeing you all again soon.

