

The Pastor's Report

Rye Baptist Church in 2020

I am writing this report in 2021, following the conversion of RBC to being a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). Therefore this report will form one of the last records of RBC (Unincorporated).

I am sure 2020 will go down in history as being one of the most extraordinary years experienced by every single person on the planet. The Coronavirus pandemic extended to every corner of the globe, and made necessary restrictions in every aspect of life, and of course this included every aspect of life in the church.

At the beginning of 2020 there were some mentions in the news about this illness affecting people in China, and some other areas but no-one imagined that in just a few weeks it would come to affect all of our lives, and cause the deaths of well over 120,000 people in the UK alone. We are blessed that only three people in our congregation (to date) have caught the virus, and only one passed away as a result of it.

2020 began as usual with our Covenant Service, and January, February and early March progressed much as normal, with all church activities taking place, including Coffee Plus; Butterfly Club; the "Encountering God" worship evenings, the Connect/Engage meals out, a United Service at St Mary's; the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; house-groups in homes; and worship services in church.

We were very sad in mid-January to learn that Sally Liley had passed away, and a number of the fellowship attended her funeral in February.

Then David Anstead, who had been battling a life-limiting illness for many months finally went to be with His Lord in mid March. By then, the number of Coronavirus cases had begun to escalate rapidly, causing much anxiety about transmission risks and so no proper funeral was able to take place. In February, Alan Strudwick also became very poorly, going

into hospital, and from there into a care home where he passed away in mid April.

A nationwide lockdown had been announced from 16th March 2020. Visiting was suspended in care homes and hospitals and we were devastated to be unable to support Alan in person in his final weeks. Funeral services were not happening at the time of Alan's death so he too was cremated without a proper service, to our great sadness. To date, we have still not yet been able to organise a memorial service for these two dear brothers, but hope to organise this when lock-down restrictions are finally completely lifted.

Once lockdown commenced in the UK we closed our doors for worship and commenced recording audio services to be available online via our website each week. From the start we were astonished at the numbers accessing our website and 'tuning' in – this quickly rose to average approximately 1100 hits per week, and this number has continued to rise in 2021. For those church members who did not have internet facility we produced CDs which were sent out by post each week. We are so grateful to Geoff Haynes for his expertise in editing the recordings, managing the website, and producing the CDs – also grateful thanks to all church members who have contributed recordings of readings and prayers so a variety of voices could be heard each week.

During the rest of the year most 'in-church' regular activities and 'in home' meetings were not allowed, so Zoom Video Conferencing technology came into its own, being used for leadership meetings, Prayer Breakfasts and house-group meetings. 3 out of our 4 house-groups continued to meet via Zoom to keep in touch, pray for each other and to study and discuss scripture.

Our church building was not completely closed, however. We were so glad to be able to bless our community via Foodbank which continued, from our facilities, to prepare and supply food parcels

to needy families in the area. This need escalated dramatically during the pandemic and the Foodbank Team rose to the challenge magnificently, often feeding 200 people a week from RBC's halls.

In July, the first lockdown came to an end, and the RBC leadership team began to make preparations to re-open for Sunday services. A risk assessment was carried out, and plans and precautions for making the building Covid-safe according to government and BUGB guidelines were applied. Thanks to our members who volunteered to help as cleaners and stewards, we re-opened on 2nd August for our first service. We were able to accommodate just under 50 with the new seating arrangements. Being seated 2 metres apart, all wearing masks, and with no congregational singing, no coffee/ fellowship time, and no lingering in the church after services, all felt very strange at first, but most persevered and started to get used to this new way of 'doing church'. We continued our online services for those who felt unable to attend, and also for our anonymous online congregation who continued to tune in to our website in sizeable numbers.

Astonishingly, during this time, God continued to build his church in Rye. In June we were delighted to welcome Bob and Ellis Harper as new members, via Zoom. In September at our Harvest service, we baptised and welcomed Annette Englefield into membership. This baptism was our only baptism by affusion in living memory – this being the only method allowed by the government and BU at that time. Then in December, on the week we returned to church after the second national lockdown, we also welcomed Joan Powell into membership. So, that made four new members during a pandemic - for which we praise God!

In November a second lockdown meant that 'in-Church' services had to cease again for four weeks, then we re-started in December, but again cases of infections in the area rose alarmingly with the advent of

the 'Kent' variant of Coronavirus. The leadership team felt it necessary to close on 20th December and this decision was confirmed as correct when our area was put into Tier 4 over Christmas, and families were not allowed to meet in homes to celebrate Christmas or New Year. This situation was followed swiftly by the third national lockdown.

In December we held a Day of Prayer asking members to pray in their homes for a number of Prayer Pointers. We very quickly saw a number of answers to prayer – including a new Financial Lead (Paul Kingham) to replace Eric, who is planning to move away; the successful conclusion of the process to make RBC a CIO by 1st January; and we were delighted to be contacted by a new couple, planning to move into the area in January, who were keen to become part of the RBC church family.

It has been a strange year, but we have continued to feel connected as a fellowship due to our online services, Zoom meetings, and members making an effort to stay in touch and look out for one another. We have been astonished to see God building His church even during this difficult period, and we are also so grateful for His provision through the continued generous financial giving of our faithful members during this season. This has meant we have remained in a relatively healthy financial position as we begin in our new season as a CIO. A huge Thank you to the leaders who have worked so hard, and supported and encouraged me during this year, and to all of you who have prayed, supported us, and served God in whatever way you could. We look forward to God doing 'a new thing' in 2021 as He walks with us into whatever exciting and different times the future holds.

Trusting the Lord for "*Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow*", and praising and thanking Him for His Faithfulness over an extraordinary and challenging year, we are confident in His

continued accompanying Presence with us,
guiding and blessing us all at RBC as we
continue from 2021 as a CIO.

Fiona



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Rye Baptist Church

No (if any)

1188057

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

Period start date

19/02/2020

To

Period end date

31/12/2020

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Charity not operating in this period	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	-0	-	-	-	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-0	-0	-0	-	-
	-0	-0	-0	-	-0
Sub total	-0	-0	-0	-	-0
Total receipts	-0	-0	-0	-	-0
A3 Payments					
Charity not operating in this period	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
	-0	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-0	-	-	-	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Charity not operating in this period	-0	-0	-0	-	-
	-0	-0	-0	-	-
Sub total	-0	-0	-0	-	-0
Total payments	-0	-0	-0	-	-0
Net of receipts/(payments)	-0	-	-	-	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-0	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	-0	-	-	-	-
Cash funds this year end	-0	-	-	-	-

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
		to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B1 Cash funds		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Total cash funds	-	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		G.R. AUSTIN	9/9/21	
	Fiona Cull	FLONA CULL	10.9.21	