

Church on the Heath General Overview 2016

As I looked back at what I wrote this time last year reviewing 2015, I said that one of the often-repeated phrases spoken from the front of church and elsewhere was, “We are entering a new season”. So a year on you might fairly ask, “Well did we – enter a new season? Are we there yet? What does it look like?”

As I look back on 2016, being positive there have been some definite encouragements and developments, but also being realistic there have been disappointments and frustrations as well. Let me begin with the latter.

For Church on the Heath 2016 was sadly the year when Joe Story firstly stepped down as the Baptist pastor, and then later when he and Catherine left the church completely. Joe & Catherine had worked hard and done much for the church over the years for which we are thankful to them and to the Lord. I personally and publicly have testified to the welcome that they had given to myself and Sue when we came to Kings Heath, and we all have benefitted from their kindness, generosity and hospitality in various ways.

There have also been frustrations on the buildings front and with the formalising of our Local Ecumenical Partnership with not much progress made, although we are hoping for approval of the LEP at the AGM and some better news on the building plans very soon.

However, on the positive side let me encourage you with some highlights:

- The Church holiday to Whitemoor Lakes during February Half-Term, great fun and fellowship was had, so another one has been planned and is taking place shortly
- We appointed Lucie Brown as our first Parish Nurse on an initial 3 year contract with funding obtained from the Diocese’s ‘Working with People in Need’ grant.
- Our church awayday with Miles Baker the Diocesan Director of Mission began the process of having a Growth Action Plan, consisting of a 5 year vision and a 1 year plan, which was launched in June and published in September. This has given me and hopefully all of us something to focus on as we serve the Lord in this place.
- Out of our GAP has come a new Kings Kids Team of more leaders and helpers who have continued the work that Catherine Story led for a long time.
- Roger has been able to foster good relations with the staff and pupils of St Mary’s RC School on the estate, and has had the opportunity to lead regular assemblies in the school.
- There has been a fairly smooth transition as the New 2 You Charity Shop became the Here 4 You Drop-in Centre with some of the previous team continuing and others being added (see other reports for more details of the good work done in both forms).
- New people. We calculated that 28 people (13 adults, 4 young people and 11 children) started attending Church on the Heath for the 1st time in 2016. Now we

realise that there is a range of regularity in attendance and some have drifted away again, but we are heartened by those who have come, and want to encourage them, and all of us, to continue to grow in faith. Overall the Average Sunday Attendance increased a small amount from 2015 to 2016.

Although she actually died in February 2017 this seems an appropriate moment to remember again Doraine Wilkinson who worshipped at Church on the Heath for a number of years. We give thanks to God for our memories of her, and for her life and faith and service in His name.

As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago Simon Jackson has said that he will be stepping down as one of the Anglican Churchwardens and also a member of the Leadership Council at this AGM. I therefore wanted to pay tribute and give thanks for Simon's time, commitment and insight in these roles over a number of years, I/we are very grateful. Ginny is also stepping down as Minutes Secretary of the LC as well, and again we thank her for all her work in this role.

If what has been written already are the headlines let me finish as I did last year by saying that a lot of the life of Church on the Heath is much more in the everyday and the "every week", where we come to worship, to pray, to hear from the Lord through his word and from other people, where people phone each other up and help in practical ways, where people share and listen and pray for each other through the ups and downs of life. That is what a church family should be like, and may we continue to be faithful to the Lord and one another in the year ahead.

Roger Woods on behalf of the Leadership Council