

Marlborough Churches Together



Annual Report 2021



Chairman's Report

This past year has been like no other. A year we may like to forget when it comes to COVID -19, Social Distancing, Lockdown, Suffering and Death that the virus has caused. We may want to forget but we never will, for its effects are worldwide and personal.

The year for Marlborough Churches Together began with the Lenten Course by Home Study Groups reading and studying "Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyon. Notably absent this year was the Good Friday Procession of Witness and joint Easter Services, but the All Souls Service took place on 1st November at St Mary's Church. It was a Service much appreciated by those who attended and by those who followed it by "Zoom". "Zoom" has become the means of so much of the Ecumenical Outreach in Marlborough, the Minister's Fraternal as well as the participation in services and meetings during this year. It is so good to report on the work of the various groups and committees that have flourished, fulfilling the care that is so needed. In his book "Let us Dream - The Path to a Better Future" Pope Francis writes " The Covid crisis may seem special because it affects most of humankind. There are a thousand other crises that are just as direrefugees, poverty, hunger and lack of opportunity, of climate change" It is so good to know that such care work proceeds here in Marlborough. If you read the Marlborough Churches Together Annual Report in its fullness you will know what I mean.

As my year as Chairman comes to its end I thank all who are involved in working with the Marlborough Churches Together, the Ministers Fraternal, the many groups that do so much, and in particular, I thank Rachel Rosedale for her patience and thoughtful guidance as Secretary, keeping us all informed and attentive throughout this year like no other in which we have all suffered but learnt so much of God's love and presence.

Father John Blacker

Treasurer's report Martin Hamer (Treasurer)

MARLBOROUGH CHURCHES TOGETHER		CALENDAR YEAR 2020	
INCOME & EXPENDITURE:			
OPENING BALANCE		£2,803.95	
INCOME	17/01/2020	£1.53	CLOSING INTEREST FROM NATIONWIDE B/S
<u>LLOYDS A/C OPENED WITH £2,805.48 -; £2,805.48, 17/01/2020</u>			
TOTAL =		£2,805.48	
EXPENDITURE			
Marlborough Council -Remembrance Day Wreath		£17.00	Invoice No. 3042 - Paid by BACS 30//11/2020
TOTAL =		£17.00	
OPERATING SURPLUS/DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31/12/2020		=	£2,788.48

Comment

The Nationwide A/C was closed in January 2020 and the balance transferred to Lloyds Bank. During the year, there was a single transaction. This was £17.00 to Marlborough Town Council for a Remembrance Day wreath.

Mustard Seed

Obviously 2020 has been an unusual one! We have had to be closed for virtually 6 months. With all the Easter stock displayed and ready to go we closed up on March 17th. Having done a lot of safety planning we opened mid-July, with outside seating and take away for 4 hours a day Monday-Friday; during September and October we were able to offer reduced seating inside plus outside and opened 6 hours a day Monday-Friday. This was made possible by a wonderful team of volunteers which has meant we have only had one paid member of staff on at a time. November was again in lockdown but in December we opened 6 hours a day and 4 hours on each Saturday with a focus on bookshop buyers. One of the main reflections from our volunteers who were welcoming was how significant a place Mustard Seed is to so many; people come to share their story with someone; that it was the only place they'd been out to; they felt safe. The Trustees and all involved are praying about God's way forward; what might we do differently?

Re bookshop side: during the first lock-down we contacted all the primary schools for whom we normally provide Bibles as gifts for school leavers and so were able to still deliver these orders. In November we offered an email order and collect service which was used by a number of customers and that is what is on offer in this post-Christmas lock-down.

Rachel Maurice

Marlborough Christian Aid Committee

The Regional Committee is still restructuring and we await further news. Janneke organised the Christina Aid service in Christian Aid week. This was zoomed with a sermon by Rowan Williams. Kath Perryman organised a street collection during the week.

Rachel Rosedale

Marlborough Area Poverty Action Group

The charities objects are to The Prevention and Relief if poverty for the public benefit in our area. To be achieved by providing information, raising awareness and provision of funds for services such as holiday activities and anything else at the discretion of the Trustees. We continue to work with this in mind.

The year got off to a good start with a good- intentions which had to be completely rethought after the March shut down due to Covid. The Town Council, through Clare Harris, organised an excellent volunteer service covering all of the town, and similar services were set up in the villages.

What we were able to do:

Before Lockdown:

- We made contact with our Community Engagement Manager, Officer Alexa Davies, before she went on Maternity leave and then kept in touch with the Area Board via Andrew Jack.
- We had a very good presentation by Dan Thompson, Operations Manager and Karen, a volunteer worker on Kennet Furniture Refurbiz, and hoped to spread the word on their good work.

Post Lockdown:

- We developed links with many Marlborough voluntary groups in responding to challenges as they arose. As it became clear the pandemic was not going away, we had to make the decision that there would be no summer outing or support for Activate and Face Adventure as they would not be running. *Nor were* we able to run out a Food Bags programme in the Summer Holidays. Throughout we kept in touch with St. Mary's, Marlborough and Preshute schools.
- Louis Shortall and Wilts County Council reached out to the Rough sleepers who were mainly accommodated. We have continued to offer support / provisions via Sue Elks to Rough Sleepers who are in the locality.
- We continue to network with Devizes Foodbank (see separate report)
- Over the summer were able to meet outside, linking with other agencies. In particular, we invited Kymee Cleasby to our September meeting to tell us about her project 'Kids Meals' being provided under the Love Marlborough umbrella to see if we could help in any way. We also made contact with Clare Harris re: the Community Fridge Project and in October Milly Carmichael of Transition Marlborough and Clare Harris came to talk about that. We are keen to support both projects in the best way we can and have representatives from both attending our Meetings.
We also heard about the amazing project 'Imagination Marlborough' to supply all under 5s in Marlborough with a regular donation of a book.
- Our Facebook page has been kept active and has been a good way to connect with people and agencies.
- We had a tremendous response to our appeal for funding for Christmas Hampers and with the help of Waitrose were able to supply 44 hampers and 4 extra food items to families identified by Kids Meals, St. Mary's Marlborough Primary, Preshute, and the Foodbank. They were hugely appreciated.

- Individual Requests:
We have been able to respond quickly / easily to individual requests for financial help such as clothing, a sleeping bag, and deposit for place at Alabare.

Trustees:

- Throughout the year the Trustees kept up regular zoom meetings. Via Zoom, we have re-established the open meetings for the wider group.
- In May we heard that Janneke Blokland had been appointed to a new job in September, and would be leaving Marlborough in August so we had to replace her in the role of treasurer and were very pleased to be able to appoint Juliette Plank in her place. We thank Janneke for her great contribution over many years. Janneke had so many links with the local community that she is hard to replace. She was a very active member of MAPAG.
- In July Sue Elks resigned as a Trustee preferring to continue with her hands-on work. We continue to keep closely in touch and thank her for her work on our behalf.

There has been a great sense of team spirit in MAPAG and Marlborough for which we are grateful. Long may it continue.

Rachel Rosedale, Chair

Tower and Town Annual Report

Circulation:

Circulation is shifting steadily towards online reading, although there is still a big majority reading the paper copy. Payment of subscriptions is following a similar path.

Finances:

Peter Astle, the Treasurer, reports that finances are in a healthy state, with more than a year's costs as a buffer. Advertising for 2021 is very healthy thanks to a big push by the new advertising manager, Chris Rogers.

Staff:

We are glad to welcome a new editor in the shape of Ben Tarring and, as already mentioned, Chris Rogers as the new advertising manager. Debby Guest and Gabriella Venus from The White Horse Bookshop continue to contribute a monthly column each. Robin Nelson has taken over as Nature Correspondent from Seán Dempster.

General:

The decision was taken at the start of the pandemic to continue with production as normal, even if it meant stock-piling copies until the end of the pandemic. In the event, our splendid band of distributors declared stoutly that they would continue covering their rounds and as a result we haven't missed a beat. All credit to Sue Tulloh and her team. Many thanks also to the Clergy team, who continue their faithful support and contributions.

Hugh de Saram Chairman February 2021

Marlborough Food Bank Distribution Point

At the start of the year we were distributing an average of four food boxes a week from Christchurch. The March lockdown meant that clients could no longer go there. We therefore arranged for boxes to be stored at my home with volunteers delivering from there to clients' homes. We took the following precautions for volunteers:

- advised those over 70 to step down.
- held a training morning for drivers.
- developed induction material for new volunteers.
- provided personal protection equipment.
- gave advice on home delivery procedures.
- issued letters of authorisation.

Numbers fluctuated over the next six months, referrals coming mainly from Devizes foodbank. There was a dip in referrals over June, July, August and September but since then a steady increase with the three weeks over Christmas/ New Year averaging twelve clients a week. During the winter months storage of boxes was moved back to Christchurch.

MAPAG funded the purchase of a stronger trolley for transport of the boxes and an upgraded Foodbank mobile contract costing £5 pcm.

We have been well supported by our younger volunteers who are so willing to help with transporting boxes, often at short notice. We are getting more referrals from the villages and have gone as far afield as Ham and Baydon. Reasons for referral are varied but are mostly low income and debt. Toiletries and pet food have also been much in demand.

Christchurch continues to be very helpful and are happy for their church to be used to help the community in these difficult times.

Sue Elks is the main link with the rough sleepers. In the first lockdown most rough sleepers took up the offer of accommodation arranged by the Wiltshire Assertive Outreach team. Sue arranges food, a dry tent and firewood for those who declined the offer. MAPAG has responded to various requests for sleeping bags, footwear and warm clothing for rough sleepers.

Since September "Kids Meals"(a new project initiated by St. Mary's church) has been an important extra help to families. Our clients with families are given relevant contact information. Foodbank has donated some basic foods to the project.

It is anticipated that working as a delivery service will continue for some months and it may be Autumn before we can return to being a drop in centre at Christchurch. We have missed the more personal contact with our clients but continue to offer advice and referral on to other Agencies such as Citizens Advice who have been particularly helpful.

Ann Yates Co-ordinator

Communications Group (Comms)

This small group which has representatives of the faith groups of this town has met informally, but regularly, each month for several years now. Our main job is to put together the copy for 'News from the Churches' for Tower and Town, and, with everybody's help, we each take it in turn to compile the pages and get it to the editor or compiler. It involves

keeping in touch with a range of things going on, secular, ecclesiastical and religious, and trying to maintain the ecumenical perspective on them.

We hope it has a role as a sort of ecumenical notice board. The meetings have also turned out to be a much-valued forum for airing and sharing our ideas and concerns and offering support to each other. Lockdown has meant meetings have been by zoom or e-mail but we look forward to getting together again. We would like a representative from both the Catholic community and from Emmanuel, but meeting in the morning makes it difficult for those who still enjoy paid employment.

Alison Selby

St Non's Retreat

This ecumenical retreat on the wonderful Pembrokeshire coast was planned for mid-September and was to be led by Lynn Busfield who last led the retreat in 2009. Like so many good things, it had to be cancelled because of the pandemic.

Our dates for 2021 are September 14th to 17th. We have given those who booked last year priority booking this year, Lynn has agreed to lead us on a Celtic theme, and we hope once again to enjoy this chance to step aside and refresh.

Barney Rosedale

Love Marlborough Kids Meals

Our objective for LMKM is to reach out and bring the Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the wider Marlborough community and a conduit into St Mary's church family. By providing hot meals and support to families in need, we are involving the local community in extending the Love Marlborough mission of St Mary's Church. Marlborough people are amazing and very community-minded, and people have come forward to volunteer in numbers I really was not expecting. Everyone understands the need, in spite of Marlborough's prosperous image, we have communities struggling with the same deprivation as other towns, just not as visible, until you begin to look for it. It is important that we make no judgement of those who come for help. We don't use any criteria to decide who gets fed because we don't want anyone to feel they can't come forward. We won't tell anyone else about their situation and we won't ask them to prove they need help. We want to reach all the families in this area who need help. A hot family meal is delivered twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays to 40 families. No Fuss – No Forms – No Referrals ... just meals, for families who need them.

Cook Teams

The preparation of meals for families began in August 2020 with just three volunteers. The project began in a commercial kitchen but then relocated to a kitchen within a Church Hall. This meant learning how to use different equipment and creating a workplace which was Covid compliant. As numbers of families requiring help increased so too did the demand for more volunteers. We purchased new equipment, such as knives and chopping boards, and were loaned two commercial catering ovens. A second kitchen also became available at Christchurch, the Wesley Hall kitchen, this offer was enthusiastically given and gratefully received. We have had to adapt how we prepare, cook and serve the meals in adherence with Covid guidelines, as directed by government policies, latterly ensuring only two chefs in the kitchen with one volunteer to act as a conduit between the kitchen and the delivery teams. We have recently been able to use just one larger catering kitchen whilst in

lockdown. Our volunteers have been amazing and adapted quickly to the training and guidance of our team leaders, giving up their valuable time. Some have gained qualifications in food safety and hygiene whilst others have built new friendships. Feedback received from the teams delivering the Friday roast chicken dinners has been fantastic!

Lisa Eyre – Friday Cook Team Lead

Delivery Teams

Since the project started formally in August 2020, the Delivery Team has seen 17 volunteers deliver up to 40 meals, twice a week. We deliver on two routes in Marlborough town and three routes out of town, as far as Bedwyn, Baydon and Avebury. As Team Coordinator, I organise delivery rotas and ensure the cooking team have the correct numbers and dietary requirements each week. Deliveries are made using large insulated hot boxes for hot meals, with additional items such as bread and eggs to supplement other family meals. Each meal (often several items balanced on a tray) is delivered to the door, and we have developed practical COVID secure processes to ensure volunteers and families do not have unnecessary physical contact. When new team members join, we operate an initial buddy system, to introduce them to families and also to locate some addresses- the dark winter evenings were a challenge at times! Delivery team members also provide a friendly face (behind a mask!) and our regular team of 10 have established relationships with families, without being intrusive or encouraging dependence. Many members of the delivery team would not have otherwise met each other or worked together; the project has brought together people from different backgrounds and a team with a common sense of purpose and service to their neighbours in need.

Catherine Williams – Delivery Team Co-ordinator

Family Liaison

When I first joined the team, our aim was to help families struggling with food poverty, particularly highlighted by the pandemic. Whilst this is still a focus, we are now engaging with and talking to our families about how we can help them to become more self-sufficient -by helping them to learn to cook, store cupboard ingredients etc. Our main aim is to stand alongside the families in these unprecedented times. Whilst these times are hugely challenging, it has been a privilege to see how communities have grown and come together.

Workshops

The plan to deliver workshops and support families into independence took a backseat as lockdown after lockdown put paid to meeting however distantly. The space allowed us to further refine the Transition phase and bring on board a nutritionist and a dietician to assist with the programme. The Rotary Club of Marlborough have helped fund the Store cupboard boxes vital to this phase, they included pantry basics like herbs, spices, flour, rice, tins etc, as well as a stockpot, scales, measuring jugs and more.

Family liaison will also be involved in supporting the families through a 6 to 8 week programme designed to offer the tools and skills they need to feel confident about the future.

Volunteers

It has been very encouraging to see the amazing response from church and community to offer to volunteer for the project. Many different people with a variety of different skills and talents have volunteered during the time the project has been running; for 7 months since the very beginning of August 2020. At the start we needed leaflet and publicity people and then cooks and drivers. A total of 66 people so far have volunteered to help - some held in reserve to support where needed. There are three main cook teams- Tuesday team, Friday team, pudding club team (new since January) and the delivery team. Many people have worked tirelessly often in difficult situations when we had to move kitchens, or deal with power cuts, inadequate space, or oven power, and sometimes have to find houses in the

dark. Behind the scenes there have also been fundraisers and admin co-ordinators. The volunteers remain cheerful and faithful in all their work. We are so incredibly grateful for all the work that has been done. Thank you all.

Caroline Philips – Volunteer Co-ordinator

Fundraising

1. Currently applying for £1000. grant from Wiltshire Area Board towards the purchase of a commercial grade Combi

Oven

2. Raising awareness through our website, local social media, local radio interviews and publicity to generate

donations from local individuals and businesses, including Christmas poster distribution.

3. Generous support of food donations from many local businesses and schools.

4. Next round of public funding applications will start in April.

On start-up we successfully received initial funding from Wiltshire Community Foundation and Marlborough Town

Council. We will apply for second round funding in April.

Martin and Christine Barnett Fundraising team

The Future

2021 will be all about the transition phase. Our families do not want to exist on handouts, and we want to see them thrive even in these times. All of the families spoken to are positive about the workshops and supporting videos and phone support. The workshops will be offered to specific geographical neighbourhoods in order to foster communities who help and support one another. As always, our amazing volunteers are committed to their futures.

Kymee Cleasby Founder

Devotion Ecumenical Youth Project

Last year's plans to employ a youth worker through Wiltshire Youth For Christ, (WYFC), were put on hold due to the pandemic.

I am pleased to report that Devotion Ecumenical Youth Project is now fully registered as a Charity, with 4 Trustees.

DEYP is developing positive discussions with WYFC. It is hoped that the talks will result in the recruitment of a WYFC Youth Worker, based in Marlborough, starting in September 2021.

The plan is to work alongside 11-17 year olds, mainly from St John's School, through the Devotion youth evenings that were held before the new set up, with a new initiative of providing strong counselling and support on mental health, which will probably be even more needed now than before.

Stephen Skinner

