



**The Strand Church, Dawlish**  
(United Reformed)



**ANNUAL REPORTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR 2011**

## **MINISTER'S REPORT**

2011 was one of the most significant years in our church life , with many changes which have helped to develop the life of the congregation.

It all began in January with three months work to remove the pews from the ground floor of the church and most of the gallery. 108 chairs, the majority very comfortable, were purchased for Sunday worship, allowing a flexibility pews do not allow. So we have moved around the space, sometimes around tables for café worship, occasionally in circles for an informal service. We were able to experiment with a Hot Cross Bun Service on Good Friday with many children present. Most people appreciate the togetherness of seat rather than being spread out in the pews, and worship has become less formal.

This change was the first step in transitioning the building into a community centre, serving the town. The result has been very encouraging. The nave (renamed the auditorium to emphasise its multiple use) has hosted a range of activities from public consultations by the local authority to a full scale dinner party at which the Lord Lieutenant was Guest of Honour. There have been two major art exhibitions, innumerable sales (we estimate about £10,000 has been raised for charities in the building in the nine months from April 2011) in addition to New Year's Eve Céilidh, several public meetings and live television screenings of the Royal Wedding and Wimbledon finals.

The first formal step in the transition was when the congregation asked the Strand Community Trust to manage the whole building from July 2011, and this will be complete when the building is leased to the Trust early in 2012. The trust is able to draw resources from beyond the congregation to support the growing number of community events held in the building. Our congregation, which is fairly aged, would have struggled to take advantage of the potential of the alterations to the building. The trust takes complete responsibility for the running and maintenance of the building, with the congregation paying for the use of the premises.

There is very widespread approval in the community for the alterations which have been done to the building and for the work of the community centre, and this has resulted in significant grants from the county, district and town councils. It has resulted in a small number of new worshippers, unfortunately matched by members whose health no longer allows them to attend. We have not as yet experimented with mid-week services, though the Bible Study group has enjoyed tackling some of the difficult books of the Old and New Testaments. As a congregation we will take responsibility for the street chapel when it is opened, and this may be the most effective way of developing an intercessory prayer ministry in the community.

The final major change in 2011 was the decision of Rosemary Holmes to take a sabbatical. Rosemary has been at the centre of almost every aspect of church life for very many years, including as Treasurer and then Church Secretary. Her work went far beyond these roles, including bookings secretary, cleaner and flower arranger. Her great knowledge of the building and local people has been of immense value. We are still learning to cope without Rosemary – it has taken between six and eight people to do what she has done. We have missed her.

*Roger Whitehead*  
Minister

## **CHOIR REPORT**

This has been a year of routine for the Choir, but it was good to be back in the main Church again after the Stage 1 refurbishment of the building. We are small in numbers but we enjoy the Fellowship when we have practices, and leading the singing of the hymns. Also singing Anthems at times.

Thank you to Elwyn for the musical arrangements that he does and to Rosemary for her help

*Joan Jones*  
Choir Secretary

## **MISSION AND OUTREACH REPORT**

### **Opening up to the community**

It is now nearly twelvemonths since we moved back into the Church from the Hall for Sunday worship. In spite of initial teething problems with the hearing system, we now seem to have worked out the best places in which the speakers, microphones, and people should be placed so that everyone can hear. And we soon discovered how good the acoustics are for music of all sorts - voices, piano, organ and other instruments. Consequently the auditorium is now in demand for different kinds of concerts. Moreover, the removal of the pews has made the space desirable for a number of exhibitions, flower festivals, and table top sales as well as public meetings.

There are now coffee mornings in the foyer and auditorium at least three times a week, and the organizers are delighted by the way in which visitors and local people come in off The Strand to sample their wares. In other words we have begun to fulfill our desire to open up the building to the community by providing a venue in the heart of Dawlish which different groups of people wish to use.

### **Development with the Strand Centre**

During the past year, two Luncheon Groups have been started in the Strand Hall, and this has enabled us to work with Oakwood Court College for students with learning disabilities who help with one luncheon, a coffee morning and an afternoon cream tea, thereby enabling some of them to learn how to relate to people who are comparative strangers.

The Third Age Project, a Dance Class and the Keep Fit Group continue to use the Strand Hall on a regular basis and this building is also in demand for Birthday Parties etc. The Strand Community Trust has taken over the responsibility for most of these activities.

### **Church Fellowship**

The Church Fellowship continues its direct Mission and Outreach work through the weekly Fellowship Hour, Toddlers Group and Bible Study and the fortnightly Knit and Chat Group. Members continue to support

Christian Aid and Fairtrade events. (Please see separate reports on some of these activities.) And during the year we have had special Services in support of Commitment for Life and Racial Justice.

### **Ecumenical**

Working with the Methodists we have monthly Iona Services on the last Sunday of the month, and joint Services for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and over the Christmas and New Year period. Messy Church continues to flourish.

We join with other Churches in United Services for Advent, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Women's World Day of Prayer, Good Friday, the Carnival and Carols on the Lawn when the town is 'lighted up' for Christmas.

### **People**

It is also good to note that, although we have lost some valued members over the past twelvemonths, some new people are beginning to join with us on a more regular basis. We hope that they will find a welcoming and spiritual home among us.

*Jean Potter*

Mission and Outreach Correspondent

### **KEEP FIT**

A group of ladies meets each Thursday in Strand Hall to exercise. The exercises last about fifty minutes followed by a cup of tea and a chat. Not only do we "Keep Fit" but we have become friends.

There are only three members belonging to our Church. I would be delighted if more U.R.C. members came. Please think about it. Remember a healthy body keeps a healthy mind.

June Wilson

*Leader*

## **KNIT AND CHAT REPORT YEAR**

Another good year for Knit and Chat. We have welcomed new comers to our group and enjoyed the company of our regular members. The out - knitters have continued to support us and we regularly exchange their jumpers and blankets for more wool!

We have a good number of parcels waiting to be collected and taken to Mulanji when the time comes. Each time FOMO receives our goods a letter is sent thanking us for our support and telling us more about their ever increasing work on behalf of the orphans. Their website is excellent and well worth looking at. [www.fomo.co.uk](http://www.fomo.co.uk).

Ian Potter and his students came again this November and gave a very interesting report to a well attended meeting. They spoke of their visit to Malawi and showed pictures of the ever expanding work there.

We are knitting the usual jumpers and small blankets, which are always needed. We are also knitting more Comfort Dolls and small purses for keeping treasured possessions in. All are knitted in carefully chosen colours that blend together or contrast, in order to delight our children and give them pleasure.

We also send the usual cheque of £50 and would like to say thank you to those who contributed money for FOMO. during this last year. We are grateful to all who support us in any way at all.

We meet again this year for knitting and chatting both of which we have great time doing. Why not come and join us. If you can't knit you can always chat! Twice a month on a Tuesday 2-4 pm in the foyer. And there is a cup of tea as well.

*Roma Hibberd*

Leader

This year's theme is We Are All Church Together. These reports show how diverse our congregation's interests are; we hope they help each attender and group realise we all matter. Without one another we would all be impoverished.

## **FRIENDSHIP HOUR**

Sadly our numbers have diminished to four — (on a good day!)

We have continued to enjoy fellowship together listening to various readings etc. but would be delighted to have a few new members. We were sorry to lose Gwen to a flower arrangement class- but this means that we can all enjoy the arrangements she prepares for church, together with Marie Coulthard and Eric Carless (the new flower arrangement group).

However we are very pleased to welcome Janet Garland to our meetings. She has given us some very interesting accounts of events in her varied career. We look forward to hearing more from her.

Can you help by joining us on Thursday afternoon at 2.30 pm; we would love to have you.

*Jan Adams*

Leader

## **CHRISTIAN AID REPORT**

A total amount of £10,945.55 was raised in 2011 for Christian Aid week. £233 was our contribution. Geoff and I would like to thank our small band of collectors for the sterling work they did during the House to House collections.

As always, there is a general lack of helpers for the door to door collections. We appreciate that it is not always a very fulfilling job, but if there is anyone who would be willing to join our small band of helpers, we would be very grateful. If you are interested, please let either Geoff or I know. Christian Aid week is the Sunday 13th — Saturday, 19th May 2012.

Thank you.

*Geoff and Pat Willis*

Church Christian Aid organisers

## **CHURCH YOUTH WORK**

### **MESSY CHURCH**

Dawlish Messy Church continues to meet once a month on a Friday in the Methodist Church Hall from 3.45 to 6.00. We have lots of craft, games, worship and end with a meal together. It's been a messy and fun filled year! However in recent months the numbers have become



large and in one way this is great but it makes for a hot room and difficulty for children and their grown-ups to access all the activities. We are thinking about how to address this.

In August we have two mornings of Holiday Club. Last year we went into Space!

### **ALL STARS**

On a Sunday morning our children's group is small and infrequent. We often have children on special occasions such as Mothering Sunday or Easter. However, we are ready and willing when they do come! We usually have a Bible story, some craft work, a drink and a biscuit.

### **COFFEE AND KIDS**

This group started on a Thursday morning in the autumn term with one or two children and has steadily grown to a regular 8 or 10. Several parents have said they like to come because it's a quieter group than some. Also several grown ups say that they come to the coffee morning because they like to see the children play or enjoy their singing session! Although we do not charge for the session the parents are expected to pay for their own coffee or tea cakes. At Christmas someone kindly gave us money to buy all the children a present which was really appreciated.

*Marie Whitehead*

Church Youth Leader