

**Christ Church, Warwick**  
**Presbytery Report – October, 2020**  
**Prepared by Doug Frith**

**Overview**

About eighteen months ago our Kirk Session determined that we wanted to concentrate on three pillars - Congregation, Community and Worship and that we:-

“Want to be known in the community as being a place FOR the community”.

The Covid pandemic has created an amazing opportunity for us to put our faith into action. So much need has developed in the local community with loss of income and families desperate in ways they never imagined.

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**Congregation**

Right at the start of the pandemic and lockdown (politically correctly called ‘Shelter in Place’ in Bermuda!) our Congregational Life Committee set about contacting all church members to determine any specific needs. Happily these were few.

**Community**

This is where we have had an amazing opportunity to offer real help. As our airport closed and tourism shut down a local hotel started preparing packaged meals for distribution to families in need. We were selected as a distribution centre. It was immediately obvious the 25 meals each day which we were being supplied with were well short of the community need so on 3<sup>rd</sup> April we started cooking meals. We are now into October and are continuing to supply in the region of 200 meals per day, 7 days per week. The real need does not appear to be going away any time soon. While some people are back to work, other temporary layoffs are becoming permanent.

A small team led by our Outreach Committee Convener, David Thompson, have put together an efficient operation to organize meal recipients, plan delivery routes, purchase and procure food, organizing the volunteers every day, coordinate with other local agencies and, through local publicity, have managed to build increasing enthusiasm for this important work.



*Preparing donated pumpkin for roasting*

Community support has been outstanding. One local company arranged for their employees to man the kitchen for one week per month, local farmers have donated fresh

produce, a call to the community for volunteers received a great response (many without any church connection) and cash donations in excess of \$200,000 to support our work have been received. Additionally, every day people visit and drop off home made deserts and other items. We have also been distributing donated grocery vouchers to some families to assist them in taking care of themselves. Unfortunately this supply is no longer available so we are funding these ourselves (from cash donations) for the time being at a cost of about \$4,000/month.



*Healthy – roasting pepper and pumpkin*

In addition to the ‘Feeding Programme’, when we went into Shelter in Place the government rounded up our homeless population and housed them in a school. There was no provision for laundry so we filled that need using our Loads of Love laundry facility and three or four times per week we received bags of laundry to wash and return. After the Shelter in Place was lifted and the temporary shelter closed we resumed our usual laundry and shower programme on Saturday mornings for mainly homeless people. We have seen about a 50% increase in utilization compared with pre-Covid. We are considering how we can increase our space and add additional machines.



*Part of our laundry and shower facility*

As we look to the future we are expecting to continue the Feeding Programme through until at least the end of this year. We are also hoping to encourage both volunteers and recipients to worship with us as we commence ‘in church’ services again.

### **Worship**

When the restrictions started, recorded services were prepared and available on our web site. Meanwhile our Christ Church Youth (Sunday School) met each Sunday via Zoom. In June as the restrictions were being lifted through a phased approach we began holding socially distanced outdoor services in the Manse grounds. These were well received with about 50 attending each week.



*Shade for Alistair and others during Service*

As we reached peak hurricane season we had two hurricanes one week apart and needed to move back indoors. We have decided to continue indoor services with significant restrictions. We are socially distanced in pews, wear masks for the whole service, read the words of the hymns rather than singing them and have shortened services with no socializing afterwards.

### **Other News:-**

#### **Manse Sale**

The sale of the Manse was completed during early summer and the new owners have agreed the Minister can continue to live there, rent free, until January 2021. A small committee has been appointed to seek suitable rented accommodation. The minister's suggestions that it should have a nice view, swimming pool and be located near a golf course are being taken into consideration – but will not feature in the final decision!

#### **Church Database**

A new cloud based database of member records was selected and data transfer carried out during the past few months and it has just gone live. Members are able to log in and update all their own contact information and set tags about what their interests are so they can receive focused communications. This is a major step forward for committee conveners who can log in remotely and send communications to their members without the need to maintain their own e-mail address lists. It will also greatly improve the stewardship process we started almost two years ago. It will also allow us to comply with personal privacy legislation in Bermuda.

#### **Finances**

With no services and hence no open plate collections for several months, loss of rental income from our church halls and no church fair this year, our Treasurer has advised that the surplus he had budgeted for the year is not going to be realized. However, the past stewardship efforts plus having promoted online giving has allowed our income to hold up surprisingly well and we anticipate we will break even financially for the year. A result we will be pleased with.

#### **Bermuda Overseas Missions**

We had planned a trip to Brazil this summer to work with Habitat for Humanity. Sadly the Covid pandemic totally prevented this from taking place. We are tentatively planning a fourth trip to Malawi in July 2021.

We are continuing to sponsor and support school children in the Mulanje region of Malawi – 87 at the present time. The focus has been particularly on girls who frequently miss out on the opportunity of education when families are forced to choose which of their children will go to secondary school. One of the graduating students we sponsored has been picked to go onto college to study engineering as her grades were exceptional.

#### **Local School Uniforms**

We have traditionally assisted financially to provide school uniforms through another local charity. While the need seemed very secondary in the current situation where families cannot afford food it was clear that the need still existed. Happily we were able to assist as usual due to fundraising carried out early in the year before Covid.

## Looking to the Future

Two years ago we reduced the number of elders on the Kirk Session to 15 with each serving a 3 year term subject to one additional term. This has led to a sense of urgency amongst Kirk Session members to make things happen quickly. Last year we held planning sessions on how we wanted to develop our congregation and where we saw Christ Church in the future.

### **Youth worker**

Our plan concluded that we wished to hire a youth worker. We are very keen to expand programmes and activities relevant to young people and to significantly grow this segment of our congregation. We believe the time is now right to move forward with this and are targeting January to have the position filled. We would like to encourage the many additional people we are currently interacting with to become more permanently connected with our church, particularly families with young children benefiting from or assisting with the Feeding Programme.

We have great teams and the current enthusiasm is very much due to the team conveners who are:-

- David Thompson – Outreach (leads the outreach programmes including the Feeding Programme);
- Arthur Wightman – Treasurer (put together the Stewardship campaign now entering its third year);
- Cindy Campbell – Congregational Life (organizes programmes for members and leader of the database implementation)
- Martha Kirkland – Nurture (runs the youth programmes, Bible Studies and spearheading the Youth Leader search)

Finally thanks to our tireless Minister, Alistair Bennett, who has consistently been on the front lines doing everything from meeting meal recipients to peeling potatoes to washing greasy baking trays to delivering meals (along with Judi) to spending hours in the laundry. His visible involvement and commitment has greatly inspired others.



*Volunteers dishing up meals.*