

TWENTY TWENTY FOUR

The year at Goffs Oak Methodist Church

One of the key changes in styles of worship brought about by Covid and lockdown was in evidence at Goffs Oak early in the new year—the use of live streaming and virtual meetings. Apart from the traditional ‘face-to-face’ worship in services and meetings at the church, we continued our Tuesday Zoom prayer meetings and the live streaming of services to enable a home ‘congregation’ to ‘virtually’ attend morning services. In this way we were able to hit the new year running.



Safeguarding

We were also quick off the mark to keep up to date with ‘safeguarding’ practices in our church. The Methodist Church nationally is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry. Safeguarding is about the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will:-

- promote the welfare of children, young people and adults
- work to prevent abuse from occurring
- seek to protect and respond well to those that have been abused

Accordingly we had a well-attended session on January 17th for people using the church to learn or renew their knowledge of the practical implementation of the principles above.

Community Hub

Thanks to David’s hard work, we continue to have a healthy list of lettings to local groups who make good use of the building. All this strengthens our role as a community hub and is helped enormously by the presence of the Food Pantry run by Christina, which operates on Wednesdays and dovetails nicely with our Coffee Morning on the same day.

Every Wednesday, between 9.30am and 3.00pm, this building is a ‘Welcome Space’



From 9.30am to midday at Goffs Oak Methodist Church

Everyone is welcome. There is no charge, just the offer of a hot drink and a biscuit, and an opportunity to relax in the warm!

Feel free to just sit, read, knit, chat, whatever...

FOOD PANTRY

Fresh and ambient food and household essentials to help with the rising cost of living.

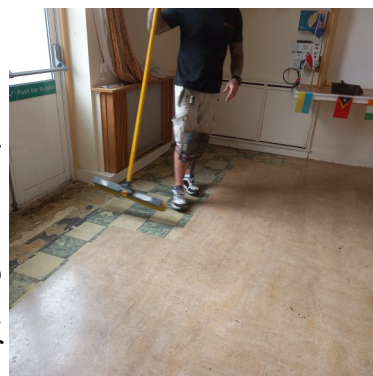


Wednesdays, 1 - 3pm
Goffs Oak Methodist Church, Newgatestreet Road,
Goffs Oak EN7 5SS
From 5th October 2022



Church Maintenance

Conditions underfoot took a turn for the better during 2024 when, stage by stage, Nigel organised flooring replacement in the hall, vestibule and corridor areas. As he always says, looking after the entire property of church and grounds is rather like painting the Forth Railway Bridge near Edinburgh—no sooner have you finished the job, it's time to start at the beginning again! This year's project took most of the year to set up and complete. First came the main hall floor, which was beginning to show signs of becoming dangerous after its 25 years of work providing safe walking, running, exercising, playing and much more.



Before work on the floor could be started, however, the doors had to be cut down due to the increased height of the floor. Some of the old flooring had to be taken up, revealing the old black and white tiled floor that was originally laid in 1957! Also new floor protection pads were made using old carpet tiles. All had to be washed during the summer in a paddling pool in Nigel's garden! Then the carpet cleaner was used to get the worst of the dirt off them. He then had them scattered all over his garden so they could dry before he could make the floor protectors. All this has had to be repeated so that the kitchen corridor could be ready to be laid during the first week of 2025.

Other jobs during the year included repairing toilets, painting walls, re-pointing some of the outside walls, painting the outside back wall of the church (the wall that looks over our neighbours in Wesley Close) and re-painting the outside main hall window frames.

A church property steward's job is never done! Many thanks to all those who have helped in various ways through out the year.

Special Services

In February we held the Girl Guides' World Thinking Day service, when our Goffs Oak Guides delivered a service based around the 2024 Thinking Day theme, Our World, Our Thriving Future: The Environment and Global Poverty.

We used one of our 'local arrangement' services to put on a '**Café Church**' style of worship. During this service in April we explored our understanding of who Jesus is, using materials from the Junior Alpha course, whilst enjoying coffee and a variety of tasty delights.



The Guides talk the congregation through the Thinking Day theme in March

Our **Holiday Club Service** in July was a 'taster' presentation outlining the Holiday Club theme 'Champions!' (*more about this later in booklet*).

There was a large turnout for our **Harvest Festival Service** in September. Very generous donations of food were made from all sections of the church and a large despatch was sent to the Whitechapel Mission along with a donation of £200.

In October we were overjoyed to welcome Isabel and Mike King to our Church Anniversary Service. Mike led the service, assisted by Isabel.

For our **Gift Service** in November we welcomed Lee Routledge of Chexs, a local charity whose aim is to help parents develop stronger family relationships by creating opportunities to improve parenting confidence in supporting their children's growth, confidence and ultimately their individual goals. Lee gave us a detailed account of what and how the charity works.



Lee Routledge of the CHEXS charity telling us all about it at our Gift Service

Saxophone and piano concert

To complete a memorable Church Anniversary weekend, we were privileged to have Joanne's saxophone tutor, Alastair Penman, accompanied by Jonathan Pease. They delivered a wonderful recital on October 19th to a very appreciative audience in the church.



Quiz nights

Some of our most successful social events in recent years have been the quiz nights. During lockdown, they proved to be a superb way of getting people together on Zoom, at a time when they couldn't meet in church. Jacqui, Alison and team laid on two church hall events in 2024, on April 27 and September 28, both with large attendances and raising valuable revenue for the church. The September quiz was attended by some of our Guides, whose hard work producing cakes raised part of the £500 total raised during the evening. The money was well spent on a new fridge and a trolley to store the blue chairs in the hall.

New library

Well, actually a portable bookcase/trolley for fiction books. These can be purchased for 50p. Its home is the vestibule, but can be moved anywhere in the building, if needed.

Charity Coffee Mornings

The first of these in mid-May was very well-attended and, along with a sale of goods, raised £325 for Christian Aid. Our MacMillan Coffee Morning on October 30 provided £275 for the charity.

Russ Leybourne

After a very long illness, Russ died in June. Before moving to Frinton-on-Sea with Frances in 2020, Russ had been a stalwart backroom supporter of our Church. For many years he had helped with building maintenance, particularly with the heating. He also supported Frances when she was responsible for church lettings. Our thoughts and prayers are with Frances and her family.



Andrea leaves

We said a sad farewell in August to Andrea, our Pastoral Secretary, who has moved to Somerset. She has done wonderful work for us and we will miss her enormously. We wish her well.

Papa's Ministry extension

We are very pleased that Papa has been offered a two year extension to his ministry in the circuit which was due to end in the summer of 2025. For the moment, however, he is bearing an extra responsibility as acting Circuit Superintendent standing in for Paul Weary. Our prayers are with Papa as he temporarily takes on the massive extra workload.

Leaflet distribution

Nigel and Liam have continued leaflet drops to the new houses in the area, as well as some of the older neighbouring streets. It is a tough job for just the two of them and they would welcome some assistance this year to carry on the excellent work of publicising the Sunday services and other activities we offer in our church.

Sunday Club

It has been a very demanding year for the Sunday Club team of Jacqui, Barbara, Alison and occasional assistants. Whilst numbers have increased from 2023, attendance has rarely been consistent. Not knowing which children will appear and what age groups they will be has made planning for any given Sunday very difficult, It means they have to be prepared for any number of children and every age group. They have done this admirably and deserve the highest praise possible for the devotion they have shown to the children. We pray 2025 will bring more children and more regular attendance.

New chairs

It was one of those offers you couldn't refuse. Our neighbours in the Herts and Essex Borders Ecumenical Area had two churches closing (Epping and North Weald Methodist Churches) and the resulting surplus chairs (enough to fill our church) were offered to us



free of charge! It's been estimated that to buy these chairs as new would cost about £10,000, so we are very grateful to our neighbours in Essex.

Remote links

To a great extent due to the hard work of David, we have continued to link up remotely with the members, adherents and the public at large. Our services are streamed live on YouTube and then placed onto our Facebook page. The WhatsApp page is visited regularly and is an excellent medium to pass on information, exchange views, post photographs and, no less importantly, have a good chat! Zoom is also used extensively. Our prayer group use it to meet remotely every Tuesday at 10.00pm and the Bible Study group Zoom together on specified Wednesday evenings.

Holiday Club full of Champions!

For one week at the end of July and the beginning of August, our church hall became the headquarters of a group of 26 children with many adult helpers exploring how Jesus 'ran the race' for God. It was the apostle Paul who said that being a Christian is like running a race towards God and that Jesus was the ultimate champion. In looking at how Jesus ran the race, we looked at five important aspects of his life which could show us how to run our own race towards God:-

Direction - being focussed and having your eyes fixed on God; **Distraction** - staying on the true course, despite distractions; **Dedication** - being dedicated to God and asking for guidance as an athlete listens to and puts the coach's advice into practice; **Determination** - Jesus overcame many hurdles, but remained faithful to the race, despite having to face the cross; **Decoration** - Jesus ascended to heaven in victory. He had stayed the course and was exalted in the highest place of all - rather like an athlete winning a gold medal.

To pursue our goal, we looked at some relevant Bible verses and watched short videos about them. We played games, sang songs, had discussions and refreshments, told jokes, laughed at our resident puppets Bert and Lucy, watched a daily drama, wrote prayers, did art and craft work and had great fun in doing so!



Remembrance Sunday

A huge turnout of more than 400 appeared at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday, mirroring similar occasions all over the country. Following a brief service by Papa in church, attended by large numbers of Guides and Brownies and many parents, the congregation walked to the War Memorial to join the assembling multitude for the wreath-laying service. With David masterminding the sound system, the Potters Bar Town Band providing the music and Papa, along with Tom from St James Church, leading the proceedings, Liam laid our Goffs Oak Methodist Church wreath. Afterwards, many came back to our church for refreshments.



Christmas party and Carol Service

We had a busy day on December 15th with a double event programme. Firstly, children from the Holiday Club and Sunday Club had a great time doing craft activities and playing a variety of games. Then they all sat down at a well-stocked table for tea. The highlight was a visit from Father Christmas, who had present for each child. There was very little rest after that as many of the children took part in our Nativity, which was performed during the following Carol Service. I expect the children (and adults) slept soundly that night!



Carols by Torchlight

The weather had the last word on the following Wednesday as heavy rain gave us no option but to transfer this highly anticipated event from the damp War Memorial to the dry church hall. Fortunately contingency plans clicked into action and a seamless transfer took place. Papa and Tom again led the proceedings, with the Potters Bar Town Band putting on a magnificent performance. One aspect of the evening which remained the same was when we all transferred to The Goffs Oak pub who again invited us to sing carols in the bar itself. Everyone was in good voice and Joanne took the collection bucket around the pub clientele adding a good deal to the overall proceeds of £300 which went to Action for Children. Afterwards, the band and singers returned to the church hall for a short concert from the band. A superb spread of mince pies, stollen cake and other seasonal treats was enjoyed by all—along with a cup or two of tea and coffee. *(pictures on next page)*



Christmas Day service

We began the day itself with more than twenty of us enjoying a lovely Christmas Day service led by Papa and Joanne, involving some of our favourite carols, before heading home to continue our own celebrations.

BIG birthdays

During the year we had several big birthdays. I know they are all big, but these really big ones have a zero at the end! Here is the roll of honour, without mentioning the number of decades: Sheila Dorling, Marie Quint, Frances Leybourne, Paul Dakin, Joanne Mead and Papa. Congratulations to them all and may they enjoy many more

Next year and the future

One of our great strengths is that everybody pulls together and it is significant that almost every member has a specific role to play - some have many. With the arrival this year of some new churchgoers, including some from the new houses in the village, we are one small step along the way of increasing our membership. But we need to go further. It is harder to find people to do some of the jobs required to keep a church going at a time when many churches are falling by the wayside due to lack of members and adherents. We must constantly examine what we can offer people in Goffs Oak and adjust where necessary. An injection of young blood, for example, would be wonderful, bearing in mind the current average age of our members. We have an excellent Sunday Club team, who can cater for all children's ages. Their parents, too, would find a lot to interest them within our walls (and outside when the weather suits!). Thanks to Nigel and David (to name but two), we are managing to maintain and improve the church and grounds, despite increasing costs and we are building ever closer links with the people of Goffs Oak through a variety of outreach initiatives, including the steadily growing coffee morning, the Food Pantry and events like 'Carols by Torchlight'.

Last year's new year resolution deserves repeating:-

'We need to find ways of continuing the wonderful work already being done and to attract more people to share the good news'

Bryan King - January 2025



In the church hall



In the pub



Back in the church hall