

Barrow Baptist church



Church Report Review of 2018

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1. Minister's Report



It seems rather strange to be writing my final report as your Lead Minister.

At the end of 2018 I realised that my time as your lead minister was drawing to a close. I felt that I had completed what God had called me to do and that it would be another person who would lead you into the next season. My final service as your lead Minister was on February 3rd 2019 and I look forward to a 'Thank-You' service on the 10th March, when I will have the opportunity to express my thanks and encouragement to you.

Stepping down was not an easy decision, however, it was a decision that was infused with prayer and took many months to reach. Since making the decision I have had a huge sense of peace in the knowledge that I have God's blessing to do this and the time is right for me and the Church.

Over the past three years since you appointed me as your lead minister, there have been many changes and it feels as though we are in a season of blessing. Our desire to be a community church has been blessed, we regularly engage with 400+ people from our community and we enjoy a very positive reputation. Baby Buds, Little Buds, Messy Church, Silver Sports, Tuesday café, WLTDO, Sparks, and Tuesday Live are all thriving. The numbers of those who belong to our worshipping congregation have increased, with new people coming from a broad range of ages, which is beginning to reflect the age profile of the community that we serve.

Our leadership structures have been refreshed with a committed group of Elders and Trustees taking responsibility for the church. Our building has also been upgraded and we are able to use it to effectively serve the church and the community.

We are in a very positive position to press ahead, fixing our eyes on Jesus, proclaiming the good news of his resurrection, and in the power of the Holy Spirit reflecting his love into our village and local area.

It is my hope and prayer that my 'stepping down' will be seen as the start of something, not the end. My prayer is that the church will be a place where disciples can go deeper in their relationship with Jesus, not just by being 'fed' but by 'feeding others'. I pray that we will never stop having an outward looking perspective, encouraging relevant community engagement and being a church where those who do not yet know Jesus can feel they belong, are valued and in a safe place to explore faith.

I trust that the worshipping heartbeat of the Church can be maintained and developed in all its forms – including music, prayer, bible study and personal reflection. As each year passes, I trust that each member will see their spiritual maturity developing in a way that honours God, blesses each other and serves his Kingdom purposes.

I would like to thank you all for the love, support and encouragement that Karen, myself and the girls have received during the past four years. It has been a tough journey at times, but we have always felt that we were honouring God's call to serve Him, the Church and the community. Karen's ministry amongst you will continue while we await God's lead for the next chapter. We look forward to working alongside you and a future Lead Minister. In the mean time we will pray for the Elders, Trustees and for Ben as they hold the church during an interregnum. You are in good hands.

2. Discipleship & Care

Pastoral Care

This Church has long had the reputation of being a caring church, and during the past year much love and care has, again, been willingly given in response to those with practical, emotional and spiritual needs. Our thanks go to the many we know who have provided meals, transport, time to listen and comfort, who have visited the housebound or hospitalised and very importantly who have prayed. We thank those who quietly and faithfully support long term needs, and when we are unaware of what you are doing, the Lord knows.

In the coming year may we even better use our gifts to 'Encourage one another and build each other up' (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and with God's help, love one another in the way Jesus has shown us.

Prayer Ministry

Prayer Ministry on Sundays has gradually changed in response to a growing congregation and it is good that people can respond and receive prayer in several ways – as a group or individually during the service, in addition to coming to the front as before. Also, as people spend time together at the end of the service, it is encouraging to see comfort, encouragement and prayer being shared. We also continue to hold prayer throughout the month with prayer for the week ahead on a Monday morning, church prayers on Tuesday morning and a monthly prayer meeting on a Thursday night.

Growth Groups

Growth groups continue to provide a strong platform for discipleship in study, prayer and practical support. Over this year Lizzie Shuttlewood has felt it time to hand on the oversight of these groups and we are very thankful to her for all she has done to support them. We have a number of groups, some with particular focuses (e.g. Men's, young adult's) and some with a broader mix; there is something for everyone to be a part of. We also joined with other churches in the village for our lent study.

As well as these bigger groups, some also meet as part of prayer triplets who get together for support and accountability with one another. If you are not in a growth group or triplet and would like to be, please speak to one of the elders.

Courses

This year saw the introduction of a marriage course, aimed at strengthening and supporting people in their relationships. We have had a number attend over two courses this year and have received very positive feedback. The night is centred around a meal, cooked by some wonderful volunteers, and video-based teaching is interspersed through the evening. Couples sit on their own table giving them plenty of opportunity for private discussion with their partner. We have also run a couple of Christianity explored courses giving people an opportunity to find out more about faith.

Services

Our regular Sunday services are well attended and we continue to offer a varied evening programme which includes communion, evening praise, Ignite and Messy Church. From September we changed the order of how these fall in the month to better accommodate the kids activities outside of the holidays. We are blessed to have a number of people that serve us in worship including through playing instruments, song and prayer. Our music group includes a wide age range and we are pleased that more youth have been able to serve us in worship on Sunday mornings alongside those that are a little older.

3. Children & Youth

Sunday School

It is a joy to see young children in our fellowship and this year we adapted our Sunday school to better suit them; we have split into a creche and a group for primary school children. Numbers continue to fluctuate week by week but we are pleased that each week we are able to speak into the lives of the children in our midst.

Messy Church

Messy church continues to be very popular with around 20 families attending each month. This provides a link between activities, such as Baby Buds, Little Buds, Who Let The Dads Out and Sparks, with our worshipping community. Each month we have a range of activities including crafts, games and food, come together for worship and a bible story, and we finish by eating together in an increasingly busy Gap. We are so grateful for the team who put a lot of time into providing all the activities and cooking.

Baby Buds

We continue to see more new faces at our Baby Buds group which provides a space free from older children, where parents can relax in the company of those in similar situations. As these babies get older the families can then transition into Little Buds. It is a great opportunity to be able to support new parents at what is often an unsettling time.

Little Buds

Little Buds continues to grow in popularity, a testament to the great work the team is doing. We have now filled our Monday session and Tuesdays remain fairly busy as well. We have around 120 families on our registers, which can be a challenging number, but a privilege to be able to serve these families and share something of God with them. Our hope for 2019 is that more volunteers may be able to step forward who are able to sit and chat and build relationships with these families.

Sparks

In 2018 we made the decision to stop Buddies, our after-school group for 4-7 year olds. We replaced this with a Friday evening group for the same age. Sparks is an hour of games and crafts with a break for refreshments and a chance to talk about faith. We have been humbled by the response of the kids to this time and they are showing their understanding through their prayers and answers. We are pleased to already having a regular 7/8 children each week. For the time being we have stopped Kidzone, a Friday night group for 7-11 yr olds. This was in part due to low numbers and a recognition that a majority of children we deal with are not in this age bracket. We hope to restart something similar in the future, as the children we are in contact with get older.

Youth

We have seen a lot of exciting things over the past year. Highlights include a new group, Ignition and Soul Survivor. After reviewing engagement with week-night youth groups we decided to close the current groups (Step up & Tuesday Youth) over the summer and form a new Sunday night group for Secondary age young people (11-18). This has been successful and we engage with an average of 7/8 youth every fortnight for discussion around the Christian response to life issues and encouragement in their own faith walk.

We also continue the Sunday morning group for 11-16 which covers more bible text based topics. We held an Ignition event on a Sunday afternoon in March to provide some more in depth discussion and social time and have held a number of social events throughout the year. During the summer holidays, four of our youth went to Soul Survivor, a Christian youth festival, where they were able to engage with many people their age in worship, teaching, prayer and fun activities. It was a joy to see two of our youth choose to follow God at this event.

4. Seniors

Seniors' Events

2018 has been a year of experimenting with a different structure of events from the established monthly pattern of Luncheon Club over the previous 34 years! Our aim, to share the love of Jesus into the village community has not changed. We are committed to establish relationships with Seniors through hospitality, kindness, visits and prayer. To this end we have held two dances which are always popular, and great fun, even for those who are unable to participate on the dance floor. The Easter Banquet was a great success, during which Ben (dressed as a Roman, and wearing a toga!) presented the Easter story from the perspective of the centurion at the crucifixion. We sang Easter songs, and great questions were explored. September saw the Harvest banquet; and the final event was the Seniors' Christmas Lunch which was followed by an afternoon of carols and Christmas reflections with 'Tuesday Live'. A busy year.

Holiday at Home

This remains as popular as ever, and is a good opportunity to spend time in 'holiday' activities. It is available to all over 60s in the village. We started our holiday with a walk. The group set out together, and some walked for half an hour, others for an hour. Those who preferred to stay 'at base' spent their time chatting, sorting answers to a quiz, or a jigsaw or watching film footage of past events. On Wednesday afternoon we enjoyed a musical extravaganza followed by afternoon tea. Lindsay Ord entertained us by playing delightful music from the shows, and other well-known favourites; including a sing along and a quiz along the lines of 'Name that tune'. On Friday we met for lunch, followed by an afternoon of varied activities, the first being 'chairobics'. Claire Lidstone kindly gave us a free session of fun movements to encourage our mobility. There were other physical activities on offer throughout the afternoon, plus bag making, knitting or crocheting poppies, and banner making. Hand massage and nail painting was also available, and much appreciated, Some people prefer just to chat, and refreshments were served to all throughout the afternoon. Any new ideas for future activities would be welcome!

Tuesday Live

Tuesday Live is church for seniors, on Tuesday afternoons in term time, followed by tea and fellowship. Our aim is to provide a place for seniors to worship, to encourage them in their walk with the Lord, to help them recognise their place in the church community, and to support fellowship among the group. The service lasts about an hour, and consists of sung worship and reflection, intercessory prayers, and a message from a visiting speaker, either from our own or neighbouring churches, or visitors from charities and other organisations. We were pleased to be joined by other seniors for our Christmas service.

Inevitably, but sadly, some members have passed away. Also, some members are physically no longer able to join us, and our aim is to support them pastorally in their homes. This really needs a larger team than we have in order for us to be consistent. But we have been encouraged by welcoming some new members, and had the joy of seeing someone declare their faith through baptism.

Silver Sports

Silver Sports is run on Friday mornings in the Gap. It provides an opportunity for people to partake in table tennis, carpet bowls and darts. It is open for anyone who is free that morning to join in with the activities. Recently, the Church has purchased a Pool Table from a Legacy which offers another activity. Table Tennis continues to be the most popular activity and a third table has now been purchased. This year numbers have grown to around twenty people on most mornings. It has been a great opportunity to invite friends from quiz nights and other contacts. It is a comfortable setting providing friendship and enjoyment.

5. Men & Women

Men's Work

We had another positive year in 2018 – the men's Growth Group continues each week, starting with a coffee and chat and then splitting into two groups for the study section. The level of honesty and openness is brilliant and the guys feel a genuine accountability to each other.

In June, a group headed off to The Gathering, a great weekend as usual and, in addition, a second group of guys went to the Hope and Purpose Conference in November – both run by CVM – the events were a chance to recharge and spend time with friends, but also to be challenged to be the men God made us to be. As always, thank you to those who support our men's work.

Who Let The Dads Out

The group is going very well, we're getting new dads each month and regularly get 40-45 dads and kids. New dads always comment what a great idea it is and seem genuinely grateful that we provide the opportunity for them to spend time with their children and get to know other dads. Whilst the Christian content is limited, it does break down the barriers of coming into the church building and we do see a number of the dads coming to Messy Church with the whole family. There is a small dedicated team who put in a shift every month, but we could do with one or two more guys who would be willing to come along and help out. We meet 1st Saturday of each month, 9-11am, if you able to help out, please speak to Ed Dring

Ladies Nights

In November, we held the first of our ladies' evenings. We had a pudding & prosecco night which was well attended by ladies of all ages, these are great events to mix with one another and get to know each other more. Our thanks go to the team that organised this, and we look forward to a range of events to come in 2019.

6. Social

Tuesday Cafe

We praise God for Tuesdays in the life of the church. Lunches are enjoyed by Little Buds families; a lively time with parents, grandparents, carers and their children, and the more senior friends arrive a little later to have their lunch before going into Tuesday Live. Others choose just to come and join us for lunch, a time of refreshment and to connect with others. Thanks to all those dedicated team members that work week by week to make this Café a success and make sure a real welcome is given to all. We are grateful to God for His enabling.

Summer Events

Over the summer while our normal groups stopped we held a few different activities. As well as Holiday at Home for seniors (see above), we had a couple of BBQs, a fun day, a picnic in the park and a couple of coffee mornings. We are looking forward to bringing this all together in 2019 and developing it into 'The Big Week'; a week of activities for all ages.

Church Meals

It is a joy when we are able to come together to share food with one another. 2018 saw a new event at Easter when we shared in a first century Passover together and learnt more about the links between the festival and the cross. We also came together for our Christmas banquet which, once again, was a packed-out event. During the year we have also enjoyed a number of picnics, BBQs and buffets which have been great opportunities to get to know one another better. Our thanks go to all who help in the logistics of these events and particular thanks to Sue Graham who keeps the kitchen running efficiently – by Christmas Day she had cooked around 250 Christmas dinners for members of our community!

7. Mission Support

As well as all the activities we do within our church, we are pleased to support a variety of other mission groups and projects. We aim to contribute 15% of our annual income to these and are pleased to have fulfilled this target again this year.

Local

This year we were very excited to see the launch of a new church in Castle Donington, supported by the churches in the Soar Valley. We were able to give a gift to support this launch and will continue to support them through their starting period. We also continue to contribute to 'Home Mission' which supports churches, projects and staff within the East Midlands Baptist Association and across the country.

Global

We support the work of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and have been linked with Alan & Megan Barker and their work in Nepal. As well as this we support three mission organisations on a rolling three year basis. This year concluded our support for the Kims in San Francisco and we chose Tearfund to be our new partner for 2019. We also supported Compassion and Turkic Belt Ministries and were pleased to be able to contribute further to these with our fundraising bike weekend in May and our Christmas services. We also recognise the many other projects that our members support individually through their finances, prayers and visits.

8. Governance

Leadership

We were pleased this year to welcome Linda Wall into the Eldership to join with Graham, Sue and Ben in the spiritual oversight of the church. We have also had a change in trustees as Fiona Smith concluded her period of service after six years on the team. We would like to thank Fiona for all that she has contributed and assisted with during this time. In 2018 we also changed the format for our wider leadership team, with those that lead different areas of church coming together between church meetings for further information sharing, updates and contributions to different ideas.

Charity Trustees

The Charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the administration of the church. They ensure our compliance with Charity law, are charged with acting in the church's best interest and managing our resources in setting budgets and approving the audited church accounts. They also have overall responsibility for safeguarding, Health and Safety and Data Protection.

At the end of the year there were seven Trustees. Ian Tansey was the chairman; members were Graham Dunn, Sue Graham, Ben Haldane, Linda Wall, Andy Boston, and Ed Dring. As mentioned above, Fiona Smith has had to take a break as she has served two terms of three years. She has been a much appreciated and valued member of the trustees.

As prescribed in the constitution, the Trustees met six times in 2018. The major focus was overall management of the upgrade to the schoolroom which was completed on time and within budget. There were no significant safeguarding nor health and safety issues during the year and the Trustees continue to seek prayerfully to act in accordance with God's will.

Finance

To be presented at the AGM.

9. Practical & Building

Fabric of the building

There was a considerable amount of work done in 2018 and we wish to thank the numerous people who have formed teams to help, both in the building and in the Church grounds. Without doubt the decoration and finishing off of the Schoolroom, upstairs office and meeting room was the major project during the year. It was necessary to arrange for the modification to the back door to the church, and this was economically completed.

Various maintenance tasks were identified in a H&S report and these were attended to. Repairs and adjustments to some of the lighting was also undertaken. Kick plates were fitted to the new doors in the kitchen and rear entrance area. There is still some additional painting to do in certain areas, and the floor coving in the Ladies washroom needs fixing.

Other ongoing maintenance will be undertaken as efficiently as possible.

Technical

We continue to adapt to the needs of the spaces and activities that go on. We have seen a few improvements made, including a new, larger screen at the front of church to improve the visuals. Work was also undertaken as part of the school room refurbishment, integrating sound and visuals to simplify and improve the overall look of the room. Changes this year have also included incorporating an electric drumkit, giving us more control over the sound.



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