

Barrow Baptist church



Church Report Review of 2019

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1. Minister's Report

There is so much that can be celebrated from 2019. We continued with all our 'usual' activities, but it was great to see the different ways that people continue to grow and adapt our groups and events so that they develop and reach people in new ways. We also held our first 'Big Week' in the summer and I enjoyed the nights of discussions we had following this, in the 'Big Questions' sessions.

For the leadership and myself, the year obviously had quite a focus on future planning for the church, not least in seeking a new Lead Minister. We began 2019 with Graham's final services as lead minister: his official 'last Sunday' was on the first weekend in February – exactly one year later on the first Sunday in February 2020 we had Neil 'preach with a view' and subsequently appointed him as lead minister. We are so grateful to all who gave input into this process; those that upheld it in prayer, attended the vision and feedback meetings, met with candidate/s and for all who came together as we sought God's will in making this decision.

It was good to be able to follow Graham's final service in post with a celebration service in March. There was a lot to give thanks for from his ministry, with a number of changes in the building, leadership structures and groups in order to simplify, make our work more efficient and, more importantly, new ways we can reach out to our community with God's love. As well as these, we are obviously very thankful for all Graham's teaching and leading during this time and look forward to continuing to see him at the pulpit from time to time. I, personally, am very grateful for all that Graham input into me and my ministry and it has been great to have him still around and available as a member of our church.

In the spring, we began a Lent series with lots of different ways to get involved. It was a good opportunity to try new methods for people to connect during the week. Feedback gained from this, has led to us starting a monthly prayer focus with points in our notices each week so that we can all be praying into the same issues together. Another teaching series I enjoyed, and found that I also got a lot out of, was the 'frontline' series. It is great to see the map in the school room of all the different places that we scatter to.



The summer brought two particular highlights for me, the first being able to go to Soul Survivor with a number of the youth (see section 3 for more about that). The second event was The Big Week and, first of all, a big thank you to all who played any part in this. The decision to cram all our events into one week was a bit unknown, especially with no idea of what part the weather might play. In the end, it all came together and after a little shock at the amount of people on the first day (over 200), we quickly got into the rhythm of things, despite the rain. Again, we came away from the week with some good ideas, such as the games night which has already been repeated.

There is so much to look forward to going into 2020 and beyond and I hope all are encouraged by what God is doing and will do amongst us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Haldane', is written over a horizontal line.

Ben Haldane
Assistant Minister

2. Discipleship & Care

Pastoral Care and Prayer Ministry

We give thanks that once again love, care and support has been given and received both within the body of the church and reaching out. This has taken place right across the age ranges, both practically and prayerfully, through the various ministries or in a more individual and informal way.

We thank the many who have provided meals and transport, given time to listen and comfort, who have visited the housebound and those in hospitals. Thanks also to all who support by praying after services as members of the Prayer Team, or more informally as needs arise. As we welcome in new faces, we want to ensure that no needs are missed and recognise that each and every one of us shares the responsibility of looking after our sisters and brothers. We do this when we love as Jesus loves, offering our bodies as a living sacrifice, and encouraging and building each other up.

Growth Groups

Growth Groups continue to provide a strong platform for discipleship, study, prayer and practical support. We have a good number of groups meeting, some with a particular focus (e.g. Men's, Pilgrims, young adults) and some with a broader mix, there is something for everyone to be part of. We also joined with other churches in the village for our lent study. If you are not in a growth group and would like to be, please speak to one of the elders.

Courses

We started the year with our second marriage course, a great opportunity for couples to take time out and focus on their relationship. We had some great feedback once again, for many this has helped reintroduce a regular 'date night' which can so easily be left aside in the busyness of life. We also followed the Big Week with 'Big Questions' evenings. These were designed to be relaxed events to explore a number of issues that people grapple with in relation to faith. No question was off limits and we had some great times of discussion. It was good to have a mix of people, some still exploring faith and others who have walked with God for years but are still eager to go deeper.

Services

Over the past year, we have been pleased to see some different faces leading services, worship and speaking at our morning and evening services. These have been from across the range of people we have in our church. We continue to adapt what we do to make sure that when we come together people are able to worship freely together, come together in prayer, around the table and be encouraged to live out their faith in the Monday-Saturday.

One of the changes that came in over the summer, was adapting our evening praise and Ignite services. These have joined together so that once a month we have a slightly longer evening service with a time of focused worship, testimonies and teaching. Over the months we have done this, they have somewhat developed a style of their own, probably most likened to an informal café church. This evening praise is usually on the fourth Sunday of the month and sits alongside our other evening services; messy church on the first week and a communion and prayer service on the second.

3. Children & Youth

Sunday School

It is a joy to see young children in our fellowship and this year we have reverted back to a joint Sunday school for all under 11s, due to the numbers fluctuating each week and the number of leaders required to run two groups. But we are pleased that each week we are able to speak into the lives of the children in our midst. If you think you might be able to help fill some of our gaps then please let us know!

Messy Church

Messy Church has continued on the first Sunday of each month. We have a core who attend each time, including many of the church families, and number of more casual attendees. It is always a fun afternoon with a whole range of activities bringing the creativity out in children and adults alike! We also have a short service with songs of praise and a biblical message. These have included a number of dramas and action based stories to get the children involved. It is often around the meal table, however, that we get the best opportunities to talk to people about life the universe and everything.

Baby Buds

This group is for those with new-borns to get together in a somewhat calmer atmosphere than when the toddlers are running around. Due to this focus, the group changes fairly frequently, as the children grow up. By the end of last year, we had built up to quite a sizeable group, often with 10 or so new mums each week.

Little Buds

Mondays and Tuesday mornings at church are filled with the sound of children playing. We remain almost at capacity in these groups, over the course of a month we can see over 130 adults and 160 children coming through the doors! It continues to provide a challenge of being able to connect effectively with so many people with a small team, but the people we do have are great at engaging with the families there. With so many people, there are some great opportunities and so do pray for all involved in this.

Sparks

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 have 15/16 children regularly attend each week. We currently have children ranging in age from 4-9 years old. As numbers are growing, we are hoping to restart a group for those aged 7-11 soon, as the age range will become quite large and more difficult to cater the activities to all that attend.

Youth

The youth group has continued to develop with many participating in different ways in the life of the church. Most weeks they meet twice on a Sunday, during the service and in the evening. In the summer we also attended Soul Survivor with a number of the youth. This was a great time of having fun together and being able to spend time getting to know God more. The most exciting thing is always seeing people making decisions to follow Jesus and we celebrated this twice whilst we were away. By the end of the year we were also excited to be leading up to the baptisms of two of our youth.

4. Seniors

Seniors' Events

We have continued our new pattern of events for Seniors, which has emerged as bi-monthly invitations to all over 60s of our community. Our aim, as ever, is to offer a warm welcome to all, with a view to sharing our faith; and an opportunity of offering the love of Jesus to those who do not yet know Him. In 2019 we ate 'Fish and Chips' twice, danced twice, and ate sumptuous lunches (Banquets)! At all events, we offer care and support where it is needed, and attempt to follow up with friendship as time and opportunity allow.

At 'Holiday at Home' during the Big Week in August, we enjoyed each others' company through shared meals; a wonderful concert provided by the Dring family and Caroline Faulkner; and finally an afternoon of activities ranging from sport, through crafts (thank you Jane Adamson), and also relaxation with hand massage, nail painting, (always popular), and reminiscence in watching film of past events. (And more!). All our events give us time to share stories over tea and refreshments, and explore and deepen our friendships. God is good (all the time).

Tuesday Live

The culture around us can sometimes give the impression that older people are 'spent' and no longer have any purpose. God's Kingdom tells us something very different: that they should continue to have fruitful and fulfilled lives (Ps 92: 12-15), grow in wisdom (Ps 90: 12) and use that wisdom for the benefit of the church.

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, and to help them recognise their place in the church community. The service lasts about an hour, and consists of sung worship and reflection, intercessory prayers, and usually a message from a visiting speaker, either from our own or neighbouring churches, or visitors from charities and other organisations. Our numbers are growing: this term about 40 people have attended each week, and recently one of our members declared her faith through baptism.

Silver Sports

Silver Sports is an opportunity for seniors, and those in early retirement, to partake in table tennis, carpet bowls, darts and pool. Table Tennis continues to be the most popular activity and a newer table has been gifted to us this year, which has replaced one of our older models. Numbers have continued at around twenty people on most mornings. It has been a great opportunity to invite people to other Church events. Many have been to meals, celebrations, The Big Week and our New Year's Eve party and service. Silver Sports gives a comfortable setting providing friendship and enjoyment and is a great opportunity to share about God's love. We look forward to more of this happening as we continue.

5. Men & Women

Men's Work

2019 was another positive year for our men's work: the Monday night growth group continues to go well, there is always good discussion, fellowship and prayer together. The group helps us stay accountable to one another and everyone is great at supporting each other in good times and tough times. We have also welcomed a new member this year.

In June, a group of men headed off to a 'Field near Swindon' for CVM's The Gathering – once again it was a fantastic weekend and brilliant to have some new faces join us. We've already booked in for 2020 and if any men want to join us, speak to Ed.

Who Let The Dads Out

The dads and toddler group continue to meet once a month, usually the same weekend as Messy Church. We regularly get 40-45 dads and kids and are welcoming new dads each month. There is a strong core of regulars both church and non-church dads. Big shout out to Jazz, Beth and Naomi who are now doing all the catering for us, giving opportunity for the rest of the team to 'work the room'. 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. The feedback from the dads (and mums who get 2 hours off) is always very positive. Please continue to pray for the ministry into 2020.

Ladies Evenings

As a church, we recognise the importance of connecting with one another; both socially and to build us up spiritually in our walk with Christ. Our first meeting of 2019 was a cheese and wine evening in March with table quizzes. This was followed by a Summer evening of garden games and light refreshments, very kindly held at Graham and Sue Harris' home. Both evenings were well attended and fun was had. In October, thirty ladies attended a day conference at Aylestone Baptist Church, led by Diane Tidball. This was a great day of fellowship and teaching; we had the opportunity to share and pray together and to learn how Christ can be part of the ups and downs of our lives. Thank you to everyone who has been part of our events and to the organising committee.

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 a meal, 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.

Church Meals

We continue to encourage people to get around the table and eat together. Often this is done in homes, we also know many growth groups that eat together, some regularly, some occasionally. There are also those times that we all come together to share in fellowship with one another. In 2019, we had a few post-service meals with a BBQ, a couple of buffets and 2019's Christmas meal was adapted from a sit down banquet to a more informal buffet, which gave plenty of opportunity to mix with one another. During The Big Week, there was also plenty of opportunity to meet and eat with one another through daily cafés and a hog roast after the Sunday Celebration.

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 organisations who are meeting needs and sharing the gospel in our area and across the world.

Local

We contribute to 'Home Mission' which supports churches, projects and staff within the East Midlands Baptist Association and across the country. We also continue to support the church plant in Castle Donington, started through the Soar Valley Gospel Partnership, and it has been great to hear stories of what God is doing there and of those coming to faith.

Global

We support the work of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and have been linked with Alan & Megan Barker and their work in Nepal. They have experienced challenges this year with various visa and registration difficulties. They had a highlight of a surgical week when a team visited them to perform hand surgery on patients with leprosy. We look forward to having them come and visit us later in 2020.

As well as this, we support three mission organisations on a rolling three-year basis. This year concluded our support for Compassion and we chose Open Doors to be our new partner for 2020. With Tearfund we have become a Connected Church with the Lamb Hospital project in Bangladesh. They work in a wide range of ways but particularly to help the community develop resilience in the face of natural disasters such as floods. We have also supported Turkic Belt Ministries, they have had another successful conference for pastors in Georgia and continue to support work in Turkey led by Peri among Iranian refugees.

Our sponsored event this year raised money for the Toilet twinning association with many toilets purchased! Thanks to everyone for their prayers, their giving and their service! Many other charities are supported by individual members of the church - may you be encouraged to keep on giving and supporting. Galatians 6 v 9 'Let us not become weary in doing good'.

8. Governance

Leadership

The last year has obviously been a different one for our leadership team in a time of pastoral vacancy. Thank you to all who helped out during this period. The wait for a replacement minister can be at least a couple of years, so it is great that we have been able to get sorted so quickly. The elders (Linda, Sue and Ben) continue to oversee the spiritual life of the church and meet formally every fortnight. They are supported in managing daily church life by the staff team and Ian, as our treasurer, who meet together every other week to plan ahead. The wider leadership team, including all those with responsibilities for particular areas of church, now meet three times a year. This has been an opportunity to touch base between church meetings and a sounding board for ideas. Each meeting there has been some very beneficial discussions and ideas which have come forth.

Charity Trustees

The Charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the administration of the church. They ensure 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.

We concluded the year with six trustees; Ian Tansey (chair), Sue Graham, Ben Haldane, Linda Wall, Andy Boston, and Ed Dring. Graham Dunn retired as minister and Trustee at the end of January and the major focus during the pastoral vacancy was the search for a new lead minister. With the exception of Ben Haldane, the remaining 5 trustees, acting as the search team, had informal meetings with 7 candidates during the year, which resulted in Neil Jones being invited to preach with a peep in November. He was then invited, and accepted, to preach with a view in February 2020.

Safeguarding and Health & Safety continued to be assessed throughout the year so that everything we do provides a safe space and that we comply with the requirements of the law. 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

We want to thank the various people who contributed their time to the upkeep of the Church buildings and the gardens throughout 2019. As well as the general upkeep, we also undertook a number of smaller projects throughout the year. The roof tiles on the main building were repaired and a new roof covering was put on the front entrance porch. We cleared the drains as much as possible in the carpark and Gap area, and the gutters on the main building were cleared out. The creche / kitchen area off the side of the Gap was repainted and new window blinds fitted. A number of other maintenance tasks were identified in a H&S report and these were attended to.

In 2020 the fabric team (which has increased in number) are looking forward to lining the car park spaces and painting yellow markers on the step access points at the front of the Church. We will also be investigating the purchase of a more efficient Baptistry heater.

Technical

Due to the time and effort put in by a number of people over the past few years to get our system upgraded, there has been very little that has needed changed with our sound and visuals. We continue to make small adjustments where necessary. One task that was completed was the final fixing of the wall ports in the school room giving us a fully integrated system. We do, however, desperately need volunteers, particularly to run the sound desk. So if you have a bit of an ear for music then we can teach you what buttons to press, so get in touch!



Barrow Baptist Church, Beveridge Street, Barrow Upon Soar, LE12 8PL

01509 416603 | www.barrowbaptist.org.uk

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