

# Barrow Baptist church



## Church Report Review of 2020

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# 1. Minister's Introduction

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2020 was not the year we were hoping for, nor expecting. It was full of frustrations and apparently endless dead-ends. However, we are still able to see the work of God in and through us, despite the difficult circumstances we found ourselves in. God is faithful to his church, therefore, we can trust that he will look after and bless it in the months and years to come.

As you read the pages that follow, make sure to recognise the hand of God, and see what he has been doing.

Now that we are in 2021, we look forward to a return to normality, though things will look and be different. We are different, the world around us is different and society is different. But let us not forget that God's character never changes; he still loves us, cares for us, protects us, walks beside us and guides us in his ways. Therefore, let us keep our eyes fixed on him, observing his movements and then let's follow and join in.

God bless you,

Neil Jones  
Lead Minister

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## 2. January to mid-March

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The year started off with various celebrations. Within the first five Sundays we had a joint service with the other churches in the village, Neil came to preach with a view and, very excitingly, we saw three of our family baptised!

We also held a games night in January, following the success of the one during the Big Week the previous summer. This was a relaxed evening and a good time of fellowship with one another. Another chance for building this social side came in March when we had a bring-and-share lunch after a service.

During this time, we continued our many and varied groups and activities, a summary of which can be seen below:

Sunday School, Baby Buds, Little Buds, WLTD (Who Let The Dads Out?), Sparks, Youth, Tuesday Live, Silver Sports, Tuesday Café, Growth Groups, Deeper, Messy Church, Evening Services, Prayer Meetings and, of course, our Sunday gatherings.

We rejoice in all that went on in that time, and give thanks for all the volunteers that invested time into these groups.

Seeing these activities is, of course, a reminder of what we have missed since then, however we were glad that we managed to fit so much in before the separation that was to follow. As well as the activities above, we held our AGM but, more significantly, we also had a special church meeting in February. This meeting was called to discern God's will concerning the appointment of Neil Jones as the new Lead Minister of Barrow Baptist Church. After due consideration, we agreed to call Neil to this role and he accepted with a view to start in the summer.

Let us remember with joy all that we saw happen in this short period, and we look ahead with anticipation for when we see more of this to come.

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## 3. Mid-March to August

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We are all aware of the major changes that occurred, not only in the life of the church, but in all our lives from the end of March. As we approached Mother's Day, it became clear that there was going to be a period where we wouldn't be able to meet with one another. This period has been longer than many of us may have thought but, while we are still longing to come back together, we are thankful for new ways of being church that have opened up during this time and enabled us to find connection in some way.

### **Services, Groups and Meeting Together**

From that first Sunday, we needed to find ways we could provide for that sense of corporate worship. This took us online, and we had one busy week prior to lockdown in which we managed to record a number of songs to use in our worship. We quickly developed an online style, and it was lovely to see a number of faces in the interviews and prayers each week, as well as speakers coming to us from all sorts of locations around home, garden and beyond! This went alongside 12 weeks of daily services, followed by weekly services once things had eased a little. All of these were also made available in CD or DVD form for those unable to access online.

We also introduced a number of online activities to connect in different ways, and began a rhythm of prayer meetings, coffee mornings, worship nights, quiz nights, and many of our growth groups took to zoom. It has of course been a learning curve for most of us, and we may have sometimes felt screen-fatigue, but that sense of seeing and talking to one another, being disciples together, has been very beneficial. It was for this reason that we also began to join on zoom for communion – a chance to visually remember that we are together as God's body, with a bonus of a 'coffee time' catch-up afterwards.

Connection was also kept up with our Little Buds families through regular 'circle time' sessions live from the Dunn household. In addition, we began Messy Church services accompanied by packs delivered to the children beforehand. The youth continued to meet each week on zoom and provided support and prayer for one another.

### **Community Support**

Upon entering lockdown, we saw the potential for huge needs across our community. Many were having to shield, some were facing job uncertainty and we had no idea the level to which people may get ill and need caring for. For these reasons we set up a response, coordinating with the newly formed 'Helping Hands' online community group. We provided a central support service which was used for linking those shielding or isolating with people who could shop for them, a food bank, provision of cooked meals for those that required it and phone befriending for those particularly struggling with isolation. All these services were used in some way, particularly the shopping links, but we were thankful that the demand for the foodbank was not as busy as first feared.

We began this work in faith and through making use of the existing resources. We were, however, very blessed to receive £18,620 towards this work of the church, in grants and direct donations. The majority of this was given through two grants of approximately £8,000 each, from Leicestershire County Council Communities Fund and Barrow Parish Council.

### **Pastoral Support**

It was great to see many people picking up the phone to keep up with others in the church. Each growth group found the best way for them to continue to provide that mutual support, some meeting on zoom, others keeping a phone chain going. As well as all the informal support that was going on,

an attempt was made to make sure each person had someone in touch with them every so often. It hasn't always been easy to keep up with how people are, but the response of the pastoral team, group leaders and individuals has been fantastic to see.

One way we gave some extra support when people needed it, was through the provision of a few cooked meals. This developed into everyone receiving a little treat as summer approached with a cream tea pack!

### **Volunteers and Leadership**

In all these changes, many things happened quickly and all of it was very different. Everything we managed to do was helped by a number of people who offered their time and skills, and many more offered than we could actually use!

Behind the scenes, the trustees and elders met every week to keep up with what was going on and the staff team continued to work hard to deliver the support we were giving. Many others gave time to zoom meetings, making crafts, manning phones, copying DVDs, providing videos for our services and there are more than can be listed here. Along with the leadership and staff, special thanks must be given to Graham and Karen Dunn for all their work with the regular 'Circle Time' and Dom Boston for all his work editing services and providing tech support for many of our members.

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## **4. September to December**

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In September, we were pleased to welcome Neil, Helen, Eliza and Joel to the village. It has obviously been strange for the family, and particularly for Neil, as there still hasn't been the chance to get to know everyone. Neil has, however, settled into his temporary role as minister-in-pandemic but looks forward to seeing the church back in full swing once again.

Summer also brought an easing of restrictions and we were pleased to be able to do some activities together. A summary of these can be seen below.

**Baby Buds** We were able to offer this ministry as a support group to new mums from in and around our village. The testimony of attendees has been that it is the highlight of their week and a real lifeline. Following legislation has proven to be challenging, but not insurmountable, and it has been wonderful to be able to offer this group to those who have connected.

**Live Services** were a blessing to those who attended, offering some degree of communal worship and fellowship. It was hard to not sing, shake hands or hug one another, and to limit our social interaction. Sadly, these only lasted until the end of October, as we entered a new lockdown.

**Tuesday Live** met in October at two services which were identical in content, with music and Neil sharing his testimony. It was wonderful to see each other after such a long hiatus. Again, it was with sadness that the meetings had to stop.

**Christmas** was a unique experience that was wonderful in many, unexpected, ways. There was carol singing in the car park, Advent displays in the church entrance and the Round House, online Nativity, Carols by Candlelight and Christmas Day service, and the usual distribution of Christmas cards around the village.

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## 5. Mission Support

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We continued to support a variety of other mission groups and projects who are meeting needs and sharing the gospel in our area and around the world. In 2020 we gave 14.2% of our total income to mission groups, for 2021 we will be using a new model to make sure that we achieve our aim of contributing 15% of our annual income.

### Local

We contribute to 'Home Mission' which supports churches, projects and staff within the East Midlands Baptist Association and across the country. We also continued our support of the church plant in Castle Donnington, during 2020 they rejoiced in being able to celebrate a lockdown baptism!

### Global

We support the work of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), and have been linked with Alan & Megan Barker and their work in Nepal. Unfortunately, they weren't able to come and visit us, but it was great to hear about some of the work they do in their online interview. We also support three mission organisations on a rolling three-year basis. Open Doors was our new mission partner and we continued with our support for Tearfund. The year concluded our support for Turkic Belt and we chose Africa Inland Mission to be our new partner for 2021.

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## 6. Governance

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### Leadership & Trustees

Managing a vacancy and a pandemic response has, naturally, been very time consuming this year and we are very thankful for all the work the trustees and elders have put in. In April, Sue began a 3-month sabbatical following two terms as an elder. This turned out to be different to the sabbatical planned with a lot more time at home rather than travelling! We were very pleased to welcome Neil to the team in September and look forward to where we may be heading next. For the first few months of the pandemic, the team met every week, this was gradually eased back as things became more settled.

This year there have been many things for the trustees to grapple with, not least of which was how to make the church building 'Covid-safe'. Safeguarding and Health & Safety continued to be assessed throughout the year to provide a safe space and ensure we comply with the requirements of the law. The Trustees continue to seek prayerfully to act in accordance with God's will.

A major change in the trustee team came from Ian sensing that the time had come to step down from his formal roles within the church. We are extremely grateful for all that Ian has put into the church and the leadership during this time and will miss his wisdom and skills. As Ian was chair of trustees, treasurer and church secretary, these roles have needed to be shared out. Neil is currently sitting as chair of trustees, Andy is the treasurer and Ed is church secretary. They are joined on the trustee team by the other elders; Sue, Linda and Ben.

### Finance

The Trustees are responsible for managing the church's finances. A financial summary for 2020 is on the following page. During the year, our contracts were reviewed, including for our phone and broadband, which resulted in a significant saving, with our utility provider due to be changed in 2021. The total amount in the bank account includes our mandatory reserves, which are 3 months of staff wages.

**Barrow upon Soar Baptist Church**  
**Financial Statement for year ending 31 December 2020**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Opening monetary balance (bank account/s &amp; cash in hand)</b>	<b>£ 35,116</b>	<b>£ 72,720</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Regular offerings	£ 104,668	£ 99,051
Donations, grants, legacies and other income	£ 13,605	£ 25,252
Income tax recovered on gifts	£ 19,549	£ 18,952
Church Groups	£ 12,598	£ 3,274
Catering	£ 9,491	£ 2,236
Bank Interest	£ -	£ -
Building Hire and Event fees	£ 4,152	£ 4,993
Mission	£ 369	£ 172
Total income	£ 164,432	£ 153,930
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Church groups	£ 6,907	£ 1,776
Catering	£ 13,838	£ 2,997
Mission	£ 21,473	£ 21,927
Ministry	£ 47,813	£ 64,826
Upkeep of premises	£ 19,932	£ 20,078
Administration	£ 11,511	£ 11,588
Other Expenditure	£ 5,354	£ 12,722
Total expenditure	£ 126,827	£ 135,913
<b>Net gain / loss</b>	<b>£ 37,605</b>	<b>£ 18,017</b>
<b>Closing monetary balance (bank account/s &amp; cash in hand)</b>	<b>£ 72,720</b>	<b>£ 90,737</b>

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities at year end**

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Monetary balance		
Current Account	£ 72,383	£ 90,488
Cash in Hand	£ 337	£ 249
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 72,720</b>	<b>£ 90,737</b>
Prepayments and other debtors	£ 1,197	£ -
Total current assets	£ 73,917	£ 90,737
<b>Other Assets</b>		
Furniture & Equipment	£ 19,794	£ 14,855
<b>Less Liabilities</b>	£ 265	£ -
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>£ 93,446</b>	<b>£ 105,592</b>

To be independently examined

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## 7. Practical & Building

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### **Fabric of the building**

While the building has been empty, an opportunity to tidy up has been taken. Largely, this has been in our main store cupboards which have been sorted, painted and cleaned out. In assessing how we may need to operate in the future, work has been undertaken in the GAP to provide a hatch from the creche/kitchenette into the main hall. This will allow food to be served in an easier way, and may allow a speedier return to some of our activities.

A number of small jobs have also been undertaken around the building, including the painting of the school room front entrance hall and interior cleaning of the big church windows.

### **Technical**

Dom and Ben, in particular, have been kept very busy this year, adapting to online services. Whilst we long to return to meeting again, we also recognise the benefit to many of having services available online. For this reason, we have invested in a camera that can suitably film our church services, as well as upgrading our computer system to cope with the demands of running everything online.

Also, within the area of technical, we recognise the efforts of many who have adapted to new systems and learnt new skills, to engage better with others and access the church services and online activities. A highlight during the year was seeing a number of people part of the 'In Christ Alone' virtual choir, and many others in the worship group who have managed to be part of the home recordings.



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