

2007 review

Last month, as I sat down to write our Annual Report for 2007, I realised how much we had to thank God for, for all his blessings to us as a fellowship last year!

In several aspects of our church life, 2007 was a record-breaking year, for which we give all the praise and glory to God.

➤ Increased Attendance levels

- **Attendance at our Sunday morning services averaged over 50** for the first time in recent years (50.8, compared to 47.7 for 2006).
- **The overall number of Sunday worshippers averaged almost 60 per week** - 59.2 to be precise! (up from 55.4 for 2006).
- Over the course of the year, **299 different people attended Sunday worship** at DRBC (up from 281 in 2006). 99 adults and 38 children were visitors from other churches (90 and 37 in 2006), leaving 114 adults and 48 children for whom DRBC was their only known church connection (105 and 49 in 2006).
- **157 worshippers were first-time attenders** (156 in 2006): 57 adults and 35 children had other church links (51 and 37 in 2006); but for 41 adults and 24 children/young people (35 and 33 in 2006), DRBC was their only known church connection.

➤ Increased Giving

- At **£461 per week, our weekly offerings** well exceeded the target we had set (£420 per week); in fact, they exceeded the target we had set in November 2006 for this year (£460 per week)!
- **Income to the Church's General Fund** amounted to **£55,744** for the year, 28% above our target figure of £43,529 (in 2006, income to the General Fund was £47,646). Exceptional items of income included a £2,000 grant towards our Youth Interims Fund; donations amounting to £1,650 (Gift Aided) to support the visit of the *Emmaus Road Show*; and an Inland Revenue rebate of £1,154.
- **Expenditure, at £60,841** included a £10,000 transfer to our Building Refurbishment Fund; a £2,000 transfer to our Youth Interims Fund; and £1,904 for the *Emmaus Road Show*. Our budget figure for the year was £53,597. Apart from the exceptional items just mentioned, the main reason for our overspend was much higher than expected fuel bills (£5,549 against £1,860 budgeted). This was due in part to late billing for 2006, leading us to underestimate our bills for 2007, as well as having to pay off what was due from the previous year.
- We give God all the praise and glory for the financial provisions he made for us as a Church during 2007. We had budgeted to breakeven, but we finished the year

with *an excess of income over expenditure of £4,903* (excluding the transfer of £10,000 to our Building Refurbishment Fund). This is £903 greater than the Home Mission grant we received, giving us confidence that, with God's help, we will be able to honour the commitment we made in November 2006 to be self-financing from 2008 onwards.

➤ Many memorable highlights

2007 was not without its challenges and difficulties for us as a Church, but it was also a year for which we had much to thank God. An international wedding (Dutch-German), another baptism service, and the visit of *The Emmaus Road Show* to Gateshead were amongst the many memorable highlights of 2007.

The challenge for 2008

As we look ahead into 2008, I see it as a year of great opportunities and many challenges for us as a church.

➤ Great Opportunities

- We look forward to participating fully in the national *Hope 2008* initiative. The *Just 10 J John* mission (April-June) will present us with a tremendous opportunity to invite our friends and contacts to the largest regional evangelistic initiative since the visit of Billy Graham to Roker Park, Sunderland, almost 20 years ago. With the *J John* mission right on our doorstep, we will want to seize the exciting opportunity God has set before us.

➤ Many Challenges

- 2008 is our first year without the safety net of Home Mission support. We have set a **weekly offering target of £490 per week**, a 6.5% increase on level of giving levels for 2007. Even with this increase, we are anticipating a deficit of just over £3,000, which will have to be met from our limited General Fund reserves. So, wouldn't it be good to exceed our weekly offering target once again, to break even!
- We should look to build on the steady **increase in attendance** that we have enjoyed over the past six years. Wouldn't it be good if, this time next year, we were able to report an average Sunday morning attendance of 60+ and an overall weekly attendance of 70+!
- Despite increased attendances, our current membership figure is lower than it was four years ago (36, compared to 38 at the end of 2003). So, one of the challenges that we face, as a Church, is to **turn samplers into settlers, and settlers into members**.
- We also face the ongoing challenge of **refurbishing our premises**, with the large expenditure that this entails. We had hoped that our numerous grant applications would have generated sufficient funds to enable us to go

ahead with replacing our antiquated heating system in 2008, together with refurbishing our halls and ancillary rooms, and providing much-needed additional ladies toilets. But so far, we have received only £3,800 towards our target of £128,000 for this work. We therefore feel it is right to concentrate on refurbishing our halls and ancillary rooms as our first priority, drawing on the £22,000 we currently have in (and pledged to) our Building Fund. Renewing the heating system (£66,000) and providing extra ladies toilets (£16,000) will have to wait until we have sufficient funds for these next phases of the work. We recognise that our main hall and parlour are in urgent need of redecoration and these spaces, together with the room over the kitchen (for an expanded Sunday School) and the Annexe (for increased numbers at our Sunday morning service) should be our immediate priorities.

Our Small Groups are Vital!

At our recent Deacons' Away day, we recognised the crucial role that our midweek Small Groups play in the life of the Church.

They exist for our mutual support, nurture, encouragement, and discipleship – and provide a forum in which we can pray for each other in specific, well-informed and supportive ways.

The *40 Days of Purpose* course reminded us that our **Small Groups are where we learn relational living**, fulfilling the key command of Jesus to *love one another as he has loved us* (John 13.34-35). **Those who choose to opt out, miss out** on this vital aspect of their Christian development. Love is about commitment and loyalty. This is why **we want everyone to be committed to one of our Small Groups**, if at all possible, as a matter of priority. Those who *cannot* attend one will be allocated to one, for people's prayers and their pastoral care.

Over the next six weeks, we will be following the **Breaking News** course in our Small Groups, as well as using it as a basis for our Sunday morning studies. It has been designed to help us share our faith with others more effectively. As such, we see it as a vital piece of preparation for our participation in the *Just 10* John mission. It will give us an opportunity not only to learn together (and from each other), but also to pray for each other and for the contacts whom we hope we will be able to invite to the mission. To this end, I hope there will be as much praying as discussing in our Small Groups over the next six weeks or so.

The Wednesday lunchtime Small Group has started to record its prayer requests in a notebook each week. It has been thrilling to come back the following week to review the requests we made, and discover ways in

which the Lord has answered our prayers. I would commend the practise to every other Small Group! Get excited by the prospect of praying *with*, as well as *for*, your fellow Christians in this way!

I have suggested to all the group leaders that we use our Small Groups to establish **Prayer Triplets**. The basic concept behind a Prayer Triplet is *three people committing themselves to meet together to pray*. They meet to pray for each other and for three named contacts each - contacts whom they would like to invite to the *Just 10* mission. So, 12 names in total appear on the list of each Prayer Triplet. Our Small Groups provide an ideal forum for setting up these Triplets, and allowing time for them to meet together to pray. Plan to be a part of one.

Forthcoming events

Here are some important dates for your diary.

- **Wed 6th Feb, Church Members' Meeting, 7.30pm** and prayer for Hope 2008 and the *Just 10* mission.
- **Fri 8th Feb, Hope 2008 Launch, 7.30pm, City Halls Newcastle.**
- **Mon 11th & Wed 13th Feb, Breaking News Course** starts in Small Groups.
- **Tues 12th Feb, Mezzanine outreach event, 7.00pm**
- **Sun 24th Feb, International Tea, 5.30pm** with Randy Addy talking about Ghana.
- **Sun 23rd Mar, Easter Day All-Age Service, 11.00am and Evening Celebration, 6.30pm**
- **Thurs 3rd April, Paraffennialiar in Concert with Clarence Adoo, 8.00pm** – an opportunity to enjoy the Gateshead's Schools Swing Band.
- **Sat-Sun 26th-27th April, Church Anniversary weekend** with Rev Rodney Stout, Associate Minister, Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh
- **Sat 8th Nov, Prom Praise North East** at The Sage Gateshead – order your tickets now!

Golden Wedding thanks

Ted and Anne Maughan would like to say a big 'Thank you' to everyone "*for all your best wishes to us on the occasion of our Golden Wedding Anniversary. The flowers are just so beautiful and the card you all signed will be treasured. We do so appreciate the friendship and love shared at Durham Road throughout the years.*"

David Hunt