

NLC Pastor's Report: Jan-Dec 2018

Introduction

This report covers the calendar year January to December 2018¹. As I started to reflect on the many things we've been involved in as a church this year I found it greatly humbling how God has blessed us during 2018. I trust that this report will reaffirm the importance of not standing still, but continuing to press into all that God has planned for us. Thank you for all your continued love and support; you are a joy to lead.

Welcome to NLC

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Jim and Suzana Dayer, John and Pauline Duce, Ed and Jenn Bailey, Helen, Toby and Emily Locket and Jean Summerhill, who have all started to become a part of the NLC family this year. It is also wonderful to see Nikki Goodway's two foster children coming along regularly. Of course, we should not forget Jesse Ronald Brown who was born on 4th February 2018, the first baby to be born at NLC.

We also said goodbye to Sarah Joy who has returned to Bournemouth to take up a new job, Josh Hung who has returned to Vancouver after completing his internship in Bristol, and Ken and Sally Wilson and Emma Booth who felt their time at NLC had come to an end. We wish them all God's blessings moving forward.

Outreach and community initiatives

Here is a summary of some of the main events and initiatives we've been involved in within our community and the wider Bristol area. Much of what we have done has been through our continued involvement with the Churches Together in Worship which is covered later in this report.

Bristol Churches Winter Night Shelter Project (BCWNS)

In November 2017 we started again to prepare for our involvement in the BCWNS Project which took between January and March 2018. Having been involved in the pilot programme the year before, we were all keen to continue to support this important city wide initiative. This time we were assigned two venues, St. Nicholas of Tolentino near Old Market where we served last year, and E5 on Jamaica Street. Several of us from NLC served the homeless guests once a week in the evening during the three months the project ran. We offered guests hot food, a friendly environment and a

¹ Note, this report covers a different timeline to the trustees report which runs April to March and is submitted to the charities commission each year

bed for the night. Again the project was a tremendous success, with many of the guests being able to find jobs and more permanent accommodation.

The BCWNS project will run again from January - March 2019 and many from NLC are already signed up to help. Due to the strong support and commitment of NLC, Kim Brown has this year been invited to be part of the organising committee providing invaluable support and insight.

UWE Fresher's Fair

We were fortunate this year to be allocated a stand at the UWE Fresher's Fair. Thanks to Freddy Summerhill and Chloe Goodway for their understanding of what attracts students, we turned up with lots of NLC branded giveaways and made all the more fun with the "spin the wheel". We also had our church logo and email address on UWE student union calendar which every student receives. Even though in the end we did not have any new students join us, I trust God that we have sown many seeds into the Kingdom. I continue to maintain my contacts with the student union looking for opportunities where we may be able to help in the future.



Hope Bristol 2018

"Hope" is about mobilising youth across the whole of the UK towards mission, enabling and encouraging them to serve alongside local churches and organisations, putting Jesus' love into action. Each year it moves to a different city and Bristol was chosen for 2018. It ran between Tuesday 3rd April through to Saturday 7th April and many of our own youth took part. Each day started with a time of worship, teaching and ministry before all the young people went out to work on a variety of projects. The NLC youth worked on one of the community's allotments, did some litter picking and some painting and general DIY in a community centre. In the latter case, several adult members of the church joined in to show their support for this important work. The week finished by joining with Fishponds Baptist for a fun afternoon in the park where again our team of youth served the community.



In 2019, there will be a similar initiative called Noise 2019 which will involve the youth from the Bristol area.

I would like to thank Alison Purnell, in particular, for coordinating our participation in Hope Bristol 2018 and Alison and Sue for their continued commitment to our youth work. Thank you also to all of you who open up your homes to host the youth on a Tuesday evening.

Resound Foodbank

We continue to support the Foodbank at Resound Church through Sally Williams. We have held many collections throughout the year and again several people in NLC contributed Christmas food and gifts to be distributed to those in need.

Christmas Gift Bags

This year we took part for the first time in providing Christmas gift bags for prisoners in Bristol. This initiative is run by a local Christian charity called Sixty-One. A team of us got together one Saturday morning to pack gift bags containing shower gel, a pair of socks, sweets, a chocolate bar, a toothbrush, a diary, a Christmas decoration and a Christmas card. The bags were delivered to the men in HMP Bristol by a team from Sixty-One. Men at HMP Leyhill woke to find a bag outside their cell doors, and residents in HMP Ashfield received theirs, in person, on Christmas Eve when two mentors from the MentorMe assisted chaplaincy staff.



4Front Theatre

We are always thrilled to invite 4Front Theatre to NLC as one of our main public outreach events. This year we enjoyed “So on and So 4th” at Easter, and “Christmas Castaways” in December. It had been a challenging time for the theatre team back in Easter. On their journey to us, another vehicle crashed into their van causing much damage, including some of the equipment and props inside the



van. I thank God for the resourcefulness of people in our church who were able to sort out all the difficulties experienced that evening and we were blessed to be able to donate towards their appeal for finance for a replacement van.

As well as enjoying 4Front Theatre in Frenchay Village Hall, I had the privilege of watching them perform for Frenchay Primary School in July. This took place in the parish church and it was wonderful to see so many children hearing the gospel through “A Fisherman’s Tail”.

This year the group has grown so that they can now split into multiple teams and reach more people through more performances. Please continue to pray for this young talented group of people who are passionate about sharing the love of Jesus. We look forward to their next Easter production, “Beyond Bars”, which we will be hosting in Frenchay Village Hall on Sunday 14th April 2019.

Serving the Community @ Frenchay Village Hall (FVH)

Once again we organised our summer working parties to help maintain the Village Hall, and Dave Summerhill has been asked to do another year chairing the FVH committee, which really helps us stay connected to what is happening around the village. The NLC veggie plot continues to be looked after and we've seen some good crops this year. We also served cheese and wine at the FVH AGM.

These all might seem like small contributions to the life of Frenchay, but I believe that as we continue to be faithful in the small then God will lead us to greater things in due time.

Churches Together in Worship (CTiW)

Our links with other churches in Frenchay and Stapleton continue to strengthen as we undertake more initiatives together. Under the banner CTiW leaders from New Life Church, Waterbrook, St. John the Baptist Frenchay, Stapleton Baptist and Holy Trinity Stapleton meet regularly to pray and discuss how we might reach the community through our "togetherness". We all share the same heart of wanting to take the gospel out to the community. Here are some of the things we have done together this year:

Regular activities

Throughout the year there have been many of our regular events. At Easter we participated in the dawn walk up Purdown Hill in order to pray together over our city. We met three times for our CTiW celebration evenings; Holy Trinity Stapleton in February, NLC in June and FPC in September. We have helped support Waterbrook with their senior's lunches and Kim has continued to be part of the Open the Book team bringing the Bible stories to the children at Begbrook Primary School. Due to a change of leadership in the school, it has become more difficult for the team to continue. However, there may be opportunities to take Open the Book into Frenchay school. Please pray that God will open up the right doors for us. We continue to deliver joint Christmas cards to the entire Frenchay and Stapleton community, which this year included the new Frenchay Park Estate.

Prayer walk

In January Charles Sugden organised a prayer walk around the new Frenchay Park Estate. Not many houses had been built at this stage and it was very much a raw building site. However, a large number of us met from all of the CTiW churches and it was a great opportunity to lay the foundations of prayer before people moved in to their new homes.

Welcome pack

Towards the latter part of this year as the development of the new houses on the Frenchay Park Estate was well underway, a small team of us started to deliver the CTiW Welcome Packs to the new residents. We have enjoyed a number of really warm conversations at the door and we pray for increased opportunities throughout 2019 as more houses become occupied. Please pray as to whether or not you would like to be part of the team delivering these packs around the estate.

Joint Harvest Festival with Frenchay Parish Church (FPC)



For the first time we were invited to join FPC for their Harvest Festival service. We were thrilled to accept this invitation and the service was well attended with strong contributions and participation from both churches. As part of the service, we were able to pray for the team who were travelling to Zambia on that day. After the service NLC hosted a lunch at FVH. There has been a lot of positive feedback from this event and we thank God for continued opportunities of both working and worshipping together.

Carol singing

In previous years FPC have arranged carol singing outside their church building which, has been quite poorly attended. For 2018 we felt we wanted to do something different and so Charles Sugden approached Redrow Homes to see if it would be possible to hold some carol singing on the green in the new estate. We were thrilled that Redrow said that they would like to sponsor the event, providing a Christmas tree and refreshments. This took place on Tuesday 18th December. Although, the weather was not kind to us, it did not deter us. Rather than singing outside around the Christmas tree, we all squashed into the kitchens in the show homes and sang carols there. Kim read “The Grumpy Shepherd” story for the children. The residents of the estate seemed to really appreciate the time together and we pray for further opportunities of reaching into this new community.

Later in that same week we were also invited to participate in the Beckspool Pond Committee carol singing event. I was asked to do a reading and Charles Sugden was master of ceremonies. Again, these are small links with the community that help to maintain our visibility.

Zambia

We continue to support our work in Zambia through our ongoing sponsorship programme School4Kids, the annual Cave Gathering Conference and personal support for Pastor Evans Luwi. A detailed report exists for our 2018 trip and can be found at:

<http://newlifechurchbristol.org/learn-about/mission/africa-trip-Oct-2018/>.

Details on our School4Kids work can be

found in the regular newsletters at: <http://school4kids.org/newsletters/>.



General Church News

Visiting speakers

I've always felt that it is important as a church to maintain healthy external links and I've been greatly encouraged this year as speakers from other churches have visited us and confirmed God's word to us. This year we had 12 visiting speakers including: Sam Johnson from Cynon Valley Church, Paul Tiley from BCC, Simon Williams from Woodspring WSM, Ron Brown (my dad), Alan Sutton from Dunstable, Mark Rich from The River of Life, Tony Martin from Glastonbury, Rob and Pam Scott-Cook from Woodlands, Charles Sugden from FPC/HTS, Luke Goodway from Elim Cheltenham and Dave Mitchell from Woodlands.

I feel really honoured that pastors who are busy leading their own churches are willing to come and share God's word with us. I will continue inviting speakers to come and minister to us in 2019. I also feel really blessed that more people within NLC are now stepping out in faith and preaching on a Sunday morning.

Dedication service for Jesse and Louie



We celebrated the birth of two babies this year: Jesse, Nathan and Georgie's son, and Louie, Adrian's grandson. In November we held our first dedication service and it was great to see the church filled with friends and families of the two babies. It was a tremendously moving morning as members of the church brought prophetic words to these young boys and together we all committed ourselves to doing all we could to ensure that they are brought up in the ways of God.

New Wine

This year was the last year for New Wine at Shepton Mallet. A large number of us attended and as always enjoyed a very powerful time together, sensing God's word and enjoying the large corporate worship. Next year New Wine moves up to Peterborough. This will be familiar ground for many of us who used to attend Faith Camp. There is a strong sense that as New Wine moves venue, God will be doing a new thing, a fresh start. I know a large number of us are already booked in and I would encourage others to prayerfully consider attending. God has always spoken to us at these times and the opportunity of being together as a church for a whole week is really valuable.

Prayer

In May we participated in the international call to prayer "Thy Kingdom Come" (see <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/>). Churches across the world were encouraged to pray between May 10th and May 20th, calling for a powerful move of God for salvation through evangelism.

In addition to this, Alison Purnell felt stirred this year to start an intercessory prayer group which meets once a month on a Wednesday evening. The focus of this group is a commitment to prayer for unsaved partners, prodigals and other issues that require perseverance in prayer.

Changes to Midweek Home Group

We had noticed that towards the end of 2017 our regular Wednesday evening meeting had become so large it was now feeling like a mini Sunday morning meeting. As a leadership we challenged ourselves as to whether we could do better and create a more missional focus. After praying this through we decided to create four “small” groups to replace the single large group, encouraging each group to develop its own character and strategy towards mission. The aim was that each group would reach out to its own demographic, enjoying the flexibility and freedom to organise events and socials as needed. We now have one group that meets during the day, one focused on the 18-25 age group and two other groups. We still meet once a month midweek as a whole church and this helps maintain a strong sense of unity and purpose as we seek God together.

One other major change we put in place is that on week three of every month we now no longer hold a traditional home group meeting. This week is now set apart to encourage us all to do something missional. This might be to go out with a non-Christian friend, family or work colleague. This is not to suggest that other weeks of the month are not missional weeks - it's about being intentional. It's about putting space in our church calendar when we are all thinking about why we exist as a church, which is to reach out to the unsaved.

External Giving

As a church we continue to be generous when we learn about needs. In addition to our considerable and regular giving to work in Zambia, we have made several substantial gifts to local projects such as BCWNS project, Hope 2018, Spring of Hope (Crisis Centre), New Wine Trust and many smaller contributions to specific individuals.

The Pastor's Bit

What have I been up to?

I continue to do a lot of networking across various church groups and organisations. These include: ongoing fellowship with Global Horizons South West, New Wine leader's hub, leader's learning community led by Woodlands, CTiW leadership meetings, city wide prayer breakfasts and MentorMe/Sixty-One.

As always it is an honour to be invited to preach at other churches, although this year I have tried to limit the amount of time spent away from NLC. With this in mind, I preached at Woodspring, Glastonbury and Holy Trinity Stapleton. I also felt very privileged to be invited to the Frenchay Primary School's 175th anniversary, along with other local church leaders, to share a few encouraging words to the children. I talked about the importance of continuing to learn, and in particular, the importance of learning about God, which is my passion.

I am now in the second year of my Graduate Diploma in Kingdom Theology which finishes in June 2019. The first year was very challenging learning how to write academic essays but I have learned a great deal through the process. Probably the most significant learning was from my lowest mark when the feedback from the lecturer said that I had “*missed the brief*”. Whilst this was extremely disappointing, especially as I had worked hard on my essay, God really spoke to me through it, reminding me that as a church we need to be careful that we do not miss the brief for why we exist,

that is to reach the unsaved. This theme continues to grow strongly within my spirit and I pray that God will open up new opportunities in 2019 to see people born again.

Earlier in the year Kim and I had the opportunity to visit Tim Harris at Moorlands and Becci Williams at All Nations. It was lovely to experience the environments they have been learning in over the last few years and as each of them complete their studies I pray that God will lead them both to the next stages of their calling.

On a more personal note, Kim and I became very proud grandparents back in February, although we were all quickly flung into heartache as Jesse was rushed into hospital in March seriously unwell. As you know, we subsequently learned that Jesse has Down Syndrome. If I have learned anything over the many years of walking with God, it is the tough times that bring people together. I want to personally thank everyone for the way you all supported Kim and I, and Nathan and Georgie through this emotional time. The church came together powerfully in prayer and we learned the importance of lamenting honestly before him. Jesse is such a blessing to us all and I know that God has a wonderful purpose for his life and the lives of all who are connected with him. Another heartache we had to work through this year was when Esther's purchase of a flat in town fell through. However, we thank God that she finally moved into her own home in Mangotsfield this summer with her two new kittens Quila and Mojito. We finish the year with Samuel's engagement to the wonderful Gemma, who he met on an Alpha course that he was running. I guess this means more exciting times ahead in the New Year for the Brown family.

Looking ahead into 2019

I continue to seek God for the coming year. Having already been reminded about the importance of mission, I'm certain God will keep these thoughts foremost in my mind. I'm keen to see NLC continue to have impact outside the four walls of Frenchay Village Hall. As I mentioned earlier, we will again be involved in the BCWNS project, and we hope to get our youth involved in Noise 2019. We will attend the first New Wine in Peterborough and I am excited to hear what God wants to do in this new phase. I also hope to support Waterbrook with their Alpha course in January, so if anyone has friends or family who would benefit from attending this course then please let me know as soon as possible.

Finally, I want to say a big thank you to Dave and Nicky Summerhill for faithfully standing alongside Kim and I within the pastoral leadership of NLC, and Sue Hall for providing that important connection between the spiritual leadership and our legal responsibilities as trustees. Once again, thank you all for the love and support you continue to give to the NLC leadership team and for making our work a joy. Please pray that as a church we continue to walk in step with God's will and pray for wisdom and discernment amongst those who carry any form of leadership responsibilities.

God bless you all

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard". The script is cursive and fluid.

Richard Brown
Pastor, New Life Church Bristol