

# VISION MEETING 2024

12<sup>th</sup> March 2024

## Annual Reports

Gatehouse Church

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# PASTOR'S REPORT

## All Age

Very early on when I started pastoring the Gatehouse Church, guided by God, I wrote down the things I would like to see in the church as we move forward. One of these things was that “our services would be relevant to all ages and that we would have activities for all ages throughout the week”. We are seeing this become a reality before our eyes and some of my most joyous reflections this year are when we have gathered for food in the centre after a baptismal, dedication or family service and see people of all ages being family together.

I think we have all been blessed to see how youth and children have started to take an active role in the church, serving in different areas of church life and growing in their faith. We thank God for this but are also very much aware that it wouldn't be happening without the strategic hard work of Kay (Families and Community Worker and Children's Leader) and Mandie (Youth Leader). Thank you! And please keep praying for the young people and the leaders.

## A Family on Mission



A Family on Mission!

During this last year, we have continued to learn what it means to be 'A Family on Mission'. We are encouraged that a number of people have responded to the Gospel message and 12 people of different ages have been baptised. One of the teaching series we did in the Autumn was on our values as a church and after that 18 people came into church membership. We have also experienced the pain of key members of the Gatehouse Family receiving their heavenly calling - with all the mixed emotions we feel in the process. It hurts because we love and because we are family together.

Being 'on Mission' means that we keep the Gospel of Jesus at the forefront of everything we do. All our activities are, and need to be, outward looking and unashamed in their approach and it is really healthy that each week we engage with hundreds of unchurched people in different ways. Some of these people feel attached to our Church Family which is wonderful. In October, as part of a National Week of Prayer with other Elim churches, we invited prayer requests from people in our various groups and the community and we received around a hundred of these, mainly from people who don't know the Lord yet, but are reaching out to God. Some of these people subsequently spoke to me and said how much they had appreciated the prayer and shared how their situations had improved. The Line Dancing group, who use the centre, felt so much included by the Gatehouse Church when we invited them to take part in the community fun day which was raising money for youth work. You'll see from some of the other ministries how they are bearing fruit.

Gatehouse Church has all the various activities happening, but it is important to remember that each of us is part of the church and there are so many opportunities to reach out with the Gospel to our families, neighbours, friends and work colleagues. Having this mindset is critical to being part of a Family on Mission. We also have a stack of 'Peace with God' Gospel tracts on the table in the coffee lounge and it is really pleasing that these are being regularly used - please continue to do so and pray for opportunities to share the Gospel, which will crop up all the time. Just as an additional comment - if you have an idea for reaching out with the Gospel, we would love to chat with you and see how we can support you in it.

## Growing in our walk with the Lord

Since the beginning of 2024, on Sundays, we have been preaching a series which is entitled "It's all about Jesus". The aim of this ongoing series is that our focus will be on Jesus, that we will re-consecrate our lives to Him in greater measure and as a result we will experience a greater move of His Spirit within our services but also in every area of our

personal lives and the various church ministries. We do need to reach out to Him for more salvations, healings and deliverances leading to freedom. Can I ask you to seek God for yourself and commit yourself to encouraging your brothers and sisters to grow in their walk too? This will involve meeting together regularly and making sure we pray together too. A final note on this is that along with serving the Lord in the various church ministries, can I encourage you to attend the Sunday services as much as possible; these already have been special times where God has been moving and you don't want to miss that! (In saying this, have a thought for the children's and youth teams who often miss out on what is happening in the main service because they are serving in their ministries).

## Working Team

We have a leadership team at the Gatehouse who are responsible, under God, for the overall direction and running of the church. However, we have another group called the Working Team, which is made up of around 10 people who head up different ministries and areas of the church. This incredibly committed group of people who really do take responsibility for their areas of ministry meet once every two months. Last year, we met to share and understand what was happening in each of the areas of church life and to pray together. This year, we are moving it forward by introducing a training element each time and hopefully this will cascade down into their volunteer teams. This, in a small way, is aimed at developing leaders within the church.

## Prayer points

- For a move of God in salvation and healing in our lives, the Gatehouse Church and across Blackpool.
- For all the departments in the reports below and for their leaders.
- For the building plans and assistant pastor that we were working towards last year and also for the church plant in Knott End. Each of these has not emerged as we had hoped, but we believe that God is very much in these projects, and we trust that in time they will come to fruition.

## COMMUNITY CENTRE (NEVILLE WALKER)

The community centre is a great facility for us and has currently got use every day of the week. Most of these activities are run by ministries from our church but we also have the Renegades Line Dancing Group and Gamblers Anonymous using it on two evenings. We also currently have a 10-week health and well-being course being run on Fridays. The Indian Church which has been using it as a venue on Sunday afternoons has just changed from meeting fortnightly to now meeting every Sunday.

With all the use it gets, it is coming up to the time when we will need to be giving it a lick of paint. Hopefully, we will be able to do this during the summer holiday time when it isn't quite as busy - keep an eye out, for we are looking to put together a work party.

## CHURCH IN THE CAFÉ (NEVILLE WALKER)

A small team regularly meets at the Pitstop Café in Waterloo Road for an hour on Wednesday afternoons. Normally two people go out and ask shopkeepers and other members of the public if they would like prayer and the other one or two remain in the cafe, where invariably great conversations happen.

We have very much become part of the community and have prayed for over 100 people this year. We have seen a couple of people respond to the Gospel and have also had people report back of being healed. We have also seen a few individuals start coming to toddlers, Open Doors or to church services.

This small ministry is fun and impactful. Thank you so much to our team members and those that join us just now and again. We would also like to thank Sarah and the staff at Pitstop Café for making us so welcome and for their heart to be a help to the community around them.

### Prayer points

- More salvation, healings and deliverance
- More team members.



# FINANCIAL REPORT (LIZ HALL)

It is wonderful to be able, to bring a much more positive report this year. I give thanks to God our wonderful provider and I am thankful also to all those who consistently and generously give financially. We have also been able to cut some costs where we were being overcharged or for services we no longer needed. The financial year for Elim is October/September so these are the figures I have worked on. Last year I reported that we spent more than we received each month, and it was spontaneous gifts and sometimes holding back paying a bill for a short while that kept us afloat. This year we have had a buffer in grants and gifts although they are designated to specific causes, they have saved us from dropping into the red at times. It was a mixed year; some months we had an excess others a minus, but over the year we gained £2,533.22 in general funds than we spent on normal expenses. If anyone wishes more details these can be made available on request.

## Good News



Family Fun Day!

Thankfully we have not had to restrict our giving and are still happily supporting, the Robinsons (Wycliffe Bible Translators) and Be free Cambodia monthly.

Again, the generosity in both time and provision of our Church family was key to the success of the Family Fun Day, this in turn contributed to sending young people to the Limitless Festival.

Kay was able to secure grants over this year which have really helped us be able to provide Food Bags for many needy families.

The fun day and Grants helped us to give without a drain on the general funds, so is a blessing to the Church and to those who receive the gifts.

## Gift Aid

The number of people who are now signed up to the Gift aid scheme has increased this year. While last year we received a total of £2,896.02 this year already we have received £3,435.12 and there will be more to come later in the year. Because we are registered as a charity, the Inland revenue will refund us 25% on donations from taxpayers. This is at no extra cost to the giver but is a blessing to the Church.

## Finance Officer

I am thanking God this year as my role has been much more pleasant without the pressure of lack of funds. It is a joy that we can pay for services etc promptly. While we do not have an excess at the end of a month, I am sure we can trust God, in any rainy days.

The need for others to be trained in the finance department was evidence when I had to take an absence. I am happy to say that Isabella is now training to complete the spreadsheets and, hopefully, in the future will be able to take on some of the role and stand in when I am not able to be there. Ideally, a second person training up would be helpful for the future; please prayerfully consider if you could help. I would be teaching one on one for as long as it takes for you to feel confident. You will be learning a new skill which could develop into a future ministry for God. Please chat to myself or Neville if you feel this could be for you.

Each Sunday we have a cash offering. This has got to be counted and prepared for the bank by two people. We have a small team who do this already, but this really needs to be larger to ease the frequency on the few. We would welcome new volunteers for this role. Again, you will be shown how it works and put with an experienced person until you feel confident.

## Prayer points

- Thankful praise to God for His provision.
- Increase in finances to move forward.
- Finances for projects.
- New trainees.
- More on counting rota.

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES (KAY WALKER)

## Our Volunteers

In every area of our Children's ministry, we have a fantastic team of volunteers, without whom we couldn't do our ministry. Not only do they give up time to help but they also pray for the children and share their own lives and experiences of God with them. They are all a fantastic example to the children who "catch" as much from our lives as they are taught. It is fantastic to see how our volunteers are developing individually and starting to lead games etc. We are also really proud of some of our youth who are "Junior Helpers" in Kids club. The children really enjoy having them there and they are a fantastic help.

## Toddlers & Co.

We've had a great year in Toddlers & Co. Numbers can be as low as 5 or 6 children and as high as 20! I think one of the best things about Toddlers is the consistency and availability of this group, week in week out. We are an established part of the children's routines, and they look forward to coming. It is lovely to see them develop in their social skills; parents/carers often tell us how much it helps their children interact with others and develops their confidence.

We have great relationships with the parents/carers who come. Often, we are able to show support, love and encouragement to those who come as well as being a place of friendship. One highlight was the prayer cards when we did the *Prayer Week*. Everyone, without exception, was delighted to be asked what we could pray for them for and gladly filled in the cards. They were really pleased that we cared and wanted to pray for them. Parents/carers also willingly contributed to the food bags when asked. In a very natural way, we are able to chat about what is going on in church. We really appreciate that "Open

doors” and “Church in the café” tell people about our group and some new parents have come as a result of this.

Going forward we’d love to see a few more families come in and even more meaningful conversations about Jesus. We don’t necessarily see the impact of what we do straight away, but we believe that God is interested in the children’s and parent/carers lives and our prayers help pave the way for God to move in their lives.

## Limitless Kids Sunday

(We changed the name from Sunday School to give a consistency with the kid’s club and youth club).

We always have a lot of fun on Sundays and it’s lovely when the children are so pleased to come out. We are so thrilled that not only children from church families come on a Sunday morning but also children from our Kids Club. Thank you church for having the stable “2 songs, kids’ slot, then out” routine each week as this makes it easier for our children to know what is happening and also for non-church family children to be dropped off.

This year we have started a creche group. Sometimes there are one or two children and sometimes we have 5. The creche children enjoy playing and also do a craft and story linked to the same theme as the older children. We have 3 volunteers on rota each week, the third person will “float” between both age groups, prioritizing the younger children. If creche grows any more we will need additional helpers as we need a higher adult to child ratio.

The older group can have any number of children from around 6 to 20. This makes planning a challenge! If we consistently have a large number in the next year we can consider splitting the group into two for the story/application part, staying together for the beginning games and snacks. Again, this will require extra helpers, but it will be wonderful to see our volunteers developing more as we will need more people able to lead a small group. I believe we can all develop together, and obviously we will train/coach our volunteers as we go along.

We have started to give a “homework sheet” at the end of the lesson which has an activity as well as the weekly bible memory verse; bringing this back earns an extra sticker towards their prizes. We do these on two levels to cater for those who can go a bit deeper. I think we have seen a deepening of faith in some of our children. Other children are opening up more and more to God and developing in their relationship with Him.

“Christmas rapped up #2” was fantastic; our children did really well in this and also every time they learn a song/dance and perform it. We are so blessed to have these wonderful children as part of our family.

## Limitless Kids Club

Our average weekly attendance is around 15 children, but there are around 25 on the books. Each week we have snack and free play, then all join together for a story, often with a connected activity, games and songs. We have 3 regular adult helpers and 4 junior helpers but do need more adults to help as we have to count the junior helpers as children in our adult to child ratio and also have a few children with additional needs.



It is great to see some of the children coming to Limitless Kids on a Sunday. The children enjoyed learning their dances and songs for “Christmas rapped up” but on the day, disappointingly, only one or two from kids club came and no parents came to watch. Perhaps this year we will take a different approach. Please pray that we develop and grow as God wants us to.



# SAFEGUARDING REPORT (IHECHILURU ANOZIE)

This is a concise report for Elim Gatehouse Church and plans for the year ahead.

## Activities

Active participation of 10 members of the Church at the regional safeguarding training at Bootle.

Creating a safeguarding awareness across all the volunteers working with vulnerable persons in the church.

Easing the new safeguarding lead into the role - I have recently stepped into this role after Kay oversaw safeguarding for the last 9 years, making sure the Gatehouse was operating with safe environments for children and vulnerable adults.

## Future plans

Completing Safeguarding training for the volunteers who need to do so, on 13, 14 or 20 April 2024.

Appointing a deputy safeguarding lead.

Updating the local church DBS database for all volunteers working with vulnerable adults.

Review of safeguarding policies and procedures relating to the internal workings of select groups in the church.

## Prayer point

- For the church and all its departments to be able to adequately respond to any safeguarding concerns that may arise.

## DOOR STEWARDS (LIZ HALL)

Firstly, I want to thank every person on this team. You have served faithfully and joyfully over this last year. With particular thanks to all for rising up to the challenge and taking full responsibility when I could not be there. You are all incredible.

Door stewards are allocated two to serve each week by rota. The door steward team is continuing to develop, although circumstances have hindered our get together training. As well as meet and greet, the door stewards take responsibility for regular checks on fire equipment and exits etc and general safety issues. They also watch over the meeting in general, take a headcount and serve communion. The door stewards are available to help anyone who may need assistance during the service and to keep watch on who is coming in and out particularly in regard to safeguarding.

Our get together training is usually done about three times a year, usually after Church with a sandwich lunch and perhaps a little cake too. This gives us opportunity together as a team and encourage each other and discuss ongoing training. We have been looking at how to respond in a fire, how to use or not use equipment, equipment checks and safeguarding. We also attempt to have at least one social event each year; again this helps us to bond as a team. Serving God should always be a pleasure, a privilege and a joy and I believe the door stewards can really reflect that.

Looking forward, we do need a few more volunteers as the team has diminished a little this year. The more volunteers we have the less often we are on rota; the ideal would be twice each quarter and the ideal number would be 12/14 people. Door stewarding is a great way to volunteer, particularly if you work in the week and cannot give time to anything else. It is a beautiful way to serve God, help the Church and meet new people. Please speak to Liz Hall or Liz Batton if you would like to join this team or come along to the next training session to see for yourself.

## FOOD MINISTRY (KAY WALKER)

Whilst not being a major focus of what we do as a church we have quietly been providing food and feeding a lot of people. Primarily this has been through the food bags going out to school families and families connected to our church ministries, and by providing an evening meal for some of the young people on Thursdays, and breakfast for some of them on Sunday mornings. In the past six or seven months we have given out of the order of 5,000 meals. This is an astonishing number but even better is how these are being used to

express love and compassion to families in need and open doors for further support. Below are some of the facts and figures of how this was done and some of the comments about how it is helping.

## Number of bags given out

Armfield Academy (fortnightly): Sept – Dec 2023 (10 bags), Jan – Mar 2024 (20 bags).

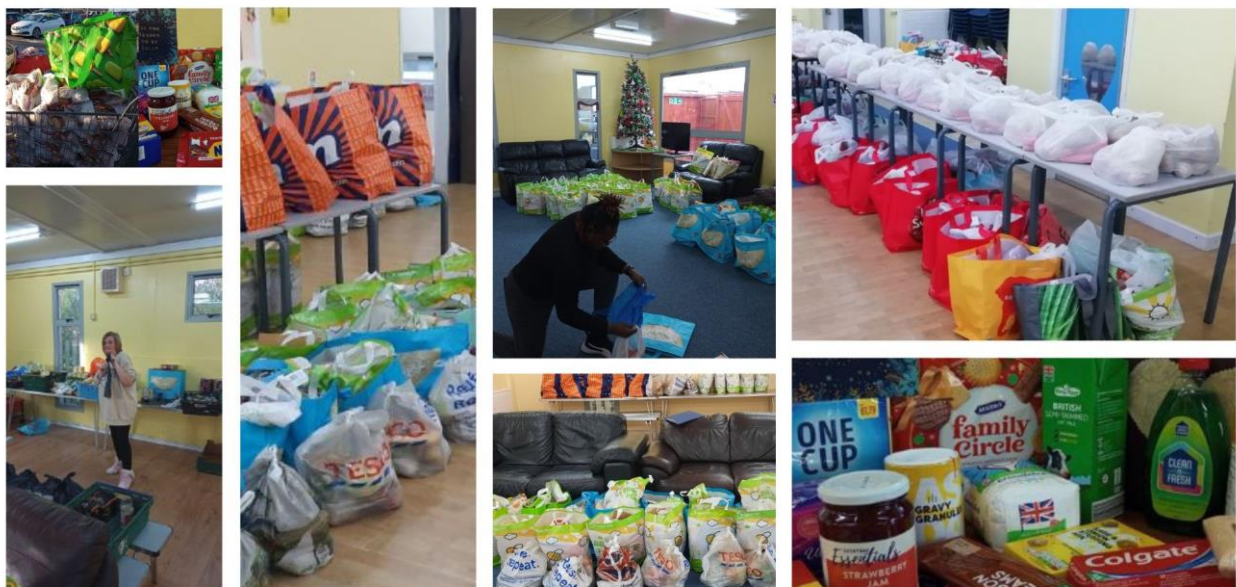
Gateway Academy (fortnightly): Sept 2023 to Mar 2024 (5 bags).

Families within our community (fortnightly): Sept 2023 – Mar 2024 (2 to 5 bags).

Approximate total: Sept 2023 – March 2024 (375 bags).

Christmas hampers: 22 Dec 2023 (26 delivered).

Ad hoc provision: Available whenever needed (around 20 bags).



Food hampers being prepared in the community centre

Christmas hampers included all that was needed for Christmas dinner including Christmas Crackers, tablecloth and napkins, Schloer & fruit juice, trifle and food for another 4 or 5 family meals plus some chocolate treats and crisps. A small but able team helped put these together and deliver them. I wouldn't have been able to do this without you, thank you for all your help.



Armfield Academy received bags containing non-perishable items of food (at least enough for two family meals), toiletries and household goods. These were then given out by the school pastoral team where there was a need.

Gateway Academy and various families could receive bags with fresh ingredients as these were collected/delivered immediately. This included fruit, vegetables, meat (at least enough for 2 family meals), toiletries and household items.

Ad-hoc provision was given out to families or individuals when the need arose. Bags were made available to the Open Doors Team and any church groups during the school summer months, and throughout the year a few key people had permission to make up bags as and when they were needed.

## Feedback/comments received

Armfield Academy described the fortnightly provision as a “Godsend” and “The Christmas Hampers went down a treat.”

Family support worker at Gateway: *“You all do amazing work and we are very lucky to have you support Gateway in every way and I could not do my job without all your help.”*

Not only did our food bags provide food for families, they also showed support and love in a practical way and sometimes were a “door” to be able to do this. Alongside the food provision we also gave knitted toys and matching books to Gateway Academy who used them as gifts for children (very generously donated by someone who attends “Open Doors”) and second-hand Christmas jumpers collected at our Toddlers Group. One girl who is a selective mute audibly said “Thank you” when she received her knitted toy and book; that seems like a small thing but it was an enormous step for her and a tremendous encouragement to the teaching staff.

The majority of provision was bought with a grant from Blackpool Council Cost of Living Support scheme, which we are extremely grateful for. Many other groups and individuals generously contributed items, including the “Crazy Renegades” dance group, church members, members of the community and the Toddler group. We are so thankful for all that has been given and it is so encouraging to see how we all worked together as a family in this.

## Going forward

I would love to build a team to help run this next September onwards. Opportunities to help will include shopping, packing up bags, delivering bags and keeping your eyes open for bargains!!!

## OPEN DOORS (LIZ HALL)

### The team

Open Doors has been running for almost five years now, so as said in previous years we are firmly established. We run every Tuesday morning fifty weeks in the year, just taking two weeks off at Christmas. This has given us consistency both in the life of the Church and the life of the local community, which is obviously not possible for all our groups. However, this consistency seems to benefit our guests; they know we will be there, when needed, which is sometimes very evident when they arrive with a need. Another benefit is having more opportunities to meet people and share God's love. Keeping this consistency means a little extra commitment from the team, but we are all able to take breaks when needed at no detriment to the consistency.

Being a team is generally how this ministry works so well, although no one has a specific role. Everyone does everything as needed, so when a person is missing others pull together and step in. This also allows individuals to minister within their giftings; some prefer going outdoors to meet and greet, others making tea and coffee or chatting at the tables. We have a devotional and prayer time before the doors open in the morning, taking it in turns to lead. This is a great time for unity and building and encouraging one another, but most importantly putting God first at the start of the day. Our policy is for us to keep our hands off and let God; we never know what we are expecting but every week God moves. We all firmly believe this time is the key to the success this ministry has experienced.

We do have a sizable group of regular guests who turn up at different intervals; for many of these we are the link to Church even if they do not attend. Some of our regulars have become so welcoming and inclusive towards others when they arrive, even bringing extra seats or sitting with a first timer. They often tell new faces about us and what we do and sometimes about Church too. They have become our reserve team without even knowing it; this has been useful when our team have been short on numbers. Most are very receptive to the gospel and like to know what is going on in the Church; we often hear they

have checked out the web site or watched a service online. We have also seen new faces in Church and baptisms because of Open Doors.

## Events



Open Doors Caribbean themed get-together

Occasionally we do have events, such as pancake day or Christmas Carols, occasionally a birthday celebration and our regular guests feel important when we treat them. One of the roles of Open Doors is bridging the gap between Church and the world; these events can really help with that. Just for encouragement we also have get togethers for the team, usually for a meal, although last year we decided to theme our get-together “Caribbean.” The weather was more like the Antarctic, but we had so much fun indoors. In January we had a post-Christmas meal together.

Unfortunately, the team has about halved this year, through people moving, sickness and sadly bereavement. However we have been blessed by the occasional visits from Patrick, Paul and Neville who have been very instrumental in speaking to guests. I have been blessed by this as we have recently had several male guests, so having another man around was brilliant. Open Doors will be celebrating our fifth birthday in April this year, thanking God that every week consistently we see God touching lives, so we have much to thank Him for.

I believe the Open Doors team are second to none and praise God for their love and their faithful service to God, for their fellowship and outrageous joy.

## Prayer points

- New volunteers, with a heart for others.
- Bigger impact in the community.
- See God moving even more.

## PRAYER GROUP (BETTY MALPAS)

Each Friday morning, a small group of us meet at church and pray and intercede for many different needs, whether for the government, the NHS, the homeless or personal needs like someone needing a job. We know that God cares about all the problems on our hearts and we feel that we are never wasting our time in praying. Sometimes prayers are answered in a way we aren't aware of. We believe that prayer is a vital part of church life.

The Friday prayer group has been going on for many years. Quite a few years ago it looked as though the church was in danger of closing. We prayed for a pastor to join us, but not just any pastor - we prayed specifically about the leader we wanted. A pastor with a wife and family, and who wasn't just doing it because he needed a job. One who was dedicated to the way the church should be led under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We feel the Lord undertook in all our requests and blessed us with Neville, Kay and family. I also remember Neville sharing that he had asked God if he could pastor a church near the sea - more evidence that God hears and answers prayers.

If you would like to know more about us, why not join us one Friday morning between 10:30 and 12. You will be very welcome.

## TECH TEAM (MARY-ANN FAIRHURST)

### Volunteers

During the year we had two new volunteers (Jayjay and Kyran) join us. Sadly, we had to say goodbye to Isaac in August who went off to Uni in Cardiff to study Media.



## Sound, video & livestreaming

In May we were able to upgrade our equipment due to some finances that became available. After researching options that would suit what we needed and also allow for growth in the future, we were able to purchase a PTZ camera, camera switcher and camera controller for livestreaming and recording services. The camera was mounted on the back wall of the church. The church was able to purchase a one-seat license for ProPresenter software which is used for presenting scriptures, playing videos, audio files and showing licensed song lyrics from our SongSelect account. Also purchased was a license for downloading the Bible NIV version. The camera switcher can switch between different cameras. Although we only have one camera operating at the moment, it is possible to add more in future. Team members, including myself, have spent some time training on the new software, camera switcher and camera controller.

Recently the sound desk was updated to the latest software and cabling to the PC was swapped which has improved livestream audio quality. We now have a team member who is dedicating himself to learning more. PAT testing equipment was purchased by the church and the equipment on the tech desk, in the church building and community centre was tested by a team member who went on a course paid for by the church.



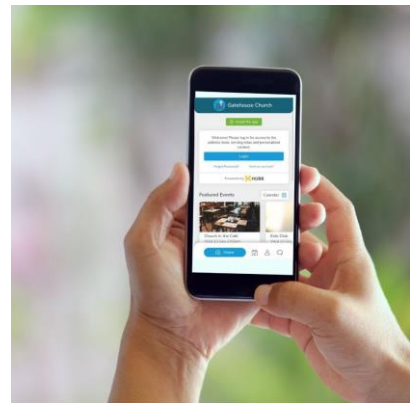
## Media creation – videos, flyers, social media

Graphics and slides for Sunday services, advertising events and social media are created online using Canva.com. Team members with a login are able to create, edit and download the created graphics from a browser while at home, so they are able to download these to the PC at church. We are also able to remotely login and setup for services from our PCs at home, which is a great help.

## Website & App

In July we went live with a brand-new website and app provided by Hubb Digital. Calendar, news blogs and upcoming news events are added regularly. Sermon videos are edited and uploaded each week or when possible.

The Gatehouse Church app is available for anyone to download to their devices. There is access to a secure members-only area after registration and logging in, which provides personalised content e.g. leaders have access to set up rotas, reminders, safeguarding DBS records and gift aid payments which can be set up by the office when applicable.



## Social media

During 2023 upcoming church events, news, sermon snippets and video shorts were posted regularly to our official Facebook page, Facebook group, Instagram and X (rebranded Twitter). X is run by Neil Bromage. The youth group Limitless Blackpool have their own Instagram account which is run by Jayjay, who is doing an awesome job.

### *Stats - 2023*

YouTube: 7,157 total views and 206 subscribers.

Facebook Official Page: 768 followers.

Facebook Church Group: 551 members.

Gatehouse Instagram: 291 followers.

Limitless Youth Instagram: 150 followers.

X: 40 followers.

## Livestreaming

Livestreaming of the Sunday morning services on YouTube started in October 2020 and has continued throughout 2022 and 2023. We have regular viewers, both in the UK and from other countries. We also try to monitor the livestream chat.

Thank you to all team members who worked hard and supported the tech during 2023. I was able to take some time off during December/January for a break and the team stepped in to do the services, which was much appreciated.

## Looking to the future

My vision for the tech team is for all of us to continually improve our skills in sound and media and the way in which we present services. To also learn new ways of using media and technology in order to share the amazing message of Jesus, both in the church and online with digital evangelism.

We welcome creatives who have a passion and talent for tech, sound, cameras and video editing and a heart to reach others via technology.

### Prayer points

- Thankful praise to God for His provision.
- Committed volunteers for livestream chat monitoring, camera control, video editing.
- Ways of engaging our online viewers & evangelising online.
- Expert advice for lighting ideas and finances for purchasing stage lighting and backdrops.

## WORSHIP TEAM (JULIE GREEN)

Over this year we have just continued to push through with limited people and try to develop the worship.

Last year we commented that our aim was to develop and encourage and involve the youth.



These last few months we have seen Kyran and Jensen step up and join us with two songs each week at the beginning of service, then go into their youth groups. We are in the early days but they are doing really well and are willing to listen and learn and I have learned some things from them too. Working with young people is new for me but we are enjoying the experience together.

We continue to use the iSingWorship app

which allows for some flexibility.

Also, over the last few months it has been great to welcome some of the church leaders to come up during worship time to pray, declare or sing so we can flow better together as a team. This is working well - so thank you folks!

## Prayer points

- We thank God for the first fruits of the youth coming to serve God.
  - Still pray for more team, musicians, singers so we can develop the worship more.
  - Pray for me as I try and lead and develop the youth at this time.
  - Pray for a rota of volunteers to be available to be present for the worship practices.
- This is necessary so that we always have at least two adults present.

## CONNECT GROUP (JULIE GREEN)

This last year we have seen God bring us together more in prayer, to intercede for different areas in the church and for people and situations. We have seen many answers to prayer.

Each week we have a time of fellowship over a brew 'n cake, have worship and a short bible study. We have covered numerous subjects, which have challenged us all and spurred us on in the things of God.



After Easter we are looking to show The Chosen TV series in the group and open it up for everyone as an outreach; an opportunity to invite people to come and get a flavour of who Jesus is. This will run for a number of weeks, so please pray for new people to come along and also think if there is someone who you might like to invite.

## YOUTH REPORT (MANDIE WALLIS)

I took over the youth work in the Church last year in September, when Matt left Blackpool for pastures new. Thank you, Matt, for all your hard work that set the foundation for me to continue building on.

Four young people were baptised last year, and more baptisms are planned for this year.

Here is a look at the different activities on offer for the youth:

### Hot chocolate

This has gone from strength to strength over the last year. We are giving out almost 200 hot drinks a week now. Great conversations are being had and there is such a feeling of community and trust from the young people.

### Youth group

We are averaging between 25 -35 weekly. We have an amazing solid wonderful group of young people many of whom became Christians in the last year. They are keen to meet together, explore new activities, learn new things and pray & worship together. The group is flourishing.

We started a support group which happens organically before the youth club starts. The youth are opening up and sharing issues that we can pray about. Also, this group of young people are supporting and praying for each other.

Planning will soon be underway for the Limitless Festival in August. Last year 11 youth and 8 adults attended this amazing event. Many lives were transformed and we all had a wonderful time.



On April 18th we have Mark Saunders, an evangelist, joining us for all our activities on that Thursday. I am very excited about this, to have fresh input as many of the Thursday youth are expressing interest in Christianity.

It was a pleasure for Becci and myself to join the Message Trust at Aspire Academy on the recent *No More Knives Tour*. There were eight church members who volunteered for the end of the week concert in the Blackpool Tower, where 488 young people attended and 130 responded to the Gospel appeal. Thank you to all that volunteered.

## Sunday youth

We decided to start a **Breakfast club** as some of the youngsters travel some distance and some were attending church hungry. This is going very well and creating a lovely feeling of family and belonging.

As more youth have started attending on a Sunday morning, we felt the need for nurture and discipleship, so we started a youth Bible study.

We are finding our feet and getting into a good routine. The young people are growing in their faith and even do homework set for them which they are enjoying (and of course loving the fact they can win prizes lol).

Some of the topics we are studying at both Thursday and Sunday youth are Christianity and what is a Christian, growing in our faith, baptism, prayer and worship, relationships, sharing our faith, the character of God and being a Christian in today's society.

## Youth training

Blackpool Church invited us to take part in youth worker training with an organisation called Youthscape Essentials for 8 weeks. Peter and Becci have been attending this.

## A story of encouragement

When one of the youth was baptised last year, her mother gave her life to the Lord and is doing a short Bible study with a view to being baptised on Easter Sunday.

A big thank you to my youth team. You are all so encouraging, supportive and hardworking and your passion for working with young people shines through.

### Prayer points

- That relationships with the families of our youth will continue to be built and grow.
- For our visit from Mark Saunders on April 18th
- For the direction we should go in for this year's festival.
- That we continue to focus and seek God on what He wants us to do with our youth.
- That my second meeting with staff at South Shore Academy will be fruitful and the lunchtime bible study for the youngsters will get underway.

## BUILDINGS TEAM (PATRICK FLEMING)

### Projects

Most of the groundwork of outlining the projects' nature and costing has been done, but the finance has not yet become available.

The scope includes major works to the main building, including roof replacement, asbestos removal in the roof void, refurbishing the front entrance, kitchen and toilets and then finally installation of solar panels on the roof. These items are estimated to cost between £180,000 - £200,000.

We expected to be able to start in the summer of 2023, but are hopeful that this year might see it begin. We are praying for the realisation of the funding.

## Maintenance

Both buildings are in regular use and require regular attention. Thankfully most of this is of a low-cost nature, ranging from £10-£250. Some funding and donations have come in for the centre, enabling upgrades to the kitchen, replacement window, new cooker and dishwasher.

The smaller tasks were undertaken by Paul Douglas and myself, where only small costs and labour were required. Work that required skilled/paid labour was kept to a minimum.

In this way we have managed to keep the place safe and bright, and although we have had some challenges, I am pleased with the outcome of all jobs undertaken.

PS. I also want to thank Paul (Mary-Ann's husband) for all his efforts in this endeavour and Ben from Christ Church, Blackpool for his help with some of our electrical work.

### Prayer points

- That other skills would be available and that individuals would offer themselves to help.
- For the realisation of funding for the building project.

## BIBLE STUDY (PATRICK FLEMING)

A core group of 9 people have taken part in this online Bible Study, with most weeks 5 or 6 in attendance. They all contribute in this discussional Bible Study.

Themes have been very much focussed on Jesus, His Kingdom and His mission and also future hope and we make sure that the Bible (both Old Testament and New Testament) is our guide and authority. The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 119:130 'The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple' and we have found that to be so.

It has been a great joy for me to see growth in my own walk with Jesus and also in the participants in the group. Hallelujah!! And all within the limitations of Zoom!!

## Prayer point

- That we may all be built in the knowledge of Him, strengthened in the inner man, by His mighty power at work in us by the Spirit of truth. To Him be the Glory!

## HEALTH & SAFETY (PAUL DOUGLAS)

Over the past year I have been compiling all aspects of H&S and Fire Risk assessments of both the church and the centre.

Just now I'm beginning to fill out the relevant documents for insurance and fire safety of the buildings and grounds. I am also making a priority list of things that are needed doing as finances allow.

We are also looking at training and emergency procedures to be implemented as soon as we can, for things such as; use of fire extinguishers, fire drill, health and safety in kitchens and general safety precautions. We will be working on this with the leaders of different departments at church.

Moving forward, we will need some significant financial input to make some of the changes which will make the church and centre as safe an environment as it can be. Also, we will need to recruit more volunteers to help with the work.

If anyone has any suggestions of any aspects of anything of the above, please feel free to come and chat with me (I promise I won't bite!).

## SCRIBES — WRITING WORKSHOP (NEIL BROMAGE)

Scribes meets on Saturday mornings and at the first gathering we opened with this word of warning (a quote used by Adrian Plass),

*"Writing is really quite simple; all you have to do is sit down at your typewriter and open a vein"*

That quote produced a few gasps around the room as the group of 10-12 writers settled down. They are a diverse group of people ranging from 7-75 (ish!) with different backgrounds and interests. The two most eager members are Hephzibah and Elijah Anozie who have been absolute stars and never fail to contribute and surprise.

Alongside 5 or 6 Gatehouse Church folk we have been joined by a total of 5 other people from elsewhere and there is a mix of experience, ability, and desired outcomes from the group.

We begin each week with a challenge: “Someone give us a Word” and the group then writes for 5 minutes on that word. The output has been really interesting. Over the first five weeks, we have also looked at: What is Creative Writing? The Essentials of Every Good Story, Viewpoint, Opening Lines, including writing 5 opening storylines, and we have written a news report, using Kipling’s advice:

*I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.  
I send them over land and sea,  
I send them east and west;  
But after they have worked for me,  
I give them all a rest.*

The real highlight of the morning is the Coffee & biscuits before setting HOMEWORK for the week. Last week they were asked to write a short story in no more than 100 words with these opening and closing lines:

“It’s the oldest dream of all and I’ve just had it.....They put the behemoths into the hold along with the Rhino’s, the Hippos, and the elephants.”

It has been encouraging to see how everyone has responded to some tough challenges and produced work they probably didn’t think they were capable of. It’s also been really good that everyone has helped out with something, from making the coffee to putting tables and chairs away.

It’s a really great group and we have some fun along the way.

Gatehouse Church  
Blackpool  
Lancashire  
UK

12<sup>th</sup> March 2024