

Pastor's report to Annual General Meeting April 2010

In my report I will try and give a flavour of the things the elders were involved with in 2009. We continued to meet most Monday evenings for prayer and business. In the last 12 months there seemed to be fewer crises in the life of the church meaning we didn't need to have so many evenings trying to sort out issues and so could spend more evenings in prayer than for some while. In addition four of the elders meet three mornings a week for prayer in the context of the staff group. Andy led the youth prayer times on Wednesday and Dennis led most of the Friday prayer meetings.

2009 opened with Francis Willoughby writing some teachings on spiritual gifts which were later shared with the housegroups. John Southam Rob and Jo spent a lot of time praying and sorting out music group teams which, because of changes in the membership, needed reorganising from Easter 2009

During January the annual membership reaffirmation process was completed and 217 people were committed to membership at Battle Baptist as we entered the year. We realised that of that 217, 50 members were currently not part of small groups and many visits were made to try and encourage these people to become part of a small group wherever possible. In January we also spent time praying about and working on the Easter programme of morning meditations.

Successful men's breakfasts in 2009 gave us some pastoral time with men we don't see very often.

There were discussions as to how our mission to younger families could be forwarded via Caterpillar preschool. We also had some time with the Battle Baptist Football Club leaders to see what help and support is needed for their outreach role to be maximised

In February the elders had a spiritual time away with Rev Peter Nodding from Purley Baptist who acted as facilitator. Another 20 visits were made to members specifically to encourage participation in the midweek groups of the church. There was contact with Glyn and Emma Moreton who were serving with BMS in Tunisia and who announced their decision to return to UK later in 2009.

Andy and Dennis were heavily involved in the administrative work flowing out of the Charities Act 2006 which is now in force resulting in Battle Baptist Church transforming itself into a registered charitable company, the Life with Hope Trust , registered charity 1134288. There was no alternative but to embark on a huge administrative exercise which included John making an inventory of every item the church owned in order to transfer it to the Life with Hope Trust.

In March Derek White and John Southam travelled to Israel and the occupied territories on an encouragement visit to various groups of believers with whom Derek has had contact over the years. Here at home there was a joint meeting with the Deacons for prayer and sharing the outcomes from the elders' retreat in February.

We began to plan for June's here for Good event and for a major youth residential in Stafford called Soul Survivor. Francis Willoughby was in contact with Pastor Pedro Angel from La Palma about a visit to the churches there in July.

During April the elders conducted an evaluation of how 412 @ 6.30 is going and found that more youth were coming along from the youth club and also more youth were helping by serving at other services We agreed to hold a day of prayer on June 8th for all preschool related outreach.

In May it was a great joy to welcome Johnny Shawan from Beit al Liqa Bethlehem on a visit and Derek, John and Dennis spent time ferrying him to engagements in the South East. We worked on a programme of services for the high summer period . As the year developed it became increasingly difficult to find volunteers to help at youth club on Friday evenings which is why we had to discontinue this activity in December. We received a request from Dominic to become a student placement for the final two years of his course with Moorlands. There was a day of prayer for the football club. One of the positive developments in the last year has been the introduction of a five minute spiritual spot on the Wednesday training nights.

In June the elders noted in their minutes “ *We believe the Lord has helped us get back on an even keel after the last three challenging years and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are regularly experienced in*

all the Sunday congregations. God has spoken clearly to the elders about leading with humility and making sure the church listens to God for his direction for the future.”

At the end of June pastor Jack arrived from Obambo, Kenya and stayed for a month

During July – 80 attended a Spree Camp and 54 Soul Survivor. Ventures with children on this scale could not be undertaken without the staff team all of whom were involved

The elders had a meeting to consider how to experience more freedom in worship in the services and this was followed by an evening of prayer with the deacons . Freda Nolan, Dick and Di Blackler and Francis Willoughby were part of a mission with the churches in La Palma in July.

The elders try not to meet in August and during that month Dennis paid a pastoral visit to Nigeria where the Uche family were going through a difficult time and where there have been internal difficulties in their family of churches. Dennis also visited the Bible College in Jos, taking £1000 as a gift from us and returned with a request for books for the library which the church later agreed to pay for and which now we have to find a way of actioning.

As autumn approached there was another quickening of the pace of life in the church here and new life bubbled up in the form of a prayer meeting for older men on Monday mornings. We began to talk with the local parish church about how we could support their mission at Battle and Langton School. In early September detailed planning for Christmas began

The annual Baptist union census was conducted in September. The number worshipping with us that Sunday was 325. As the autumn progressed the 412 youth congregation and its members came to take up a considerable proportion of Dennis' time. Whilst this group has had its ups and downs over the years it is now properly accountable to the church and much more clearly integrated in what we are doing.

In September the church was incorporated as the Life with Hope Trust with its own charity number and the Trust effectively began life in April 2010. The process of change started in the Church

Meeting on 11th April 2006, took four years and an enormous amount of time and energy to complete!

In October we agreed to have a special focus on the persecuted church so work started on the planning of those services. As the year moved towards its close it became more apparent that our children's work on Sundays is going through a time of increasing fragility both in terms of children attending consistently and in terms of volunteers willing to develop the groups. This remains an ongoing challenge for prayer.

Some old chestnuts resurfaced at elders' meetings in November such as number of members who don't attend housegroups and the large number of non members who do. In the modern church the whole question of defined and formal membership is something which seems to sit less easily with some people and others want to be part of us but don't want to join.

Some of the elders attended an encouragement day in Worthing on the subject of Vision. Dennis attend a conference put on by the Baptist Union about the challenges of leading a church of more than 200.

It was a busy year- to what extent it was fruitful will only be revealed in eternity but I want to thank the elders and everyone else for their help over the last year. Let's pray that the lord will help us take forward the church together in the coming days.