Ministry Report for 2015
For presentation at Annual General Meeting
Sunday 31st January at 7.30pm
**Trustees’ Meetings**

The trustees meet ten times a year, usually on Sunday evenings 7pm—9pm, and the meetings always begin with 10 / 15 minutes Bible reading and prayer.

The trustees have overall responsibility, before God, for the finances, buildings, employment, safeguarding, health and safety together with the legal governance of the charity with the Charity Commissioners.

The trustees are indebted to Will Spendilow our Treasurer, who keeps careful control over our finances, Louise Davies, who takes minutes and provides reports, and Ailbe Sadlier, our Health and Safety Officer.

Sadly three of our trustees, Rachel Hodges, Nick Adams and Jon Hunter stood down during the year and we are indebted to their years of loyal service, particularly Nick Adams who served faithfully for over 20 years.

Praise God we have six new trustees coming on board subject to verification at this year’s AGM.

The early part of the year saw completion of the first floor extension with the grand official opening taking place on Friday 27th March by Fiona Bruce MP, supported by Richard Smith of Wren and Cllr. Denis Murphy, Congleton Town Mayor. Tesco Congleton very generously provided all the refreshments.

**Extending the car park** remains a priority issue and discussions are continuing with Cheshire East Counsellors and Officials and the matter is still progressing, 2016 will be the year of breakthrough!

Steve Hodgkinson, Chairman

**Eldership**

As Elders, we are responsible for the oversight of the church before God and we are in continual communication together and endeavour to meet more formally most Mondays to pray over everything concerning the church, our people and all the ministries.

We are blessed to have Steve Cosgrove as a new Church Elder, the church publically affirming his appointment on Sunday 27th September.

Steve brings a fresh dynamic to the Eldership and has already begun to invigorate us with a new momentum. Watch this space! The prayers of all God’s people are needed and valued to support the Elders and their work and ministry.

We are ably supported by Will Spendilow, who attends most of our weekly meetings and with whom we have continual dialogue.

Steve Hodgkinson, Church Elder
Administration
Danesford Centre

The Danesford centre is a hub of activity with a huge amount of people coming and going most days. All the rooms are set out first thing, then are swapped around for the next event or course, sometimes the rooms can have four different courses in during one day, then a different booking at night.

 Earlier in 2015 the building work on the extension above the Nursery was completed and we opened for business, using four new upstairs rooms. This includes the Sanctuary which is open for anyone who wishes to pray or have a quiet time.

 The office is where most of the enquiries are dealt with, either through email, phone calls, fax, post or face to face with people just arriving in the office. People could be enquiring about anything from room hire to furniture recycling, food parcels or needing prayer. You never know what might arrive next!
 In the late Autumn 2015, we rearranged the office space so that the main reception is now found by using the new staircase by the toilets and the original entrance now is only used by staff.

 A large proportion of my time is spent processing room bookings and general church admin. including Acting as Steve’s PA, invoicing, wages, HR, church membership, emails, notices, church rotas, restocking all supplies from cleaning products to diet coke! We have recently been inundated with bookings for 2016 and 2017 with Cheshire East and various other organisations from the local community. One of the biggest challenges is the car parking and as the building is getting even busier it is becoming more urgent that we find a solution.

 As well as the paid staff (Louise Davies and Will Spendilow) and cleaning (Laura Casey), we have a number of volunteers who are also regularly working in the office and are committed to various roles (Steve Hodgkinson, John Mulley, Eleanor Blythe, Peter Martin, Mandy Martin and Ailbe Sadlier without whom we would not be able to keep the centre running smoothly.

 We continue to maintain an ‘open door’ church which does create pressures at times but is part of our DNA.

 I am very grateful for everyone’s continuing prayers and support.

 Thanks

 Louby Davies, Church Administrator
New Life Church Website

I have now been given access to the church’s website. The website is now being updated on a regular basis and I am in constant communication (email or phone) with all the different services within New Life to ensure that information is current. I have planned for the year ahead by asking for details and dates of upcoming events as far into the year as possible i.e. dates for Messy Church, term dates for the Children’s and Youth Groups, Fundraising events etc. All of which has been transposed both to the website and facebook page. Defunct sections, events and links on the website have been removed. Church newsletter is now always current on the website via communication from Church office. In order to make it more user friendly, continued work is an ongoing process but hopefully all going in the right direction. I will appreciate any creative suggestions and feedback.

Julie Thomas

Facebook Page

Going very well - have now increased to a number of 250 Likes for our page. With doing the website as well, it ties in well with the facebook page re sharing of information and ensures consistency. Its very nature means the page has many “news feeds” ie photo’s, updates from Church, updates from community, videos, links from other relevant groups to name a few. These need daily constant updating which are seen by all the people who have liked our page. But more importantly, all the people who have liked our page can in turn “share” our information with their friends etc and this is basically social networking which in turn spreads the news from New Life further afield. This “social network” can then be utilised as an effective marketing tool so that we can increase our reach of people re Alpha courses and so on. The last promotion of Alpha last year, on facebook alone, was shared and reached i.e. seen by over 4/5 thousand people. The most recent post regarding Steve and his MBE was seen by 7,315 people, shared 25 times and had 84 separate comments!

Julie Thomas

Footnote

The Elders and trustees are indebted to Julie Thomas who has enthusiastically embraced keeping our Facebook Page and our Website information up to date and to Peter Goodwin for the ongoing design, support and website hosting which he generously provides free of charge through his business.
Preaching God’s Word

Preaching God’s Word remains central, and will always remain central to the life of the church and we are very blessed by our main three anointed and inspirational preachers, Paul Williams, Wyn Reynolds and Catherine Krinks.

We have also benefitted from input by visiting speakers including Mike Vickers (Cross the Nations), Mike Frith (Oscar), Heather Thompson (Powerpack Children’s Ministry), Dr Rob Kiff (founder member of New Life Church), Rev Paul Weaver (retired AOG National President), Ven Ian Bishop (Archdeacon of Macclesfield), Judy Elliott (International China Concern), Dennis Smith (Chairman Gideons South Cheshire Branch) and David Jones (SAT7).

Life Groups have brought God’s Word on the first Sunday of each month as well as ‘praying for our prodigals’ and sharing Holy Communion.

Up and coming young men have also been introduced as preachers on Sunday mornings and these have included Shane Wright and Chris Talbot.

We shall be hearing from them and other young men in 2016 and Penny Dossett who is becoming part of the team.

Steve Hodgkinson

Worship Bands

We give thanks to God that there are a large number of faithful and gifted people who have led us in music and song to help us express our worship over the course of this past year. Peter, April, Dale, Lynne, Paul and myself have each taken a lead role over the year, seeking God to help us and to inspire the whole congregation in our worship.

Coming together to lift our eyes to see and proclaim the Lordship of Jesus and to direct thanks and praise to Him is part of the DNA, integral to us as a church.

There will be some changes in 2016. Both April and Peter have stepped out from leading bands for the foreseeable future. We are currently meeting together as a whole team asking Father God for His heart to direct us in worship, having some teaching and prayer and encouraging people to grow into what He has for us.

Heartfelt thanks is given to all those who have served us this past year, we honour you for your practical and spiritual investment into New Life Church and we are excited for the year ahead and for times in the Lord’s presence.

‘He is good, His faithful love endures forever’. 2 Chronicles 5

Jeff Cutts
Audio Visual Team

The work in the sound room has continued to cover all the Sunday Services and the various additional events including weddings, funerals, Nursery Services and special outreach events. We greatly appreciate all those who volunteer their time.

There is always on-going maintenance to keep the equipment functioning properly. Sound team training is organised to further improve our use of equipment.

As well as projecting the words and videos and balancing the sound, the preaching is recorded each week and available to download from the church website during the following week. We aim to utilise technology to benefit the Church, the worship bands and the congregation whenever possible. New A/V team members are always sought and training will be given.

Jeff Cutts

Sunday Service Signing

All our Sunday services are signed using British Sign Language for the benefit of the hard of hearing, usually by Andy Holland, but once a month by a professional signer. The Sunday’s Cool children also are able to sign some worship songs and take part in the service when appropriate.

Andy Holland

Prayer Meetings

Regular daily, weekly and monthly meetings take place at the centre, plus special days of prayer where appropriate. Nothing of lasting value happens unless it is birthed, covered and sustained in prayer.

We held a special week of prayer entitled 7-1-7 where the Sanctuary Room was set aside for this purpose. It is worth noting that the Tuesday early morning prayer meetings 6.30 - 7.30am has a strong core of committed warriors.

Prayer also takes place in our Life Groups and of course, daily personal prayer is vital for our spiritual oxygen.

Everyone is encouraged to use the monthly prayer calendars covering New Life Church, Churches Together in Congleton, Kilbrys/YWAM Slovakia, the children and young adults in China.

Prayer Calendars for New Life and Churches Together are distributed each month with the newsletter. Monthly Prayer Calendars for ICC China, YWAM Slovakia and a-mic Romania can be emailed or printed on request.

Steve Hodgkinson
The Storehouse Foodbank

The Storehouse foodbank ministry is a well established free service into our community. Operating 5 years now, in that time it has helped over 7,000 people with approximately 140,000 items of food.

Christmas hampers have been a major feature year on year, this last year (2015) we produced 340 hampers covering almost 1,000 people and 750 Christmas presents. These were extremely well received and we have had wonderful feedback on the effect of this initiative across the town, sharing God’s love in a very practical way.

Most of those helped (80%) are in and around Congleton with the remainder being “our neighbours” in nearby towns like Sandbach, Alsager, Middlewich, Holmes Chapel, Biddulph, Mow Cop, Marton, Macclesfield, Knutsford, Wilmslow and Alderley Edge and others.

Over the last 5 years, God has continued to grow this ministry in many ways; we deal with 80 organisations who depend upon the foodbank and the food is sourced from New Life Church members, many regular doners from local and not so local churches, schools, local businesses, members of the public and special fund raising or food donating events.

Worthy of a mention is an excellent relationship developed with our local Tesco store over the last 2 years or so.

Year on year an increasing number of people in our community are experiencing the impact of significant changes in the social welfare system which for many has had a major and devastating effect, seeing significant increase in the numbers of people in regular emergency situations, poverty and homelessness. Low pay has also been a major factor for some needing help.

Please keep this ministry in your heart, minds and prayers. Please continue to support it whenever you can. Each donation you make helps someone you do not know have a better day than they would have done and lets them know we and God care for them.

Thanks

Will Spendilow.
The Jubilee Club

The Jubilee Club has been operating weekly (Tuesdays) since May 2012. It provides to anyone in our community a place to belong, be accepted and enjoy friendship. It currently offers an allotment, a cooking club, a craft club, a programme of life skill topics and a job club.

The club always starts with a 30 minute reflection on some aspect of life introducing God’s perspective. God has blessed us with a brilliant set of volunteers who run the various activities. We have over 400 people registered to the club, with a weekly attendance (of volunteers and club members) which varies from 30 to 40+ in any one week.

We like to think that the club is successful and is reaching a number of people who otherwise we might not come into regular contact with; our agency partners are keenly promoting the club all the time to their clients so we often get new people popping along.

We praise God for the great outcome in helping 54 members into full-time employment or apprenticeships since the job club launched mid 2013. We also meet from time to time with other local job clubs to share and learn. Local businesses now routinely contact us to give us first option and sending people to them for vacancies they have..... how good is that ! Praise God that relationships and connections done in the right way can bear such great blessing and fruit.

The club also helps break down barriers and prejudices which often prevent folk showing interest in church and this is reflected in the fact that we have yet more people from the club this year who have attended Alpha and also a number who now come to church on Sunday mornings.

We hold social events and also a summer coach trip out. Great friendships have been built whether a volunteer or attendee, a great friend base has been established.

Please keep this ministry in your prayers. It is an important outreach, demonstrating God’s love for those in our community who need family, friendship, role models, assistance and love.....

It is so dependent upon the sacrificial giving of time and skills of the volunteers each week to whom we are greatly thankful. If you wish to know more or can volunteer some time to help or join in then please see Will Spendilow. Thanks !

Will Spendilow
Family Support Ministry

The family support work is continuing to grow and progress. Joanna Crichton joined April Hunter in September and the two have been working together in a similar role, but very much according to their individual strengths and gifts. We are continuing to focus on building supportive communities within the church that look after one another practically and emotionally, as well as spiritually.

Women’s Bible Study

The group has continued to grow and maintain a sense of momentum. We have three groups within the overall group that ensure that all women who come have an opportunity to share, contribute, and receive support. We have welcomed many new people through our doors and have enjoyed supporting five mothers as they have welcomed new babies in the last year though our birth hope evenings, meals after the birth, and creating a space for them to continue to be part of a group and bring their babies along as the group continues to prioritise mothers of babies and toddlers but also benefits from including women of all ages and seasons of life.

Thursday Morning Group

Joanna has taken the lead on establishing a new group on a Thursday morning. This group draws mainly from the established mothers who are part of New Life Nursery and Little Angels, but also welcomes new mothers and mothers from the church community. The group is still very much in development with no official title but includes elements of encouraging overall wellness for body, mind, and spirit. We often describe it as a toddler group with a special focus on the mothers.

One to One Support

Joanna and April continue to work one on one with families and individuals both within the church and the community offering practical, emotional, and spiritual support.

Sunday Morning Crèche

Sunday mornings can be challenging for young families, especially those with children under three. Families often struggle to feel connected to church during this season and have difficulty getting out in the evenings for life group, or staying after church for tea and coffee due to the needs of their family. For the last year, the crèche has been running with a parent led format which is a wonderful opportunity to get to know parents and build a community during Sunday mornings. The parents are leading the children in simple interactive songs that communicate spiritual truths, helping children and even very little babies experience the presence and love of God. The parents are then encouraged to chat to each other over tea and coffee while the children play. It’s another experience of church that breaks away from the traditional format but is just as valid and worthwhile as participating in a traditional service. It’s essential in ensuring families feel and stay connected to church in the midst of what can be an overwhelming season of their lives.

April Hunter
Family Support Worker

Furniture Recycling

The furniture recycling project has continued to operate successfully during the year, providing essential furniture and white goods for families and single people in desperate need. Referrals come from various sources, but most notably through our Family Support Workers where we are providing an holistic continuing level of support. Various agencies, e.g. Social Services, Adullam Homes, Plus Dane Housing, Mental Health Team, Drugs Team, Probation Service, also make referrals to the project.

We are indebted to Crossroads Community Partnership based at Bosley Crossroads who provide warehouse facilities, van collections and deliveries and installations.

We are also very grateful to the John Holford Charity with whom we have a special relationship and arrangement whereby they will refund the cost of white goods when purchased by the church, within an overall ceiling of £6000.

The lease we held over a warehouse unit at North Rode at a peppercorn rent has been terminated.

Steve Hodgkinson
The Counselling and Listening Service:

The Counselling and Listening Service supported 21 clients in 2015. 75% of these individuals were Christians - more than double last year’s figure, and received between 1 and 17 counselling sessions each.

The service continues to be valued by those who use it. When asked what difference it has made to their lives, comments have included,

“Everybody should be able to have this kind of support –you can’t say all this to your family.”

“Coming here is the light in my life.”

“I can see that I am making steps forward, and starting to like myself more.”

These examples of feedback from clients illustrate the value they place on the New Life service: a place where they can feel accepted, valued, and affirmed. One of the foundations of person-centred counselling is providing unconditional positive regard, which means, believing that the person is doing their very best with the life resources they have.

Clients have mainly sought help for depression and relationship difficulties, and some have been referred for Sozo ministry. A client who finished counselling sessions but who needed further support continues to be regularly supported by a ‘Listener’ from our congregation.

The Counselling and Listening Service works in Partnership with other areas of the church, and has received referrals from The Jubilee Club, Image, and New Life Nursery as well as self-referrals. Other referrals continue to come from Social Services, the Mental Health Team, and from ‘old’ clients who recommend our service to their friends within neighbouring churches.

The New Life Counselling and Listening service continues to provide a professional service: this year the senior counsellor travelled to Manchester to sit the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists Certificate of Proficiency Assessment, and is now eligible to be included on the national voluntary register of counsellors and psychotherapists.

It is important that, although the service we provide is on a small scale, we continue to work to ‘Best Practice’ and be part of national bodies to ensure our integrity. We want those who come to us (and increasingly these are Christians) to know we provide a quality and trusted service. And I must add - what a privilege it has been to walk alongside members of my Christian family during difficult times.

I would like to add my thanks to our ‘Listeners’ who so willingly give of their time and their love to those who need it.

New Life is a member of the Association of Christian Counsellors and carries specialist insurance cover.

Louise Daniels, Cert Ed., Grad Dip Couns.
New Life Church is now recognized as a satellite centre to Image in Manchester. The centre offers a confidential service for those struggling with pregnancy decisions, post abortion support/counselling, miscarriage, child loss.

Posters advertising the Image contact details have been personally distributed to the various professionals/organisations within Congleton; for example Congleton Hospital, midwives, health visitors, children’s centre etc along with information about New Life Church as a satellite centre, together with details of the way referrals are processed.

Since then we have had referrals from one of the health professionals and self referrals to the NLC centre service which was very encouraging. However work needs to continue in promoting the service and expanding to other health professionals within and in the outlying areas of Congleton and also Macclesfield where there is no centre.

Contact details of the service are provided on the New Life Church and Image (Manchester) websites. Also Image Helpline volunteers have all centre site information including Congleton. The team at Congleton now consists of Christine Wannop, Margaret Bradley (Wellspring Church) and myself (Val Williams)

Our team recently featured in the local Congleton Chronicle with Fiona Bruce MP and Christine Fidler, CEO of Image, celebrating Image’s 25th anniversary and New Life’s satellite becoming fully established.

Val Williams (centre co-ordinator.)
Celebrate Recovery

Celebrate Recovery has been running at New Life Church since January 2014. The first course was initially run to fast track people and try to establish a team of helpers to assist with the next course which was planned for September 2014. Both of these courses were ran by Paul and Joan Howard and assisted by myself, Dawn Roberts. From the second Celebrate Recovery course we were glad to see that 5 of the participants showed a willingness to return as helpers for the 2015 September launch.

At the end of May 2015 Paul and Joan had decided to step down from facilitating Celebrate Recovery at New Life Church. Measures were put into place for myself (St Martins Church, Talke), Mick Burgess (New Life Church, Congleton) and Sue Timbey (St James, Newchapel) to continue the good works already started by Paul and Joan. After much prayer and consideration a proposal was put forward and agreed by all three leaders. The proposal was a three year plan to work together to grow the Celebrate Recovery ministry team. Celebrate Recovery would run at each church during a three year period. Year 1 - hosted at New Life Church. Year 2 - hosted at St James Newchapel and finally Year 3- hosted at St Martins, Talke. This will give any new helpers time to develop and grow in confidence and experience. Also, it will enable them to become more familiar with the programme so that they will be well equipped to facilitate it independently in the future.

We met with the elders at New Life Church who have been open to the proposal and give it the go ahead. I took the role as main leader/facilitator, closely assisted by Mick Burgess and Sue Timbey. Paul and Joan Howard kindly agreed to support and advise when necessary during this transitional period.

We launched Celebrate recovery in September 2015. The launch supper attracted approx 30 people. Of these, 28 people started the course. To begin with we started with the open share format. Now the numbers have stabilised (23 regular participants) we have progressed onto the step study format (this requires a little more commitment). We have 2 women’s groups and 1 men’s group. The groups are now ‘closed groups’ as the participants begin to prepare to face hurts, hang ups or habits.

The leaders and I continue to support and encourage the team in trying different roles as they feel confident. We have continued to take advantage of the training that has been provided by the head of Celebrate Recovery in the UK, Tony Turner. The leaders and many of the team have travelled to Derby for this training over the last five months. We are also presently looking at attending the European conference in May 2016 to further develop this ministry.

I would like to thank Paul and Joan Howard for their ongoing support during this transitional period and also New Life Church elders for being open to the proposal, for hosting and supporting this Celebrate Recovery Programme.

Dawn Roberts
Life Ministry using Sozo Principles

SOZO UK in New Life Church was started 5 years ago by Merle and Paul Williams after the elders asked them to set up a prayer ministry team. It consists of 9 New Life members and a member of Astbury Church. All team members have Basic training, 6 have Advanced training, and Merle and Beth have also trained in Children’s Sozo Ministry. Some team members also have other prayer ministry training. New Life is now licensed as an official Bethel Sozo UK Church, and can be a resource nationally.

Sozo is a ministry which focuses on the Godhead rather than the minister, and is therefore very Christ-centred. The team have now prayed for well over 300 people, many of whom have come to us from other churches. We have had much encouraging feedback telling us what a blessing this ministry has been. Quite a few have used terms such as ‘life-changing’ and many have had dramatic healings, physically, spiritually and emotionally. Because this is a confidential ministry, we are unable to be more specific but clearly this ministry is valued by all who have experienced it.

This Ministry is offered free of charge and as we had hoped, it has become a valuable resource both in the local community and further afield. To date we have ministered to folk from over 19 different churches, and also to some unchurched.

Currently we are looking to encourage more people to become involved in praying for this valuable and relevant ministry. We hope to continue to build a strong prayer support base.

Merle and Paul Williams

Congleton Healing Rooms
Costa Coffee Tesco

A huge thank you to everyone who prays regularly for Costa Healing Rooms as we offer prayer each week in Congleton Tesco Costa Coffee. We have seen many amazing breakthroughs in healing and restoration for countless people as we get to pray for both Christian believers and for those who don’t yet know Jesus as their Saviour.

Please continue to pray for covering and protection as this is a very visible ministry and we have to be constantly mindful that the enemy is never wanting us to take ground for The Kingdom. We need to be vigilant and not complacent as we connect and demonstrate God’s amazing love to those who have yet to encounter Him.

Please check out the costahealingrooms.com website which is regularly updated with news and testimonies which will assist with specific needs of the ministry.

There are now nine churches who are part of the Healing Rooms teams together with an additional three churches who make up the Advisory Board for Healing Rooms. We have had the privilege of assisting in the opening of further Healing Rooms in Costas in different parts of the country including the first in Wales. A number of different areas have visited us in Congleton and it has been a real pleasure to host them as they explore similar ministries for their regions. There are others new Costas planned for this year and we are excited to be part of these developments.

Veronica & David Mee
Numbers have decreased since my last report. There are currently 47 children attending weekly, with an average attendance of 24 each day in the pre-school. Rainbow Room numbers have been significantly lower this year, which seems to be because parents are now ‘strongly encouraged’ to be in employment and they therefore need longer hours of childcare. This has been a concern and we are currently prayerfully considering opening for 3 x 6 hour days per week which may begin in September.

We are again planning to provide a full Wednesday session for the ‘rising 5’s’ commencing in the summer term. This has been very successful in the past and enables the children to feel more confident when tackling the transition and challenges of ‘big school’.

We currently employ 9 staff members all of which are very committed and professional. All staff are qualified to level 3 or above apart from Fern who is working towards her Level 3 and should complete late February, 2 staff have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and I have Early Years Professional Status which is QTS but specific to Early Years Education. Toni Meakin is studying for a Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Practice.

Pauline Mellor left us in September to begin a new career working in a Care Home. We were sad to see her go, but celebrate the devotion and love she shared with hundreds of children over the many years she worked here at New Life Nursery.

We were thrilled to receive an ‘Outstanding’ award from Ofsted in March 2014 and continue our ‘outstanding’ practice on a daily basis. We closely monitor and evaluate our practice in order that we remain the best we can possibly be for the Glory of God.

We recently secured funding from Dane Housing which enabled us to buy books for the 2 year olds. We are now holding half termly ‘stay and play’ sessions for the parents of 2 year olds. This enables us to build positive relationships with our nursery families and demonstrate how easy it is to communicate effectively with young children through literacy initiatives.

We continue to provide an inclusive environment, not only for the children, but also their families. We are asked for support during times of bereavement, family break-ups and debt problems and if staff cannot help they know when and where to refer the parents for more specialist help.

Together with the children’s families, we always celebrate the Christian festivals i.e. Harvest, Christmas and Easter, plus our very popular sports day service when we pray for the children who are leaving to start school and present them with a gift to remember their special time with us. Our Nativity this year was particularly well attended with standing room only and some of the families subsequently came to the Christmas Eve service.

We actively promote the Alpha Course to our parents and last year had a favourable response from mums and even grandparents. We continue to pray for those members of staff who are not yet Christians.

New Life Nursery continues to provide love and security for all children and is a key outreach and Christian witness into the families and wider community.

NB The Government’s policy to extend funding for 3 and 4 year olds from 15 hours to 30 hours, subject to parents working a minimum of 16 hours per week, could present us with a major challenge in ensuring we have sufficient children attending to remain a vibrant nursery preschool. Your prayers will be greatly appreciated.

Margaret Sanders (Nursery Manager)
Words & Music

This well established ministry is approaching its 20th anniversary year in 2016!

During the weekdays, it often continues to be a key front door for the church, but also in fulfilling the original vision as a place for prayer and ministry, a safe meeting environment and a resource centre for many Christians and churches in the town and surrounding area.

At a time where huge numbers of local Christian bookshops have closed or gone out of business, we fully encourage all here at New Life Church to use Words and Music for all your resources. It is vital we support our local Christian Bookshops and both the service and the witness they provide.

Over the years, the coffee shop side of the ministry has built up a great reputation and clientele, perhaps as much as 80% of the customer base during the week, are non-New Life Church people and many unchurched. It has proved to be a great environment where people get their first “taste” of New Life Church. Similarly, the Bookshop side has, year on year been frequented by other churches and has a good reputation for fresh and relevant resources and gifts.

Often a busy place, it has a number of strings to its bow and each day continues to be the “reception” for the many and varied individuals who visit the church. During the week it is key in establishing the life, welcoming the presence of God and demonstrating Christian service to those we serve. In 2015 it has perhaps hit a new level of busyness with almost every day being full of people in both the coffee shop and book shop and additional part-time staff have joined the team.

The coffee shop staff have developed strong links with all the regular groups of people who attend the centre e.g. Alpha, Nursery parents, Jubilee Club, Storehouse and the various bible studies which take place during the daytime. This has added a great dynamic to the day to day role and atmosphere around the place.

We would also like to offer our heartfelt thanks to those who volunteer and step in at hectic times! Your help is greatly received and appreciated.

We look forward to seeing you during 2016.

Kathryn Spendilow, Catherine Krinks, Geoff Wood
Hospital Service

This has now been in existence for several years and we visit Macclesfield General Hospital six times per annum to conduct a service in their Chapel on the third Sunday’s of January, March, May, July, September and November.

There is a team of about eight to twelve people and of course not all are available each time - in fact we rarely have more than five or six and we would LOVE to have more. Our aim is to visit all the wards, ask the Sister’s permission and talk to the patients who want to or can engage with us and invite them to the service or pray with them. If they are able and can join us we take them down in a wheelchair to the Chapel. The service itself is simple and short - about twenty five minutes, with hymns, a Bible reading, prayers and a 6/7 minute talk. We find that the patients enjoy the time and find it helpful.

As for us we feel privileged to be able in a small way to help them. However we can only visit what the time allows, and we would so much like to have a larger team and several more would be most welcome to join us!

Giles Chapman

The SPIRE Trust
(Supporting Pupils In Religious Education)

Visits are made to Congleton High School, Daven and Havannah Primary Schools for an hour each week to help some children who find reading difficult and hear six or seven children on a one to one basis. This individual attention is valuable and we find that over the weeks their confidence and ability improve. They are also able to enjoy the discipline of reading much more, which of course adds greatly to their general education. Since this again is dealing with individuals we are restricted in the number of children we can hear by our small number and more help would always be much appreciated.

Giles Chapman

Ladies Life Matters

In March we held an Afternoon Tea (which is becoming an annual event!) in aid of the Tanzania project. We had a super afternoon with manicures, foot massages, cake, plants and many other lovely things. Our speakers were Sue Wood and Jess Ratcliffe. We were able to raise over £900 for the project.

In October we had a Pudding and Fizz evening, which we all enjoyed. Our speaker Marge Reynolds was unfortunately unwell so Lynne Ashmore kindly stepped in. She gave an amazing testimony of God’s grace and provision. She also sang some of her beautiful moving songs.
We look forward to 2016 with another Afternoon Tea in March supporting the Romania trip and welcoming Lyn Holland to speak.

All ladies are welcome, come and join in. The events are relaxing and a lovely, non-threatening place to bring non-Christian friends.

Linda Hurlstone, Gillian Borland, Gill Kirk and Laura Brinton
Alpha

The Alpha Course has run in both the spring and autumn terms again in 2015 and continues to be the main evangelistic outreach from New Life; approx. 18,000 invitation leaflets have been delivered throughout the town by individuals and life groups, some of which have borne fruit and all of which have maintained awareness of the church’s presence in the community.

The spring course had 26 guests and the autumn one 28, some of whom were supported by people both in New Life and Astbury churches. The morning courses were again popular with a solid group attending the autumn one in particular, and all attendees have enjoyed either tea and toast, or the delicious meals provided both by the life groups, and individuals who’ve prepared food so willingly when no life group was available.

We have witnessed healing miracles and also that greatest miracle of all, new life in the spirit, both on our Holy Spirit days and within the weekly sessions. Alpha wouldn’t work without the support of New Life people and we are ever grateful for prayers offered, meals served and invitations delivered.

Jesus said “Do not say four months and then the harvest. I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” (John 4 vs 35)

Eleanor Blythe

Men’s Breakfast Outreach

The Men’s Breakfast Outreaches have continued over the past year, and it’s been good to see an average of 20 men enjoying breakfast together and listening to amazing testimonies of God’s grace in their varied lives.

Wyn Reynolds.

Elderly Persons’ Outreach— “Songs of Praise”

Once again our team have visited some of the Elderly Persons Homes in Congleton on a monthly basis, endeavouring to bring them hope for the future in the message of the Gospel. We have a very faithful, committed team working with us who take part in singing some of the lovely old hymns the residents can remember, and various team members who pass on the Good News of Jesus in interesting ways, share poems and Bible readings, sometimes a solo, and shake hands with each resident, making them feel special. It’s a very precious three quarters of an hour and lovely to see the joy on the faces of the residents as their memories return of days spent in Sunday School and in various churches they belonged to. We believe that when these dear folk can’t get to church, we take the church to them!!!

Wyn and Marge Reynolds
High Schools Work

It's Your Move
We had a good response from primary schools and nine took us up on our year 6 'It's Your Move' lessons in the summer term helping prepare students for moving up to high school and allowing us to make contact with and invite young people to come to our youth groups.

Eaton Bank Academy
On Mondays at lunchtime Sue and Jeff now offer a listening service at Eaton Bank and have a number of regular young people who we chat to and encourage in the playground / corridors / lunch hall.
We have presented RE lessons for year 8's, 9's, 10's, and 11's at Eaton Bank. Once again we have been able to deliver some valuable lessons; 'Belief in God'; 'Christian in the Hot Seat'; where we were able to share our testimonies, explain the gospel, and answer many questions from the students themselves.
Last year the school asked us to organise a STOP day which was really well received, guests invited included Chip Kendall and a former Compassion child, MAF, etc. The Challenge Team also visited during the year to dramatically address the subject of Saving Sex until Marriage; they will be back again this year.
We conducted assemblies for all school years on topics such as ‘making right choices & ‘love’.
The Christian Union as it was did not work as such, but teachers said the group of young people who came benefitted from the safe / positive place to meet and Jeff continues to meet with them on Tuesdays and aims to drop something positive into their lives each week.
As a result, a ‘secret CU’ has started with a few Christian young people in a different classroom with the intention of keeping a Christian focus and inviting people in carefully until it is established. This is growing well and has four year 7 pupils and two year 10 pupils currently.

Congleton High School
As School Chaplains, we continue to help young people who need to talk, meeting regularly for mentoring one to one. Staff can refer students to us as necessary. We spend Wednesday lunchtimes in the playground and around the school talking to students.
The Christian Union group 'Go Fish' has 15-20 regular attendees. The students, all from different churches, are enjoying meeting together and sharing about their faith. The Sixth Formers continue the teaching slot, supported by Sue and it has been great to see them grow and gain confidence in this role. A Bible Study group continues and is led by a 6th form pupil again supported by Sue. There is a real commitment to the group and openness from the younger students.
We continue to present assemblies to all year groups each term, and support RE lessons. Lessons have included Christian Aid simulation games for year 7’s, the 'Belief in God' lessons for years 8 & 10. 

Four Stop Days (full days of five lessons a day -year 10, 11 & 6th form) have taken place, we have organised these to include very powerful Christian testimony, life stories and challenges. We have been able to invite Christian speakers and groups into school, eg; the Challenge Team (sex education), The Genetik Team from the Message, Christian Aid, MAF(Mission Aviation Fellowship), Life Charity and various musicians.
The Christmas Carol Service at Astbury Church was different this year but very successful. Many students and a school band were involved in the pre-service time and we felt it was the best one yet!

6th form Volunteers
Mrs March, Head of 6th form at CHS approached us last year to ask if we could partner with the school to help some of their 6th form find volunteering opportunities in the community. A group of 22 students signed up for volunteering, some to visit the elderly, some to help in charity shops. Two other groups of volunteers have formed and work more closely with us; one group of 6 helps to sort out food and pack food parcels in the storehouse, Sue and Will guide them and they have served well and worked hard. It is also a benefit to them to be at NLC centre and we are sure that God is working in them. A second group of 6 students have been helping out in the community with gardening, litter picking, cleaning up in a local school; this group goes out with Jeff for 2 hours on Wednesday afternoons to help people we connect with through church, storehouse and referrals that come in to the church.
These 2 hours on a Wednesday afternoon with 12 students we feel are God appointed and we have great opportunities to sow into their lives, just as they have great opportunity to give into our community.

Thanks be to God!

Jeff Cutts and Sue Wood
Church based youth work

Rock Solid
Rock Solid continues to be an exciting and fast moving evangelistic youth group for ages 11 to 14. It is a mix of church and unchurched, Christian and non-Christian young people. The leaders include older teens who have grown in confidence themselves through running games and sharing their faith over the past year. We were really grateful for both Tom Birch and Lucy Cutts who were on the team until Tom moved for a new job and Lucy went to uni. Geoff Wood has joined the team which is a great help and blessing. There has been a real growing together with the young people and there is a good family feeling. We would appreciate a few more boys.

Maxlife
Friday evenings see a lively group of 14 to 18 year olds come each week. A group who attended for much of last year came away to Cae Canol centre in Wales. Some of them have moved on from the group and some new people have been coming in. Some of the group are Christians from our church families, many members are not from Christian homes and the evening is quite evangelistic. Encouragingly there is a growing involvement of church young people in leading elements of MaxLife.

Sunday morning teaching
Teaching sessions for the younger teens take place in the Children’s Room on Sundays. We use a mix of bible study, discussion, DVD clips, games and music to challenge the young people to grow in their faith. This term we are looking varied topics - from ‘missions’ to ‘protecting our planet’.

Discipleship
We have been privileged to meet regularly and lead young people to a closer relationship with God through Bible study, prayer & listening. We are particularly working to train young leaders, and using resources such as ‘Freedom in Christ’ and ‘Bondage-breaker’

Youth Life Group
Geoff and Sue Wood love leading this group. They have between nine and eleven young people each week who are very committed to growing in their faith. The group is a safe place to share, support each other in prayer, learn to lead and step out in using their gifts. This year older young people have moved up and younger ones have joined the lifegroup. We are encouraging the younger ones to step up and take responsibility and be active participants.

6th form Life Group
A new life group started in the autumn as a group of 6th form and college students wanting to meet together. Their first study together was an evangelism course ‘Walk across the room’; this term they are looking at a teaching called ‘Courage’ by Francs Chan, and will be inviting some visiting speakers on occasions.

Volunteer Youth Leadership Team
Huge thanks to our volunteer team! We could not run these things without them. Heartfelt thanks go to Frankie, Keith, Susanne, Charlie, Tony, Chaz, Jonny, Jess, Emma, Lucy, Ed, Tom, Pauline, Aaron & Lou, Geoff, Tom, James, Alex, Peter, Callum and David... We do need more help!! We would love to hear from you if you are interested in getting involved in this exciting ministry.

Girls Events
Last year we ran some girls’ events with 20+ girls each time. We enjoyed fun times of making food, crafts and jewellery. The highlight again was the ‘Great Girl’s Bakeoff’. We always have a theme and a Christian message to challenge us and it is a great place for friendships to be made and to chat about our faith. Thanks to Lucy Cutts who has helped lead this, we are now looking for someone else to help lead as she is now at Uni.

Tanzania Team
Four young people went on the team with Geoff and Sue Wood (and six other adults) to Tanzania in August. They worked hard together fundraising and preparing and we praise God for such amazing support that was shown to the team. Two young people made commitments while out in Tanzania; all of them showed great maturity and were happy and willing to serve others. It truly was a life changing and faith growing mission trip.
Soul Survivor
Last year’s Soul Survivor group consisted of eighteen people. We were pleased to have Emma Kilbry join us from Slovakia, and it was encouraging to see the group of young people worshipping God together, growing in friendship and enjoying a vibrant positive atmosphere. We plan to take a group again this year on 27th to 31st July.

Jeff Cutts and Sue Wood

Children’s Ministry

The children’s ministry covers children and families who are part of the church and also reaches out into the community through school’s work, Friday’s Fab, Little Angels, Messy Church, Growing Through and special events.
Our vision is that each child would know the reality of ‘God as a Great Big God’ in their lives. We have three part-time children’s workers. Marie Clare & Jayne are responsible for all the church based activities and Beth for schools work and ‘Growing Through’ ministry.

Sunday’s Cool

We have four ever growing groups which run on Sunday mornings where the children learn about and experience the reality of God.

Creche 0-3 years: Creche is a parent-led group where ‘See and Know’ is run which is a way for the babies and toddlers to engage with God through song and Bible truth. This is overseen by April Hunter.

Bubbles pre-school from aged 3.

Splash reception, Y1, Y2.

Xtreme Y3-Y6.

These groups are full of fun, friendship, worship, Bible teaching, prayer, crafts, activities and a snack. The children are given opportunities to engage with God and be equipped for life.
On the months with 5 weeks in we have the ‘Big Breakfast’ and ‘Little Breakfast’ which take on a different format starting with a sausage bap!

We continue to be blessed with so many wonderful children in all the groups. We average around 60 children each week with an overall team of 40 dedicated and committed volunteers to lead them.

Little Angels – weekly baby and toddler group

Tues 12.30-2.45: Picnic, Play, Snack, Craft & Story

We continue to build stronger relationships with parents through the weekly sessions. The Story & Singing time always includes a mixture of Christian stories and songs.

Friday’s Fab – Club for children in School Years 3 – 6 on Fridays 5.30– 7.00pm £1.00 per child

Each week we play games, sit and eat a meal together and we have Bible teaching and activities.

Regularly around 20 children attend, this helps to develop the relationships we have with them through other activities we are involved in such as Messy Church, Growing Through and also schools work. Some children have also started coming along to church on a Sunday. It is amazing to see God working in these children’s lives.
**Encounter Zones / Prayer Space**
In November we set the Prayer Room up as a prayer space/encounter zone. This was visited by children in Extreme, Growing Through and Friday’s Fab.
The theme of the prayer space was: Ephesians 4:18 ‘And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high and how deep his love is.’
Some children shared the verses which spoke to them most........

‘Nothing will ever stand in the way of my love for you.’ Romans 8:38  
God says; When your heart aches I am near.’ Psalm 34:18  
God says; ‘I can do more for you than you can ever imagine.’ Ephesians 3:20  
God says; ‘I even know how many hairs are on your head.’ Matthew 10:29

**Messy Church**
Messy Church is designed for all the family to enjoy together. It reaches out to families in the community with whom we already have a link through our Nursery and other clubs and activities run by the church.
We meet bi-monthly on a Saturday afternoon and enjoy being a big family together having lots of fun exploring a Bible theme through craft, activities, a celebration and a meal. We have had around 120 people attending each time.

**Growing Through**
This year has seen our second Growing Through course for children. This is a peer-support group for children who have experienced loss through bereavement or family breakdown, which runs for 12 weeks, ending with a Discovery Day. Each week we cover a topic eg. anger, fear, acceptance – all based on God’s Word. We aim to equip the children to Grow Through the challenges they have faced, knowing that Jesus never leaves them, loves them completely and has a good plan for them with hope and a future.
We have seen God’s faithfulness and provision throughout this course in so many ways, including: the team, prayer support, the children and there are lots of testimonies to share! Feedback from parents was that they had seen big changes in their children and how they dealt with challenges.  
We aim to run this course in the autumn term each year.

**Training & Equipping**
We welcomed a team from ‘Powerpack Ministries’ to church on March 7th and 8th for a weekend of training and equipping for the whole church. Powerpack’s vision is to see children ‘chasing God’ and ‘shaking nations’. We were thrilled that so many people from our church embraced this training. Now we are putting into practice some of the initiatives we learned about.

Safeguarding – We have now received CCPAS safeguarding training as a team.

**Praying & Planning Ahead**
We pray for His continued blessing and guidance on all areas of the Children’s ministry and pray for the grace to be able to take His leading in everything we do.

With an ever growing number of children attending our groups there is always a need for more volunteers, so please do prayerfully consider whether you have a part to play in our ministry to children. We particularly need people who will come into the groups and sit alongside the children and chat with them, even if it’s only for one Sunday a month or every other month.

**A Big Thank You**
All of these invaluable ministries rely on a huge team of willing, gifted volunteers. We would like to say a massive ‘Thank You’ to you all.
Primary Schools’ Work

Open the Book
Clare Harvey leads a fantastic team of volunteers who go into four Congleton Primary Schools each week to act out a Bible story and encourage the children to think about how it applies to them. We are overwhelmed by how much the children love the stories and want to take part. It is wonderful to be able to sow the seeds with these stories and powerful messages into school. At Astbury we follow OTB assemblies with a lesson in the classroom. Through these lessons the children are able to interact further with the story.
The schools we visit are Astbury, Smallwood, Quinta and Daven.

A big thank you to all the dedicated teams!

Bible Explorer – lessons for Year 5 and 6
Wyn and Beth teach Bible Explorer in ten Congleton Primary Schools, where the children receive an interactive, action-packed adventure through the Bible. Bible Explorer is brilliantly designed using different learning styles to appeal to different children and each story has a hand sign so children can remember what they have learned. The feedback from schools and children alike is incredibly positive and it is brilliant to hear children saying....'I love the Bible!' and 'I have learnt that God always keeps his promises!' We have a steady supply of schools requesting Bible Explorer in the Macclesfield and the surrounding area as they have heard about it from other schools, so please pray as we actively seek out new presenters. Beth is qualified to train up new presenters, so training is readily on hand!

This past year has again been a wonderful opportunity to teach the Bible Explorer Course in many schools, including Congleton (alongside Beth Cosgrove), and I myself covering Crewe, Winsford, Sandiway, Talke, Alderley Edge, Barnton, Harriseahead, Longton Tunstall, Northwich, Cumberbach, Davenham, Over Peover, Elworth, Scholar Green, and Weaverham. I teach children aged nine and ten on a daily basis in the Primary Schools and thank God for this golden opportunity He has given me – long may it continue. I have been greatly encouraged by the feedback both from pupils and staff, and I appreciate your continued prayers and support in this vital ministry.
The Bible Explorer project is teaching five one hour lessons on the Old Testament and five one hour lessons on the New Testament.

Wyn Reynolds

Assemblies, lessons and visits
We lead assemblies and lessons in a variety of primary schools. A particular highlight of the year was taking Easter lessons, workshops and assemblies in several classes. This was an amazing opportunity to explore the Easter story with many children. Many schools are already booked in for this Easter!
We were pleased to welcome The Quinta Primary School to visit New Life for their harvest celebration again last year.
As the school curriculum has changed, please pray that schools make space and time in the curriculum for us to go in.

Prayer Spaces in Schools
This year we were invited by Marton school to set up a Prayer Space as part of their Christian Value week. We had three tents on the school field which were set up with interactive prayer activities and every child in school spent time in the prayer space during the week. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Many children commented on the peace in the tents (even though it was pouring with rain and windy outside).
The school now have a permanent prayer space set up in their school for the children to visit.
We welcomed some of the children to receive some training at NLC on leading assemblies for their peers and ideas for prayer activities for their prayer space. They visited our prayer space to get ideas.

It is always a privilege to work in the Primary schools of Congleton and we would like to thank them for welcoming us.

Beth Cosgrove, Marie Clare Tyrrell and Jayne Blythe
"Feed Each Other"
Meetings held on Thursday mornings 10.00 – 12 noon

A small group setting of six people meet at Penny’s house in Westholme Close just round the corner from church. We are currently studying the Book of Hebrews which focuses on Jesus’ position in heaven, sitting at the right Hand of the Father and working and making intercession for us.

At the same time we are learning about the responsibilities required from God as we walk side by side with Him on a daily basis, together with the consequences of failing to do so.

We have had some wonderful times unlocking the sometimes difficult and challenging lessons of this scripture and much discussion on how to apply these truths to our lives today.

If you love the Word of God and would like to commit to this group please contact me.

Penny Dossett
Feed Each Other – Group Leader

Men’s Discussion Bible Study Group

Last year, the Men’s Discussion Bible Study Group has met most Monday evenings between 8pm–10pm with men from New Life Church and other local churches. We have encouraged each other by sharing testimony, praying, and discussing a Bible passage and ministering to each other as various needs have arisen. We see this as an opportunity to be open to and exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We started 2015 continuing in the book of Acts and have progressed into 1 Corinthians. For the coming year of 2016, we aim to continue in 1 Corinthians. It is open to whosoever has a hunger for God's word. It is not limited to just one person teaching, but we encourage all to contribute and ask questions. This year, various men have led the study and it has enriched our time. We have also led a couple of ‘1st Sunday’s in the month’ services at our church which have proved a bonding time and God has moved in healing which is always encouraging to see.

Paul Williams
Life Groups ...loving God...loving one another...loving the lost

We currently have six vibrant Life Groups, including the young people’s group, which meet regularly in members’ homes each week. The groups provide a setting for building close friendships and relationships in trust and love together with Worship, Bible Study, Prayer and Holy Communion. Life Groups provide vital support for the outreach ministry of the church primarily through Alpha by delivering leaflets, providing meals, praying and wherever possible inviting guests.

Sadly a couple of groups disbanded during the year due to family commitments but we hope new groups will be formed during 2016.

Life Groups provide a vital network for pastoral care in the church and we are indebted to our leaders and deputy leaders for their commitment to the ministry.

Life Groups currently meeting are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evening</th>
<th>Leader</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>:Geoff &amp; Sue Wood (Young people’s group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>:Andy &amp; Claire Jones and Pip Worswick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>:Hans &amp; Yvon Degens &amp; Eleanor Blythe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>:Godfrey &amp; Faith Davies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>:Wyn &amp; Marge Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>:Peter &amp; Mandy Martin and Brian Hudson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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All groups welcome people to join them and below is a brief report from Wyn & Marge Reynolds’ group.

Steve Hodgkinson

Wyn & Marge’s Life Group

This year has been a time of blessing together on Wednesday evenings in various homes when it has been great to hear our members contributing through various testimonies, answers to prayer, and at times leading the Bible Study. We have had new members join us which is an encouragement to us all, and its great to see everyone participating in group discussion. The biscuits have always been first class!!!!!! It has been a privilege for us all to share in prayer with the various needs which have arisen over the past year and rejoice together on receiving the answers!!

Wyn and Marge Reynolds
Ministry to the Persecuted Church

Persecution of Christians is getting worse - and it's getting worse fast. Open Doors have just published their World Watch List of the fifty worst places to be a Christian and a number of countries have dropped down the list, not because persecution there is decreasing, but simply because it is increasing in other countries.

The worst place is North Korea. Christians there face arrest, torture, imprisonment and death for daring to believe there is a higher authority than the nation's leader, Kim Jong-un. Second on the list is Iraq, where thousands of Christians have been forced from their homes to escape the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) - remaining in IS-controlled territory as a Christian is effectively a death warrant.

Third on the list is Eritrea, which is under the control of an absolute dictator who sees Christians as 'agents of the West'. Believers have been imprisoned in horrific conditions in their thousands - some are kept in metal shipping containers in scorching temperatures, others are forced to work long hours doing manual labour.

After that comes Afghanistan, where leaving Islam is seen as apostasy and anyone suspected of converting to Christianity is arrested, and Syria, where Islamic State attacked 35 Christian villages in February 2015 alone, abducting over 250 people and driving 3,000 others from their homes.

Even in Niger, 49th on the list, 70 churches were destroyed and at least 2,000 Christians threatened or forced to leave their homes.

With such unprecedented levels of persecution, it is possible to feel helpless and simply switch off. But there are things we can do. Things we ought to do. There is a war on and we cannot just opt out.

Pray

We can pray at home and together at church. There is a prayer meeting specifically for the persecuted church from 7:00 to 7:45 pm on the first Tuesday evening in each month. We use audio recordings from Open Doors. You can also get the latest information from the field by asking for prayer diaries and magazines to be posted to you. If you have a computer, you can get weekly email alerts. To receive any of these, go onto the Open Doors UK or Release International web site, or get Mandy Martin to do it for you.

Give

Our church gives £50 a month to Open Doors and some of us feel strongly enough to give regularly as individuals as well. These donations go to a number of projects, but you can make one-off donations in response to appeals that have touched your heart, such as the plight of Syrians in refugee camps.

Write letters

Those of us who are good letter-writers write encouraging letters or cards to Christians who are in prison, suffering persecution or grieving the loss of a relative who has been martyred. This can be a good activity for a Life Group or Sunday's Cool class. Details about what sort of letter to write, and who to send it to, are on the Open Doors web site (or ask Mandy for a leaflet).

Campaign

Congleton MP Fiona Bruce has been increasingly successful in raising awareness of the plight of persecuted Christians, to the extent that at the end of last year the Prime Minister paid a visit to the Open Doors headquarters to hear about the problems first-hand. Over a hundred MPs attended a presentation of the latest World Watch List this month.

Open Doors encourages its supporters to write to MPs and ambassadors and to sign petitions about specific issues, and you can ask for an email to be sent to you whenever there is an opportunity to do this. Although we do not need to try to change her mind, Fiona Bruce is glad to receive letters and emails in favour of the stand she is taking, as she can use them as evidence of public support when she speaks in Parliament.

Mandy Martin
Samaritan’s Purse - Christmas Shoebox Appeal

We feel extremely blessed to have been given the opportunity to once again coordinate the Christmas Shoebox Appeal and would like to thank everyone who has wholeheartedly supported us in this ministry, and for all of the prayers that we have received.

In 2014, New Life collected approximately 1718 shoeboxes, and this year we managed to increase this yet again to 1834 shoeboxes! Those boxes have been sent to Liberia, and the majority of these boxes came from local schools and churches that we had contact with (& of course from New Life members!). We really weren’t sure how many to expect this time due to other humanitarian crises such as the Syrian refugees, and those in need at Calais, so we are very pleased at the generosity shown again.

This year we decided to have a fun-day event in October to further boost the amount of extra boxes we could make with buying items from the proceeds. This was very popular and a great day for lots of families and was also a great way to raise awareness of the shoebox campaign. We raised over £1300 which would have helped boost the number of boxes made and helped us increase from last year. Again, a huge thank you to everyone who volunteered, took part, and came on the day - it couldn’t have been done without the support of the church!

Unfortunately, this year we have decided to step down from the ministry. The reason is simple - we now have our daughter Sophia to look after, and the shoebox appeal is a very time-consuming project! After consulting with Steve H, we feel it is right for somebody else to take-over, but also that it is spread between two couples at least - so it is more manageable for those involved! Prayer is going into this and new volunteers are being sought - we will be happy to support the transition to a new group and will support them as best we can.

Once again, a huge thank you to the church and those who have supported this important ministry during the time we have been blessed to run it.

Thank you again,

Stuart & Caroline Davies
**Report on Missions Account for AGM**

The Church commits a tithe of the regular giving from church members to the Mission Fund Account which is also funded by individual church members and some supporters outside the church. In addition to providing financial support, we pray daily for our work in China, Romania, Slovakia, and the Persecuted Church using the monthly prayer calendars and leaflets.

Details of our regular financial support together with reports on our overseas missions are as follows:

**Overseas**

**China: International China Concern (Orphanages and Welfare Centres caring for mentally & physically handicapped children)**

We have supported this work in China ever since it began over 20 years ago with two young men who went out from New Life Church. Through our Missions Fund we give £150 per month which includes gifts from Sunday’s Cool Children and our Nursery Group Children sponsoring Fu Shan, Liu Mi, Wang Liang, Zhang Qui Xi, plus special appeals.

Judy Elliott from the ICC UK Office visits us each year and speaks at one of our Sunday services.

**Romania: a-mic Family Home (Andy & Lynn Holland)**

The partnership with Ecce Homo has continued throughout 2015. In May, Liviu Balas, the president of Ecce Homo visited with his wife Antoanella. A meal was arranged during their stay to allow members of New Life Church to meet up with the couple and to hear about the current situation within the home, the evening ended with a time of prayer and worship. Also during their stay, they were introduced to members of the 2015 mission team and bonds were strengthened and new friendships made.

From 6th to 13th September 2015 a small team of four visited our partners in Cluj-Napoca, staying at the Ecce Homo headquarters. The team spent precious time with the children from a-mic, taking them to the zoo, salt mine, McDonald’s, the park, to the mountains near Turda and out for pizza. Visits were also made to poor families, the elderly and the children at the social centre, La Noi. Meetings were held with the Ecce Homo staff. Many needs were identified during the visit.

The home accepted three new children this year, siblings, Calin (13), Maria (9) and Andreea (5). Mirela, who is 22 years old, is now living independently in the studio apartment beneath a-mic. The second studio apartment is now occupied by sisters Ileana and Marinela, who have moved from the social centre to prepare for independent life.

Our a-mic family currently consists of nine children – Marian, Cristina, Alin, Cristi, Calin, Andreea, Adriana, Maria and Andi.

Shortly after the team returned from Cluj plans were put in place to replace the dilapidated kitchen in a-mic and fund raising events commenced to cover the cost of refurbishing the house extensively.

Andy & Lynn Holland
Slovakia: Kilby Family / Youth with a Mission (YWAM)

We have supported the Kilbrys for many years, Jo Kilbry (Collis) being a member of New Life Church. In 2014 the trustees agreed to send £10,000 to support their Lucatin project which is to convert a former communist centre into a major new YWAM centre. This work has progressed and the centre has become operational. There is still much to be done as and when friends are available. We support Steve & Jo financially each month and daily in prayer here at the centre.

EPHRATA in Mali, West Africa

In 2015 we continued to support Ephrata’s Church Planting and Empowerment programme which uses Tearfund’s Church and Community Mobilisation Programme (CCMP) as the resource to implement it. Specifically, we supported our Whole Life Coach, Vanbe Emmanuel, in ministry to three villages in the 3rd stage of the programme which focusses on bible study. Vanbe reports, ‘Personally, the process of conducting these Bible studies makes me feel very useful in God’s service. Whenever I was conducting a study, I saw and feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. So, I would like to be grateful to the Lord for His grace and the work He is doing in the life of the participants of the programme. I would also like to thank you our financial partner New Life Church for their sponsorship and prayers support.’ Vanbe has recommended that literacy support is also given to enable greater anticipation in the programme by the villagers. At the end of last year, more good news was received as Tearfund has made a grant to extend the CCMP programme to 6 villages.

Andy Jones

We also provide financial support for various UK missions as follows:

£15 per month Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) Congleton Branch
£20 per month Mercy Ministries
£15 per month CARE
£25 per month Alpha North
£25 per month United Christian Broadcasters UCB
£10 per month Cell UK
£50 per month Gideons
£50 per month Open Doors (supports persecuted Christians overseas)
£15 per month Christian Institute
£50 per month Image - Crisis Pregnancy Support
£50 per month Bible Society (to purchase Bibles for placement overseas)

We also support Christian Motorcyclists’ Association with whom we are an associate member and to which several church members belong. Other special requests for support are considered by the trustees as and when they arise.
Tanzania Team trip August 2015

A team of 8 adults and 4 young people travelled to the village of Berega in Tanzania for 3 weeks in August. We had an amazing time and saw God work powerfully through us and saw many answers to prayer. Two of our young people gave their lives to Jesus whilst out there.

Before the trip the team worked hard to fundraise for both their own expenses and to raise the £10,000 needed to carry out the projects whilst we were there. We praise God for his provision and for the great support of church members and those in the wider community who came to events such as Line dancing, quiz night, men's games night etc and who gave so generously. We raised in excess of £13,000 which was beyond our expectations.

Whilst in Berega, we were able to
- build a new classroom to train nurses,
- paint the nurses admin block inside and out,
- install 8 rainwater harvesting tanks
- decorate 2 classrooms at the orphanage
- run 3 Kid’s Clubs
- install guttering and a new roof
- put on an evangelistic evening for families, showing a Jesus film
- plus many more small projects around the village.

Individual team members were also able to use their expertise in giving advice on tree planting, helping sort the hospital finances, teaching in the primary school and attending outreach clinics with the hospital health teams.

We felt very privileged to work alongside this amazing team of people who worked so hard and gave so much of themselves, never moaning when things were difficult. The villagers as always, took us to their hearts and were so welcoming and grateful that we came to help and didn’t just send the money. We blessed the village but we were so blessed by them in return and learned so much from them.

Sue and Geoff Wood