



## Vicar's Report for The Point AGM - 28 April 2021

### Review of ministry/events since last AGM (October 2020)

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic our last AGM was delayed until October 2020, so this "annual" report is only covering 6 months. The majority of this season was spent in lockdown so pretty much all our mission and ministry has been online (YouTube, Zoom, WhatsApp and phone calls). Nevertheless, there is much to give thanks for as we look back over the last 6 months and exciting plans are in place for the coming season as we emerge from Lockdown and step into all that God has planned for us. Our online services have grown in quality and in numbers. It has been wonderful to use The Emmanuel Centre in Ditchling as studio to host services. There are now over 350 people subscribed to The Point YouTube channel (up from about 150 in September 2020!). There has been an amazing sense of unity and enthusiasm during the past year, demonstrated powerfully by our most successful Vision/Gift day ever in November when we shared our vision for the Northern Arc Development (Burgess Hill) and our plan to employ a new Head of Operations to pioneer this exciting vision – people's generosity was humbling as we raised £47,596 (including Gift Aid).

James Allen was appointed as the new Head of Ops in January and he has made a huge difference to our capacity already and will certainly provide the gifts and skills needed as we move forward with the Northern Arc vision. Specifically James now:

- Oversees all technical/equipment/IT for the team, and specifically has or organised internet to be reinstated at the Office and Emmanuel Centre
- Chairs the Operational Leadership Team who meet monthly to plan and review all activities
- Created a new Admin team which he line manages
- Manages all departmental/staff budgets
- Acts as Clerk to the Trustees
- Manages the staff review process
- Liaises with other stakeholders in the bid for the Northern Arc schools (Chichester Diocese; newly formed Hurst Education Trust; Local Authority officials)

Although we have not been able to meet in person, we still feel very connected as a community. Our regular weekly small groups have provided amazing support and a strong sense of connection for many, with about 160 people (75% of the adult membership) participating regularly in a small group. Our Kids and Youth ministry is thriving under lockdown through YouTube and Zoom but it has been a huge challenge to keep connecting with children, families and young people while meeting remotely like this. Everyone is eager to get back to meeting in person as soon as we can.

A huge debt of gratitude is owed to the big team who have made all this possible. There are many but a special mention must go to: our very hard-working staff team; the three key volunteers who lead our tech team and direct our Sunday livestream services (Matt Freestone, Cam McBain and Mark Steel); our amazing Kids and Youth teams; and our Small Group leaders who are so faithful.

## **Advent and Christmas**

### **Advent Point People's Prayer**

We resurrected the Point People's Prayer for Advent 2020, with 27 people contributing a daily prayer for our church members from 29th November to 25th December. To support the Advent journey, we created a daily Bible reading plan that was supported with structured personal prayer following the PRAY (Pause, Rejoice, Ask, Yield) model.

### **Christmas Services**

We held two wonderful YouTube Carol Services: Carols Altogether which contained a fabulous nativity "movie" involving 39 of our Point Kids! This service was our highest "viewing" of the year with 125 devices streaming live on the day. We also enjoyed a beautiful Carol Service hosted from the home of Rachel and Richard Gordon, with wonderful carols recorded by our worship team and a Christmas sermon from JJohn. On Christmas Eve, due to the temporary lifting of restrictions, we were able to meet in person for our Midnight Communion at the Tea Thyme Café run by Emma and Waz Wasilou, and on Christmas morning we met on the South Downs at Jack and Jill Windmills for an open air worship celebration of the birth of Jesus. It was wonderful for at least a few of us to meet in person before being plunged back into lockdown and being allowed only to meet online.

### **Sunday Mornings**

Our YouTube livestream Sunday Morning Service has seen significant growth in numbers, creativity and quality over the last 6 months (see the stats below). We moved, in February, from live hosting from homes to using a studio, designed and built by Mark, Matt and Cam. This solved a number of technical problems that had been the result of having the hosts and the director/producer in different venues, and also allowed us to overcome some of the issues with the Wire Caste software we were using. The studio setup also looked great, hugely improved the audio and visual quality and made the whole service much more attractive and easy to relate to. The Emmanuel Centre is shortly to reopen to other user groups, so have now moved venue again and will now be broadcasting from The Point Office in Burgess Hill.

The whole church, (youth, kids and adults) followed the teaching series "Promised Land – the story of Joshua" during January and February. The adults then focussed on "Being Jesus" through Lent, as we took familiar stories from the Gospels and were seeking to get to know Jesus better as we imagined what was his heart experience through his earthly ministry. The Kids explored "Meals with Jesus" during Lent and the Youth looked at the life of Jesus and different topics that the young people themselves requested. We all joined together for the "40 Days" challenge – one challenge to grow in faith or serve others for each day of Lent.

Mothering Sunday was an extra special service with over 100 people of all ages on screen! Creative readings, sung worship, drama, games, interviews, guest speaker (Gareth Hillier from Care for the Family) made up a brilliant and very engaging service for all ages and stages.

## **Holy Week and Easter**

On Palm Sunday we were able to broadcast live worship for the first time, albeit on YouTube, but it was wonderful to be able to worship for an extended period in a live setting being led by our wonderful musicians. There were special Good Friday services on Zoom (Altogether at the Cross in the morning and An Hour at the Cross in the afternoon) and on Easter Sunday we met “in person” on a Sunday morning for the first time since October. Hurstpierpoint College very kindly allowed us to use the College Chapel for an altogether gathering. 182 people gathered for a socially distanced, Covid-secure celebration, which was all livestreamed and enjoyed simultaneously by over 60 households online. The new Bishop of Horsham, Rt Revd Ruth Bushyager, came with her family and preached for us on the truth of the resurrection. Liz Styles and Michael Holt planned and led the service superbly well. It was wonderful that so many were able to come together for worship, albeit in strange way (no singing, wearing masks, social distancing, etc). But it was still such a joyful occasion and gave us a wonderful taste of what we will return to very soon.

We have seen significant growth in the level of engagement with our YouTube services over the last 6 months which is really encouraging. It seems that more and more people are sharing the services and they are being watched by a wider audience after the event:

## **Sunday Livestream Stats**

Sept averages: 282 total views; 84 concurrent viewers; 177 playbacks; 10 new subscribers.

March averages: 438 total views; 93 concurrent viewers; 203 playbacks; 34 new subscribers.

Growth during Oct-Dec:

- Views: 55% growth
- Concurrent Viewers: 11% growth
- Playbacks (numbers watching later): 15% growth
- Subscribers: 340% growth.

Subscribers is the most important figure as it shows the level of interest in what we are publishing. There were 209 new subscribers to The Point YouTube Channel between Oct 2020 and March 2021. The total number of subscribers is now 353.

## **Worship Team – Worship Pastor, Stuart Barbour, writes:**

“Lockdown has not been easy for The Point Worship Team, our normal thing to do is to gather together and be just that, a team, so although we are doing what we can in the circumstances I just wanted to acknowledge how tough it has been for the team. Over the past six months we have continued to record our worship songs and while not everyone on the team has been able to contribute, several new people are now regularly part of what we do which is encouraging. A total of 53 people have now appeared/recorded themselves on the songs recorded for our Sunday livestream services. We have now recorded 91 songs in total and are regularly uploading them to our YouTube channels. Two other churches have asked us if they can use these videos as a resource for their meetings.”

## **Point Youth – Youth Pastor, Michael Holt, writes:**

“It hasn’t been easy, keeping the young people engaged, connected, and inspired via zoom every week but they have been incredible! Such an amazing group of young

people – what a privilege it is to lead them. One of the highlights in youth was at the end of our teaching series on Joshua we posed the challenge to the youth, for those willing, to make a commitment to serve the Lord and to turn their back on the world and its idols. 7 young people respond, not simply praying a prayer to go to heaven but to make Jesus their Lord – it was precious!

“Another highlight in Youth was constructing a corporate prayer with the group. As a youth team we had been praying how to encourage the young people to pray and one of our leaders (Julia) suggested constructing a corporate prayer written by the youth. When we brought the idea to them we were amazed by the profound things they wanted to pray for, where they wanted to see God move in their lives and in the world. We wrote it up, gave each of them a copy and we now pray it individually and as a group – connecting us with God and with one another.

“Approximately 20 young people attend our Sunday morning zoom calls every week and around 15 young people attend mid-week groups (Nova & Coda). Numbers have been fairly consistent throughout Covid, with a couple more older youth attending mid-week groups this term. No new members have joined recently, but we are now planning outreaches (including a new Monday night football session) to young people’s friends this term.

“The majority of my time has been spent mentoring a number of the young people (7 of them every other week), and organizing/delivering mid-week sessions via zoom and Sunday morning sessions every week. I’ve also helped with several Altogether services and have recorded & edited assemblies at least once every term for local schools.

“Despite lockdown, our schools work has continued. I have helped deliver, record, and edit 3 assemblies with a strong Christian message since October last year which were shown to all the students at St Paul’s Catholic College. I have also had weekly prayer meetings with the chaplain at St Paul’s praying for the schools and students. I am also really looking forward to the upcoming term where God is opening so many doors: alpha courses, assemblies and opportunities to serve teaching staff in local schools.”

We ran a Parenting Teenagers Course on Zoom during Jan/Feb/March using HTB and Care for the Family material. The course was attended by 27 households (41 parents plus 6 team in total). This was good timing as parents have been facing the challenges of remote learning/home schooling and it was very helpful to meet and share with other parents. The fact that it was held online made it easier for people to attend as they could remain at home and not worry about needing babysitters, this format could be considered for future events even when there are no social restrictions in place. Michael Holt also attended the course and made connections with parents of Point Youth and other non-church parents which was greatly appreciated.

**Point Kids – Kids Pastor, Liz Styles, writes:**

“Over the last 6 months we have covered themes including, “The life of David”, “Characters of Christmas”, “Joshua and the Promised Land” and “Meals with Jesus”. It’s been great to hear some of the children sharing testimonies about how they have been putting God’s word into action, praying for relatives etc. It’s been lovely to see the team involved in these online sessions in so many creative ways. Our Sunday online kids sessions in 2021 are viewed an average of 56 times each week. Most households have more than one child watching. There are over 40 families in regular contact and taking part in Point Kids with children age 0-11 years old.

“Despite not being able to go into school we have produced several online assemblies that local schools have shown in classrooms. Our Advent Assembly has had over 260 views! On Maundy Thursday I was invited to deliver an open air School Easter Service. This was a wonderful opportunity to preach the Good News of Jesus in the school playground to approx 200 children, and a joy to be back doing “in-person” schools ministry for the first time in many months.

“Mini Mags - at the start of 2021 the kids team developed the idea of a mini mag which would be posted out to the primary school aged children. Each magazine includes prayer and Bible teaching activities relating to the Sunday morning program as well as puzzles, challenges and competitions. This is proving a great way to keep the kids connected even when we are not able to meet in person.

“In Feb/March we ran the Raising Faith Parenting Course. This was really successful, with 15 households attended and the course was enjoyed by all. The material is excellent and really well presented – we will definitely repeat the course in future years.

“Pre-School Post Packs: We have 9 families who currently receive a weekly post pack (15 1-4 year olds!) Each pack contains a story and creative activities themed around say, play, pray, hurray!

“We have also held several really engaging family Zoom and “in-person” events online aimed at engaging all ages together and helping kids to see each other and have some interaction with church friends (which has been so hard during lockdown). These included: Nativity Treasure Hunt in St John’s Park; Christingle Family Zoom Event; God’s Love is Big Zoom Event; Mothering Sunday Bake Along and Altogether at the Cross for Good Friday.”

**Mission and Evangelism****Alpha – Curate, Simon Shorey, writes:**

“We ran a small but significant Alpha Course in October to December with five people, all of whom responded positively to the course. Having run the course for six consecutive terms without a break, we then agreed to have a rest for one term and didn’t run a 2021 spring term course. Plans and team are now in place to start our summer term Alpha Course beginning on 10th May.

“Alpha Online has proven to be a great working model that connects with people who wouldn’t have joined an in-person course. It is, therefore, likely that we will continue to run periodic online courses in the future. Plans for an evening course in Burgess Hill and a daytime course in Haywards Heath remain on hold until Covid restrictions are sufficiently lifted.”

## **Mission Partners**

### **HOPE - Naomi McBain**

The Point provides regular monthly support for Hope towards general costs. Our ‘Drop In’ at Benstwood Hub provided a space for us to meet parents face to face up until Christmas (, and the Sparkle Network Facebook page has continued to grow as a community of humbling vulnerability that has been helping mothers through some difficult times. Volunteers have worked hard within the restrictions to stay in touch and support regular group members. The delivery of our sensory playtimes, Space For Dads and schools work have all been delayed throughout the pandemic.

### **Off The Fence - Paul Young**

The Point provides regular monthly support for OTF towards general costs. We continue to work with many people for whom a roof is a luxury and a family a memory. A key focus for us this year has been the running of a capital appeal project to secure the future of our Gateway Women’s work by purchasing the freehold and to fully own and manage the building that will open its doors to 50 more women as the economic climate worsens. This has gone well and we hope to take occupancy before the end of the Summer and start work on refurbishment to be open early in 2022 - we are within £10k of raising the £495k needed and are now just waiting upon exchange of contracts. Many thanks to The Point for giving so generously to this project through the Christmas Appeal.

### **Sam Leighton**

Most of our trips, work and discipleship schools in Brazil have been cancelled for now, so we have been adjusting like everyone by doing lots online. We have been teaching at YWAM schools, preaching in churches (on Zoom) and reaching teenagers by sharing the gospel on Tiktok (many coming to Jesus!). We have recently been able to do a two-week evangelism trip in Poland and are leaving for Albania for two months this week, where we will be partnering with local Churches to train in evangelism.

### **Hope House Haiti – Jo Glew**

The Point provides regular monthly support for HHH which sponsors 3 teachers. The political climate in Haiti is extremely volatile at present. The government has largely broken down, there has been much unrest and lawlessness. This coupled with the pandemic has made for very challenging times. The community at Hope House continue to serve God in amazing ways in the midst of such trials – there has been a mini revival and many have come to Jesus. The school is open and about 60% of students have been able to attend (travel is very dangerous with many road blocks and kidnappings). It has become increasingly difficult to access funds from the banks and to purchase supplies as shops and markets struggle to open. But God is continuing to provide and the Hope House community have been well and protected from the worst of the trouble. The farm is flourishing, there has been rain, producing much needed food and income.

### **Befriended – Gail Millar**

The Point provides regular monthly support for Befriended towards general costs. The last 6 months have been very significant for Befriended. Telephone befriending has continued through the pandemic with about 30 clients receiving weekly support. More than 120 Christmas Bags were delivered to isolated and elderly people on Christmas Eve and 193 “Easter in a Box” gifts were delivered for Easter. These simple “acts of kindness” are becoming a key part of our ministry, they make a huge impact on many individuals as a tangible demonstration of God’s love.

The trustee team has expanded, three new members have joined (two from The Point) and the new team are committed to seeing Befriended grow to reach out to more lonely and isolated people in Mid Sussex. In order to achieve this the trustees have taken the decision to employ a part-time Chief Executive and Gail Millar was appointed to start this role on 1 April 2021. This will make a significant difference to Befriended’s capacity and we are already seeing the impact.

### **CENTRE FOR URBAN MISSION, Nairobi – Programme Director, Simon Peter**

The Point provides funding for Daniel Omondi, CUM Youth Director, and sponsorship for 8 students on the apprenticeship programme. The last 6 months have been a time of rebuilding after lockdown, here are some highlights of ministry activities in Nairobi within CUM:

1. The 11 Schools of Hope (libraries) resumed operations allowing students an access to spaces that they can do homework.
2. The Child and Family Support program was able to resume operations in the month of October 2020 and as schools opened in January 2021 was able to facilitate access to education by providing school fees to over 100 children from the informal settlements within Nairobi.
3. CUM has been recruiting suitable candidates for the apprenticeship program who will soon be placed into the training program to commence later in the year.
4. The children workers conference was a huge success in the month of February 2021. Over 30 Sunday school teachers from various churches gathered to plan and pray for the children living in the slums.
5. CUM is currently looking forward to commence construction of its centre in Kibra and upgrade it into a modern facility that will be able to host a hospital, training centre for the youth, light industry, community gym, community recording studio, library and training rooms. Please pray with us as we navigate between meetings with the architects, community leaders and organizations that might finance the project. Thank God for provision.

### **ABI BARNES**

Towards the end of 2020 I had to leave Korea, so I joined the Discipleship Bible School where we read and studied the Bible from cover to cover. Since then, I have been looking for work and temping to raise money to serve with YWAM at The Kings Lodge where I will teach English to missionaries and support the base in financial management and administration.

### **Pastoral Care – Associate Vicar, John Naude, writes:**

“During this season of pandemic and lockdown, pastoral support has become more important than ever. I would like to express my thanks to the Pastoral Support Team who

have helped make sure that more than 60 vulnerable people within the church family, who are either alone or have been identified as needing some extra care, have been receiving regular phone calls and pastoral support during this season. The need to ensure that people have felt cared for and missed during the Pandemic has been essential.

“Caring for those who may be going through mental health issues or loneliness has been extra challenging but, thanks to the team, no one is slipping through the net and we are in regular contact with everyone on our database. During this challenging season we are seeing the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit in action every day.”

### **SAFEGUARDING (see separate Safeguarding Report)**

The Point safeguarding team continues to oversee all aspects of safeguarding. We are pleased to declare that no incidents needed to be reported to the relevant authorities for the period covered by this report. Lockdown and the resulting increased activity online meant that we have had to be extra vigilant in this area. It has not been possible to hold in-person training sessions, online training has sufficed, but we are looking forward to resuming in-person training in June and July 2021.

### **Prayer**

Prayer continues to underpin and shape all that we do. We enjoyed an excellent Joint Churches Prayer zoom gathering in January attracting nearly 100 people. We have increasingly felt the need to seek God for the end of the pandemic and to hear his direction as we face the challenges of this season. As a result our monthly Sunday evening prayer meeting was restarted in January. The vision for the Northern Arc has been a particular focus for prayer and especially prayer walking the boundary – more Prayer walks are planned as things develop. New prayer triplets have formed, prayer ministry continues after services by phone and Zoom, we did “40 challenges” for Lent, many of which encouraged us to prioritise prayer in creative ways, The Point Kids Mini Mag has been an excellent source of creative prayer ideas, and Thy Kingdom Come (10 days of 24 hours prayer with other local churches) is coming up in May as we lead up to Pentecost Sunday.

### **Trustees (see separate Trustees Report)**

Many thanks to our excellent trustee team who continue to meet monthly to oversee all aspects of life at The Point. Special thanks to Paul Haines who finished his term as Chair of Trustees in October 2020. Paul, Annette and their daughter Eloise are now moving away to be nearer their other daughter. We are so grateful for all they have given to The Point over the last 15 and a half years. They have served on practically every team and been instrumental in the growth and life of The Point from the very early days. We will miss them and we pray God’s blessing on them for the next chapter of life. We are also very grateful to Simon Poole who stepped in as interim Chair of Trustees since the last AGM. He has provided excellent leadership for 6 months and helped the new team to settle in. He leaves us in good heart and we are delighted that Faith Fallon is taking on the role of Chair.

## **Looking Ahead – Future Vision, Emerging from Lockdown, The Northern Arc . . .**

The last 14 months has been a hugely challenging and also a hugely creative time for The Point. We have completely reinvented the way we do church, and overall we have navigated the challenges well. We now face some big decisions about how to emerge from lockdown/predominantly online church. We are eager to regather as soon as we are allowed, but equally we do not want to go back to what we were before without a clear lead from the Holy Spirit. This is an opportunity to “reimagine” again what we do and how we live out our vision and calling to be a transforming presence throughout Mid Sussex. We also make no assumptions about how we might deliver our large gatherings again – with many volunteer teams and resources required. Our sense is that we need to reconnect and rebuild our sense of community before we jump straight back into lots of programmes and activities. What is clear is that we will not be restarting a regular weekly full Sunday morning programme at a school venue before September. The Summer months give us an opportunity to renew our fellowship together in person, to experiment with “mixed-mode” church (in person and online) and to pray, plan and prepare carefully for the next chapter.

Our vision for the Northern Arc continues to take shape. The bidding process for the new school is set to open in May or June and we will be holding a prayer led vision process to help hone our vision into a statement that can accompany the bid and strengthen it. It is a key focus for prayer over the next few months. We are trusting that God will grant us favour, that the bid will be successful so that we can then start working in earnest towards the new church/community centre/school that we excited to establish for The Point.

We are committed to working in partnership with many other local community groups: schools, churches of all denominations, local authorities, local charities, support groups and individuals who share our passion for building community here in Mid Sussex. We are now partnering with the Education Team at Chichester Diocese and the newly formed Hurst Education Trust to secure the bid for the new all-through school to be built in the Northern Arc development, for this to be a Church of England school.

Our vision is to establish a permanent home on the site of the new school. This new facility would be a base for all our activities, a multi-use resource for the whole community. The new home for The Point will include:

- A 500 seat auditorium that will function as a school chapel, Sunday worship space, performing arts venue, school and community theatre, conference centre
- A Community Café with live music/performing arts space
- Youth and community meeting rooms for groups and activities, including larger rooms for parent and toddler activities/soft play area
- Office space for The Point, our associated charities and departments, other local community groups (Citizens Advice; Housing Association; counselling rooms; etc)
- A pre-school
- Youth and community outdoor space: skate park, climbing wall, outdoor seating area

We believe this facility will become the centre of the local community and add significant value to the role of the school in the local area. All the facilities will be available to the school and other community groups. We will continue to seek to build partnerships wherever possible.

Our vision is wider than the school/church facility itself. We would love to establish some form of residential community, centred on prayer, offering hospitality and embodying community life at the heart of the church. We believe this community could help us as a church demonstrate love for God (worship) , love for neighbour (justice and mission), and love for this world (creativity and environment) to our local community and beyond. We are sincerely praying for the guidance and the empowering of the Holy Spirit as we pursue the vision God has given us.

Rev Will Kemp, Vicar, April 2021