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THE POINT AGM – 10 May 2023

Vicar's Report

Highlights/thank yous from the last 12 months

A year of Generosity

- Partnership with St Edwards – after 2 years in vacancy, dwindling numbers, threat of closure, Jules Middleton was licenced as Vicar in Jan 2022 – with a small team from The Point and v generous gift (£20k) – fresh vision, growth, new life, (attendance has more than tripled!) Delighted, very exciting, but costly – have sent some of our best! Partnership continues – mutual encouragement (staff team, cover during sabbatical, use of building, some joint events):
 - o 24-7 Prayer week at St Edwards
 - o Women's Day at St Edwards(Increasingly, we will function in parallel, as two neighbouring churches, independent from each other but strong relationship and support)
- Mission Partners – huge privilege to be involved with such amazing organisations (such a big part of what God is doing through The Point happens through our mission partners – so many people involved – not separate from church):
 - o Befriended – visits/Tea Parties/Blankets/Balance/Bereavement Course (Gail and Stuart at Buckingham Palace this week to collect Coronation Champions Award!)
 - o Hope – Naomi McBain and team supporting vulnerable families in Mid Sussex, Sparkle Groups, Drop-In (New England est HH), Parenting, Melting Pot Café
 - o Off The Fence – Paul and Wendy Young in Brighton (new Gateway Women's Centre)
 - o Sam and Daniella Leighton with YWAM – (visited in Jan/Feb)
 - o Yvrose from Hope House Haiti who is coming in June (first time in 4 years!) coming to TPWA
 - o Centre for Urban Mission – all under Church Army Africa – Danson Mwange visiting in two weeks (20/21 May)

- Amazing generosity – support for Mission Partners, plus appeals (Ukraine etc) total amount given away in 2022 (calendar year) – over £63k!

(Finances – see separate report – small deficit for the year but covered all costs)

Highlights of last 12 months

- 150 livestreams (video) – thanks to James, Zoe and Rory
- Wildfires/BCDO – May 2022 - over 100 people gathered – first “weekend away” since 2019
- School closed - July 2022 - Small Groups Sundays
- Baptisms - July and October 2022 – 8 people baptised (more baptisms in 2 weeks!)
- Summer Sundays at Court Bushes
- New Welcome Pack/keep cups – September
- Barbara’s Retirement lunch
- Melting Pot Café – steady growth – partnership with Hope and Hurst churches
- November Gift Day – fabulous response – over £42k one off gifts and over £1k/month increase in regular giving
- Christmas - Nativity/Christingle/Carols with Bp Ruth/men’s women’s curries
- Church in a Pub x5 since last AGM
- Mothering Sunday
- Easter Sunday + brilliant kids/families event on Maundy Thursday
- Kemps’ sabbatical – huge thank you to all those who made this possible (even with Assoc Vicar John Naude moving on): staff team, (see separate reports on Youth, Kids, Worship) and many other leaders: those who took on extra responsibilities leading/preaching/pastoral care/running all that we do so smoothly (esp Faith Fallon, and trustees (see separate report) – thanks to Dave Emmanuel finishing, Gail and Stuart Millar, Michael and Rosie Holt, and preachers: Bishop Ruth, Paul and Wendy Young, Julie Cameron-Hall, Jules Middleton, Josh Winter, Sam and Daniela Leighton and YWAM team, plus small group leaders and team leaders – huge team effort – THANK YOU!)
- Returned re-energised – fresh passion for our mission to Mid Sussex/opportunity of the Northern Arc - reshaped our thinking a little bit - excited about missional/intentional community (Bishop Justin + Gill and Kirk Weber)
 - o Building? – yes – trusting God – sense that He has a home for us – keep praying/exploring the options - but not just going for anything that comes up – waiting for the right place – patience!
- Staff team – no immediate plans to replace John and Simon – need wisdom re finances – excellent team of volunteers – new opportunities – pray for wisdom/discernment for Trustees

Safeguarding

Thank you so much to Sarah Emmanuel – who is stepping down after 18 years as Point Safeguarding Officer. We are very grateful to Sarah for her leadership and expertise over such a long period – her wisdom and direction have been a huge blessing. We will be announcing/introducing our new Safeguarding Officer very soon.

The Point safeguarding team continues to oversee all aspects of safeguarding. (see separate report).

Preaching and teaching

- series from the last 12 months: Summer of Psalms, When You Pray... (small groups: Be Still and God on Mute), Discipleship (Practising the Way), Preparing for Pentecost (Acts)
- Small Group Leaders – 12 groups
- Courses – Alpha, Marriage Course, 2x Bereavement Course, Listening Pathways, (Coming up: CAP money course, Parenting, Bible Course, Bereavement)
- Teaching day with Steve Daughtry – “Marriage, Sexuality, The Bible and Us” – very good teaching day looking at scripture and the current debate over biblical interpretation/sexuality and marriage, and also helping us think about how we relate to those whom we disagree with.
- Marriage – CofE – turbulent time – unsettling for many (wherever you stand on the debate) – January synod voted not to change the doctrine of marriage – lifelong covenant commitment between one man and one woman – biblical place for sexual intimacy – but, recognizing how the church has failed to love and care for LGBTQ+ people, indeed has been guilty of great injustice and cruelty and caused deep pain to many. So, in an effort to offer better pastoral support to those in same sex relationships, the CofE is preparing “Prayers of Love and Faith” to be offered for same sex couples. There will be another debate/vote at the July meeting of General Synod aimed at finalizing these prayers.
- We are planning another teaching day (I realise it is now a year since Steve came – there have been a couple of false starts where we have invited speakers who have not been able to come). It makes sense to wait now until the “Prayers of Love and Faith” are published so that the teaching day can help us to consider the right way forward for The Point.
- I realise that this has been a long period of prayer and reflection – too much uncertainty for some – can make us feel wobbly – but important not to rush – genuine difference and difficulty/pain over this issue in our church family – earnestly seeking the right way forward – please continue to pray, listen, study, love one another.

Farewells

- (more generosity!) – costly but wonderful what God is doing through Point people!
- o Shoreys – Simon, what a brilliant Curate (Mission, Alpha, creativity, leadership) –

Horsham

- o Steels – Sarah and Mark, amazing family (Kids, Youth, Creativity, passion for Jesus!) (and Dares) – Hurstpierpoint
- o Naude's – John and Janine (Pastoral Care, Prayer, love for people) - Birkenhead!!
- o Middletons (and team) – St Edward's Burgess Hill
- o Eugene Haban/Julia Brackenbury still members of The Point and belonging to our church family, but also now on the staff team at St Andrew's Burgess Hill
- o Di Castigliones – Ashington
- o Others just felt God calling them on to local churches – they go with our blessing

. . . transforming presence throughout Mid Sussex

Looking Forwards

- Discipleship – leadership strategy day in Sept 2022 led to our preaching focus this year which will continue. Returning from sabbatical we sense a fresh desire for God which is showing itself in greater numbers at prayer meetings and other gatherings as we prepare for Pentecost, the Wildfires conference and The Point Weekend Away.
- Fellowship/friendship – building unity – feel we are still regathering after Covid – bit unsettled with key people moving on - new people seeking to connect/integrate - many challenges to the church/reasons to give up? Too difficult?
 - o Encourage you – stick with your small groups - build relationships – eat together – serve together – share with one another – continue to be generous – give and it will be given to you!
- Please pray for Trustees/leadership team – big decisions coming up – many challenges and exciting opportunities!

Will Kemp, 10 May 2023

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