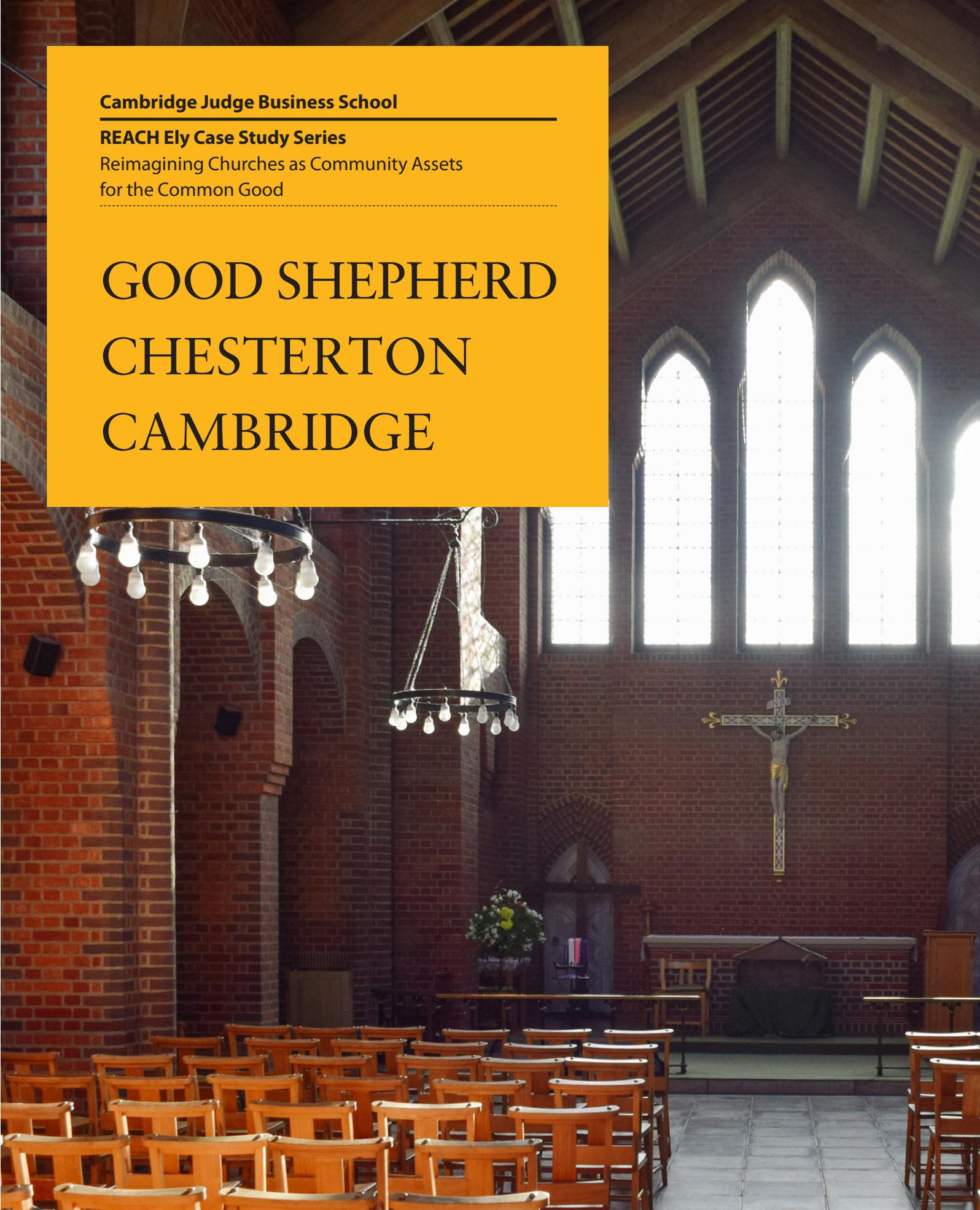


Cambridge Judge Business School

REACH Ely Case Study Series

Reimagining Churches as Community Assets
for the Common Good

GOOD SHEPHERD CHESTERTON CAMBRIDGE



Text, design, and photography

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**REACH Ely (Reimagining Churches as
Community Assets for the Common Good)**
is a multi-partner research project that
aims to help communities make fuller use
of their churches.

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The project is implemented by

**Centre for Social Innovation at
Cambridge Judge Business School
and the Diocese of Ely**

*with the generous support of Allchurches Trust
and Historic England*

www.reachely.org

The challenges facing church communities and their buildings have been extensively studied in the light of declining church attendance in the United Kingdom over several decades. REACH Ely aims to address the less-well-understood opportunities for churches to engage and reconnect with the 97.7 per cent of the local communities in the Diocese of Ely who do not attend their parish churches.

With the absence of universal determinants of success and failure of churches in the community engagement context, the REACH Ely project will provide an understanding of the relationship between communities and wider use of church buildings as well as the contribution that churches make to the common good. The project will determine community values, needs and opportunities that can be used in the most effective way to ensure a win-win outcome for communities and sustainable future of church buildings.

The **case study series** is based on in-depth interviews and observations about church building use with informants from a subset of deaneries and parishes in the Diocese of Ely, supplemented with secondary information about the communities they represent. The purpose of the case study is to unearth various church experiences in renovating and envisioning their buildings as missional and social spaces, engaging with local and wider communities, addressing current challenges, and learning from their practice.

The **Glossary** is a separate document that accompanies the case study series. It is available as a download from the project's website www.reachely.org

On the cover: View towards the East window from the nave of Good Shepherd church.

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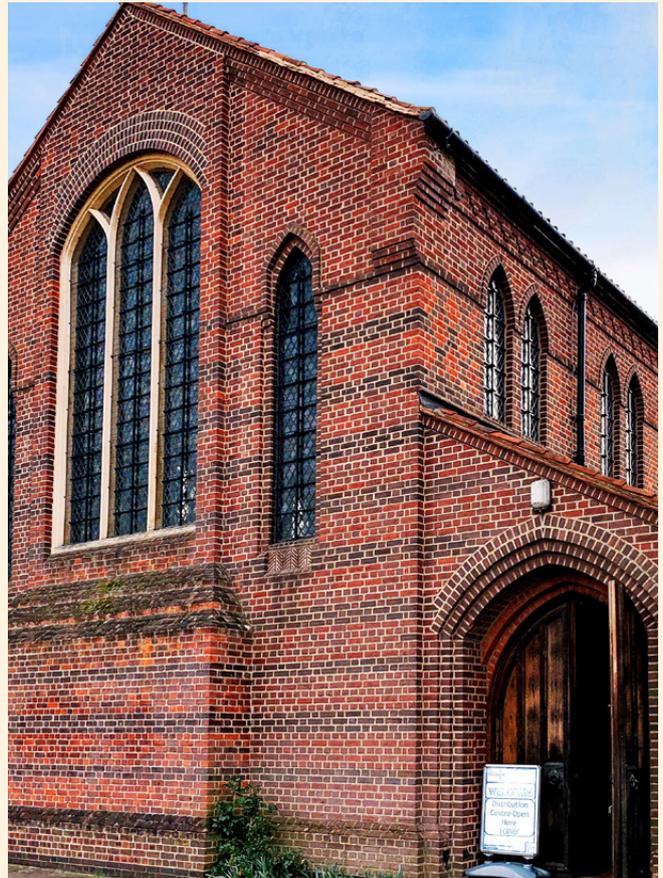
GOOD SHEPHERD CHESTERTON CAMBRIDGE

Church Category: Suburban

Deanery: Cambridge North

Address: Mansel Way, Cambridge CB4 2ET

Website: www.churchofthegoodshepherd.co.uk



Summary

Buildings and Artefacts: Modern red brick building; Four-bay nave with chairs; Kitchen and facilities; Fan heaters; Church hall with kitchen and facilities

Congregation to Population Ratio: 123 / 14,462

Fundraising: Targeted appeals and fundraisers

Income Generation: Sales, donations, Christmas market

Communications: Website; Newsletter; Facebook page; Guide for newcomers; WhatsApp group

Community Engagement: Church hall; Community Fridge; Foodbank; Church teams; Choir; Mother and toddlers' group; Activities and support for families and children; Youth groups; Arbury Carnival; Community Action Day; Holiday Lunch Project; Red Hen Coffee Morning; Monday Club; Sunday Lunches; Collaboration with local organisations; Knitting Fund; House groups; Zoffee (coffee on Zoom).

ROOTS



Profile

Chesterton is a suburb of Cambridge (population 18,134 residents in 2011) located on the north-eastern edge of the city, and is divided into two wards, West and East Chesterton. The Good Shepherd church is located in the northern part of Chesterton, bordered by Kings Hedges to the north and Arbury to the west, an economically deprived area of Cambridge. The latter may change as this area becomes more attractive to commuters with the opening of the new Cambridge North railway station. New council housing and a new community centre are also planned by the City Council.

Chesterton lies to the south of Milton Road, a main arterial route linking the centre of Cambridge with the nearby Science Park and A14 trunk road. In May 2017, a new railway station, Cambridge North, was opened in Chesterton to provide fast links from Cambridge to King's Lynn and Norwich to the north and east and London to the south. The River Cam forms the southern boundary of the ward.

The parish includes four primary schools and a community centre, which houses Arbury Community Church. A post office, library, supermarket and other local shops are located in Arbury Court. A new hotel is to be built next to the railway station.

Other Church of England churches in the area are St George's (*See REACH Ely case study: St George Chesterton*) and St Andrew's. There are also Chesterton Methodist church, a Baptist church, a gurdwara, and Arbury Community Church nearby. The asylum of the Victoria Benefit Society, county gaol, and Union workhouse were formerly located in the area.



Top: South-west view of the church. Bottom: Northern view of the church and church hall.

Building

Good Shepherd Chesterton is a large, modern red brick church designed by Stephen Dykes Bower. The chancel was built in 1958 and the nave in 1963-64. Opened in 1963, it became the parish church of its own parish in 1969. The church was constructed as the surrounding housing estate was built and the building was funded by the original members of the church who collected donations from local households. The intended tower and spire were never built. Rather, the raised money was spent on building a separate community hall for the use of the parish community. At that time, it was the only community space on the estate.

Good Shepherd church has a chapel which is used for some of its services and for children's activities during the main services. The church previously owned two houses and a vicarage, but these were sold.

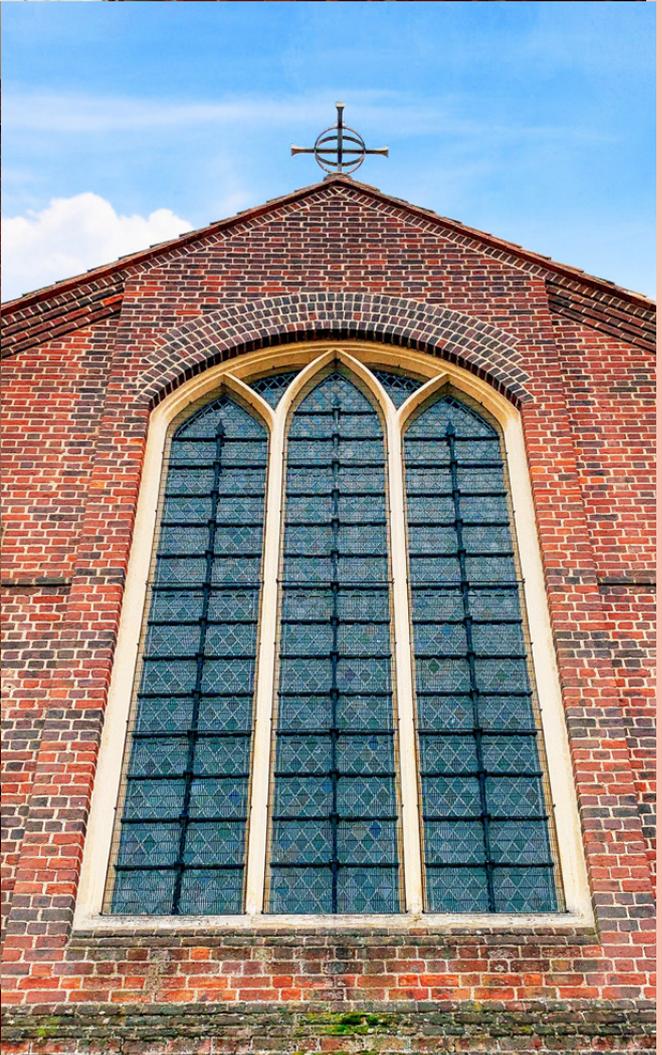
The church is well built and has good acoustics, and there are no concerns about structural renovations, although the electrics may need some attention. There is a full kitchen and a meeting room in the church building. There were never pews in the nave, which allowed a more flexible use of the building for groups and events. The church originally had underfloor heating, which was failing, so new fan heaters were installed with the capacity to heat the building on their own. Unfortunately, running the old and new systems together for a time was not effective. Small fragments from the old disintegrating pipe work for the underfloor heating entered the new system and the church is planning to replace the heat exchanger on the second new boiler, the first was replaced some time ago. *"It's new wine and old bottles, I'm afraid. Not to be recommended!"*, adds Ms Ruth Banger, church administrator.

Church hall. Good Shepherd church hall is located next to the main church building. Structural alterations have been made to the hall to add a WC block with baby changing unit and a kitchen to allow lunches to be prepared for senior members of the community. There are plans of developing a link between the hall and the church.

Good Shepherd Chesterton is open during the week on an ad hoc basis during services and group meetings. The community is keen for the church to be open throughout the day, for example, allowing access to those who wish to light a votive candle. The church can comfortably seat 150, although up to 400 children have attended on school assemblies services.

Artefacts

As a modern church Good Shepherd Chesterton does not have the kind of artefacts that older churches have. However, the church and its fittings were designed by Stephen Dykes-Bower, a famous British church architect best known for his works at Westminster Abbey, Bury St Edmunds Cathedral and the Chapel at Lancing College. The PCC knows the congregation care about their church and its fittings and, where additions and alterations have been made, great care has been taken to ensure these are of high quality and compatible with the pre-existing fabric.



Clockwise from top: View towards chancel from the nave; Exterior view of West window; Lady Chapel's interior.



RUNNING

Team

The ministry team of Good Shepherd Chesterton includes the vicar and the curate, both of whom are employed by the church, a part-time community chaplain (funded), volunteer administrator, four readers, a youth worker and a community worker.

Team volunteers. The church is supported by a large number of volunteers. There are various specific teams whose members are invited by the PCC to use their expertise to help in the running of the church. All the Teams report to the PCC whenever they meet.

The active teams and their scope of focus are:

- Buildings and Grounds Team – practicalities of church building and gardens and their maintenance
- Families and Children's Team – worship and activities for young people
- Pastoral Team – pastoral concerns and all aspects of church life
- Worship and Music Team – format of services
- Social Awareness Team – foodbank and charity.



Panoramic view of the nave.

Religious Services

The church holds two Sunday morning services – Holy Communion at 8.30 a.m. and Parish Communion at 10 a.m. There is a monthly Sunday evening service and a mid-week Communion service on a Wednesday.

The vicar of Good Shepherd church attends regular assemblies in one of the local primary schools. School assemblies at Harvest and Christmas are held in the church. The Good Shepherd team work closely with Arbury Baptist Church and Arbury Community Church, meeting for prayer and to collaborate on local projects. The North Cambridge carol service is held at the Good Shepherd and is attended by congregations from other churches.

Each month, the church holds Holy Communion services in two local care homes, Buchan House and Alexwood House, as well as a local retirement housing Havenfield. These usually include a communion service with the singing of hymns.

The church regularly has about 120 worshippers, most of whom reside in the parish. The congregation reflects the diversity of the parish, with many young families and professionals based at the nearby Science Park, as well as a large number of underprivileged families.

Covid-19 lockdown. During the pandemic in 2020, the church was closed yet there were many positive developments during the lockdown:

Livestreaming. The church livestreamed the 10 a.m. Sunday service on Zoom and Facebook. The text of the sermon was emailed out every Sunday afternoon.

Online meetings. The Ministry Team met weekly, as before, via Zoom session 'Huddle not in the Haven'. The Team also met on Thursday evening for catching up and sharing Compline together. Every other week the invitation to Compline is more widely extended and is much appreciated by the faithful few.

Zoffee. In May 2020, the church experimented with zoffee (i.e. coffee on Zoom), a chance to chat together as it would have done after church.

Facebook and email. There was a regular email to the Sunday School and young people with ideas of things to do, and a monthly filmed story for children was posted on Facebook.

Groups. From the start of the lockdown, the Pastoral Care Team organised the members of the congregation who were vulnerable and/or alone into **small groups** and assigned one of those groups to each member of the Team. Two **House Groups** have started up on Zoom and meet weekly.

“We are a very diverse church and ‘one size fits all’ does not suit us at all. As we know we are attracting a different congregation on Sundays, many of whom are unchurched, our Sunday sermons have been carefully tailored to fit this. These House Group meetings give established church members an opportunity to grow and deepen their faith as they discuss the Bible together.”

Ruth Banger

Church Administrator and PCC Secretary

Weekly contact by phone was maintained with the local Nursing Homes that the church normally visits regularly. A music group Sing a New Song (SANG) and Bookworms continued on very successfully but differently. These weekly sessions have been well supported and have helped harassed parents coping with children at home. Many songs have been sung.

Parish Share

In 2019, parish share expenditure was £57,039.

Fundraising

As the church has a large congregation, parish giving is more than sufficient to cover running costs. Hence, fundraising tends to be less of a priority for day-to-day costs. Jumble sales, plant and book sales are held, but these are community-focused events as much as fundraisers. Appeals are used for more specific items, such as the recent improvements to heating, when a large donation of £10,000 was received. A new appeal will be launched for the redevelopment of the hall.



Income Generation

Rental income. The church and the community hall are rented out to various groups. The cost of running the hall is barely covered by the rental income, which runs to around £7,000 per year, but the church decided not to increase hire charges as the hall is a vital asset and affordable resource for the local community. Other venues in the area tend to be more expensive to hire and are seen as too large for small groups or events. The community hall is particularly popular for children's activities. Decisions on who may hire the church or the hall are taken on a case by case basis.

Book, jumble, and plant sales. These are held occasionally with a focus on affordability rather than fundraising.

Christmas market. This is a large event with many stalls held in the church.

Communications

The church has a well-developed **website** that includes a downloadable version of the monthly **newsletter** published both in print and online and annual reports from church teams. Good Shepherd church has an active **Facebook** page to reach local parents. The team are looking to explore how they might use this as a more effective communication tool. A **guide for newcomers** is available, although the church prefers to welcome newcomers in person. The church also spreads the word about its activities through local schools and community centres. To enable information sharing, a **WhatsApp group** has been recently set up by the Families and Children's Team.

During the pandemic lockdown in 2020, instead of the publication (hard copy and online) of a monthly newsletter, Good Shepherd church **emailed** out every Friday morning news, church notices and the wording for the online Sunday service to over 100 recipients, many of whom were not previously church members.



1st row: Harvest made donations to Foodbank by a local primary school; Foodbank. 2nd row: Carols in Arbury Court organised by local churches together with local council representatives; Christmas activities in the church. 3rd row: Mother and toddlers' group event; Foodbank (Photos by Good Shepherd church); 4th row: Information stands with publications in the church.

REACH

Community

Church hall. A number of the activities that take place in the church hall are specifically for senior members of the local community. Some of the gentle activity things include a Tai Chi course on Fridays and other uniformed groups.

Church choir. Good Shepherd choir group meets each week on Thursdays to practise singing hymns and songs. Other local choral groups also use the church building on an ad hoc basis. In the past, the church had children's choir 'Shout Aloud' which run successfully for four years.

Community Fridge and Foodbank. In conjunction with the City Council the church have established a Community Fridge in the Church Hall. A team drives round to collect food donated by supermarkets etc. which is at the end of its shelf display life and this is offered free to all who come. About 50 have come for food (3 times each week) and the church now delivers to about 11 as well each time. Foodbank still happens each week in the Church. The church shared in the work of delivering meals prepared locally through Cambridge Sustainable Food – a much appreciated local provision. Church members also supported the work done by Red Hen (*See Events*) to help local families in need.

Mother and toddler group was a group connected to the church which was held on Friday mornings. There are plans to possibly establish a new group.

Provision of an affordable community space. The church has purposely kept the hire charges for the hall at an affordable rate to enable groups and private individuals to continue to hire a space for their activities.

Support for families and children. Good Shepherd church runs a range of support groups for families and children as well as having a team with a specific focus on this section of the community. The vicar regularly attends school assemblies and children from local schools attend special assemblies at Harvest and Christmas in the church.

The image shows the interior of a church with a series of brick pillars and pointed arches. The walls are made of red brick. In the foreground, there is a wooden notice board on a stand. To the left, there are rows of wooden chairs. The floor is made of large, light-colored tiles. The lighting is warm, with some light coming from windows in the background. The overall atmosphere is quiet and open.

“Creating the space, having the church open for people to come and find the place of space and peace we know has been appreciated when it’s been done, so we would like to do that a little bit more.”

Revd David Maher
Vicar

Events

Family workshops. In collaboration with Romsey Mill and Cambridge Sustainable Food, the church will be providing a four-week course Thyme to Cook for parents and pre-schoolers to learn how to prepare healthy, affordable meals yet the primary aim is to encourage and develop the relationships between child and carer. Another workshop is on Universal Credit, supported by the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Good Shepherd church hopes to host more workshops once the hall has been upgraded.

Arbury Carnival. The church has a stall during the annual Arbury Carnival.

Community Action Day. Each year, in the autumn, the church of the Good Shepherd works in partnership with other local churches and the local authority to organise a clear up and recycling event in North Arbury.

Christmas Market (*See Income Generation above*).

Holiday Lunch Project. Activities are run for families during school holidays and free lunches for up to 120 people are provided. The church is part of a group that funds and organises these events, which includes Meadows Community Centre, Brownsfield Community Centre and Buckenstreet Community Centre. Vouchers from an agency familiar with their situation are required from those attending. Activities around the lunches were supported by Kettle's Yard (museum) and a new initiative from the County Council called 'Talking together' aimed at increasing literacy levels of school children in the area.

Red Hen Coffee Mornings. The Red Hen Project (www.redhenproject.org) holds coffee mornings in the church hall every Monday during term time. The informal group includes parents and pre-school children from the local community, generally with children who will go on to attend the primary schools who are supported by the project. They are Arbury, The Grove, King's Hedges, Orchard Park, and Shirley. The coffee mornings offer play activities for the children, peer support from other parents, and advice from the family workers as well as a cooked breakfast.

Monday Club. The church runs the club on Monday afternoons for those over 50s. The club enjoys a variety of social events from the Shrove Tuesday fish and chip supper to ceilidhs, quizzes, and dinners.

Sunday Lunch Club. These are laid on once a month for the older members of the community. There are typically around 50 people, partly from the church and partly from the local area.

Engagement

Activities for children and youth. Depending on their age, children are encouraged to join either the Sunday School or attend the creche, known as 'The Haven', during Sunday services.

SANG. On Monday mornings, the church runs SANG (Sing a New Song) music group for children up to 4 years old and their parents. As a joint initiative with several other churches, the group provides fun activities, companionship, and an opportunity to learn about family-friendly services. Around 20-30 families visit SANG weekly.

Foodbank. Good Shepherd church is a founding member of the Anti-Poverty Strategy group in Cambridge. The foodbank has been running since 2013 and is held in the church on Thursdays. It was set up by the Community Awareness Team attached to the church. The church averages around 12 people coming for food each week, but around Christmas the church receives about 30 people.

Foodbank visitors must bring vouchers from an agency familiar with their situation, and are allowed to present three vouchers in six months, except in extreme circumstances. All are welcome to pop in for a chat and a cup of tea. Church volunteers help with driving, packing up the food, talking to visitors, making cups of tea, putting on the music, and generally providing a comfortable environment on Thursday mornings.

In spring 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic, Good Shepherd Chesterton continued running the Foodbank from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursdays.

Starting Rite is a new five-week course for babies and carers that explores spiritual questions through multi-sensory play.

COGS Youth Group (Church of the Good Shepherd) regularly meets on Sunday evenings at the church to play games, chat, discuss about God, and pray.

Co-sponsorship of youth project. The church has previously collaborated with other organisations on a youth project.

Counteracting loneliness. The church provides a welcoming and inclusive community for parishioners of all ages who may lack family support.

Church Knitting Fund. The Social Awareness Team has initiated the Ministry of Prayer Shawls. The shawls are blessed in the church and then go out with a label of blessing and are always well received. Spare balls of wool or donations are given to a church knitting fund. Anyone in the community who is ill or in distress can receive a knitted shawl from the church.



1st row: Activity run by Red Hen Project; Visit by church members to a local care home, Buchan House. 2nd row: Children's activities in the church; Come and Sing Carols at The Good Shepherd. 3rd row: Community Fridge; Children's activity in the church. 4th row: Christmas activities for children in the church (Photos by Good Shepherd church).

Collaboration with local organisations. The church works together with local agencies, community centres, schools, museums, and other churches in its mission to support the underprivileged in the local community. Arbury is an area of real deprivation, with challenges around poverty, addiction, and literacy. Initiatives such as the foodbank, youth projects, and hosting of the local drug rehabilitation service support those in need.

“It’s an area of real deprivation... Our address is Cambridge, but we’re not the Cambridge that people think of. One of the reasons we were so glad to have Dave [the vicar] was he didn’t want to come to Cambridge, he wanted to come to Arbury. I do think that people think of Cambridge as all the beautiful buildings, lovely chapels, the colleges, and this sort of thing, but we are also Cambridge and all that that means.”

Ruth Banger

Church Administrator and PCC Secretary

House groups. Across the parish, there are a number of house study groups, which are important part of learning and fellowship at the Good Shepherd. Each term the groups follow a short course linked in with the sermon series or the seasons of the year.

‘In Your Community’ project and film screenings. Together with The Cambridge Film Trust the church screened popular movies (e.g. *Mary Poppins Returns*, *The Wizard of Oz*) as part of the ‘Cambridge Film Festival - In Your Community’ project, in partnership with venues across Cambridge and with the generous support of Grosvenor and Cambridge City Council.

‘In Your Community’ aims to take the latest films out of the traditional cinema setting and into the heart of local communities to foster cultural engagement in low income households areas with less arts provision.

REFLECTIONS

Challenges

Youth engagement

As the children who attend the flourishing children's groups approach their teenage years, Good Shepherd church is interested in finding ways to keep them involved and engaged with the life of the church.

Alternative formats for worship

Sunday morning services at the church are often two-thirds full. There is less scope for these services to grow so the church has been experimenting with evening services and alternative formats as well as considering how to further develop this in the post-pandemic time. The PCC members feel that all the contacts the church is currently making will be a great help as and when the church is able to concentrate again on the redevelopment plans for the church hall.

Need for more personnel and volunteers

The large size of the congregation, the challenges presented by social issues in the community and the number of activities offered by the church mean that additional volunteers are always needed. There is currently a core team of volunteers of 40 people. The vicar has many demands on his time, not only in relation to theological matters but from his involvement in community action initiatives.

Separation of church and community hall

The church is keen to make a physical and spiritual connection between both buildings. There are plans for a bridge to link the two.

Cost of running the community hall

The PCC struggles with the dilemma of keeping the hire charges for the hall at an affordable level for the community. It currently subsidises the running costs.

Upgrading the facilities

Good Shepherd church is keen to provide better facilities such as a kitchen, which can be used as a space to teach cooking skills. The hall currently only allows for one activity at a time and is not seen as fit for purpose. The church plans to redevelop the hall in the next two years.

Lessons Learned

To be open and responsive to the needs of the community

The church understands that acquiring knowledge from other agencies is crucial to meeting the needs of its community. Sourcing help from the local community and having a stable presence in the form of the vicar is vital to the community.

“One of the things that we’ve done in the past is identifying ‘sticky people’, knowing people in the community, getting them onboard and sharing with them the vision of what we’re doing. We both feel that you need to serve your time attending meetings of local groups and genuinely participating. Over a period of time you will build up knowledge of them and familiarity with their areas of expertise and enthusiasm. They will also get to know you and, hopefully, experience at first hand your heart for the local community. You can only identify these ‘sticky people’ through being where they are, by attending things which matter to them. They do remember and, when you are later making a request, it’s then to a known person. You are not coming in cold and have a much greater chance of success..”

Revd David Maher, Vicar

Ruth Banger, Church Administrator and PCC Secretary

To create a living church

Good Shepherd Chesterton fosters a sense of belonging in the community by welcoming groups such as schools and uniformed organisations (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts), into the building. The foodbank is held in the church rather than in the hall, and feedback from its clients suggest that they enjoy this opportunity and have been very appreciative of the actual fabric of the church building. Non-worshippers are made equally welcome at events arranged by the church.

To apply transferable skills in church management

To support the vicar in his mission, five teams (*See Team*) have been set up that draw on the expertise of the congregation. Some of the team members are on the PCC. The proposed redevelopment of the hall has attracted new volunteers. *'We had people knocking on the door saying can we be involved please,'* adds Revd David Maher, the vicar.

To adapt the church buildings for more flexible and a wider use

The PCC is looking to refurbish its kitchen with a view to running cookery classes for parents, teaching the value of home cooking and nutrition. The church is keen to create a suitable space for further adult workshops.



To work in partnership

The church partners a wide range of organisations, including other churches, in order to serve both the spiritual and social needs of its community. The lunches organised with the three local community centres work very well, in terms of funding, support and communication. Many of the services provided by the church can only be offered using the knowledge and expertise of outside agencies.

To be open to people who might feel overwhelmed or intimidated by the church

New worshippers are welcomed in person and Good Shepherd church regularly goes out into the community, for example, by holding stalls at the Arbury Carnival and visiting schools. A link between the church and the community hall is intended to bring the community closer to the heart of the church.

To plan for the future

This planning has not been done systematically in the past, although there has been a Parish Plan setting out the aims and ideals of the church, that has been followed quite closely. The church team is currently looking at what might be achieved in the next five years. The staff and the PCC regularly review the activities organised by the church to decide whether they continue to offer value to the community or whether they should move on to something new.

Good Shepherd's community members sharing VE Day celebration images during the pandemic lockdown in 2020.





“I count myself one of them for whom the church is my family, and it’s a great family. That’s what we are seeking to be... that kind of community family for people who live in this area.”

Ruth Banger

Church Administrator/PCC Secretary

**REACH Ely: Reimagining Churches as
Community Assets for the Common Good**

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