

## Annual Report 2020

In the January, 2020, Calendar, the Minister wrote that she hoped for another successful year for us; it would be good not to experience a period without grief, pain, bad or worrying news, but if we did, we would support each other through whatever had to be endured. For two and a half months, we continued as usual, but became increasingly aware that reports from Wuhan indicated that Coronavirus was swiftly spreading worldwide. By mid-March, the decision had been taken to close the church-premises completely, and we have never opened totally since.

During January and February, all the usual services and formal meetings took place; the Lunch Circle, the Book Club, the Camera Club, and the Women's League met regularly; coffee was served on Saturday and Sunday mornings, and the Traidcraft stall was open. In January, Kate introduced a "Second Sunday Lunch" session, and Anne Mills, the GA V-P presented the Junior Church Prizes. Anne also conducted the Women's League Service, in February, when the Manchester District held its AGM, at Bury. Donations to the Foodbank continued; we attended Rochdale's Film Evening. Our annual Quiz Evening was very successful, and the profits went to church-funds, Hope for Justice, and Médecins Sans Frontières; we also took the decision to support the Woodland Trust. We survived Storms Ciara and Dennis. On the first Sunday in March, we were informed about The Peace Forest in Rossendale, to which we sent a sizeable donation. We held a Give and Take event; we planned a trip to "Phantom of the Opera", in Manchester.

Alas! From March 17th, none of this was to be; we entered the realms of lockdown, self-isolation and social-distancing. Our services, written by Kate, and distributed by her, were read at home; later, some of us managed to join services by Zoom, but, sadly, this excluded many members. When we were allowed to hold services at church, stringent restrictions had to be observed, and November saw us back in lockdown, once again; the church-officers spent a great deal of time debating when we might reopen, and under what conditions. None of this was what we were used to, or wanted. Some regular groups transferred successfully to Zoom: the Camera Club, the Book Club, Saturday Coffee; more and more formal meetings moved to Zoom, too. We adapted as best we could, and did amazingly well! We poured out our hearts and souls into each calendar, with great creativity!

On April 1st, our church-community increased by one, with the birth of Ethan; congratulations to Lorraine and Pete! Sadly, we lost two long-term members with the deaths of Alf Howson and Dorothy Roberts, both of whom are remembered with affection, and much-missed. Our best wishes go to everyone who has suffered ill-health, during 2020; get well soon.

Finally, on behalf of the whole congregation, I offer heartfelt thanks to Kate and Ade, both of whom have worked indefatigably, during the past year and into 2021. Ade began his job as our Property Manager, just over a year ago, and has taken on a multitude of tasks---all carried out with quiet efficiency and professionalism; this has relieved pressure on Roger and Peter, and we thank them, and Howard, the fourth member of our practical HARP Team. Once Zoom services began, Ade assisted Kate by providing technical support. It is to Kate, however, that we owe the greatest appreciation and gratitude---for all her services, particularly on Remembrance Sunday and at Christmas; for all the time and care she has devoted to our congregation; and for the hours and energy spent in her ministry towards each of us individually. 2020 was a difficult year for everybody; 2021 sees us still in uncertainty, but we know that we have been held and heard, in so many ways, by our Bury Unitarian community. Let us hope and pray that, by the end of this year, we can be fully-open, permanently, and able to take up the reins of church-life, together and in freedom. Thanks to everybody for coping and adapting, and for keeping our church viable, despite problems.

Anne Mills: March, 2021.