

# **Glenorchy** UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



## **Book of Reports**

**For the year ending December 2024**

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### **Minister's Annual Report**

This has been a more settled year for us but not without its difficulties and losses for us as a family.

As ever, we have said our goodbyes to some of our Church Family who you have known and loved for many years, and I was still getting to know. We've remembered them as we've celebrated their life and work, their place in our hearts as part of us, and as parts of the work God has been doing, here.

I am getting to know you better and hope you have got used to me by now! But there's still much to learn about each other, our skills and strengths and our struggles as well as still finding out how we can work together to be the people God calls us to be - a people of blessing, of hope, love, care, kindness, thoughtfulness and of prayer.

*The things that excited me most about '24 have been - in no particular order!*

Lent and Advent Study Groups and the monthly Bible Book Club (although disappointingly under used).

Working with Exeter Road Primary School – Since April '24, I've led several Assemblies, and children have visited Glenorchy to learn some of their RE Curriculum. We've explored what makes Churches special places and how they help us learn about God They loved hearing the organ played and having a go themselves - under Peter's watchful eye. We've also welcomed yr 2 children to think about the narrative of Jesus' birth and how it informs Christian faith. A few days before the Christmas break, they held their School Carol Service here – it was wonderful to see the church full of 90+ children and many of their parents / carers! They loved it, as did those of us who joined in! Thank you to those who have helped in this valuable Schools work during the year.

The Small Coffee mornings at Rose Drackford's home (a few of you at a time)

Working with the Eldership Team

Welcoming some new people as they have come to worship here with us.

The growth and work of the Exmouth Area Church Leaders Network (EACLN): Planning for and participation in the Christmas Encounters Day in the Strand on 23<sup>rd</sup> December. Further collaborative work is planned for 2025 including Chaplaincy Work within Exmouth Community College (started in Sept '24).

Pastoral visits to get to know folk better – people are infinitely fascinating!

Being involved in the positive support and advice we give at the Job Café

Greeting people at Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts

The growth of the Table Tennis Club

The money and awareness raised for our Mission Partners, and the activities we put on to raise those funds.

The generosity of Glenorchy in giving to the Food Bank, Open Door, CRE, Shoe Boxes, toys for distribution at Christmas, one off emergency support to vulnerable individuals - and much more.

Your open mindedness and open heartedness and inclusivity for those who are often marginalised!

*But as in any church and ministry, some things sadden me.*

The reliance on just a few folks to step up and take on roles within the Church in every aspect of its life, leaving the work to a few stalwarts, without whom Glenorchy Church would be much less than it is and could be.

I'm sorry to feel the need to say this again, but the sharpness of tone I have heard used here by some, can sometimes be painful for others. Of course we get frustrated sometimes, but the Apostle Paul tells us that Christians are people who build others up, encouraging and enabling people to live life in all its fullness. All Churches must be places where its adherents / ambassadors act in such a manner that they are living proof of a loving God.

I will be taking Sabbatical leave in 2025 (mid May-mid August). I will still be holding you in my love and prayers and hope to come back to you refreshed and looking forward to continuing to build a Church of prayer and welcome.

*Rev Janine*

### **Secretary's Report 2024**

Church life has continued under the leadership of our Minister, Revd Janine Atkinson. The Sunday congregation is around 40-45 people most weeks. During the year 3 Church Members and 2 friends died. Our membership now stands at 72. The two members who moved away in 2023 have sadly died.

Church life has continued with a few changes. The Church magazine is now published bi-monthly and the Church meetings continue to be held bi-monthly. The Minutes are distributed to members and friends either by email or printed copy.

The Bible Book Group has met most months during the year except when we have held a Lent course or Advent which are held weekly. The Art Group meet weekly on a Wednesday with several people from the community joining in. The Walking group meet monthly for a fairly local walk, weather permitting. The Table Tennis group meet most Friday evenings and the Glenorchy Crafters meet monthly. The Choir meet prior to special services to prepare an anthem.

The Lunchtime Concerts have continued, with our thanks to Peter Johnstone who organises the programme and Peter Brain for preparing the posters.

The Job Café is now getting increased numbers and is continuing to meet weekly to offer people help in getting into work. This is our major piece of outreach into the local community and is much appreciated. More help is always needed, in offering a welcome to those who come and helping to provide them with refreshments in the café.

The Saturday Coffee Morning is continuing, but few Church people attend. If you are able to help with either the Saturday or Sunday rota, please sign up for this on the Hall noticeboard. The Coffee Morning is a meeting place for friends to get together and chat with people from other Churches in our warm hall!

As a Church we financially support the Open Door Centre which celebrated 30 years of working in our community helping people who are lonely and sometimes homeless. Anyone can drop in on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday for coffee or tea or a meal.

The Food Bank is supported by members of our fellowship with food donations or a monetary gift. All our Harvest Food is donated to the Food Bank. The need for food help is growing almost monthly. The Salvation Army Hall is a hive of activity on a Tuesday and Friday morning, with food donations being dated up and sorted into categories. Clients attend in the afternoon or bags of food are delivered where they have no transport or are working, but finding it difficult to make ends meet.

Christian Response to Eastern Europe has continued to be well supported by members of our congregation with humanitarian aid taken to the Warehouse in Spiders Lane each month.

Each year with help from our Craft Group some 70 plus shoe boxes are packed with goodies for children or adults and taken by truck to Moldova and Ukraine in time for Christmas.

In late November we were joined by our friends from the Salvation Army for our annual 'Gift' Service, when we give gifts/toys etc, which are then distributed to families in Exmouth and area who are struggling to care for their family. Help is also given to the Ukrainian and Afghan refugees now living in our town both at Christmas and during the year with donations from the Food Bank.

Our Mission Committee organises events during the year so that we can financially support three Charities. We have supported Mark & Dorcas Nicholson for many years in Rehoboth, Zimbabwe where they look after abandoned children. We were privileged to meet Mark in October and hear him speak about his work. In 2023 we also supported St Petrock's, the homeless Charity working mainly in Exeter, and Water Aid. Some friends have a 'Mission' box where you can put your small change. There are boxes available in the Vestibule, please take one and add your name. Boxes are usually returned to Church for emptying on Mission Sundays in March and October.

Who does not take tablets? Well, the blister packs can be recycled in the box in the Vestibule. These are taken to Super Drug who recycle them and money given to Marie Curie-cancer research. Used or unused postage stamps are donated to Bible Society and post cards sent to MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) which are sold and money helps with the work they do overseas.

Where would our Church be without the work of the Elders? With the minister, they are responsible for the Spiritual life of the Church. At their monthly meetings they share news about members of the fellowship and plan special services. At the Annual Meeting Lyn Bellamy stood down as a Serving Elder for

more than 40 years. She was thanked for her service. Lyn served as our pulpit supply secretary and flower secretary organising a rota for fresh flowers and more recently silk flower arrangements in the Church. We welcomed Sheila Johnstone back onto the eldership and John Greenslade was elected as a new elder. Sadly the G.P. Committee, who usually deal with the maintenance of the buildings, is not meeting at present so their work will be added to the Elders Meeting Agenda.

We thank our Finance Committee who work hard behind the scenes making sure that we are able to pay our bills. We do have an Administrator who prints the weekly Bulletin and the bi-monthly Review, making sure that we have a preacher for each Service, preparing the large print hymn folders each week and other duties as well.

Our thanks to Angela Morland and her small team who oversee that the Church Window shows a seasonal presence.

We thank Peter Johnstone who sits on the organ stool and plays the organ for our worship most Sundays in the year. When Peter needs a Sunday off, he is able to find among his organist friends, one who will come and play the organ. Thank you, Peter, for all that you do with helping to lead our worship with the music, along with the Choir on special occasions.

Our premises are used during the week by various organisations which appreciate our building and the warm space that we offer, especially in the winter.

May we continue to be a Christian witness in the town. We pray that with our Minister, Elders and congregation we will continue to witness the love of Jesus in our community.

*Jenny Newman*

## REPORTS FROM CHURCH COMMITTEES AND ORGANISATIONS

### **ART GROUP**

We are a friendly group of people who enjoy art, meeting once a week on a Wednesday morning 10.00am till noon. The standard varies and no-one is expected to be that good. The whole point is to draw and paint for pleasure and also have a cup of coffee!

*Bob & Diana Austen*

### **CHRISTIANS TOGETHER IN EXMOUTH / OPEN DOOR**

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, several church leaders walked between churches with “Unity Candles”. There were no weekday prayer and lunch meetings, nor a joint service this time. There was also no Walk of Witness on Good Friday.

Later in the year, however, there were developments. The church leaders’ “breakfasts” were expanded to include more people and renamed EACLN (Exmouth Area Church Leaders Network). I can only remember this name because it’s an anagram of “CLEAN”!

More shared events were planned. Noteworthy was “Christmas Encounters” on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> December. This involved a Nativity Parade in the Strand, a Nativity Play with adult actors, together with craft activities in a hired marquee. Several days before were taken up rehearsing and also preparing craft activities – including Christingle and Goody bag preparation on Glenorchy Church premises with members of other churches. The event had moderate success and showed that our town churches can do things together. The marquee was provided by the Town Council for several days in December for various community events.

Other churches together events are planned for 2025.

**OPEN DOOR CENTRE:** “Open Door” provides support, all year round, to many Exmouth residents in difficult circumstances. This valuable work is supported by grants from secular community organisations and local churches, including Glenorchy Church.

There are six main project areas: The Community Café (like other cafés open to everyone - try it out), The Craft Room, Men's Shed, The Parent Hub, Haven, The Community Hub. Early in the year the "Toast" Youth Cafe project was launched. A safe and supportive space is provided two days a week for young people after school. Up to 20 youngsters attend on each occasion.

This year "Men's Shed" celebrated 10 years and "The Craft Room" celebrated 5 years. Towards the end of the year Open Door supporters had the opportunity to fill a tote bag as a "Bag of Hope" for a homeless person.

*Peter Johnstone*

## **CHURCH CHOIR**

The church choir held Friday practices at several stages of the year. The choir has changed in recent years. We are more limited in choice of repertoire because we are now mostly sopranos. Nevertheless, we have managed to sing at the main festivals during the year. On Easter Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> March, we sang "Christ is alive" by Roger Jones. On Harvest Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> September, we sang the Hymn "How wonderful this world of Thine". At the Carol Service, on the morning of Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December, we sang "Three kings from Persian lands afar" by Peter Cornelius.

*Peter Johnstone*

## **COMMITMENT FOR LIFE**

**Commitment for Life (CforL)** is the world development programme of the United Reformed Church. Millions of pounds have been raised since 1993: 75% goes to development projects in four regions (focused on Christian Aid local partner organisations), 5% goes to 'Global Justice Now' for campaigning, and 20% is (efficiently and carefully!) spent on administration (two part-time posts), production of materials, occasional conferences and general publicity.

Glenorchy has been linked with development work in Bangladesh for a few years. We have learned of the impact of global warming, a present not just a future danger, as they suffer from both floods and drought. There will be the usual annual CforL service and gift day on July 6 and we invite you to hold this work in your prayers through the year. Regular bulletins are posted on the Mission Committee notice board. Reading this on-line? [click here](#) or [here](#)  
*Peter Brain*

### **CRAFT GROUP**

Another year has seen us working towards sending children in Moldova a large shoe box filled with goodies ready to open at Christmas. Throughout 2024 around 12 ladies at each monthly meeting knitted hats, scarves, mittens and baby clothes, These items, along with toys, sweets and colouring books and pencils etc were packed into the boxes by a few of the members one morning in October, ready to be blessed on the following Sunday and then delivered to the warehouse ready for the long journey by lorry to Moldova. Thanks are due to the Craft Group who provided some boxes filled personally by them and to members of the church for their monetary contributions and gifts of soft toys, etc. A huge thanks to Sheila Johnstone, our coordinator, who made sure that all the items of her list were packed into each box. She and Peter covered all the boxes, inside and out with festive paper. A mammoth task!

As well as all this work craft group members were able to work on their own personal projects throughout the year, knitting garments for grandchildren and friends and for the Country Market. We all enjoyed the fellowship and refreshments, as well as gaining the satisfaction of during all our work come to fruition.  
*Mary Blackburn*

## **ECO CHURCH**

We continue our commitment to ecological matters in various ways and urge church members to continue to play their part in saving energy and by recycling as much as possible. A page in each issue of The Review discusses topics in the News relating to Climate Change and Biodiversity - and encourages us to reconsider our individual contributions to improvements in our care for our environment.

*Peter Johnstone*

## **FLOWERS IN CHURCH**

Lyn Bellamy has retired as organiser and treasurer for the church flowers and we are grateful to Mell who very kindly arranges the pedestal most weeks and Jenny who donates and arranges the pedestal from time to time. Due to the high cost of real flowers, most arrangements are now done with lovely artificial flowers, and if you wish to have an arrangement done for a particular occasion, please let Mell know.

## **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Our sincere thanks are due to the members of the GP Committee who retired during the year, after many years of service. The burden of the work has been considerable for the small number of members involved. Necessary repairs have been carried out with major electrical work in the church and further repairs to the manse. Responsibility for maintenance work has now been taken over by the Elders.

## **JOB CAFE**

4<sup>th</sup> January saw the first session of the year for the Glenorchy Job Café. Numbers for the previous year had been quite low, and we were hoping for better things in 2024. Sadly, this did not prove to be the case, and I believe this is partly explained by a significant change in some people's attitude to work and how they go about their job searching. Covid has had a lot to answer for!

Some are trying to do this from home, with some success, and our Facebook page ([click here](#)) has been much-visited. But I believe there is nothing better than a 'face to face' discussion, to provide help where it's needed. We have a very talented group of volunteers (we could always do with more) with a range of experience to help our clients, so a big thank you to them.

Various organizations come in to talk to clients about their vacancies or general information on how to help themselves. We aim to do more of this in the future. I also attended several events and Job Fairs, to spread the word of what we had to offer at the Job Café. Towards the end of the year, there was a concerted effort to cultivate a better working relationship with the main Job Centre in Exeter, but this, for many reasons, has proved difficult and is an ongoing priority. We are still working hard at securing funding, with Pam and Peter searching hard.

Once again, a big thank you to all those volunteers who continue to support the Glenorchy Job Café in whatever role you have. I would also like to say that anyone in the Church is more than welcome to pop in on a Thursday morning to see what we do – tea and cake provided!

*Simon Skidmore, Co-ordinator*

## **LUNCHTIME CONCERTS**

These concerts present music and performance of high quality. The performers are nearly all either currently active professionals or retired professionals.

Audience entry is free and generous donations are received after each concert. Donations support the costs of putting on the concerts and also support church projects.

The concerts continued, as usual, between January and April and between October and December. 26 concerts were planned. One concert in November was postponed when the church was closed for repairs to the lighting.

*Peter Johnstone*

## **MISSION COMMITTEE**

Peter Brain chairs the meetings with Anne Empson as Minutes Secretary; Sue Densham has the vital role as treasurer; Angela Morland, Jenny Newman, Christine Stredwick and Janine Atkinson also serve on this committee.

Each year we raise funds for three charities. In 2024 we raised almost £2,500 for Rehoboth ('Mark, Dorcas and the tribe' in Zimbabwe), for Water Aid and for St Petrock's. See the accounts for details of how the money was raised and disbursed. In 2025 we shall be supporting Rehoboth and St Petrock's again. We have also chosen 'Embrace the Middle East', which started life as the Bible Lands Society and still produces the well-known Bethlehem carol sheet. We post information and news about them on the Mission notice board in the hall and offer regular updates in the Review.

We lead two 'Mission Sunday' services each year and arrange various fund-raising events during the year. Our primary source of financial support is through 'mission boxes' (nearly £900 in 2024) which church members keep handy at home in case they get any actual cash! There are always spares in the vestibule.

*Peter Brain*

## **TABLE TENNIS CLUB**

The group has continued to meet almost weekly – illness and keyholders permitting – to enjoy knocking a table tennis ball around between 7 and 9pm each Friday. The group is increasing in numbers and would welcome more members.

No experience necessary, just yourself and a bat and ball (if you have them). We have 2 Table Tennis Tables and can comfortably manage two simultaneous games of 2 or 4 players and some sitting out for a spell to catch their breath.

A small charge of £2 per week goes into the pot, so that the group will be able to contribute to the cost of heating and lighting the Church Hall.

*Mike Atkinson and Sarah King*

## **WALKING GROUP**

Despite the unsettled weather during the year we did manage to get out and about fairly often. Most of our walks were fairly short in terms of distance as the advancing maturity of the group made long walks a thing of the past. For this reason we are now down to only about 4 or 5 regular walkers. We managed a few woodland walks mostly around the local towns and villages such as Lympstone, Budleigh and Exmouth where thanks to our resident historian Bob Austen we learnt many interesting facts.

We did however make up for the shorter walks by enjoying good conversation, and plenty of good humour, as we lingered over coffee in local cafes. We hope we can continue during 2025.

*Peter Street*

## **WEBSITE** [www.glenorchychurch.org.uk](http://www.glenorchychurch.org.uk)

The website continues to be a valuable asset for those looking for information about the Church and its activities. There is a photo gallery, a history of the church, and an archive of the last year's issues of the *Review*. In addition, it continues to feature a regular Reflection from the minister, as well as a recording of the Sunday Service (if possible). We are grateful to our Webmaster, David Brain, for all the work that is involved in managing and maintaining the site.

*Sheila Brain*

## **WINDOW**

We are grateful to Angela Morland and her team for maintaining the window to show changing displays through the year. This is an important witness to passers by that the Church is still an active presence in the community.



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