

# Dorset Gardens Methodist Church

## Brighton



Christmas Card designed for us by Sarah, Silva, Anna Maria and Hala. Children of a refugee family who attend DG.



## Annual Report ~ 2022-2023

Registered Charity No. 1160211

[www.dgmc.org.uk](http://www.dgmc.org.uk)

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*The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.*

## **INTRODUCTION and MINISTER'S ANNUAL REPORT**

Twelve months ago the folk at Dorset Gardens were looking forward to building on all the good things that were already in place and seeking ways to reach out into the community. With that in mind a Jubilee Celebration for Queen Elizabeth's 70 years was organised with a party in Dorset Gardens park. This was a wonderful opportunity to involve the various organisations that use the church premises as well as reaching out into the local community. Our resident artist, Shirley Veater, was able to capture the day on canvas, which now hangs on the wall in the foyer.

The church continues to hold to the ethos of being a place of welcome for all, holding to the values of the Inclusive Church Network. This included registering as a Warm Space for those who have struggled with the exponential rise in fuel costs, opening our doors on Sunday mornings and Thursday afternoons, alongside the events that are already taking place, such as worship on Sunday and Open House on Thursday.

Through the work of the City of Sanctuary movement, Dorset Gardens, along with the other churches in the Brighton & Hove Circuit, has worked hard to become recognised as a Church of Sanctuary. We have established links with Sanctuary on Sea (Brighton & Hove City of Sanctuary), Sussex University, Care4Calais, and other organisations who are striving to ensure the Gospel of Hospitality is extended to those who find themselves in need. All five churches in the Circuit have gained this recognition, and the Circuit has been named as the first Circuit of Sanctuary in the UK. The awards were given out during a Circuit Together Service at Dorset Gardens, now the task is for the church to do all in its powers to help challenge the injustices that refugees and asylum seekers encounter.

During the summer months I was fortunate enough to be able to take a sabbatical, a period of three months to explore Celtic spirituality in Cornwall. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who during that time stepped in to cover aspects of my role.

However, my thanks are offered not just for those three months, but for all the ways the people of Dorset Gardens Methodist Church pull together to the benefit of others, spiritually, physically, emotionally and practically. Evidence of all the hard work that goes on to make this happen can be found within the pages of this report.

*Revd Deborah Cornish*



*The 'Big Sing' on Saturday 14 May 2022 was enjoyed by all.*



## SECTION 1: WORSHIP & EVANGELISM



*The Church exists to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love.*

Over the course of the past twelve months it has been a joy to see new faces in so many places across the life of the church. Mid-week worship has seen our regulars return, as well as some new faces, as confidence post-Covid has restored. This service is supported by a group of four people who regularly provide time for reflection, prayer, meditation and an opportunity to sing hymns old and new.

The Christmas Carol Service was shared with The Village MCC, and an invitation to take part in the service was extended to other user groups. This meant we had different people taking part. On Christmas Day we had an infant baptism, which added to the excitement and joy of the day.



*Baby Kevin's Baptism on Christmas Day!*

In the last few months, during Sunday worship, we have had an adult baptism and brought six people into church membership. In addition, we have a small group of primary school-aged children that are regularly attending worship with their parents.

The fortnightly letter continues to be sent out to a wide range of people on our mailing list, helping them to stay connected even when they find it difficult to attend church or any of the other activities that take place on the premises. In addition to the letters, we also keep in touch with people through the quarterly newsletter, and through the hard work of our pastoral visitors.

*Revd Deborah Cornish*

## **SUNDAY CLUB**

We have two families who attend regularly. Sometimes we stay in the Sanctuary throughout the service, sitting at a table at the back to do colouring, and sometimes we go downstairs and do our own thing, stories, puzzles, crafts, etc. The children enjoy dancing during some of the hymns and on a couple of occasions they have led the congregation singing a song and doing a dance.

At Christmas we made lots of star and heart decorations for the Action for Children Christmas Tree as part of the Woodingdean Christmas Tree Festival and we made a stable to house our Nativity figures.

At our March 2023 Circuit Service our numbers more than doubled as we were joined by children from other churches. We looked at a world map, drew flags and put stickers on the map on countries where we had connections and where there are troubles.

For Easter we plan to use our Sunday Club Cross and decorate cakes for the congregation.

*Rosemary Cuthbert*

## THE VILLAGE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH



2022 was definitely a defining year for The Village MCC. Spring brought the illegal invasion of the Ukraine by Putin's forces. The church was able to liaise with MCC folk in the area to be able to provide 'on the ground support' to those LGBTQ+ refugees who would most certainly have been murdered had they stayed in the country. By the end of March we began to realise that the war might be a great deal more protracted than originally thought, and as I write this it is still in progress. March and April were challenging months as illness made the rounds. One of our board members, Simon, sadly lost his partner.

At the Maundy Thursday Seder we were still talking at 10.30 pm. It was a lovely evening, with a really genuine spirit at play amongst us. Our Easter service went well, and we continue to have visitors drop in now and then. Many are from out of town, or seeking the kind of reassurance and support that The Village offers, but my hope is that some of the locals will choose to make it a home.

I was asked by the Men Talk Health team to choose music and share some of my thoughts on their Monday Music Therapy show hosted by Davey Shields on Charitable Radio. After choosing music I recorded the programme with Davey on Zoom. It was broadcast on Monday 16 May. Chris and I met with Revd Cynthia Park to help plan the Dorset Gardens Street Party in honour of the Queen's platinum jubilee, and after a lot of hard work the party went well. We ran games and went through 30 coconuts, 30 jubilee keyrings, and a half a ton of Haribo!

In June we also celebrated our first lay led Third Sunday service, led by



Will and Mark, it was great. The spirit flowed, and we were each blessed. In truth nobody wanted to go home!

The international MCC conference was held online, and was a great success. Not being one to enjoy crowds I found that I really appreciated being able to connect with people and enjoy worship in my own space. I screened the conference using a projector onto the wall at home, and it was a fun experience for those who attended.

Access to St James's Street was limited during the Pride celebrations and so we held our 2022 Pride Service in the Ledward Centre Cafe. It was a wonderfully affirming experience for all of us. It was especially nice because it was a hot day, and the venue has great air conditioning.

In the summer we offered Switchboard staff and end-users a chaplaincy service, and our offer was gratefully accepted. It's an informal arrangement, and a free service given by The Village, a way of serving the community as a listening ear.

In September we experienced the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth II. The country went into mourning, as did our congregation. However, October began with a meeting of LGBTQ+ groups and leaders to discuss the proposed queer youth shelter project to be trialled for ten weeks in the new year. It's going well and making a real difference to those community members who access the service.

At the close of the year we again planned a joint World Aids Day Service with Revd Heather Leake Date, which went well despite my booking the wrong date! The Christmas Eve Service was also a wonderful celebration with DGMC and it was lovely to join with our friends in such special worship.

Thank you to everyone at Dorset Gardens for helping us feel so at home, and providing a worship space where we can truly be ourselves.

*Revd Michael Hydes*



## SECTION 2: LEARNING AND CARING

*The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care.*



### STUDY GROUPS

The exigencies of age are diminishing our number, but we continue to meet once a month on a Thursday afternoon and are still studying Luke's Gospel, effectively a chapter each month, using notes that I write for the group. I send these notes to members who cannot attend, including our 'branch' in Sri Lanka (Avanka Fernando).

*Mick Hickman*

### PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Pastoral care is at the centre of the church's mission and ministry. Currently, there are eight pastoral group leaders, along with the Minister, gladly giving their service. The Committee meets twice a year and is responsible for the provision of pastoral care.

One way the pastoral leaders demonstrate their faithfulness as a Christian community is by offering help and care to a range of people both in the church and wider community. Care and friendship are offered by home visits, over coffee and/or through regular phone calls or emails. During a wide range of circumstances and in demanding situations, the pastoral leaders seek to be a helpful presence, often listening attentively, sustaining others through prolonged difficulty or immediate needs, offering guidance about resources, bringing different perspectives or simply listening, helping people discover God's will and love and developing friendships.

The act of praying is at the heart of pastoral work. Besides being in touch through visits and/or phone conversations, pastoral care providers continue to support members through a prayerful ministry.

Pastoral care is available for all, irrespective of whether anyone attends church regularly or not. Strict confidentiality is maintained when offering pastoral care unless someone is at risk of abuse or harm when the issue is discussed with the minister.

Going forward our vision is to invite new members to become pastoral group leaders and expand the team and continue making our church a caring environment for everybody. The dynamics of our church is changing; we have several people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and from different age groups. We would like to explore ways of improving pastoral effectiveness that might be helpful in developing a fresh approach to pastoral work and then use it in the contemporary circumstances and according to distinct individual and collective needs.

On 18 March 2023 the church membership was 69 members and 28 adherents.

Please continue to pray for our pastoral team and the work and responsibility we have committed ourselves to.

*Deeptima Massey, Pastoral Secretary*

## **SAFEGUARDING**

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. We all of us need to do our best to ensure everyone who comes into our church building is safe. This includes not only children and young people but also vulnerable adults. Who is vulnerable? All of us are at some time in our lives: during illness, following bereavement, going through a bad time, stressed out due to housing or financial worries, or worries about family and friends; those with disabilities or special needs. We also have people coming into our building who have mental health issues, addiction problems, homelessness, anxieties about their sexuality or immigration status.

We are an inclusive church, so we need to try and take care of them all. We also need to take care of ourselves, and it is important that we do not

put ourselves at risk. We need to ask for help, and remember that we cannot sort out everybody's difficulties.

To this end Steve Preston and I have run a series of training sessions "Creating Safer Space" over the past year for all those with specific roles in the church which have been well attended.

If you do find you have concerns about someone in the church family, please speak, in confidence, to me, Steve Preston, our minister Deborah or your Pastoral Visitor. Do not keep it to yourself, you will be supported.

*Rosemary Cuthbert*

### **OPEN HOUSE @ DG**

Over the last year Open House has continued to meet every Thursday, except for one in December. The Thursday after Christmas a number of people were going to be away, so we didn't meet then. But the following week we held an Epiphany Party and had a great time! The team game using "The Twelve Days of Christmas" proved a particularly uproarious challenge – and there were lots of other amusements including barbecued sausage rolls by yours truly who will try to learn how to use the oven before attempting that again! But it was a great way to celebrate the end of the Christmas season and prepare for 2023.



Throughout the year we've found every Thursday to be a bit different. Sometimes we have a birthday to celebrate; when Michael and Steven

come along we have live music; when Mary or Colin appear we'll have a piano recital; if Rosemary is with us we'll face the challenge of an excellent Connect4 player. And there are always crafts to enjoy, tasty cake to eat, much good conversation and a lot of laughs. It is a great afternoon, and everyone is always welcome: Every Thursday, 2 to 4 pm. Roll up, roll up!

And PS – a big thank you to all the helpers who make cake, biscuits, coffee, tea, set up and clear away. It is a great team!!

*Revd Cynthia Park*

### **KNIT 'N' NATTER: KNITTING GROUP**

At our meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, Dave Hunt, an ex-Scout Leader from Saltdean, came and gave a talk telling us what happens to our knitting. Dave collects our knitting twice a year, comprising blankets; children's cardigans, jumpers and toys; balaclavas, scarves and gloves for adults and children. He delivers our knitted goods to a warehouse near Worthing, from there it is despatched to Romania, Ukraine and wherever needed. Some of the items go into shoeboxes at Christmas time.



We also knit for the Trevor Mann Baby Unit and knit knee blankets for the dementia ward at the Royal Sussex County Hospital.

We are a very friendly group and enjoy each other's company and look forward to our monthly meetings on the first Friday of each month (except January).

*June Cooke*

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SUPPORT**

We've had an action-packed year with children and families! Our biggest event was the Endangered Earth Summer Holiday Club, with almost 50 children taking part across four days of fun activities learning all about endangered species.



Special visitors from Sussex Wildlife Trust arrived to teach us all about nocturnal wildlife - they'd set the alarm for 5 am to capture some spectacular moths to show us all. Brighton & Hove City Council's

rewilding expert helped make wildflower seed bombs to encourage native species closer to home and told us all about helping wildlife habitats thrive. We created a real team rooting for nature with our stylish T shirt printing (see previous page).

Christmas Club was all about giving this year with the children wrapping chocolate bars in funky reindeer, penguin and snow people designs as gifts for their loved ones. Everyone went home with a paper-crafted Mary and baby Jesus ornament for their tree too.

As always our cookery segments proved the most popular, thanks to Jennie Lamb at Harvest Club and Rosemary Cuthbert across the year. Edible highlights included pastry snakes and snails, ladybird cakes, soda bread and delicious Christmas wreath pizzas.



Massive thanks to every volunteer who made our children's clubs an epic success. Now more than ever, feedback from families is that they really appreciate our great clubs because the children enjoy themselves and parents know we keep our doors open for families on any income.

Tearaway Tots has had some busy times too – sometimes up to 60 toddlers and babies in one morning. A huge thank you to our regular helpers, especially Vikki Kennedy and Ady Yeung, who are loved by all the

little ones. New families find us each week and we have welcomed parents, carers, toddlers, and babies from across the globe. Our healthy toddler snacks and limitless cuppas, as well as a lively sing-song, and fun craft sessions, cater to well over 150 to 200 families across the year.

*Liz Neale*

## **WARM SPACES**

Methodist Churches have responded to the cost-of-living crisis by opening their doors to ensure that communities are not left out in the cold. Dorset Gardens was happy to offer somewhere for people to find warmth, comfort and companionship. Although we were late to launch (a few challenges with our heating) we were featured in the February Brightonian magazine (see next page) and welcomed some occasional friends when open. I'm sure we will resume this offering again in the autumn.

*Jennie Lamb*

## **CHURCH NEWSLETTER**

Our combined Dorset Gardens and Woodingdean Newsletter serves as a connection between the congregations, visitors and community. Four editions are published during the annual cycle: March, June, September and December. The email version allows members to receive church news wherever they are, and a printed version is made available to those who do not have an email along with spare copies in the church for visitors coming through the door.

Our newsletters help to keep an active and informed church community. They increase engagement between each other and inform readers about current events in and around the church. A personal message from the Minister serves as a means to nourish the faith of the congregation and offers encouragement, hope and love.

Our newsletters feature key announcements about worship, stories of celebration of life and special milestones, prayer requests, theological



News from Dorset Gardens Methodist Church.

## A new warm space in Kemptown

Kemptown has a new warm space open to all, offering a friendly welcome twice a week. It's a space to enjoy free hot drinks and biscuits, as well as tea and toast every Sunday.

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church has thrown open the doors to provide a warm place to sit and chat every Sunday from 10am to 1pm and Thursdays from 2-4pm. Chairs and tables are set out on the ground floor, as well as space to be quiet if people prefer their own company. Morning worship takes place on Sundays on the second floor although there is no obligation to join in; volunteers at the church simply want to provide a warm welcome to the community when the heating is already on!

The church prides itself on being an inclusive church and is registered for same sex marriages. It's a safe space throughout the week and is home to a wide variety of diverse organisations. The one common denominator is a friendly face, a cup of tea and the opportunity to chat if you're feeling sociable. But it's also a place of quiet contemplation where visitors can happily keep themselves to themselves.



***"As a congregation we strive to use the church premises in ways that serve the local community. In the midst of a cost of living crisis, with spiralling utility bills, one of the ways we can do this is by offering a welcoming space to all."***

Reverend Deborah Cornish, minister at Dorset Gardens, explained: "As a congregation we strive to use the church premises in ways that serve the local community" She said: "In the midst of a cost of living crisis, with spiralling utility bills, one of the ways we can do this is by offering a welcoming space to all."

On Thursday afternoons board games are

available as part of the church Open House. Teas, coffees, cakes and biscuits are on offer and quite often homemade treats thanks to enthusiastic bakers. It's an informal and relaxed space so visitors can make themselves comfortable. Toys are provided for the youngest visitors and the building is pushchair and wheelchair friendly.

*The church are looking for extra volunteers to help keep the warm space running, welcoming those who come to Dorset Gardens and letting people know what's on offer. Please contact the church office on [office@dgmc.org.uk](mailto:office@dgmc.org.uk) or call 01273 605502 for more information.*

reflection on hymns and Bible passages, occasional quizzes and puzzles and congregational and community news.

We are always open to new suggestions and feedback and would like to continue increasing its readership.

I would like to express a huge thank you to Angela Millanzi, our Church Administrator, for organising the material and presenting it in an enticing way.

*Deeptima Massey*

## **CHURCH STEWARDS**

The jubilee party in the park, celebrating the Queen's platinum jubilee, organised by Revd Cynthia Park was "a triumph!" The Scouts' leafleting really worked - large numbers attended. Working with others - The Village MCC and Lunch Positive - was excellent.

We have experienced many special Sunday services including Refugee Sunday in June where we welcomed Revd Andrew Jackson from Voices in Exile and Avanka Fernando delivered the sermon. The August Pride service was led by Revd Heather Leake Date; in October we celebrated Sybil Rogers and June Cooke's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of membership and the Harvest Parade service was well attended with a 'green' tree theme led by Revd Deborah Cornish. Thanks to those who prepared the lunch that followed and to those who decorated the church so beautifully. Food donations were given to the City Mission Food Bank. The March Circuit Together Service at Dorset Gardens, where Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal preached and Circuit of Sanctuary certificates were awarded was a wonderful occasion.

We sadly said farewell to Avanka who was returning to Sri Lanka. On 4<sup>th</sup> December, during morning service she was given gifts and we had a chance to say goodbye individually over cake, teas and coffees after the service.

In early February we held a Church of Sanctuary tabletop sale and coffee morning with Tombola in aid of the Circuit Refugee Project, including National Book Week costume sale. Monies raised were shared between the Project and Carlton Hill School (School of Sanctuary).

Operationally we have been looking at a range of different matters:

- Flyers for DG & events have been taken to the new flats (where Amex was): 168 new people to the area, important to raise our profile.
- School parking: we are exploring with the site manager the possibility of using the school car park at other times: evening meetings, events, special services, etc. Also considering transport help to DG for people with mobility issues.
- Our Dorset Gardens banners, incorporating descriptive words such as welcoming, loving and inclusive in a heart shape, all suggested by members of the church family, have been printed and are now hanging in various locations around the building. We also now have an LGBTQ+ banner in the window.
- With the help of our treasurer, we now have a QR code which links to a donation page that appears on our service sheets and elsewhere, e.g. new banners. We are looking at possibly getting a contactless terminal for card giving in addition to the current cash donations.
- We have met with NotJustPCs who will be upgrading our AV and computer systems, but in collaboration with Ashdown AV who did the original installation to avoid any incompatibility issues. We are delighted that we now have a fabulous team running the AV desk, Emmanuel, Vanessa, Richmond and Freda as well as the old hands! Many thanks to them all.

Things are definitely different since COVID although we are getting back to 'normal' now, but we still urge people to be safe. Together we can help each other, and we will make good things happen.

*Sue Harrington,  
on behalf of the Stewards/Leadership Team*

## **FINANCE AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

### **FINANCE**

Our income comes from three sources: individual giving, church lettings and rental income from the property at 12 Dorset Gardens.

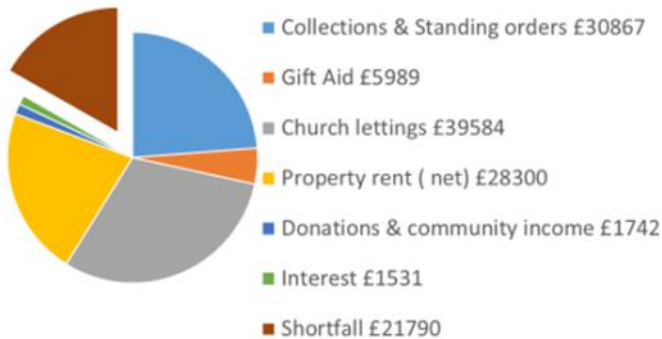
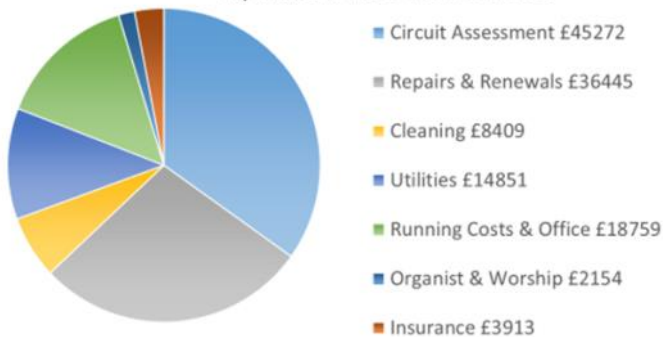
Thanks are again due to our regular givers, without whom our church would not be viable, around 35% of our income comes from personal giving. If you are a regular giver who pays UK income tax and you have not yet made a gift aid declaration please do request a form so that DGMC can claim back the tax paid on the monies you donate.

Church lettings are back to pre-Covid levels. In March 2022 we increased room hire fees to cover the general increase in costs and the predicted increases in the cost of energy. Room hire fees had not been increased for several years and it was decided that we could not continue with some hirers on agreements that were considerably less than the standard concessionary rate. For these organisations the increase was considerable, but was delayed until September to allow them more notice.

As expected our income did not cover expenses and a larger shortfall than expected (£21,790) was taken from reserves.

Our expenses have again increased: the Repairs and Renewals figure is a big increase, but includes the cost (£13K) of refurbishing the lift. The exception is the Circuit assessment; Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit used its reserves to reduce the assessment in order to support all five Churches with their post-Covid recovery. This support continues for the current year and is much appreciated.

E King Legacy: This year donations have been made to The Clare Project, Held in Mind and the Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project. In January 2022 we received a legacy from the estate of NW Langridge Deceased and in August a donation from the estate of John Marchant Deceased.

**Income 2021-2022 £108013****Expenditure 2021-2022 £129803**

A full copy of the accounts (September 2021 - August 2022) is available on request.

*Jennie Lamb*

**PROPERTY**

The Guinness Partnership have fitted a wooden gate to the fenced area that belongs to Purbeck House by our parking spaces. I have cleared the area and planted up Primulas and bulbs in five containers to improve this area. I am now able to regularly clear litter that accumulates there.

New padlocks have been fitted to the parking posts; PAT testing of electrical equipment is ongoing; a new electric piano has been purchased to replace the clavinova.

We have employed BHESCo (Brighton & Hove Energy Services Cooperative) to carry out an energy survey to see if we can reduce our energy costs. We are hoping to be able to install solar panels on our roof.

Southern Heating, the company that installed and maintained our boilers went into liquidation in October. We were fortunate in getting one of their ex-employees, Dave Reed, to take on the maintenance but he has since retired due to ill health and he has recommended someone else.

The fan in the kitchen broke down and we were unable to use the gas hobs for some weeks until a replacement was fitted by Heatcraft. Thirty-two new blue padded folding chairs have been purchased for use in the Main Hall.

The Church Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in January, and we have since received the report. There are no major issues and I am gradually planning for work to be carried out on the issues recommended by the report. We are working with Ashdown AV to improve the audio visuals in the Sanctuary.

*Ian Lamb*

## **BRIGHTON & HOVE METHODIST CIRCUIT**

The Circuit continued with a combined Sunday morning worship called Circuit Together, held every quarter and now hosted in rotation at each church. The size of the attending congregation has grown steadily at each service. Other special Circuit services, as well as some Sunday morning online worship and two evening online services every month have been held.

As reported last year and acknowledging that the Circuit will reduce to two ministers from September 2023, an extensive consultation was held to examine the potential of re-organising to become 'One Society covering Multiple Sites'. The conclusion was that the benefits of the one society concept do not outweigh the complexities/difficulties identified and reservations/resistance expressed. It was felt that the process had

been useful in bringing folk together from across the Circuit, identifying a number of synergies and in the belief of the strength of our Circuit and the benefit of working together going forward.

Stella Goddard (Interim Circuit Treasurer) reported that only £36,000 had had to be used from the reserves (as opposed to an anticipated £50,000) to cover the Circuits' expenses for the year ending 31 August 2022. This included a contribution to support Barnstormers at Patcham with a new stage and £6,600 towards the Ministers' Retirement Fund. The Circuit would continue to need to use its reserves to cover its costs.

### **Circuit/Church of Sanctuary:**

A new Circuit Project for 2022 to support refugees, was led by Sue Harrington and Deeptima Massey of Dorset Gardens, and with the following vision statement: "Our vision is to make our Circuit a Sanctuary for All, where all feel safe and welcomed, including those fleeing violence, conflict and persecution. We will live out God's purpose and mission and offer hospitality, kindness, love and sanctuary to all through witness and service. We seek to build a culture of outreach and service by identifying and responding to the needs of those experiencing relocation and displacement. Through this project we will share our commitment to support and advocate for student refugees and their families, working collaboratively in partnership with individuals and groups."

All five Circuit churches have pledged their commitment to support refugees, inviting them to church to share about their fears and their lives. Church members have collected clothing for the newly arrived asylum seekers living in hotels while church buildings have been opened to host refugee social events. Some church members have offered accommodation to Ukrainian families seeking safety from the war. Refugees with an urgent need for practical help, such as assistance with school uniform and equipment for children, have been supported and food banks were established in each of the churches to provide for those living with no immigration status or seeking asylum.



The churches have also been working to change the conversation around migrants. They participated in last June's Refugee Sunday as well as holding a joint service in November with speaker Angie Lynn from Sanctuary on Sea.

Lafa is from Kurdish Syria. She came to the UK in 2019 and moved to Brighton last year. She has one son called Azad who is 17 months old and together they attend the parent and toddler group at Dorset Gardens. She said: "I really like coming to this group because I have new friends, I can speak some English words, because I met friends who speak English, and my child enjoys his time a lot. I thank everyone who provides such opportunities for refugees."

The circuit churches were awarded Church of Sanctuary status at a special service that took place at Dorset Gardens on Sunday 12 March 2023. The founder of the City of Sanctuary movement, Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, preached at the service to celebrate the awards and said: "This recognition of the support that these churches offer migrants comes at an important time when our government is making coming to the UK seeking sanctuary increasingly difficult."



Revd Andy Lowe, Superintendent Minister commented: "As individual churches and as a circuit we feel that there is a gospel call for us to be places where welcome, hospitality and inclusion are the norm. Loving our neighbour whoever they are, wherever they come from, is central to our faith and must be at the heart of all we do. Receiving these certificates and recognition is not an end in itself but just a mark in an ongoing journey to live out that command to love."

A big thank you to Deeptima and Sue for all their hard work towards such a successful launch.

## ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

The Revd Deborah Cornish, and others, have given me for deposit orders of service for funerals. I always welcome such items. It is better to be offered the same item three times than never to receive it.

On Saturday 15 October 2022 seventeen members of the Chapels Society visited a number of nonconformist places of worship in our city, including Dorset Gardens. Their visit here was unusual in that they usually go to old buildings, but on this occasion they wanted to see a new building as well. Deborah and I showed them around and explained the history and nature of the building and its architecture, and answered their questions.

One interesting question was what ‘would we have done differently were we to plan it now?’ One of our responses was that we would look far more carefully at our environmental impact and being eco-friendly. The chapel downstairs was especially appreciated, a number of them preferred the ‘round’ design to that of the more traditional ‘rectangular’. The use of candles by members of the local community intrigued them. They bought a number of my books on Brighton & Hove Methodism, and on Dorset Gardens. The monies have been given to the Circuit and the Church. They had their packed lunches here and left us after an hour or so to go on to the Unitarian Church in New Road.

Deborah and I went through the ‘register safe’ at the Church. We have a number of completed baptismal and marriage registers. As part of my biennial deposit with the County Record Office as Circuit archivist, I shall be depositing those registers together with other material. There is nothing else to report at present.

*Mick Hickman, Church Archival Officer*

### SECTION 3: SERVICE

*The Church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need  
and to challenge injustice*



#### TWELVE STEP GROUPS

The 12 Steps were originally developed in 1935 by the two co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Bill Wilson and Dr Bob Smith. Since then many other 12 step programmes were founded. The 12 steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practised as a way of life, can expel whatever the obsession is and 'enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.'

The church is happy to provide a safe space for several Alcoholics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups and we were delighted to see some join us at our Christmas Carol Service.

#### BRIGHTON'S PASSION

In August 2022 Poppy Szkiler completed her payments to Dorset Gardens from her own resources for which we are very grateful. Our involvement with this project, and that of the two other churches, has now ended. We wish Poppy success as the project changes and moves on. As a consequence this is my last report and the position of 'Officer for Brighton's Passion' no longer exists.

*Mick Hickman*

*Ex-Dorset Gardens Officer for Brighton's Passion*

#### THE CLARE PROJECT



We have had one of our busiest years to date and continue to support hundreds of trans, non-binary and intersex adults across Sussex. Now in our 23<sup>rd</sup> year, we continue to run the increasingly popular weekly drop-in and neurodivergent group, alongside 1:1 support

and psychotherapy services. In the last four years, the staff team has grown from three employees to now ten, and continues to grow, offering support throughout East and West Sussex. To date, the Clare Project hosts approximately 12 regular group psychosocial support spaces every month, and envisions this to grow throughout the coming year.

Despite many successes, it has also been a challenging year for many of our users, and particularly for those from intersectional groups including People of Colour, Autistic and/or ADHD, survivors of violence and people over 50. Due to NHS delays exacerbated by the recent pandemic, and the on-going presence of the anti-trans agenda in our (national and local) media and political scape, it is a huge strain on our communities' mental health. The Clare Project continues to explore avenues for opportunity for providing more specialist support to our community facing violence and discrimination, and the on-going mental health impact this has had on so many in our community.

We continue to send our thanks and appreciation to both Dorset Gardens Methodist Church and allies throughout the network for your continued support of our essential work.

*Gray Hutchins*

## **COMMUNITY LUNCHESES**

Our community lunches recommenced last Spring, running when there is a fifth Sunday in the month.

We have a small, dedicated team who cook and serve a hot meal to between 35 and 50 people who live on the margins of society. The meals seem to be appreciated and we have quite a bit of positive response; some often stay on and help clear up by stacking tables and chairs which is a big help. Four times a year may not seem much, but it's something.

*Rosemary Cuthbert*



*The Community Lunch Team*

## **COUNSELLING: DORSET GARDENS ADULT COUNSELLING PROJECT**



We were so thankful in 2022 to receive a further £2,500 grant from Dorset Gardens to help continue funding our adult counselling project. Together with funds donated from Dolphin House Charity and funds we managed to raise ourselves, the valuable work has continued throughout 2022 and into the current academic year. We have been able to offer support to a further 15 parents and carers delivering 174 sessions of therapy.

We gather feedback from everyone using the service and this continues to be unanimously positive. The additional comments, such as the one set out below, continue to motivate us to keep the service going:-

*“It’s helped me to build confidence in myself. Be kinder and more patient with myself. I find I can challenge situations/criticism more than I could before by challenging my beliefs about myself and not submitting instantly to blaming myself. I hope this will continue to grow with time and that I will model a stronger and more positive model to my children. Also being less hard on myself has made me less stressed/down so that has had a positive impact on my children.”*

We are also very grateful to Dorset Gardens for allowing us to continue using the Counselling Room, which offers a safe and comfortable space for delivery. We are in no doubt that the warm environment offered by the church and the security the room offers plays a major part in the success of this project.

We are currently in the process of seeking a large three-year grant to extend the adult therapy across all the schools with whom we work and very much hope we will be able to continue our long-standing relationship with Dorset Gardens to deliver this. Thank you to everyone for making this possible.

*Alison Lucas & Ruth Lazarus*

## **LUNCH POSITIVE**

As a small grassroots charity, Lunch Positive has continued to reach, support and involve large numbers of people living with HIV. People who come along to Lunch Positive experience profoundly challenging life circumstances, poor health, and often have complex needs.

During the year we provided much needed additional space and extra days of service delivery. This has helped us to engage with and support growing numbers of people experiencing greater vulnerabilities.

Such vulnerabilities have included enduring food and fuel poverty, social isolation, mental health, substance misuse, caring responsibilities, and bereavement; people with complex health issues including ageing and frailty, cancer and dementia.

Our work at Dorset Gardens is provided almost wholly by a large team of amazing volunteers. The volunteer team have worked exceptionally hard throughout the year to respond to people's needs. Everyone was overjoyed to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2022. This prestigious and highly competitive award recognises the involvement and achievements of volunteers in supporting the community of people living with HIV. The citation also highlighted the uniqueness of our work, the positive impact on the lives of people we support and the community based volunteering ethos of the charity.

This year has been one of our most successful ever in reaching and providing community based support for people living with HIV. The levels of recently increased rent and hire at Dorset Gardens required of our charity have, however, put this work at very significant risk.

*Gary Pargeter*



## **OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS**

A wide variety of community groups use our premises, and a number of our major users are already featured in this report.

Other groups that regularly use our premises include two performing arts groups: The Young Actors Group and Freckle Productions; as well as Buzz Club (running 'Crafty Art' on a Monday morning and 'Music Matters' on a Tuesday morning), Dance for Parkinson's, BeeZee Bodies and Sussex Defend the NHS.



## STUDENT WORK

*Our aim is to connect with and express to students and staff the love of God through our actions and interactions with them.*

(UoB – University of Brighton UoS – University of Sussex)

I retired from my role as Circuit Student Development Worker - Lay Chaplain at UoB and UoS at the end of July 2022. I am maintaining contact, particularly at Sussex where there is a dedicated Chaplaincy Hub, and I have offered to help as a volunteer if required. I am also keeping in touch with a couple of people from UoB. There is currently no Methodist representation at UoB although I am still an admin on their Facebook group and feel sure the Faith and Spirituality Advisors who know me would refer any Methodist enquiries to me, Revd Cynthia Park or via the Circuit. Revd Dan Woodhouse continues as Methodist Chaplain at UoS. Both universities marked my retirement with gatherings of colleagues and generous gifts. This was followed by a wonderful surprise marking of my retirement at our Circuit Together Service at Stanford Avenue, for which many thanks to all involved.

Both universities continued to move to face-to-face meetings, but still used Teams for online meetings where necessary or to save time and travel. The Meeting House (UoS) remained quieter than before lockdown, but began to pick up. I understand that at Freshers this year it was much busier again. The food bank continues via Administrator, Janine. The Lead Chaplain, Revd Chris McDermott also retired at the end of the academic year, the university has now appointed a new Lead Chaplain, James Croft, a Humanist - the first such appointment in Britain. I have been to meet him, and he is interested to be involved, through his role, in our Refugee Project.

UoB end of year prize 2022 was given to the student pro-bono law clinic where law students practise, supervised by qualified lawyers, helping

people in the community. The prize acknowledges the student that gets the most from the clinic. We received this email of thanks: "I'm delighted to share the messages we received from the students who were awarded the Faith & Spirituality Prize for the final year LLB students who demonstrated strong academic achievement on the Justice and Practice module – working in the pro-bono clinic:

**First place award of £100: Lauren Andrews, LLB Hons Law with Criminology:** *Thank you so much!! This is amazing, I am so honoured to receive this award. This donation will help me so much with progressing my career after my degree. I am looking to use it fund a work experience/ volunteering trip. I can't thank you enough!*

**Highly commended award of £50 each: Taylor Foster, LLB Law:** *Thank you so much for this generous gift. It will be used this summer to go towards buying study material for my legal training contract which starts in September.*

**Elena Adina Corcau, LLB Law:** *Awards like this should have great impact in motivating students to get higher marks. Thank you so much for making these awards possible."*

The UoS Chaplaincy at The Meeting House had a book of Remembrance open to sign, and Chaplains were available there, following the announcement of the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

I continue as one of the Circuit Refugee Project Leads. Originally I took this on as part of the student work role, but I feel it is important and meaningful work and so I chose to continue, although it is now outside the student work remit. Four members of the Project Steering Group are at UoS and so there is still contact through the university and of course, the University of Sanctuary Team are also based there. The food bank at The Meeting House also supports refugee students and so my links continue there also.

Although no longer officially on the team I go in to help with events at UoS as required, most recently One World Week - a food event offering a taste of around 6-8 different cuisines.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank everyone around the whole Circuit, but particularly at Dorset Gardens as that is where I have had most contact, for all your help and support be it with events, welcome packs, setting up and serving Christmas lunches, welcoming students, offering hospitality or any and all the other ways you have made this such an amazing place and way to serve.

*Sue Harrington, Ex-Circuit Student Development Worker*

### **SUSSEX HIV CHAPLAINCY**

This year saw a return to many pre-pandemic activities, including the World AIDS Day (WAD) Vigil taking place in person at the Brighton & Hove AIDS Memorial in New Steine Gardens.

The online WAD activities which began in 2020 have also continued, which increased accessibility to those who are unable, or find it difficult, to attend an open air event on a December evening. Short videos were posted on the Brighton & Hove WAD Community Partnership Facebook page, contributed by a wide variety of local organisations (including the Chaplaincy), and local Councillors and MPs, on a range of issues, such as addressing stigma and supporting those living with HIV. The annual WAD service was again held jointly with The Village MCC at Dorset Gardens, led by me and Revd Michael Hydes.



I was invited to speak to the LGBTQ+ History Group about my work as Chaplain and HIV Pharmacist, and the history of HIV in the city. I also

contributed an article to the Connexion magazine (Issue 29, page 22)  
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28265/theconnexion29.pdf>

Pastoral care remains an important aspect of my ministry, and I have conducted several funerals over the last year (not all directly connected with the Chaplaincy).

To contact the Sussex HIV Chaplaincy, including to submit any names to be read at the next WAD Candlelight Vigil, please email [susshivchap@gmail.com](mailto:susshivchap@gmail.com) or phone/text 07867 773360.

*Rev'd Heather Leake Date*

### **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: 14<sup>TH</sup> BRIGHTON SCOUT GROUP**

All three sections are now full. There are 26 Scouts with four on the waiting list, 23 Cubs with two on the waiting list, and 13 Beavers with six on the waiting list.



*On 9 May 2022 the Scouts assisted 'Care for Veterans' with a Bucket Collection at Brighton Station. They collected an amazing £431.48!*

The Scouts ran a Summer Camp at Parkwood Camp Site, near Poynings and also an indoor weekend at Blackland Farm Activity Centre, near East Grinstead in February where they took part in a number of adventurous activities including zip wire, abseiling, archery and orienteering.

The Scout Troop entered two teams in the Overland Hike at the end of March, a competitive 25-mile hike over two days where they carry all their equipment and camp overnight. The hike is open to Scouts from both East and West Sussex and this year 36 teams participated. We were delighted that our team with three girls and a boy came third, and our all-male team came fifth. Everyone had fun, they really loved it – and especially when they heard the result! It rained when they camped and they lost an hour's sleep because of the clocks changing, so they had breakfast and packed up in the wet. But they enjoyed it all and we're hoping to enter a team in the summer hike when the weather gets warmer.



*Max, Cai and Isobel gained their Cub Scout Silver Award, the highest award in Cubs!*

The Cub Pack ran a successful weekend indoors at Parkwood in December.

One of our Scouts, Dylan Andrews, will be off to the World Jamboree which is to be held in South Korea in August 2023.

In our Leadership Team we have recruited Sam Gentles-Mann in the Scout Section and Aimee Butcher in the Beavers. John Cornish has resumed as Beaver Leader until he and Deborah leave in summer 2023. This means we will have to find a new Beaver Leader from July.

We have three young leaders (15-18 years old) working with us. Lucas Hillard in Scouts, Benjamin Waterer and Dylan Andrews in Cubs. We need to recruit some new members on our Executive Committee.

The Groups' big fund raising refreshment stop on Ditchling Beacon for the London to Brighton Bike Ride went ahead in June, but we have decided that we will no longer continue to take this on as no one has come forward to take over from John Cripps in co-ordinating it.

It is hoped to hold the Group's AGM outdoors at Parkwood alongside a family Fun Day probably in late June/early July.

The Scout Group is celebrating its Centenary this year. We have invited Revd Robin Selmes to lead a special worship service on Sunday 29 October and we will be holding other events to celebrate during the year.

*Ian Lamb, Group Scout Leader*

### **3<sup>RD</sup> BRIGHTON RAINBOWS AND BROWNIES**

Girlguiding numbers have grown steadily this year with 30 Rainbows and Brownies now enjoying fun meetings each week and a team of eight dedicated volunteers. Our programme has been as varied as the girls who attend. We've done craft evenings, recipes, and cooking, played games and of course worked on badges throughout the year. One of our Brownies recently completed her 1000km walking challenge badge, possibly the first nine-year-old in the county to do this!

The Brownies have been on two holidays; first up was a summer pack holiday to the glorious Parkwood campsite where they worked on outdoor challenges and competed against each other on the challenging assault course. We had campfires and singing and of course s'mores. That's toasted marshmallows, chocolate, and biscuits, for the uninitiated!

At Christmas we had a trip to the cinema to see Matilda, followed by a sleepover at Telscombe. Things felt very festive on the Sunday afternoon

with the South Coast's unexpected snowfall. The girls had a great time making snowmen in the flurries.



Leaders and girls enjoyed the wonderful platinum jubilee celebrations at Dorset Gardens, taking part in church activities and honouring our Queen, who of course was an important part of Girlguiding for so many years.

We look ahead to Coronation celebrations this summer with King Charles stepping up to the throne.

*Dawn Crook, Leader, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brighton Brownies & Rainbows*

