

DORSET GARDENS METHODIST CHURCH
Registered Charity 1160211

www.dgmc.org.uk

Annual Report of the Trustees for Year ending 31st August 2024

The Trustees of Dorset Gardens Methodist Church welcome you to our Annual Report covering the Financial Year ended 31 August 2024.

1. Mission statement and Aims

Mission Statement : "We will share God's love with those around us"

Worship

Our worship is open and inclusive of all, celebrating God's saving love expressed through Jesus in ways that are relevant, collaborative and inspirational.

We do this by:-

- Providing a rich blend of words and music that embraces and reflects our diverse community.
- Offering worship that is relevant, encouraging and challenging.
- Creating an atmosphere which enables everyone to express worship in ways which are meaningful to them.
- Helping everyone to discern and develop their own gifts and talents within worship and the community.
- Offering wholeness through worship, prayer and a healing ministry.

Nurture

We offer opportunities for everyone to grow and learn as Christians within a supportive and accepting environment.

We do this by:

- Creating opportunities for everyone to study, e.g. House Groups, and pray together.
- Using arts and crafts, music, and literature in ways which nurtures spiritual growth.
- Creating opportunities for young people and children to deepen their faith and feel valued as active members of our community.

Pastoral Care

We are a loving church family where everyone is welcomed, loved, cared for, and supported by each other.

We do this by:

- Looking after our church family through hospitality, fellowship and caring for each other e.g. through our group of pastoral visitors..
- Extending that care into the community.
- Being a praying people who also embrace the needs of our community and the world.

Service

We express God's love by serving the community and the world, challenging injustice, and being responsible stewards of God's creation.

We do this by:

- Providing an environment where everyone finds a loving welcome, a sense of worth, and a listening ear.
- Offering our love, our energy, and our prayers wherever they are needed
- Enabling and working in partnership with community groups
- Actively promoting awareness of injustice and helping everyone to respond appropriately.
- Being an eco-friendly church as far as possible.
- Being a place of welcome and support to students and meeting them where they are.

Equal Opportunities Statement

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church is an inclusive church.

All are welcomed regardless of age, gender, race or sexual orientation.

We are registered as a church to conduct marriages of both same sex and opposite couples.

2. Objectives and Activities

In planning its activities, Dorset Gardens has considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and in particular the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion together with the 'Our Calling' framework as defined by the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament as we try to enable people to live out their faith as part of the wider community.

3. Achievements and Performance

a) Worship

- Evening healing services have been introduced on the fourth Sunday of the month, led by the Revd Cynthia Park and Shirley Veater. This quiet, meditative service includes communion and the opportunity for the laying on of hands.
- A time of food and fellowship has been introduced after the first Sunday service of the month and has been well received.
- The annual World Aids Day Service was held on 4 December and led by the Revd Heather Leake Date and the Revd Michael Hydes from the Village Metropolitan Community Church (VMCC).
- Our popular Carol service was held on Christmas Eve for the second year in conjunction with VMCC and included readers representing some of our user groups.
- During the summer of 2024 we enjoyed a number of special services including: in May longstanding DG member and local preacher Ken Smith led the Church Anniversary; in June we celebrated Revd Heather Leake Date's 20 years as an HIV Chaplain; in July local preacher Alan Saunders led his last service at DG and was thanked for his preaching ministry over the last six decades; and later that month Revd Duleep Fernando (President of the Methodist Conference in Sri Lanka from 1994-2000) was a guest preacher.
- Revd Andy Lowe ran the Lent Course *Windows into the First Holy Week and Easter* based on material by Revd Stephen Dawes.
- We are delighted to welcome Will Mason as our regular organist. He replaces Tony Leonard who has retired after years of dedicated playing the keyboard. Thank you, Tony.

b) Pastoral

- The annual Covenant Service took place in early January 2024; at which two new pastoral visitors were commissioned.
- The pastoral visitors offer help and care to a range of people both in the church and wider community via home visits, over coffee and/or through regular phone calls/emails. During these interactions the pastoral leaders aim to sustain others through prolonged difficulty or immediate needs, offering guidance about resources, bringing different perspectives or simply listening.
- Revd Andy Lowe, Revd Cynthia Park, and two pastoral visitors, who have been authorised by the Church Council, visit those who are housebound to offer Holy Communion as and when requested.

d) Young People

- Our Young Church 'Sunday Club' meets weekly and attracts a small but enthusiastic group, enjoying a range of activities and participating in the worship from time to time. Over Advent and Christmas they looked at the Birth of Jesus and cut out and decorated stars to stick in windows and made sheep and a stable for the Nativity scene.
- In Spring, Sunday Club spent several weeks looking at the resurrection stories, followed bible month on Genesis during July, and then looked at some more Old Testament stories.

- The Christmas Holiday Club had a festive time at this year with children creating giant snowflakes that were almost as big as themselves, which looked beautiful displayed in the front windows across our community. The children also decorated wonderful chocolate Yule logs to take home. Parents also appreciated the chance for a cuppa and a delicious coconut snowball biscuit while they all chatted and sang a Christmas song together at the close of the day.
- Tearaway Tots attracts a diverse group of parents, carers, toddlers, and babies from across the globe to enjoy fun play, healthy toddler snacks, support over a cuppa, as well as singing and varied craft sessions.
- Children & Families Worker Liz Neale celebrated her seven years of service at a March service, and we were sad to say farewell as she secured an exciting new job in a local College. We welcomed replacement Sam (Samantha) Dyke into the role with a vision to work with the existing Tearaway Tots and Holiday Club and bring the community and church closer together.
- In her first term with Tearaway Tots Sam reported: "We've had two very successful Clothes Swaps, planted sunflower seeds, had a messy play session and finished with the end of term discos. It has been a real pleasure and blessing getting to know the babies, toddlers and their parents/ carers. We have also had visits from Brighton & Hove Energy Services Cooperative (BHESCo) and the Special Care Dental Team who provided valuable advice and support."
- A summer Holiday Club ran for primary age children. The first four days explored *Our City by the Sea*, with a guest from Rampion Visitors Centre and looking at the sea life that can be found on our shoreline. A further day at the end of August explored *Love Languages*.
- Thanks to all our volunteers who worked incredibly hard to support such successful events and particularly to our past and present Children and Families Worker for their energy, creativity and inspiration.

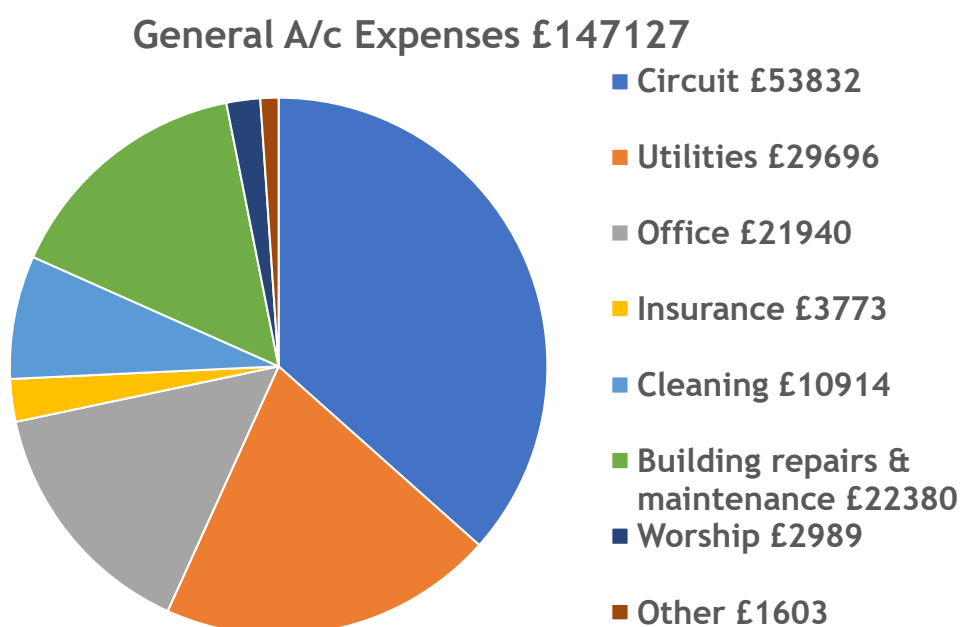
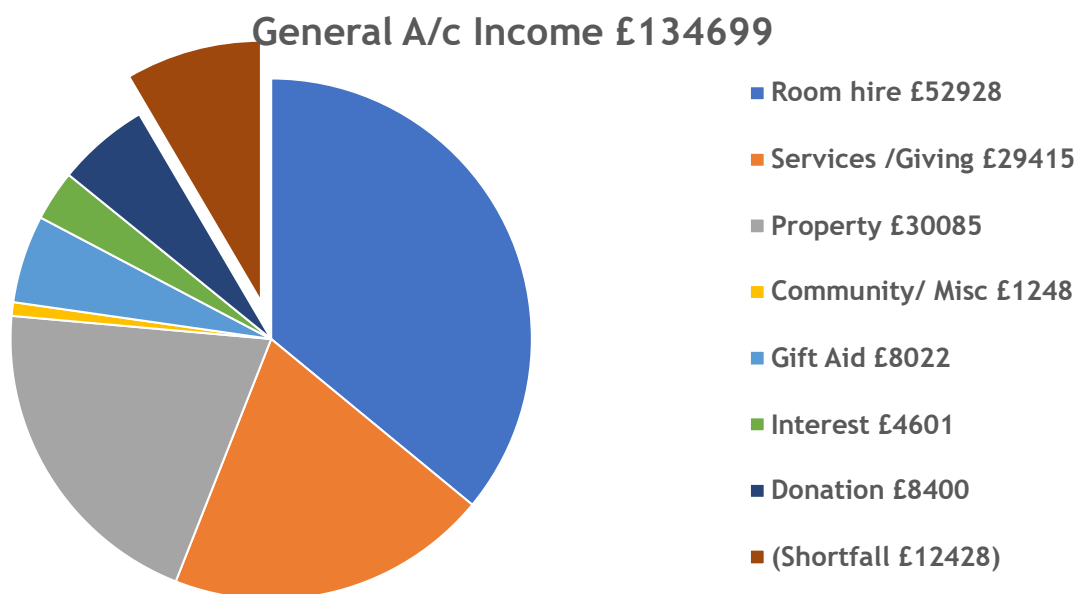
e) Service & Community

1. We continue to actively support our Circuit Project Supporting Refugees via fund raising, donations of supplies and education/social events for six local refugee charities as well as working to change the conversation around migrants. In July we hosted a fund-raising concert by the Brighton Male Voice Choir.
2. Open House @ DG continues to thrive, 2 pm to 4 pm every Thursday and providing a warm welcome, good conversation, music, refreshments and games.
3. Knit 'n' Natter meet on the first Friday of each month and apart from enjoying social time together the output from the groups goes towards various needs including hospitals, overseas aid and Christmas gift boxes.
4. Community Lunches are held on any 5th Sunday of the month where a volunteer team serve a hot meal to on average 50 people who live on the margins of society.
5. The 14th Brighton Scout Group where groups of Scouts, Cubs and Beavers pursue a full range of activities have always called Dorset Gardens home. In fact in the summer of 2023 they celebrated their Centenary having first met on Friday 20th July 1923. The 3rd Brighton Rainbows & Brownies who meet on Monday evenings came to Dorset Gardens after lockdown and have decided to make this their permanent home.
6. We are also pleased to provide a home for the following community groups:
 - a) **Lunch Positive** reach, support, and involve large numbers of people living with HIV. In June 2023 they celebrated their 15th birthday by hosting a lunch for over 140.
 - b) **The Clare Project** supports trans, non-binary, and intersex adults across Sussex.
 - c) **Held in Mind** delivers counselling support to the parents and carers of children at local primary schools and nurseries.
 - d) **People living with Parkinsons** can attend twice weekly dance and fellowship groups.
 - e) **Sussex Defend the NHS** brings together employees, campaigners and communities.
 - f) As safe space for 12 Step Groups including **Alcoholics Anonymous**, **Cocaine Anonymous**, and **Narcotics Anonymous** meetings.

4. Financial Review

The Standard Form of Accounts for year ending 31 August 2024 are attached and were signed off by the Church Council Meeting held on Sunday 16th February 2025.

Our Income comes from three sources: Individual giving, church lettings, and rental income from the property at 12 Dorset Gardens. At times we are also the beneficiaries of legacies from people who valued our work and during this year we drew from a legacy to upgrade the pipe work in our boiler room and the sound & AV in the Sanctuary. We have also needed to draw from our reserves to cover a shortfall in our general accounts – see below.



Ongoing thanks to all the work of our Treasurer Jennie Lamb.

5. Structure, Governance and Management

a) The Circuit Meeting

The Circuit Meeting of Brighton & Hove is the body of Managing Trustees that is responsible for the affairs of the five Methodist churches: Dorset Gardens, Hove, Patcham, Stanford Avenue, and Woodingdean. The Circuit Meeting acts as the focal point of the working fellowship of the churches in the Circuit, overseeing their pastoral, training and evangelistic work.

b) **The Church Council**

The Church Council of Dorset Gardens is the body of Managing Trustees that is responsible for the affairs of the Church and the development of Church Policy. The Church Council Meeting together with the Church Minister, the Church Stewards & Leadership team, and lay employees exercises that combination of spiritual leadership and administrative efficiency which enables the Church to fulfil its purposes as set out in the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church.

c) **Staffing**

Revd. Andrew Lowe, Circuit Superintendent and Dorset Gardens Minister.

We are also benefit from the help of a supernumerary minister, Revd Cynthia Park (who was once the minister with pastoral responsibility for Dorset Gardens), and a minister in Local Appointment, Revd Heather Leake Date.

b) **Safeguarding**

The Methodist Church is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry. Safeguarding is about the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. We all of us need to do our best to ensure everyone who comes into our church building is safe, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults. We are an all-inclusive church, so we need to try and take care of them all. We have people coming into our building who have mental health issues, addiction problems, homelessness, anxieties about their sexuality, or immigration status.

No reportable Safeguarding issues were noted during this period.