

# **ANNUAL TRUSTEES REPORT FOR THE SQUARE METHODIST CHURCH**

September 2023 - August 2024

**Name of Church:** The Square Methodist Church, Dunstable

**Address:** Ashton Square, High St South, Dunstable LU6 3SN

**Correspondence address:** as above

**Name of person to whom correspondence should be addressed:**

Rev Claudia Lupi

**Names of those who have served as managing trustees in the year (Church Council):**

Rev Claudia Lupi                      **[Minister]**

**[Church stewards]**

Debbie Mitchelmore

Wendy Armiger

Jenny Smith

Rachel Bond (stood down November 2023)

Pierre Ricco (stood down November 2023)

Abel Bunu (appointed May 2024)

Maria Simon

**[Treasurer]**

Jenny Frith

**[Pastoral committee secretary]**

Bridget Gavanga

**[Council secretary]**

**[Council members elected by the AGM]**

Sharon Andrew

Bridget Calvert

Barrie Wells

Jenny Smith

Pearl Mathieson

Stephen Parkinson

Linda Berry

**[representatives from areas of church life]**

Ian Ellis

**[Property team]**

Carole Pratt

**[S Club]**

Stephen Turner

**[Musical Director]**

Debbie Mitchelmore

**[Safeguarding Officer]**

Ivor Mitchelmore

**[Local Preacher]**

Wendy Armiger

**[Worship Leader]**

Terry Sissons

**[Circuit Steward]**

## Structure

The Square is part of the South Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit. The decision-making body is the Church Council, but all members are involved in the running of the church and setting its strategy at the General Church Meeting.

## Aims and Mission

Our church mission statement:

*We are a town centre church aiming to radiate God's love, as revealed in Jesus Christ, for the local community and the wider world.*

*We seek to help people in their search for God through our worship, prayer and action.*

## Review of the year (September 2023 – August 2024)

### **Sunday worship services**

Traditional services take place on all Sundays except the first Sunday of the month when we hold a Café style worship, Café Church. Café church also takes place on the third Sunday of the month giving the congregation a choice of either attending the traditional service or the Café Church. Café Church is an opportunity for outreach into the community and is well attended by church members and people from our local area. The atmosphere is very warm and welcoming, and this time of worship is very popular. For most services we have approximately 60 people attending. As of 31st October 2023, our community roll stood at 212 of which 98 are Church members. During the year these numbers continue to fluctuate.

### **Other forms of mission or 'church' (e.g. church-led community groups, etc.)**

A number of different groups/clubs run by members of the church family operate within the church:

- **Pastoral care** – A team of Pastoral Visitors and Group Leaders has now been established who offer pastoral care alongside our minister, Reverend Claudia Lupi. Pastoral Visitors and Group Leaders have a list of church members whom they contact regularly. The Pastoral Team meet quarterly to discuss the Pastoral situation of the Church. A new Pastoral Secretary was appointed in March 2024.
- **Baptisms, Membership and Bible classes**  
Baptism and Membership classes were held early in 2024 and following this five people were welcomed as Members of the church including one asylum seeker. Four lady asylum seekers have been baptized during the year September 2023 to August 2024.  
Bible classes have also taken place for the Asylum Seekers we support.
- **'House groups'** – We have three house groups who meet in members' homes. Two groups, which are small in number, meet monthly to share bible studies, prayers and fellowship. The third group meet on a weekly basis where they start by sharing their week, then follow on with a programmed activity and finish off with prayer time and a cup of tea/coffee. This group has been inspired by Indian craft work and enjoyed outings to exhibitions at St Albans Cathedral and held social buffets.

- **Meeting Point** is a Bible study and fellowship group that meets fortnightly on a Tuesday morning at the church. Our minister, Reverend Claudia Lupi, leads the session once a month with a variety of topics. In other sessions, the group has used some reflections by Sheridan Voysey, based on the Sermon on the Mount.
- The **Gather Round** group is another group who meet at the church once a month to enjoy fellowship and support each other. Activities have included discussions on television programmes, playing board games, sharing hobbies, interesting occasions and experiences.
- **Prayer Meeting** – This takes place on the first Monday of each month where a small group meet to share private and shared prayer for the church, our local community, and the wider world.
- **‘Ladies Thursday Club’** meet twice a month and enjoy refreshments, develop friendships, and have a varied programme of visiting speakers, crafts, game afternoons and quizzes. The group has 30 members made up of ladies from our church, the community, and ladies from other denominations.
- **Armchair exercise group** meets weekly and is open to anyone who wants to come along for some armchair exercise and provides an opportunity to meet, find company and friendship and share any problems they may be having.
- **The Living Room** (Warm Space) is open every Friday from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm, and offers a variety of refreshments, including soup, filled rolls, bread, cakes, biscuits, and drinks. Additionally, it features a nail bar, jigsaws, games, and craft resources. A diverse range of guests have visited, including refugees, rough sleepers, adults with learning disabilities, as well as members of our church and local community who come in to meet friends or have a chat.
- **The drama group** is a multi-generational group of people living in and around Dunstable. In November 2023 they performed Golden Days, a huge musical production performed in the church when they were very fortunate to be joined by special guest, Claire Moore, a renowned West End singer and actress.
- **Gardening Team** – Following on from our Garden Project, where both the gardens on the north and south sides of the church have been developed, a small team meet on a Wednesday afternoon to care for the gardens. Members of the community often stop to comment on how nice the gardens are looking. As we are in the town’s Heritage Action Zone, Dunstable Town Council have continued to provide on-going maintenance advice for our garden spaces. Our gardens were again part of the town’s entry to both Anglia in Bloom and Britain in Bloom. We once again received a Level 4 – Thriving Neighbourhood Award from The Royal Horticultural Society.
- **Asylum Seekers** – A small group of church members provide English lessons on a weekly basis to asylum seekers staying at one of our local hotels. The asylum seekers have come from far and wide. Our service has also extended to providing clothing and hospitality, as well as setting up a home once asylum has been granted. As a church, we have welcomed four ladies who were baptized following the baptism classes. Other asylum seekers have come to our warm space, ‘The Living Room’. This has helped some to integrate with our local church family and the wider community. The Reverend Claudia Lupi graciously opens her home to welcome asylum seekers, offering them individualised pastoral care with deep compassion and commitment. In addition to spiritual support, she actively assists

with their practical and personal needs, making calls to schools, corresponding with local councils when needed and serving as a mediator in their initial contact with legal professionals.

- **Square Singers** – an informal group of singers formed to take part in the Festival of Carols in December 2023. The group became established in 2024 and took part in various services and a local outdoor community event in August 2024.

### ***Activities aimed at young people***

- **'S Club'** meets on Sunday mornings when we cater for children and young people to learn and share about Jesus' love. We have two groups: under 11's and 11-18 year olds, and our sessions are based on a Bible reading. We have a good number of young people attending the older group. The two groups come together for Big Breakfast every two or three months when they enjoy food and activities together, which have included making an Easter Garden, a scavenger hunt, a Pearl race using marbles, and writing a Peace prayer.
- **3-Generate** - Eight young people, accompanied by three leaders, included the minister, attended 3-Generate, a National Youth event, at the NEC in Birmingham, in October, where there is time for interactive Bible studies and worship as well as a full programme including crafts, reflective opportunities, use of technology, sporting and physical activities.
- **'Youth Club'** meets once a month on a Friday evening with a team of leaders which includes the minister, the Reverend Claudia Lupi, and features food, fun, and fellowship. The programme consists of spiritual input and reflection, as well as a pasta meal, pancakes, Indian snacks and games such as giant Jenga, an art session, and parachute games.
- **Uniformed groups** include Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Squirrels, Guides, Brownies and Rainbows. Scouts camped at Chalfont St Peters and completed a high ropes course. The Cubs went to Tolmers Scout Activity Centre and enjoyed activities, including archery and pedal carts. The Beavers went skiing, trampolining and attended a local Beaver Fun Day. The Brownies visited the Fire Station, went to the cinema, and went on a Pack Holiday. Brownies assisted with the decorations at the church's Harvest Festival and Remembrance Service, and held a coffee morning, raising £365 for the Mayor's charities.

### ***Outreach events***

We again held our Festival of Carols to coincide with the Town Council's Christmas Twilight markets. As part of this event, we had refreshments available, craft activities for children, and a craft stall that drew in many visitors. Carols were sung and played throughout the event, featuring singers from the church.

Our newly formed Singing group performed at the Town Council's Ashton Square Day in August 2024.

### ***Resources***

We have a large church building with a number of halls to the rear, which are available to hire to the local community. The halls are used regularly by our own church groups, but we also have regular bookings with Slimming World, Local History Society and U3A groups, plus numerous short-term lets from both individuals for parties and organisations for events. We are located in the centre of town with a large town centre car park adjacent to the building. The church itself is able to accommodate a large

number of people and hosts concerts by Vauxhall Male Voice Choir, Shambles Band, drama productions (Golden Days), amongst others.

Lettings income is a vital and necessary part of being able to run and maintain the buildings. In August 2023 we appointed an Administrator to manage existing lettings and seek to promote further lettings.

During the year 2023-2024 our church fundraising project was for repairs required to the west wall of the church. Just over £4,000 was raised and has now all been spent on the necessary repairs.

### ***Looking forward***

The Property Team continue to care for our extensive and aging Grade II listed building which presents many challenges for us. The team identified issues within our Tower which will need to be addressed in the near future. As such we have started to investigate sources of grant funding to assist with these repairs.

We continue to be challenged by the fact that we have an aging congregation with limited capacities and abilities to carry out the weekly housekeeping tasks of the church. To try to address this we promoted an initiative to encourage more members of the church to contribute to these varied needs, with some success. We continue to be encouraged as we welcome newcomers to the church.

We have consulted with the church to review our practices around the worship life of the church and many suggestions have been taken on board and implemented. This is an on-going process.

## THE METHODIST CHURCH STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS

**THE SQUARE METHODIST CHURCH DUNSTABLE**

**Church**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED**

**31 August 2024**

<b>SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE</b>	<b>Circuit</b>	<b>Circuit no.</b>	<b>34/04</b>
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**Registered Charity - Charity Registration number**

1126936

If not a registered charity **His Majesty's Revenue and  
Customs Gift Aid number**

(The HMRC number is equivalent to a registered charity number in terms of evidence of charitable status and may be used to give to donors or grant funders wishing to see evidence of the organisation's charitable status. Methodist charities in England and Wales that are not registered charities are excepted from registration under Statutory Instrument 2014 No.242)

Minister:

REV. CLAUDIA LUPI

Church Stewards:

Abel Bunu

Debbie Mitchelmore

Wendy Armiger

Jenny Smith

Rachel Bond (2nd Steward)

Pierre Ricco (2nd Steward)

Treasurer:

DR MARIA SIMON

SECTION A			Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
			£	£	£	£
a1	RECEIPTS	Note				
a2	Offerings and Tax recovered		61,302		61,302	63,051
a3	Bank and CFB interest and Investment income		1,489		1,489	949
a4	Lettings		15,394		15,394	18,862
a5	Other receipts		12,362	2,538	14,900	14,235
a6	TOTAL RECEIPTS		90,547	2,538	93,085 (a7)	97,097
SECTION B						
b1	PAYMENTS					
b2	Circuit Assessment or Share		58,937		58,937	57,550
b3	Donations		25		25	324
b4	Repairs and Maintenance		10,734	7,738	18,472	6,472
b5	Utilities (Insurances, water charges, heating & lighting)		20,236		20,236	18,185
b6	Property employment costs					
b7	Other payments		9,539	2,285	11,824	8,457
b8	TOTAL PAYMENTS		99,471	10,023	109,494 (b9)	90,988
SECTION C						
c1	NET RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR	(a6-b8)	(8,924)	(7,485)	(16,409)	6,109
c2	Total funds brought forward from last year		58,346	9,674	68,020 (c6)	62,219
c3	Sub total	(c1+c2)	49,422	2,189	51,611	68,328
c4	Transfers and adjustments		(918)		(918) (c7)	(308)
c5	TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR	(c3+c4)	48,504	2,189	50,693 (c8)	68,020 (c6)
SECTION D						
FOR INFORMATION ONLY: MONEY RECEIVED AND PASSED ON TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS						
d	(these amounts are not to be included in total receipts/payments figures above)				£	£
d1	Balance brought forward from last year				10	318
d2	Offerings/Gifts - received for external organisations				1,897	833
d3	Offerings/Gifts - passed to external organisations				1,868	1,141
d4	BALANCE STILL TO BE PAID	(d1+d2-d3)			39	10

**SUMMARY OF CHURCH ACCOUNTS AND INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS REPORTING TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL**

**SECTION E** Please follow the Guidance Notes to complete this page

Summary of the Church accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024 and Internal Organisations reporting to the Church Council/Church Meeting. Note that the funds of an Internal Organisation would normally be Restricted funds unless it could be clearly shown that they could be used for any Methodist purpose. This section must be completed to arrive at the gross income and expenditure totals of the Church. If gross income exceeds the Accruals threshold, then the Accruals method of accounting AND A DIFFERENT FORM must be used to report the accounts (see Methodist website). Please refer to the guidance notes regarding transfers between the District and connected District Organisations.

	INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS	Receipts	Payments	Net Receipts/ Payments	Adjustments	Opening balances	Closing balances
e1	SQUARE DRAMA CIRCLE	2,906	3,682	(776)		6,027	5,251
e2	LADIES THURSDAY GROUP	1,242	920	322		716	1,038
e3	S CLUB	552	402	150	933	296	1,379
e4	SQUARE FC					113	113
e5							
e6							
e7							
e8	Sub total of Internal Organisations funds	4,700	5,004	(304)	933	7,152 (e11)	7,781 (e12)
e9	Church accounts (totals brought forward from page 2 - totals column)	93,085 (a7)	109,494 (b9)	(16,409)	(918) (c7)	68,020 (c6)	50,693 (c8)
e10	TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CHURCH	97,785	114,498	(16,713)	15	75,172 (x)	58,474 (y)
	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary and bring the totals forward	TOTAL RECEIPTS	TOTAL PAYMENTS				

**SECTION F**

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**

**CHURCH - CASH FUNDS HELD at 31 August 2024**

		OPENING BALANCES	CLOSING BALANCES
f1	Cash in hand		
f2	Bank Current Account	40,223	24,613
f3	Bank Deposit Account		
f4	Central Finance Board	27,797	26,080
f5	Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes		
f6	Other funds		
f7	SUB TOTAL - Church accounts	68,020 (c6)	50,693 (c8)
f8	Total funds held by Internal Organisations (the closing balance total from above) (e12)	7,152 (e11)	7,781 (e12)
f9	TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CHURCH	75,172 (x)	58,474 (y)

**SECTION G**

**OTHER ASSETS and LIABILITIES**

		At 1 September 2023	At 31 August 2024
g1	Investments (include Endowments)		
g2	Land & Buildings (see notes re Insurance value)	9,897,035	10,193,940
g3	Other Assets	197,941	203,879
g4	Loan(s) - show amount outstanding at year end		
g5	Other Liabilities		

f4 Include only Funds held at the Central Finance Board

f5 Include only Funds held at Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

g1 Include any other investments (not the cash element of TMCP trusts accounts this is included in line f5)



Name of Church .....The Methodist Church, The Square

No...1126936

## Declarations and Scrutiny

I confirm that these Receipt and Payment based accounts for the year to 31 August 2024 have been prepared from the records of the Church and that they include all funds under the control of the Church trustees.

Signature of treasurer ..... *M. Simon*

Date.....01.10.24.....

Name and address of treasurer .....Dr Maria Simon

...34 Claridge Close, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire

Post Code...LU7 4TW

### Presentation to the Church trustees

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024 were/will be\* presented to the meeting of the Church trustees held on .....

Signature of the Chair of the meeting ..... *Claudia Lupi*

Name of the Chair of the meeting .....Rev. Claudia Lupi..... Date ...11.11.24.....

## Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

### The Square Methodist Church

Charity Number .....1126936.....

### Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Square Methodist Church for the year ended 31 August 2024 set out on pages 2 to 3 As the Church's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Church's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and, in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

\* delete or circle as appropriate

Name of Church                      The Square Methodist Church... No .1126936..

### Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below\*) which give me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

I have/have not\* obtained independent verification of all investments with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes or held in other trusts, bank balances and funds at the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church which are individually in excess of £10,000 (ten thousand pounds) at the balance sheet date.

Signature of independent examiner                      *CJ Sheehan*

Name of independent examiner    C J Sheehan

Relevant professional qualification of independent examiner Chartered Accountant

Name of firm (where appropriate) .....

Address    88 Goswell End Road, Harlington, Beds

Post Code   LU5 6NX

Date 10/11/2024

\* delete or circle as appropriate