

Staplehurst Free Church
Reports and Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 October 2024

Company number: 06725987
Charity number: 1127205

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Trustees

T Hawgood
R Howse
R Laming
Mrs K Minett
G. Smith

Address of the principal office of the charity

Staplehurst Free Church
Station Road
Staplehurst
Kent
TN12 0QQ

Independent Examiner

Mr L.C. Seal FCCA FAIA
Blain Pritchard
74 College Road
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 6SL

Treasurer

Mrs Carol Skov

Bankers

National Westminster Bank plc
Maidstone Branch
3 High Street
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XU

TRUSTEES REPORT

The trustees are pleased to present their report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 October 2024. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (SORP) effective from January 2015.

CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

Our Memorandum and Articles of Association state the following objective:

To advance the Christian Faith in accordance with the Statement of Beliefs and in Staplehurst, Kent and in such other parts of the United Kingdom or the World as the Trustees may from time to time think fit and to fulfil such other purposes which are exclusively charitable according to the law of England and Wales and are connected to the charitable work of the Charity.

Relieving sickness, hardship and promoting and preserving good health by the provision of funds, goods and services of any kind, including the provision of counselling and support in Staplehurst, Kent and other such parts of the United Kingdom or the World as the Trustees from time to time may think fit.

SUMMARY OF THE CHARITY'S MAIN ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

To further the above objects and vision, the charity's main activities and achievements were as follows:

In 2024 we celebrated 55 years as a community church for Staplehurst.

Our social, health and wellbeing activities have continued to expand alongside our usual faith-based services and meetings. The building continues to be in use every day of the week, with multiple sessions each day, as follows: -

- Mondays – Debt Advice Centre, Men's Walking Group, SFC Choir• Tuesdays – Friends Together, Warm Hub, Community Fridge, Home Groups (off site)• Wednesdays –Prayer Meeting, Community Fridge, Home Groups (on site), AA Meeting• Thursdays – FreeBees, Community Fridge, Mixed Badminton• Fridays – Pastoral Care Meeting, Interest Group, Ladies Badminton, Youth24, Worship Group Rehearsals• Saturdays – Community Fridge, Family Fun, and ad hoc Social Events• Sundays – Church Services, Sharing Lunches and Social Events (occasional)

Key developments in the year have been as follows: In person attendance at Church services continued to increase with 110 regular attendees and several new families attending. Online broadcasting has also been maintained with over 2000 views in the year. We also celebrated 8 baptisms in the year. The Community Fridge has seen almost 6,000 visits in 2024 a 26% increase driven by the continued cost-of-living crisis. This initiative is part of the Shepherd's Pantry portfolio a food-insecurity community support programme which started during the Covid pandemic to reclaim food from retailers and suppliers that would otherwise go to waste or is surplus to their requirements. This is then made available to the public, particularly those in financial hardship at no cost. The Fridge is open at varying times over 4 days a week with over 20 volunteers in the team collecting food, undertaking stock control and welcoming and informally supporting visitors. Other building users are invited to make use of the Community Fridge on other days.

Our busiest month of the year was August which we believe is related to the school holidays. The Winter Welcome Space became the Warm Welcome Hub opening up our premises to local people and to provided warmth, company and refreshments. During the coldest months free hot soup and rolls were also provided. Up to 40 people are served each week. The FreeBees support sessions

for new parents continue to be popular. Two age-appropriate groups operate on Thursday mornings and afternoons with a waiting list in place for the morning session. Places are freed up as parents return to work or children start attending nursery, so over time we are able to provide support to many families who benefit from the help and encouragement given by the sessions hosts and other parents with shared experiences. At any onetime we have had up to 66 children registered with us. In the autumn we concluded our training programme the 'Emmaus Project' helping us plan and deliver a coordinated programme of community engagement events. In the last year we have held a free barn dance, a free quiz night, a Santas Grotto, a summer music event and an Anniversary celebration. Further events are planned for the coming year. Also, in the Autumn we launched Youth24, an interactive fun evening for young people of secondary school age. Sessions run on the second and fourth Fridays during term time. Following his successful first year with us our Church Leader, Peter Brook has increased his hours and will now work four days per week in the coming year. In late June we had solar panels and back up batteries fitted thanks to a generous grant from Maidstone Borough Council. This has helped reduce our electricity bills and reduced our carbon emissions and expect the system to start generating passive income in the summer months

In planning the activities, the trustees have applied the guidance on public benefit issued by the Charity Commission.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The charity is a company limited by guarantee, with a Memorandum and Articles of Association as its governing document. It was incorporated on 16th October 2008. Previously Staplehurst Free Church, which began in the home of one of the founder members in 1969, was an unincorporated charity governed by a Trust Deed.

The Constitution of Staplehurst Free Church sets out the rules on how the organisation will operate on a day-to-day basis. This document sets out the purpose, statement of faith, vision, mission and goals. It also contains provisions regarding membership, the governance of the church through the leadership team and their appointment and responsibilities, the option to appoint a remunerated pastor, the conduct of church meetings and reference to the role of trustees. In the event of a conflict between the constitution and the Memorandum and Articles of Association, then the Memorandum and Articles of Association have preference.

The Leadership Team take principal responsibility for the day to day running of the church and overseeing its numerous volunteer led activities. Succession planning for the Leadership Team had been a priority for the previous year. Several of those previously acting had been doing so for many years and wished to transition out of leadership but in a managed way that did not leave the church leader-less. Since significant difficulties were previously experienced after recruiting someone completely unknown to the Church, a strategy was adopted to openly approach a cohort of people who have some previous knowledge or involvement in Church life. Since our financial situation would likely only enable any new church leader to be appointed on a part-time basis, this approach also provided scope for those with different skills and other sources of income to express interest; there would be flexibility to scope a role rather than it be prescribed and potentially exclude good candidates. Various expressions of interest were received and after a selection and consultation process, Peter Brook, a long-standing Christian who had joined the Church within the last two years, was nominated to the membership to be the new remunerated church leader and he commenced this role on the 1st December 2023. Previous members of the Leadership Team, Clive Jones and Bob Howse, stood down from leadership at the same time. The Leadership team therefore continues to be made up of members with significant historic involvement in and experience of Christian and Church life and comprises:

- Peter Brook (Church leader)• Terence Hawgood (Senior Elder)• Mary Howse (Assistant Leader)• Kate Henry (Assistant Leader)

Additionally, the members of the Charity may by ordinary resolution appoint a person who is willing

to act as a Trustee either to fill a vacancy or as an additional Trustee at a General Meeting in accordance with the Articles of Association. Trustees are also reappointed, if desired, on a rotational basis in the order in which they were appointed as also defined in the Articles. As at the date of this report the following are the charity's trustees and directors for the purposes of the Companies Act: -

• Bob Howse• Terence Hawgood• Roy Laming• Graham Smith• Kathryn Minett

The Leadership Team and the Trustees ensure the various policies of the church are reviewed annually to ensure it uses best practice across all activities. Policies in place include but are not limited to the Equal Opportunities Policy and Ethos Statement, Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults, Pastoral Care Policy, Acceptable Behaviour Policy, Mission Funding Policy, Health & Safety Policy including the Food Hygiene Policy, Premises Security Policy and the Fire Safety Policy. A new a Members and Volunteers Handbook was also completed this year.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Our financial position remains robust. Around 60% of income comes from the regular monthly giving, mostly by standing order, from our generous members and regular attendees. The remaining income is made up from other grants, one-off donations towards the work of the church, donations for participation in church activity group sessions, the gift aid rebate and other ad-hoc income. We also had a one-time grant from Maidstone Borough Council of £45,000 for a solar panel system which will contribute greatly to our financial sustainability in the long term.

Our expenditure for the year was in line with expectations and the bank balance remains healthy with sufficient reserves to meet short term needs if income significantly dropped. We anticipate being able to increase the pastor's working hours to four days per week in the coming year.

One of the cornerstone activities of the Church is providing financial support for a variety of third-party charitable organisations and we are pleased to be able to report we have sustained this activity through the continuous generous donations of our members and regular attendees.

FUNDS IN DEFICIT

None

INVESTMENTS POLICY

None

RESERVES POLICY

Of the cash in hand at the bank at year end, £15,000 of this is ringfenced as reserves which covers 3 months of fixed expenditure which the trustees consider to be adequate.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES UNDER CHARITY LAW

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity at the year end and of its income and expenditure during the year. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently; make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent; state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed; subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

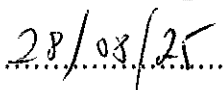
The trustees are required to keep proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signature

This report was approved by the trustees, and is signed on their behalf by:


.....
R Laming

Date.....


.....

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Staplehurst Free Church

I report on the financial statements of Staplehurst Free Church for the year ended 31 October 2024, which are set out on pages 8 to 12.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The trustees (who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(b) of the 2011 Act.

This report, including my statement, has been prepared for and only for the charity's trustees as a body. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body for my examination work, for this report, or for the statements I have made.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the financial statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, which is complete, no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in respect of Staplehurst Free Church in accordance with section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the financial statements give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities [applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)].

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Signed: 

Mr L. C. Seal FCCA FAIA
Blain Pritchard, Chartered Certified Accountants
74 College Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6SL
Date:

Staplehurst Free Church

Statement of financial activities

for the year ended 31 October
2024

	Note	General Fund £	Missionary Fund £	Building Fund £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Income	1.2					
Donations and Legacies		131,407	724	2,810	134,941	162,292
Charitable activities		0	0	0	0	820
Investments		829	0	0	829	430
Other		1,055	0	0	1,055	0
Total income		<u>133,292</u>	<u>724</u>	<u>2,810</u>	<u>136,826</u>	<u>163,543</u>
Expenditure						
Charitable activities		152,156	15,712	0	167,868	105,676
Governance costs	2	2,566	0	0	2,566	3,310
Total expenditure		<u>154,722</u>	<u>15,712</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>170,434</u>	<u>108,986</u>
Net income/(expenditure) before transfers		-21,430	-14,988	2,810	-33,607	54,556
Transfers between funds		-17,921	17,921	0	0	0
Net income/(expenditure) after transfers		-39,350	2,933	2,810	-33,607	54,556
Balance brought forward at 1 November		44,287	211	885,105	929,603	875,047
Balance carried forward at 31 October		<u>4,937</u>	<u>3,144</u>	<u>887,915</u>	<u>895,996</u>	<u>929,603</u>

Staplehurst Free Church

Balance sheet at 31 October 2024

	Note	General Fund £	Missionary Fund £	Building Fund £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Fixed assets						
Building cost		-	-	1,260,400	1,260,400	1,260,400
Depreciation for the year				-25,208	-25,208	-25,208
Accumulated depreciation				-278,027	-278,027	-252,819
Net building value				957,165	957,165	982,373
Current assets						
Cash at bank and in hand		5,018	3,144	23,409	31,570	45,436
Debtors						
Gift Aid recoverable		6,604	-	-	6,604	6,604
Liabilities: amounts falling due within one year						
Accruals		6,685	-	-	6,685	1,217
Holiday pay accruals		0			0	0
Loans	3	-	-	0	0	0
Mortgage	4	-	-	5,467	5,467	5,467
Net current assets/(liabilities)		4,937	3,144	17,942	26,023	45,356
Long-term Liabilities						
Mortgage				87,192	87,192	98,127
Net assets		4,937	3,144	887,915	895,996	929,602
Funds:						
General Fund		4,937			4,937	44,287
Missionary Fund			3,144		3,144	211
Youth Fund						0
Building Fund				887,915	887,915	885,105
House party Fund						0
Total funds		4,937	3,144	887,915	895,996	929,603

The Trustees consider that the charity is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 ("The Act") and members have not required the charity to obtain an audit for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Act. The Trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for ensuring that the charity keeps accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act and for preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity as at 31 October 2024 and of its deficit for the year then ended in accordance with the requirements of section 396 of the Act and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to the financial statements so far as applicable to the charity.

Approved by the Managing Trustees on and signed on their behalf by

.....
Roy Laming

Date

28/08/25

Staplehurst Free Church

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 October 2024

1 Accounting policies

1.1 Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with applicable United Kingdom accounting standards and the Companies Act 2006. In preparing the financial statements the trust follows best practice as laid down in the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities", issued by the Charity Commission effective from January 2015.

1.2 Income

Donations and interest received are accounted for in the year in which the trust is entitled to receive them.

1.3 Expenditure

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and, in accordance with the requirement of the SORP, and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to that category.

In accordance with the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" all expenditure has been classified under standard headings – [the charity has taken advantage of concessions provided by SORP and prepared headings to suit the charity as opposed to by activity categories which would apply to larger charities subjected to an audit].

Depreciation on the building is depreciated on a straight-line basis over 50 years.

1.4 Funds

The general fund is available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes. Details of designated funds are as follows:

- Missionary fund – used for the support of missionaries overseas and in the UK and charities/mission organisations as approved by the Leadership Team.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor. Details of restricted funds are as follows:

- Building fund – specifically for the repayment of the loans taken out to complete the construction of the church building.

2 Donations

During the year the total aggregated donations made by the charity by the trustees was £14,235. There were no conditions attached to the donations (2023: £10,320).

3 Loans

Loans totalling £311,000 have been made by Church members since March 2012. Over the past year £53,333 has been repaid from a donation. The balance of £53,333 has been repaid within 2 years as requested by the lender.

4 Mortgage

A loan of £150,000 was completed on 3 April 2012 from the Childs Charitable Trust at the rate of 5.5% (variable) repayable over 25 years payable by monthly instalments of capital and interest of £876.89 the first payment having been made on 1 June 2012. The loan is secured on the land and building at Station Road, Staplehurst.

5 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries and wages	32,506.99	11,035.55
Social security costs	877.98	139.14
Pension costs	1,834.20	348.48

No employees had employee benefits in excess of £60,000 (2023: £nil). The administrator role continued to be filled on a part time basis throughout the whole year.

The charity trustees were not paid or received any other benefits in the year for undertaking this voluntary role (2023: £nil). Any expenses incurred were reimbursed in the same way as with other church members. No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2023: £nil).

6. Related Party Transactions

There have been no related party transactions in the year (2023: £nil).