

ANNUAL REPORT

Year ending

31 August 2023



THE GROVE METHODIST CHURCH
HORSFORTH, LEEDS
Registered Charity No. 1129305

2022 – 2023 saw the welcome of The Grove's presbyter for the next stage of its work and witness in Horsforth. In the first Quarter of the present year, the District Chair has written to all members of the Leeds South West Circuit, as follows "As you are aware, Rev'd Jo Lightowler has been living with the effects of long covid for many months. She has tried to continue to serve the Circuit to the best of her ability, and because of her deep sense of calling, and wish not to burden her colleagues with additional work, she has sometimes been too generous in her service."

In consequence, the following remarks for the year 2022 – 2023 are the product of comments that Rev'd Jo Lightowler has made to Church Council, in the church weekly bulletin, and elsewhere, reflecting on the past year with The Grove Church.

Dear Friends,

Early in the year, on Church Priorities Review, noted that the church was already intending to hold whole church conversations on future priorities and that these had been held up by illness and change of church leadership. Stressed: the need to consider patterns of ministry and the possibility of having flourishing churches when resources might be spread too thinly; current problems being faced by churches included COVID impact, high energy costs, acute issues within churches and a need for immediate action. On a three point scale (red, amber, green), the current position of the church concerning 'Finance' was judged amber, 'Buildings' - green, 'People Resources' - amber. Noted that any red judgement would have indicated that the Circuit needed to provide immediate support. Key questions that needed further thought included best bits of the church to keep, what is done well, things difficult to retain, what we are called to do, the importance of recognising why the church is here, an emphasis beyond mere survival to include what we are called to do, what we are entrusted with, and what it means to be Methodists here and now. (Council minutes, 11.10.22)

However, significant economic challenge to the U.K. in autumn 2022 fed through to church finances and particularly the unprecedented and excessive increase in energy prices. This, coupled with the impact of COVID placed unforeseen heavy pressure on the church's financial base. Looking closely at church budgets and analysing the picture they provided, the Finance Committee took the lead in seeking to identify ways forward and informing the Trustees, membership and church adherents of what was happening. The Committee created the Church Recovery Plan in three stages: Establishing a sound foundation of priorities; Creating breathing space; Moving forward into longer term recovery. *The Council chaired by Rev'd Lightowler* unanimously accepted the plan. (Details listed in Church Council agenda, 9.05.23)

By early 2023, Rev'd Lightowler concluded: God is calling us towards

flourishing churches within a flourishing Circuit. We journey through this review process as a curious, compassionate community of grace. Knowing the central Christian story of death and resurrection we are willing to live it. (*Church bulletin, 8.01.23*)

And mid-year, I was so touched by the warm welcome you gave me at the General Church Meeting last Sunday, thank you. ... my second 'thank you' is for all the care, support, encouragement and prayer you have shown each other. (*Church bulletin, 30.04.23*)

By the end of the year, the Chair drew the Trustees' attention to the agreed working plan on church finance that is to take The Grove through the coming new year. She pointed out that it is anticipated that the church should not dip below a zero budget next year and should pick up reserves because of the positive impact of actions taken. (*Council minutes 13.07.23*)

Following the period covered by this report, 2022 - 2023, 'For many of us September is a season of new starts - new term, new Connexional year, a return to routine after a summer break. This year (2023) my 'new start' invites me to pick up the threads which Covid caused me to drop all too suddenly in January (2023), and to work with them again. ... As a Circuit, and as local churches, we know that this is a year (2023 - 2024) in which we are facing significant change.' (*Church letter, 3.09.23*)

With best wishes
p.p. Rev'd Jo Lightowler
Circuit Superintendent & Grove Presbyterian

AIMS AND ORGANISATION

The aims of the church are set out in its **Mission Statement** as follows:

The Grove Methodist Church is called to respond to the Gospel of love in Jesus Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship, service and mission.

In seeking to live out our mission statement we are **committed to:**

Worship - which takes into account the needs of the whole church family, preserving all that is good from the past while being open to the new.

Fellowship - which seeks to make all welcome, builds up our faith and enables us to care for one another.

Spirituality - believing that Bible Study, Prayer, Worship, Giving and Service are vital, we seek to order our lives on the pattern of Jesus.

Serving God in the World – by seeking to live out our faith where we work and live, witnessing by word and deed in the local community, fostering interest in world affairs, engaging in world-wide mission and seeking to enhance the lives of those in our neighbourhood.

Working together - committed to the whole Church of God and seeking greater awareness of, and co-operation with, other faiths and denominations within our community.

Evangelism - sharing our faith in Jesus Christ with others and bringing them into fellowship.

Secure Foundations - ensuring that we have a sound working base, since our commitment to worship, fellowship, spirituality and service requires us to provide premises that are structurally sound, well maintained and underpinned by effective finance.

The church seeks to carry out its stated aims and objectives through:

- Sunday services and other acts of worship.

- Various meetings for prayer, fellowship, Bible study and outreach.
- Membership of 'Leeds (South & West) Circuit (16/01)'
- Membership of Horsforth Churches Together and support of its activities.
- The Church Council and its appointed Committees, which act under its direction.

Review of progress and achievements

At the opening of the new Connexional year, in September 2022, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs gave its analysis of the world situation, 'A bleak outlook for the global economy: slowing growth, high and persistent inflation, and elevated uncertainties cloud global outlook.' At the time, the post-COVID world presented enormous challenges. On the international scene war had broken out in Europe, Russia was making nuclear threats, global warming had fuelled extreme climate disasters, inflation rose to reflect higher energy and commodity prices and the use of food banks, skipping meals and worries about food-affordability were higher than they had been in the previous year. Those challenges affected all tiers of society and church. Effects on The Grove were no exception.

Throughout a difficult year, The Grove's mission has never wavered. It has responded effectively '**to the Gospel of love in Jesus Christ and to live out its discipleship**' (page 3). Despite the very real problems that have had to be faced, in so many ways, over 2022 – 2023, the church has shown its commitment once again to making a difference to the world in which it lives. This report for the church year ending 31st August 2023 highlights how the people of The Grove have taken on board their mission statement and how they have sought to impact beneficially upon neighbours, both near and far.

The following pages show a full range of actions that have been taken to spread love and care where it has been needed, whilst at the same time making sense of the threats to the church's previously sound working foundation (pages 14-18). Endeavours to repair, even on a small scale, the destructive acts to the environment that have been all too frequent in news bulletins (page 14, point 4a, page 19 point 3), have shared the love of Christ. Even the smallest pieces of recycled waste (page 11, point 7), every light bulb changed to energy efficient equivalents (page 18, point

6) and the collection of useful items for redistribution (page 20, point 4), has been a part of that sharing. The church's resolve to highlight fairly traded goods, is a sharing (page 22, point 1). Every donation made to any number of charities by individuals, groups and the church as a whole, is a sharing (page 10 points 5 - 6, page 14, point 4), page 18 point 8 and page 19 point 1). Provision of services and facilities for local use, whether for worship (page 6, point 6), fellowship (page 8 point 3, page 9 points 4 & 5), enjoyment (page 11 point 6) or nourishment (page 11 point 1) are actions taken to share the growth of that love in a needy world.

The church's journey is by no means completed. Challenges remain (page 14 Secure Foundations), service is still necessary to meet easily identifiable demands, and yet, this 2022 – 2023 Annual Report charts another eventful period in which The Grove has ventured to retain its commitment in response 'to the Gospel of love in Jesus Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship, service and mission'.

Peter Mawson
Church Council Secretary

Worship (Grove objectives: Worship, Spirituality)

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

This is underpinned by God-centred worship, prayer and spirituality that has continued to be at the forefront of how The Grove has responded to the post-pandemic situation. Having come through the instability caused by COVID, a gradual return to services in a 'new reality' has retained the important intention of supporting people wherever they find themselves: seeking participation in communal worship, providing opportunities to develop spirituality, keeping the choice to be involved though not present within the building. Despite lower attendance numbers in church compared with pre-COVID levels, this year numbers participating in worship within the church building have been sustained at an average of 60 whilst additional zoom worshippers were around 8 – 10.

To achieve these ends the church has:

- Encouraged people to find ways for regular weekly worship, prayer, reflection and study that are in line with requirements of individual health conditions. Over the year The Grove has been mindful about gathered worship and COVID that has eventually led towards the careful restoration of shared participation. This has been complemented by the use of alternative worship opportunities when needed. Video calling has been continued for those able to participate in this way of communication. The church has carried on with access to the download app, Zoom, to engender a sense of virtual meeting through entry to weekly Zoom services.
- Although face-to-face services have been part of yearly practice, numbers of children attending were much reduced and so the church provided worship/fellowship opportunities during morning service for families and children who attended and is successfully developing a monthly Sunday afternoon messy church. This provided children of primary school age and their families opportunities for craft, bible stories, games and tea.
- Supported video access to weekly worship, through the opportunity to make use of weekly Sunday services provided by '12 Baskets', the Vine at Home Worship Cloud video.
- In addition, offered adults, by email and post, Circuit written services, Minister's letters, extracts from the Circuit Prayer Diary and details of the Circuit night prayers on zoom. Feedback indicates that the weekly documentation was much appreciated and allowed readers to reflect at length on the service content.
- Valued the choir commitment to regular input into church worship. Weekly practices are maintained, and enable the choir to lead congregational singing in worship and provided introits and anthems to enhance services.
- Maintained the structural rhythm of annual worship. At key times the church brought together individual and communal devotion around shared special service opportunities. In November bright, scarlet poppies marked the church door to celebrate the annual Remembrance Sunday Service that took the theme of 'Sacred Remembrance and Right Living'. At Christmas, a Carol Service with new format took place during December morning worship. To open the 2022-2023 new Connexional year worship in church followed the Methodist Covenant Liturgy. In January a service focussed upon work with refugees and was led by a local worker from the Parkways

Hotel experience that provides accommodation for refugees.

- Another regular service was on Good Friday attended by over 300 worshippers; carrying the cross between the churches of Horsforth, the church's use as a place for private prayer and a short outdoor service followed by The Grove hosting seasonal refreshments. £203.00 was donated to Mission Aviation Fellowship. This proved invaluable as did Easter Day celebrations. During Advent and Lent when a short devotional service marked its opening, the use of special seasonal liturgies involving the lighting of wreath candles and the dressing of the cross greatly helped to focus attention on the significance of the time of year. In May the Church Anniversary Service celebrated over 220 years of continuous witness and worship in Horsforth.
- Included opportunities within the regular pattern of worship to join in the evening circuit zoom service that at times attracted around 70 devices. Combined church worship included Christmas Eve service at Central and Christmas morning service at The Grove, face-to-face and on zoom.
- Sought ways of providing a 'communion' service in church that was adapted to COVID requirements and considered the suitability of the experience for those accessing worship on zoom. Those presiding at Communion have given thought to the inclusion of references to 'Spiritual Communion' whilst the distribution of elements have taken place within the church building. To complement these services, every Quarter there is the opportunity to participate in a small early morning reflective communion that is valued by those able to attend.
- Encouraged the use of resources for reflection: the 2022 leaflet 'Grove Methodist Church: Praying for each other' remained in use with the aim of providing a daily prayer focus; opportunities have been given for private reflection and study throughout the year; individual use of prayer materials continued, particularly the Methodist Prayer Handbook and the Leeds Lent Prayer Diary; individual use of daily Bible notes obtained from the International Bible Reading Association; and the sale of spiritual magazines such as Magnet, the Christian publication nurturing faith in thoughtful, challenging ways.
- Provided a range of prayer initiatives: These have included use of the Methodist Prayer Handbook and participation in circuit prayer

activities, particularly Circuit Night Prayers and the monthly prayer meeting. The weekly bulletin has also carried items of local, national and international events suitable for private prayer and reflection. As part of the Week for Prayer for Christian Unity the church organised Prayer Stations with local and world wide themes, a drop-in event that attracted a range of visitors from the neighbourhood and other churches.

- Despite COVID restrictions, throughout the year the church has provided a point of spiritual contact for those in the neighbourhood who have identified their own personal or family needs. In this connection there have been conducted 1 wedding and 10 funerals.
- Continued to gradually increase access to the building within the restrictions of Covid-19 rulings for personal and communal use.

Learning and Caring (Grove objectives: Fellowship, Spirituality)

The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care. Actions this year include:

- The bond of fellowship and caring is encouraged by organising members into pastoral groups, each led by a Church Visitor. Their watchful oversight of individual welfare is also extended to regular adherents.
- Learning from lockdown, The Grove recognised that keeping in touch would be essential but could be difficult. Consequently, pastoral visitors continued to be the starting point for contact procedures that have involved all those with church links. To meet considerable pastoral needs amongst all members and adherents use has been made of telephone, social media, letters and cards. In addition, groups such as Tuesday Bible Fellowship, Ladies Group and Uniformed Organisations created systems for weekly links to members.
- In September, Messy Church restarted after the holiday break. The monthly meeting of junior aged children proved popular and enabled those attending to enjoy craft and other activities planned around suitable biblical themes. As numbers attending Sunday morning Junior Church have been much reduced, Messy Church has proved to be an effective replacement for keeping in touch with families.

- Opportunities for group study and reflection were held at appropriate times in the year. During Lent the focus was on 'The Kingdom of God is justice and peace' published by Embrace (The Middle East).
- Meditations at particular points in the church year were stimulated by physical prompts, for example, the distribution of palm crosses in Holy Week and provision of prayer stations on local and worldwide topics during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.
- In order to secure a safe environment for all premises users the Trustees have continued to take a keen interest in safeguarding matters, receiving feedback on the Annual Risk Assessment and Check List and reviewing the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy. Updated training has been accessed by appropriate office holders. In addition trustees accepted and agreed to Access and Environmental audits.
- As one of the strongest bonds of fellowship had been the Flower Guild, and following last year's decision by members that the time was right to disband, in their place the members have provided an advisory service to church adherents who have faithfully borne the work of providing flowers for Sunday worship and then distributing bunches to those in need within the wider neighbourhood.
- Having showed great care for each other, Grove Ladies Group successfully maintained face-to-face meetings on a twice monthly basis.
- With much appreciation, Thursday and Saturday Walking Groups have met throughout the year for local walks and, on occasions, lunch breaks.
- Across the year the weekly bulletin has been the church's means of continuing with written contact by providing service arrangements, event details and short prompts for further reflection. This has been made available both on line and in print.
- Mindful of individual rights, the Church Data Protection Officer kept the Trustees fully informed about General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and so agreed GDPR Statement, Policy and Privacy Notice are displayed on noticeboards throughout the premises. Reminders have been given about data cleansing to ensure that personal information has not been retained in church groups longer than was usefully needed. The church's 'Acceptable Wi-Fi Use Policy' was added to church practice and information provided on noticeboard displays.

- In order to foster close links to church members and adherents, with individual agreement, the Data Base Secretary has maintained and updated contact details on a regular basis.
- The Trustees have continued to take a keen interest in safeguarding matters, receiving feedback on the Annual Risk Assessment and Check List and reviewing the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy. Updated training has been accessed by appropriate office holders. Trustees have accepted a Safer Recruitment Policy that has been followed for recent officer appointments.
- The church has continually maintained a web site with useful information for anyone seeking further details of Grove worship and activities. Having been overhauled to ensure its accessibility, the site has received favourable feed back from users.

Service : (Grove objective: Serving God in the World)

The church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice. Moving on from last year's COVID restrictions that limited social outreach, the church worked consistently throughout the year to widen its links with the community:

- A number of church outreach organisations re-established regular meeting patterns to re-connect with members, review available resources and possibilities, and plan annual calenders. This included Women's Fellowship, Monday Luncheon Club and Grove Ladies Group. Subsequently, meetings were held as a result of recognised need and the faithful commitment of past members.
- Individual church adherents continued to raise awareness of particular good causes including Mission Aviation Fellowship.
- At Christmas printed seasonal greetings replaced the giving of Christmas cards for those who made individual donations to 39 favourite charities in lieu of the expense of sending cards.
- During Christian Aid Week, 14-20 May 2023, house-to-house collections were replaced by encouraging the congregation to put envelopes through doors, not to collect but to encourage recipients to return the donations themselves. £577,00 was raised by the church towards this appeal.

- Support continued for the Community Foodbank through the giving of toiletries and other shortage items, as well as gifts of money in lieu of food donations. As well as using the church collection point, attention was drawn to opportunities provided by the nearby Morrisons store for receipt of gifts. Prior to lockdown foodbanks showed a 30% increase in requests and two new centres were opened.
- Without the provision of an Easter Offering Service from which donations are used to support many overseas church partnerships and projects, on behalf of Methodist Women in Britain, Grove Church stewards requested individual gifts to be sent direct to the church treasurer and collected £291.97.
- As with many organisations post-COVID, Scouting at The Grove has gradually returned to a regular meeting programme. It is now composed of seven sections involving 79 young people. Amongst its annual activities was the packing of purchases by shoppers at nearby Morrison's store in aid of Martin House Hospice.
- The Grove Guiding units all returned to indoor face-to-face meetings last year with some groups building up their capacity numbers. In March Guiding arranged for a memorial bench to be placed in Horsforth Hall Park, a central meeting place for the community, in memory of colleagues and church members of The Grove and sister church, Central.
- Traditionally, Tots and Tykes has been one of the church's largest outreaches to young families in Horsforth and beyond. This year it opened its service to the neighbourhood attracting back many previous as well as new users.
- Throughout the year the church has run a monthly Grove Cinema showing popular and appropriate movies that have attracted to the premises many members of the local community who have no formal links to church as well as church adherents. And from March, a monthly tuneless choir has proved popular with those enjoying singing but have limited confidence or who lack the opportunities for practice.
- Support for the work of Leprosy Mission, an international Christian organisation aimed at transforming the lives of people affected by leprosy through their diagnosis, treatment, specialist care and rehabilitation, has long been a church focus. This year funds for the charity were raised by recycling used postage stamps

- Liaison - Much service has generally been given through welcoming on site a range of premises users. Keeping in touch with community groups that met regularly has been a valuable part of church outreach. Given COVID closures lettings were seriously reduced to the detriment of church finances. However, on re-opening, the Booking Secretary gradually received enquiries about use of the premises that have been increasing over the year. Where needed risk assessments and actions to ensure safe return have been followed, especially provision of sanitization resources.
- Having agreed to a request from West Yorkshire Ambulance Service, a defibrillator for neighbourhood use is now sited on the outside of the premises and awareness training has been provided by the Yorkshire Ambulance Service for anyone expressing interest.

Evangelism (Grove objectives: Working Together, Evangelism)

The Church exists to make more followers of Jesus Christ.

Ever mindful of this priority across the year the church has:

- Upheld the wider Methodist Connexion and its outreach by making donations to the Methodist Fund for Church Property, the Fund for Support of Presbyters and Deacons and the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society. The Connexion, a quarterly magazine about the life and work of the Methodist Church, brings together inspirational stories about Methodist people who are passionate about sharing God's love to change lives and is made available for congregational reading.
- As a member of a Circuit with 18 churches, The Grove strengthened inter-church links and mission by accessing Circuit zoom evening services to enable on line users to worship with others across circuit churches. At the request of the Circuit the Trustees undertook a church consultation on the Connexional report 'God in Love unites us', agreeing that the church premises could be used for same sex marriages and submitted an application to Leeds City Council.
- Also at the request of the Circuit, Adherents participated in two half days of reflection as part of a Circuit Review that enabled those attending to share thoughts on 'The Way Forward for The Grove'. In addition, there has been the opportunity to attend the Circuit Meeting to consider wider leadership matters.

- Church officers together with Circuit staff, participated in a review of church governance systems. In line with recent revised Circuit guidance the church recognised the need to begin creation of written volunteer role descriptions and the necessity of following the new '12 Steps to Safer Recruitment' advice.
- As an active member of Horsforth Churches Together (HCT), part of the national ecumenical instrument for mission with other Christian churches, participation has helped present a united faith to the community. Currently, The Grove is one of 10 churches and a Chaplaincy that has retained contact through joint community events. These have included, most notably at Christmas and Easter, support for common projects such as Carols in the Park, Carols in the Pubs, distribution of Christmas greetings, assemblies in primary schools, Community Aid Project and Horsforth Chaplaincy newsletters.
- Across the year The Grove has participated in Churches Together worship activities including Advent Carol Service, inter-church pulpit exchange, hosting prayers for Christian unity, and the summer Civic Service.
- This successful involvement with churches in the neighbourhood has involved distribution of 8,000 Churches Together Christmas Cards, support for the award winning Horsforth Farmers' Market (2017 Market of the Year), prayer services during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, involvement in Horsforth Food Bank, and 'Open the Book', a school programme aimed at bringing the Bible to children and young people of school age, explaining the implications of Christian festivals to children.
- In July support was provided for the Horsforth Walk of Art. Across the two days this gave the church the opportunity to house an exhibition on Horsforth and environmental issues. Use of the church drive for these opportunities is not only of benefit to the church but is widely valued by Horsforth Churches Together as an outdoor witness point for all churches.
- Grove organised a Valentine's Day Gig at nearby Bedford Court, a session for elderly residents who wished to participate in devotion and fellowship.
- Opportunity was given to support Yorkshire West District Methodist Women in Britain summer afternoon event at Wibsey Methodist church.

- The church has collaborated with other local churches by submitting information towards the updated Churches Together website and creating links to The Grove's own website.
- The church contributed to the work of Horsforth Chaplaincy Project by providing financial support for the co-ordinator. The Chaplaincy aims at working with churches to express 'God's heart and encourage the local community of Horsforth to flourish in every sphere from schools to High Street'. It has encouraged growth of the 'Church footprint' throughout the neighbourhood as more and more people have felt the impact of Churches Together events and activities.
- Supporting the Bible Society in the translation and distribution of Scripture through holding a special Bible Sunday service focussed upon the youth outreach programme, 'Open the Book', members joining the Bible-a-Month Club and by individual direct giving.
- Outdoor activities aimed at widening neighbourhood interest included:
 - Horsforth Climate Action using the front grounds of the church during Walk of Art. This complimented their indoor exhibition in the church and raised the general interest of the Horsforth public.
 - Maintaining the tradition of transforming an empty outdoor cross on Easter Day to reflect the Easter message, by careful placing of flowers along its beams. The transfigured cross, that had been a desolate shell marking the season of Lent, was open to view by everyone who used Town Street, the main road fronting the church.
- The church reorganised its web site to enable wider public access to opportunities in the community for worship, and continued to enable details of its sister church, Central, to be included on the site. Information about meetings and activities that might be of more general interest were also displayed. The Annual Report, past Church Magazines to February 2022, and weekly notice bulletins were made accessible. Connections on the church site also included the Facebook page created by the 9th Airedale Scout Group.
- In efforts to provide information on church activities for the immediate neighbourhood a volunteer Publicity Co-ordinator remained in post to ensure church events were promoted in the local press.

Secure foundations

The church needs a sound base from which to operate. At the start of the year the reduction in premises' lettings and the need to pay a hefty energy bill seriously questioned the future of the church. Without prompt action The Grove had an estimated lifespan of 12 – 18 months before funding ran out. As a result during the year the church:

- Alerted members and adherents to the financial problems facing the church at an Open General Church Meeting held on 20th November 2023.
- Kept interested parties informed of developments through periodic written reports distributed with weekly notices, and at the General Church Meeting in April and Church Council in May when discussion of the financial challenges facing the church and how we planned to resolve them, were shared.
- Elected a small group of representatives from key parts of the church to identify areas where money might be saved and income improved. The Group have been meeting weekly, and more recently fortnightly, to take the necessary action to ensure a secure financial future for The Grove can be put in place.
- Over the period, made some difficult decisions so that the financial picture, though challenging over the medium term and almost exhausting all the savings in the bank, eased the situation.
- Planned for the future so that once the church is beyond this period there is an expectation that the church should begin to return to a stronger position where reserves are gradually rebuilt. Actions taken include encouraging members to increase their giving, negotiating a much improved energy supply agreement, and taking steps to rent out the cottage in the new year.
- As a consequence, once exceptional one off items are excluded, it is anticipated that the church will move from having an annual deficit to creating a small annual surplus in 2023/2024. Conclusions are that although there is still much to do, particularly in terms of identifying new revenue opportunities for the Centre, trustees are now significantly more confident about firming up the long term financial foundations for the church.

Position by end of year:

- The church has been enabled to weather the current crisis through careful oversight of church finances and by making use of capital funds that was planned expenditure for the activity room roof in the Centre when needed. It was also helped by maintaining successful access to the Government furlough scheme for the Premises Manager and by people continuing to support with generous donations.
- Despite a pattern of declining attendance in recent years and the need to run on its reserves, the church has continued to sustain income levels (as outlined below, page 27) that has enabled it to cover running costs and undertake events and activities in line with its stated Mission Statement (page 3).
- As stated above (page 11), monthly film nights have been organised as a way of meeting community need, encouraging fellowship and raising a regular income that helps meet church expenses. This has proved to be a popular activity across the year.
- Once again, savings have enabled the church to produce sufficient finances to undertake necessary improvements, and, together with its organisations, to make donations to outside charitable bodies as noted above (see e.g. p.18, point 1, 1 above p. 12 point 3).
- Since church finances have been adversely affected by COVID and with a growing concern about the large increases in energy bills, thought has been given to an appropriate increase in room hire charges and in the suitability of fees for weddings and funerals.
- Following COVID impact on bank services, including local branch closures and paying in arrangements, the church has adapted to changing circumstances by keeping donors aware of banking developments and systems for giving. In this situation financial support has continued and for that the Trustees are truly grateful.
- In accordance with Charity Commission regulations, Trustees are mindful of best value when it comes to premises' use and so have maintained fees in line with market expectations for cars parked on church property that belonged to private firms. Through careful negotiation, funding lost in car parking fees through the move of Manse Capital from the old manse site has been replenished with new hirers.

- As from 1st April 2016 and in pursuance of the Government's pension auto-enrolment legislation, the Premises Manager has been transferred as an employee from The Grove Church to Leeds South and West Circuit so as to benefit from the Circuit's pension scheme arrangements. Under his agreed Statement of Terms and Conditions of Service he remains based at The Grove and with no break in his duties and commitments to the church.
- At the start of the year, to take account of the church's changing financial needs and ensure that there are sufficient financial resources for future major maintenance projects, the Reserve Fund was maintained at the equivalent of six months expenditure . This has proved providential in the light of subsequent experiences outlined above.
- In order to comply with Methodist Insurance requirements a detailed inventory of all church equipment has been maintained. As part of safety regulations the Trustees accepted the Annual Risk Assessment and Check List
- In the light of the needs of the church, amongst additional financial initiatives, the congregation have been encouraged to participate in 'EasyFundraising', a charity scheme aimed at raising donations for the church through everyday on line shopping at designated stores. In February an appeal for review of personal giving resulted in a welcome increase in one-off and weekly donations.
- Trustees are kept informed about the state of the premises through submission of the Annual Return formerly known as Schedule A with accompanying notes and the Health and Safety Return, as well as through regular reports from the Property Committee to Church Council.
- In ensuring that the building provides the safe and secure base that is needed for furthering the Mission Statement and working in the community, regular maintenance and improvements are made. This includes the annual cleaning, washing down and painting of parts of the Centre. There has also been legionnaires testing, fan filter cleaning, heating pump repair, and drain cleansing. Annual PAT testing of electrical equipment has been carried out and, as appropriate, organisations and groups have been required to undertake COVID risk assessments.

- Given the tight state of church finances, major works of improvement have been closely monitored. However, whenever possible, tasks needing urgent attention have been done. Amongst these are the repair to the Church roof in line with the findings of the Quinquennial Inspection and identified repointing needs, action on an area of soft floor near the altar, cleaning and update of church notice boards.
- Having experienced leaks from a small expanse of flat roof ineffectively relaid at the time of the refurbishment of the Community Centre, the church has continued to spend much time and energy seeking a solution to the problems so as to ensure the premises remain sound and secure.
- With safety in mind, Stewards have undergone fire training.
- The church organ is 84 years old and, recognising that in recent years there have been a number of organ failures, before the start of this year, the church undertook restoration work at a cost of £15,000 but has been constantly aware that at some point in the future full restoration incorporating modern day standards might be needed. The expense has been estimated at between £60,000 and £100,000.
- Mindful of the benefits of an orderly and well-kept environment, the Grove Gardening Team reviewed their organisation and began the autumn with a comprehensive clear out of the church garden.
- Moves have been made to sustain the church's environmentally friendly approach. The Environmental Audit was updated and in consequence the Centre ceiling lights continue to be changed for LED lighting. This action has meant the successful reduction in power consumption from 3420 watts to 335 watts. In addition, draught seals have been fitted around all external doors and windows.
- A data protection review has been undertaken to update the church data map.

Progress on any special projects

- Pakistan Flood Disaster: Near the start of the year the church responded to an appeal through the Disaster Emergency Committee for funds to support the people of Pakistan suffering from unprecedented floods triggered by severe monsoon rains. £143.00 was collected and donated.

- Turkey and Syria: In February the church received donations through the Disaster Emergency Committee, for support of families badly affected by the earthquake that struck southern and central Turkey and northern and western Syria. £486.20 was donated.
- Good neighbours: The Circuit, having negotiated the sale on leasehold of Grove House, the old Grove Manse, across the year the Trustees have continued to maintain working relationships with each of its neighbours. In preparation for the year ahead and in a sense of goodwill, the Trustees were pleased to grant the new premises users of the old Grove Manse (Oakdale Centre) permission to erect a notice board, similar in style and construction to the previous user's board, on church ground.
- Ground upkeep: The Trustees are also keen to bear in mind the needs of neighbours by taking great care to cultivate and trim shrubs on church grounds alongside the borders of their property and by taking a favourable view towards allowing access to church land for immediate neighbours in order to make building repairs.
- Church Review: As part of the Circuit's decision to reassess the needs and future for the constituent churches, The Grove has held two successful review sessions during which members and adherents have identified aspects of the church's profile and broad ways of moving ahead. In turn, this has enabled comments and ideas to feed the financial reappraisal that has been taking place and into thoughts about potential new ways of meeting our mission.
- Dementia Friendly Church: The church highlighted the benefits of the local MHA/Morrison's Alzheimer's cafe on the second Tuesday of each month. During Dementia Awareness Week, 15 – 19 May, the church hosted the Town Play, 'The Purple List' and screened the film, 'The Notebook' concerning an elderly resident of a care home who is suffering from dementia.
- Horsforth Live at Home Scheme: This has been a special project run by Methodist Homes that has been active for over twenty-four years. It is aimed at decreasing social isolation and loneliness by supporting the independence of elderly people in their own homes. Currently it supports 630 members and has 75 volunteers. This year the church has given £450.00 in financial support as well as voluntary help.

- Harvest: Prior to the Harvest service, food was collected and the church decorated for the Harvest Sunday. Fellowship was encouraged with a bring and share cold finger-food buffet. Gifts of food were gratefully received by Woodhouse Moor Community Centre and the Leeds Foodbank Warehouse.
- Action for Children (AFC): Traditionally, The Grove has given donations from the Christmas services (Christingle and Christmas Day) to this Methodist charity supporting children, young people and their families. Following COVID restrictions in previous years, happily, the church was able to resume collections in 2022 and donated £694.92 to its fund. In addition the church highlighted availability of further information about the charity on the AFC website.
- Advent / Christmas: Across the Advent / Christmas season the church supported several special projects including:
 - Within church, the significance of Advent was reinforced by asking individuals and organisations to dress a church window on the theme of 'Special Delivery'.
 - Support for the inter-church team delivering 'Rewind Christmas for Children' accessed by local schools.
 - Celebrating the season's message, The Grove hosted an evening of 'Carols and Brass' involving Horsforth Choral Society and Yorkshire Evening Post Brass Band.
 - The gift of toys and games collected during November and early December around the time of the annual Toy Service were distributed to Baby Bank (0-5 years) and the Ukrainian Centre.
 - Once again, organising the Churches Together nativity display in the church drive.
- Refugee support: In a bid to make a difference, support was provided for the appeal by the Refugee Council of Britain for the collection of men's clothing given to the HCT Migrants' Support Group to help 120 male asylum seekers (mostly African) currently housed in a nearby Leeds hotel. Church members donated bicycle accessories to enable a local group of migrants to enjoy much needed freedom. At Christmas the church responded to an appeal for Christmas presents of socks and toiletries. In March, individual members were encouraged to support the launch of Horsforth Town of Sanctuary and in June the church responded to an appeal for men's summer clothes.

Church's response to important events

- **COVID:** Despite a reduction in the seriousness of the pandemic, the major event that has continued to overshadow the life of the church impacted upon global life has been the spread of coronavirus as described throughout this report. The church's response has been particularly noted above in the Review of Progress and Achievements.
- **Environment and Climate Change:** During the weekend of the Horsforth Walk of Art (1st - 2nd July) the church collaborated with Horsforth Climate Action to hold an exhibition and activities publicising the impact of climate change and enabled the church and Centre to be opened to over 300 visitors from the neighbourhood. Besides appreciating the chance to come inside the church and reflect on the environmental theme, Climate Action noted new interest in the themes presented, received 22 bicycles for renovation and the church raised £268 for church funds including £60 from donated Eco Chic Bags.
- **Death of Queen Elizabeth II:** On the anniversary of the death of Queen Elizabeth II (8.09.2022) the church was opened for private reflection and prayer.
- **The King's Coronation:** A celebratory lunch was held on 8th May to mark the enthronement of King Charles III, at which £216.00 was collected for church funds.
- **Military impact in Ukraine:** Members continued to seek ways to support victims of the crisis. In September the church responded to an appeal from Leeds Ukrainian Community Centre for toiletries and clothing suitable for recently arrived refugees. Besides donating items to the church supermarket trolley intended for the appeal, 16 boxes of clothes were collected for the Centre. In April the church received the thanks of the Leeds Ukrainian Centre for the many gifts of clothing collected over the past eight months.
- **The devastating June flood caused by the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam in Ukraine,** resulted in a donation of £160 towards the Christian Aid emergency appeal.
- **Sadly,** in March individual members supported our sister church, Woodside Methodist, in its celebratory tea, a pop in event to share tea, cake and memories and in June, at its final service before closure.

- Fairtrade: Having been awarded Fairtrade status, the church has been mindful of specific world economic situations and throughout the year has continued to emphasise its commitment to serve Fairtrade goods at all church meetings, with a choice of other products on request. It is aware that in the near future the church will have to reapply for Fairtrade status.

Value of the church not in monetary terms

- The range of activities and services outlined above is evidence of the church's particular impact on its immediate locality and its residents, whether they are Methodist members and adherents or non-church neighbours. This outline of the scope of the church's interest and support also indicates a positive, if less direct, influence at national and international levels in a wide number of areas.
- The church continues to offer a welcome place of traditional and varied worship, geographically placed at the heart of Horsforth. Our well-maintained and attractive premises are extensively used by church groups and the wider community throughout each week whenever possible.
- The church community continues to provide the opportunity for spiritual growth to young and old alike, pastoral care to one another and those outside the church, and continues to explore new ways to reach out in mission.
- Above all it seeks to provide a pattern for living that responds to the gospel of God's love in Jesus Christ by following a life of discipleship through worship, service and mission.

Financial information

Despite concern about the financial viability of the church, the very tight budget this year and the need to watch expenditure very carefully, whenever possible the church has sought to undertake financial activities in line with its mission statement as outlined in the financial accounts. Response has been made by the church and its associated groups to appeals and charities across the year as listed throughout the report.

The accounts provide details of major transactions for the year 2022 – 2023. With some difficulty and careful management this includes payment of the full Circuit Assessment for the church, which was £57,469.00. This is a major and ongoing expenditure for sustaining and supporting the ministry and work of the Leeds South and West Circuit of which The Grove is one of eighteen constituent churches.

This Annual Report outlines the widespread range of events and activities that the church has striven to provide across the year 2022 – 2023. These would not have been possible without the very many hours of dedicated service and voluntary help that have been given by members and adherents.

The Trustees would like to thank all volunteers for their interest, time and energy, particularly given the difficulties of the post- COVID and pandemic outbreaks, that has enabled the church to respond in such a positive way to the gospel of God's love in Jesus Christ within this community.

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st AUGUST 2023

Administrative information:

The Grove Methodist Church, Horsforth, is a registered charity number 1129305. It is governed by the Methodist Church constitution set up by Act of Parliament and by the Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) of the Church as amended from time to time by the Methodist Conference.

Correspondence for The Grove Methodist Church should be addressed to the Rev. Jo Lightowler, The Grove Methodist Church, 4 Chestnut Drive, Adel, Leeds, LS16 7TL.

The Managing Trustees are the unpaid members of the Church Council and for the year ending 31st August 2023 those who have served on Church Council are as follows:

Kath Ashby, Ann Bailey, Kay Bassett, Barbara Buckley, David Buckley, Kirsty Butler (Circuit Representative), Judith Chaplin, Alan Firth, Rev. Jo Lightowler (Chair), Carol Hoyle, Graham Hoyle, Gill Jewell, Gill Marley, Philip Maud, Janette Mawson, Peter Mawson (Secretary),

Anthony Orton, Jean Orton, Sylvia Parker, David Quick, Paul Thompson, Caroline Turner, Christopher Turner, Michael Wallis (to 1st April 2023), Andy Walker, Helena Watkins, Bryan Whitham (Treasurer), Keith Whitham, Trish Whitham, Sally Wolfe.

Independent Examiner: Amanda Brown (FPC CeMap)

Bankers: Yorkshire Bank plc, Horsforth

As at 3rd October 2022 there were 146 church members. Details of a further 120 people are placed on the church data base and altogether 526 on the community roll. Membership numbers continue to fluctuate as new members and adherents are offset by bereavements, house moves and a scrupulous scrutiny of membership names.

Objectives and Activities These are set out in detail on pages 4 to 22.

Financial Review by The Church Treasurer

We at the Grove, like so many other Churches, are constantly under financial pressure to survive. This year we have continued to search for better deals on utilities and service contracts, savings on supplies and maintenance costs and ways to maximise income, among other essential tasks .

Running a Church is no different from running your home, expenditure cannot exceed income and if it does so and is ignored, the result would be grave with severe consequences. I can now confirm a large saving on our gas and electric contract has been secured, a saving of 40%. This alone will have a great beneficial impact on the Church finances going forward but this alone will not secure the Grove Church future.

However, plans and changes to improve our financial position and ensure security for the future continue to take place. Like everyone, we find that increases in cost and the speed our world is changing means that we really have no option but to change now and adapt to the present in order to meet the future. Standing still and doing nothing is not an option. Maximising hire capacity in the centre, more events for our community outreach, adapting to what people expect and want locally - young and not so young - is the way forward.

Now is the time for change, to ensure we can hand our Church and it's community on to the next generation.

The summary balance sheet and statement of financial activities up to 31st August 2023 can be found on the following pages 27 to 28.

Bryan Whitham.
Treasurer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bryan Whitham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Reserves Policy

The General Fund comprises the unrestricted reserves of the Church. It aims to accumulate the equivalent of six months potential expenditure, currently estimated as between £60,000 to £65,000.

Approved by The Grove Church Council on 27th February 2024 and signed on its behalf by Peter Mawson, Secretary to the Church Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Mawson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of
The Grove Methodist Church, Horsforth**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Grove Methodist Church (the Church) for the year ended 31 August 2023

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Church, 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 2011 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.

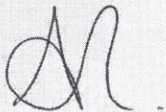
Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination, giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Church as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. The accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. The accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a "true and fair view" which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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.

Amanda Brown
Independent Examiner
47 Kirkwood Drive
Cookridge
Leeds
LS16 7DY



Dated: 16 December 2023

THE GROVE METHODIST CHURCH HORSFORTH
SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT
for the YEAR ENDED 31st AUGUST 2023

The Annual Report of the Trustees comprises pages 1 to 28 of this booklet.
This Financial Information is a summary of the Independently Examined Annual Accounts which
are available from the Treasurer. The Independent Examiner's Report is unqualified.

Approved by The Grove Church Council on
Signed on it's behalf by

Trustee

Trustee

FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31ST AUGUST 2023

		2023	2022
ASSETS			
Church property and organ at insurance value		7,838,878	7,119,698
Bank accounts		51,842	50,958
Debtors		4,145	18,874
		-----	-----
		7,894,865	7,189,530
LIABILITIES			
Creditors		438	-1,663
		-----	-----
TOTAL NET ASSETS		7,894,427	7,191,193
		-----	-----
FUNDED BY			
Restricted Funds:	Property valuation reserve	7,838,878	7,119,698
	Benevolent fund	980	945
		-----	-----
		7,839,858	7,120,643
Designated Funds:	Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes	2,041	1,983
	Organ fund	1,267	1,267
	Property fund	11,004	13,746
	Projects for young people	3,414	3,414
Unrestricted Funds:	General fund	36,843	50,140
		-----	-----
		7,894,427	7,191,193
		-----	-----

THE GROVE METHODIST CHURCH HORSFORTH
SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT
for the YEAR ENDED 31st AUGUST 2023

	RESULTS FOR THE YEAR	
	2023	2022
INCOME		
Collections & Gift Aid tax refunds	72,834	64,401
Hire of rooms, car park & use by Church organisations	49,876	49,050
Donations	12,007	9,664
Bank interest & other income	4,508	3,156
Fundraising events	2,121	3,527
	-----	-----
	141,346	129,798
Restricted & Designated Funds	99	66
	-----	-----
Total Income	141,445	129,864
	-----	-----
EXPENDITURE		
Circuit assessment	57,469	57,469
Maintenance of the Church, repairs, heating, insurance etc	29,116	19,188
Maintenance of the Centre, repairs, heating, cleaning etc	32,743	22,790
Premises manager salary and accommodation	23,237	21,741
Planned maintenance	144	130
Administration, photocopier, stationery	1,557	1,820
Other expenses, organ & music	2,647	3,413
Outreach	2,000	2,365
Subscriptions & donations	3,402	4,396
Fundraising Events	2,328	1,562
	-----	-----
	154,643	134,874
Restricted & Designated Funds	2,748	32
	-----	-----
Total expenses	157,390	134,906
	-----	-----
SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT) for the year	-15,946	-5,042
Unrealised revaluation property gains for the year	719,180	699,698
	-----	-----
Net movement in funds	703,234	694,656
Funds at the beginning of the year	7,191,193	6,496,537
	-----	-----
FUNDS AT THE END OF THE YEAR	7,894,427	7,191,193
	-----	-----

Grove Methodist Church, Horsforth, Leeds

[Horsforth Grove Methodist Church - Grove Methodist Church \(chessck.co.uk\)](https://www.chessck.co.uk/Horsforth-Grove-Methodist-Church)