

Trustees Report to Charity Commission FYE 31/8/2024

Introduction

This report covers the activities of Cornerstone Methodist Church (particularly financial) for the 12 month period ended 31 August 2024.

The affairs of the Church are managed by the Church Council (the 'Managing Trustees'), the members of which are also the charity Trustees. They are responsible for ensuring compliance with the principles and practice of Methodism and with the legislation relating to charities.

The latter includes registration, keeping proper accounts and making returns to the Charity Commission.

Aims and organisation

The Mission of the Methodist Church as a whole is 'to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship through Worship, Learning and Caring, Service to others and Evangelism'.

In response to this calling and to better equip the local Church to meet those aims, the Church created 5 Forums during 2023 to concentrate on specific areas of our Church Strategy, namely, Caring, Finance, Learning and Worship, Mission and Service, and Property. The leaders of the Forums report to the Church Council.

The Church prepares an Annual Report on its Mission and activities which is presented to the wider congregation annually at the General Church Meeting for member approval.

The approved Vision Statement of the Cornerstone Methodist Church (as adopted by the Church Council of October 2023) is 'Seeking to follow Jesus in Community, Love and Service.'

Presbyteral Minister's Report

Dear Friends,

In last year's report I spoke about resurrection and highlighted three challenges, namely: Parochialism, Growth and Buildings. As I come to write this report for what will be my final time in active ministry we find ourselves still wrestling with those challenges seeking the transformation or, resurrection, that their resolution will bring.

Over the past twelve months there has been much emphasis on finding resolutions to those challenges. We have spent a lot of time in conversation and prayer

together seeking the way forward. It has been a challenging and a frustrating time. A significant moment in that journey came in January of this year when a General Church Meeting was called to share more intentionally with a bigger audience what we, the Church Council, understood those challenges to be in more stark outline.

At the heart of these challenges is the fundamental call to grow the church. Jesus final command to his disciples before the ascension was to '...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'(Mt 28:19&20).

Furthermore, that is just what we see happening in the book of Acts as '...the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.'(Acts 3:47)

I am only too well aware that the idea of growth, or at least any part of that idea that supposedly means we, collectively, will have to go out and take responsibility for it, renders us weak at the knees. We need to get over ourselves and roll our sleeves up. Remember, the first part of the so called Great Commission, is a statement of authority. Jesus says 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go!' More than that, at the end of that commission he promises 'Lo I am with you always.' Both John and Luke have very clear depictions of Jesus imparting the Spirit as the sign of that perpetual presence and strength as we embrace this task of growing the church. We have to learn to tap into that. I have no doubt that if we do, we will grow and, as a result, the church will too.

In fact, the Church Council has recognised that imperative and has adopted that as our primary response to these challenges. At our April Church Council we adopted a strategy document entitled: **The Way Forward**. The following areas of importance were highlighted:

1. **Church Growth**
2. **Funding Strategy**
3. **Communications Strategy**
4. **Building Projects**

Church Growth. To see the church growing....

starting NOW. Under this heading the headline items are:

- To celebrate the 250th Anniversary of Methodism in and around Horsham. Our aim is to be encouraged as we remember our humble beginnings and where they led over the years as we imagine a prosperous future.

- To develop a pattern of worship as a single mobile Horsham congregation. We're using the title Worship Together as we seek to build our identity as a single congregation.
- To reinforce the Circle Theory of growth so as to engage the whole congregation in growing the church.
- Prioritise solidarity and inclusivity through support of the Inclusive Church Network, and Open Table Network services.

Funding Strategy. To securely establish a long term and sustainable financial strategy for regular income for the church. Headline items are:

- Use the Lime Green Consulting master plan for development of a Funding Strategy; this involves developing less reliance on personal giving and legacies and broadening our profile beyond the church.
- Initial focus is to address the annual deficit by developing multiple sustainable income streams.
- Working with HDC Grants officer (Candice Coveney) to source and apply for suitable and regular grants to support projects.

Communications We need a strategy that reaches the congregation/adherents; believers looking for a new church; for those spiritual enquirers and for those using the premises.

- We need to identify someone to co-ordinate this strategy URGENTLY
- Website/app
- Local noticeboards at front of chapels
- Social media
- Outlook
- Weekly notices
- Posters in church and in windows
- Pulpit announcements
- Conversations

Building Projects. Primarily in respect of London Road but apply to other sites where appropriate.

- Meet with Connexional Property Dev officer – we met with Charlotte Betts in April.
- Consider feedback from the architect on possible development schemes and discuss options.

- Engage with local agencies and stakeholders, and possible partners (including discussions with regular hirers)
- Look at examples of other church developments
- Be willing to embrace radical change for the sake of the Kingdom mission.

This marks the first steps in what will be a longer term journey towards the renewal of Cornerstone. Two things are required of us all: **Commitment** and **Patience**. This is not going to happen unless we each give of our ourselves, our time, our talents and our treasure. We need to consciously ask of our selves: 'What is mine to do, God, in this great opportunity? What are you calling me to?' If we can each do that and willingly embrace the answer, then, as a good friend of mine says: We go forward!

The rest of this report shares the story of the work that continues, even in the midst of this moment of crisis we seem to be journeying through. Always that story is bigger than we often recognise. It is a story of faithful discipleship and steadfast commitment to the life and work of Cornerstone. For that we are ever grateful and, indeed, our prayer is, long may that continue. To each one of you, no matter how small or big the part is you have played in our story, thank you. Without you there would not be a story to write.

On a personal note this is a rather poignant moment. As I have already indicated, this is my final report in active ministry. Angela and I have particularly enjoyed our ministry together here in Horsham, initially with London Road and Partridge Green and latterly with St Andrew's and then Cornerstone. The fact that this would have been my longest appointment in my ministry perhaps speaks for itself in that regard. Thank you for being a part of making that so.

It has been a privilege to share in your journey and I trust that the things we have shaped together over these past, almost 9, years now will prove the foundation needed to build on into the future. Thank you for being a part of our journey and for receiving us and working with us. We are grateful for the part you have played in our lives and look forward to, perhaps, sharing more together in the future.

As Tony & Mandy Cavanagh arrive may they find that same welcome and opportunity you afforded us.

Yours in the Gospel.

Gavin

Diaconal Minister's Report

Writing this in the middle of my fourth year with the church here at Cornerstone, I can't quite believe where another year has gone. Last summer saw the eventual completion of the BA degree that I began in ministry training, and I was eventually thrilled to be awarded a 2:1 in Theology, Mission and Ministry from the University of Durham. Part of the thrill was achieving a better degree at this stage of my life than I did at the University of St Andrews the first time around! I continue to be grateful for the encouragement and support that I receive in all aspects of my ministry journey from Cornerstone and indeed from the wider circuit. I continue to value this annual opportunity to share with you some of the work that I do in the church, the circuit and the District.

Last summer was spent organising the team of people who made the Cornerstone first birthday **concert with Philippa Hanna** happen in September 2024. We had an amazing night with a church almost filled to capacity with friends and visitors from Cornerstone, churches across Horsham and beyond. It was a fitting celebration of the first year of Cornerstone Methodist Church but we recognised that there is still work to do in drawing the church together into one cohesive community.

Our **church website and social media pages** are an area of work which feel fundamentally important as we seek to engage with the wider community, most of whom spent much of their lives online in 2025. Recognising the ways in which the world continues to change and finding ways to evolve as a church community is important as we seek to share the gospel in an ever changing context. We would value more input from the congregation though, and I would encourage you to share with us your own writing, poetry, prayers, photographs, etc so that the website can become an authentically representative reflection of Cornerstone.

My work as a Forum leader with the **Mission and Service forum** is very important to me, and one in which I focus a lot of attention – the growth of Cornerstone can only happen if the whole church is engaged in that, and so the M&S forum is seeking different ways to resource and encourage everyone to participate in church growth, from conversations over coffee in one of the cafes we run, to perhaps more visible testimonial writing for Outlook, etc. We are a church which is lay-led, and which celebrates and Connexionally empowers lay people to be agents for the change they want to see in the church, so the M&S forum actively encourages YOU to join in with that work. Going to the Wholehearted Conference in February with a small group was very inspiring and I was glad of the opportunity.

I also contribute to the **Learning and Worship** forum as a preacher and leader of worship. I also led some **short courses** this year, one on Exploring Gratitude and the Sunshine & Showers course on the paradox of prayer. This is very rewarding and I enjoy this immensely – we will continue to run such courses and others in the

future. I also lead the **two soup and conversation lunches** which are run over Advent and Lent each year, sometimes even writing the material myself, or most recently adapting it from other material to make it more appropriate for our context. I support the work of the **Caring Forum** by running **The Bereavement Journey** with a key team of volunteers from across the chapels, and we have run that twice this year, once at St Andrews and latterly at Partridge Green.

I work behind the scenes to support the **Community Café** which runs alongside the Community Fridge at the London Road chapel, and I am very appreciative of the committed volunteers who make that work on a weekly basis. They listen, signpost, pray alongside and for, and generally give a lot of time to those who come into the room to get the food which is available.

Messy Church at St Andrews continues to be both a joy and a challenge: the families who return month after month are a testament to the storytelling and sharing that David Fraser gives from the front, and they very much enjoy the crafts devised by Susan Halliday (supported by Sarah Halliday and Christine Dale) and supervised by an amazing team of volunteers who converse with the families as they engage in the crafts, and then the food prepared by Teresa Thomson and Dave Wrighton is the icing on the cake for them. I am so grateful for the team who commit to regularly taking part to make this happen. The challenge comes from devising the monthly themes, working out the rotas and table plans and then having families drop out at the last minute and change the plans! But we are committed to this work as a way of sharing the gospel with the local families, and we continue it in faith.

Bright Stars Toddler group at St Andrews closed at Christmas 2024 and we have no current plans to re-open it. That is not to say that it will never re-open, and we maintain the toys and equipment there, but is sometimes a need to prune what we are doing in one area to make space for God to grow us in other ways.

The **Friday Café at London Road** is now a solid part of the weekly landscape and is much enjoyed by those who attend. We have been unable to recruit a weekly leader, despite having funding for that role, and so I continue to oversee it. This is only made possible by the dedication of the volunteer pairs who work so hard to give a kind welcome and word to those who come in: we now have regulars who use it as a place to meet their friends, and we have also established some new friendships through it. Do try it out!

There can be no doubt that there are challenges ahead for Cornerstone and I have spent many hours this year with Gavin working on projects to give space for conversations about the way ahead. The Discerning Prayer Journey and the Your Place at the Table conversations gave way to a visit from the Connexional Property Development officer and fresh inspiration. I don't underestimate the mountain that

is before us as we engage in discussions about building redevelopment and new ways of working, but I know that God goes before us in all that we do, and so I have confidence in God's leading, that there is still work for Cornerstone to do in Horsham and Partridge Green, and as we look forward to celebrating 250 years of local Methodist witness in 2026, I believe that there might well be a 500th celebration for generations still to come. Methodism will no doubt look different by then, but it is up to us to embrace the opportunities that God sets before us in this generation, to plant the seeds for the future.

Being your diaconal minister in Cornerstone continues to be a privilege and a joy, and I am continually grateful for your kindness, your support and your wisdom as we walk this path of faith together. I do have roles and responsibilities beyond Cornerstone, and I am the Circuit EDI officer – at present much concerned by the Supreme Court ruling about the trans community and trying to make progress on ways to continue to make everyone feel welcome in our buildings. More widely, I continue to sit on the District Sabbaticals Group, and have this year become a member of the District Probationers' Committee. I look forward to the annual Convocation next week when I join with diaconal siblings at Yarnfield for almost 4 days of conference, sharing, prayer and worship. I value our local Area Group of deacons, and the support of my own diaconal support group in the church here.

I close by quoting from my report last year, because I STILL believe it: "My testimony continues to be one of the grace (unmerited favour) of God, who takes what we offer in all our human frailty and brokenness and uses us to make a difference."

Every blessing

Sarah

Report on Financial Outturn

The year-end accounts to 31 August 2024 have been approved by Church Council and Independently Examined.

Standard Form of Accounts (SFA) is the standardised way of presenting accounts to the Circuit and the Charity Commission and complies with the relevant legislation and accounting requirements.

Matters to note:

- This year has seen major changes in the composition of the church with the merger to form Cornerstone Methodist Church, and significant changes to the financial environment in which it operates.
- There have also been significant one-off items of income and expenditure which have impacted on the financial performance of the charity.

Overall, we experienced a deficit of £3,175 -v- a budgeted surplus of £3,125 (before the agreed allocation of 25% of letting income to the Property Development Fund).

- Income – key positive variations from budget were an extra £2k from Gift Aid reclaims and £2.2k from interest, alongside a refund of £13.5k from the Connexional Pension Reserve Fund to recognise that previous donations to that fund were no longer required. However, these were set against negative variations of £3.8k on offertory giving and £4.5k on lettings income. Overall income for the year exceeded the budget by c£2.7k.
- Expenditure - overall spending was c£9k over budget mainly due to overruns of £3k on cleaning, £2k on office costs, £2k on property expenditure and £1k on utility and services costs.
- Balance Sheet - Following the allocation of 25% of letting income to the Property Development Fund reserve, the overall general fund deficit for the year is £10,302 (budgeted deficit £5,125) reducing the net worth to £70.9k (excluding Designated funds) which exceeds the stated reserves policy to maintain 3 months planned operating expenditure (excluding Mission expenditure).
- The balance sheet tangible fixed assets figure reflects the valuations following assessment by the Methodist Insurance Company in a previous financial year updated approximately to the current date and plus depreciated expenditure since that full valuation and the trustees' estimate of the land value.

- Sundry debtors relates mainly to the prepaid Circuit Assessment for the following financial period and unpaid Gift Aid claimed.

Risk Management and Governance

Any major risks have been identified and recorded by the Trustees, with professional advice taken, as required. In particular, there is a regular and ongoing review of our Safeguarding obligations by our Safeguarding Officer; of 'Lone-Worker' activities and our Health and Safety policy by our H&S Officer. These policies are reviewed and updated every 3 years.

The Church is committed to ensuring implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation; guidance and safe practices in the Church and Circuit through the provision of support, advice, guidance and training for lay and ordained people so that they are clear and confident to carry out their roles and responsibilities.

Safeguarding

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

"Methodist Connexional practice outlines commitment to the following principles:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.
- We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.

- We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.
- We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice"

Cornerstone Methodist Church commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation, guidance and safe practice in the church.

The Church commits itself to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

Reserves Policy

The approved reserves policy during this accounting period was to hold a minimum sum in general reserves equivalent to 3 months' average expenditure or such sum sufficient to meet unforeseen major expenditure on the Church building.

Static Information

Full Name of Charity: Cornerstone Methodist Church

Charity Commission number: 1134052

Date of Registration (as a charity): 3 February 2010

Communication address: 41 London Road, Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 1AN

Treasurer: Mr Fred King

It is confirmed that Fred King, as a Managing Trustee, acted as the principal officer overseeing the day-to-day financial management and accounting during the financial year.

Independent examiner: Mr Tony Canvin, 33 Kingmere, South Terrace, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LD

Investment Bankers: Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church and Trustees for Methodist Church Purpose.

Clearing Bankers: The Charities Aid Foundation 'CAF'