



Vale of Aylesbury Methodist Circuit
Registered Charity No. 1134235
www.aylesburyvale.org.uk

Trustees' Annual Report 2022-23

Correspondence Address:
Superintendent Minister
Revd Richard Atkinson
6 Herston Close, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 9UR

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Vale of Aylesbury Methodist Circuit (VOAMC) comprises sixteen churches, fourteen of which are in Buckinghamshire and two in Oxfordshire. Of our churches, Christchurch Thame is joint Methodist and United Reformed; two are united with the Anglicans (Hardwick & Weedon and North Marston); a third, at Fairford Leys, a three-way LEP with Methodist, URC and Anglian participation.

The churches are situated in:

Aylesbury	North Marston	Fairford Leys
Cheddington	Princes Risborough	Chinnor
Stewkley	Stone	Cuddington
Swanbourne	Waddesdon	Thame (Christchurch)
Wingrave	Hardwick & Weedon	
Haddenham	Whitchurch	

The circuit employs three full time Presbyters, one of whom acts as Superintendent Minister. The church at Fairford Leys employs its own minister. Our churches are grouped for mutual support and fellowship. We are part of the Northampton District of the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

The Circuit Meeting is the main decision-making body which normally meets twice a year. In the intervening times the Circuit Leadership Team comprising the Presbyteral staff, Circuit Stewards and other key figures, watches over the life of the Circuit.

AIMS AND ORGANISATION

Charity objective is to act as a Resource provider within the area around Vale of Aylesbury for the Methodist Church:

The purposes of the Methodist Church are and shall be deemed to have been since the Date of Union the advancement of:

- a) The Christian faith in accordance with the doctrinal standards and discipline of The Methodist Church;
- b) Any charitable purpose for the time being of any Connexional, District, Circuit, Local or other organisation of The Methodist Church;
- c) Any charitable purpose for the time being of any society or institution subsidiary or ancillary to The Methodist Church;
- d) Any purpose for the time being of any charity being a charity subsidiary or ancillary to The Methodist Church.



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The organisation and resourcing of regular public acts of worship open to members of the church and non-members alike.

The teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups.

The resourcing of pastoral work including visiting the sick and bereaved.

Taking religious assemblies in local schools.

Promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and services.

Provision of chaplaincy services to the local university and other institutions

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a mutually supportive team of churches in and around Aylesbury. We are all committed to a common purpose of channelling God's unchanging love for all people in our constantly changing world.

1 Circuit Leadership

- 1.1** Relationships: To build links with other churches and faiths identifying potential for joint working.
- 1.2** Local support: To support local congregations to identify priorities for mission, develop strategies to pursue these and provide leadership continuity.
- 1.3** Resources: To regularly review our Circuit deployment of people, finance and property.
- 1.4** Internal Communications: To constantly consider the communication needs of our churches in relation to Circuit policies and actions.

2 Worship

- 2.1** Circuit: To worship together as a Circuit and to foster a sense of Circuit identity.
- 2.2** Prayer: To encourage participation in and the development of Circuit Prayer services and events.
- 2.3** Congregation development: To provide meaningful weekly worship, to identify and facilitate alternative approaches to worship, the development of local congregations and support of smaller churches. To regularly present the challenge of Christian commitment and church membership to all those associated with the circuit churches.
- 2.4** Ecumenism: To encourage local churches to explore shared worship with other churches in their community.

3 Learning and Caring

- 3.1** Training and Development: To identify needs and to provide both financial assistance and opportunities for personal and church growth by appropriate events and training for Church Stewards, Youth & Children's workers, Local Preachers, Worship Leaders, Musicians, Pastoral Carers and other identified groups, including ecumenical partners.
- 3.2** Personal faith: To encourage people to increase and develop their personal faith through Bible Study, Fellowship and small groups.
- 3.3** Pastoral: To ensure appropriate pastoral care for all congregations.

4 Service

- 4.1** Community needs: To encourage churches to investigate and respond to the needs of their local community and new housing developments, especially in the use of our buildings.
- 4.2** Welcome: To provide a welcoming environment for family occasions, Christian Festivals and other community events.
- 4.3** Issues and Concerns: To provide a forum for publicising and supporting issues of local or global concern, especially climate change, justice, freedom and humanity.



4.4 Fair Trade: To be a Fair Trade Circuit by all churches maximising their use of fairly traded goods to give a fair return to third world producers.

5 Evangelism

5.1 External Communications: To explore appropriate means of presenting the life changing Good News of Jesus Christ in the local community.

5.2 Publicity: To make best use of available means of publicity including the external image of our churches and the practical Christian love of our members within the community.

5.3 Training: To provide training in personal evangelism to enable all our people to share their faith effectively.

5.4 Seekers: To ensure opportunities regularly exist for people to explore the Christian faith. To develop a church life of wholesome Christian spirituality in our witness to each other, the local community and the world.

5.5 Chaplaincy: To support chaplaincy work in its various forms

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Our churches have returned from the challenges of the pandemic with numbers holding up. Some of our folks have become less mobile but we have seen an influx of new people around the circuit with some positive endeavour to try and reach out into the post-pandemic world. Many of our churches are also seeking to respond to the cost-of-living crisis by providing warm spaces either with or without local authority funding in spite of the immense challenges that the current economic climate brings.

Some places are looking at more evangelistic endeavours in the hope of allowing the Christian voice of hope to be heard in the midst of the bleak circumstances we all face.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

INCOME TRENDS

Assessment paid by circuit churches continue to make up the bulk of regular income (77%).

Assessments collected were slightly lower than the previous year as two churches requested financial support through reduced contributions.

The freehold manse at 14 Henrietta Road ceased to be let in January 2023 with the new minister arriving in August.

The loss in rental income was partially offset by higher interest income due to the increase in interest rates and Stoke Mandeville lettings, which continues to be managed by Aylesbury Methodist Church Council.

Total income was in line with budgeted.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS

The main categories of regular expenditure are salaries and associated costs, property and District Assessment & Levy.

Overall expenditure was £46,000 lower than budgeted and £8,000 than the previous year.

Salaries and associated costs were lower than budgeted due to reduced costs as the circuit budgeted for a complement of four full-time minister but ultimately became a three minister circuit.



Property costs were lower than budgeted due to lower costs for Stoke Mandeville.
District Assessment & Levy costs of £38,236 were 2% higher than the previous year (£37,522).

Donations were given to Aylesbury Town Chaplaincy, Princes Risborough Lighthouse and Haddenham Lighthouse projects.

The net expenditure for the year was £98,377 which includes a loss of £140,538 on the revaluation of the manses.

FUND BALANCES

Total funds carried forward stand at £2,995,016. About 85% of the value of this fund is held as freehold property, being manses for ministers, and from time-to-time churches closed for worship in the Circuit.

PLANS FOR 2023/24

We continue to be mindful of the need to support our churches through the challenges and opportunities of the present, to this effect we are looking at possible use of the Model trust fund to help enable this. The arrival of the new presbyter means that we have completed the transition from 3.5 to 3 presbyters. The new geographical arrangement will help to reduce our environmental impact.

The budget for the coming financial year allows for the current complement of three full-time ordained ministers funded by the Circuit.

Income (assessments paid by churches) has increased by 7% in line budgeted expenses.

Expenses are expected to rise due to increased salary costs and district assessment.

Income and expenses related to Stoke Mandeville church building are included in the budget.

Circuit approved the withdrawal of £20,000 from the Circuit Model Trust Fund to help support the churches in light of the significant increase in the level of assessment.

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), (effective from 1st January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)).

The members of the Vale of Aylesbury Methodist Circuit meeting are the Charity Trustees, membership being made up of circuit office holders, ministers and representatives appointed by the local churches. Full membership is shown as Appendix A to this report.

The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMPC) are the Custodian Trustee of Circuit Properties.

CIRCUIT MINISTERS AND OFFICERS

CIRCUIT MINISTERS:

- The Rev'd Richard Atkinson



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- The Rev'd Keith Edwards
- The Rev'd Noreen Daley-Lee
- The Rev'd Hee-gon Moon (wef Sep 2023)
- The Rev'd Anthony Howells

CIRCUIT STEWARDS:

- Lynn Bernstone
- Chris Sara
- Barry Tarbox (dec'd Sep 2022)
- Kathryn Trout
- Keith Wallace
- Catherine Whiteway

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:

Michael L Foote
8 Bates Lanes
Weston Turville
Aylesbury
Bucks. HP22 5SL

BANKING AND INVESTMENTS:

National Westminster Bank Plc
22 Market Square, Aylesbury, HP20 1SJ

MetroBank
45 Market Square, Aylesbury, HP20 2SP

Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church,
9 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PE

Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes
Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1J

CIRCUIT TREASURER:

Pearl Doughlin

PUBLIC BENEFIT

We confirm the trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The governing document for the circuit is the Deed of Union (1932) and Methodist Church Act (1976).

Detailed governance arrangements are outlined within the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church by order of the annual conference (CPD).



Day to day management of the circuit is undertaken by the Superintendent Minister and the Circuit Leadership Team.

RELATED PARTIES

The Circuit is part of the Northampton District and is also accountable to the Methodist Conference.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Vale of Aylesbury Methodist Circuit:

- takes professional advice as and when required.
- follows procedures and guidelines issued by the Methodist Church to mitigate risks.
- adopts and implements the Methodist Church's robust safeguarding policies and procedures in the Circuit and the local churches.

SAFEGUARDING

The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God's creation of humans in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this 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.

The Vale of Aylesbury Circuit is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults and affirms that the needs of children and of people when they are vulnerable and at risk are paramount.

The Vale of Aylesbury Circuit recognises that it has a particular care for all who are vulnerable whether by disabilities or by reduction in capacities or by their situation. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible, but that it does not diminish our humanity and our wish to affirm the gifts and graces of all God's people. This policy addresses the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It is intended to be a dynamic policy. It is intended to support the Church in being a safe, supportive and caring community for children, young people, vulnerable adults, for survivors of abuse, for communities and for those affected by abuse.

The Vale of Aylesbury Circuit fully agrees with the statement reiterated in Creating Safer Space 2007: As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages.

The Vale of Aylesbury Circuit recognises the serious issue of the abuse of children and vulnerable adults and recognises that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, discriminatory, domestic or institutional abuse or neglect, abuse using social media, child sexual exploitation or human trafficking (slavery). It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development, including spiritual and religious development. It accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. It accepts its responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. It takes seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.

The Vale of Aylesbury Circuit commits itself to:



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1. **RESPOND** without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, whether in the Church or in another context. It commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust. It commits itself to providing informed pastoral care to those in need, including the supervision of those who have committed criminal offences.
2. **IMPLEMENT** the Methodist Church Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance, government legislation and guidance to achieve safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.
3. 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.
4. **AFFIRM** and give thanks for the work of those who are workers with children and vulnerable adults and acknowledge the shared responsibility of us all for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults on our premises.

RESERVES POLICY

The Reserves Policy for the Circuit is to hold a minimum sum equivalent to six months' average expenditure. In addition, the Circuit will hold sums relating to specific budgeted expenditure, such as: planned repairs and renewals; relocation expenses of ministers; and outreach projects. This should be sufficient to meet any unforeseen item of major expenditure on manses and/or to be able to continue, in the short term, funding of planned activities in the event of any inability to raise the full Circuit Assessment from churches.

CIRCUIT STEWARDS REPORT

Manses;

KEA is being marketed by George David in Aylesbury at £700,000. There has been some interest and several viewings but, as at 30th. August, no offer.

The online Circuit consents process is being pursued. Once a firm offer is received I can have a discussion with TMCP about the choice of solicitors for the transaction- we do not want to be behoven to use a panel firm given our ongoing experience with Capsticks.

The Thame manse, 14, Henrietta Road, has now had its quinquennial inspection with no significant remedial works required.

The dispute with the letting agents regarding their failure to implement the annual rent review when the manse was being privately rented has been resolved by mediation with the Circuit receiving £1,500 compensation.

New Circuit stewards are required to complement the current wide range of skills we enjoy, especially as we still need to find someone after Barry's passing last year.

FAIRTRADE REPORT

What has been happening since February 2023;

- Although Traidcraft has ceased trading some of their stock items are available through other outlets.
- new outlets for Fairtrade/ ethical/ sustainable products are emerging eg 'We are Fairtrade'
- items on offer are now sourced through a wider range of companies, as each develop their practices.
- links continue with the Church school in Chinnor, providing items for sales and talks to children
- items continue to be provided to some Churches in the Circuit and villages local to Chinnor



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- stalls have been provided at both Chinnor village and Friend of the Earth events.
- a donation from the sales has been made to Chinnor Christian Aid

Where are we now?

- While Fairtrade biscuits (most commissioned by Traidcraft) remain more difficult to find, tea and coffee ranges remain readily available.
- With the rise in ethical claims, remember to look out for the Fairtrade symbol, for assurance. (NB this may now be in relation to a particular named ingredient, or the whole product.)
- Cert B verification on packaging also offers assurance about the practices of the whole business.
- production of a single comprehensive catalogue of Fairtrade items in 2023 seems unlikely.
- many Fairtrade items are now online, and spread across several companies.

LEADERS OF WORSHIP & PREACHERS REPORT

We said a fond farewell to Rev Keith Edwards at our last LW&P Meeting and thanked him for his 13 years of service in our circuit. He said there had been only 4 churches which he had not had pastoral care for at some stage of his ministry with us!!

We are looking forward to welcoming Rev Hee-gon Moon to our next LW&P Meeting in a week's time.

We have welcomed Revs Carina & Andrew Shergold as members of our meeting as they have no other appropriate forum within which to meet.

We are pleased that our two 'On Trial' preachers are taking services regularly and are much appreciated around the circuit. Steve Kemp hopes to finish his studies this year and so be accepted onto full plan.

It was a joy to hear of the spiritual journeys of Rev Noreen Daley-Lee & Lafton Lee at our last meeting. What inspiring journeys they have both had.

Lynda Hart & Paul Thomas will be receiving long service certificates shortly & we thank them for their long service.

MWIB REPORT

The biggest news is that in the light of Conference changing the District groups and boundaries MWiB have done their own reorganisation and with the continuing difficulties in recruiting leadership districts have been joined together and we have 2 Presidents one dealing with the North Ruth Parrott and the South Maggie Woods. The other piece of news sadly we have lost our seat at Conference doesn't say much about how women's views are valued.

Daffodil Day (DD) at Methodist Central Hall Westminster this year was on Saturday March 4th the second time it has been held on a Saturday with the attendance still nowhere near what the Monday event would attract. The title for the day was 'Sing to the Lord a New Song' and we had hoped for the National Methodist Choir of GB but the choir fell off just weeks before the event but the programme that was subsequently put together was excellent. How we attract more folk we do not know it is sad to see the decline especially when travel into London on a Saturday is cheaper and easier. Next years event will be on Saturday March 2nd.

The annual Swanwick Conference. this was held on the weekend of April 14/15/16 and was fully booked plus it was available by zoom. It was entitled "Voices in Harmony" and the keynote speakers were Pam Rhodes, Jenny Pathmarajah There were great stories from our speakers and wonderful singing from the conference participants.

Methodist Conference



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The MWiB event this year was the Mary Bosanquet lecture for anyone wishing to listen to this it can be found on the MWiB Youtube channel.

World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women

We are awaiting news of the Europe and Britain assembly in Portugal in 2024.

Easter Offering for this year raised £1177.00 thank you to all the churches who participated .

Online things like the Prayer diary and the Presidents blog can still be found on the MWiB website www.mwib.org.uk and this will give you a broader view of what is happening. Our Partnerships with AllWeCan , WFMUCW and Touchstone continue plus our links with the World Church.

SAFEGUARDING REPORT FOR CIRCUIT MEETING 6TH SEPTEMBER 2023

The Circuit Officers continue to attend District Safeguarding meetings and also meet regularly with all Church Officers to ensure everyone is kept up to date.

Since the last Circuit meeting no referrals have been received, but we remain vigilant and members are reminded that anyone can be at risk and we should be alert to the possibilities.

The last few months have seen a concerted effort to catch up with training and DBS checks that had lapsed due to Covid19 restrictions. We are grateful to Arthur and Pete for their efforts in this area and we are pleased to report that the vast majority are now complete and up to date.

Over the summer the District issued a Safeguarding Audit for all churches to complete. This was a trial, to enable churches to identify actions needed to comply with best practice. It was also in preparation for a possible future audit by the connexion. It was disappointing that only 9 churches in the circuit completed the audit by the deadline. The picture was very positive and we would like to thank the Church officers for their hard work and commitment. It has identified some actions for those churches and us as a circuit, which we aim to address in the coming year.

All safeguarding flow charts for churches have been updated and are available at Circuit meeting; please ensure that the church safeguarding officer receives them for display. The Church Safeguarding Policy will be sent to the Church Officer for completion and should be agreed at the next Church Council meeting.

The electronic version of the Safer Recruitment form has been shared with Church Safeguarding Officers for completion and is now available. If any Church is appointing new officers, you must send the email address of the new post holder to the Circuit Safeguarding Team and we will ensure that the e- form is sent. The form can be completed on paper if necessary. The reason we have opted to do this electronically is because it means that information can be stored easily and securely.

The meeting should be aware that there are a number of changes to the District team. Pauline Jackson and Sue Ioannou have stepped down from their roles in the District and Gill Crippen will retire in December. Grahame Snelling has been appointed for 6 months to work with Gill, so support from the District is ongoing and they are looking to make further appointments in the near future.



Appendix A

Vale of Aylesbury Methodist Circuit Trustees
2022/2023

Trustee name	Notes
Paul Alderman	
Louise Atkinson	
Rev Richard Atkinson	
Janet Banham	
Peter Banham	
Lynn Bernstone	
Jenny Bullimore	
John Cotton	
Sheila Cotton	
Mary Cottrell	
Claire Crofts	
Marilyn Dore	
Pearl Doughlin	
Robert Earl	
Rev Keith Edwards	Resigned 31/08/2023
Barbara Evered	Resigned 22/08/2023
Frankie Fisher	
Sarah Gibbs	
Kevin Hardern	
Ken Harris	
Lynda Hart	
David Heffer	
Douglas Hill	
Jane Honeyball	
Pete Honeyball	
Rev Anthony Howells	
Paul Ingram	
Viv Kemp	
Roger Kirk	
Julie Maguire	
Jennifer Mariner-Kyle	
Gill Marks	
Joy Murphy	
David Neville	
Albert Odro	
Alison Orr	
Mike Pullen	

Trustee name	Notes
Des Quinn	
Arthur Sara	
Chris Sara	
Andrew Shaw	
Mary Shurlock	
Sue Spinks	
Margaret Stevens	
Marilyn Storer	
Peter Stray	
Heather Stuchbury	
Barry Tarbox	Resigned 29/09/2022
Rod Thorpe	
Kathryn Trout	
Keith Wallace	
Barbara Warne	
Ruth Watkins	
Roger Watson	
Colin Watts	
Margaret Watts	
Margaret Wells	
Cathy Whiteway	
Dawn Wright	

Name of Circuit VALE OF AYLESBURY METHODIST
CIRCUIT..... No...23/29.....

Declarations and Scrutiny

I confirm that these accruals-based accounts for the year to 31 August 2023 have been prepared from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit meeting.

Signature of treasurer *[Signature]* Date..... 23/2/2024.....
Name and address of treasurer PEARL DOUGHERTY, 10 GREAT MEADOWS WAY,
..... AYLESBURY, BEDFORDSHIRE HP19 7FT Post Code..... 23/2/2024.....

Presentation to the Circuit meeting

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023 were/will * be presented to the Circuit meeting held on: ...6/3/2024..

Signature of the Chair of the meeting: *[Signature]*
Name of the Chair of the meeting: Richard Atkinson Date 25/02/2024.....

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the VALE OF AYLESBURY METHODIST CIRCUIT

Charity Number 1134235

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vale of Aylesbury Methodist Circuit for the year ended 31 August 2023 set out on pages 1 to 17 As the Circuit's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

* delete or circle as appropriate

Name of Circuit ...VALE OF AYLESBURY METHODIST CIRCUIT No23/29.....

Independent Examiner's Statement

[The Circuit's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales]. *Delete [] if not applicable.*

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

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records; or
- 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 *Delete if not applicable i.e. all R&P accounts*
- the trustees' annual report is not consistent with the accounts *Delete if not applicable i.e. all R&P accounts.*

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

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

Signature of independent examiner



Name of independent examiner: Michael Foote

Relevant professional qualification of independent examiner:

.....FCA.....

Name of firm (where appropriate):

Address: 8 Bates Lane, Weston Turville, Aylesbury, Bucks

Post Code: HP22 5SL.....

Date:22/2/2024.....

* delete or circle as appropriate