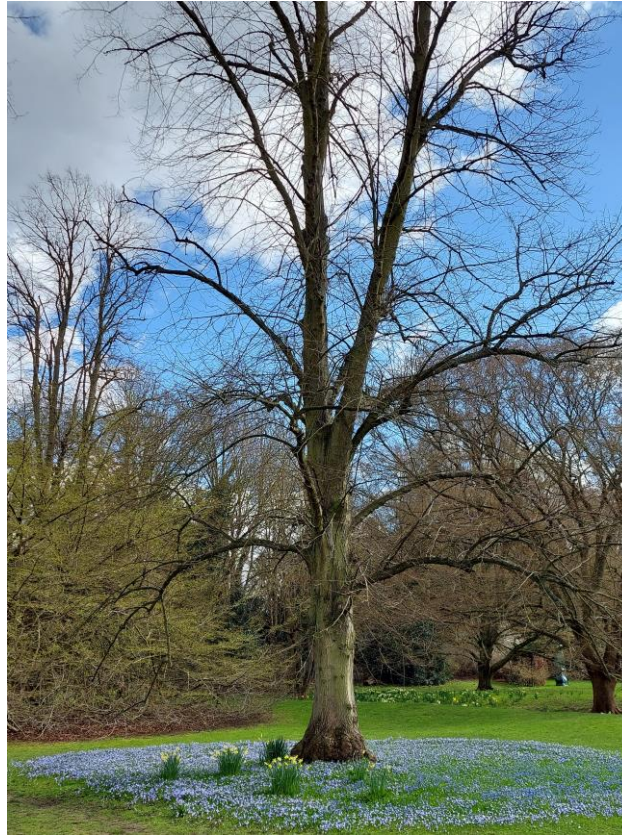




**Annual Report of the Trustees of the Peterborough Methodist Circuit
for the church year 1st Sept 2022 to 31st August 2023**
(Registered Charity No 1135613)



Produced by the Peterborough Circuit of the Methodist Church
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Our Mission Statement

“The Peterborough Methodist Circuit aims to be the people of God within our communities, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and showing God’s love through worship, witness and service.”

We seek to discover the needs of contemporary society and respond to it; working with our ecumenical partners towards creating relationships within the communities and sharing the word of God with those around us.

We seek to utilise and ensure the abilities and skills of lay people fully in the Circuit and encourage others to explore and offer themselves for service at all levels as equal partners in our work.

As a Methodist Circuit, we put into action the different elements of our Methodist Calling in our Worship, our Learning and Caring, our Service and our Evangelism, always striving to put Jesus first.

We have a heart for nurturing and shaping disciples. We are deeply committed to evangelism and social outreach. We have seen great things by working in partnership with other denominations.

Our vision statement for our children's and young people's ministry

‘Providing loving and caring ministries that children and young people may come to know Jesus Christ’

Trustees during the year	
Revd Langley Mackrell-Hey (Chair)	Jo Marshall-Sully
Giles Armstrong	Valerie Octon
George Barber	Sylvia Parker
Sarah Bereznyckyj	Revd David Parkes
Heather Black	Cathy Ruffles
Anne Brown	Margaret Smith
Margaret Brown	Revd Douglas Stevens
Stephen Brown	Simon Stewart
Sue Gage	Monica Sturgess
Michael Goodman	Revd Janet Titterton
Revd Sarah Gower	Revd Graham Tooth
John Hewitson	Denise Watson
Sue Holmes	Elizabeth White
Trevor Howlett	David Whiting
Sue Keeney	Nicky Ward
Christine Kell	Peter Williams
Sarah Kelly	Wendy Willis
Nigel Lightfoot	

1 Our Circuit

- 1.1 Encompassing the heart of Peterborough and extending into three counties – Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire - we minister in the city, in towns, and in villages. There are twelve churches in the Peterborough Circuit and one of these churches (Yarwell), is an Anglican Church, and Methodist ministers or Local Preachers lead the service there once a month. The Yarwell congregation is a class of Elton and receives support from the congregation there. Three of the churches: Whittlesey, Westgate New Church and Christ Church are Local Ecumenical Partnership's (LEPs).
- 1.2 Trustees of the Circuit Meeting met four times during the year: In October 2022 and in January, March and August 2023. Our inspiring Circuit Meeting Devotions were led by: Revd Janet Titterton on the theme of "Treasures", based on Matthew 13:44-53; Nigel Lightfoot (Local Preacher) on the theme of "Where to now?", based on John 14: 1-6; Zoe Drury (Preacher On Note) on the theme of "Follow Me...Follow the Leader: A journey with Jesus reflecting on the leadership I received ... what kind of superpowers does Jesus ask of you as a leader?"; and Tim Wong (our Children, Family and Community Worker) on his new role and about being willing servants for God; In addition, at our March meeting, we welcomed Lynne Booker from the Refugee Council, who explained the situation in Peterborough with refugees and asylum seekers and the number of ways in which we can reach out to them and support them locally, as individuals and as churches.
- 1.3 **Different Ways of working**
Some of the new and different services and activities we put on in a variety of creative ways as a result of Covid continued, particularly midweek worship and live daily online Morning Prayers and online recorded Sunday worship. Morning Prayers continue to be a helpful discipline to many.

Some churches showed the livestream whilst they gathered, accessing YouTube or Facebook and the monthly podcasts which Revd Janet Titterton produced, with people able to comment on them with someone in the background. These options have proved helpful to smaller gatherings.

We are still providing Circuit online worship every Sunday morning and online 'Morning Prayers' four times a week, having built up a thriving online community, many of whom contribute to the services via live chat, sharing prayer concerns and supporting one another. The Morning Prayers are live and the Sunday worship is pre-recorded as we now need our preachers in the churches on Sunday mornings. The advantage of livestreams is that we can put prayers on straightaway, and this is a comfort and strength to people. Sharing live means people build in community together and feel able to share in this way. We have been blessed also with people in the background who have been able to respond to posts and prayer requests through their natural discipleship - thanks go to Helen and Simon Stewart for their continued work with this.

1.4 **Circuit Strategy**

Revd Langley reminded everyone that reviewing our Circuit Strategy had been a standing item in the agenda, but now we needed to develop a new strategy rather than a review. With impetus from the churches, in the light of our financial situation, meaning we have been having to delve into our reserves, we started to have discussions about our situation and start developing a new strategy for our future, a future that will be sustainable.

With our Circuit Mission policy already in place, we have a track record of recognising where the shortfalls are in terms of oversight, where the opportunities might be for roles, and responding by shaping new appointments. For example, we realised the need for lay pastoral support, BoB at Westgate New Church needing to press forward and find a co-ordinator (delayed three years), and Whittlesey drawing from its bequest to appoint a Children, Family and Community Worker.

Also, in terms of circuit policy, we had introduced a rolling five-year financial projection (in operation for some years now). We are quite unique as a circuit in having this.

Our Circuit Mission Policy is on our web site. We humbly recognise that we have emerged from Covid, and we have supported the churches as best we could through the most challenging times. Our web site also shows the work we have done in the past to review our mission in the past.

The Circuit staff have been thinking continually about strategy at staff meetings. We agreed to look at one model – the Circuit as a Single Church. Staff had some deep reservations about this but Langley talked us all through it, the pros and the cons.

As a circuit, we began work on developing a strategy that looks forward one, three and five years - and for this not just to look at finance, but also resourcing in terms of people, and what the picture looks like and how we plan for the future even though it is difficult. We have reached the point where we need to confer more and understand where the future takes us. As we can only do this well if we have everyone involved so, he encouraged people to offer to serve as circuit stewards, and someone to offer as Circuit Treasurer, as Giles signalled he would be standing down, so we can review finances across the churches, and then we can look to develop a far richer strategy as we look towards the future.

- 1.4.1 As Revd Viv Smith left in August 2022, we decided we would go straight for a stationing appointment starting from September 2022. We were aware the previous year that the stationing process had already started and the stationing matching group had met quite a few times. However, encouraged by our District Chair, we got to work on applying for a new minister and entered the stationing process at the later stage. We put together a profile to submit to the April stationing matching group to see if there was a match for us. We were fortunate to have a match. Following a visit to the Circuit and meeting with church representatives and the Circuit Invitation Committee, Revd Janet Titterton accepted the invitation to serve in the Peterborough Circuit from September 2022.

Revd Janet's Welcome Service was held at Brookside Methodist Church on 27th August 2022.

- 1.4.2 Revd Janet has the oversight of the Methodist churches at Brookside, Dogsthorpe, Elton, Orton

Waterville, Southside and Yaxley. In this section of churches, there are a lot of different activities and needs and Revd Viv had already expressed that it was probably too much for one person, as it is difficult to work on a regular basis with the many and varied organisations that meet in the premises, and suggested we realise this when looking at our restructuring.

Revd Viv had said she could do with an assistant to help her so the thought of a Lay Pastoral Assistant (LPA) came to mind. This person will not take over the pastoral leader responsibilities, but will be an assistant to the presbyter. The LPA will have an involvement in the life of the Church and take on roles specific to a church's needs, i.e. regularly attend parent and toddler groups, visit families being baptised. It is about having someone to directly assist the minister and to follow up on baptisms and funerals and looking at groups which can be offered something more. The March Circuit Meeting agreed to recruit for a two-year fixed position with the possibility to extend, and we started the recruitment process.

- 1.5 In terms of Circuit staffing, with the lockdown easing, our CLT started the process of creating a lay worker post (Children, Family and Community Worker) and the funding for this is in place for Whittlesey. It includes a grant from the East Midlands URC Synod. Interviews took place on 18th March and Tim Wong was appointed to the role on 3rd July. He was soon making an impact with the young people and the wider church.

The congregation at Queen Street, Whittlesey has been an invaluable source of kindness, enabling Tim to fulfil his new role. This is a fresh role to Queen Street Church. He is able to be creative and come up with new ideas. From the outset, Tim got involved in the church's activities. One of these is 'Friends of God', which is like Sunday school for children during the Sunday service. The children have their time to learn during the sessions, and then they come back to tell the congregation what they have learned. He arranged a meeting with all the leaders of this group to let them have a space to share their ideas. They have lots of experience and really work hard to teach the children well. We are working towards having enough helpers in the future, and trying to work out how to handle the changing number of people who come and the different ages they are.

Tim noticed there was something missing in how we connect with the young people, so he started "Come Talk with Us", which is a group where teenagers come together to cook, eat, and talk. For each session, he asks a church member to share their life stories, career or faith, which helps the teenagers learn important things about life. But, not all the teenagers come every time, which can be tricky to deal with.

He has brought back Messy Church. This was an event in the past involving a lot of people and families in the community. Now, it is a joint project with the other churches in Whittlesey. It needs a lot of people to help and resources too, and it is not something one church can do alone. It is to show what a church looks like to our community. We want to show that it can be fun, interesting, and sometimes a bit messy. It is an outreach work that we can connect with families and children in our community. It helps us build relationships that show how much Jesus loves everyone.

2 Mission and Outreach

This section includes different mission activities happening in the Circuit, and some examples of specific mission in individual churches.

2.1 *Mission in our Circuit*

- 2.1.1 We continued to run and support Foodbanks at Crowland, Dogsthorpe, Oundle and Westgate New Church. The number of users continued to be very high, so we are thankful to all concerned for their commitment to feed and support the many hungry and poor individuals and families in our communities.
- 2.2.2 Due to the Government regulations concerning Covid-19, the local Winter Night Shelter for the homeless, led by local charity Light Project Peterborough, was again unable to take place. However, Light Project Peterborough has set up some homelessness pods outside a few churches in Peterborough and one of these is at Southside, in their church car park. Church members provide a meal for the guest on a rota basis and provide support, as needed.

Several church members sit on the Light Project Peterborough Steering group ('Peterborough Christians for Social Action'), attending meetings and highlighting and contributing to local needs. Some Circuit members volunteer for the "The Garden House", which is a drop-in day centre for the project.

- 2.2.3 Individual churches raised money for particular charities in need of support including the Methodist Homes Association (MHA), and some churches kept MHA Sunday on 11th June. It was based on 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 27: "There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body." The MHA material focused on recognising the importance that, to have a fulfilling life, we need to be in community with one another. Monica Sturgess ensured that copies of the 'Heart and Soul' magazine went out to the churches. Churches engaged in many forms of outreach and charitable giving, i.e. at the Orton Waterville 'Stitches' group supported Knit for Peace (distributing to those in need in the UK and refugees abroad), Sands memory boxes, Barnardo's, Mission to Seamen, Knit for nowt (charity providing "monsters" for use by counsellors) local nursing homes and Footsteps.
- 2.2.4 As ever, the churches responded generously to Connexional Funds. £6470 was sent to the charities involved, allocated as follows: Property £1600; Presbyters and Deacons £589; LWPT £852; MHA £1142; All We Can £1344; and Ministers' Housing £943. We are grateful to Sue Keeney, Our Connexional Funds Officer for organising and administering this. Sue stood down as Connexional Funds Officer in August 2023. Thanks go to Sue for her service and support, which has been much appreciated.

2.3 *Mission in our Churches*

2.3.1 A wide range of regular groups met in our churches, and these included:

At Orton Waterville, 'Orton Friends' (a drop-in for the retired) continued on Monday afternoons. The Stitches Group made things to help numerous charities (see item 2.2.3 above). Orton Waterville had their first book group. Twelve people came. It was well received. They are doing particular themes, rather than titles, and the theme for November, for example, was war and remembrance. It could be anything from fiction to biography or history, and they try and make the theme appropriate to the month. The group meets on the first Thursday of every month from 10 until 11.30am. Orton Waterville had a successful Bible Month in June, and we prayed for them as they continued to reach out into the local community. They have games evenings (Scrabble) and other games planned). They have Occasional coffee mornings on Friday mornings.

At Brookside numerous activities have taken place: Brookside Pre-school, which meets each weekday during school terms; 'Ladies' Evening', which meets on the first Monday of the month at 7.30pm; Men's Club, which meets on the third Monday of the month at 7.30pm; Crossways Bible study group, which meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 10am; The Craft and Chat group meet on first and third Tuesdays of each month at 2pm; Tuesday Fellowship meets on second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 2.30pm; A Communion service is held at 1.45pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month; Coffee & Conversation (their 'well-being' coffee mornings) are fortnightly on Wednesdays between 10.00am & noon; Rainbows, Brownies and Guides meet every week on Wednesdays in term-time from 4.15pm onwards; Film Night is on the third Wednesday of each month at 7pm; The 'New Direction' Bible study group meets via Zoom on Thurs at 10.30am; Boys' Brigade meetings are on Thursday every week during term-time from 6pm; Brookside Community Hub is open every Friday during the winter months, providing a warm space and friendship, hot drinks and snacks, from 9.30am to 3pm. This started in October; Lend-a-Hand days are held on the 1st Saturday of each month from 10am (The Property Team invites volunteers to give two hours for doing essential maintenance and improvements). Refreshments are served after each morning service to enable the congregation to meet informally. Groups meet together to enjoy a variety of activities and build friendships and support networks.

Brookside also held a Lent course where they showed 'The Chosen' videos. It was a very interesting

way of learning about the life of Jesus.

Since March 2020, a weekly Church Newsletter has been circulated to members and friends online, or by post for those without computer access. Grateful thanks again to Chris Hardman who puts this brilliant newsletter together.

And thanks to Joanna Parkin for setting up their Well-being Coffee Mornings, ('Coffee and Conversation'). These are a drop-in for coffee, chat and prayer and are once a fortnight. Church members and people from the local community come along.

The Boys' Brigade did a Great Big Brekky in March, raising money for the Unite Camp. Revd Janet continued in her role as the Boys' Brigade Chaplain here. We give thanks for that and for all the BB leaders.

Brookside has also held other events, such as concerts, and The Brekky in May raised money for Christian Aid Week. Cathy Ruffles said Claire Holden from Brookside again organised the *shoeboxes* (Operation Christmas Child - a project of Samaritan's Purse) and liaised with other churches.

At Oundle, they continued with their bi-monthly "Gatherings" (times of fellowship, teaching and prayer), with eight local preachers and ministers invited to give reflections on a rota basis). Oundle continue to meet on the first and third Sundays of the month, and are really feeling very fulfilled by having their weekday gathering. The Trussel Trust Food Bank continues to operate every week on the premises. An advisor from Citizens' Advice now attends each session, offering advice to clients.

At Crowland: They have Explorers; Toddlers group, Saturday morning coffee sessions with book stalls; Small fellowship / study groups: Wesley's Wayfarers; Stepping Stones (A study group for young people). They have regular Messy Church. Their 'Who Let the Dads Out', project, which started last year, has been successful. It focuses on trying to improve the relationships between children and their fathers/lads/dads/father figures); they have Community Larder, Family Eats, and there are ongoing explorations around starting a men's shed project. They held a railway exhibition in October for their roof fund.

Five new people committed themselves to do a six-week course of faith discussion in May and became new members. They all came into the church purely and simply through their Coffee Mornings. The course enabled them to ask questions and get to know one another, but the lovely thing is that they naturally just wanted to become members of this loving, Christian community.

Revd Langley updated the 'Finding Faith Course' that he wrote originally in 2018, and used this at Crowland. The course ran for six or seven weeks and is aimed at helping people discover faith for the first time, or refresh their faith. It is equally helpful for people who have journeyed in faith for some time - it takes a different look at some of the challenges of living by faith in a modern world - and destroys a few myths on the way. The really good news is that people are being attracted back to church. Whilst we are not talking about people with no prior experience of faith, some are returning to church after a long time and the issue is to discern their needs. Often people have already received a welcome from the church and feel part of things before he even gets there. Some would appreciate a refresher in faith. Others are well settled in their faith and need a 'welcome to planet Methodism (or Methodism/United Reformed Church)' conversation. Some simply transfer from other Methodist Churches.

Revd Charles, the Priest at Crowland Abbey, left, and we prayed for his successor who will serve as part of his ministry within a neighbouring parish, and for the work of MAP (Methodists and Anglicans in Partnership), which is growing.

At Westgate New Church, they continued to alternate on the Preaching plan with having a C4 service, which is an own arrangement café-style service, and then a service led by a preacher on the alternate week. People continue to feel really uplifted by this pattern.

Langley continued to attend Churches Together in Central Peterborough meetings as Westgate is now under his oversight. Our Churches Together groups in Yaxley, the Ortons, and Central Peterborough focused on that material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU), focusing on racial justice as 2023 was the thirtieth anniversary of Stephen Lawrence's death. Churches were also invited to engage with the material as part of Racial Justice Sunday on 23rd April.

At Whittlesey, there are lots of new families coming and families from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which is amazing for a market town. Some have no Christian background at all, some have a background nominally or otherwise from a different Christian denomination and some are Methodists who have come to us from other places. The challenge is how we meet their needs, but it is a good challenge to have.

Zoe and Nick Drury ran a Lent course on 'Les Misérables'. People came along who do not normally attend their Bible group. It was very encouraging. Church reps heard at Circuit Meeting about the different Lent courses churches were running and arranged to share information, notes and resources.

We are always seeking to engage with others outside of ourselves, and amazing work has been done by Churches Together in Whittlesey and District, which emerged from the Covid pandemic, determined to look afresh at how as churches we can support each other. Revd Langley shared with us two online articles: 'Churches Together, What's the Point?', and 'We Believe: Churches Together in Whittlesey and District - for God's sake'. In the latter, there is a statement of faith and values, and he offered the below to us as a reflection of the good things that are happening and the joy that people are experiencing in meeting together.

During Lockdown, Whittlesey set up a WhatsApp group to provide connection and pastoral care across a variety of age groups. Members have continued to use this forum as a means to support one another and to request and provide prayers for one another. at this time.

Their church magazine – 'Fresh Horizons' - started during Lockdown as a means to maintain contact with the church family and this is still going strong. Their Film showings with refreshments served continue to be popular. Voluntary donations provide income for the church.

At Elton, there is good and bad news: The Chapel building is Grade 11 Listed, in a Conservation Area. They are great in faith but small in numbers, with a declining congregation through age, ill health or members moving away. Therefore, to comply with both Methodist requirements and Charity Commission rules, they have realised that they may have to apply to 'cease to meet' and form a Fellowship instead. They continued to meet for worship on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, whether or not a preacher was able to be appointed to lead the service.

A successful Quiz for villagers took place in October 2022 and an equally successful indoor Boot Sale to raise funds for the Chapel and for defibrillators in the village took place in March 2023.

In addition to the existing 'Knit and Natter' group, mid-week activities for villagers and wider afield have expanded tremendously raising the profile and income of the Chapel with: Ukulele lessons, weekly Wednesday morning Cuppa & Chat @ the Chapel Hub, Wednesday Welcome afternoons with singing, cuppa & cake on the first and third Wednesdays of each month (also attended by folk from around the Circuit), and an Art Group alternate weeks. A podiatrist gives professional foot-care on Wednesday mornings, donating the consultation fees to the Chapel. The Chapel is registered as a 'Warm Hub' for the activities on a Wednesday. The Chapel benefitted from a Missional Grant of £1,000 from the Northampton District of the Methodist Church for the purchase of audio-visual equipment which has been used successfully for Wednesday Welcome. During the summer, a villager gave canoeing lessons on the adjacent River Nene, donating the income to the Chapel. From June to September, the Chapel was open to provide tea & cake to villagers and casual passers-by, especially walkers and cyclists. Three 'Walks & Talks' were held focussed on the chapel where local expert speakers took participants around the village and enlightened attendees about

the archaeology, history and old buildings of the village. Once again, there was a very successful 'Cod and Carols' held in Elton Village Hall with Barnhill Band. These activities are planned to continue in 2023-24: The organ has been played for some 'Wednesday Welcomes' and has received expert remedial attention from Brookside's organist. No major repairs have been undertaken; minor repairs have been undertaken by villagers.

Sadly, as the year went on, Elton chapel struggled to fill its church vacancies and is considering options that will enable it to continue a worshipping presence in the village. An open meeting, which those living in the village were invited to attend, was held in December with Rev Langley, Rev Janet, Matt Forsyth, Rev David Parkes and two Circuit Stewards in attendance. While there have been some offers of help from the village, particularly to help with some aspects of property, decisions still need to be made that will enable worship to continue.

At our Circuit Meeting we highlighted how we need to provide further support for Elton and Revd David Parkes has been doing an excellent job in journeying with a group of people from the village, where Simon Stewart has been present as our lead Circuit Steward. Revd Janet continued to discern the best way to come alongside the members and support them, and Revd Langley, as superintendent, is discerning the best way for us to move forward as a circuit with oversight. Services at Elton continue, although we are reflecting continually on what the members need.

A focus group was formed and this met on 4th January to look at how the building could be utilised. They also met on 1st February. There was a good core of people from the community at the focus groups, and they came up with a raft of ideas regarding how the building can be used and perhaps for some sort of mission. At the January Circuit Meeting, the CLT proposed that Elton cease to meet and the meeting voted unanimously in favour, but with much reluctance. Property Matters now come under the oversight of the new church council and the Circuit agreed to take on the responsibility for key areas, i.e. finance, property, safeguarding and legal matters.

A newly formed Church Council meeting was held at the chapel. The chapel building was being used by a number of groups and funds were starting to come in from these. One of the groups is 'Wednesday Welcomes' that seeks to meet the needs of those suffering with Dementia. Playing music is a key part of the activities and we are grateful for the awarding of a start-up grant from the District that has enabled the large screen TV to be purchased and set up for use of this group and others.

There are some future activities planned such as an art group starting in September and Walk and Talk within the village, culminating with refreshments at the chapel (the first of these was held in July and was oversubscribed).

At *Southside*, they continued their outreach for children: Suzanne Delegate has been the Children Ministry Worker there for four years. She runs three groups: The 'Church 4 All' group meets on Tuesday afternoons – this is alternative worship for all age groups. They have Christian festival services along with regular socials where they all enjoy a meal together. This group is aimed for families with school age children, although they do have families come with younger children, and sometimes they have people come from their Sunday congregation, so this is a Church for all, and all are welcome.

Her vision has always been to bring all age groups together as one family and, whilst they still have a Sunday congregation and a Tuesday congregation, both do come together more often than they used to. She is keen to get families from the Circuit involved in this group. Although we are many churches, we are still brothers and sisters in Christ. 'Footprints' is a mum and under one's group and 'Footsteps' is a toddler group. Both are growing and there is definitely a community feel with both groups.

Yarwell continued to meet as part of what feels like a 'small group church' that energises everyone. We give thanks for our gentle and easy work in partnership with the parish.

At Dogsthorpe, they have Mums and Tots group on a Monday morning and this is continuing to prove successful. A link has been formed with the school next door. Being aware of the cost-of-living

crisis, both at the church and the school, they worked closely together so that now the school supports the Breakfast Club that the church runs to try and give some of their more vulnerable families some extra support. A member of the school staff goes across to support the church so that means the Breakfast Club gets an extra volunteer and the families have somewhere else warm to go on a day when we are already heating the church for a long-term let. It makes sense all round to do that joined up thinking to be able to support some quite vulnerable families within the community.

There is continued outreach through the Food Bank two mornings a week. Citizens Advice and Care Zone attend on a Friday Morning. They have the U3A 'Sing Something Simple' choir which meets on a Monday Afternoon. U3A 'Rhythmairs Choir' meets on Tuesday Mornings. 'Rhapsody Choir' meets on a Tuesday Evening. The U3A 'Singing Songs of Praise' meet on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month in the mornings. A Big Band meet on a Thursday Evening. The church holds a "Family Night" on a Friday Evening. There is also a Craft Meeting which meets one evening a week. A very successful Pre-School meets every week day. The Thursday House group continued to meet weekly from 7.30 to 9pm. All of these events contain outreach contacts and engage with the community. They seek to minister across all ages.

Dogsthorpe had a really good Covenant Service followed by a meal. This was the first time they had met together as a church family since Covid. They catered for fifty people and welcomed two new people who they know through the Food Bank.

At Christ Church, they went back to having quizzes face to face, having had them online during Covid. Each person prepared a round each to make it less work for just one person. They had excellent pizzas from the local fish and chip shop. It was really good to be together in person again. Before Christmas, they had a Messy Church which was bursting at the seams with people and massively successful. They have lots of new families. They had another successful one on the Friday of the February half-term and they had a Good Friday Messy Church. They continue to learn and have fun together.

At Yaxley, in March, they held their first Coffee Morning for three years. It was packed with old and new faces. About thirty people were there at one point, including two mums from their Busy Bees group. People really enjoyed being together again. These happen every other month on the second Saturday of the month at 10am.

The very successful baby support group (the 'Busy Bees Baby Group') continued and was oversubscribed. This group had started just after the first Lockdown and it has altered as it has gone on. They had tiny babies to start with and they are now starting to get the second ones that have been born. It has been very well supported and they have kept the numbers small as that was what they wanted. Some mums and dads are helping, and Yaxley are really pleased that it means so much to them that they want to do that, and they want it to continue.

Yaxley received outstanding support from the other groups that operate in the church – the singers and the Busy Bees, for projects that have run over the last two Christmas periods: In 2021, they received warm clothing to send to the Garden House and in 2022 they received food parcels for the Food Bank at St Peter's. They had tremendous support for both ventures from the village.

- 2.3.2 The Circuit Meeting continue to address the 'God for All' strategy, which is significant both financially and in terms of mission strategy in the next decade to twenty years in the life of the Church.
- 2.3.3 As a Circuit, we continued to review our Mission Plan. Revd Langley continued to work closely with Crowland and Whittlesey in developing their mission plans and it has been a very rewarding time. We are going through the Mission Action Plan with the building works that are going on at Whittlesey's works. (There is a suggested way of working through a Mission Action Plan on the Circuit web site). MAPs help churches going from nothing to discerning what their vision might be. Part one of the plan was the appointment of Tim Wong as Children, Family and Community Worker. Part two was a desire to do something more with the front of the building. Some immediate things need to be rectified but we are also thinking about access, visibility and how we use the front entrance. This is under continual development.
- 2.3.4 As part of 'God for All', Revd Langley had three areas of focus: New Places for New People, Evangelism and Digital Mission. He shared his future vision of evangelism and growing disciples: By

2023, What do we need to let go of so we can take other stuff on?; by 2024, focus on more of the things that are intentional, encouraging people in their faith; and by 2025. We need to think where's our journey and where are we heading? He continued to work on these areas and focus in that direction. He shared with the Circuit that, however it is done, we need to focus on our invitation, as that is the way the local church grows. We can yearn for a programme but ultimately, we need to build our churches by inviting people to new things. Churches have since been doing this. A successful example of this is at Yaxley with their 'Busy Bees Baby Group' – please see item 2.3.4 above.

- 2.3.5 Revd Langley has sent out 'Bulletins' from time to time; these include his thoughts and reflections and guidance for the churches, including information on topical concerns and local and national developments. These help to give the Circuit a sense of connection.

We are always seeking to improve our communication and to ensure those who are not on email are informed and included our thanks to all who have provided up to date information and assistance to those in their churches, including those who have produced paper copies, church newsletters and written reflections from preachers to those not on email.

2.4 Worship, Services and Prayer

- 2.4.1 Some churches took part in the national 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative from 18th to 28th May 2023. Our thanks to our County Ecumenical Officer, Caroline Hutchings, for always keeping us informed of ecumenical initiatives, events and services in the local area. Church members took part in the ecumenical World Day of Prayer services taking place at local churches on 3rd March. This year's theme was 'I have heard about your faith' and the service was prepared by people of Taiwan.

- 2.4.2 The Circuit continued its subscription to The Vine's 'Twelvebaskets' (set services for Own Arrangements), and this has again been a real Godsend for the churches when preachers were unavailable because of illness etc. Oundle has based their midweek gatherings on these materials and invited preachers to come and preach, so enabling its congregation to benefit from a variety of preaching. Out thanks go to Revds Langley and Janet, Revd David Parkes, Revd Dale Sherriff and Revd Graham Tooth, and to Nigel Lightfoot, Monica Sturgess and Ann Tooth for supporting Oundle in this way. Church stewards and contacts faithfully worked to make The Vine material available to people in their churches.

- 2.4.3 Our Pioneer Hub Café worship went back to meeting in person, at Southside, rather than via Zoom every month, enabled by Revd Langley. The hub is for everyone busy in the life of the church who wants to relax and receive prayer. It is there as a space and it is a place to retain contact. However, as the year went on, we found this afternoon gathering was not really meeting people's needs and the attendance was not high, so we removed the hub meeting from the Plan, but the hub will continue to exist as a means of contact and helping people. It is now more about how we bring people from the Church into new groups. All churches are different, but our problem is how we incorporate new members because we have so many. It is about putting a small group structure in place to support people and that is way beyond what just ministers can offer.

- 2.4.4 Revd Dale Sherriff guided us in working on a way of enabling what we have and what we hope to have in the form of small groups and small teams – those that already exist and those we want to be able help churches develop for new people in new places. The first stage, by December 2022, was to identify those groups and teams and for us to look at what we can do to help them. (Groups are defined as those groups of people that gather together for things like Bible study or prayer or for Messy Church, or home group gatherings. Teams are those people, either within a church or across the Circuit, who work in the same areas i.e., Treasurers, Local Preachers, Worship Leaders).

Thanks also go to Anne Yeoman from Brookside who did a lot of work in identifying those groups primarily based in our 'Circuit Directory'. Anne and Dale identified forty-five different ways of gathering initiatives across the Circuit. Because of the pandemic, we did not know how accurate those details were and Dale asked the churches to look at information about their gatherings and whether they are still up to date and accurate.

Dale started his report with 'CPD - 500 Nature and Purposes' because it explains something about

the remit we are engaged in. The Circuit is the primary unit in which local churches express and experience their interconnection in the Body of Christ for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help. The purposes of the Circuit include the effective deployment of the resources of ministry, which include people, property and finance, as they relate to the Methodist churches in the Circuit, churches of other denominations and to participation in the life of the communities served by the Circuit, including local schools and colleges, and in ecumenical work in the area. So, our remit is to be able to offer as the Circuit to the local churches, be they single denomination or local ecumenical partnerships, to develop a hybrid network, connecting groups and teams that are already gathering, and using a variety of places and online platforms, in order to better resource and support all. (Hybrid means what we are doing face to face and what we are doing online). So, we will grow networks where we encourage and support and resource one another, rather than just having one little group trying to do all these things.

The impetus comes out of recognising the changes in attitudes to gathering and to ways of gathering, resulting in people perhaps not physically gathering at all, but happy to gather online, and a whole variety in between, and that is how we live now. It also comes out of conversations with many people who do not want to continue in one particular way or group setting. This is not a matter of timing – this is a conscious decision because they have actually discovered that in meeting in other ways, they are better able to worship and to serve God and to live out their discipleship. So, they identified these groups and teams, and they then identified those leaders of those different ways of gathering and those who facilitate and they got a picture of the differing ways in which we gather, the purposes of our gathering and the frequency of our gathering. With the initial scan of the data which showed there are forty-five ways in which churches are engaged in groups outside of Sunday worship, some had been running for a while, others were quite new.

Perhaps one of the most interesting and positive findings from Anne's research is that some small groups or teams have become 'Crossing Places' where people have joined groups or teams from other churches within the Circuit, because they share the same desires, needs or focus, and some of that is happening because of the online or just through conversations. So, what we have is a lovely blend of people gathering from different churches on a regular basis and finding fellowship in that new way.

The reason we are doing this is because we want to uncover new initiatives or hoped for initiatives, and there are those we do not yet know about, and we have two goals in mind: One is that we want to develop a diversity of small groups and teams to involve new people in new places, but we also want to develop a diversity of small groups and teams that are already established but that we can perhaps help to invite and reach new people.

It is important that what we do, we are together, and we are all given the same chance, the same resources and the same support. So, all the information that we can gather will help us as Circuit to do that.

We are also blessed enormously by the fact that we are a circuit that is deeply connected to three major denominations – Anglican, Methodist and URC. On top of that we are regularly resourced from all the materials that organisations like Churches Together in Britain and Ireland produce. There are so many resources out there and there are so many ways we can find support and we can offer it, but we need the information as our first platform. Small groups are so important because they can become praying places. They are the key to growth. Investment in small groups is significant and it was our major area of growth during Covid. As well as showcasing the many small groups and teams in our Circuit at our Circuit Service, the groups were also the subject of our Prayer Themes at the top of our Preaching Plans throughout the year.

- 2.4.5 Thanks go to Matt Forsyth and Revd Langley who continued to lead Circuit Livestream worship and 'Morning Prayers'. Also to Nicky Ward, who continued with leading Circuit online worship once a month. Thanks also to Sandra Hughes who still leads online Reflections on Friday mornings. There is something provided every week day. The Circuit Administrator contributed to the Livestream Team by liaising with Local Preachers and readers in helping plan the content for the worship leaders and their services. The readers are local preachers, church stewards and church members from across the Circuit, all adding a different voice.

A faithful number of people value being part of our online livestream community, supporting and being supported by others every day through our live 'Morning Prayers'. As these are also recorded, people can also catch-up later if this works better for them. Meanwhile, if people want to know more about where they can find their closest Methodist Church in the Peterborough area, they are directed to our Circuit website.

Our purpose on a Sunday for livestream prayers is to offer something for those who cannot make it to church because they are unwell, caring for others, working shifts or 'juggling family commitments'. We are not looking for large numbers, but some people do view these in addition to morning worship. Thanks again to those local preachers who offer to record their Sunday message for us so that we can achieve this and, of course, those who present the worship, and read for us.

Here are our Livestream Statistics, put together in March 2023: These stats are for the Peterborough Methodist Circuit's livestream, rather than its linked channels, such as Revd Langley's profile, MAP (Methodist and Anglicans in Partnership, Crowland or Churches Together in Whittlesey - worship is often relayed to these sites as well).

Facebook

As a circuit, 334 likes, 395 follows (front page)

Last three months - reached 4,724 people (plus 1,904 though advertising), 33 new followers, 804 page visits, 29 new interactions with people 'liking' the page

Audience - gender breakdown - low views for under 45s, roughly equal genders, more views 45+, with more male viewers than female. Highest proportion of viewers is at 65+ with more men than women.

Most engaging broadcast - morning prayers, 22nd December, 16 viewers throughout (others pop in and pop out), 55 comments/prayers, we know of 20 others who watched for at least a minute, and 36 who will have seen Morning Prayers are happening, and moved on. Audience retention for live broadcasts is high - around 30% - if you consider these are morning prayers and people often have to leave.

YouTube

The YouTube stats are not as reliable (because we use YouTube as a back-up), but it does provide another way for people to engage.

- 2.4.6 Circuit Services was held at Christ Church on 27th August, when Suzanne and Tim, gave their testimonies; Dogsthorpe on 26th February; Brookside on 28th May; and Christ Church on 27th November (Advent Sunday); This service was to celebrate who we are (and by that he means all of us – three denominations et al), and how we gather. We heard stories and we celebrated new initiatives around the Circuit including those two wonderful ongoing activities happening in Crowland, and the reason they are successful is because they are brought to us and serving their communities by the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church working together. They would not be possible without that.

So, we celebrated that as a Circuit. We celebrated our Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, and we renewed the relationship and promises that our Local Preachers and Worship Leaders make. We reflected on our ecumenical nature, our mission together and our hope for the future. We heard people's stories in this service, stories from groups, from the churches in word, in picture and in other creative ways. Churches did displays about their small groups and people shared their initiatives and talked about them.

Circuit services have become a regular fixture on the Plan, taking place on the last Sunday of the Plan. As well as helping reduce the pressure on preachers, they are much valued as a time to come together and worship en masse as a circuit. With thanks to Brookside, Christ Church and Dogsthorpe for hosting. As so many people attend, they need to be held in the bigger churches. We will soon be looking at somewhere even bigger if we continue to grow! People are really benefiting from coming together.

In terms of special services, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Ascension Day services were held at Christ Church, to which all were welcome.

- 2.4.7 Doing the Preaching Plan has been quite a challenge this year because of the availability of our preachers and supernumerary ministers - they give so much and some journey with ongoing health issues and family commitments. Their gift to us is humbling. We have had to become more creative in our Plan-making, including holding more united services within church sections and introducing some monthly afternoon services in some churches. We are grateful to our worship leaders and other leaders who craft their own services using our worship resources, including 'The Vine at Home'.

Although the Plan is a challenge, we rejoice in that that we have new worship leaders and preachers in training. Matt Forsyth has been drawing together his prior learning and will soon complete his Local Preacher training. And, we continue to celebrate Judy Robinson who has started training as a Worship Leader and Maddie Whiting from Brookside who is still training as a Worship Leader). Zoe Drury continues to journey as a Preacher On Note and Paul Watkins from Southside also started as a Preacher On Note. We always welcome anyone who senses a call to lead worship or preach and, on 20th November, we held our first fellowship meal for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, which was also an opportunity to bring in anyone new who was interested in preaching or worship leading. It is hoped to hold further gatherings in the future at various venues. The object of these gatherings is to have a time of fellowship and sharing around a light lunch.

Thanks go to our mentors of those in training – Steven and Susan Halford, Nicky Ward and Nick Drury.

We were pleased to welcome to our Plan, from Equipping the Saints/Good News for Everyone, Tim and Tope Pearson and, from CROPS (Christian Options in Peterborough Schools), Nigel Taylor. In recent years, of course, we have seen huge benefits from supporting and working in partnership with organisations where we share a common interest and aim. We are blessed to have three visiting preachers from other circuits who regularly do appointments on our Plan.

We continue to include 'Prayer Themes' within the Plan document; this year we have prayed daily in this way for our small groups in the Circuit, our local preachers and worship leaders, our ministers and supernumerary ministers and our church stewards.

- 2.4.8 In the last two years we have had twenty-three new members across the Circuit. Membership is a show of commitment to a local congregation as a base from where we think about what it means to put our faith in action. We rejoice that several have been confirmed.
- 2.4.9 The January Circuit Meeting formally adopted the Connexional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report. This helps to prevent things like unconscious bias. Our Circuit Stewards had to do the EDI training (equality, diversity and inclusivity and unconscious bias) as part of stationing and the Methodist Church's recruitment process. Local Preachers were also asked to do the JDS training and to reflect back. Circuit Stewards and Church Stewards are next to do the training. It is all good practice as it improves our inclusivity.

3 Staffing and Appointments, Stewards and Ministries

- 3.1 Simon Stewart, Sue Keeney, Christine Kell and Sue Holmes all continued as Circuit Stewards for this year. Sue and Sue were re-elected to the Circuit Stewarding Team at our August Circuit Meeting. Simon decided to stand down and was given a vote of thanks for all the hard work he has done, and for all the extended time he has given as a Circuit Steward. Christine Kell also stood down and was thanked for her loyal years of service.
- 3.1.1 Sue Keeney, Nigel Lightfoot, Mick Goodman and Nicky Ward continued as our representatives to District Synod.
- 3.1.2 Marion Mahan continued as Chaplain to our local MHA (Methodist Homes Association) retirement

living scheme, The Maples. The residents are also supported by visits from two of our ministers and several Circuit members.

Nigel Lightfoot continued in the role of Local Preachers' Secretary.

- 3.2 We advertised for a *Back of Beyond (BoB) Project Co-ordinator for Westgate New Church* in September. This role was initially termed as a Friendship Club, but we decided on a Project Co-ordinator, helping those in need. The interviews were held on 12th November and Suzanne Delegate was appointed. She started work on 4th January. Suzanne reports to Revd Langley as Line Manager with support from the Westgate New Church trustees. The position has been funded by generous grants from the East Midlands URC Synod, the Northampton Methodist District and Westgate New Church. The BoB project is open to anyone including those at risk of isolation. Thanks go to all involved in the recruitment process from the updated Job Description, advertising the vacancy, receiving the applications, assessing who should be called for interview, being part of the interview assessment event and decision on who to appoint, preparing contract documentation and the induction process.

BoB had a really good start. Suzanne introduced a structure for the morning which works well. When people arrive they sit in the 'Refreshments' area, connecting with each other. Suzanne has introduced a 'Pause for Thought', which gently introduces some Christian content. Everyone engages with this and are very happy for her to read from her Bible, which then often encourages further conversations when we are all sharing a meal. We have had one member clearly inquisitive about our faith (and theirs), and we are now in talks about starting a separate group where we can offer a space for questions to be answered around the Bible, spirituality and what it looks like to be a Christian. We are hoping to offer this out within the circuit to other outreach groups!

Suzanne serves a two-course cooked meal and this seems to be gratefully received. On average, at the start of the project, there were between six to twelve people coming. On the whole, the group has become a great space, and we hope that they all feel love, warmth and welcome.

As the year went on, the project grew and continued to grow. From the outset, none of us really knew what the group might look like and we continued to pray and let God have His way. We soon had twenty-seven people on our roll. Each one of these have sat at our table and have eaten with us; About 95% of these people live on their own, and a small number live on the fringe of society - Back of Beyond (or BoB) as we like to call it. We have welcomed people of all walks of life into our space. Suzanne's 'Pause for Thought' soon became a Christian based link to the Bible and very intentional, and was well accepted by all; it has raised conversations and questions about what it means 'to be a Christian' and to 'walk on a faith journey'. This group is definitely 'Church done differently'.

During our first year, we have had regular attendance of around twenty-five people. This is the core group with many others coming intermittently. After a successful Maundy Thursday service, where we shared Holy Communion, which was very special, it was agreed that we would hold a monthly service at BoB before lunch. This has been well received.

We now have someone come in once a month to do crafts with the group, we also play board games once a month and we are going to be introducing speakers too. It was recognised that that it was time to move the group forward by changing things. It is refreshing that the group is not just about the food anymore, but about being together as a church family. Relationships have formed, friendships have developed and there is a sense of community.

We now have thirty-three active members of this church family and, it is definitely a church community. There is one regular volunteer but, during the session, people who are able love to help with table setting, clearing away and serving hot drinks. This gives people a sense of purpose, and some would say 'a reason to get up on a Thursday morning'. We had a wonderful Christmas meal, where Suzanne served a three course Christmas Lunch. Everyone had a wonderful time; it was lovely to provide this space as, or some of them, Christmas Day was going to be spent alone. The last Thursday before Christmas we held a Christmas Party, and a Christmas buffet, we played appropriate games for the mobility of the group and everyone was very happy when they received

prizes too!

During the last few months, we have had people hospitalised, through ill-health or operations. We have also experienced bereavement. As a church family we have been able to send cards and flowers, and Suzanne has done several pastoral visits, either because she felt the need to or because she had been asked.

Suzanne's vision for this group is to continue to grow and nurture it. She hopes everyone feels loved and welcomed. It would be great to set up a space for those who are questioning their faith and want to learn more, and to have regular services would be an actual blessing.

- 3.3 Suzanne Delegate was appointed to the new as Lay Pastoral Assistant role and started her job on 19th June. Suzanne has slotted easily into her role as LPA to Revd Janet. They meet on a regular basis, and their understanding of each other's needs are good.

She has tried to identify where she is best placed, and one thing that all churches seem to require is provision for children. She has built a relationship with local schools and schoolwork is quite prominent within her role. She regularly ministers Collective Worship in three different schools around the Circuit, recognising the importance of building relationships with staff and children.

Rev Janet has allowed me to shape my role, using my strengths. One of my focuses has always been around children and young people. School work is quite prominent within my role, and she now regularly ministers Collective Worship in three different schools around the Circuit, recognising the importance of building relationships with staff and children.

She has created a Bible Craft club in one of the schools as a lunchtime activity and has a cohort of twenty children that consistently attend. They set themselves a Lent challenge, talking about God's Creation. She set a Poster competition, for children to express the importance of water, how we can save it and protect our planet. Following on from this, she was invited by the school to spend an afternoon with a class of children during their Religious Education studies, and she took groups of children on a Nature Trail to talk about God's Creation.

She visits another school on a weekly basis to read the 'End of school' story. This school has had a visit to one of our local circuit churches. Relationships with schools grow stronger. With fifteen children attending a lunchtime group that she runs.

She has also supported Revd Janet with school educational visits. They talked about different elements within the Church; the children were very engaged and asked a lot of questions. She taught the children an 'action' worship song and read a Bible story. At the end of March, she went to Dogsthorpe Methodist Church to welcome a local nursery to talk about Easter.

She organised a 'Youth Gathering' for all young people in December. This was advertised around the Circuit. Many of the churches highlighted that there was a need for this provision around our circuit. She would love to bring the young people in the Circuit together on a monthly basis. She is investigating this in more in-depth and maybe this will be a space where we can encourage our young people to bring along friends. This is something she and Tim Wong can work closely together with. These young people are the future of the Methodist Church. We need to nurture them and give them space for them to grow in faith.

She tries to attend as many outreach and community groups around the Circuit as possible - mainly the Dogsthorpe Breakfast group, Brookside Chat and Coffee group and, on occasions, the Community Hub. She has started a Bible lunch time group in Yaxley. She is helping Dogsthorpe to develop a Toddler Group, supporting them during the school holidays with their Breakfast Club. She been able to do some networking around the Circuit and it is great to see familiar faces that now also attend BoB.

The 'Pause for Thought' that she writes for BoB, now serves multiple church newsletters. She has been asked for pastoral visits, which she feels very humbled by. We have lots of people in our community who are feeling overwhelmed, lonely and just need a listening ear and someone to pray for them. It is great to be able to network around the Circuit, identifying people that could use groups at local churches, as is supporting group leaders in their work.

4 Safeguarding

- 4.1 David Whiting continued as our Circuit Safeguarding Officer. Thanks go to all the Safeguarding Team – David, Connie Hunt, Revd Janet Titterton, Revd Langley and Janet Rich.
- 4.1.2 Twenty-two people from the Peterborough Circuit completed the online version of 'Creating Safer Spaces' Advanced Module (CSSAM). Twelve people from four of our churches have attended a "Creating Safer Spaces Foundation Module" course at Southside Methodist Church. Twenty-two people signed up for the February face-to face CSSFM Safeguarding Foundation course at Dogsthorpe, eleven people from the Circuit completed the Zoom version of the course in February.
- 4.1.3 A Circuit-wide record of DBS checks was compiled.
- 4.1.4 We communicated that we are need of a trainer to assist in the giving of the 'Creating Safer Space' foundation module course, and would value more trainers generally.
- 4.1.5 The Circuit Safeguarding Policy for 2023 was amended and updated and agreed at our March Circuit Meeting.
- 4.1.6 The Circuit continues to abide by the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and keeps contacts and posters accurate and up to date. All the churches are up to date and compliant with the District GDPR requirements. Some church reps attended the Zoom training sessions led by the District Data Champion.
- 4.1.7 As part of the Methodist Church's response to the recommendations of the independent inquiry into 'Child Sexual Abuse: Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings', an internal audit of all Methodist districts by the Safeguarding Committee was undertaken.
- 4.1.8 The results from the Church Safeguarding Audit were collated and sent to District, and we await any feedback. The audit was a very worthwhile exercise; in general, all our churches were shown to have a good knowledge of what is required and were applying them in a satisfactory fashion.

5 Finance

- 5.1 The accounts for the year ended 31st August 2023 were audited and approved.
- 5.2 Income for the year was £150,402. The expenditure for the year was £181,743. Our reserves decreased by £31,341.
- 5.3 With the Russia and Ukraine situation, we expect more adverse effects and quite a significant reduction in the value of our reserve funds. Our Circuit Treasurer updated our 'Circuit Reserves Policy', and this was unanimously agreed at our January 2023 Circuit Meeting.
- 5.4 We have benefitted from regular income from the rental of the Birchtree venue manse, and not too much in terms of associated costs.
- 5.5 We know that times are challenging for our churches in the Circuit, and we are grateful for the shares that are received, with many churches continuing to match what they gave the previous year. However, our treasurer advised that, year on year this does have a detrimental effect on the budget and five-year forecasts. Ultimately it is not sustainable and we really need churches to consider year on year increases in giving.
CLT did look at moving away from the share system to an assessment-based calculation, using similar methods applied by the District used to calculate what each Circuit has to pay to the work of the District. Before it could be brought to the Circuit Meeting the pandemic came and so was put on hold. It should be noted that the first call for a church is to meet the assessment, in the same way that the first call of the Circuit is to meet the District assessment.
- 5.6 *Mission policy* We have a Mission policy which is continually held under review. We have our helpful Five-Year projected budget ('Five-year projections: Projected Costings for 2021 – 2026') and this helps us to plan ahead and be aware and prepared regarding what the position will look like in the

not-too-distant future, and looking further ahead in terms of being able to sustain a minister.

5.7 We are, again, indebted to Giles and Mark for all their hard work throughout the year.

6 Property

- 6.1 Mick Goodman and Simon Stewart continued on the Property Team. With the lack of a Property Team Co-ordinator, Revd Langley also dealt with property matters, which was an added responsibility, whilst we looked for someone else to be the team co-ordinator. We were delighted when Rhod Eaton took this on in November 2023.
- 6.2 Property schemes – Brookside fitted a new roof because of longstanding leaks. Money to fund this came from a loan from the Circuit, grant applications and their own successful fundraising efforts. Whittlesey formerly agreed a title for its work: 'Fresh Horizons'. There are two tiers to this scheme: A: To appoint a Family and Community Worker as a people resource and B: To modernise the front of the building so it is more effective for mission. As outlined earlier in the report, they went ahead straightaway with employing a Community Worker.
- 6.3 We continued to let the Dogsthorpe manse in Birchtree Avenue. As, last year, the CLT requested that rental income from the rental of the Birchtree Avenue manse be used for work in the Circuit, this was put into the Lay Pastoral Assistant role.
- 6.5 Quinquennials were carried out at Crowland and Dogsthorpe. Quinquennials were done at the Gunthorpe Road and Fleming Court manses.
- 6.6 Regarding Westgate New Church, significant refurbishment has been going on in the Christian Bookshop. £100,000 of work has been put into that building by the URC, and a smaller amount from the local congregation, which is a reflection of how well they have managed their finances and also the particular model of mission they operate. They rent out the bookshop.
- 6.7 A defibrillator was affixed to the outside of the chapel at Elton.
- 6.8 Progress has been made regard the sale of Ailsworth chapel. The solicitors have been liaising with Trustees for Methodist Church purposes (TMCP) and the surveyor regarding the best way of selling the property. We have now been granted permission to sell.
- 6.9 Revd Langley e-mailed all Church Property Secretaries, particularly in relation to ensuring that Safeguarding, GDPR and Insurance notices were displayed, and that Health and Safety Surveys, Risk Assessments, Letting Agreements, and Key holder Agreements were all in place. This was very much a team effort, and is already part of our working but, it was good preparation for the circuit safeguarding audit that took place after Easter. This was part of the District Safeguarding Audit where the District was resourcing its safeguarding and looking at how it was supporting the circuits.

In conclusion

One of the significant highlights this year are the challenges that have emerged and the positive ways being discussed in which our Circuit Life can change, develop and become more relevant in serving the opportunities coming out of those changes. The Circuit Leadership Team is grateful to everyone for their support, prayers and contributions throughout this busy and challenging year. As we give thanks for this year, and look ahead to a new one, we close with some prayers, starting with this one from Revd Janet Titterton:

Father,

We come to the end of our year with a note of thankfulness. We thank you for Your Holy Spirit. We thank You that, through Your Spirit, You call so many people to serve You so faithfully in so many different ways, large and small, seen and unseen in our churches and in our circuit and in our community beyond our walls. We pray Your Holy Spirit will continue to call and to challenge that others might respond, that others might say yes to what it is You are asking them to do, so that we can continue to serve, to grow and to reveal Your kingdom in our lives and in our churches. As we go forward, help us to praise You for all that is past and to trust You for all that is to come.

In Jesus' name, Amen

We continue to give thanks for many blessings:

We celebrate how small groups across the Circuit are helping people find a new depth of fellowship and support, and we pray their faith in Jesus will grow.

That our aim to have our three lay worker appointments filled by the end of this year has been fulfilled.

The continued service of some of our churches by way of Warm Hub and Foodbank facilities.

The good news that we now have a new Circuit Property Steward together with an additional Circuit Steward.

That in times of challenge and austerity, new and innovative ideas are realised.

Seeing new people come to church (in person and online), and witnessing existing members growing in their faith and learning new skills.

New groups and new initiatives being set up in our churches.

Our District and the wider Connexion in all their resourcing of us.

We continue to pray:

For those who have been baptised and confirmed.

That our faith in Jesus will grow.

For those who attend our small groups – that they will invite others.

For us to notice and maximise people's talent and guide people into the right roles, and for guidance on how we bring them into leadership roles in our churches and in our circuit.

For our thoughts on how we can make the best use of our resources.

We end with the following prayer – a challenge to think about what we should do as a community of faith:

What do you ask of us Lord? You know our possibilities, you know our frailties, our weaknesses, our prejudices. Yet, You still call us to Your work. You challenge us to stand against injustice; to overcome our fears; to act as Your hands; to be Your voice; to be Your ambassadors on earth, emulating your preference for those living in poverty and the marginalised. With You in us and beside us we can fulfil what You ask of us. Amen.

(Hilary Evans, ex-President of Methodist Women in Britain, 2021-2022)

Signed: *L Mackrell-Hey*

*Revd Dr Langley Mackrell-Hey
Chair and Superintendent of the Methodist Circuit:
The Peterborough Methodist Circuit of Churches*

Date: 28th June, 2024

THE METHODIST CHURCH STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS

PETERBOROUGH

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2023**

District	Circuit no	23/21
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number

1135613

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

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

Ministers:

REVD DR LANGLEY MACKRELL-HEY
REVD JANET TITTERTON
REVD SARAH GOWER

Circuit Stewards:

MRS SUE KEENEY
MRS CHRISTINE KELL
MR SIMON STEWART
MRS S HOLMES

Treasurer:

MR GILES ARMSTRONG

SECTION A

			Un - restricted Funds	Circuit Model Trust Fund	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
	Note		£	£	£	£	£
a1	RECEIPTS						
a2	Assessment/Share		128,243			128,243	135,595
a3	Capital receipts			- 6,874		- 6,874	(10,943)
a4	Bank and CFB interest and Investment income		2,727	5,011		7,738	6,432
a5	Grants		3,000			3,000	
a6	Other receipts		18,295			18,295	62,988
a7	TOTAL RECEIPTS		152,265	- 1,863	-	150,402 (a8)	194,072

SECTION B

b1	PAYMENTS						
b2	Stipends, salaries, NIC, Pension and travel costs		100,349.60			100,350	90,930
b3	Manse Costs		15,485.97			15,486	9,114
b4	Administration etc		6,087.17			6,087	4,300
b5	District Assessment		30,169.76			30,170	17,556
b6	Grants & donations		12,500.25			12,500	
b7						-	
b8	Other payments		11,110.81	6,039		17,150	19,841
b9	TOTAL PAYMENTS		175,704	6,039	-	181,743 (b9)	141,741

SECTION C

c1	NET RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR	(a7-b9) -	23,439	- 7,902	-	- 31,341	52,331
c2	Total funds brought forward from last year		136,571	166,991		303,562 (c6)	251,231
c3	Sub total	(c1+c2)	113,132	159,089		272,221	303,562
c4	Transfers and adjustments					- (c7)	
c5	TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR	(c3+c4)	113,132	159,089		272,221 (c8)	303,562 (c6)

SECTION D

d	FOR INFORMATION ONLY: MONEY RECEIVED AND PASSED ON TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (these amounts should not be included in total receipts/payments above)						
d1	Balance brought forward from last year					-	-
d2	Offerings/Gifts - received for external organisations					-	-
d3	Offerings/Gifts - passed to external organisations					-	-
d4	BALANCE STILL TO BE PAID (d1 + d2 - d3)					-	-

SUMMARY OF CIRCUIT ACCOUNTS AND INTERNAL ORGANISATION REPORTING TO THE CIRCUIT MEETING**SECTION E** Please follow the Guidance Notes to complete this page

Summary of the Circuit accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023 and Internal Organisations reporting to the Circuit Meeting. Note that the funds of an Internal Organisation would normally be Restricted funds unless it could be clearly shown that they could be used for any Methodist purpose. This section must be completed to arrive at the gross receipts and payments totals of the Circuit. If gross income exceeds the Accruals threshold of £250,000, then the Accruals method of accounting AND A DIFFERENT FORM must be used to report the accounts (see Methodist website). Please refer to the guidance notes regarding transfers between the Circuit and connected Circuit Organisations.

INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS	Receipts	Payments	Net Receipts/ Payments	Adjustments	Opening balances	Closing balances
e1						
e2						
e3						
e4						
e5						
e6						
e7						
e8 Sub total of Internal Organisations funds					(e11)	(e12)
e9 Circuit accounts (totals brought forward from page 2 - totals column)	150,402 (a8)	181,743 (b9)	(31,341)	(c7)	303,562 (c6)	272,221 (c8)
e10 TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CIRCUIT	150,402	181,743	- 31,341	-	303,562 (x)	272,221 (y)
Continue on a separate sheet if necessary and bring the totals forward	TOTAL RECEIPTS	TOTAL PAYMENTS				

SECTION F**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES****CIRCUIT - CASH FUNDS HELD at 31 August 2023**

	OPENING BALANCES	CLOSING BALANCES
f1 Cash in hand		
f2 Bank Current Account	120,600	101,120
f3 Bank Deposit Account		
f4 Central Finance Board	12,972	9,014
f5 Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes	169,990	162,087
f6 Other funds		
f7 SUB TOTAL	303,562 (c6)	272,221 (c8)
f8 Total funds held by Internal Organisations (the closing balance totals above) (e12)	(e11)	(e12)
f9 TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CIRCUIT	303,562 (x)	272,221 (y)

SECTION G**OTHER ASSETS and LIABILITIES**

	At 31 August 2023	At 31 August 2022
g1 Investments (include Endowments)		
g2 Land and Buildings (see notes re Insurance value)	1,049,317	878,820
g3 Other Assets		
g4 Loan(s) - show amount outstanding at year end		
g5 Other Liabilities		

f4 Include only Funds held at the Central Finance Board

f5 Include only CFB Funds held at Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

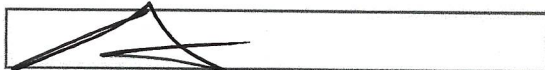
g1 Include any other investments (not the cash element of TMCP trust accounts this is inserted in line f5)

DECLARATIONS

Treasurer

I confirm that I have prepared the accounts from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit

Signature of Treasurer



Date

23/1/24

Name

MR. GILES ARMSTRONG

Address


1, EATHWAITE GREEN, PETERBOROUGH PE4 6SZ

Presentation to the *Circuit Meeting for approval.

I confirm that the Accounts have been presented to the Circuit Meeting on
and were approved.

23/11/23

Signature of the Chair of the meeting



Name of the Chair of the meeting

LAJ MACKRELL-HELI

Date

30/11/23

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

PETERBOROUGH

Circuit

This Report is on the Circuit Accounts for the year ended 31st August

2023

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under Section 145 of the Charities Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act), and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

THE METHODIST CHURCH STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS

PETERBOROUGH

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2023**

District	Circuit no	23/21
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number

1135613

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

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

Ministers:

REVD DR LANGLEY MACKRELL-HEY
REVD JANET TITTERTON
REVD SARAH GOWER

Circuit Stewards:

MRS SUE KEENEY
MRS CHRISTINE KELL
MR SIMON STEWART
MRS S HOLMES

Treasurer:

MR GILES ARMSTRONG

SECTION A			Un - restricted Funds	Circuit Model Trust Fund	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
	Note		£	£	£	£	£
a1	RECEIPTS						
a2	Assessment/Share		128,243			128,243	135,595
a3	Capital receipts			- 6,874		- 6,874	(10,943)
a4	Bank and CFB interest and Investment income		2,727	5,011		7,738	6,432
a5	Grants		3,000			3,000	
a6	Other receipts		18,295			18,295	62,988
a7	TOTAL RECEIPTS		152,265	- 1,863	-	150,402 (a8)	194,072

SECTION B							
b1	PAYMENTS						
b2	Stipends, salaries, NIC, Pension and travel costs		100,349.60			100,350	90,930
b3	Manse Costs		15,485.97			15,486	9,114
b4	Administration etc		6,087.17			6,087	4,300
b5	District Assessment		30,169.76			30,170	17,556
b6	Grants & donations		12,500.25			12,500	
b7						-	
b8	Other payments		11,110.81	6,039		17,150	19,841
b9	TOTAL PAYMENTS		175,704	6,039	-	181,743 (b9)	141,741

SECTION C							
c1	NET RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR	(a7-b9) -	23,439	- 7,902	-	- 31,341	52,331
c2	Total funds brought forward from last year		136,571	166,991		303,562 (c6)	251,231
c3	Sub total	(c1+c2)	113,132	159,089		272,221	303,562
c4	Transfers and adjustments					- (c7)	
c5	TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR	(c3+c4)	113,132	159,089		272,221 (c8)	303,562 (c6)

SECTION D						
d	FOR INFORMATION ONLY: MONEY RECEIVED AND PASSED ON TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (these amounts should not be included in total receipts/payments above)					
d1	Balance brought forward from last year				-	-
d2	Offerings/Gifts - received for external organisations				-	-
d3	Offerings/Gifts - passed to external organisations				-	-
d4	BALANCE STILL TO BE PAID (d1 + d2 - d3)				-	-

SUMMARY OF CIRCUIT ACCOUNTS AND INTERNAL ORGANISATION REPORTING TO THE CIRCUIT MEETING

SECTION E

Please follow the Guidance Notes to complete this page

Summary of the Circuit accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023 and Internal Organisations reporting to the Circuit Meeting. Note that the funds of an Internal Organisation would normally be Restricted funds unless it could be clearly shown that they could be used for any Methodist purpose. This section must be completed to arrive at the gross receipts and payments totals of the Circuit. If gross income exceeds the Accruals threshold of £250,000, then the Accruals method of accounting AND A DIFFERENT FORM must be used to report the accounts (see Methodist website). Please refer to the guidance notes regarding transfers between the Circuit and connected Circuit Organisations.

INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS	Receipts	Payments	Net Receipts/ Payments	Adjustments	Opening balances	Closing balances
e1						
e2						
e3						
e4						
e5						
e6						
e7						
e8	Sub total of Internal Organisations funds				(e11)	(e12)
e9	Circuit accounts (totals brought forward from page 2 - totals column)	150,402 (a8)	181,743 (b9)	(31,341)	303,562 (c6)	272,221 (c8)
e10	TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CIRCUIT	150,402	181,743	- 31,341	303,562 (x)	272,221 (y)
Continue on a separate sheet if necessary and bring the totals forward						
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	TOTAL PAYMENTS				

SECTION F

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

CIRCUIT - CASH FUNDS HELD at 31 August 2023

	OPENING BALANCES	CLOSING BALANCES
f1		
f2	120,600	101,120
f3		
f4	12,972	9,014
f5	169,990	162,087
f6		
f7	SUB TOTAL	
f8	Total funds held by Internal Organisations (the closing balance totals above) (e12)	
f9	TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CIRCUIT	
	303,562 (x)	272,221 (y)

SECTION G

OTHER ASSETS and LIABILITIES

	At 31 August 2023	At 31 August 2022
g1		
g2	1,049,317	878,820
g3		
g4		
g5		

f4 Include only Funds held at the Central Finance Board

f5 Include only CFB Funds held at Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

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

DECLARATIONS

Treasurer

I confirm that I have prepared the accounts from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit

Signature of Treasurer Date

Name

Address

Presentation to the *Circuit Meeting for approval.

I confirm that the Accounts have been presented to the Circuit Meeting on
and were approved.

Signature of the Chair of the meeting

Name of the Chair of the meeting

Date

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

Circuit

This Report is on the Circuit Accounts for the year ended 31st August

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an independent audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under Section 145 of the Charities Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act), and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

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

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention (other than that disclosed below*):

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act;
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply appropriate*

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

** Please circle as appropriate*

Name

M. J. RUFFLES

Signature

M. J. RUFFLES

Relevant Professional qualification or body

FCA ICAEW

Address

4 BARON COURT
PETERBOROUGH PE4 7ZE

Date

04/10/23