

**BURY ST EDMUNDS METHODIST CIRCUIT (Registered Charity 1135971)
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

CIRCUIT MINISTERS

Reverend Canon Jason Vinyard 14 Well Street Bury St Edmunds IP33 1EQ
 Reverend Rita Carr 12 Shakespeare Road Stowmarket
 IP14 1TJ
 Reverend Ruth Ridge 4 Kedington Court Acton CO10 0XB

CIRCUIT STEWARDS

Mr Bill Humm 52 Farriers Road Stowmarket IP14 2NS (to March 2023)
 Mrs Jane Brooker
 Mr Francis Carr 12 Shakespeare Road Stowmarket IP14 1TJ
 Mr Andrew Walker 14 Horsecroft Road Bury St Edmunds IP33 2 DU

CIRCUIT TREASURERS

Mr Richard Meadows 16 Greene Mews Bury St Edmunds IP33 1QL
 Mr Richard Wild (Assistant) Palmers Cottage The Green Woolpit IP30 9RQ

THE TRUSTEES are those persons appointed by the Circuit Meeting under Methodist Church rules. In March 2023 Mr Bill Humm moved from the Circuit to be nearer his family. The Trustees are grateful for all the work Mr Humm did for the Circuit, for example as senior steward and local preacher, on top of all his duties for his local church at Stowmarket.

THE CIRCUIT is the primary unit in which local churches express and experience their interconnection in the body of Christ for the purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help. The Circuit comprises 9 churches and had a team of two and a half Ministers covering a mainly rural area of some 500 square miles. There were 3 active supernumerary ministers and 11 local preachers. From time to time Sunday services are held on a local arrangement basis if no minister or local preacher can be found.

THE CHURCHES' membership and attendance numbers were as follows:

	Membership		Attendance	
	2022	2023	November 2022	
2023				
Bradfield	7	4	9	6
Glemsford	8	8	12	13
Ixworth	12	12	7	7
Needham Market	34	34	22	22
Northumberland Avenue	18	17	25	25
Old Newton	17	17	14	12
St Johns Sudbury	67	62	45	45
Stowmarket	33	38	29	32
Trinity Bury St Edmunds	<u>107</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>60</u>
Total		303		304
213	224			

Churches' annual assessment contributions to Circuit expenses are set out in note 1 to the accounts.

CIRCUIT ACTIVITIES

Circuit Newsletter: The circuit publishes a monthly newsletter covering its own activities it organises together with activities taking place in, or planned by, the local churches. This ensures that church members and friends know what is going on across the Circuit as a whole and can support the activities of other churches as well as their own. It also includes information for services and events across the district, and links to other Methodist Organisations such as the Joint Public Issues Team and Methodist Homes. Amongst other things there is a monthly environmental and eco article. The front cover features artwork from people within the circuit.

Continuing Local Preachers' and Ministers' Development: The Justice, Dignity and Solidarity report agreed and adopted at Methodist Conference continues to be the focus for on-going development; Unconscious Bias and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training is being carried out by all Local Preachers, Church Stewards and Ministers. The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders and ministers meet quarterly for business such as ongoing training, forward planning and for pastoral support, fellowship and study.

Safeguarding and GDPR: The Circuit Safeguarding Officer, the Superintendent, Ministers and Safeguarding Officers within the Circuit churches ensure all DBS certificates are up to date, and also The Foundational and Advanced Module Safeguarding courses are completed. Annual GDPR checks have been completed.

EDI and Unconscious Bias

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Unconscious Bias has been completed by over half of the Circuit's Presbyters and Stewards. A positive step and it is good to see people engaging with this training. The training is undertaken by individuals online, and some 'face to face' training has taken place. Those who have completed the course are very positive about it, with the key take away being our use of language.

The Environmental and Eco Circuit Policy: Four Eco Church days were held at Bradfield to build a group of interested individuals. This Circuit initiative has the name B.eco.ME. Target now is to widen participation and work towards planning for Net Zero by 2030, taking into consideration the recommendations for Methodist Church report and mission – A Justice Seeking Church. Creation services feature in each circuit church, led by our Eco lead and we have an annual Circuit Service around the Season of Creation, towards increasing awareness of ecological matters and the theology of this, while developing towards Net Zero targets as agreed at Conference. The Trustees of the church in which the Circuit Office is housed, will apply for Eco Church, while other churches within the circuit have obtained silver and bronze certificates.

Circuit Office progress towards Eco Circuit certification continues – as the Circuit Office is situated in a Circuit church, we factor that both need consideration to obtain Eco Circuit Certification – both for the 'Office' and the 'Whole' building – during this year continued replacement to low energy LED lighting has taken place, and the building had a substantial refurb some years where underfloor heating and full eco insulation was added. The Office photocopy has many environmental factors - low energy, sustainably sourced components, and material, carbon neutral papers, recycling. Circuit office continues working with A Rocha Christian environmental charity (Eco Church)

and policy is to develop this across the circuit. The Circuit Office uses a GDPR compliant shredder.

Circuit Website: The Circuit Website is continually updated and has resources available such as 'the theology of safeguarding' and information on circuit church events, services and links to partner organisations. The Circuit Newsletter and Preaching Plan is uploaded monthly, with GDPR compliance.

Circuit Services are held for fellowship of all the circuit churches and have included a creation service, and a contemplative service with a meal afterwards – these are to supplement the weekly services within the local congregations.

Staff Meetings: The ministers in active appointment meet every two weeks, for fellowship, support, to share news from across the circuit churches, for strategic thinking, for plan making, and for time of prayer.

Circuit Leadership Team: made up of Circuit Ministers, Circuit Stewards, Circuit Treasures, meets regularly and before each Circuit Meeting to develop circuit policy and agreements on circuit matters, to recommend any conference policy and to continue to develop policies such as risk assessment and lone worker policies. It also meets to develop circuit strategy.

Children and Community Worker: Circuit contributes £2'000 to St John's Children and Community Worker. The circuit assists in supporting a Community Worker at St John's, Sudbury, who works with a team to engage with the local community through a toddler group, after school club and drop in coffee and activities group. The team also runs regular Messy Church sessions.

Line Management: The circuit ensures line management of the Circuit PA/Administrator and plans are in place to develop our lone worker policy.

Supervision as set out by Methodist Conference: The circuit superintendent regularly meets presbyteral staff for Pastoral Supervision as agreed at Connexional Conference for formation and continued ministerial development.

Ecumenical work is continued across all churches in the circuit, sharing acts of worship, lent and easter combined bible studies, World Day of Prayer, Week of Christian Unity, Good Friday Walk of Witness and mission events such as Messy Church, Open the Book in schools, and services at A Rocha Nature Reserve. Strong links have been developed with St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

Bradfield Retreat: The circuit has been exploring ways to make fuller use of its buildings. Bradfield chapel is situated in the countryside with good parking, meeting rooms and good transport links and the circuit has been exploring how this could be used to provide facilities for retreats and quiet days. The circuit Eco group, B.eco.ME have met here on a number of occasions and churches have used the premises for away days. At circuit meetings there has been agreement and plans develop towards the creation of a retreat centre and refurbishment of ancillary cottage at Bradfield Methodist Church to create a sustainable source of revenue for the mission of the circuit.

Grants to Circuit churches: During the year Circuit agreed grants for several Circuit churches towards property improvements.

The Martins Methodist Homes Association: The senior circuit steward is the chaplain at The Martins and links continue to restore since the pandemic and Circuit Ministers and Supernumeraries offer Holy Communion to residents on a weekly basis and utilise Churches Together ecumenical links with other ordained colleagues from across Bury St Edmunds

Culford Methodist School: A local preacher in the circuit is chaplain and head of RE at Culford and links continue to develop. The Superintendent is welcomed at Culford, shares in services such as The Annual Carol Service, presides at Holy Communion for school staff at start of term, and meets the chaplain and other staff, on a regular basis

Churches in the Circuit continue to be inclusive, welcoming and some have now registered to take equal marriage services and welcomed new families and new members. There are continued programmes of improvements to properties and all the necessary annual checks. An example of works completed range from new underfloor heating to decorating. The Circuit Churches serve their local communities in several ways: from craft groups; affordable lunch clubs and cafes, warm spaces; pastoral support groups and hosting community groups such as AA, Bury Drop In – that supports vulnerably housed and homeless which links with local organisations and NHS to provide support and routes to housing and employment and health care. Participation in Bible Studies and House groups has flourished, meaning new groups have been formed.

Circuit staff and volunteers: We are incredibly grateful for the time, talents, gifts and prayers, overall strategic thinking, management and fellowship they share across the circuit.

CIRCUIT PROPERTY MATTERS

Work continued on the refurbishment of the manse in Well Street, including the re-equipment of the downstairs bathroom and a start on major repairs, using traditional methods, to the boundary walls largely of flint and stone fragments from the dissolved abbey. Expenditure remained within the Budget of £100,000 authorised by Circuit Meeting.

Last year's annual report noted that the future of the closed Cotton church premises was under consideration. Proposals for retention, for example as a community facility, were considered but were not seen as capable of coming to fruition. In June the Circuit Meeting agreed that the church should go for sale on the open market. Cotton Methodist Church, Northumberland Methodist Church and Glemsford Methodist Church all had their quinquennials.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Circuit's financial objective is to meet its day to day running costs, referred to in the accounts as expenditure on on-going activities, from income from on-going activities, namely assessments, interest and rental income from the Sudbury manse. The accounts show a surplus of £9,059 on on-going activities. This was due to increased interest receipts and an underspend of £2,780 of the manse maintenance provision - transferred to the designated fund. Taking account of other activities, in Part B of the accounts, there was an overall net surplus of £915,711. However, this included a gain of £933,000 following a revaluation of the manses. Without that the accounts would have shown a deficit of £17,289. The value of net current assets at the start of the year were £254,818 and £237,529 by the end of the year. The Circuit remained in a strong financial position. However, the state of the Circuit's finances are closely

monitored to ensure that appropriate and timely action could be taken to ensure continuing sustainability.

RESERVES POLICY

In last year's annual report we published the allocation of reserves at 31.08.22:

90,000	6 months' expenditure in hand
50,000	Eco etc projects
30,000	Mission
20,000	Post Covid relief
25,000	Extra administration provision
24,000	Remaining work at Well Street.
239,000	Total

This was out of total funds at that date of £254,000.

Total funds at 31.08.23 were £238,000.

£17,000 of the Well Street allocation had been spent by that date. Post-Covid factors have now worked out of the system, and as a matter of good practice the circuit reserves are now

90,000	6 months expenditure in hand
60,000	Eco etc projects
30,000	Mission
25,000	Extra administration provision
7,000	Remaining work at Well Street
212,000	Total

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES - YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

	Notes	2022-23		2021-22	
		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total

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STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AT 31 AUGUST 2023

	Notes	31 August 2023			31 August 2022
		Unrestrict- ed funds £	Restric- ed funds £	Total £	Total £
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors and prepayments		4,932	0	4,932	3,302
Central Finance Board account		162,690	0	162,690	162,173
Model Trust Funds - held by TMCP		99,323	0	99,323	107,821
HSBC current account		8,562	0	8,562	20,727
Cash		0	0	0	87
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		275,507	-	275,507	294,110
Creditors due under 1 year	10	37,979	0	37,979	39,292
TOTAL NET CURRENT ASSETS		237,529	-	237,529	254,818
Fixed assets - Manses	12	1,950,000	0	1,950,000	1,017,000
TOTAL NET ASSETS		2,187,529	0	2,187,529	1,271,818

REPRESENTED BY

General fund		135,426	0	135,426	146,997
Manse maintenace fund - designated	11	2,780	0	2,780	0
Model Trust Funds - held by TMCP		99,323	0	99,323	107,821
Manses titles - held by TMCP	12	1,950,000	0	1,950,000	1,017,000
TOTAL		2,187,529	0	2,187,529	1,271,818

Signed: *Francis Carr*

Date:
12.3.24

Senior Circuit Steward

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ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2022-23

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

Accounting policies

Basis of accounting These financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention, except as noted below in respect of the valuation of manses, and in accordance with Statements of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities, and applicable UK accounting standards and the Charities Act 1993. The estimated net realizable value of the manses has been incorporated in the accounts. There has been no change in accounting policies from the previous year.

Reserves Total net current assets at the end of the year were £237,529. Circuit policy is to hold unrestricted reserves equivalent to about six month's expenditure. The Circuit has drawn up a reserves policy which considers how funds in excess of that can best be used to meet its charitable objectives and these are reported in the annual report.

Incoming resources All incoming resources are recognized once the Circuit has entitlement to them, it is certain they will be received and the monetary value of incoming resources can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Resources expended Liabilities are recognized as resources expended as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation which commits the Circuit to the expenditure. All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs relating to that category.

Irrecoverable VAT Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the category of resource expended for which it was incurred.

Tangible fixed assets Tangible fixed assets are capitalized if they have a cost in excess of £2,000 and can be used for more than one year. The only such assets are the manses in Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket and Sudbury.

1 Assessments

Assessments are based on perceived ability to pay as indicated by the average income of each church over the previous five years. Allowance is made for any extraordinary income such as bequests and grants. The total assessment required to support circuit is then shared between the churches pro-rata to income. Assessments received were:

	2021-22(£)	2022-23(£)
Bradfield	7,162	7,298
Glemsford	2,000	3,000
Ixworth	6,000	5,825
Needham Market	10,690	9,184
Northumberland Avenue	11,270	12,316
Old Newton	11,654	11,636
St John's Sudbury	41,760	44,940
Stowmarket	13,304	14,404
Trinity Bury St Edmunds	55,062	57,920
Total	158,902	166,523

2 Rent from manse

The figure is net £14,950 less agent's fees £1,361.

3 Other receipts and donations and gifts

Restricted receipts comprise collection at Circuit service (£99) and donation towards a benevolence payment (£125). Donations and gifts paid from restricted and unrestricted funds as shown.

4 Staff costs	2021-22(£)	2022-23(£)
Stipends and salary	73,911	81,260
Pension contributions	17,951	18,587
Employers NI	5,874	6,216
Allowances	513	536
Apprenticeship levy	378	417
Total	98,627	107,016

Number of full-time employees	2.8	3
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5 District Travel Fund

This is the Circuit's contribution towards the Fund run by District (based on the number of Ministers in each Circuit) from which actual travel costs are paid.

6 Manse maintenance

Expenditure over the two years of £114,864 included the cost of an extensive programme of essential repairs and refurbishment works at the Well Street Manse (£ 92,925) and a new bathroom and kitchen at the Stowmarket Manse (£20,564).

7 Contributions to District Advance Fund

A levy of 2.5% on the first £100,000, 5% between £100,000 and £250,000 and 7.5% above £250,000 is applied by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) to the Circuit Advance Fund as at 1 September and paid to the East Anglia District Advance Fund.

8 Cotton

Expenditure was on the empty building insurance policy and heating and maintenance to preserve the building's fabric while decisions were taken about its future.

9 Grants to churches

Grants to churches were: £2,000 lay worker and £1,000 towards new boiler at Sudbury and £6,000 towards lighting and soundproofing and £372 legal fees at Stowmarket.

10 Creditors

This item includes advance payments totaling £36,405 from churches of their first quarterly assessments for 2023-24.

11 Manse maintenance fund

A manse maintenance fund has been set up. There is an annual allocation of £20,000 with any in-year underspend or overspend being credited or debited to the fund.

12 Manses

The manses are owned by the TMCP but are managed on their behalf by the Trustees of the Bury St Edmunds Methodist Circuit. As such their value is only reported in these accounts as a convenience to the owners TMCP. As indicated in last year's accounts the value of the manses has been reviewed in the light of local market conditions and the refurbishment of the Well Street manse and increased to £1,950,000.

13 Trustees

None of the Trustees, or persons connected with them, received any remuneration or other benefits from the Circuit or any connected organization as a result of their office during the year.

DECLARATIONS

1. TREASURER

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

Signature R J Meadows
Circuit Treasurer

Date 15 October 2023

2. INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE BURY ST EDMUNDS METHODIST CIRCUIT

This report is on the Circuit accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the Examiner

The Circuit's Trustees are responsible for the preparations of the accounts. The Charity's Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under Section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is required. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts under Section 145 of the Charities Act.

Basis of the Independent Examiner's Report

My examination comprised a review of the accounting records kept by the Circuit Treasurer and a comparison of the accounts with those records. The procedures undertaken do not provide evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion in the view given by those accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with my examination no matter has come to my attention:

- a) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 46 of the Charities Act, and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the Accounting Act have not been met, or
- b) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signature Stephen Cook
Stephen Cook MA FCA 84 Whiting Street Bury St Edmunds IP33 1NZ

Date 6 March 2024

3. PRESENTATION TO THE CIRCUIT MEETING FOR APPROVAL

I confirm the accounts have been presented to the Circuit Meeting on 12 March 2024 and were approved.

Signature of the Chairperson of the meeting

Revn Canon Jason Vinyard