

BURY ST EDMUNDS METHODIST CIRCUIT *(Registered Charity 1135971)*
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

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 Francis Carr	12 Shakespeare Road Stowmarket IP14 1TJ
Mrs Jane Brooker	
Mr Andrew Walker	14 Horsecroft Road Bury St Edmunds IP33 2DU

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.

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:

Church	Membership November 2023	Membership November 2024	Attendance November 2023	Attendance November 2024
Bradfield	7	4	9	6
Glemsford	8	8	12	14
Ixworth	12	12	7	7
Christchurch Needham Market LEP	34	34	22	22
Northumberland Avenue	18	17	25	25
Old Newton	17	17	14	12
St John's Sudbury	67	62	45	45
Stowmarket	33	38	29	32
Trinity Bury St Edmunds	107	107	50	60
Totals	303	299	213	223

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

Churches in the Circuit continue to be inclusive, welcoming and register to officiate equal marriage services; some circuit churches have officiated same-sex marriages, and some churches have

welcomed new families and new members. Across the circuit churches services of Baptism, Confirmation have taken place, and several funerals for local members and community. The Circuit Churches serve their local communities in several ways: from Old Newton's craft groups; affordable lunch clubs and Trinity's and Ixworth's affordable weekly café days, St John's family work, Northumberland Avenue Tots group, and some provide warm spaces. The circuit churches also provide community spaces an example, Trinity hosts a community choir., and 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. Within some of the circuit churches, participation in Bible Studies and House groups has flourished, meaning new groups have been formed, and pastoral groups continue. There are continued programmes of improvements to properties for accessibility to premises and also during worship services and all the necessary annual checks. An example of works completed range from new fire alarm, underfloor heating, AV screens, sound baffles, to decorating.

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 and ecumenical 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 East Anglia District, and links to other Methodist Organisations including the Joint Public Issues Team and Methodist Homes. Amongst other events there is a monthly environmental and eco article and gardening page fusing our spirituality and place in Suffolk. The front cover features artwork from people within the circuit supporting our local creativity, and theology of creation and incarnation, and the national Methodist Artwork collection bringing in wider theological perspective.

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 has been carried out by 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, and further development and learning fellowship and study. During the year a local church member gave testimony to become a preacher on note, exploring a calling to the ministry of local preaching, and a mentor and tutor from among the meeting was appointed. During this year the Local Preachers Meeting reformatted the agenda to give time to business and a more balanced time to worship, spirituality and wellbeing.

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. The Circuit Safeguarding Policy is reviewed annually and the September meeting and adopted and is on the circuit website, Annual GDPR checks have been completed.

EDI and Unconscious Bias:

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Unconscious Bias has been completed by most 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 and the learning from legally protected characteristics and accessibility of worship and premises.

The Environmental and Eco Circuit Policy: Four Eco Church days were held at Bradfield Methodist Chapel to support the group, made up of representatives from each circuit church. This

Circuit initiative has the name B.eco.ME. Target 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 continue to apply Eco Church – some churches within the circuit have obtained silver and bronze certificates, and as this focus develops the Circuit identifies that over Net-Zero, the Circuit will focus on Eco-Church and Eco-Theology.

Circuit Office: progress towards Eco Circuit certification continues – during this year continued replacement to low energy LED lighting has taken place, and the building has underfloor heating and full eco insulation in roofs. Focus is towards low energy usage, sustainably sourced materials, carbon neutral papers, recycling. Circuit office continues working with A Rocha Christian environmental charity (Eco Church) and policy is to continue to develop this across the circuit. The Circuit Office uses a GDPR compliant shredder. During the year to fulfil the lone worker policy, new door locks were fitted, viewing glass to office doors, and a cctv system compliant with GDPR.

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, and Circuit Harvest service in which a local preacher received their 50 years of Local Preaching certificate, Ash Wednesday and Holy Week services.

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.

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, Advent, 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 some Circuit churches towards property improvements and Children and Family work.

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. The Circuit Superintendent worked with a student confirmation group and nine students were confirmed.

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 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.

Two years previously the 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. The Circuit Meeting agreed that the church should go for sale on the open market and Cotton Methodist Church was sold with all legal compliance signed off by Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes in August 2024. Quinquennials are up to date.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Circuit's Financial objective remains to meet its day to day running costs from income on on-going activities. These are mainly assessments received from the individual churches but also rental income on the Sudbury manse and interest income on reserves.

The accounts showed a surplus of £1,195 from ongoing activities compared to £9,059 the previous year. The lower surplus was due to continued expenditure on the Well Street Manse and Higher Administrative Costs coupled with general cost of living expenses.

Other costs totalled £21,888, including grants made to churches of £13,500 left us with an overall shortfall of £20,693 reducing the value of net current assets from £237,529 to £216,836

Although the Circuit remained in a strong financial position the Circuit Finances' continued to be closely monitored.

RESERVES POLICY

The reserves shown within the Net Current Assets of £216836 are earmarked as follows:

Description	Amount
6 months expenditure	£90,000.00
Eco Projects Etc.	£60,000.00
Mission Work	£30,000.00
Extra administration provision	£25,000.00
Removal Fund	£2,500.00
Manse expenditure	£7,500.00
Total	£215,000.00

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted 2023-24 £	Restricted 2023-24 £	Total 2023-24 £	Total 2022-23 £
PART A ONGOING ACTIVITIES					
INCOME FROM ONGOING ACTIVITIES					
Assessments	1	162,545		162,545	166,523
Rent from manse - net	2	14,936		14,936	13,589
Interest		11,504		11,504	7,708
Other		73		73	224
TOTAL INCOME FROM ONGOING ACTIVITIES		189,058	0	189,058	188,044
EXPENDITURE ONGOING ACTIVITIES					
District assessment		31,475		31,475	31,562
<i>Ministerial support</i>					
Ministers' stipends and pensions	3	94,891		94,891	95,078
District travel fund	4	5,250		5,250	4,500
Manse council tax and water		6,407		6,407	6,140
Manse maintenance	5	23,777		23,777	17,220
Manse insurance		2,722		2,722	2,439
Telecommunications		1,166		1,166	1,042
Supernumerary preaching fees		791		791	703
Removal costs	6	0		0	1,708
<i>Administration and other</i>					
Administrator (part time)	3	15,964		15,964	11,938
Office expenses and TMCP fee		3,457		3,457	4,054
Quinquennial inspections		1,182		1,182	1,073
Donations and gifts		300		300	725
Bank charges		81		81	87
Examination fee		250		250	200
Other		150		150	516
TOTAL EXPENDITURE ONGOING ACTIVITIES		187,863	0	187,863	178,985
SURPLUS / DEFICIT ONGOING ACTIVITIES		1,195	0	1,195	9,059
PART B OTHER ACTIVITIES					
Annual District Advance Fund Levy	7	-2,483		-2,483	-2,472
Ongoing costs - Cotton premises	8	-6,632		-6,632	-14,016
Grants to Churches	9	-13,500		-13,500	-9,372
Pension Reserve Fund refund		3,582		3,582	0
Mission initiatives		-791		-791	-488
Gains on fixed asset valuations	10	0		0	933,000
Circuit Office works at Trinity		-2,064		-2,064	0
SURPLUS/DEFICIT OTHER ACTIVITIES		-21,888	0	-21,888	906,652
TOTAL NET SURPLUS/DEFICIT ON YEAR		-20,693	0	-20,693	915,711
ADD FUNDS START OF YEAR		2,187,529	0	2,187,529	1,271,818
FUNDS AT END OF YEAR		2,166,836	0	2,166,836	2,187,529

FUNDS AT END OF YEAR
EXCLUDING FIXED ASSETS (BUILDINGS)

11	216,836	0	216,836	237,529
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STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AT 31 AUGUST 2024

	Notes	31 August 2024			31-Aug-23
		Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £	Total £
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors and prepayments		15,587		15,587	4,932
Central Finance Board account		121,293		121,293	162,690
Model Trust Funds - held by TMCP		101,800		101,800	99,323
HSBC current account		16,492		16,492	8,562
Cash		0		0	0
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		255,172	0	255,172	275,507
Creditors due under 1 year	12	38,336		38,336	37,979
TOTAL NET CURRENT ASSETS		216,836	0	216,836	237,529
Fixed assets - Manses	13	1,950,000		1,950,000	1,950,000
TOTAL NET ASSETS		2,166,836	0	2,166,836	2,187,529

REPRESENTED BY

General fund	14	115,036		115,036	138,206
Model Trust Funds - held by TMCP		101,800		101,800	99,323
Manses titles - held by TMCP	13	1,950,000		1,950,000	1,950,000
TOTAL		2,166,836	0	2,166,836	2,187,529

Signed:

Senior Circuit Steward

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023-24

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 £216,836. 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:

	2023-24(£)	2022-23(£)
Bradfield	6,968	7,298
Glemsford	3,000	3,000
Ixworth	5,780	5,825
Needham Market	6,510	9,184
Northumberland Avenue	12,564	12,316
Old Newton	11,328	11,636
St John's Sudbury	44,416	44,940
Stowmarket	14,208	14,404
Trinity Bury St Edmunds	57,771	57,920
Total	162,545	166,523

2 Rent from manse

The figure is net - £16,200 less agent's fees £1,264.

3 Staff costs	2023-24(£)	2022-23(£)
Stipends and salary	83,919	81,260
Pension contributions	19,027	18,587
Employers NI	6,866	6,216
Allowances	582	536
Apprenticeship levy	461	417
Total	110,855	107,016
Number of full-time equivalents	3	3

4 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.

5 Manse maintenance

An allocation of £20,000 a year for manse maintenance was introduced on 1 September 2022 to be held as a designated fund within the general fund. The accounts show total expenditure of £40,997 in 2022-23 and 2023-24 meaning the fund was £997 overdrawn by 31 August 2024. This will be carried forward.

6 Removal fund

A designated fund was set up on 1 September 2023, within the general fund, for Ministers' removals. It contained £2,500 at 31 August 2024.

7 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. The building was sold by auction on 25 September 2024 - £236,000 gross was realized.

9 Grants to churches

Grants to churches were: £4,500 lay worker and repairs at Sudbury, £4,000 repairs at Ixworth, and £5,000 towards a new kitchen at Trinity.

10 Gains on fixed assets

The gains on fixed assets in 2022-23 reflected a revaluation of the manses.

11 Funds excluding fixed assets

This information has been included at the request of the Circuit Meeting. Members wished to see clearly the funds actually held by the Circuit excluding the estimated value of the manses.

12 Creditors

This includes assessment payments from the churches as required by Standing orders of £36,112 made in August 2024 towards Circuit expenditure after 1 September 2024.

13 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 had been reviewed in the light of local market conditions and the refurbishment of the Well Street manse and increased to £1,950,000. (See also note 10 above.)

14 General funds

Allocation of general funds:

Manse maintenance - designated (note 5) deficit	- £997
Removal fund - designated (note 6)	£2,500
Other	<u>£113,533</u>
	£115,036

15 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 Sore
pp Circuit Treasurer

Date 25.3.2005

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 2024.

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 J Knights

Date 8.5.2005

James Knights
Eldo House
Kempson Way
Bury St Edmunds
IP32 7AR

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.

J Vinyard

Revd Jason Vinyard
Superintendent Minister

Signature of the Chairperson of the meeting