

United Area Trustees Report: the last one, reflecting on 2010 - 2025

In preparation for writing this final Trustees Report, it has been interesting to look back at previous reports from 2010/11 onwards and consider what South West Cumbria United Area has meant and the road we have travelled together. What is clear is that many good people have worked hard for the benefit of our churches and to show God's love in our communities, coming together as a Methodist and URC United Area to support ecumenical projects and plans, to encourage and take inspiration from each other and to worship and share fellowship together. What follows is a snapshot rather than a complete record, but here are some of the things that have been accomplished.

Working with children and young people has been a priority throughout, even in churches with no youth of their own. As well as the traditional Sunday Schools, there have been Messy Churches, Toddlers Groups, uniformed organisations, ecumenical youth clubs, holiday lunch clubs and a United Area camp. Events like the Knitted Bible and Bible Stories exhibitions and the much-appreciated Flashbacks brought pupils into our churches and fostered deeper relationships with schools. As well as ministers taking assemblies, some of our members go into schools to help with reading and children come into church to read and sing and decorate the church at Christmas. The UA has also seen the creation of a lot of fellowship and social groups for older people, both church and community members. Some were set up after consultation with Help the Aged, but they all provide companionship and connection in a church setting for people who might otherwise feel isolated and lonely. Throughout these years, Newslink and, more recently, South West Connections have kept us informed about events and given us food for thought.

Another ongoing theme has been the UA's commitment to charitable giving. While individual churches have their own favourite causes – the Leprosy Mission, the Christmas Shoebox appeal, Methodist Homes for the Aged and All We Can among others - we have together supported the Foodbank, Fairtrade, the Credit Union, Lebone and Christian Aid. Our love of God's creation and our fellow humans has led to many of our churches twinning their toilets and embracing eco issues. Vickerstown led the way by becoming the first church to win the bronze award; and there are now 4 churches who have achieved silver under A Rocha's Eco Church scheme, Ramsden Street being the most recent, with others working towards their bronze. On June 7th, the UA's 'green team' will hold their second Green Fair with a range of stalls and invited outside agencies. This work started under the UA and will continue.

Time, prayer and money - sometimes the church's own, sometimes granted by the UA – has been invested in improving facilities, both for their own members and to enable outreach. An early example was Hartington Street's impressive Hub, built to aid their work with children in the area. More recently, Millom have improved their kitchen facilities to help them produce not only their excellent 3rd Sunday Community lunches, but also now the midweek lunches previously provided by the Salvation Army, thus offering a great service to the town. Beacon Hill received money to buy their large screen and new sound system, which is an ongoing blessing and proved particularly beneficial when the UA hosted Methodist Synod. Some projects have been bigger in scope and required larger scale funding, like the magnificent re-build of Dalton Community Church which offers a lovely space for all kinds of community outreach and has hosted a number of UA events. 'Faithful investment' has also brought us the benefits of extra people who are committed to working on specific tasks, such as Mike, the Children and Families Worker, and Sophie, the Family and Community Worker, who set up our original community charity shop and, in doing so, brought Tim to the UA as shop manager. Since then, re:new has become bigger and better, thriving in its new venue and able to reach and support more people. This aim to create 'church at the margins' will develop further when we are finally able to appoint the Pioneer who will be based at the shop. re:new really does embody the spirit of a United Area working together and supporting its community. Members from every church support the project with donations of items and by visiting in person; and the volunteers in various capacities come from different churches and the community. It has been a joint Methodist / URC project from the start and will remain so in the future.

Worship and fellowship remain important to us all. While there are fewer evening services now, there are some midweek services, services in different venues and services delivered in different formats, a recent innovation being Service on the Screen. The timing of Sunday morning services changed several times during the UA era, with preachers often 'doing the double', at 9.30 and again at 11, enabling more churches to receive ministry. We are grateful for their willingness to be flexible. Even our most trying period, Covid and the lockdowns, produced some really good things. As we weren't able to see each other on a Sunday morning, there were more intentional efforts within churches to keep in touch with people, leading to an increased sense of closeness; and our ministers developed new forms of worship, like Pause and Pray

online and the Worship at Home sheets, things that we know reached people from well beyond our own congregations. We even started to make technology work for us by holding meetings on Zoom, something which continues to reduce the travel burden for many. Prayer groups and Bible studies, some seasonal, some ongoing, have prospered, sometimes with participants from more than one church, allowing us to share our reflections and grow our faith together. Similarly, United Area services for events like the arrival of a new minister, an anniversary or a special time of year, have been joyful times of fellowship, often paired with sharing food. Our churches have also worked ecumenically with other denominations, coming together for worship at special times of the year, like Good Friday, and enabling the development of different forms of ecumenical worship, like the Dementia Friendly Tea Service and the work of the Anna Chaplaincy.

The UA has been well served, led and loved by presbyters and deacons who have fed us spiritually in services and Bible studies, cared for and supported us in happy and sad times and built links with our communities – in re:new, in schools, at the hospital, in the prison, at the auction mart. With their individual styles they have offered us variety in worship and alternative ways of doing things – and have been gracious when we have grumbled that ‘it’s not the way we usually do things’. In fact, some of them liked us so much that they have stayed on or returned in retirement and continue to support us on the preaching plan and in other ways! Another huge asset to our church life is the team of local preachers that the UA has nurtured, who all contribute so much to our quarterly preaching plans and enrich our worship. Indeed, one of the joys of the UA era has been seeing Hayley go from being a church member to a local preacher, training for ministry and returning to South Cumbria as a member of our ministerial team.

Of course, there have also been concerns. Successive Trustees reports have highlighted the issue of declining Sunday congregations and, although there have been some new members in most churches, there is lower membership overall, something which in turns affects the amount of ministry to which we are entitled. The general age profile of our congregations means that there is limited capacity to take on the necessary roles; and since 2010, several of our churches have closed. The closing of these church buildings has brought sadness at the loss of that shared history; but the church *members* have found a warm welcome in a different place. Similarly, Askam and Kirkby have benefitted from mergers with a larger church; and Trinity has found a new home at Abbey Road Baptists. It may feel frustrating that our many social and outreach events have not translated into many more formal members across our churches. Yet informal links have been created; and, for those people, the group or activity itself has been of great value and done what it was intended to do, be that introducing young people to God – which may well have planted a seed that will come to fruition later in life – or giving lonely people the company they need. Similarly, the work we do with church at the margins will hopefully create a new worshipping group in a different place; it is less likely to bring those people to our existing places of worship. Much of this reflects the changing pattern of people’s lives and contemporary society and is a problem for Christian denominations all over the country, not just us; and if there was an obvious or easy solution, we’d all be doing it. It does mean, however, that we will need to think carefully and realistically about how we can create a sustainable future for our church community.

So, as South West Cumbria United Area comes to an end, let us remember and celebrate the good things we have achieved and continue to work together and support each other in the next phase.

Please continue to pray for the life and work of our churches, those in them and those in leadership roles; and have faith in God’s wisdom and His plan for us all.

THE METHODIST CHURCH STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS

South West Cumbria United Area	Circuit
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**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2025**

Cumbria	District	Circuit no	01/35
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number

1141404

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

(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:

Rev Helen Hooley
Rev Kate Hunt (URC)
Rev Hayley Edmondson

Circuit Stewards:

Lynne Pearce	Kathryn Aldred
Sue Millard	Karen Edmondson
Charlie Mills	

Treasurer:

Lynne Pearce MAAT

SECTION A		Un - restricted Funds	Circuit Model Trust Fund	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
	Note	£	£	£	£	£
a1	RECEIPTS					
a2	Assessment/Share	118,520			118,520	119,845
a3	Capital receipts					
a4	Bank and CFB interest and Investment income	795	9,257		10,053	21,405
a5	CPF Levy Refund					20,110
a6	Loan repayment from Dalton Community Church (once TMCP release levy)					60,000
a7	Grants					
a8	Other receipts	2,530			2,530	3,793
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	121,845	9,257		131,102 (a8)	225,152

SECTION B		Un - restricted Funds	Circuit Model Trust Fund	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
		£	£	£	£	£
b1	PAYMENTS					
b2	Stipends, Salaries, NIC, Pension and Travel Costs	69,299			69,299	71,657
b3	Manse Costs	5,675			5,675	4,136
b4	Administration etc	4,752	719		5,471	3,845
b5	District Assessment	42,888	8,561		51,449	76,103
b6	Capital payments					101,873
b7	Trinity Church Centre Building Costs - to be reclaimed on sale	39,048			39,048	
b8	Other payments	7,943			7,943	19,737
b9	TOTAL PAYMENTS	169,605	9,280		178,885 (b9)	277,351

SECTION C		Un - restricted Funds	Circuit Model Trust Fund	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
		£	£	£	£	£
c1	NET RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR	(47,760)	(23)		(47,783)	(52,199)
c2	Total funds brought forward from last year	£ 155,986.61	81,966.57		237,953 (c6)	290,152
c3	Sub total	108,226	81,944		190,170	237,953
c4	Transfers and adjustments	(4,967)	(2,154)		(7,121.22) (c7)	
c5	TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR	103,259.25	79,790		183,049 (c8)	237,953.18 (c6)

SECTION D		Un - restricted Funds	Circuit Model Trust Fund	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
		£	£	£	£	£
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				455	2,830
d2	Offerings/Gifts - received for external organisations					425
d3	Offerings/Gifts - passed to external organisations				455	2,800
d4	BALANCE STILL TO BE PAID (d1 + d2 - d3)				(0)	455

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 2025 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	Re:new Project	56,644	93,073	(36,429)	7,121	171,474	142,166.11
e2							
e3							
e4							
e5							
e6							
e7							
e8	Sub total of Internal Organisations funds	56,644	93,073	(36,429)	7,121	171,474 (e11)	142,166 (e12)
e9	Circuit accounts (totals brought forward from page 2 - totals column)	131,102 (a8)	178,885 (b9)	(47,783)	(7,121) (c7)	237,953 (c6)	183,049 (c8)
e10	TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CIRCUIT	187,747	271,958	(84,212)		409,426.73 (x)	325,214.88 (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 2025**

		OPENING BALANCES	CLOSING BALANCES
f1	Cash in hand		
f2	Bank Current Account	124,833	361
f3	Bank Deposit Account		
f4	Central Finance Board	31,153	102,898
f5	Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes	81,967	79,790
f6	Other funds		
f7	SUB TOTAL	237,953 (c6)	183,049 (c8)
f8	Total funds held by Internal Organisations (the closing balance totals above) (e12)	171,474 (e11)	142,166 (e12)
f9	TOTAL CASH FUNDS HELD BY CIRCUIT	409,427 (x)	325,215 (y)

SECTION G**OTHER ASSETS and LIABILITIES**

		At 01 September 2024	At 31 August 2025
g1	Investments (include Endowments)	1,625	1,628
g2	Land and Buildings (see notes re Insurance value)	421,109	432,053
g3	Other Assets		
g4	Loan(s) - show amount outstanding at year end		
g5	Other Liabilities	146,439	155,512

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

20/09/2025

Name

Lynne Pearce MAAT

Address

60 Steel Street, Askam-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA16 7BP

Presentation to the *Circuit Meeting for approval.

I confirm that the Accounts have been presented to the Circuit Meeting on

21/09/2025

and were approved.

Signature of the Chair of the meeting

Name of the Chair of the meeting

Rev Dr Helen Hooley

Date

21/09/2025

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

South West Cumbria United Area

Circuit

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

2025

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 examination is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an 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:

- (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.
- (3) I 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.

Name

Signature

Relevant Professional qualification or body

Address

Date

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