

VALE OF STOUR METHODIST CIRCUIT

England & Wales · Charity number 1145208

Details

Status Registered

Legal form Previously excepted

Registered 2011-12-22

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address New Road Methodist Church
New Road
Stourbridge
West Midlands
DY8 1PA

Phone 01384442718

Email valeofstour@outlook.com

Website www.valeofstour.org.uk

Activities

Objects: THE PURPOSES OF THE METHODIST CHURCH ARE AND SHALL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN SINCE THE DATE OF UNION THE ADVANCEMENT OF -(A) THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH;(B) ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY CONNEXIONAL, DISTRICT, CIRCUIT, LOCAL OR OTHER ORGANISATION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH;(C) ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY SOCIETY OR INSTITUTION SUBSIDIARY OR ANCILLARY TO THE METHODIST CHURCH;(D) ANY PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY CHARITY BEING A CHARITY SUBSIDIARY OR ANCILLARY TO THE METHODIST CHURCH.

Activities: General Charitable Purposes and otherssee 'classification section for detail

Classification

- **How:** Makes Grants To Individuals, Makes Grants To Organisations, Provides Human Resources, Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, Disability, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Overseas Aid/famine Relief, Religious Activities, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Dudley
- Sandwell
- Staffordshire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-08-31	£275,755	£406,359	-	-
2024-08-31	£370,769	£369,745	-	-
2023-08-31	£658,484	£513,388	£2,189,634	7
2022-08-31	£279,075	£402,769	-	-
2021-08-31	£588,805	£466,030	£2,168,231	7
2020-08-31	£327,294	£452,335	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
CAROL Ann WEALE		2011-11-21
Eileen Yvonne Pilkington		2019-09-18
Elaine Panchal		2019-04-11
Elizabeth Ann Long		2021-09-14
Geoffrey Charles Weale		2021-09-14
HANNAH KAY DODD		2012-11-19
Howard Skidmore		2014-09-01
JANE B BAXTER		2011-11-21
JILL MARTIN		2013-01-28
JOHN JAMES MILLER		2023-07-04
James Bradley		2019-09-18
Jane Artist		2023-06-20
Janet Christine Kirkham		2019-09-18
Jayne Allin		2014-03-25
Jayne Corns		2014-11-01
Jayne Valerie Greenaway		2021-09-14
Jean Margaret Green		2021-09-14
John Mearman		2023-06-20
KENNETH WORTON		2011-11-21
Lorraine Yvette Shrimpton		2021-09-14
Lyn Andrews		2023-06-20
MAGGIE POSTINGS		2013-05-20
MARGARET KITE		2012-11-05
MARGARET M PRICE		2011-11-21
Margaret Anne Harvey		2022-09-28
Martyn Filsak		2021-09-14
Michael James Sykes		2022-09-28

Name	Role	Appointed
OLWEN Joyce MELLER JP		2011-11-21
PAULINE MARGARET NICHOLLS		2012-11-19
PAULINE TRISTRAM		2011-11-21
RITA HUGHES		2021-09-14
Rev Christine Beverly Watson		2021-09-14
Rev Michael Payne		2019-09-18
Rev Peter Stacey Clarke		2019-09-18
Rod Worthington		2015-09-01
STELLA SMITH		2011-11-21
STUART ASHMORE		2014-09-01
Susan Ann Parkes		2021-09-14
Susan Miller		2023-07-23

VALE OF STOUR METHODIST CIRCUIT

England & Wales - Charity number 1145208

Accounts

THE METHODIST CHURCH
STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS

Vale of Stour	Circuit
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2025

Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury	District	Circuit no	28/05
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number 1145208

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

Ministers:

Rev Alan Combes
Rev Michael Payne

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Circuit Stewards:

Miss Margaret Kite
Mr Michael Sykes (Property)
Mr Stuart Ashmore (Finance)
Miss Jacqueline Hill
Mr Roderic Worthington (Circuit Way Forward Review)

Treasurer:

Mr Stuart Ashmore

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Trustees' Annual Report

Introduction

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting present the accounts and Trustees' Annual Report for the year to 31 August 2025.

Brief financial review of the year

Income trends

Circuit income is primarily drawn from the assessment paid by the circuit churches.

Expenditure trends

Stipend expenditure has increased each financial year in line with conference approved increases.

31% of expenditure is the Circuit contribution to the District and Connexion, of which a significant part is used to fund the work of the wider Methodist Church.

Fund balances

As of 31 August 2025 the net current assets of the Circuit were £697,584 giving it in excess of 6 months' cover for expenditure. (see Reserves Policy)

There is an amount of £1,009.90 held in a Youth Account and administered by Trustees. This fund will be transferred to the Circuit's Funds in the financial year 2025/26 and will be ring-fenced for Youth Work within the Vale of Stour Circuit.

Churches and Manses

No manses were disposed of during the year – the former Brierley Hill manse continues to be used in support of The Brierley Hill Project.

The manses at Timbertree and Birch Coppice have been retained and are currently generating rental income for the Circuit.

Activities and Outcomes 2024/25

Some five years on from the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, life has returned to 'business as usual' for the Circuit's churches, albeit they are still feeling the lingering effects of decreases in worshippers and income streams as a result (although we have seen some churches return to pre-pandemic levels of membership and attendance. Indeed, some churches have brought in new regular worshippers, members and regular hirers of their premises).

Cost of Living pressures remain at the forefront of many, particularly through increased energy costs. But support of immediate congregations and the wider community remain at the heart of church outreach.

Indeed, we have seen two churches 'cease to worship' – Wesley and Providence – which has impacted Circuit finances by way of reduced assessments. Whilst approved sales will ultimately generate additional income at some future point (likely 25/26 financial year) this will be on a 'one off' basis, so there needs to be honest conversations about how best such funds can be invested to support the long-term future of Methodism in the Vale of Stour Circuit.

The Circuit's 'Way Forward' programme has continued steadily during the year with many positive discussions as to what the future looks like for the 'clustered' churches; we now have the 'new' Stourbridge Methodist Church – a single 'church' worshipping from two sites (New Road and Gig Mill).

Support for The Brierly Hill Project (BHP), whose mission is to provide targeted life support and mentoring for the people from the Brierley Hill area and wider Dudley Borough has continued through a re-purposing of the former Brierly Hill manse as an operational base. Such a partnership serves to strengthen the Circuit's charitable role (through its churches) of acting as a resource provider for the Methodist Church in the local area.

Plans for 2025/26

Circuit financial plans for the coming year have been prepared on the basis of a continuing two-Minister Circuit, together with appropriate support from the Lay Team and Supernumeraries. Accordingly, a gross operating budget of £346,702 has been assessed on the circuit churches. However, the Circuit has actively chosen to invest in two key lay roles from its reserves, meaning a net operating budget of £272,202 has been approved.

We remain alive to the cost-of-living pressures facing the Circuit's churches and congregations and so, in light of the closure of Wesley and Providence, have similarly reduced the financial call on the remaining churches (via assessment). For 2025/26 this is set at £210,000.

The Circuit Leadership Team has openly encouraged individual churches to discuss their own future plans with the Circuit Leadership Team where they feel the impact of the pandemic has had significant impact on their wellbeing and spiritual life and such conversations continue as an integral part of the 'Way Forward' programme.

2025/26 also sees a new Superintendent Minister – Rev. Jem Hawkins – following the 'sitting down' of the previous incumbent – Rev. Alan Combes ... but we will remain a two-minister Circuit for the financial year.

Basis of preparation and legal framework

The Charity's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2025 have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities: Statement of

Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS) 102.

Full Name of Charity: Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Registration Charity Number: 1145208

Date of registration: 22 December 2011

Main communication address: Circuit Office, New Road Methodist Church, New Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PA

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting are the Charity Trustees, membership being made up of circuit office holders, ministers and representatives appointed by the local churches.

Full membership is shown in the charity's entry on the Charity Commission website.

Circuit Ministers and officers

Active Circuit Ministers	Rev Alan Combes (Superintendent) Rev Michael Payne
Circuit Lay Worker	Mrs Claire Biggs (Children & Families Worker) – resigned 3 rd November 2024
Mission and New Communities Enabler	Mr Luke Denley (from 1 st February 2025)
Financial Administrator	Ms Carole Bennett (P/T)
Circuit Local Lay Pastor	Mr Martyn Filsak
Circuit Stewards	Mrs Elaine Panchal (appointed 1 st September 2024) Miss Jacqueline Hill (stepped down 31 st August 2025) Rev. Andrew Sankey (appointed 1 st June 2025) Mrs Jill Martin Mrs Lyn Andrews (appointed 1 st September 2024) Mrs Jayne Corns (Circuit Safeguarding Officer) Mr Stuart Ashmore (Finance) Mr Mike Sykes (Property) Mr Roderic Worthington (Circuit Way Forward Review)

Circuit Administrator	Mrs Elaine Panchal
Treasurer	Mr Stuart Ashmore ACMI
Independent examiner	David Wright FCA, DJH Halesowen Limited, Church Court, Stourbridge Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3TT
Investment Bankers	Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Trustees for Methodist Church purposes HSBC Bank plc

Aims and organisation

Charity objective is to act as a resource provider within the area around Vale of Stour Circuit for the Methodist Church:

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

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

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

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

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

Taking religious assemblies in local schools.

Promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and services.

Provision of chaplaincy services to the local university and other institutions.

Public Benefit

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

Structure, Governance and Management

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

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

Day to day management of the circuit is undertaken by the Circuit Leadership team together with the Local Preachers meeting, the Circuit Finance and Property Committee and the Circuit Policy Committee.

Trustee Training

A range of guidance produced by Methodist Connexion to support the effective running of the circuit, specifically the leaflet 'The Role of a Trustee in The Methodist Church' is given to all new Circuit meeting members as induction to their role as trustees.

Related Parties

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

The following Methodist Churches are linked to the circuit: Amblecote/Wordsley, Birch Coppice, Brierley Hill, Dudley Wood, Gig Mill, Kingswinford, Kinver, New Road, Overend Mission, Providence, United Church Lye, Wesley, Wollaston.

Risk Management

The major risks have been identified and recorded by the Circuit Finance and Property Committee with professional advice taken as required.

Formal Covid-19 risk assessments are no longer required in accordance with Government guidelines but churches remain mindful of good practice regarding ventilated spaces and good personal hygiene.

There is a regular annual process review undertaken and recorded.

Income and Expenditure is monitored in total and is compared with the approved annual budget on a monthly basis to detect trends as part of the risk management process to avoid unforeseen calls on reserves.

Safeguarding

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Methodist Connexional practice outlines commitment to the following principles:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable

- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.
- We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.
- We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.
- We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation, guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

Reserves Policy

The Reserves Policy for the Circuit is to hold a minimum sum equivalent to 6 months' average expenditure. This should be sufficient to meet any unforeseen item of major expenditure on manses and / or to be able to continue, in the short term, funding planned activities in the event of any inability to raise the full Circuit Assessment from churches.

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2025

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total 2024- 25 £
Income							
1	Donations and legacies						0
2	Income from monetary Investments	1,255	32,260		932		34,447
3	Income from investment properties						0
4	Assessments on Churches	213,538					213,538
5	Capital Receipts						0
6	Grants received						0
7	Other charitable income	27,770					27,770
8	Total income	242,563	32,260	-	932	-	275,755
Expenditure							
9	Grants and donations	6,320					6,320
10	Salaries and associated costs	194,282					194,282
11	Property maintenance	40,447					40,447
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy						0
13	District Assessment & Levy	63,494	46,626				110,120
14	Depreciation						0
15	Office expenses	12,057					12,057
16	Other outgoings	39,731	3,231		171		43,133
17	Total charitable expenditure	356,331	49,857	0	171	0	406,359
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary Investments						0
19	Gains/(losses) on Investment properties						0
20	Net income/(expenditure)	-113,768	-17,597	0	761	0	-130,604
21	Transfers between funds	115,000	113,498		1,602		0
22	Other gains/(losses)						0
23	Net movement in funds	1,232	-131,095	0	-741	0	-130,604
24	Total funds brought forward	1,416,260	755,907		18,491		2,190,658
25	Total funds carried forward	1,417,492	624,812	-	17,750	-	2,060,054

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2024

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023-24
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Income							
1	Donations and legacies	10,000					10,000
2	Income from monetary investments	1,067	37,784		1,052		39,902
3	Income from investment properties						0
4	Assessments on Churches	285,496					285,496
5	Capital Receipts	19,762					19,762
6	Grants received						0
7	Other charitable income	15,609					15,609
8	Total income	331,934	37,784	-	1,052	-	370,769
Expenditure							
9	Grants and donations	2,318					2,318
10	Salaries and associated costs	199,535					199,535
11	Property maintenance	22,224					22,224
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy						0
13	District Assessment & Levy	63,514	47,810				111,324
14	Depreciation						0
15	Office expenses	11,510					11,510
16	Other outgoings	20,947	1,759		128		22,834
17	Total charitable expenditure	320,048	49,569	0	128	0	369,745
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments				0		0
19	Gains/(losses) on investment properties						0
20	Net income/(expenditure)	11,886	(11,785)	0	924	0	1,024
21	Transfers between funds	9,000	(9,000)				0
22	Other gains/(losses)						0
23	Net movement in funds	20,886	(20,785)	0	924	0	1,024
24	Total funds brought forward	1,395,374	776,692		17,567		2,189,633
25	Total funds carried forward	1,416,260	755,907	0	18,491	0	2,190,658

Name of Circuit

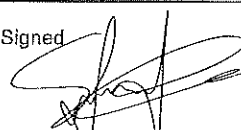
Vale of Stour

Circuit No 319

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2025

Notes to the Accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trusts (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (Unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Totals 2024/25 £	Totals 2023/24 £
Fixed Assets							
Circuit Manses & Equipment	1,366,520					1,366,520	1,366,520
Investment properties						0	
Investments						0	
Total fixed assets	1,366,520	0	0	0	0	1,366,520	1,366,520
Current Assets							
Debtors	10,659					10,659	12,888
Loans by the Circuit		12,560				12,560	17,560
Investments with TMCP		612,252		17,750		630,002	756,838
Central Finance Board Deposits	44,679					44,679	33,834
Cash at Bank and In hand	23,223					23,223	33,396
Total current assets	78,561	624,812	0	17,750	0	721,123	854,517
Current liabilities							
Creditors (due in under 1 year)	27,589					27,589	30,379
Grants payable within one year						0	
Total current liabilities	27,589	0	0	0	0	27,589	30,379
Net current assets/liabilities	50,972	624,812	0	17,750	0	693,534	824,138
Total assets less current liabilities	1,417,492	624,812	0	17,750	0	2,060,054	2,190,658
Long term liabilities (due after more than one year)							
Grants payable after one year						0	
Loans to the Circuit						0	
Net assets	1,417,492	624,812	0	17,750	0	2,060,054	2,190,658
Funds of the Circuit							
General Fund (Unrestricted)	1,417,492					1,417,492	1,416,260
Circuit Model Trust Fund (Unrestricted)		624,812				624,812	755,907
Designated Funds (Unrestricted)			0			0	0
Total Unrestricted Funds						2,042,304	2,172,167
Restricted Funds				17,750		17,750	18,491
Endowment Funds					0	0	
Total Funds	1,417,492	624,812	0	17,750	0	2,060,054	2,190,658

Signed



Circuit Treasurer

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with the 2014 version of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102 – the Charities SORP(FRS102) and taking note of the Update Bulletin 1 issued in 2016.

2. FUNDS

The funds held constitute: General funds held for any purpose of the Circuit which are Unrestricted. The Circuit Model Trust Fund has wide purposes defined in Standing Orders and is categorised as unrestricted. Restricted funds which are held for a narrower purpose. There are no Endowment funds. Details of each material fund are disclosed in the final note to these accounts. Any funds may be represented by more than just cash.

3. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis – These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost except that investments are shown at their market value at the end of the year, on the accruals basis to show a true and fair view of the Circuit's financial position and activities.

Incoming Resources – Income included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when the Circuit becomes entitled to the resources, and the trustees are reasonably certain they will receive the resources, and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Resources Expended – This is recognized when a liability is incurred, or a constructive obligation arises, that results in the payment being unavoidable. Liabilities are recognized as soon as an outflow of economic benefit is considered more likely than not under the legal or constructive obligation committing the Circuit to pay out resources.

Grants – Grants made by the Circuit from its own funds are recognized in full at the time of agreement or when the Circuit accepts that there is a legal or operational obligation to make the payment.

VAT – Since the Circuit is not VAT registered, all input VAT is charged with the expenses to which it refers.

Tangible fixed assets for use by the Circuit – Tangible fixed assets are capitalized if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £500. The freehold property is shown in the accounts at 2015 deemed values, of which the land component is deemed to be £350,000. No depreciation is provided on the buildings because the Trustees consider the current residual fair value of the manse buildings (on assumption that it had reached the end of its useful economic life by the year end) to be not less than its current value. Any depreciation would not be material. The property has been reviewed for impairment.

Investment Properties – Investment properties – no property is currently deemed to not be held for the long-term purposes of the charity.

Investments – Investments are valued in the balance sheet at market value at the year end. Investment income is included in the accounts when receivable and any gains or losses on revaluation at the year end are shown in the SOFA.

Debtors and Prepayments – These are shown as having been calculated using appropriate accounting conventions.

Creditors – Creditors include both sundry expense and specifically the 1st quarter assessment received in August.

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4. PAYMENT TO TRUSTEES

There were no payments made to Trustees for additional services provided to the Circuit by agreement with the Circuit Meeting, this excludes stipends.

Trustee expenses

	2024/25	2023/24
Number of Trustees	52	51
Total amount	3566	4226

Expense payments primarily relate to reimbursement for travel and computing costs

5. FEES FOR EXAMINATION OR AUDIT OF THE ACCOUNTS

	2024/25	2023/24
Independent examiners or auditors fees for reporting on the accounts	1542	£1488
Other fees (e.g. advice, accountancy services) paid to the independent Examiner or auditor		

6. PAID EMPLOYEES

Staff costs paid during the year were :

	2024/25	2023/24
Gross wages, salaries and benefits in kind	143615	153360
Employers National Insurance costs	14671	13735
Pension costs	15197	20922
Total staff costs	173483	188017

Average number of full-time equivalent employees in the year were	5	6
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7. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

At the 31st August 2025 there are no capital commitments,

No Contingent Liabilities were identified at 31st August 2025

8. MONEY RECEIVED AND PASSED ON TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (Information only)

	2024/25	2023/24
Balance b/fwd from last year	0	173
Offerings/gifts received for external organizations	1741	2410
Offerings/gifts passed to external organizations	1741	2583
Balance carried forward	0	0

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

Cost or valuation

	Land	Manses	Other buildings	Fixtures, fittings and equipment	Payments on account and assets under construction	TOTAL
Balance brought forward		1366520				1366520
Additions						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers *(+1-)						
Balance carried forward		1366520				1366520

ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION

Balance brought forward						
Depreciation charge for year						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers *(+1-)						
Balance carried forward						

NET BOOK VALUE

Brought forward		1366520				1366520
Carried forward		1366520				1366520

10. INVESTMENT ASSETS

The Circuit has no common investment fund holdings.

11. LOANS

The Circuit currently has no loans.

12. ANALYSIS OF RESTRICTED AND DESIGNATED FUNDS 2024-25

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Closing Balance	Purpose of the Fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	6	4	-277	-	Any purpose specified part9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	14519	692	47		15164	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1428	68	4		1492	LP training
Barry Blunt	1066	140	112		1094	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road Account	1203	26	4	-1225	-	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre
TOTALS	18491	932	171	-1502	17750	

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESTRICTED AND DESIGNATED FUNDS 2023-24

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance	Incoming Resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Closing Balance	Purpose of the Fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	15	15		275	Any Purpose specified part 9 volume 2
John R Wright	13812	746	39		14519	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1359	73	4		1428	LP Training
Barry Blunt	976	157	67		1066	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road Account	1145	61	3		1203	Fund designated for maintenance of the centre
TOTALS	17567	1052	128		18491	

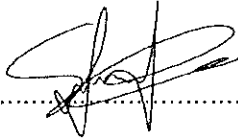
Name of Circuit: VALE OF STOUR

No: 28/05

Declarations and Scrutiny

I confirm that these accruals-based accounts for the year to 31 August 2025 have been prepared from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit meeting.

Signature of treasurer



Date .28th January 2026

Name Stuart Ashmore ACMI

Address 4 Southern Close, Kingswinford DY6 8HS

Presentation to the Circuit meeting

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2025 were

presented to the Circuit meeting held on ..5.3.2026.....

Signature of the Chair of the meeting



Name of the Chair of the meeting: J.R. HAWKINS

Date 5.3.2026.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vale of Stour Circuit for the year ended 31 August 2024 which comprise the Trustees Annual report, the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, and the Notes to the Accounts.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act).

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

Independent examiner's statement

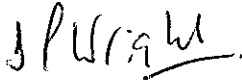
Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of ICAEW, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Signed:



Name

David Wright FCA

ICAEW

Name of firm

DJH Halesowen Limited

Address

Church Court, Stourbridge Road, B63 3TT

Date

19.3.26

VALE OF STOUR METHODIST CIRCUIT

England & Wales - Charity number 1145208

Accounts

**THE METHODIST CHURCH
STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS**

Vale of Stour	<small>Circuit</small>
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**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2024**

Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District	Circuit no	28/05
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number 1145208

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

Ministers:

Rev Alan Combes
Rev Michael Payne
Rev Helen Croft (Resigned 30/11/2023)

Circuit Stewards:

Miss Margaret Kite
Mr Michael Sykes (Property)
Mr Stuart Ashmore (Finance)
Miss Jacqueline Hill
Mr Roderic Worthington (Circuit Way Forward Review)

Treasurer:

Mr Stuart Ashmore

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Trustees' Annual Report

Introduction

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting present the accounts and Trustees' Annual Report for the year to 31 August 2024.

Brief financial review of the year

Income trends

Circuit income is primarily drawn from the assessment paid by the circuit churches.

Expenditure trends

Stipend expenditure has increased each financial year in line with conference approved increases.

30% of expenditure is the Circuit contribution to the District and Connexion, of which a significant part is used to fund the work of the wider Methodist Church.

Fund balances

As at 31 August 2024 the net current assets of the Circuit were £824,138 giving it in excess of 1 year cover for expenditure. (see Reserves Policy)

There is an amount of £1,009.90 held in a Youth Account and administered by Trustees. This fund will be transferred to the Circuit's Funds in the financial year 2024/25 and will be ring-fenced for Youth Work within the Vale of Stour Circuit.

Churches and Manses

No manses were disposed of during the year – the former Brierley Hill manse continues to be used in support of The Brierley Hill Project.

The manses at Timbertree and Birch Coppice have been retained and are currently generating rental income for the Circuit.

Activities and Outcomes 2023/24

Some four years on from the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, life has returned to 'business as usual' for the Circuit's churches, albeit they are still feeling the lingering effects of decreases in worshippers and income streams as a result (although we have seen some churches return to pre-pandemic levels of membership and attendance. Indeed, some churches have brought in new regular worshippers, members and regular hirers of their premises).

Cost of Living pressures remain at the forefront of many, particularly as many churches see increased costs as fixed term energy contracts begin to expire and renewals are at significantly higher levels than previously. But support of immediate congregations and the wider community remains at the hearts of church outreach.

The Circuit's 'Way Forward' programme has continued steadily during the year with many positive discussions as to what the future looks like for the 'clustered' churches. But there will also be difficult discussion to be had due to reducing resources, both financial and in terms of personnel – both at Circuit and individual church levels.

Support for The Brierly Hill Project (BHP), whose mission is to provide targeted life support and mentoring for the people from the Brierley Hill area and wider Dudley Borough has continued through a re-purposing of the former Brierly Hill manse as an operational base. Such a partnership serves to strengthen the Circuit's charitable role (through its churches) of acting as a resource provider for the Methodist Church in the local area.

Plans for 2024/25

Circuit financial plans for the coming year have been prepared on the basis of a reduced two-Minister Circuit, together with appropriate support from the Lay Team and Supernumeraries. Accordingly, a gross operating budget of £331,736 has been assessed on the circuit churches. However, the Circuit has actively chosen to invest in two key lay roles from its reserves, meaning a net operating budget of £286,101 has been approved.

We remain alive to the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living pressures facing the Circuit's churches and congregations.

The Circuit Leadership Team has openly encouraged individual churches to discuss their own future plans with the Circuit Leadership Team where they feel the impact of the pandemic has had significant impact on their wellbeing and spiritual life and such conversations continue as an integral part of the 'Way Forward' programme.

Churches have been asked to consider their current, and future, positions with a view to keeping Methodism alive and well in the area going forward (including likely reductions in ministerial cover to just two ministers by the summer of 2024).

Basis of preparation and legal framework

The Charity's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024 have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS) 102.

Full Name of Charity: Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Registration Charity Number: 1145208

Date of registration: 22 December 2011

Main communication address: Circuit Office, New Road Methodist Church, New Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PA

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting are the Charity Trustees, membership being made up of circuit office holders, ministers and representatives appointed by the local churches.

Full membership is shown as Appendix A to this report.

Circuit Ministers and officers

Active Circuit Ministers	Rev Alan Combes (Superintendent) Rev Michael Payne Rev Helen Croft (appointment ceased 30 th November 2023)
Circuit Lay Worker	Mrs Claire Biggs (Children & Families Worker)
Financial Administrator	Ms Carole Bennett (P/T)
Circuit Local Lay Pastor	Mr Martyn Filsak
Circuit Stewards	Miss Margaret Kite Miss Jacqueline Hill Mr Stuart Ashmore (Finance) Mr Mike Sykes (Property) Mr Roderic Worthington (Circuit Way Forward Review)
Circuit Administrator	Mrs Elaine Panchal
Treasurer	Mr Stuart Ashmore ACMI
Independent examiner	David Wright FCA, Nicklin LLP, Church Court, Stourbridge Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3TT
Investment Bankers	Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Trustees for Methodist Church purposes HSBC Bank plc

Aims and organisation

Charity objective is to act as a resource provider within the area around Vale of Stour Circuit for the Methodist Church:

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

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

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

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

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

Taking religious assemblies in local schools.

Promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and services.

Provision of chaplaincy services to the local university and other institutions.

Public Benefit

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

Structure, Governance and Management

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

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

Day to day management of the circuit is undertaken by the Circuit Leadership team together with the Local Preachers meeting, the Circuit Finance and Property Committee and the Circuit Policy Committee.

Trustee Training

A range of guidance produced by Methodist Connexion to support the effective running of the circuit, specifically the leaflet 'The Role of a Trustee in The Methodist Church' is given to all new Circuit meeting members as induction to their role as trustees.

Related Parties

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

The following Methodist Churches are linked to the circuit: Amblecote/Wordsley, Birch Coppice, Brierley Hill, Dudley Wood, Gig Mill, Kingswinford, Kinver, New Road, Overend Mission, Providence, United Church Lye, Wesley, Wollaston.

Risk Management

The major risks have been identified and recorded by the Circuit Finance and Property Committee with professional advice taken as required.

Formal Covid-19 risk assessments are no longer required in accordance with Government guidelines but churches remain mindful of good practice regarding ventilated spaces and good personal hygiene.

There is a regular annual process review undertaken and recorded.

Income and Expenditure is monitored in total and is compared with the approved annual budget on a monthly basis to detect trends as part of the risk management process to avoid unforeseen calls on reserves.

Safeguarding

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Methodist Connexional practice outlines commitment to the following principles:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.
- We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.
- We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.
- We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation, guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

Reserves Policy

The Reserves Policy for the Circuit is to hold a minimum sum equivalent to 6 months' average expenditure. This should be sufficient to meet any unforeseen item of major expenditure on manses and / or to be able to continue, in the short term, funding planned activities in the event of any inability to raise the full Circuit Assessment from churches.

Name of Circuit

Vale of Stour

Circuit No 28/05

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2024

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023-24
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Income							
1	Donations and legacies	10,000					10,000
2	Income from monetary investments	1,067	37,784		1,052		39,902
3	Income from investment properties						0
4	Assessments on Churches	285,496					285,496
5	Capital Receipts	19,762					19,762
6	Grants received						0
7	Other charitable income	15,609					15,609
8	Total income	331,934	37,784	-	1,052	-	370,769
Expenditure							
9	Grants and donations	2,318					2,318
10	Salaries and associated costs	199,535					199,535
11	Property maintenance	22,224					22,224
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy						0
13	District Assessment & Levy	63,514	47,810				111,324
14	Depreciation						0
15	Office expenses	11,510					11,510
16	Other outgoings	20,947	1,759		128		22,834
17	Total charitable expenditure	320,048	49,569	0	128	0	369,745
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments				0		0
19	Gains/(losses) on investment properties						0
20	Net income/(expenditure)	11,886	(11,785)	0	924	0	1,024
21	Transfers between funds	9,000	(9,000)				0
22	Other gains/(losses)						0
23	Net movement in funds	20,886	(20,785)	0	924	0	1,024
24	Total funds brought forward	1,395,374	776,692		17,567		2,189,633
25	Total funds carried forward	1,416,260	755,907	0	18,491	0	2,190,658

Name of Circuit

Circuit No

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2023

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2022-23
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Income							
1	Donations and legacies						0
2	Income from monetary investments	790	21,601		636		23,027
3	Income from investment properties						0
4	Assessments on Churches	262,723					262,723
5	Capital Receipts	367,934					367,934
6	Grants received						0
7	Other charitable income	4,800					4,800
8	Total income	636,247	21,601	-	636	-	658,484
Expenditure							
9	Grants and donations	15,520					15,520
10	Salaries and associated costs	216,841					216,841
11	Property maintenance	20,661					20,661
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy	125,094					125,094
13	District Assessment & Levy	60,914	38,129				99,043
14	Depreciation						0
15	Office expenses	13,847					13,847
16	Other outgoings	20,159	2,030		193		22,382
17	Total charitable expenditure	473,036	40,159	0	193	0	513,388
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments						0
19	Gains/(losses) on investment properties						0
20	Net income/(expenditure)	163,211	(18,558)	0	443	0	145,096
21	Transfers between funds	(167,640)	167,640				0
22	Other gains/(losses)						0
23	Net movement in funds	(4,429)	149,082	0	443	0	145,096
24	Total funds brought forward	1,399,803	627,610		17,124		2,044,537
25	Total funds carried forward	1,395,374	776,692	0	17,567	0	2,189,633

Name of Circuit

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Circuit No
28105

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2024

Notes to the Accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trusts (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (Unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Totals 2023/24 £	Totals 2022/23 £	
Fixed Assets								
Circuit Houses & Equipment	1,366,620					1,366,620	1,366,620	R
Investment properties						0		R
Investments						0		
Total fixed assets	1,366,620	0	0	0	0	1,366,620	1,366,620	
Current Assets								
Debtors	12,898					12,898	22,330	S
Loans by the Circuit		17,560				17,560	22,580	
Investments with TMCP		738,347		18,491		756,838	771,699	
Central Finance Board Deposits	33,834					33,834	33,810	T
Cash at Bank and in hand	33,396					33,396	7,128	
Total current assets	80,119	755,907	0	18,491	0	854,517	852,527	
Current liabilities								
Creditors (due in under 1 year)	30,379					30,379		U
Grants payable within 2023-24						0	34,414	V
Total current liabilities	30,379	0	0	0	0	30,379	34,414	
Net current assets/liabilities	49,740	755,907	0	18,491	0	824,138	823,113	
Total assets less current liabilities	1,416,260	755,907	0	18,491	0	2,190,658	2,189,633	
Long term liabilities (due after more than one year)								
Grants payable after 2023-24						0		V
Loans to the Circuit						0		
Net assets	1,416,260	755,907	0	18,491	0	2,190,658	2,189,633	W
Funds of the Circuit								
General Fund (Unrestricted)	1,416,260					1,416,260	1,395,374	W
Circuit Model Trust Fund (Unrestricted)		755,907				755,907	776,692	
Designated Funds (Unrestricted)			0			0		
Total Unrestricted Funds						2,172,167	2,172,066	
Restricted Funds				18,491		18,491	17,667	
Endowment Funds					0	0		
Total Funds	1,416,260	755,907	0	18,491	0	2,190,658	2,189,633	

Signed

Circuit Treasurer

6/3/2025

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with the 2014 version of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102 – the Charities SORP(FRS102) and taking note of the Update Bulletin 1 issued in 2016.

2. FUNDS

The funds held constitute: General funds held for any purpose of the Circuit which are Unrestricted. The Circuit Model Trust Fund has wide purposes defined in Standing Orders and is categorised as unrestricted. Restricted funds which are held for a narrower purpose. There are no Endowment funds. Details of each material fund are disclosed in the final note to these accounts. Any funds may be represented by more than just cash.

3. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis – These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost except that investments are shown at their market value at the end of the year, on the accruals basis to show a true and fair view of the Circuit's financial position and activities.

Incoming Resources – Income included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when the Circuit becomes entitled to the resources, and the trustees are reasonably certain they will receive the resources, and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Resources Expended – This is recognised when a liability is incurred, or a constructive obligation arises, that results in the payment being unavoidable. Liabilities are recognized as soon as an outflow of economic benefit is considered more likely than not under the legal or constructive obligation committing the Circuit to pay out resources.

Grants – Grants made by the Circuit from its own funds are recognised in full at the time of agreement or when the Circuit accepts that there is a legal or operational obligation to make the payment.

VAT – Since the Circuit is not VAT registered, all input VAT is charged with the expenses to which it refers.

Tangible fixed assets for use by the Circuit – Tangible fixed assets are capitalized if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £500. The freehold property is shown in the accounts at 2015 deemed values, of which the land component is deemed to be £350,000. No depreciation is provided on the buildings because the Trustees consider the current residual fair value of the manse buildings (on assumption that it had reached the end of its useful economic life by the year end) to be not less than its current value. Any depreciation would not be material. The property has been reviewed for impairment.

Investment properties – no property is currently deemed to not be held for the long-term purposes of the charity.

Investments – Investments are valued in the balance sheet at market value at the year end. Investment income is included in the accounts when receivable and any gains or losses on revaluation at the year end are shown in the SOFA.

Debtors and Prepayments – These are shown as having been calculated using appropriate accounting conventions.

Creditors – Creditors include both sundry expense and specifically the 1st quarter assessment received in August.

Cont..

4. PAYMENT TO TRUSTEES

There were no payments made to Trustees for additional services provided to the Circuit by agreement with the Circuit Meeting, this excludes stipends.

Trustee expenses

	2023/24	2022/23
Number of Trustees	51	52
Total amount	4226	5308

Expense payments primarily relate to reimbursement for travel and computing costs

5. FEES FOR EXAMINATION OR AUDIT OF THE ACCOUNTS	2023/24	2022/23
Independent examiners or auditors fees for reporting on the accounts	1488	£1440
Other fees (e.g. advice, accountancy services) paid to the independent Examiner or auditor		

6. PAID EMPLOYEES

Staff costs paid during the year were :

	2023/24	2022/23
Gross wages, salaries and benefits in kind	153360	166252
Employers National Insurance costs	13735	14545
Pension costs	20922	25253
Total staff costs	188017	206050

Average number of full-time equivalent employees in the year were	2023/24	2022/23
	6	7

7. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS AND CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

At the 31st August 2024 there are no capital commitments,

No Contingent Liabilities were identified at 31st August 2024

8. MONEY RECEIVED AND PASSED ON TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (Information only)

	2023/24	2022/23
Balance b/fwd from last year	173	0
Offerings/gifts received for external organisations	2410	1979
Offerings/gifts passed to external organisations	2583	1803
Balance carried forward	0	173

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

Cost or valuation

	Land	Manses	Other buildings	Fixtures, fittings and equipment	Payments on account and assets under construction	TOTAL
Balance brought forward		1,366,520				1,366,520
Additions						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers *(+1-)						
Balance carried forward		1,366,520				1,366,520

ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION

Balance brought forward						
Depreciation charge for year						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers *(+1-)						
Balance carried forward						

NET BOOK VALUE

Brought forward		1366520				1366520
Carried forward		1366520				1366520

10. INVESTMENT ASSETS

The Circuit has no common investment fund holdings.

11. LOANS

The Circuit currently has no loans.

12. ANALYSIS OF RESTRICTED AND DESIGNATED FUNDS 2023-24

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Closing Balance	Purpose of the Fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	15	15		275	Any purpose specified part9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13812	746	39		14519	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1359	73	4		1428	LP training
Barry Blunt	976	157	67		1066	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road Account	1145	61	3		1203	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre
TOTALS	17567	1052	128		18491	

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESTRICTED AND DESIGNATED FUNDS 2022-23

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance	Incoming Resources	Resources expended	Transfers	Closing Balance	Purpose of the Fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	9	9		275	Any Purpose specified part 9 volume 2
John R Wright	13420	431	39		13812	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1335	43	19		1359	LP Training
Barry Blunt	982	117	123		976	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road Account	1112	36	3		1145	Fund designated for maintenance of the centre
TOTALS	17124	636	193		17567	

Name of Circuit: VALE OF STOUR

No: 28/05

Declarations and Scrutiny

I confirm that these accruals-based accounts for the year to 31 August 2024 have been prepared from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit meeting.

Signature of treasurer



Date

6/3/2025

Name and address of treasurer Stuart Ashmore ACMI

4 Southern Close, Kingswinford.

Post Code: DY6 8HS

Presentation to the Circuit meeting

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024 were presented to the Circuit meeting held on:

Signature of the Chair of the meeting



6/3/2025

Name of the Chair of the meeting:

Rev. Alan Combes

Date

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vale of Stour Circuit for the year ended 31 August 2024 which are set out on pages 2 to 14

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

Independent examiner's statement

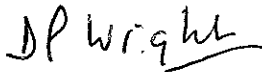
Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of ICAEW, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Signed:



Name David Wright FCA
ICAEW
Name of firm Nicklin Accountancy Services Limited
Address Church Court, Stourbridge Road
Date 24/04/2025

VALE OF STOUR METHODIST CIRCUIT

England & Wales - Charity number 1145208

Accounts

**THE METHODIST CHURCH
STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS**

Vale of Stour	Circuit
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**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2023**

Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District	Circuit no	28/05
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number 1145208

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

Ministers:

Rev Alan Combes
Rev Michael Payne
Rev Helen Croft

Circuit Stewards:

Margaret Kite
Michael Sykes
Stuart Ashmore
Jacqueline Hill
Roderic Worthington

Treasurer:

Stuart Ashmore

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Trustees' Annual Report

Introduction

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting present the accounts and Trustees' Annual Report for the year to 31 August 2023.

Brief financial review of the year

Income trends

Circuit income is primarily drawn from the assessment paid by the circuit churches.

Expenditure trends

Stipend expenditure has increased each financial year in line with conference approved increases.

20% of expenditure is the Circuit contribution to the District and Connexion, of which a significant part is used to fund the work of the wider Methodist Church.

Fund balances

As at 31 August 2023 the net current assets of the Circuit were £823,114 giving it in excess of 1 year cover for expenditure. (see Reserves Policy)

There is an amount of £1,009.90 held in a Youth Account and administered by Trustees. This fund will be transferred to the Circuit's Funds in the financial year 2023/24 and will be ring-fenced for Youth Work within the Vale of Stour Circuit.

Churches and Manses

No manses were disposed of during the year – the former Brierley Hill manse continues to be used in support of The Brierley Hill Project.

The Lawrence Lane congregation 'ceased to meet' in February 2023 and the premises was sold in March 2023, generating gross sale proceeds of £372,734 (net £247,640 after TMCP levy of £125,094), contributing to the increase in the Circuit's reserve balances for the year.

Activities and Outcomes 2022/23

The Covid-19 pandemic, which initially saw the Circuit's churches temporarily close in March 2020, has been an unprecedented period in the life of the local church and the wider country.

It brought significant disruption to the lives of individuals and communities, not least with the curtailment of many of the support activities offered and facilitated by the circuit's churches.

But our faith has remained resilient in these challenging times, with many innovative ways of supporting our congregations and wider local communities.

During the year, church life has continued its return to some level of 'business as usual', but it is fair to say that many churches have faced, and continue to face, ongoing challenges with loss of regular hirers and lower congregational numbers. Together with the impact of the 'cost of living' crisis that we saw during the winter of 2022 into 2023 (with significantly increased energy costs for many churches), this has had implications for both church and Circuit finances and conversations.

Looking ahead to the future, though, the commencement of the Circuit's review for the future – the 'Circuit Way Forward' process – has meant that churches are working proactively to consider the future of Methodism in the area and how to remain missionally relevant in these changing and challenging times.

Support for The Brierly Hill Project (BHP), whose mission is to provide targeted life support and mentoring for the people from the Brierley Hill area and wider Dudley Borough has continued through a re-purposing of the former Brierly Hill manse as an operational base. Such a partnership serves to strengthen the Circuit's charitable role (through its churches) of acting as a resource provider for the Methodist Church in the local area.

Plans for 2023/24

Circuit financial plans for the coming year have been prepared on the basis of a continuing three-Minister Circuit. Accordingly, a gross operating budget of £358,423 has been assessed on the circuit churches. However, the Circuit has actively chosen to invest in two key lay roles from its reserves, meaning a net operating budget of £300,013 has been approved.

Covid-19 restrictions have had significant implications for the lives of all the circuit's churches, particularly at a financial level, and these continue to be felt. Many churches, though, have proved to be very resilient, with regular giving being maintained by congregations in the face of challenging circumstances and rental income levels beginning to return, albeit slowly. Indeed, some churches were the beneficiaries of funding to support the operation of vaccination centres, but this is, very much, a 'one-off' income stream.

However, the Circuit Leadership Team remains alive to the ongoing impact of the pandemic and have openly encouraged individual churches to discuss their own future plans with the Circuit Leadership Team where they feel the impact of the pandemic has had significant impact on their wellbeing and spiritual life.

Discussions have also continued in respect of the Circuit's future planning – 'The Way Forward' – to see what changes may be appropriate for the future against the backdrop of current datasets and missional imperatives.

Churches have been asked to consider their current, and future, positions with a view to keeping Methodism alive and well in the area going forward (including likely reductions in ministerial cover to just two ministers by the summer of 2024).

Basis of preparation and legal framework

The Charity's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023 have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS) 102.

Full Name of Charity: Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Registration Charity Number: 1145208

Date of registration: 22 December 2011

Main communication address: Circuit Office, New Road Methodist Church, New Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PA

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting are the Charity Trustees, membership being made up of circuit office holders, ministers and representatives appointed by the local churches.

Full membership is shown as Appendix A to this report.

Circuit Ministers and officers

Active Circuit Ministers	Rev Alan Combes (Superintendent) Rev Michael Payne Rev Helen Croft
Circuit Lay Worker	Mrs Claire Biggs (Children & Families Worker)
Financial Administrator	Mr David Little (P/T) to December 2022 Ms Carole Bennett (P/T) from November 2022)
Circuit Local Lay Pastor	Mr Martyn Filsak
Circuit Stewards	Miss Margaret Kite Miss Jacqueline Hill Mr Stuart Ashmore Mr Mike Sykes Mr Roderic Worthington (Circuit Way Forward Review)
Circuit Administrator	Mrs Elaine Panchal
Treasurer	Mr Stuart Ashmore ACMI

Independent examiner	David Wright FCA, Nicklin LLP, Church Court, Stourbridge Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3TT
Investment Bankers	Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Trustees for Methodist Church purposes HSBC Bank plc

AIMS and organisation

Charity objective is to act as a resource provider within the area around Vale of Stour Circuit for the Methodist Church:

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

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

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

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

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

Taking religious assemblies in local schools.

Promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and services.

Provision of chaplaincy services to the local university and other institutions.

Public Benefit

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

Structure, Governance and Management

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

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

Day to day management of the circuit is undertaken by the Circuit Leadership team together with the Local Preachers meeting, the Circuit Finance and Property Committee and the Circuit Policy Committee.

Trustee Training

A range of guidance produced by Methodist Connexion to support the effective running of the circuit, specifically the leaflet 'The Role of a Trustee in The Methodist Church' is given to all new Circuit meeting members as induction to their role as trustees.

Related Parties

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

The following Methodist Churches are linked to the circuit: Amblecote/Wordsley, Birch Coppice, Brierley Hill, Dudley Wood, Gig Mill, Kingswinford, Kinver, New Road, Overend Mission, Providence, United Church Lye, Wesley, Wollaston.

Risk Management

The major risks have been identified and recorded by the Circuit Finance and Property Committee with professional advice taken as required.

The Covid – 19 Pandemic meant that very stringent Risk Assessments had to be undertaken to allow some of our churches to reopen for worship in early August 2020. Such formal assessments are no longer required in accordance with Government guidelines but churches remain mindful of good practice regarding ventilated spaces and good personal hygiene.

There is a regular annual process review undertaken and recorded.

Income and Expenditure is monitored in total and is compared with the approved annual budget on a monthly basis to detect trends as part of the risk management process to avoid unforeseen calls on reserves.

Safeguarding

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Methodist Connexional practice outlines commitment to the following principles:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

- We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.
- We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.
- We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation, guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

Reserves Policy

The Reserves Policy for the Circuit is to hold a minimum sum equivalent to 6 months' average expenditure. This should be sufficient to meet any unforeseen item of major expenditure on manses and / or to be able to continue, in the short term, funding planned activities in the event of any inability to raise the full Circuit Assessment from churches.

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2023

	Notes to	Circuit Model		Designated	Restricted	Endowment	Total
	the	General Fund	Trust	Funds			
accounts	(Unrestricted)	(Unrestricted)	(Unrestricted)	(unrestricted)	Funds	Funds	2022-23
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income							
1 Donations and legacies							0
2 Income from monetary investments	790		21,601		636		23,027
3 Income from investment properties							0
4 Assessments on Churches	262,723						262,723
5 Capital Receipts	367,934						367,934
6 Grants received							0
7 Other charitable income	4,800						4,800
8 Total income	636,247		21,601	-	636	-	658,484
Expenditure							
9 Grants and donations	15,520						15,520
10 Salaries and associated costs	216,841						216,841
11 Property maintenance	20,661						20,661
12 Connexional assessment & model trust levy	125,094						125,094
13 District Assessment & Levy	60,914		38,129				99,043
14 Depreciation							0
15 Office expenses	13,847						13,847
16 Other outgoings	20,159		2,030		193		22,382
17 Total charitable expenditure	473,036		40,159	0	193	0	513,388
18 Gains/(losses) on monetary investments							0
19 Gains/(losses) on investment properties							0
20 Net income/(expenditure)	163,211		(18,558)	0	443	0	145,096
21 Transfers between funds	(167,640)		167,640				0
22 Other gains/(losses)							0
23 Net movement in funds	(4,429)		149,082	0	443	0	145,096
24 Total funds brought forward	1,399,803		627,610		17,124		2,044,537
25 Total funds carried forward	1,395,374		776,692	0	17,567	0	2,189,633

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2022

	Notes to	Circuit Model		Designated		Total 2021-
	the	General Fund	Trust	(unrestricted	Restricted	
	account	(Unrestricted)	(Unrestricted))	Funds	Funds
	s	£	£	£	£	£
		£	£	£	£	£
Income						
1	Donations and legacies					0
2	Income from monetary investments	126	3057		197	3,380
3	Income from investment properties					0
4	Assessments on Churches	264,095				264,095
5	Capital Receipts	10,000				10,000
6	Grants received					0
7	Other charitable income	1,600				1,600
8	Total Income	275,821	3,057	-	197	279,075
Expenditure						
9	Grants and donations					0
10	Salaries and associated costs	225,811				225,811
11	Property maintenance	40,100				40,100
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy					0
13	District Assessment & Levy	60,897	41,158			102,055
14	Depreciation					0
15	Office expenses	14,937				14,937
16	Other outgoings	16,897	2,288		681	19,866
17	Total charitable expenditure	358,642	43,446	0	681	402,769
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments				0	0
19	Gains/(losses) on investment properties					0
20	Net income/(expenditure)	(82,821)	(40,389)	0	(484)	(123,694)
21	Transfers between funds					0
22	Other gains/(losses)					0
23	Net movement in funds	(82,821)	(40,389)	0	(484)	(123,694)
24	Total funds brought forward	1,482,624	667,999		17,608	2,168,231
25	Total funds carried forward	1,399,803	627,610	0	17,124	2,044,537

Name of Circuit

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Circuit No
28/05

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2023

Notes to the Accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trusts (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (Unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Totals 2022/23 £	Totals 2021/22 £
Fixed Assets							
Circuit Manses & Equipment	1,366,520					1,366,520	1,366,520
Investment properties						0	
Investments						0	
Total fixed assets	1,366,520	0	0	0	0	1,366,520	1,366,520
Current Assets							
Debtors	22,330					22,330	21,306
Loans by the Circuit		22,560				22,560	2,560
Investments with TMCP		754,132		17,567		771,699	642,174
Central Finance Board Deposits	33,810					33,810	24,640
Cash at Bank and in hand	7,128					7,128	16,397
Total current assets	63,268	776,692	0	17,567	0	857,528	707,077
Current liabilities							
Creditors (due in under 1 year)	34,414					34,414	29,060
Grants payable within 2021-22						0	
Total current liabilities	34,414	0	0	0	0	34,414	29,060
Net current assets/liabilities	28,854	776,692	0	17,567	0	823,114	678,017
Total assets less current liabilities	1,395,374	776,692	0	17,567	0	2,189,634	2,044,538
Long term liabilities (due after more than one year)							
Grants payable after 2021-22						0	
Loans to the Circuit						0	
Net assets	1,395,374	776,692	0	17,567	0	2,189,634	2,044,538
Funds of the Circuit							
General Fund (Unrestricted)	1,395,374					1,395,374	1,399,803
Circuit Model Trust Fund (Unrestricted)		776,692				776,692	627,610
Designated Funds (Unrestricted)			0			0	0
Total Unrestricted Funds						2,172,066	2,027,413
Restricted Funds				17,567		17,567	17,124
Endowment Funds					0	0	
Total Funds	1,395,374	776,692	0	17,567	0	2,189,633	2,044,537

Signed


 Stuart Ashmore ACMI
 Circuit Treasurer

7/3/24

Notes to the Accounts

1 Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with the 2014 version of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102 — the Charities SORP (FRS102) and taking note of the Update Bulletin 1 issued in 2016.

2 Funds

The funds held constitute: General Funds held for any purpose of the Circuit which are Unrestricted. The Circuit Model Trust Fund has wide purposes defined in Standing Orders and is categorised as unrestricted. Restricted funds which are held for a narrower purpose. There are no Endowment funds. Details of each material fund are disclosed in the final note to these accounts. Any funds may be represented by more than just cash.

3 Accounting policies

Basis

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost except that investments are shown at their market value at the end of the year, on the accruals basis to show a true and fair view of the Circuit's financial position and activities.

Incoming Resources

Income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when the Circuit becomes entitled to the resources, and the trustees are reasonably certain they will receive the resources; and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Resources Expended

This is recognised when a liability is incurred, or a constructive obligation arises, that results in the payment being unavoidable. Liabilities are recognised as soon as an outflow of economic benefit is considered more likely than not under the legal or constructive obligation committing the Circuit to pay out resources.

Grants

Grants made by the Circuit from its own funds are recognised in full at the time of agreement or when the Circuit accepts that there is a legal or operational obligation to make the payment.

VAT

Since the Circuit is not VAT registered, all input VAT is charged with the expenses to which it refers.

Tangible fixed assets for use by the Circuit

Tangible fixed assets are capitalised if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £500.

The freehold property is shown in the accounts at 2015 deemed values, of which the land component is deemed to be £350,000. No depreciation is provided on the building because the trustees consider the current residual fair value of the manse buildings (on the assumption that it had reached the end of its useful economic life by the yearend) to be not less than its current value. Any depreciation would not be material. The property has been reviewed for impairment

Investment Properties

Investment properties - no property is currently deemed to not be held for the long-term purposes of the charity.

Investments

Investments are valued in the balance sheet at market value at the year end. Investment income is included in the accounts when receivable and any gains or losses on revaluation at the year-end are shown in the SOFA.

Debtors and Prepayments

These are shown as having been calculated using appropriate accounting conventions.

Creditors

Creditors include both sundry expenses and specifically the 1st quarter assessment received in August.

Cont

4 Payment to Trustees

There were no payments made to trustees for additional services provided to the Circuit by agreement with the Circuit Meeting, this excludes stipends.

Trustee expenses

	2022/23	2021/22
Number of Trustees	52	78
Total amount	£5,308	£6,173

Expense payments primarily relate to reimbursement for travel and computing costs

5 Fees for examination or audit of the accounts

	2022/23	2021/22
Independent examiners or auditors' fees for reporting on the accounts	£1,440	£1,320
Other fees (e.g. advice, accountancy services) paid to the independent examiner or auditor	NIL	NIL

6 Paid employees

Staff Costs paid during the year were:

	2022/23	2021/22
Gross wages, salaries and benefits in kind	£166,252	£171,462
Employer's National Insurance costs	£14,545	£14,807
Pension costs	£25,253	£29,924
Total staff costs	£206,050	£216,193

Average number of full-time equivalent employees in the year were:

7	7
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7 Capital Commitments and Contingent Liabilities

At the 31st August 2023 there are no capital commitments.

No Contingent liabilities were identified at 31st August 2023

Cont

8 For information only: Money received and passed on to External Organisations

2022/23 2021/22

Balance brought forward from last year
Offerings/Gifts received for external organisations
Offerings/Gifts passed to external organisations
Balance carried forward

0	0
1,979	2,973
1,806	2,973
173	0

Cont

9 Tangible Fixed Assets

Cost or valuation

	Land	Manses	Other buildings	Fixtures, fittings and equipment	Payments on account and assets under construction	Total
Balance brought forward	0	1,366,520				1,366,520
Additions						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers * (+1-)						
Balance carried forward	0	1,366,520				1,366,520

Accumulated depreciation

Balance brought forward						
Depreciation charge for year -						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers* (+1-)						
Balance carried forward						

Net book value

Brought forward	0	1,366,520				1,366,520
Carried forward	0	1,366,520				1,366,520

Cont

10 Investment assets

The circuit has no common investment fund holdings.

11 Loans

The Circuit currently has no loans.

Cont

12 Analysis of restricted and designated funds: 2022-23

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Closing Balance	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	9	9		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,420	431	39		13,812	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,335	43	19		1,359	LP training
Barry Blunt	982	117	123		976	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,112	36	3		1,145	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,124	636	193		17,567	

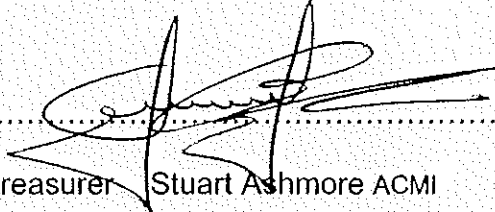
Comparative analysis of restricted and designated funds 2021-22

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Closing Balance	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	1	1		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,395	63	38		13,420	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,813	8	486		1,335	LP training
Barry Blunt	1,015	120	153		982	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,110	5	3		1,112	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,608	197	681		17,124	

Declarations and Scrutiny

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

Signature of treasurer



Date.....

7/3/24

Name and address of treasurer

Stuart Ashmore ACMI

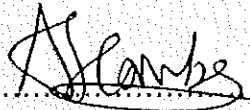
4 Southern Close, Kingswinford.

Post Code: DY6 8HS

Presentation to the Circuit meeting

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023 were presented to the Circuit meeting held on:

Signature of the Chair of the meeting



7/3/2024

Name of the Chair of the meeting:

Rev. Alan Combes

Date

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vale of Stour Circuit for the year ended 31 August 2023 which are set out on pages 1 to 16

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

Independent examiner's statement

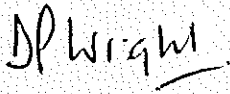
Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of ICAEW, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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

Signed:



Name

David Wright FCA

ICAEW

Name of firm

Nicklin Accountancy Services Limited

Address

Church Court, Stourbridge Road

Date

VALE OF STOUR METHODIST CIRCUIT

England & Wales - Charity number 1145208

Accounts

THE METHODIST CHURCH
STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS

Vale of Stour	Circuit
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2022

Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District	Circuit no	28/05
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number	1145208
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If not a registered charity Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs Gift Aid number	n/a
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Ministers:

Rev Alan Combes
Rev Michael Payne
Rev Josephine Soon (left 31/8/22)
Rev Helen Croft

Circuit Stewards:

Margaret Kite
Michael Sykes
Stuart Ashmore
Beatrice Cloke (Retired 31/3/22)
Jacqueline Hill

Treasurer:

Stuart Ashmore

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Trustees' Annual Report

Introduction

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting present the accounts and Trustees' Annual Report for the year to 31 August 2022.

Brief financial review of the year

Income trends

Circuit income is primarily drawn from the assessment paid by the circuit churches.

Expenditure trends

Stipend expenditure has increased each financial year in line with conference approved increases.

25% of expenditure is the Circuit contribution to the District and Connexion, of which a significant part is used to fund the work of the wider Methodist Church.

Fund balances

As at 31 August 2022 the net current assets of the Circuit were £678,017 giving it in excess of 1 year cover for expenditure. (see Reserves Policy)

There is an amount of £1,009.90 held in a Youth Account and administered by Trustees. This fund will be transferred to the Circuit's Funds in the financial year 2022/23 and will be ring-fenced for Youth Work within the Vale of Stour Circuit.

Churches and Manses

No premises were disposed of during the financial year, but the former Brierley Hill manse was re-purposed to support partnership missional activities with The Brierley Hill Project.

Activities and Outcomes 2021/22

The Covid-19 pandemic, which initially saw the Circuit's churches temporarily close in March 2020, has been an unprecedented period in the life of the local church and the wider country.

It brought significant disruption to the lives of individuals and communities, not least with the curtailment of many of the support activities offered and facilitated by the circuit's churches.

But our faith has remained resilient in these challenging times, with many innovative ways of supporting our congregations and wider local communities.

During the year, church life has returned to some level of 'business as usual', albeit not at pre-Covid levels; congregational numbers have been slow to return and, overall, we are seeing lower numbers of both church members and weekly

congregations across the Circuit. This, in turn, has implications for both church and Circuit finances and conversations have already begun during the year in respect of the Circuit 'Way Forward' and what the future might look like.

One of the key outcomes at Circuit level was the new partnership working arrangement with The Brierly Hill Project (BHP), whose mission is to provide targeted life support and mentoring for the people from the Brierley Hill area and wider Dudley Borough. A re-purposing of the former Brierly Hill manse created the opportunity to work with BHP, helping them to move to new premises having outgrown their previous location. Such a partnership serves to strengthen the Circuit's charitable role (through its churches) of acting as a resource provider for the Methodist Church in the local area.

Plans for 2022/23

Circuit financial plans for the coming year have been prepared on the basis of a reduction to **three** full-time ordained staff, following the re-location of Rev. Josephine Soon and her family to Scotland. The impact of the Covid pandemic, together with anticipated cost of living stipend increases and a stable assessment paid to the district, means a gross operating budget of £349,896 has been assessed on the circuit churches. However, the Circuit has actively chosen to invest in two key lay roles from its reserves, meaning a net operating budget of £301,845 has been approved.

Covid-19 restrictions have had significant implications for the lives of all the circuit's churches, particularly at a financial level, and these continue to be felt. Many churches, though, have proved to be very resilient, with regular giving being maintained by congregations in the face of challenging circumstances and rental income levels beginning to return, albeit slowly. Indeed, some churches were the beneficiaries of funding to support the operation of vaccination centres, but this is, very much, a 'one-off' income stream.

However, the Circuit Leadership Team remains alive to the ongoing impact of the pandemic and have openly encouraged individual churches to discuss their own future plans with the Circuit Leadership Team where they feel the impact of the pandemic has had significant impact on their wellbeing and spiritual life.

Discussions have also started in respect of the Circuit's future planning – 'The Way Forward' – to see what changes may be appropriate for the future against the backdrop of current datasets and missional imperatives.

Two meetings took place in the financial year – January and April 2022 – with a third scheduled for November 2022, to discuss the possible options going forward and what a future, re-imagined Circuit and its churches might look like.

Basis of preparation and legal framework

The Charity's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2022 have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS) 102.

Full Name of Charity: Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Registration Charity Number: 1145208

Date of registration: 22 December 2011

Main communication address: Circuit Office, New Road Methodist Church, New Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PA

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting are the Charity Trustees, membership being made up of circuit office holders, ministers and representatives appointed by the local churches.

Full membership is shown as Appendix A to this report.

Circuit Ministers and officers

Active Circuit Ministers	Rev Alan Combes (Superintendent) Rev Michael Payne Rev Josephine Soon (resigned 31 st August 2022) Rev Helen Croft
Circuit Lay Worker	Mrs Claire Biggs (Children & Families Worker)
Financial Administrator	Mr David Little (P/T)
Circuit Local Lay Pastor	Mr Martyn Filsak
Circuit Stewards	Miss Margaret Kite Mrs Beatrice Cloke (resigned: 31 st March 2022) Miss Jacqueline Hill Mr Stuart Ashmore Mr Mike Sykes
Circuit Administrator	Mrs Elaine Panchal
Treasurer	Mr Stuart Ashmore ACMI

Independent examiner	David Wright FCA, Nicklin LLP, Church Court, Stourbridge Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3TT
Investment Bankers	Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Trustees for Methodist Church purposes HSBC Bank plc

Aims and organisation

Charity objective is to act as a resource provider within the area around Vale of Stour Circuit for the Methodist Church:

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

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

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

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

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

Taking religious assemblies in local schools.

Promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and services.

Provision of chaplaincy services to the local university and other institutions.

Public Benefit

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

Structure, Governance and Management

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

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

Day to day management of the circuit is undertaken by the Circuit Leadership team together with the Local Preachers meeting, the Circuit Finance and Property Committee and the Circuit Policy Committee.

Trustee Training

A range of guidance produced by Methodist Connexion to support the effective running of the circuit, specifically the leaflet 'The Role of a Trustee in The Methodist Church' is given to all new Circuit meeting members as induction to their role as trustees.

Related Parties

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

The following Methodist Churches are linked to the circuit: Amblecote/Wordsley, Birch Coppice, Brierley Hill, Dudley Wood, Gig Mill, Kingswinford, Kinver, Lawrence Lane, New Road, Overend Mission, Providence, United Church Lye, Wesley, Wollaston.

Risk Management

The major risks have been identified and recorded by the Circuit Finance and Property Committee with professional advice taken as required.

The Covid – 19 Pandemic meant that very stringent Risk Assessments had to be undertaken to allow some of our churches to reopen for worship in early August 2020. Such formal assessments are no longer required in accordance with Government guidelines but churches remain mindful of good practice regarding ventilated spaces and good personal hygiene.

There is a regular annual process review undertaken and recorded.

Income and Expenditure is monitored in total and is compared with the approved annual budget on a monthly basis to detect trends as part of the risk management process to avoid unforeseen calls on reserves.

Safeguarding

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Methodist Connexional practice outlines commitment to the following principles:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

- We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.
- We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.
- We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation, guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

Reserves Policy

The Reserves Policy for the Circuit is to hold a minimum sum equivalent to 6 months' average expenditure. This should be sufficient to meet any unforeseen item of major expenditure on manses and / or to be able to continue, in the short term, funding planned activities in the event of any inability to raise the full Circuit Assessment from churches.

Name of Circuit

Vale of Stour

Circuit No 28/05

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2022

Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total 2021-22 £
Income						
1 Donations and legacies						0
2 Income from monetary investments	126	3057		197		3,380
3 Income from investment properties						0
4 Assessments on Churches	264,095					264,095
5 Capital Receipts	10,000					10,000
6 Grants received						0
7 Other charitable income	1,600					1,600
8 Total income	275,821	3,057	-	197	-	279,075
Expenditure						
9 Grants and donations						0
10 Salaries and associated costs	225,811					225,811
11 Property maintenance	40,100					40,100
12 Connexional assessment & model trust levy						0
13 District Assessment & Levy	60,897	41,158				102,055
14 Depreciation						0
15 Office expenses	14,937					14,937
16 Other outgoings	16,897	2,288		681		19,866
17 Total charitable expenditure	358,642	43,446	0	681	0	402,769
18 Gains/(losses) on monetary investments				0		0
19 Gains/(losses) on investment properties						0
20 Net Income/(expenditure)	(82,821)	(40,389)	0	(484)	0	(123,694)
21 Transfers between funds						0
22 Other gains/(losses)						0
23 Net movement in funds	(82,821)	(40,389)	0	(484)	0	(123,694)
24 Total funds brought forward	1,482,624	667,999		17,608		2,168,231
25 Total funds carried forward	1,399,803	627,610	0	17,124	0	2,044,537

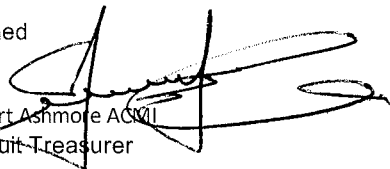
Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2021

Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total 2020-21 £
Income						
1 Donations and legacies						0
2 Income from monetary investments	220	2,657	199			3,076
3 Income from investment properties						0
4 Assessments on Churches	267,388					267,388
5 Capital Receipts	308,341					308,341
6 Grants received	10,000					10,000
7 Other charitable income						
8 Total income	585,949	2,657	199	-	-	588,805
Expenditure						
9 Grants and donations	1,490					1,490
10 Salaries and associated costs	220,216					220,216
11 Property maintenance	27,574					27,574
12 Connexional assessment & model trust levy	103,336					103,336
13 District Assessment & Levy	62,275	27,737				90,012
14 Depreciation						0
15 Office expenses	14,420					14,420
16 Other outgoings	7,970	973	39			8,982
17 Total charitable expenditure	437,281	28,710	39	0	0	466,030
18 Gains/(losses) on monetary investments						0
19 Gains/(losses) on investment properties						
20 Net income/(expenditure)	148,668	(26,053)	160	0	0	122,775
21 Transfers between funds	(205,005)	205,005				0
22 Other gains/(losses)						
23 Net movement in funds	(56,337)	178,952	160	0	0	122,775
24 Total funds brought forward	1,538,961	489,047	17,448			2,045,456
25 Total funds carried forward	1,482,624	667,999	17,608	0	0	2,168,231

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2022

Notes to the Accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Circuit Model Trusts (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (Unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Totals 2021/22	Totals 2020/21
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets							
Circuit Manses & Equipment	1,366,520					1,366,520	1,366,520
Investment properties						0	
Investments						0	
Total fixed assets	1,366,520	0	0	0	0	1,366,520	1,366,520
Current Assets							
Debtors	21,306					21,306	15,768
Loans by the Circuit		2,560				2,560	2,560
Investments with TMCP		625,050		17,124		642,174	683,047
Central Finance Board Deposits	24,640					24,640	122,511
Cash at Bank and in hand	16,397					16,397	6,924
Total current assets	62,343	627,610	0	17,124	0	707,077	830,810
Current liabilities							
Creditors (due in under 1 year)	29,060					29,060	29,100
Grants payable within 2021-22						0	
Total current liabilities	29,060	0	0	0	0	29,060	29,100
Net current assets/liabilities	33,283	627,610	0	17,124	0	678,017	801,710
Total assets less current liabilities	1,399,803	627,610	0	17,124	0	2,044,537	2,168,231
Long term liabilities (due after more than one year)							
Grants payable after 2021-22						0	
Loans to the Circuit						0	
						0	
Net assets	1,399,803	627,610	0	17,124	0	2,044,537	2,168,231
Funds of the Circuit							
General Fund (Unrestricted)	1,399,803					1,399,803	1,482,624
Circuit Model Trust Fund (Unrestricted)		627,610				627,610	667,999
Designated Funds (Unrestricted)			0			0	0
Total Unrestricted Funds						2,027,412	2,150,623
Restricted Funds				17,124		17,124	17,608
Endowment Funds					0	0	
Total Funds	1,399,803	627,610	0	17,124	0	2,044,537	2,168,231

Signed



Stuart Ashmore ACMI
Circuit Treasurer

Notes to the Accounts

1 Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with the 2014 version of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102 – the Charities SORP (FRS102) and taking note of the Update Bulletin 1 issued in 2016.

2 Funds

The funds held constitute: General Funds held for any purpose of the Circuit which are Unrestricted. The Circuit Model Trust Fund has wide purposes defined in Standing Orders and is categorised as unrestricted. Restricted funds which are held for a narrower purpose. There are no Endowment funds. Details of each material fund are disclosed in the final note to these accounts. Any funds may be represented by more than just cash.

3 Accounting policies

Basis

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost except that investments are shown at their market value at the end of the year, on the accruals basis to show a true and fair view of the Circuit's financial position and activities.

Incoming Resources

Income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when the Circuit becomes entitled to the resources, and the trustees are reasonably certain they will receive the resources; and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Resources Expended

This is recognised when a liability is incurred, or a constructive obligation arises, that results in the payment being unavoidable. Liabilities are recognised as soon as an outflow of economic benefit is considered more likely than not under the legal or constructive obligation committing the Circuit to pay out resources.

Grants

Grants made by the Circuit from its own funds are recognised in full at the time of agreement or when the Circuit accepts that there is a legal or operational obligation to make the payment.

VAT

Since the Circuit is not VAT registered, all input VAT is charged with the expenses to which it refers.

Tangible fixed assets for use by the Circuit

Tangible fixed assets are capitalised if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £500. The freehold property is shown in the accounts at 2015 deemed values, of which the land component is deemed to be £350,000. No depreciation is provided on the building because the trustees consider the current residual fair value of the manse buildings (on the assumption that it had reached the end of its useful economic life by the year-end) to be not less than its current value. Any depreciation would not be material. The property has been reviewed for impairment.

Investment Properties

Investment properties - no property is currently deemed to not be held for the long term purposes of the charity.

Investments

Investments are valued in the balance sheet at market value at the year end. Investment income is included in the accounts when receivable and any gains or losses on revaluation at the year-end are shown in the SOFA.

Debtors and Prepayments

These are shown as having been calculated using appropriate accounting conventions..

Creditors

Creditors include both sundry expenses and specifically the 1st quarter assessment received in August.

Cont ...

4 Payment to Trustees

There were no payments made to trustees for additional services provided to the Circuit by agreement with the Circuit Meeting, this excludes stipends.

Trustee expenses

	2021/22	2020/21
Number of Trustees	78	78
Total amount	£6,173	£4,876

Expense payments primarily relate to reimbursement for travel and computing costs

5 Fees for examination or audit of the accounts

	2021/22	2020/21
	£	£
Independent examiner's or auditors' fees for reporting on the accounts	1,320	1,440
Other fees (e.g. advice, accountancy services) paid to the independent examiner or auditor	NIL	NIL

6 Paid employees

Staff Costs paid during the year were:

	2021/22	2020/21
Gross wages, salaries and benefits in kind	£ 171,462	£ 171,784
Employer's National Insurance costs	£ 14,807	£ 13,633
Pension costs	£ 29,924	£ 26,254
Total staff costs	£ 216,193	£ 211,671

Average number of full-time equivalent employees in the year were:

	7	7
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7 Capital Commitments and Contingent Liabilities

At the 31st August 2021 there are no capital commitments.

No Contingent liabilities were identified at 31st August 2020

8 For information only: Money received and passed on to External Organisations

	2021/22	2020/21
	£	£
Balance brought forward from last year	0	0
Offerings/Gifts - received for External Organisations	2,973	3,810
Offerings/Gifts - passed to External Organisations	2,973	3,810
Balance carried forward	0	0

Cont ...

9 Tangible Fixed Assets

Cost or valuation

	Land £	Manses £	Other buildings £	Fixtures, fittings and equipment £	Payments on account and assets under construction £	Total £
Balance brought forward	0	1,366,520	0	0		1,366,520
Additions						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers * (+/-)						
Balance carried forward	0	1,366,520		0		1,366,520

Accumulated depreciation

Balance brought forward				0		0
Depreciation charge for year (-)				0		0
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers* (+/-)						
Balance carried forward				0		0

Net book value

Brought forward	0	1,366,520	0	0		1,366,520
Carried forward	0	1,366,520	0	0		1,366,520

10 Investment assets

The circuit has no common investment fund holdings

11 Loans

The Circuit currently has no loans

Cont ...

12 Analysis of restricted and designated funds: 2021-22

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	1	1		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,395	63	38		13,420	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,813	8	486		1,335	LP training
Barry Blunt	1,015	120	153		982	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,110	5	3		1,112	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,608	197	681		17,124	

Comparative analysis of restricted and designated funds 2020-21

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	1	1		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,376	45	27		13,395	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,810	6	3		1,813	LP training
Barry Blunt	878	168	31		1,015	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,108	4	2		1,110	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,448	224	64		17,608	

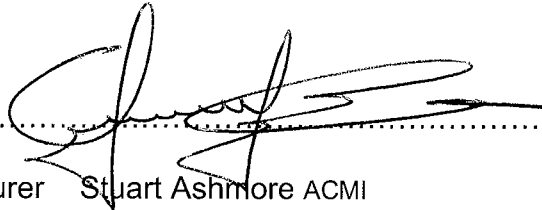
Name of Circuit: VALE OF STOUR

No: 28/05

Declarations and Scrutiny

I confirm that these accruals-based accounts for the year to 31 August 2022 have been prepared from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit meeting.

Signature of treasurer



Date.....

13/3/2023

Name and address of treasurer Stuart Ashmore ACMI

4 Southern Close, Kingswinford.

Post Code: DY6 8HS

Presentation to the Circuit meeting

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2022 were presented to the Circuit meeting held on:

Signature of the Chair of the meeting



Name of the Chair of the meeting:

Rev. Alan Combes

Date

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the
Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit - Charity Number 1145208**

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vale of Stour Circuit for the year ended 31 August 2022 set out on pages 2 to 14. As the Circuit's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

Independent Examiner's Statement

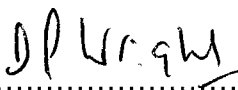
The Circuit's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination
- the trustees' annual report is not consistent with the accounts.

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

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

Signature of independent examiner 

Name of independent examiner: David Wright Date: 24/3/23

Relevant professional qualification of independent examiner: FCA

Name of firm Nicklin LLP

Address Church Court, Stourbridge Road,
Halesowen, West Midlands. Post Code B63 3TT

VALE OF STOUR METHODIST CIRCUIT

England & Wales - Charity number 1145208

Accounts

**THE METHODIST CHURCH
STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS**

Vale of Stour	Circuit
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**FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 AUGUST 2021**

Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury	District	Circuit no	28/05	
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number	1145208
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Ministers:

Rev Alan Combes (Superintendent)
Rev Michael Payne, Rev Josephine Soon, Rev Helen Croft, Rev Christine Watson (URC)
Rev Peter Bradley (Supernumary), Rev Andrew Roberts (Supernumary)
Rev Peter Clarke (Supernumary), Rev Ian Gibson (Supernumary)

Circuit Stewards:

Mrs Beatrice Cloke, Miss Margaret Kite, Mr Mike Sykes
Miss Jacqueline Hill, Mr Stuart Ashmore

Treasurer:

Mr Stuart Ashmore ACMI

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Trustees' Annual Report

Introduction

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting present the accounts and Trustees' Annual Report for the year to 31 August 2021.

Brief financial review of the year

Income trends

Circuit income is primarily drawn from the assessment paid by the circuit churches.

Expenditure trends

Stipend expenditure has increased each financial year in line with conference approved increases.

41% of expenditure is the Circuit contribution to the District and Connexion, of which a significant part is used to fund the work of the wider Methodist Church.

Fund balances

As at 31 August 2021 the net current assets of the Circuit were £801,711 giving it in excess of 1 year cover for expenditure. (see Reserves Policy)

There is an amount of £1,009.90 held in a Youth Account and administered by Trustees. This fund will be transferred to the Circuit's Funds in the financial year 2021/22 and will be ring fenced for Youth work within the Vale of Stour Circuit.

Churches and Manses

Bromley Methodist Church, which closed for worship in 2018, was sold for £315,000 on 10th June 2021 (£308,341.20 net of expenses).

Activities and Outcomes 2020/21

The Covid-19 pandemic, which brought initial closure to the circuit's churches during March 2020, has been an unprecedented period in the life of the local church and the wider country.

It has brought significant disruption to the lives of individuals and communities, not least with the curtailment of many of the support activities offered and facilitated by the circuit's churches.

But amongst the challenging times we have seen incredible resilience and an outworking of our faith in the support of our congregations and wider local communities, including the development of 'online worship' (and thanks must be noted here to the circuit's Technical Community, and others, for the incredible hard work and commitment shown in moving so quickly to establish 'digital church'), which has brought regular acts of worship via digital platforms (and that continue to be

delivered 'post lockdown' for those in congregations that yet feel/are unable to return to regular face-to-face worship.

We have seen other innovative ways of continuing to provide support more widely, from telephone 'wellbeing calls' (within church congregations, and more widely) to YouTube videos from our Children & Families worker – helping to support parents and families through the challenges of lockdowns and home-schooling.

Plans for 2021/22

Circuit financial plans for the coming year have been prepared on the basis that there remain 4 full time ordained staff. The impact of the Covid pandemic, together with anticipated cost of living stipend increases and a small decrease in the assessment paid to the district, means an operating budget of £282,000 has been assessed on the circuit churches.

Covid-19 restrictions have had significant implications for the lives of all the circuit's churches, particularly at a financial level, and some of these are now being felt. Many churches, though, have proved to be very resilient, with regular giving being maintained by congregations in the face of challenging circumstances and rental income levels beginning to return, albeit slowly.

However, the Circuit Leadership Team remains alive to the ongoing impact of the pandemic and have openly encouraged individual churches to discuss their own future plans with the Circuit Leadership Team where they feel the impact of the pandemic has had significant impact on their wellbeing and spiritual life.

Basis of preparation and legal framework

The Charity's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021 have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS) 102.

Full Name of Charity: Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Registration Charity Number: 1145208

Date of registration: 22 December 2011

Main communication address: Circuit Office, New Road Methodist Church, New Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PA

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Full membership is shown as Appendix A to this report.

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- d) Any purpose for the time being of any charity being a charity subsidiary or ancillary to The Methodist Church

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

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

Taking religious assemblies in local schools.

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Trustee Training

A range of guidance produced by Methodist Connexion to support the effective running of the circuit, specifically the leaflet 'The Role of a Trustee in The Methodist Church' is given to all new Circuit meeting members as induction to their role as trustees.

Related Parties

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

The following Methodist Churches are linked to the circuit: Amblecote/Wordsley, Birch Coppice, Brierley Hill, Dudley Wood, Gig Mill, Kingswinford, Kinver, Lawrence Lane, New Road, Overend Mission, Providence, United Church Lye, Wesley, Wollaston.

Risk Management

The major risks have been identified and recorded by the Circuit Finance and Property Committee with professional advice taken as required.

The current Covid – 19 Pandemic has meant that very stringent Risk Assessments had to be undertaken to allow some of our churches to reopen for worship in early August 2020. Such assessments continue to be monitored and maintained and Government guidelines have been followed very carefully.

There is a regular annual review process undertaken and recorded.

Income and Expenditure is being monitored in total and is compared with the approved annual budget on a monthly basis to detect trends as part of the risk management process to avoid unforeseen calls on reserves.

Safeguarding

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Methodist Connexional practice outlines commitment to the following principles:

- the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with, all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

- We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of criminal records disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We will respond without delay to every complaint made which suggests that an adult, child or young person may have been harmed, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.
- We will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.
- We will seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to ensuring the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy; government legislation, guidance and safe practice in the circuit and in the churches.

The Vale of Stour Circuit commits itself to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people that will ensure people are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.

Reserves Policy

The Reserves Policy for the Circuit is to hold a minimum sum equivalent to 6 months' average expenditure. This should be sufficient to meet any unforeseen item of major expenditure on manses and / or to be able to continue, in the short term, funding planned activities in the event of any inability to raise the full Circuit Assessment from churches.

Name of Circuit

VALE OF STOUR

Circuit No 28/05

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2021

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowmen t Funds £	Total 2020-21 £
Income							
1	Donations and legacies						0
2	Income from monetary investments	220	2,657	199			3,076
3	Income from investment properties						0
4	Assessments on Churches	267,388					267,388
5	Capital Receipts	308,341					308,341
6	Grants received	10,000					10,000
7	Other charitable income						
8	Total income	585,949	2,657	199	-	-	588,805
Expenditure							
9	Grants and donations	1,490					1,490
10	Salaries and associated costs	220,216					220,216
11	Property maintenance	27,574					27,574
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy	103,336					103,336
13	District Assessment & Levy	62,275	27,737				90,012
14	Depreciation						0
15	Office expenses	14,420					14,420
16	Other outgoing	7,970	973	39			8,982
17	Total charitable expenditure	437,281	28,710	39	0	0	466,030
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments						0
19	Gains/(losses) on investment properties						0
20	Net income/(expenditure)	148,668	(26,053)	160	0	0	122,775
21	Transfers between funds	(205,005)	205,005				0
22	Other gains/(losses)						
23	Net movement in funds	(56,337)	178,952	160	0	0	122,775
24	Total funds brought forward	1,538,961	489,047	17,448			2,045,456
25	Total funds carried forward	1,482,624	667,999	17,608	-	-	2,168,231

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2020

	Notes to the account s	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total 2019-20 £
Income							
1	Donations and legacies						0
2	Income from monetary investments	1,373	2,555		108		4,036
3	Income from investment properties	5,148					5,148
4	Assessments on Churches	279,439					279,439
5	Capital Receipts	28,670					28,670
6	Grants received	10,000					10,000
7	Other charitable income						
8	Total income	324,630	2,555	-	108	-	327,293
Expenditure							
9	Grants and donations	500					500
10	Salaries and associated costs	206,191					206,191
11	Property maintenance	22,548					22,548
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy	109,981					109,981
13	District Assessment & Levy	63,294	12,402				75,696
14	Depreciation						0
15	Office expenses	20,127					20,127
16	Other outgoings	16,634	659				17,293
17	Total charitable expenditure	439,275	13,061	0	0	0	452,336
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments						0
19	Gains/(losses) on investment properties						
20	Net income/(expenditure)	(114,644)	(10,505)	0	108	0	-125,043
21	Transfers between funds	(214,971)	214,971				0
22	Other gains/(losses)						
23	Net movement in funds	(329,615)	204,466	0	108	0	-125,043
24	Total funds brought forward	1,868,576	284,581		17,340		2,170,497
25	Total funds carried forward	1,538,961	489,047	-	17,448	-	2,045,454

Name of Circuit

VALE OF STOUR

Circuit No
28/05

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2021

Notes to the Accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Circuit Model Trusts (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (Unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Totals 2020/21	Totals 2019/20
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets							
Circuit Manses & Equipment	1,366,520					1,366,520	1,366,520
Investment properties						0	
Investments						0	
Total fixed assets	1,366,520	0	0	0	0	1,366,520	1,366,520
Current Assets							
Debtors	15,768					15,768	13,996
Loans by the Circuit		2,560				2,560	2,560
Investments with TMCP		665,439		17,608		683,047	503,935
Central Finance Board Deposits	122,511					122,511	175,166
Cash at Bank and in hand	6,924					6,924	12,264
Total current assets	145,204	667,999	0	17,608	0	830,811	707,921
Current liabilities							
Creditors (due in under 1 year)	29,100					29,100	28,986
Grants payable within 2018-19						0	
Total current liabilities	29,100	0	0	0	0	29,100	28,986
Net current assets/liabilities	116,104	667,999	0	17,608	0	801,711	678,935
Total assets less current liabilities	1,482,624	667,999	0	17,608	0	2,168,231	2,045,455
Long term liabilities (due after more than one year)							
Grants payable after 2018-19						0	
Loans to the Circuit						0	
Net assets	1,482,624	667,999	0	17,608	0	2,168,231	2,045,455
Funds of the Circuit							
General Fund (Unrestricted)	1,482,624					1,482,624	1,538,960
Circuit Model Trust Fund (Unrestricted)		667,999				667,999	489,047
Designated Funds (Unrestricted)			0			0	
Total Unrestricted Funds						2,150,623	2,028,007
Restricted Funds				17,608		17,608	17,448
Endowment Funds					0	0	
Total Funds	1,482,624	667,999	0	17,608	0	2,168,231	2,045,455

Signed



Circuit Treasurer

Notes to the Accounts

1 Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with the 2014 version of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102 – the Charities SORP (FRS102) and taking note of the Update Bulletin 1 issued in 2016.

2 Funds

The funds held constitute: General Funds held for any purpose of the Circuit which are Unrestricted. The Circuit Model Trust Fund has wide purposes defined in Standing Orders and is categorised as unrestricted. Restricted funds which are held for a narrower purpose. There are no Endowment funds. Details of each material fund are disclosed in the final note to these accounts. Any funds may be represented by more than just cash.

3 Accounting policies

Basis

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost except that investments are shown at their market value at the end of the year, on the accruals basis to show a true and fair view of the Circuit's financial position and activities.

Incoming Resources

Income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when the Circuit becomes entitled to the resources, and the trustees are reasonably certain they will receive the resources; and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Resources Expended

This is recognised when a liability is incurred, or a constructive obligation arises, that results in the payment being unavoidable. Liabilities are recognised as soon as an outflow of economic benefit is considered more likely than not under the legal or constructive obligation committing the Circuit to pay out resources.

Grants

Grants made by the Circuit from its own funds are recognised in full at the time of agreement or when the Circuit accepts that there is a legal or operational obligation to make the payment.

VAT

Since the Circuit is not VAT registered, all input VAT is charged with the expenses to which it refers.

Tangible fixed assets for use by the Circuit

Tangible fixed assets are capitalised if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £500. The freehold property is shown in the accounts at 2015 deemed values, of which the land component is deemed to be £350,000. No depreciation is provided on the building because the trustees consider the current residual fair value of the manse buildings (on the assumption that it had reached the end of its useful economic life by the year-end) to be not less than its current value. Any depreciation would not be material. The property has been reviewed for impairment.

Investment Properties

Investment properties - no property is currently deemed to not be held for the long term purposes of the charity.

Investments

Investments are valued in the balance sheet at market value at the year end. Investment income is included in the accounts when receivable and any gains or losses on revaluation at the year-end are shown in the SOFA.

Debtors and Prepayments

These are shown as having been calculated using appropriate accounting conventions..

Creditors

Creditors include both sundry expenses and specifically the 1st quarter assessment received in August.

Cont ...

4 Payment to Trustees

There were no payments made to trustees for additional services provided to the Circuit by agreement with the Circuit Meeting, this excludes stipends.

Trustee expenses

	2020/21	2019/20
Number of Trustees	78	78
Total amount	£4,876	£5,940

Expense payments primarily relate to reimbursement for travel and computing costs

5 Fees for examination or audit of the accounts

	2020/21	2019/20
	£	£
Independent examiner's or auditors' fees for reporting on the accounts	1,440	1,200
Other fees (e.g. advice, accountancy services) paid to the independent examiner or auditor	NIL	NIL

6 Paid employees

Staff Costs paid during the year were:

	2020/21	2019/20
Gross wages, salaries and benefits in kind	£ 171,784	158,199
Employer's National Insurance costs	£ 13,633	11,677
Pension costs	£ 26,254	22,777
Total staff costs	£ 211,671	192,653

Average number of full-time equivalent employees in the year were:

	7	7
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7 Capital Commitments and Contingent Liabilities

At the 31st August 2021 there are no capital commitments.

No Contingent liabilities were identified at 31st August 2020

8 For information only: Money received and passed on to External Organisations

	2020/21	2019/20
	£	£
Balance brought forward from last year	0	0
Offerings/Gifts - received for External Organisations	3,810	2,950
Offerings/Gifts - passed to External Organisations	3,810	2,950
Balance carried forward	0	0

Cont ...

9 Tangible Fixed Assets

Cost or valuation

	Land £	Manses £	Other buildings £	Fixtures, fittings and equipment £	Payments on account and assets under construction £	Total £
Balance brought forward	0	1,366,520	0	0		1,366,520
Additions						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers * (+/-)						
Balance carried forward	0	1,366,520		0		1,366,520

Accumulated depreciation

Balance brought forward				0		0
Depreciation charge for year (-)				0		0
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers* (+/-)						
Balance carried forward				0		0

Net book value

Brought forward	0	1,366,520	0	0		1,366,520
Carried forward	0	1,366,520	0	0		1,366,520

10 Investment assets

The circuit has no common investment fund holdings

11 Loans

The Circuit currently has no loans

Cont ...

12 Analysis of restricted and designated funds: 2020-2021

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	1	1		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,376	45	27		13,395	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,810	6	3		1,813	LP training
Barry Blunt	878	168	31		1,015	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,108	4	2		1,110	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,448	224	64		17,608	

Comparative analysis of restricted and designated funds 2019-2020

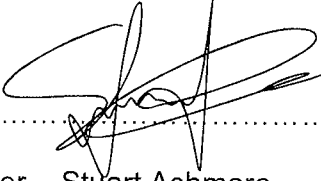
Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	0	0		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,289	88	0		13,376	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,798	12	0		1,810	LP training
Barry Blunt	876	2	0		878	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,101	7	0		1,108	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,339	108	0		17,448	

Name of Circuit: VALE OF STOUR

No: 28/05

Declarations and Scrutiny

I confirm that these accruals-based accounts for the year to 31 August 2020 have been prepared from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit meeting.

Signature of treasurer  Date 10th Jan 2022

Name and address of treasurer Stuart Ashmore

4 Southern Close, Kingswinford. Post Code: DY6 8HS

Presentation to the Circuit meeting

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021 were presented to the Circuit meeting held on 10th Jan 2022

Signature of the Chair of the meeting 

Name of the Chair of the meeting: Rev. Alan Combes Date 10th Jan 2022

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

Vale of Stour Circuit

Charity Number 1145208

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vale of Stour Circuit for the year ended 31 August 2021 set out on pages 2 to 14. As the Circuit's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

Name of Circuit: VALE OF STOUR

No: 28/05

Independent Examiner's Statement

The Circuit's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

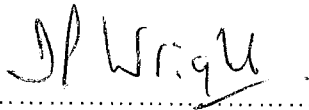
I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination
- the trustees' annual report is not consistent with the accounts.

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

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

Signature of independent examiner



Name of independent examiner: David Wright

Relevant professional qualification of independent examiner: FCA

Name of firm Nicklin LLP

Address Church Court, Stourbridge Road,

Halesowen, West Midlands.

Post Code B63 3TT

Date

25th Jan 2022.

VALE OF STOUR METHODIST CIRCUIT

England & Wales - Charity number 1145208

Accounts

**THE METHODIST CHURCH
STANDARD FORM OF ACCOUNTS**

VALE OF STOUR	Circuit
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31 August 2020

Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury	District	Circuit no	28/05
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Registered Charity - Charity Registration number

1145208

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 exempted from registration under Statutory Instrument 2014 No.242)

Minister:

Rev. Alan Combes (Circuit Superintendent)
Rev. Michael Payne, Rev Ruth Childs (left 31/8/2020)

Rev. Peter Bradley (Supernumary), Rev. Andrew Roberts (Supernumary),
Rev. Peter Clarke (Supernumary), Rev Ian Gibson (Supernumary)

Circuit Stewards:

Miss Margaret Kite	Mrs Beatrice Cloke
Miss Jacqueline Hill	Mr Stuart Ashmore
Mr Paul Stevens (retired 31/8/20)	

Treasurer:

Mr Stuart Ashmore ACMI

Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Trustees' Annual Report

Introduction

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting present the accounts and Trustees' Annual Report for the year to 31 August 2020.

Brief financial review of the year

Income trends

Circuit income is primarily drawn from the assessment paid by the circuit churches. The rental income related mainly to the rental of the manse at 43 Timbertree Road, Cradley Heath but this ceased at the end of April 2020 and the manse is now occupied by Rev. Helen Croft, who joined the Circuit from September 2020.

Expenditure trends

Stipend expenditure has increased each financial year in line with conference approved increases.

23% of expenditure is the Circuit contribution to the District and Connexion, of which a significant part is used to fund the work of the wider Methodist Church.

Fund balances

As at 31 August 2020 the net current assets of the Circuit were £678,935 giving it in excess of 1 year cover for expenditure.

There is an amount of £1,009.90 held in a Youth Account and administered by Trustees. This fund will be transferred to the Circuit's Funds in the financial year 2020/21 and will be ring fenced for Youth work within the Vale of Stour Circuit.

Churches and Manses

Bromley Methodist Church, which closed for worship in 2018, has been on the market for some time – a purchaser has now come forward and sale completion is progressing, which we hope will be completed as quickly as possible. The manse at 10 Fairways Close, Stourbridge was sold on 26th June 2020 for £330,000.

Activities and Outcomes 2019/20

The Covid-19 pandemic, which brought initial closure to the circuit's churches during March 2020 (and still has restrictions in place beyond the period of this report), has been an unprecedented period in the life of the local church and the wider country.

It has brought significant disruption to the lives of individuals and communities, not least with the curtailment of many of the support activities offered and facilitated by the circuit's churches.

But amongst the challenging times we have seen incredible resilience and an outworking of our faith in the support of our congregations and wider local communities, including the development of 'online worship' (and thanks must be noted here to the circuit's Technical Community, and others, for the incredibly hard work and commitment shown in moving so quickly to establish 'digital church'), which has brought regular acts of worship via digital platforms (and which continues past the scope of this report).

When restrictions were lifted during the summer period, many churches responded by opening for private prayer and Covid-secure worship to help re-establish a personal faith connection from buildings, recognising the special role they play for many people in local communities.

We have seen other innovative ways of continuing to provide support more widely, from telephone 'wellbeing calls' to YouTube videos from our Children & Families worker – helping to support parents and families through the challenges of lockdown and home-schooling.

Plans for 2020/21

Circuit financial plans for the coming year have been prepared on the basis that there remain 4 full time ordained staff. With anticipated cost of living stipend increases combined with an increase in the assessment paid to the district, an operating budget of £292,000 has been assessed on the circuit churches.

The Rev Alan Combes was appointed Circuit Superintendent minister and took up his post in January 2020.

Covid-19 restrictions have had significant implications for the lives of all of the circuit's churches, particularly at a financial level, and some of these have already been felt in this reporting year. However, we know that such effects will continue well into 2020/21 (and likely significantly beyond) and so we remain alive to these needs as they arise.

Basis of preparation and legal framework

The Charity's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2020 have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS) 102.

Cont ...

Full Name of Charity: Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit

Registration Charity Number: 1145208

Date of registration: 22 December 2011

Main communication address: Circuit Office, New Road Methodist Church, New Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PA

The members of the Vale of Stour Methodist Circuit meeting are the Charity Trustees, membership being made up of circuit office holders, ministers and representatives appointed by the local churches.

Full membership is shown as Appendix A to this report.

Circuit Ministers and officers

Active Circuit Ministers	Rev Alan Combes (Superintendent) Rev Michael Payne Rev Ruth Childs (left 31/8/2020) Rev Josephine Soon
Circuit Lay Worker	Mrs Claire Biggs (Children & Families Worker)
Financial Administrator	Mr David Little (P/T)
Circuit Local Lay Pastor	Mr Martyn Filsak
Circuit Stewards	Miss Margaret Kite Mrs Beatrice Cloke Miss Jacqueline Hill Mr Stuart Ashmore Mr Paul Stevens (retired 31/8/20)
Circuit Administrator	Mrs Elaine Panchal
Treasurer	Mr Stuart Ashmore
Independent examiner	David Wright FCA, Nicklin LLP, Church Court, Stourbridge Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3TT
Investment Bankers	Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Trustees for Methodist Church purposes HSBC Bank plc

Aims and organisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taking religious assemblies in local schools.

Promotion of Christianity through the staging of events and services.

Provision of chaplaincy services to the local university and other institutions.

Public Benefit

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

Structure, Governance and Management

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

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

Day to day management of the circuit is undertaken by the Circuit Leadership team along with the Local Preachers meeting, the Circuit Finance and Property Committee and the Circuit Policy Committee.

Trustee Training

A range of guidance produced by Methodist Connexion to support the effective running of the circuit, specifically the leaflet 'The Role of a Trustee in The Methodist Church' is given to all new Circuit meeting members as induction to their role as trustees.

Related Parties

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

The following Methodist Churches are linked to the circuit: Amblecote/Wordsley, Birch Coppice, Brierley Hill, Dudley Wood, Gig Mill, Kingswinford, Kinver, Lawrence Lane, New Road, Overend Mission, Providence, United Church Lye, Wesley, Wollaston.

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The current Covid – 19 Pandemic has meant that very stringent Risk Assessments have had to be undertaken to allow some of our churches to reopen for worship in early August 2020. Government guidelines have been followed very carefully.

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- the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
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The Reserves Policy for the Circuit is to hold a minimum sum equivalent to 6 months' average expenditure. This should be sufficient to meet any unforeseen item of major expenditure on manses and / or to be able to continue, in the short term, funding planned activities in the event of any inability to raise the full Circuit Assessment from churches.

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2020

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted)	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted)	Designated Funds (unrestricted)	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2019-20
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Income							
1 Donations and legacies							0
2 Income from monetary investments		1,373	2,555		108		4,036
3 Income from investment properties		5,148					5,148
4 Assessments on Churches		279,439					279,439
5 Capital Receipts		28,670					28,670
6 Grants received		10,000					10,000
7 Other charitable income							
8 Total income		324,630	2,555	-	108	-	327,294
Expenditure							
9 Grants and donations		500					500
10 Salaries and associated costs		206,191					206,191
11 Property maintenance		22,548					22,548
12 Connexional assessment & model trust levy		109,981					109,981
13 District Assessment & Levy		63,294	12,402				75,696
14 Depreciation							0
15 Office expenses		20,127					20,127
16 Other outgoings		16,634	659				17,293
17 Total charitable expenditure		439,275	13,060		0		452,335
18 Gains/(losses) on monetary investments							0
19 Gains/(losses) on investment properties							
20 Net income/(expenditure)		(114,644)	(10,505)		108		(125,042)
21 Transfers between funds		(214,971)	214,971				0
22 Other gains/(losses)							
23 Net movement in funds		(329,615)	204,466		108		(125,042)
24 Total funds brought forward		1,868,576	284,581		17,340		2,170,497
25 Total funds carried forward		1,538,961	489,047		17,448		2,045,455

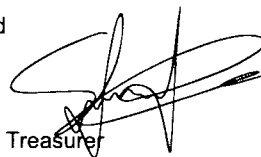
Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year ended 31 August 2019

	Notes to the accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trust (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Total 2018-19 £
Income							
1	Donations and legacies	1,881					1,881
2	Income from monetary investments	1,357	2,528		253		4,138
3	Income from investment properties	10,018					10,018
4	Assessments on Churches	276,784					276,784
5	Capital Receipts	10,000					10,000
6	Grants received						
7	Other charitable income						
8	Total income	300,040	2,528	-	253	-	302,821
Expenditure							
9	Grants and donations	1,107					1,107
10	Salaries and associated costs	209,222					209,222
11	Property maintenance	26,127					26,127
12	Connexional assessment & model trust levy						
13	District Assessment & Levy	60,587	15,071				75,658
14	Depreciation						
15	Office expenses	16,412					16,412
16	Other outgoings	18,034	570		119		18,723
17	Total charitable expenditure	331,489	15,641	0	119	0	347,249
18	Gains/(losses) on monetary investments	66					66
19	Gains/(losses) on investment properties						
20	Net income/(expenditure)	(31,383)	(13,113)	0	134	0	(44,362)
21	Transfers between funds						
22	Other gains/(losses)						
23	Net movement in funds	(31,383)	(13,113)	0	134	0	(44,362)
24	Total funds brought forward	1,899,959	297,694		17,206		2,214,859
25	Total funds carried forward	1,868,576	284,581	-	17,340	-	2,170,497

Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2020

Notes to the Accounts	General Fund (Unrestricted) £	Circuit Model Trusts (Unrestricted) £	Designated Funds (Unrestricted) £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	Totals 2019/20 £	Totals 2018/19 £
Fixed Assets							
Circuit Manses & Equipment	1,366,520					1,366,520	1,662,802
Investment properties						0	
Investments						0	
Total fixed assets	1,366,520	0	0	0	0	1,366,520	1,662,802
Current Assets							
Debtors	13,996					13,996	16,972
Loans by the Circuit		2,560				2,560	2,560
Investments with TMCP		486,487		17,448		503,935	299,361
Central Finance Board Deposits	175,166					175,166	200,610
Cash at Bank and in hand	12,264					12,264	19,522
Total current assets	201,426	489,047	0	17,448	0	707,921	539,025
Current liabilities							
Creditors (due in under 1 year)	28,986					28,986	31,330
Grants payable within 2018-19						0	
Total current liabilities	28,986	0	0	0	0	28,986	31,330
Net current assets/liabilities	172,440	489,047	0	17,448	0	678,935	507,695
Total assets less current liabilities	1,538,960	489,047	0	17,448	0	2,045,455	2,170,497
Long term liabilities (due after more than one year)							
Grants payable after 2018-19						0	
Loans to the Circuit						0	
Net assets	1,538,960	489,047	0	17,448	0	2,045,455	2,170,497
Funds of the Circuit							
General Fund (Unrestricted)	1,538,960					1,538,960	1,868,576
Circuit Model Trust Fund (Unrestricted)		489,047				489,047	284,581
Designated Funds (Unrestricted)			0			0	
Total Unrestricted Funds						2,028,007	2,153,157
Restricted Funds				17,448		17,448	17,340
Endowment Funds					0	0	
Total Funds	1,538,960	489,047	0	17,448	0	2,045,455	2,170,497

Signed


Circuit Treasurer
Stuart Ashmore ACMI

Notes to the Accounts

1 Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 in accordance with the 2014 version of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS102 – the Charities SORP (FRS102) and taking note of the Update Bulletin 1 issued in 2016.

2 Funds

The funds held constitute: General Funds held for any purpose of the Circuit which are Unrestricted. The Circuit Model Trust Fund has wide purposes defined in Standing Orders and is categorised as unrestricted. Restricted funds which are held for a narrower purpose. There are no Endowment funds. Details of each material fund are disclosed in the final note to these accounts. Any funds may be represented by more than just cash.

3 Accounting policies

Basis

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost except that investments are shown at their market value at the end of the year, on the accruals basis to show a true and fair view of the Circuit's financial position and activities.

Incoming Resources

Income is included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) when the Circuit becomes entitled to the resources, and the trustees are reasonably certain they will receive the resources; and the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Resources Expended

This is recognised when a liability is incurred, or a constructive obligation arises, that results in the payment being unavoidable. Liabilities are recognised as soon as an outflow of economic benefit is considered more likely than not under the legal or constructive obligation committing the Circuit to pay out resources.

Grants

Grants made by the Circuit from its own funds are recognised in full at the time of agreement or when the Circuit accepts that there is a legal or operational obligation to make the payment.

VAT

Since the Circuit is not VAT registered, all input VAT is charged with the expenses to which it refers.

Tangible fixed assets for use by the Circuit

Tangible fixed assets are capitalised if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £500. The freehold property is shown in the accounts at 2015 deemed values, of which the land component is deemed to be £350,000. No depreciation is provided on the building because the trustees consider the current residual fair value of the manse buildings (on the assumption that it had reached the end of its useful economic life by the year-end) to be not less than its current value. Any depreciation would not be material. The property has been reviewed for impairment.

Investment Properties

Investment properties - no property is currently deemed to not be held for the long term purposes of the charity.

Investments

Investments are valued in the balance sheet at market value at the year end. Investment income is included in the accounts when receivable and any gains or losses on revaluation at the year-end are shown in the SOFA.

Debtors and Prepayments

These are shown as having been calculated using appropriate accounting conventions..

Creditors

Creditors include both sundry expenses and specifically the 1st quarter assessment received in August.

Cont ...

4 Payment to Trustees

There were no payments made to trustees for additional services provided to the Circuit by agreement with the Circuit Meeting, this excludes stipends.

Trustee expenses

	2019/20	2018/19
Number of Trustees	78	78
Total amount	£5,940	£9,936

Expense payments primarily relate to reimbursement for travel and computing costs

5 Fees for examination or audit of the accounts

	2019/20	2018/19
	£	£
Independent examiner's or auditors' fees for reporting on the accounts	1200	1800
Other fees (e.g. advice, accountancy services) paid to the independent examiner or auditor	NIL	NIL

6 Paid employees

Staff Costs paid during the year were:

	2019/20	2018/19
Gross wages, salaries and benefits in kind	£ 158,199	161,533
Employer's National Insurance costs	£ 11,677	12,947
Pension costs	£ 22,777	29,452
Total staff costs	£ 192,653	203,912

Average number of full-time equivalent employees in the year were:

	7	7
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7 Capital Commitments and Contingent Liabilities

At the 31st August 2020 there are no capital commitments.
No Contingent liabilities were identified at 31st August 2020.

8 For information only: Money received and passed on to External Organisations

	2019/20	2018/19
	£	£
Balance brought forward from last year	0	0
Offerings/Gifts - received for External Organisations	2,950	3,412
Offerings/Gifts - passed to External Organisations	2,950	3,412
Balance carried forward	0	0

Cont ...

9 Tangible Fixed Assets

Cost or valuation

	Land £	Manses £	Other buildings £	Fixtures, fittings and equipment £	Payments on account and assets under construction £	Total £
Balance brought forward	0	1,662,802	0	0		1,662,802
Additions						
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)		(296,282)				(296,282)
Transfers * (+/-)						
Balance carried forward	0	1,366,520		0		1,366,520

Accumulated depreciation

Balance brought forward				0		0
Depreciation charge for year (-)				0		0
Revaluations (+/-)						
Disposals (-)						
Transfers* (+/-)						
Balance carried forward				0		0

Net book value

Brought forward	0	1,662,802	0	0		1,662,802
Carried forward	0	1,366,520	0	0		1,366,520

10 Investment assets

The circuit has no common investment fund holdings

11 Loans

The Circuit currently has no loans

Cont ...

12 Analysis of restricted and designated funds: 2019-2020

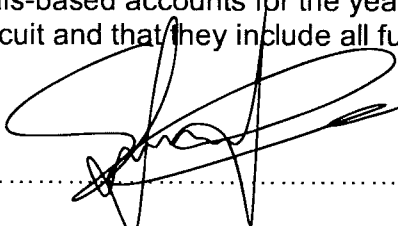
Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	0	0		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,289	88	0		13,376	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,798	12	0		1,810	LP training
Barry Blunt	876	2	0		878	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,101	7	0		1,108	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,339	108	0		17,448	

Comparative analysis of restricted and designated funds 2018-2019

Restricted Fund Name	Opening Balance £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Closing Balance £	Purpose of the fund
Unconditional Bequest	275	2	2		275	Any purpose specified part 9 of CPD volume 2
John R Wright	13,203	112	26		13,289	For the maintenance of the ministry
Arthur Pearson Bequest	1,787	15	4		1,798	LP training
Barry Blunt	847	113	84		876	For training local circuit preachers
Surplus New Road account	1,094	9	2		1,101	Fund designated for the maintenance of the centre.
Totals	17,206	251	118		17,339	

Declarations and Scrutiny

I confirm that these accruals-based accounts for the year to 31 August 2020 have been prepared from the records of the Circuit and that they include all funds under the control of the Circuit meeting.

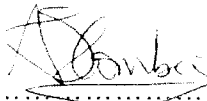
Signature of treasurer  Date... 10th March 2021

Name and address of treasurer Stuart Ashmore

4 Southern Close, Kingswinford. Post Code: DY6 8HS

Presentation to the Circuit meeting

I confirm that the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 August 2020 were presented to the Circuit meeting held on 10th March 2021.

Signature of the Chair of the meeting 

Name of the Chair of the meeting: Rev. Alan Combes Date 10th March 2021

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

Vale of Stour Circuit

Charity Number 1145208

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Vale of Stour Circuit for the year ended 31 August 2020 set out on pages 2 to 14. As the Circuit's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

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

Independent Examiner's Statement

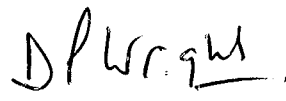
The Circuit's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination
- the trustees' annual report is not consistent with the accounts.

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

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



Signature of independent examiner

Name of independent examiner: David Wright

Relevant professional qualification of independent examiner: FCA

Name of firm Nicklin LLP

Address Church Court, Stourbridge Road,

Halesowen, West Midlands.

Post Code B63 3TT

Date 10th June 2021.