

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

England & Wales · Charity number 1159085

Details

Status Registered

Legal form Trust

Registered 2014-11-05

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

Contact

Address Highbury Congregational Church
Priory Walk
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL52 6DU

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Website www.highburychurch.com

Activities

Objects: THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH IS THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES AND USAGES FOR THE TIME BEING OF CONGREGATIONALISM AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH ANY SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS IN THE FOUNDATION TRUSTS. THE CHURCH MAY ALSO ADVANCE EDUCATION RELIEVE NEED AND CARRY OUT OTHER CHARITABLE PURPOSES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.

Activities: Providing church buildings,regular worship services,venue for community groups,activities for parents and pre-school children,facilities suitable for elderly people,comfort for the bereaved,visitation for the sick,support for those in need.Conducting weddings and funerals.Promoting spiritual welfare of children,young people and all others,youth club activities,healthy phsical activities,

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services
- **What:** Religious Activities
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Gloucestershire

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£91,327	£103,093	-	-
2023-12-31	£103,844	£82,882	-	-
2022-12-31	£84,729	£84,746	-	-
2021-12-31	£155,362	£154,590	-	-
2020-12-31	£110,365	£101,207	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Adrian Blazey		2020-03-05
BARBARA LOUISE MIDDLETON		2025-03-06
Darryl John Mills		2023-03-02
Gabrielle Anne Lewis		2026-03-05
Mary Simpson Buchanan		2022-02-03
Rev Jason Clare Boyd		2019-09-01
Susan Mary Cole		2026-03-05

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Accounts

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

**Oxford Street
Cheltenham
GL52 6DU**



ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS 2025

Highbury Congregational Church

Our Vision: to connect people with Jesus, with each other and with the wider world,
growing together

Our Values: empathy, learning, including all

Ministry Leadership Team

Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Children	Andrea Lacey	
Discipleship	Helen Bloxham	
Pastoral Care	Laura MacLeod Louise Middleton Rachel Jacques	

Diaconate (and Trustees)

Secretary	Mary Buchanan	buchananm37@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Roger Gregory	
Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Deacons	Adrian Blazey, Karen Haden, Iain MacLeod, Darryl Mills, Ruth Wyatt	

Others

Highbury News	Sue Cole	
Safeguarding	Nephesha Michael	
Church Office	Admin	highburyoffice@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.highburychurch.com

The Charitable Objects of Highbury Congregational Church

The principal purpose of the church is the advancement of the Christian Faith according to the principles and usages for the time being of Congregationalism and in accordance with any specific requirements in the foundation trusts. The church may also advance education, relieve need and carry out other charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Governing document, THE DECLARATION OF TRUST, was adopted by Congregational Federation Limited on the 13th day of June 2009 as a recommended governing document for Congregational Churches who are members of the Congregational Federation and for whom Congregational Federation Limited are appointed as holding trustees, the form having been previously agreed between Congregational Federation Limited and the Charity Commission and also having been approved by HM Revenue and Customs.

Highbury Congregational Church began in 1827 and has been part of the Congregational Federation since 1972. The church is also a registered charity 1159085. We have adopted the Congregational Federation's Declaration of Trust of 2009 as our Governing Document, supplemented by our own Working Practices Document (updated September 2022).

Whilst we work closely with other Congregational Churches, all we do is decided and funded by our own Church Members. We have no outside source of funding and we do not have any outside body over us. All who belong are welcomed into church membership on confession of faith in God and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Quarterly (and as required), Church Members meet for Church Meeting to seek the mind of Christ in shaping the life of the Church and setting the future direction of Church life. The Deacons serve the Church as Managing Trustees and ensure all the Church does is in keeping with its Charitable Objects as a Congregational Church and with reference to finances, safeguarding, health and safety, disability, employment and other legislation.

Our Vision

The Vision of Highbury Congregational Church is consonant with our Charitable Objects (as above):

- To connect people with Jesus, with each other and with the wider world, growing together.

Contents

Minister's Report	p5
Congregational Federation/South West Midlands Association	p6
Worship (includes Flowers)	p7
Discipleship	p8
Pastoral Care	p9
Children and Youth	p10
Mission and Outreach	p14
Secretary's Report (includes administration, Health and Safety)	p18
Maintenance	p19
Safeguarding	p19
Treasurer's Report	p21

Minister's Report

Starting on a personal note, I write my seventh report to you whilst recovering from heart bypass surgery. After a year dominated by health challenges, I am full of gratitude to God for his love, mercy, and grace. God is good. I am thankful to God for the gift of Viviane, Naomi, Sonya, and Jeremy, my parents and siblings; for Highbury, for your prayers, cards, visits, and practical support; for the prayers of previous congregations and friends all over the world.

For the church, this year presented challenges which God has led us through with the discernment of the Holy Spirit. The Vision Day in March led by Yvonne Campbell and Oliver Kinchin generated much to think about. Further discussion within the Leadership Team, and with the congregation, led to a proposed Vision Statement and Values which was put to the Church Meeting in June and adopted:

Our vision is to connect people with Jesus, each other, and the wider world, growing together.

Our values are empathy, learning and including all.

At the same Church Meeting, we agreed that Highbury would register to conduct same-sex marriages. This was the culmination of a discussion evening in January followed by a period of prayer and reflection. The discussion at the Church Meeting was gracious. It is important to acknowledge that three members resigned because of the decision; others voted against the proposal but have continued in fellowship. We need to hold this difference with respect. We are in the process of applying for this registration status which has proved bureaucratically slow.

In June it was a privilege to be a delegate, together with Eilidh MacLeod, to the Council for World Mission Assembly in Durban, South Africa. The highlights were:

1. Meeting Shobana from India, who was brutally assaulted and lost her unborn daughter for the sake of Jesus Christ. Through her tears, she said, 'But thanks be to God, there are now three congregations in the place where my daughter died.' I have often pondered whether I would be true to Jesus if faced with brutality and death.
2. Three young women, passionate activists, who spoke of their work; one worked with young women who are pregnant and excluded from their families and communities, helping to restore relationships as well as offer education and opportunities for employment and business startups; another was a Palestinian born in Bethlehem campaigning for the rights of Palestinians; another was an Indian campaigning to end the caste system.
3. Visiting iCare, a project that works to get boys off the streets of Durban, rehabilitating their relationships with family and community, as well as supporting education and nutrition. The singing of a young lad, 'In the middle of the night when my heart is broken down, rise and pray' was touching and inspiring.
4. The sermon by Lydia Neshangwe during opening worship was rousing. In a nutshell: The Holy Spirit is for everyone!

During my summer break, I sensed a call to joy for Highbury, joy that is rooted in the bedrock of faith; joy that comes from Jesus through good and bad times, in life and in death; joy that is an invitation to delight in what God is doing in our congregation, even in those areas that seem difficult; joy that invites us to experience abundance, instead of focusing on what we lack. It has been a joy during my recovery to participate in worship as a regular punter. The congregation is thriving. What a joy to see people using their gifts for God's glory and to see so many people, young and old, participating in worship over Christmas! God has gifted us with God's abundance.

What is the nature of this abundance? Paul writes:

'For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ... Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation...we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself... For in him [Jesus Christ] every one of God's promises is a "Yes". For this reason, it is through him that we say the "Amen" to the glory of God.' (2 Corinthians 1:5, 7, 20).

Abundance is 'overflowing' from Christ in his sufferings and consolation. The joy we have is centred in Jesus Christ who suffered and was raised from the dead. To be connected to Jesus is to be bearers of the cross. To be connected to one another and our world is to share their sufferings. Abundant consolation or comfort comes in knowing that the suffering Christ is the risen Christ and therefore our sufferings are marked by the joy of resurrection.

My plan for the year ahead is to walk with you following Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Peace



Jason C. Boyd

Congregational Federation

Report by Jason Boyd

National

The Annual Assembly was held in Colchester on 11th May 2024 on the University of Essex campus. There were a variety of events at Wivenhoe Congregational Church on the 10th and 11th May including a presentation on the use of art in school assemblies and a shared meal. Those attending were encouraged to worship with local Congregational Churches. Jason and Viviane participated in the weekend and worshipped at Tollesbury with CF President, Elisabeth Sweeney, leading worship.

Highbury welcomed Rev'd Oliver Kinchin, 2023/24 CF President, with Yvonne Campbell, General Secretary, to lead our Vision weekend from 2nd-3rd March 2024. Later in the year, on 22nd September, 2024/25 CF President, Elisabeth Sweeney led morning and evening worship for Harvest.

Highbury members Jason Boyd and Eilidh McLeod represented CF ministers and youth at the Council for World Mission Assembly in Durban. The other members of the delegation were Mark Tucker (Operations Manager for CF) and Elisabeth Sweeney (CF President). Yvonne Campbell attended to support the CWM Assembly, particularly the voting process. The theme was Rise to Life: Together in Transformation. Eilidh and Jason gave a brief report to Highbury during morning worship on 23rd June, then at both services on 15th September.

Highbury records gratitude to Yvonne Campbell for her ministry as General Secretary. Her involvement in the Vision weekend and her offer of practical support during Jason's illness and post-operative recovering has been much appreciated.

South West Midlands Area

The Area has consolidated in 2024 as Treasurer, Joanne Oldridge (South Cerney United Church), grappled with accounts after the sudden death of Nicola White. SWMA is indebted to the CF

nationally for assisting us financially until we were able to gain control of the bank account, especially Gary Baker and Yvonne Campbell.

The Spring Assembly was at Sherston Congregational Church on 9th March. The morning was taken up with reports and sharing news of churches. After lunch, a brief history of Congregationalism was presented by Jason Boyd and promotion of the Training Course. A student was recruited following the day with lots of encouragement from Joy Howell. The worship was inspiring.

An Area Gathering was held on 22nd August at South Cerney United Church. Joy Howell organised the day and Yvonne Campbell came to share in it. The weather was not great so we did not do the planned walk. Instead, we spent the time together chatting, eating packed lunches and homemade cakes. We got to know one another and shared what was happening in our churches. We had a wonderful time of worship and hymn/song singing which was spontaneous and encouraging.

The Autumn Assembly was held on 19th October at Stapleton Road, Bristol. The theme was mental health. We were led by Yvonne Campbell in the morning and Catherine Booton (Learning and Development Manager). We had an excellent presentation by Harry Booton in his role as Congregational Federation Youth Representative about young people in the church. The hospitality from Stapleton Road was superb.

Worship Ministry

Report from the Worship Group

At the AGM in March 2024, Maureen Williams completed her term as Worship Ministry Coordinator after six years; a well-deserved retirement since her tenure of the role included a vacancy and a pandemic. In the absence of an obvious successor, the role of worship coordination has devolved to the Worship Group under the leadership of the minister.

This group has developed over the year and now incorporates the previously separate Café Church and Messy Church teams, and by the end of the year included representatives from morning and evening services. This has allowed for a broad exchange of ideas and makes for much improved coordination of themes and activities; it proved particularly effective when Jason was out of action in the autumn. The composition of the group is not fixed and the invitation to attend regular meetings (about five in a year) is open to anyone.

Some key points from Highbury worship in 2024:

- We effectively have four worshipping congregations: weekly Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, and online Youtube, plus monthly Tuesday Messy Church. There are of course overlaps, but we need to remember them all in our planning.
- We continue to livestream one service a week as far as possible for those who are unable to get to church in person. We know that particularly the reproduction of the music is not great - there are a number of reasons why this is the case - and we are looking at ways to try to improve this if we can.
- Café Church is now well-established on the second Sunday of the month and has covered a variety of topics in a more informal and interactive way. The format appeals to those with different learning styles and has deepened connections as we learn from each other.
- Services continue to offer a variety of music with HySpirit in the morning and Alan Berry as chief organist in the evenings and for special occasions.

Thanks to Angela Pickles and Louise Middleton for the regular preparation of communion and to Jean Gregory and Maureen Williams for providing refreshments before/after our services.

Flowers

Report by Karen Wilkes, flower coordinator

2024 closed following a year of mixed emotions, as we bade farewell to several talented members of our congregation. At least two were very accomplished arrangers, one of whom taught me a great deal.

I have continued to mark the church calendar as requested. If you have any ideas, please let me know, as new ideas and views make flower arranging even more rewarding. We had a wonderful display of orchids for many weeks marking a milestone wedding anniversary. It would be wonderful if more members of Highbury contributed, or just had a go! Bethany Lacey did exactly that, and made a fabulous arrangement.

Please bring flowers to church and arrange them in the vases (to be found in the wardrobe in the Morton Brown Room). Remember you may have to remove the flowers from the church after the Sunday services. If you are keen to use the floral foam, then you have to provide that yourself or you can use chicken wire in receptacles/vases which works well. There may be the opportunity to have a go at arranging as I think Helen is planning for a workshop one Sunday craft afternoon.

Many thanks to all who have contributed this year.

Discipleship Ministry

Report by Helen Bloxham, Discipleship Ministry Coordinator

Aim: To help everyone in the Church to grow and develop in their Christian faith, their prayer life and their discipleship as they explore the Christian faith and seek to put Christ at the centre of their lives.

I had a review with Karen Haden as my link Deacon in August and we came up with these 3 areas for my role as Discipleship Ministry Co-ordinator:

- a. Helping those starting to explore discipleship
- b. Developing/supporting/encouraging existing disciples
- c. Helping to create new disciples

I am going to use these as a focus for the annual report as I review the last year at Highbury:

a/b/c Discipleship is at the heart of all our services at Highbury but I have particularly been involved in the Café Church services which have covered themes such as Love and relationships, Gathering in his name – Congregationalism, Fruit on the frontline, Where are you God? and Peace, actually.

I am now part of the Messy Church and Worship Group teams and this has been particularly supportive as we have looked at planning services together especially in Jason's absence.

a/b/c Thy Kingdom Come – our planning for this started with an ecumenical meeting with some from other Churches/Christian organisations and it was good to then share what we were doing during the 10 days of focussed prayer. We developed our prayer stations and particularly valued the daily prayer journal and Art prints and prompts displayed in the entrance. Thank you to those that helped keep the church open as much as possible and led daily prayers.

a/b Articles in Highbury news – it has been a challenge for me to write regularly for Highbury News! I have focused on prayer this year and often referred to or shared reading I have done so hopefully we are learning together as disciples.

b Highbury Vision/values – Following our Vision weekend in March our Vision statement and core values have now been agreed and give us a focus for developing our discipleship:

To connect people with Jesus, each other and the wider world, growing together.

Empathy; Learning; Including All

a/b/c Church membership – It was good to support a group in the autumn with Mary looking at considering Church membership and Jason will continue this on his return in the spring.

b/c Highbury entrances – Mary and I revamped the noticeboards in the entrances and our welcome leaflet so that there is information about our services and activities. There is now a prayer focus as you come into the Church including a box for prayer requests and locks on the internal doors and it is hoped that the main door to the church can be open to all as much as possible.

Looking forward (please pray for):

The weekly prayer meetings in church/at home.

A new Discipleship theme for Highbury News – suggestions welcome!

Lent materials to be found for study groups/sessions.

Thy Kingdom Come year 3 at Highbury – the 10th anniversary of the prayer initiative.

Worship/Café church/Messy church team – additional volunteers?!

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thess. 5:16-18

Pastoral Care Ministry

Report by Laura MacLeod on behalf of the Pastoral Care team (Louise Middleton, Rachel Jacques and Laura)

The pastoral care team is headed up by Jason, as minister, and regular meetings are held throughout the year, as we keep a check on the general welfare of Highbury members, regular adherents and their families. We also know and care for those that we meet through various church groups such as Toddlers, Messy Church, and HyTec.

A weekly prayer email is issued, and cards of support are sent to those we feel are in particular need. In addition, birthday cards and a Christmas gift are sent to anyone known to us who is over 85. Regular visiting is undertaken to those who are unable to get to Highbury services, and others who may be ill or just in need of a chat and friendship.

Although we have a pastoral care ministry team at Highbury, in reality all of our congregation are involved in caring for each other in one way or another and we thank each of you for that. This is illustrated by the events that are supported by, or suggested by others. For example, the teapot buddies, the Connect groups, Highbury café, various social events and just generally keeping an eye out for each other. This is what makes Highbury a real family community.

Louise is stepping down from the pastoral care team on a formal capacity, having served for many years. A very big thank you to Louise for her thoughtful and encouraging weekly prayers, regular visits to many and for practical advice and wise words.

Children and Youth Ministry

Report by Andrea Lacey, Children and Families Worker

Aim of ministry or group: To help children share Christian Friendship, explore Christian faith and enter into Christian Mission as a full part of the Church family. To help the Church to be fully supportive of children, as a child friendly Church, with Christ at the centre and open to all. Build on and develop children's work, build on relationships with other appropriate local links, such as uniformed organisations.

Report of activity for 2024

2024 continued building on established activities for the period April 2024 to February 2025

Messy Church

Messy Church continued with a wonderful congregation of families who attend regularly. There is a real sense of fellowship and sometimes parents bring other children along as well. Relationships within this group are strong and all who attend are comfortable to share prayer concerns during the celebration part of the service. The BRF Get Messy magazine is used to plan monthly meetings, breaking only during the August summer holiday. I am thankful for the dedicated team who continue to meet, plan and help run this - without them it would not be possible.

Messy Church sessions over the year included:

- looking at three ships (worship, fellowship, stewardship) and the need to look after God's creation and pass on his word through worship and fellowship;
- Jesus' anger at the money changers;
- a (wet) 'Experience Easter Outside', finishing with hot cross buns and making crosses;
- planting broad beans and watching them grow in God's grace, as a reminder that He is always present throughout our lives;
- exploring the meaning of Pentecost;
- looking at the persecuted church and the work of Open Doors (hiding Bibles in Jason's car for the children to search for); this session in particular saw wonderful conversations around the table with few activities undertaken because of the conversations being held.
- We have explored what God is like through hearts, clay pots, and creativity, and continued to think about Jesus in terms of Love and Light. Joy Howell very kindly stepped up to help with January 2025 Messy Church in Jason's absence.

Reflecting on past sessions, we reviewed the space we use for the celebration and sectioned off an area of the dais to minimise distraction and bring everyone together. In January a last-minute change moved us into the Morton Brown Room, which was a blessing as it was wheelchair friendly; we plan to use this for future regular celebrations and the church space for occasions such as Easter and Christmas.

Baby & Toddler group

A lovely group of parents and grandparents meet on Tuesday mornings for the baby and toddler group. There is currently a small regular group, with others joining on a less regular basis. This could be due in part to a decline in numbers after covid-19 but also the increase in funded childcare places. The conversations are supportive and often lead to attending Messy Church.

Family Film afternoons

Family film afternoons have continued to run bi-monthly, to serve the community and act as an outreach event. Films shown:

- "Wonka" - a story about having large hopes and dreams. Faith in Jesus offers hope in the face of defeat. Throughout his struggles, Wonka continues to take a positive outlook on every situation he faces. As Christians, we are called to trust God in every situation.
- "Paddington" – a reminder of the Good Samaritan story as Paddington is taken in by a family in his time of need.
- "The Wild Robot" – a reminder of the story of Noah's Ark, when all animals came together to survive the winter, but had to agree not to eat each other. The theme of love throughout brings the realisation that life is valuable and worth living. Roz the robot learns to find peace and urges the other animals to "be more than their programming." Finally, Roz is prepared to sacrifice herself for her friends. (John 15:13.)

Christmas

The nativity scene photo board went up again during December.

Toddler group finished 2024 with party food and a short retelling of the Christmas story in front of the crib in church. The children and parents were excited to take a look inside the church, see the Christmas tree and other decorations.

The Christingle service saw Messy Church families past and present, HyTec-ers, Toddler group families as well as families from Pittville School supporting the choir. Joy Howell from the Congregational Federation came to lead the service. The church was full and 60+ oranges were shared as they were lit in a circle around the worship space.

The scratch nativity was well supported by the congregation with plenty of interaction from all who attended. This used material from the Bible Society called the Shiny Bright Sparkling Light, with a booklet giveaway (with support of the Bennington Hall Trust Fund).

Sunday worship

Children continue to be present during Sunday services and have built beautiful nurturing friendship between them. Activities at the table or in the side room focus on the theme of the service. Of different ages, they genuinely look forward to seeing each other and offer words of support.

Other Outreach

Know Your Worth

In October, I ran a course (eight weekly sessions) called 'Know Your Worth'. This was a free pilot course, from a charity run by a Christian lady, to help teenage girls grow self-esteem, recognise strengths, build resilience and develop a healthy self-image - empowering them to make good decisions. The girls started off very quiet but grew together as a group and very much looked forward to the weekly sessions. They received a weekly goodie bag containing small things like body sprays, face packs, crocheted hearts, home-made lavender bags. Five girls took part and with a free license to run the course for a year, we can run this again for other girls.

Light in the Porch

In place of Halloween, we staged our own take on trick or treating, celebrating Light in the Darkness, by lighting up the porch and welcoming all passers-by with hot chocolate, sweets, and cake. Copies of the Scripture Union booklet "Jesus is Light" were available to take away (thanks again to the Bennington Hall Trust Fund). This was so successful we plan to run this again.

Saltmine Pantomime

We hosted the Saltmine Theatre Company in January to kick start 2025. We had expected Jack and the Beanstalk, but a last-minute change of plan due to illness saw the Little Red Riding team adding one last show to their season instead. This was a really fun way to start 2025, and brought in many new faces and some families we know through other activities such as Toddlers and Messy Church. It was so well received we are planning to do the same again next year.

Planned activities for 2025

- Continue to build on strengthening relationships with new and established contacts through Messy Church, toddler group and or other activities such as family films, St John's School, Angel Day Nursery etc.
- Build on outreach for Café Church.
- Continue with the Family Film afternoons during the winter (September to March).
- Run at least one more Know Your Worth course.

I am grateful to Jason for his ministry, guidance and support for my work, and have realised this more during his period of absence. Thank you also to Mary B as my line manager and her continued commitment and support. Thank you also to the commitment of the Messy Church team (Jean and Roger, Laura M, Helen B, Marguerite and Louise) and others who step in and help as required.

HyTec (Highbury Youth – The Eternity Club)

Report by: Mary Buchanan, HyTec Leader

Aim of group: To provide safe space for teenagers/young adults to develop their potential and explore Christian faith.

Activity in 2024:

HyTec for secondary school age (years 7-13) meets on a Sunday evening. We have 10 on our books, with about 6-7 attending each week. Favourite activities continue to be eating, playing mafia, UNO, hide-and-seek, as well as table tennis and badminton. We always include times of prayer together and aim to be supportive through what can be difficult years for young people. The themes for 2024 were:

Hide and Seek (winter term) - included an 'treasure hunt' looking for interesting designs on buildings in Cheltenham and of course, a walk in the dark, a pancake fest and an Easter egg hunt!
Cheltenham Parks (summer term) – we spent most of the time outside, 'rating' some of the local parks and sent our findings to the Borough Council.

Brave Faith (autumn term) – using materials from Open Door and the persecuted church, we considered some of the implications of living 'bravely' as Christians, as well as enjoying the usual raft of favourite games.

Connect/Discipleship Group for over-18s. Up to seven of us continued to meet on line and across national boundaries (with occasional in person in Cheltenham when everyone is home). This has been less regular than in previous years, largely because of the changing circumstances of individuals, but there is a strong network of support for each other.

Thanks to

- HyTec team: Ruth Wyatt, Adrian Blazey, Jason Boyd, Heather Rendell - and Carolina Schubert until the summer before she left us for college after at least 10 years of HyTec!
- Everyone who has prayed for us, encouraged us, helped out on an evening
- Parents who have helped out and supported us
- All the young people themselves for their engagement, enthusiasm and encouragement.

11th Cheltenham (Highbury) Guides – 2024

Report by Tania Ashdown, Guider

During the spring term we travelled around the world doing activities from the Girlguiding South West Region World Thinking Day challenge, learning about, and trying activities from countries on the same lines of latitude and longitude as the Region HQ in Salisbury. Jason came to a meeting to tell us about Canada, we played football games from the Ivory Coast, we made juggling balls (for France) and made hobby horses to try Mongolian horse-riding activities. The guides also found out about guides and girl scouts in those countries and we shared food from them as well (always a popular activity!). During the spring term we also learnt how to make Macramé plant-pot holders as Mothering Sunday gifts and ended the term with a bowling evening at Hollywood Bowl.

In the Summer term the Guides worked on 2 Skills Builder activities (Network and Reflect) and we held a Beetle Drive to raise funds for the unit. All of the guides made cakes or biscuits to sell and we had a fun evening. In May most of the unit took part in the County "Bubbs Hill Bash", working in patrols to complete various challenges around the County headquarters. Everyone had a fun but exhausting day. Each patrol had to decorate a mallet as a mascot, and this year one of our patrols was awarded second prize for their design. In June we met outside at Cowley for a patrol cooking evening and for an evening using the Low Ropes course. We finished the term with an Olympic Games themed evening.

In the Autumn term the guides completed their Upcycling interest badge – creating bags from old t-shirts, decorating plastic milk containers to make plant pots (which we then planted with bulbs) and making games from the contents of the leaders' recycling bins. We also had patrol cooking evenings and a "Newspaper Island" challenge. We finished the term with a Christmas themed meeting.

In November we joined with Cornerstone guides for an Indoor Holiday weekend at Cowley with "Travels in time and space" as our theme. We had an enjoyable weekend and it stopped raining long enough for us to enjoy a treasure hunt outdoors.

During the year the guides have worked hard, earning 12 interest badges, 22 Skill Builder badges, 5 Theme badges and 1 Bronze and 1 Silver Award between them.

I would like to thank all the Highbury Guide Leaders for all they have done this year again and we would like to thank everyone at the church for their continuing support. We look forward to trying new challenges as well as returning to old favourites in the year ahead.

We are happy to welcome any girls between the ages of 10 and 14 to Guides to join our activities this coming year and any adults interested in volunteering. Please get in touch if you are interested in finding out more about the unit.

Contact us at **11cheltenhamguides@gmail.com**

1st Cheltenham Cub Pack

Report by Doug Keay, Cub Scout Lead Volunteer, 1st Cheltenham Scouts

We are delighted to report another successful year for the Cub Pack, maintaining a healthy and vibrant group with 28 Cubs, supported by two enthusiastic Young Leaders, three dedicated Leaders, and two occasional helpers.

2024 saw our Cubs achieve an impressive 304 badges, demonstrating their diverse range of skills and interests, from bushcraft to helping at home. We were particularly proud to award the Chief Scout's Silver Award, our highest Cub Scout honour, to six deserving Cubs. This is a fantastic achievement and a testament to their hard work and commitment.

It has been a busy year filled with exciting activities and adventures. Our Cubs enjoyed three memorable camps: the joint Cub Scout camp in Bristol in February, the County event 'Evolution' in July, and a skills weekend in September. Our weekly program has also been packed with fun and learning, including navigation skills, tubing at Gloucester Ski Slope, and an interesting tour of the church and its former buildings led by Jason.

Looking ahead to 2025, we have another exciting year planned with plenty of camping, skill-building activities, and of course our cubs favourite thing, lots of food and games!

1st Cheltenham Scout Group Beavers

Report by: 1st Cheltenham Scout Group Beaver Leadership team (Steve, Becky, Tim, Tom, Alex, Meg, Claire, Florence and Lauren)

Our Beaver Colony at 1st Cheltenham Scout Group has had a fun-filled year! We are pleased to report that we have a full Colony of 24 Beaver Scouts, both boys and girls. We have a wonderful team of regular adult volunteers to plan and deliver the Beaver Scout programme, alongside one Young Leader.

In 2024, we held our two annual sleepovers, one summer sleeper at Murray Hall in Gloucester where the Beavers had the chance to sleep outside in tents, and the other inside for our Winter Sleepover, held in the church hall.

Our programme has been varied, taking place both inside at Highbury Church Hall and also out in the community. We have been on hikes and explorations, were visited by Hannah from Cheltenham Borough Council to run a session on air quality, completed the Builder Badge, watched 'Shrek - The Musical' at The Everyman and had a behind the scenes tour, did some gardening, helped in the community (making cards for those in a local care home), completed lots of badges, and much more! As a Group with the Squirrels, Cubs and Scouts, the Beavers also attended the 2024 pantomime at The Everyman Theatre.

We would like to thank the Church team for their support this year and we look forward to continuing to work with you in 2025.

Mission and Outreach Ministry

Community Cafe

Report by Angela Pickles, Coordinator

Community Cafe is held in the dining room on Thursday mornings throughout the year and continues to provide a regular opportunity for church members and friends, as well as people from the community, to meet informally. Hot drinks and homemade cakes are enjoyed and there is a buzz of conversation.

Everyone is welcome, so why not come along, whether for a quick drink as you are passing or for the whole morning. Some people come every week and others just occasionally.

Once again, a big thank you goes to the small team of volunteers who make Community Cafe possible.

Highbury News

Report by Susan Cole, Editor

Aim: Dissemination of news and reports to Church and other interested parties. Also to inform, notify and encourage.

2024: Eleven editions produced. Distributed to most recipients by email. Hard copies also made available for delivery by hand, by post or picked up at church.

2025: Plans to continue to produce monthly editions (except August).

Thanks to contributors, to Mary Buchanan for in-office printing, and to those who arrange subsequent distribution.

Open the Book

Report by Jean Gregory, on behalf of the team – Sue Cole, Mary Michael, Elaine Schonbeck, Karen Haden and Brian Wood (from Prestbury St Mary's)

The team goes into Oakwood school every Thursday morning in term time to share a Bible story during school assembly. Each story has a simple message for the children to take away with them, for example being kind, saying sorry, asking for help etc. Open the Book (OtB) fulfils both OFSTED and church schools' inspections for collective worship – Oakwood is a multi-faith school and we are enthusiastically welcomed by staff and pupils alike. We all think that our Thursdays begin well by doing OtB together. Recently we met with three other local OtB teams for a morning of training together, followed by lunch, which we all found helpful and fun. During last autumn Karen Haden very reluctantly had to leave the team for health reasons and she is much missed. As I write we are just welcoming Louise Middleton. We are always happy to increase the size of our team, so if this might be something for you, please let me know and come and see what we do.

Christian Aid

Report by Louise Middleton

Having implemented the changes outlined in last year's report, Cheltenham Christian Aid has continued to support Christian Aid with fund-raising and awareness-raising activities. The supporters' group continues to meet about four times a year and everyone is welcome.

Changes. The Cheltenham Christian Aid website has been discontinued as it was not felt to be cost effective. Laura MacLeod is standing down as Highbury's Christian Aid rep. This will now be taken up by Louise Middleton. Huge thanks to Laura for many years of service as our CA representative.

Activities 2024/25

Fellowship Walks. Two walks were undertaken: the first on 15 June around Guiting Power led by Louise from Highbury; the second on 19 October led by Heather from St Phillip and St James, Hatherley. This walk was in memory of Enid Sutcliffe. Both were supported by several churches although numbers were small. It is hoped more people will take up this opportunity to "walk and

talk" in the beautiful Cotswolds, as the walks become an established feature in the Christian Aid calendar.

Picnic in the Park. This is now firmly established as a regular event and is always held the Saturday before August bank holiday weekend. It was well attended in 2024 with over thirty participants from different churches. The date for this year is Saturday 16 August.

Christian Aid Week. Envelopes continue to be delivered to households around Cheltenham but are no longer collected, so we now have no way of knowing how much is donated to Christian Aid from Cheltenham. However, the delivering of the envelopes serves as a reminder that Christian Aid is serving the poorest and most disadvantaged people in the world, and we hope that it nudges people into giving in whatever way they prefer. To maximise donations, Christian Aid Cheltenham aims to increase the number of envelopes delivered this year, and for this to happen more volunteers are needed. I hope that Highbury members will rise to the challenge, particularly as so many of our regular posters are either no longer with us or are too frail to undertake this task.

Christian Aid Fair. The Christian Aid Fair was held on 9 November 2024. The unwanted gift stall manned by Highbury took more than £120.00 in cash and more by card. The total raised was £1431.50. To compare, £1041.48 was raised in 2023.

Carol Singing. All church carol singing took place at Waitrose on Saturday 14 December, when Highbury had a slot together with St Luke's and St Nicolas' churches. We were fortunate to have music provided by Phill Bird as Adrian was unable to join us. The total raised on the day was over £1059.89 so well worth it and very enjoyable too. Ecumenical carol singing took place outside John Lewis on Thursday 19 December and was reasonably well attended. The total raised was £165.30.

AGM. We are now a supporters' group of Christian Aid, so we no longer have an official AGM as there are no accounts to deliver. However, we continue to have regular meetings throughout the year.

Finally, thank you to everyone at Highbury who supports Christian Aid in whatever way. The charity is at the very heart of the meaning of Christianity, a global movement of people, churches and local organisations working together for dignity, equality and justice to enable people to live a full life free from poverty. Please visit the website to find out more: www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/about-us.

World Day of Prayer

Report by Rachel Jacques, Branch Secretary

The World Day of Prayer was celebrated at Highbury on 1st March 2024. The service had been written by the WDP committee of Palestine and the troubles in Palestine, Gaza and surrounding areas had been very much in the news since October of 2023.

We welcomed about 60 people to Highbury at the new time of 2.30pm. People seemed very much more comfortable with an afternoon service. People came from numerous churches and denominations around the Cheltenham area as we are the only church to continue with the World Day of Prayer tradition in our area.

The service was led by leaders from Highbury and representatives from other local churches, based on Ephesians 4:1-6 'I beg you, bear with one another in love'. My grateful thanks to them for stepping in at the last minute due to my hospital admission.

January 2025 we hosted a WDP zoom session in preparation for this year's service from the Cook Islands.

If you have not attended before it's always the first Friday in March. Please come along and support the valuable work of this worldwide organization or check out www.wwdp.org.uk

Room Hire

Report by Mary Buchanan, on behalf of the team (Adrian Blazey, Viviane Boyd)

Aim: To serve the community through the letting of Highbury's building

2024 has been a particularly busy year and we are close to full capacity for regular groups. It is great to see so many different people of all ages enjoying the space and considering Highbury as their 'home' (see list below). It is a particular pleasure to be able to provide extra space for St John's Primary School when they have whole school gatherings or need more room to accommodate SATs, and to host community talks, such as the recent one on Alzheimer's Disease, in conjunction with our local councillor, Barbara Clarke. We continue to be a popular venue for birthday parties and as a polling station. In the autumn, we co-hosted a drama production 'If Prison Walls Could Speak', in conjunction with Release International and opened our doors during Interfaith Week in November.

Highbury may not be the most prominent church building in Cheltenham, but it is without doubt a much appreciated one within our local community and gives us opportunity to connect with many who may not choose to come on a Sunday. From one of the Narcotics Anonymous groups: "I have been attending meetings at Highbury Church since the first meeting 20 years ago and see a great many people get well. We are so grateful to have a venue and host such as Highbury Church."

Regular and occasional users during the year

Angel Day Nursery

Art Workshops

Cheltenham Bach Choir

Cheltenham Fostering Support Group

Cheltenham Horticultural Society

Curious Choir

Dramatots

Exercise classes (Heart 2 Heart, Balance class, Shibashiqigong, NIA Sensory movement and dance)

First Aid Training

Gloucestershire Eye Therapy Trust

Hearing Aid Clinic

Narcotics Anonymous (two groups), Gamblers Anonymous

NHS Retirement Fellowship

Patricia Newman Dance School

Pittville Townswomen's Guild

Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Squirrels; Guides, Brownies

Song Club

St John's School

Street Pastors' Prayer meeting

U3A Groups (Bridge (x 2), Economics, Art, Modern History, Shakespeare, Ukuleles, Square Dancing, Folk Music)

Upholstery Classes

Zion Church

Secretary's Report

Purpose of role - to enable the whole ministry of Highbury Congregational Church, by supporting the church leadership team and coordinating a variety of other roles and activities.

Report by Mary Buchanan, Church Secretary

Membership

New members: 0

Resignations: 3

Deaths: 6

Membership at the end of 2024: 86 (around 64 'active')

Regular adherents: around 30 (including Messy Church)

Highbury Leadership Team

At the AGM in March 2024 Sue Cole completed her term as Deacon. Thanks to Sue for her contribution to church life in this way. Karen Haden was elected to the Diaconate for the first time, although she had previously served as a Ministry Leader.

Maureen Williams completed her term of service as Worship Ministry Coordinator and we are grateful to her for her service over six years. As there was no obvious successor to Maureen, the role of Worship Ministry Coordinator reverted to Jason and has been exercised in conjunction with the Worship Group (see report above).

At the end of 2024 the Highbury Leadership Team consisted of:

Minister (ex-officio member of Diaconate and trustee): Jason Boyd

Secretary (ex-officio member of Diaconate and trustee): Mary Buchanan

Treasurer (ex-officio member of Diaconate and trustee): Roger Gregory

Elected Deacons (and trustees): Adrian Blazey, Karen Haden, Iain Macleod, Darryl Mills, Ruth Wyatt

Children and Youth Ministry Coordinator: Andrea Lacey

Discipleship Ministry Coordinator: Helen Bloxham

Pastoral Care Ministry Coordinator: Laura MacLeod (Rachel Jacques, Louise Middleton)

Administration (including publicity)

Keeping the church office tidy and the noticeboards up to date, managing the accumulation of clutter around the building, keeping our waste and recycling tidy, and monitoring cars in the car park is an unending task and a big thank you to Rachel Jacques for her contribution to this. Thanks too to Helen Bloxham who has assisted with printing and keeping the external (now refurbished!) noticeboard up to date.

We continue to have a presence online via our website, YouTube, and Facebook. The aim is to develop a small team who can keep these dynamic and up to date.

Health and Safety

Peter Harrison continues to oversee our fire safety equipment and arrange for regular inspection, testing and maintenance; Rachel Jacques is overall responsible for our First Aid equipment (including the defibrillator inside the building; the external one is the responsibility of the Secretary). Kitchen hygiene and general cleaning is overseen by Jean Gregory and team, including our excellent cleaner Helen Roberts.

We are grateful to all those above, plus those involved in Maintenance and Safeguarding (see below), for doing largely unseen but crucial jobs.

Maintenance

Report from Ian White & John Pickles

The main project work completed in 2024 was centred around the hall. Work was undertaken to clad the lower sections of the walls in timber to provide a more resistant finish better able to take the knocks and bangs of regular use. The work proved to be more involved than originally anticipated resulting in delay. However, the work was completed to a high standard.

Work was also undertaken on the hall floor to sand back and re-coat with a natural oil product. The sanding revealed a very patchy appearance to the base timber and a stained product was used to help disguise this. This has not worked as planned which is due in part to excess product being applied by the contractor (in an attempt to mask the underlying patchy appearance) and the darker finish resulting in any scuffs and scratches being significantly more visible.

Consultation has been ongoing with the contractor and manufacturer of the product and a plan has been developed which will remove the excess product and then reapply a thinner layer of either clear or lighter stain. Due to the underlying patchy appearance of the base timber a compromise will be required between uniformity of appearance and achieving a finish that can be easily and economically maintained.

Similar work was undertaken on the ground floor of the Manse; however, the floor was in a much better condition allowing a clear product to be applied.

Work started in 2023 and continued in 2024 to obtain quotes to repair the damaged leaded windows. The existing contractor has ceased to trade, and the specialist nature of the work has made it challenging to obtain quotes. A new contractor visited the site at the end of the year and a quote is awaited. Due to the limited budget available the focus will be on the worst damage.

Investigations took place during 2023 and 2024 to look at ways of improving the thermal comfort in the main Church building. Plans have been developed for adding insulation to the roof and sealing the gaps around the opening leaded windows. However, the costs are significant, and funds do not currently allow these projects to be progressed.

The buildings are used extensively by church and community groups during the week and this results in a number of minor repairs being necessary to maintain the facilities.

2025 is likely to focus on essential maintenance activities due to the limited funds currently available.

Safeguarding

Report by Nephesha Mary Michael, Safeguarding Officer

Our Safeguarding Policy has been slightly amended to include our Vision Statement and to update the names of groups who are using Highbury. All church members and users of our premises agree to abide by it. It is therefore important that you read it please. A hard copy is kept on the kitchen windowsill for anyone who finds that easier than accessing it online. Most importantly we must all play our part in keeping Highbury a safe place for everyone. If you have any cause for concern please talk to me, our Minister or one of the Deacons.

We use Thirtyone:Eight for online training and they are available for any support that we may need.

All our Leadership team have either a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) certificate or have completed a Local Workers Form. They have also signed the Code of Conduct. I continue to update the DBS certificates when they become due and those include the Open the Book team.

Last year I mentioned that I would like to pass the role of Safeguarding Officer on to someone else whilst I am still able to support them as they take over. No one has yet shown interest.

Highbury Congregational Church Accounts to Year ended 31st December 2024

Financial Summary

This year has suffered from a reduced level of members standing order receipts. This has occurred from a loss of a major giver (through transfer) in March and other members who died in subsequent months in the year, without new members replacing them.

Some existing members increased their giving to support this shortfall – thank you - but the year still ended considerably down on standing order receipts.

This highlights the fact that the church relies heavily on a small number of generous givers and the loss of any one of those has a material effect on the finances. The church needs to encourage those members who have yet to join the giving scheme to do so, encourage regular church goers into membership and for others to review their giving in line with the proportionate giving guidelines in TRIO – “The responsibility is ours”

Better news was the increase in room receipts from more hirers being encouraged to use the facilities. Room booking receipts are a material part of overall receipts which is good for finances; but we are very reliant on this to balance the books.

Several expense areas were more than expected putting further pressure on the finances,

However, the church has responded by inviting members to recommit to their membership promises, and planning a Giving campaign in the new year. These promises include giving of our time, talents, and money as we are able.

The church was able to refurbish the church hall walls and floor to make the room much more serviceable for church and hirers use.

Review of the accounts - Income & Expenditure, All Funds

Below is a summary of overall financial performance:

	Year 2024	Year 2023
	£	£
Incoming Resources:		
Offerings	56,525	61,036
Legacies	2,513	15,000
Gifts	1,000	1,300
Room letting	21,157	18,498
Investments and other income	10,132	8,010
Total Income	91,327	103,844
Resources used:		
Charitable objectives	-55,898	-51,133
Support costs:		
Maintenance	-22,348	-10,531
Other support costs	-24,847	-21,218
Total Expenditure	-103,093	82,882

Excess of Incoming Resources over Resources used		
Net movement	-£11,762	£20,962

Total net movements in the year of £11,762 deficiency include;

General Fund (day to day) £7,210 surplus

Fabric Fund £20,969 deficiency –largely from hall refurbishment

Gift and Legacy Fund £2,263 surplus

Organ and Visuals Fund £270 deficiency

Early in the year we produced a budget for the **General Fund**, day to day, income and expenditure excluding maintenance and legacies and gifts; to reflect our best estimates of how the year may turn out.

There were many swings and roundabouts, but I am able to report a surplus of £7,210 which will be used to part fund our future 5-year maintenance plan requirements Thank you for your support in making this possible.

However, this falls short of the planned transfer to the maintenance fund and will limit our future maintenance plans, and is not sustainable on an ongoing basis.

Movements in funds

A) General Fund (day to day)

Total year produced a surplus of £7,210 which was however £3,734 less than our budget.

Variances from budget include;

Income - £1,496 less includes;

- Standing orders/tax refund down by £4,594, as explained in the Financial Summary.
- Gift of £1,000 from George Cullis in memory of Barbara
- Grants received better by £291 from increased claims made to Bennington Hall Trust
- Miscellaneous income down by £148 – includes a late transfer to Standing orders.
- Room Hire considerably better by £2,659 from increased activities and new clients.
- Highbury News income £95 down on budget
- Outreach income £605 down on budget – this includes receipts from Café, Cards, Film Club, Messy Church, and other events like the Vision week-end which made a loss.

Expenditure - £2,238 more includes;

- Preaching costs £128 more from travel expenses in June
- Organist fees £105 more, includes more playing over Christmas
- Minister in-service training/travel £538 more but car mileage £81 less
- Gas and electricity costs £413 more from increased usage. We have enjoyed the benefit of very low fixed prices for the last 3 years, but these have been renewed at 15th December 2024 at much higher rates
- Insurance costs £251 more from premium increases
- Junior Church £102 more

- Miscellaneous expenditure £184 less and Outreach expenditure £243 less (in line with above reduced Outreach income.
- Manse water rates £222 more from increased standing order charges (previous charges were too low!)
- Worship resources £428 more – this includes membership classes documentation, Bible Society Christmas booklets and licence costs for registering the church for same sex marriages
- Other affiliations £303 more which includes church donation to Open Doors
- Savings of £148 on SWMA subscriptions from reduced membership numbers.
- Cleaning materials £128 reflecting increased activity in room bookings and a small expense for Cleaning day
- Cleaners Gross Pay £238 more from sickness cover for the main cleaner Helen
- Photocopy charges £62 from increased usage, particularly higher cost colour copying.

B) Fabric Fund

Expenditure of £22,348 included;

- Manse floors - £1,380, covered by 100% grant
- Void Projects church ceilings and windows, main hall, Manse floor and en-suite - £2,937
- Hall; joinery, electrical and decoration - £14,013
- A & E annual inspection and call-out - £532
- Stallard & Co office lighting, and church up-lighting – £835
- David Mason plumbing - £462
- Church/Manse boiler services - £302
- Decoration of hallway ceiling tower - £1630
- Other miscellaneous expenditure - £257

It is recommended that we transfer in £7,200 from the General Fund surplus to part meet the 5-year maintenance plan requirements for 2024 – thank you for making this possible!

Future work could include making the church more environmentally friendly by extensive insulation – in an old building like ours this would be very expensive, requiring extensive funds both by external grants and internal funds.

C) Organ and Visuals Fund

- Expenditure of £270 on piano tuning
- Mary Clifford's estate left a legacy of £1,000 for Organ and piano maintenance.
- Balance of £7,230 is to cover likely costs of organ refurbishment

D) Gift and Legacy Fund

- This is designated for Outreach Projects, and has grown considerably over time with little expenditure
- Expenditure this year was £250 by way of deposit for the Saltmine panto. The church has agreed to underwrite this, and there are further costs of £1,105 in 2025. However, we have yet to count the money on the door which will help to defray the costs.

E) 1st look Budget for 2025

- 1st look Budget for 2025 is likely to be a break-even situation on the General, day to day, Fund precluding transfers to top up the necessary transfer to the Fabric Fund.
- This break-even situation reflects the current shortfall in standing orders and the extra expenditure in 2025 for salary reviews, big increase in utility costs and general increases across the board.

- Finance Group and Diaconate recommended the following accounting treatment for the year 2025;
"That we charge routine maintenance to the General Fund and charge Project/Capital maintenance to the Legacy Fund. This would be done after we deplete the existing Fabric Fund" – subject to Church Meeting (CM) approval
- All Capital maintenance projects would need CM approval as we would be using up reserves rather than the existing Fabric Fund

Giving to Others

Giving to others in the year amounted to £6,609 which included;

- £560 to the CF Mission and Society Fund
- £1,400 to CF South West Midlands Area
- £3,732 to local monthly charities
- CWM Papua New Guinea appeal - £178
- Release International Prison Walls- £181

Other giving/collections;

- Listening post - £100
- World Day of Prayer - £402
- CCP - £56

This giving is 7.4 % of our income

Unrestricted Funds

All the church funds are unrestricted.

The trustee policy is to retain at least 3 months' expenditure as "free" reserves within the General Fund to meet future shortfalls in income, or unexpected expenditure for 2025. The balance, after recommended year end transfers at 31st December, represents 6 month's current day to day General Fund expenditure.

Highbury Church

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

12 months to 31st December 2024

INCOME Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Offerings, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Envelopes & loose change	1101	605	647
STO & single cash/cheque	1102	45,592	49,224
Tax refund	1103	10,328	11,163
Gifts - Other	"	1,000	1,300
Legacies	1122	2,513	15,000
Grants received	1200	2,403	366
Miscellaneous income	6110	392	613
Total - Incoming resources		62,833	78,313
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
Other room hire	1141	19,857	16,953
Church users room hire	1143	1,300	1,470
Weddings & Funerals	2801	1,006	1,069
Highbury News income	3402	0	95
Highbury News advertisers	3403	250	180
Scouts insurance	6105	142	134
Outreach Income	6700	2,239	2,845
Total - Incoming activities		24,794	22,746
Activities for generating Funds			
Fund raising	1131	0	
Investment Income			
Dividends & Interest	1151	3,700	2,785
Total Income		91,327	103,844
6			
EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			

<u>Ministry salary etc:</u>			
Minister's gross salary	5101	32,044	29,692
Minister's employers NI	5102	0	
Minister's pension EE and ER	5103	3,596	3,334
Car mileage allowance	5401	188	270
Children's Worker gross salary	5801	12,806	11,535
Children's Worker employers NI	5802	0	
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Preaching	2101	578	315
Junior Church/Sunday Special	2302	166	64
Video licence	2304	599	559
Organist	2501	605	425
Music	2502	0	
Piano/Organ Maintenance	2503	270	270
Pastoral	3201	0	
Pastoral gifts	3202	128	88
Ministry Leaders exps Joint	3216	0	
Publicity/advertising	3404	0	
Neighbourhood cards	3405	0	
CF affiliations/SW Midlands area	3501	2,260	2,408
Other affiliations	3502	473	195
CF Ministry and Mission	3504	560	608
Worship resources	5115	692	260
Church equipment/furnishings	6109	0	
Miscellaneous expenditure	6801	74	258
Outreach expenditure	6800	859	853
Total - Outgoing activities		55,898	51,134

7

EXPENDITURE		TOTAL	TOTAL
Header	A/C	THIS	LAST
	code	YEAR	YEAR
		£	£
Support costs			
<u>Ministry expenses:</u>			
Travel, excluding Car	5116	0	71
In -service training/retreat	5117	609	
Subsistence	5118	0	
<u>Manse expenses:</u>			
Manse insurance	5301	336	301
Manse - water	5304	366	263
Manse - community charge	5305	3,086	2,947
Manse - maintenance	5307	1,671	252
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Project	6100	0	
Church - Maintenance	6101	20,677	10,278
Gas	6102	3,560	3,338
Electricity	6103	2,417	2,226
Insurance	6104	3,047	2,668
Trade disposal	6106	509	475
Housekeeping	6301	180	187
Cleaning materials	6302	1,040	873

Green Waste Disposal	6303	180	
Cleaners gross pay	6501	6,435	4,912
Stationery/directory	6601	15	17
Postage	6602	16	25
Telephone	6603	780	779
Office equipment	6604	255	247
Payroll costs	6606	288	288
Photocopy hire/copy charge	6611	1,400	1,340
Photocopy paper	6612	109	58
Bank charges	6701	219	203
Legal costs	6702	0	
Recruitment costs	6703	0	
Professional fund raising	6705	0	
Total - Support costs		47,195	31,748
Total Expenditure		103,093	82,882
	8		

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

Income/Expenditure Header		TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Income			
Incoming resources		62,833	78,313
Incoming activities		24,794	22,746
Fund raising		0	0
Dividends & interest		3,700	2,785
Total Income		91,327	103,844
Expenditure			
Outgoing activities		55,898	51,134
Support costs		47,195	31,748
Total Expenditure		103,093	82,882
All Funds surplus/(deficiency)		-11,766	20,962
Less transfers to other funds:			
Fabric		20,968	-3,114
Gifts and Legacy		-2,263	-14,000
Organ and Visuals		270	-3,500
Year end transfers 2023		0	16,144
Gen. Funds surplus/(deficiency)		7,209	16,492

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Highbury Congregational Church

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the Examiner

As Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Accounting Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) issued in March 2005, UK Accounting Standards and the Charities Act 2011. As Trustees, you consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to;

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

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Trustees and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

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

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

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

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

Signed



Date

13/02/25

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 1159085

Accounts

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

**Oxford Street
Cheltenham
GL52 6DU**



ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS 2023

Highbury Congregational Church

Making connections in friendship, faith and mission, with Christ at the centre and open to all.

Ministry Leadership Team

Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Worship	Maureen Williams	worship@highburychurch.co.uk
Children	Andrea Lacey	children@highburychurch.co.uk
Discipleship	Helen Bloxham	
Pastoral Care	Laura MacLeod Louise Middleton Rachel Jacques	

Diaconate (and Trustees)

Secretary	Mary Buchanan	buchananm37@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Roger Gregory	treasurer@highburychurch.co.uk
Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Deacons	Adrian Blazey, Sue Cole, Iain MacLeod, Darryl Mills, Ruth Wyatt	

Others

Highbury News	Sue Cole	news@highburychurch.co.uk
Safeguarding	Nephesha Michael	safeguarding@highburychurch.co.uk
Church Office	Admin	admin@highburychurch.co.uk

Website: www.highburychurch.com

The Charitable Objects of Highbury Congregational Church

The principal purpose of the church is the advancement of the Christian Faith according to the principles and usages for the time being of Congregationalism and in accordance with any specific requirements in the foundation trusts. The church may also advance education, relieve need and carry out other charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Governing document, THE DECLARATION OF TRUST, was adopted by Congregational Federation Limited on the 13th day of June 2009 as a recommended governing document for Congregational Churches who are members of the Congregational Federation and for whom Congregational Federation Limited are appointed as holding trustees, the form having been previously agreed between Congregational Federation Limited and the Charity Commission and also having been approved by HM Revenue and Customs.

Highbury Congregational Church began in 1827 and has been part of the Congregational Federation since 1972. The church is also a registered charity 1159085. We have adopted the Congregational Federation's Declaration of Trust of 2009 as our Governing Document, supplemented by our own Working Practices Document (updated September 2022).

Whilst we work closely with other Congregational Churches, all we do is decided and funded by our own Church Members. We have no outside source of funding and we do not have any outside body over us. All who belong are welcomed into church membership on confession of faith in God and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Quarterly (and as required), Church Members meet for Church Meeting to seek the mind of Christ in shaping the life of the Church and setting the future direction of Church life. The Deacons serve the Church as Managing Trustees and ensure all the Church does is in keeping with its Charitable Objects as a Congregational Church and with reference to finances, safeguarding, health and safety, disability, employment and other legislation.

Our Mission

Our Mission is consonant with our Charitable Objects (as above):

Highbury Congregational Church is a community connecting in friendship, faith and mission, with Christ at the centre and open to all.

Contents

Minister's Report	p5
Worship (includes Flowers)	p7
Children and Youth (includes Scouts and Guides)	p8
Pastoral Care	p12
Discipleship	p12
Mission and Outreach	p14
Secretary's Report (includes administration, Health and Safety)	p17
Maintenance	p18
Safeguarding	p18
Treasurer's Report	p19

Minister's Report

I begin my sixth annual report to the Church Meeting with gratitude to God. It is a privilege to have a good team of Deacons and Ministry Coordinators who, along with the Secretary and Treasurer, give the best of themselves in the service of this congregation.

The year has been full of the normal responsibilities of ministry: preaching, teaching, prayer, pastoral care (visiting and bereavement), oversight of the various congregations at Highbury, community connections (Schools/Scouts/Guides), commitments to the Congregational Federation (SWMA Chair, Tutor for the Congregational Institute of Practical Theology), and teaching and PhD supervision at the Nazarene Theological College.

Several areas of ministry have been a source of encouragement:

- The worship planning group has established itself and is meeting regularly. The feedback from the worship conversations were considered by the group. What is clear is that not much is clear: Highbury is a diverse community with as many preferences as there are people. It was recognised that we cannot be everything for everyone. Our aim is to ensure that there is some form of worship that is accessible to various tastes.
- The pastoral care group has bedded down under Laura's leadership. There is such excellent support being given that goes unseen.
- The Café Church team has been established. It is a source of delight to see how Café Church has become such a vital part of the different styles of worship. It is good for the spiritual development of our existing congregation and provides an entry point for those less familiar with church. This second aspect is yet to be exploited to the full.
- The Deacons and Ministry Coordinators carefully considered how to open up the conversation on same-sex marriage, as agreed at our last AGM. It began with a survey at the December meeting and a planned discussion evening in January 2024.
- Participation in morning worship has been steady between 35-45. It has been good to have a couple of families visiting and then staying. The evening congregation is steady with 10-15 people. Messy Church has developed relationships with families and it has been joyful to have a good number of Highbury folk participating. This changes the dynamic. Andrea leads the team with a 'can-do' attitude.
- Andrea has re-started Film Club. Attendance varies but the atmosphere is always warm and friendly. Do come along. Enjoy a film and make connections with people from our community.
- Those of us who participated in the Highbury Community Celebration at the end of September went home buzzing. Thank you to Mary for the vision and organisation and to the team that made it all happen. Since then, I have met numbers of people in other contexts who mentioned what a special day it was.
- The connection with Scouts and Guides has been building. I have been invited to speak to various groups, telling stories, talking about Canada etc. It was a pleasure to participate in the Beaver Sleepover and then to have them join us for our Scratch Nativity.
- The relationship with St. John's School is firmly established. The school has used the church during SATS and had presentation services in the church. I have weekly involvement in RE Assemblies. Mary, Chris, and Rachel are the team that make the church events happen and for that I am so very grateful.
- Andrea, Mary, June, and I went to the joint School Fete which included St. John's and was held at Pittville. We had significant conversations with children, parents, teachers, and staff. When it is advertised this year, would there be any others willing to come and support Highbury's presence?

- The Christingle Service took an unexpected turn. We had planned for Messy Church and Guides to be part of the service. Days before the service, the Church Office was contacted. After a flurry of emails Pittville School were involved with their newly formed choir. The church was full. The atmosphere was the soft glow of candle light and hope in the dark.
- Helen Bloxham's passion for Thy Kingdom Come met with energy. About 18 people gathered to pray and plan for the week beginning on Ascension Day and concluding on Pentecost. Highbury Church kept its doors open from first thing in the morning until about 6 pm every day. Thank you to all who 'held the space'. We had numbers of people drop in. Some prayed. Others simply looked around. The Prayer Labyrinth and a dog bowl provided welcome for those who simply passed by. There is a meeting on 29th February to which other churches have been invited. Please pray for participation and that this wave of prayer will wash over Cheltenham.

There are many signs of growth in our community of communities. My prayer is that the Vision Weekend will clarify our vision and galvanize our purpose in living the Good News wherever we are. Growth inevitably involves growing pains. As the community grows there is change. Some of that change is easier to accept than others. May the Spirit give us openness of heart and mind so that we can receive and give with humility. Particularly, may the Holy Spirit guide us in our conversations about same-sex marriage and, in our differences, may we be held together in the tenderness of God's love. Lord, please give us patience.

On a personal note, Viviane and I are grateful to the congregation for prayerful support during a year marked with health challenges. We continue to value your prayers in our fostering journey. Be assured of our prayers for you. God bless you.

Peace



Jason C. Boyd

Worship Ministry

Report by Maureen Williams, Worship Ministry Coordinator

The year has again gone very quickly, and it would seem that our Congregation at both morning and evening services remains about the same. There are still people who prefer to listen in from home via YouTube, some out of preference, others because of frailty or ill-health, and because of that we continue to stream mainly the evening service. However, it is always good to be together and experience the fellowship of other Christians, and hopefully with the better weather, lighter nights and Spring just around the corner, people will feel like returning. Discussions have been held about what people would like in the services. It was interesting that many supported having the organ played in the morning along with HySpirit. It was also decided that Cafe Church should occur once a month. Thanks must be given to those who prepare the Church on those occasions and to those who do the groundwork for each presentation.

The Advent Carol Service was well attended, as was the Christingle service which is an opportunity to have Messy Church, HyTec and Pittville school choir sharing with us also. Knowing that many people are away over Christmas, the services were quite well attended.

During Jason's period of recovery after foot surgery, we were very thankful for those who kindly stepped in to take services, and will be again whilst Jason is in Canada in February. We are pleased that Jason is now fully recovered and we thank him for his leadership.

Many members and adherents prefer to worship in a more contemporary style and so our morning service is designed to meet that need. Others in our Church prefer a more formal style and so the evening service is an opportunity to sing hymns rather than songs, and to enjoy a more reflective space. As this attracts the older members of the Church, the numbers are decreasing. All our worship, however, needs the Holy Spirit to give it life and to bring glory to God, and so prayers are needed from us all.

Special thanks must go to our organists, Alan Berry, Ian James and Mary Buchanan and also to Adrian Blazey and Helen Bloxham in HySpirit who give so much of their time to provide the joy that music brings to worship.

Finally, I would like to say a big THANK YOU to all those people who so readily agree to read the lesson, or prepare the prayers of intercession or help in other ways at both services and in the running of Highbury. It requires commitment and dedication, and I know a lot of time is spent in preparation. Also on special occasions the flowers and decorations around the Church have been spectacular and I wish to thank all who provided these at any time, which as part of the ministry to the Congregation also reflects the glories of God's creation.

It has been my privilege to serve in this office for six years, but now it is someone else's turn. As Congregationalists, we all have a part to play if we are to see our Church flourish and grow.

There are two Bible verses which spring to mind...

"In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths"

"With God all things are possible "

We ask God's blessing as we step out in faith for the future.

Flowers

Report by Karen Wilkes, flower coordinator

Little has changed during the last year. We continue to mark the Church calendar as we always have. I am delighted that the younger members of our church are now involved during the Christmas period.

It is great that Church members have arranged a vase of flowers from time to time. Remember you can always bring a bunch with you on Sunday morning, as long as you have removed the leaves before arranging in a vase. If you decide to bring a plant to church, please ensure you are responsible for its health and well-being. If you have garden flowers/shrubs they are just as

acceptable as a purchased bunch. I do hope more church members give this consideration as it is a focus for people and a welcoming sight.

Thank you to everyone who has provided flowers and plants in 2023.

(NB. If you are really enthusiastic and arrange in a bowl using oasis, it's your responsibility to provide, remove and dispose of the oasis; if re-using oasis it must be kept wet and totally covered by a plastic bag. Oasis is not environmentally friendly and not biodegradable.)

Children and Youth Ministry

Report by Andrea Lacey, Children and Families Worker

Aim of ministry or group: To help children share Christian Friendship, explore Christian faith and enter into Christian Mission as a full part of the Church family. To help the Church to be fully supportive of children, as a child friendly Church, with Christ at the centre and open to all. Build on and develop children's work, build on relationships with other appropriate local links, such as uniformed organisations.

Report of activity for 2023

2023 (April 2023 to February 2024) continued building on established activities (reflecting changed hours; 15 hours per week).

Messy Church

Messy Church has continued to run and has a good number of families attending regularly. These families share in fellowship with each other and the team hold good relationships and conversations with them. We are able to share prayer concerns as well as enjoy worship songs together during the celebration. Relationships made through the Baby and Toddler group sees new families joining us throughout the year.

The services follow the plans provided by the BRF Get Messy magazine. The Messy Church team has grown during the last year and meet at the start of the month to plan for the session ahead. We use the plan from the magazine and study the Bible theme together before selecting or adapting the activities to suit. The activities chosen are either crafts, puzzles, games or experiments! We try to focus on all age activities in our selections and always have a prayer tent.

In April we celebrated the theme "Everyone is welcome" from Luke 14:1-23 making happy face pancakes and newspaper dress up. April was also a time of sharing the Easter message with each other and some families joined us on Good Friday to walk the Experience Easter Outside trail. In May, we celebrated Pentecost and, with the help of Viviane and Jason, used a prayer Labyrinth which also became a part of the Thy Kingdom Come activities. We celebrated harvest and caring for God's creation through the story of Johnny Appleseed. Following on from this and subsequent services, the Messy Church congregation hope to build on the community aspect and plans are underway to create a vegetable garden. In December we had a very busy Christingle service welcoming so many different groups connected with Highbury into one service, including Messy Church past and present, HyTec-ers, Toddler Group families as well as families from Pittville School to name just a few. It has been a wonderful year of seeing the Messy Church congregation growing together and sharing in fellowship.

Baby & Toddler group

We have a lovely group of parents and grandparents for the Tuesday morning Baby and Toddler group. We consistently have around 10-12 children weekly with a consistent core group with others joining on a less regular basis. Realistically, the numbers connected to this group are more like 20 children. This group helps to build on children's work and we are fortunate to be able to support parents where needed. These conversations have also led on to Messy Church connections.

Christmas

A freshly painted photo board featured on the Highbury Christmas card asking the question "Where am I?". The board was displayed outside during December and received a very positive response from passers-by (including refuse collectors), as well as those using the building for various events. The scratch nativity was also very well supported with plenty of interaction from all ages of the congregation.

Family Film afternoons

Family film afternoons were brought back in September as a bi-monthly event to help serve the community and act as an outreach event. Following Covid-19 lockdowns, it was felt that there may have been a gap in terms of word-of-mouth communication of events. The family film afternoons hope to bridge this gap in making our local community aware of what we have to offer. We saw families who had previously come to Toddlers but whom we hadn't seen since, so it was lovely to be able to reconnect with them and remind them that Highbury is very much still here. It was also great to welcome some new families and respond to their questions of "what else do you run here?" The first of these films was a one-off in Spring which welcomed around 35 people to watch Disney's "Encanto"; a perfect telling of the Prodigal Son who was welcomed back to his family. "Super Mario Bros." followed the story of 2 brothers who work together helping others in need (Luke 10:25-37 and John 15:13). An extra film was shown for Halloween during half term; "Coco" focuses on forgiveness and celebrating the memory of loved ones who have died, under the Day of the Dead theme. "Rise of the Guardians" was the film for November. The guardians (Santa, Easter Bunny, Jack Frost and the Sandman) work together to hang on to one boy's belief; the mustard seed of hope. January saw Disney Pixar's "Elemental"; welcoming everyone from different backgrounds.

Sunday worship

Children continue to be present during Sunday services. Activities are focused on the theme of the service. We occasionally take children out to explore activities that might not be possible in the church space, or just to burn off some energy before re-joining the service.

Planned activities for 2024

We continue to build on strengthening relationships with new and established contacts through Messy Church, Toddlers and or other activities such as family films, engagement with St John's School, Angel Day Nursery etc. Particular aims are:

- Help to equip parents with skills during Toddler Group to encourage children's development, such as in taking turns and literacy skills.
- Build on outreach for Café Church.
- Continue Family Film afternoons during the winter months (September to March).

As always, I am grateful to Jason for his Ministry, guidance and support for my work. Thank you to Mary B as my line manager and her continued commitment. Thank you also to the committed and growing Messy Church team (Jean and Roger, Laura M, Helen B, Marguerite and Louise) and for others who help as required.

HyTec (Highbury Youth – The Eternity Club)

Report by: Mary Buchanan, HyTec Leader

Aim of group: To provide safe space for teenagers/young adults to develop their potential and explore Christian faith.

Activity in 2023:

HyTec for secondary school age (years 7-13) meets on a Sunday evening. We have 14 on our books, with between 6 and 10 attending each week. The group is in turns fiercely competitive and mutually supportive, boisterous and thoughtful; we always include times of prayer together and still enjoy sharing food together at our monthly cafes. The themes for 2023 were:

Journeys (first 6 months) considering life as a journey and exploring the significance of maps/directions, overcoming obstacles, with activities indoors and outdoors (including the hazardous journey of the annual Duck Race)

Hide and Seek (autumn term) pivoting off a favourite game to consider some of the things we might be looking for and what things we might try to hide.

Connect/Discipleship Group for over-18s. Up to seven of us meet regularly online, connecting various parts of the UK, Germany and, for a time, the US. We sometimes follow a theme, but our tendency to explore unrelated tangents is legendary. This year we have delved a bit into how the Bible came to be and how the two testaments link together. We have developed a strong network of support for each other.

As we go into 2024, both groups continue to evolve as the young people grow, move to college, settle in other places. But being part of 'The Eternity Club' never leaves you!

Thanks to

- HyTec team: Ruth Wyatt, Carolina Schubert, Adrian Blazey, Jason Boyd, Heather Rendell
- Everyone who has prayed for us, encouraged us, helped out on an evening
- Parents who have helped out and supported us
- All the young people themselves for their engagement, enthusiasm and encouragement.

11th Cheltenham (Highbury) Guides – 2023

Report by Tania Ashdown, Guider

Last year one of our Guides was selected to join a County International trip to South Africa and after a lot of fundraising, this year she joined a group of Rangers and Guides from Gloucestershire on the visit, spending Thinking Day (22nd February) enjoying activities with South African Guides as well as visiting museums and taking part in a safari. Kitty shared photos, souvenirs and stories (including being stuck in a hotel lift during a power cut) at one of our Guide meetings and taught us a game she had learnt from the South African Guides. We were also proud to present Kitty with her Gold Award – achieved with a lot of hard work on her own and taking part in unit activities. Kitty is our first guide to achieve the Gold Award since the new programme was launched.

During the year the Guides have continued working on badges – completing the "Take Action" skills builder badge in the spring and "Live Smart" skills builder badge in the autumn. In the summer term we did a lot of activities based around the Coronation, including a Coronation patrol bake off, making guardsman peg dolls and designing patrol logos (based on the ideas behind the coronation logo). We had our own Coronation party and attended the Battledown District Coronation activity evening with the other Rainbows, Brownies and Guides from the area.

In March most of the unit joined a County trip to Woodhouse Scout Activity Centre, where we spent the day trying different activities including go-karting, climbing, abseiling, fire lighting, zorbing and

soap carving. One of the Guides made her promise whilst at the top of the climbing wall (the leader stayed safely at the bottom!). We were very lucky with the weather as it stopped raining as we arrived and only started again as we left. The unit also took part in the County "Bubbs Hill Bash" in June, working in patrols to complete various challenges around the County headquarters. Everyone had a fun but exhausting day.

In August we joined with Cornerstone Guides for our first camp since the pandemic. We spent time during the summer term learning how to make gadgets and bedding rolls, and during the camp all the Guides completed their "Backwoods cooking" badge, cooking some of their own meals over a campfire. Although we had some rain, everyone enjoyed the experience and we hope to have another camp this year.

Other activities during the year have included a fundraising Beetle Drive, a movie evening, making "Twiddle Muffs" to donate to a local care home and a quiz evening, as well as Christmas and Easter themed meetings.

I would like to thank all of the Highbury Guide Leaders for all they have done this year again and we would like to thank everyone at the church for their continuing support. We look forward to trying new challenges as well as returning to old favourites in the year ahead.

We are happy to welcome any girls between the ages of 10 and 14 to Guides to join our activities this coming year and any adults interested in volunteering. Please get in touch if you are interested in finding out more about the unit.

Tania Ashdown, Guider

Contact us at 11cheltenhamguides@gmail.com

1st Cheltenham (Highbury) Scouts

Report by Jeremy Gibbs, 1st Cheltenham Group Scout Leader

This year saw the Scout group complete its first full year for Squirrels. We awarded 15 Chief Scout Acorn, the top award for Squirrels, making it one of the most decorated groups in the country. Our Squirrels have taken part in exciting activities throughout the year that can only be found in Scouting. They have worked towards their first bit of knife work, learning how to use them safely whilst creating nice sculptures out of soap. They have had birds of prey visit, pollution scientists and banks. The waiting list unfortunately remains at over 2 years!

Beavers – see below

Our Cubs and Scouts continue to link up providing 2 separate joint camps this year, as well as exciting sessions such as caving, climbing and laser tag.

In February, the Scouts will also be welcoming Alex Chalk MP when they will interview Alex as part of their Media badge.

The Scouts are right in the middle of fundraising for their Jamboree in July when they will spend a week in Essex. We have over 20 Scouts attending including some that will only be 10 by a few days! The Scouts ran a successful Burns Supper raising over £600 and are doing charity collections at Tesco and Cheltenham Town football. Watch this space for more fundraising!

We are still on the lookout for a couple of leaders to help assist in opening an Explorers section at Highbury (age 14-18). If you, or anyone you know would be interested then please get in touch - in addition to the rewarding aspects of running an Explorer section, it allows you to bypass any one of our waiting lists. Support and training will be provided.

1st Cheltenham Scout Group Beavers

Report from: 1st Cheltenham Scout Group Beaver Leadership team

1st Cheltenham Beavers have had a busy year! We have maintained a full Colony of 24 Beavers (both boys and girls aged 6–8) and have welcomed two new leaders, Becky and Alex. Sadly, due to work commitments, we said goodbye to Andrew who had been volunteering with us for 5 years. Beavers took part in our annual summer sleepover at Prestbury Scout HQ, incorporating a hike to see the steam railway at the Racecourse. Our winter sleepover was at Highbury Church when we visited a local residential home and took part in the Christmas-themed church service. Our sessions have included a visit from the Digibus team, local hikes, a visitor from the Borough Council's 'Care for our Air' team, cook badge activities, creative badge, nature surveys, plus many more!

We are looking forward to continuing our work with the Beaver Scouts into 2024.

Pastoral Care Ministry

Report by Laura MacLeod on behalf of the Pastoral Care team (Louise Middleton, Rachel Jacques and Laura)

The pastoral care team is headed up by Jason, as minister, and regular meetings are held throughout the year, as we keep a check on the general welfare of Highbury members, regular adherents and their families. We also know and care for those that we meet through various church groups such as Toddlers, Messy Church, and HyTec.

A regular prayer chain is issued weekly, and cards of support are sent to those we feel are in particular need. In addition, birthday cards and a Christmas gift are sent to anyone known to us who is over 85. Regular visiting is undertaken to those who are unable to get to Highbury services, and others who may be ill or just in need of a chat and friendship.

Although we have a pastoral care ministry team at Highbury, in reality all of our congregation are involved in caring for each other in one way or another and we thank each of you for that. This is illustrated by the events that are supported by, or suggested by others. For example, the teapot buddies, the Connect groups, Highbury café, various social events and just generally keeping an eye out for each other. This is what makes Highbury a real family community

Discipleship Ministry

Report by Helen Bloxham

Aim: To help everyone in the Church to grow and develop in their Christian faith, their prayer life and their discipleship as they explore the Christian faith and seek to put Christ at the centre of their lives.

The various Connect@Highbury groups are now well established and meet in various ways and at varying times to support one another, pray together and study God's word. I am grateful to the leaders for their continued commitment and welcome anyone interested in joining or even starting

a new group to contact me for support. There are materials you can use linked to the Holy Habits and even DVD Bible studies – one group has been watching the dramatization of Jesus’ life ‘The Chosen’ and have really enjoyed the discussions that have followed. It has been great that the groups have been involved in leading services and it has been good to hear from a variety of Church members – thank you!

Our first Alpha course to be run for several years came to its end in the Spring Term and although our team of volunteers were keen to run another in the Autumn unfortunately there was not the interest. This continues to be something for the Church to pray about and at least we are prepared should it be called for again. Thank you to Janet in particular for her enthusiasm and commitment for getting this up and running.

In May we came together to take part for the first time in the Thy Kingdom Come prayer initiative. A creative team came up with some prayer stations in Church and volunteers helped to keep the Church open to visitors as much as possible for 10 days until Pentecost. Thank you to Jason for holding daily prayers in the morning and evening and to all those church members who came along and were praying at home. We are hoping to be able to do the same in 2024 and have invited other churches in Cheltenham to come and find out more at a meeting in February.

A year of Connect@theteapot was celebrated by an afternoon tea in the Café in July. A special thank you goes to Ruth who has paired up interested church members most months to meet up either at home or at cafés to get to know one another better over a cuppa. It is something I have enjoyed and everyone who has even tentatively joined now looks forward to.

The latest group to start up in 2023 is the Highbury Cr-afternoon another opportunity for fellowship over cake and to bring friends and neighbours along to. It has been lovely to have Tricia back with her crafting ideas to be part of a small team introducing simple activities to all ages and abilities. We pray that the conversations here and in all the activities we invite people to at Highbury may lead to a developing relationship with God.

Looking forward (please pray for):

All Church members to join a Connect group.

- More people to add their names to the Connect@theteapot.
- Outreach activities like the Cr-afternoon to be welcoming and well attended.
- Thy Kingdom Come prayer initiative - for joint opportunities with other churches and creative prayer stations, enough volunteers to enable the church building to be open for 10 days.
- For us all to develop our faith, prayer life and be good disciples of God!

Mission and Outreach Ministry

Currently no specific lead for this area of ministry

Community Cafe

Report by Angela Pickles

Throughout 2023, Community Cafe has been held every Thursday morning from 10.15 am in the dining room, giving church members and friends, as well as people from the community, an

opportunity to meet informally. Hot drinks and homemade cakes are always available and there is plenty of friendly conversation.

If you have not tried our cafe do come along, by yourself or with a friend, as you will receive a warm welcome. Some people just pop in occasionally while others come every week. Our age range can span 90 years, so everyone is included!

A big thank you to the small team of volunteers who make Community Cafe possible.

Highbury News

Report by Susan Cole

Aim: Dissemination of news and reports to Church and other interested parties. Also to inform, notify and encourage.

2023: Eleven editions produced. Distributed to most recipients by email. Hard copies also made available for delivery by hand, by post or picked up at church.

2024: Plans to continue to produce monthly editions (except August).

Thanks to contributors, to Mary Buchanan for in-office printing and to those who arrange subsequent distribution.

Hy-Speed (Highbury Digital Scalextric club)

Team headed up by Adrian Blazey and Iain Wallington.

Report by Adrian Blazey.

Aim of Hy-Speed: Our Mission is "to demonstrate God's love in the local community through slot car racing". Our objectives are:

- a) To build and strengthen relationships between Highbury Congregational Church members and between HCC and the local community.
- b) To provide space for a shared activity between parents/guardians and their children and strengthen family bonds.
- c) To create a non-judgmental, accepting environment in which everyone can relax and have fun racing slot cars.

2023 Activity: We met for a couple of race meetings at Highbury in 2023 which were reasonably well attended as well as running the track at the Celebration afternoon in September, all of which were good fun. We are still reliant on a very small team of regular helpers which limits what we are able to do. As ever, offers of help would be greatly appreciated; please contact Adrian or Iain for more information. We should be back for 2 or 3 more meetings in 2024, check our Facebook page for up-to-date information.

Open the Book

Report by Jean Gregory, on behalf of the team – Sue Cole, Mary Michael, Elaine Schonbeck, Karen Haden and Brian Wood (from Prestbury St Mary's)

The team goes into Oakwood school every Thursday morning in term time to share a Bible story during school assembly. Each story has a simple message for the children to take away with them, for example being kind, saying sorry, asking for help etc. During 2023 the Bible Society published a new set of material for us to use, still using Bible stories, but with a simpler and all-inclusive introduction and closing prayer. Open the Book fulfils both OFSTED and church schools' inspections for collective worship. Oakwood is a multi-faith school and we are enthusiastically welcomed by staff and pupils alike. We all think that our Thursdays begin well by doing Open the Book together - if you would like to join us please let us know and you'd be welcome to see what's involved.

Christian Aid

Report by Louise Middleton

Cheltenham Christian Aid has undergone some changes this year. It is run by a small but dedicated team, which includes two members of Highbury who serve on the committee: Louise Middleton and Marguerite Brown. Laura MacLeod is the Christian Aid rep for Highbury.

At the beginning of 2023 our treasurer, Howard Bartlett, retired after thirteen years of service, and we thank him for that. A replacement has still not been appointed and we continue to seek someone to take on this role. Without a dedicated treasurer, the way contributions are collected and remitted has had to change, and most is now remitted direct to the national Christian Aid bank account. This means that it is not always possible to know exactly how much money has been raised by Cheltenham alone, making it difficult to assess the success of some of our local campaigns.

Following the pandemic, we needed to regroup as an organisation, not just to focus on fundraising. With this in mind, two fellowship walks were undertaken to allow people just spend time together. The first was planned and led by Highbury and the second by St Phillip and St James', Up Hatherley. It is expected that these walks will become a regular feature of the Cheltenham Christian Aid calendar. Another regular social event is the summer Christian Aid picnic in the park. This was very well attended in August 2023 with around 30 people, about double that of 2022. This is a very good way of socialising between members of many different churches, exchanging ideas and giving support to those ideas.

Christian Aid Week has evolved and with online giving now the preferred way of donating, the effort of collecting envelopes of cash or cheques is no longer warranted. Cards/envelopes with information on how to make a donation will continue to be posted through letterboxes to prompt people to donate and raise awareness of the work of Christian Aid. The total amount donated to Cheltenham Christian Aid during the week was just over £7,000, excluding made directly to Christian Aid central. Christian Aid Cheltenham aims to increase the number of envelopes delivered this year, and for this to happen more volunteers are needed. I hope that Highbury members will rise to the challenge.

The Christian Aid Fair was held a month earlier on 14 October 2023 in the hope that there would be more passing trade from the Literature Festival. This was not the case and attendance was down on previous years. It is not possible to separate takings from each stall but the unwanted gift stall manned by Highbury took more than £100.00 in cash and more was paid by card. The total raised was £1041.48 (£1,351.05 was raised in 2022). In 2024, the date will return to November.

Carol Singing Pre Covid, Highbury used to sing at Sainsbury's Oakley, but so far it has been impossible to engage with them again. Other churches have also had difficulties returning to previous supermarkets. Therefore, all church carol singing took place at Waitrose on Saturday 16 December. This arrangement worked well as it meant that there was singing from 9.00am–3.00pm with different churches taking different time slots (Highbury shared 9.00-10.00am with

Christchurch). We hope other supermarkets will support us again next year. The total raised on the day was £1,360.00, so well worth it and very enjoyable, too.

Ecumenical carol singing took place outside and inside John Lewis on 14 December 5.00–6.30pm and was well attended as Anne Vine had acquired a choir to support us. The total raised was £168.04.

The Christian Aid AGM 2024 is on **Tuesday 16 April at Christchurch at 19.30**. This is later than usual as it was decided to move the date, as February is such a miserable month weatherwise. We hope that the change will encourage more people to attend.

Finally, thank you to everyone at Highbury who supports Christian Aid in whatever way. It is the charity at the very heart of what Christianity means and is a global movement of people, churches and local organisations working together for dignity, equality and justice to enable people to live a full life free from poverty. Please visit the website to find out more:

www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/about-us or the Cheltenham Christian Aid website for local information: www.cheltenhamca.com

Room Hire

Report by Mary Buchanan

Team: Adrian Blazey, Viviane Boyd, Mary Buchanan

Purpose: To serve the community through the letting of Highbury's building

2023 has seen a return to near full capacity in terms of lettings after all the disruption of Covid. To mark this, we held a very successful Highbury Community Celebration afternoon in September 2023, at which church and outside users were able to share what they were doing and make good connections with each other.

A particular highlight has been the return of St John's Primary School for special events and exam time space. We also hosted a public meeting with Cheltenham Borough Council Recycling Department and our local councillors in February.

Current Tenants (regular and occasional)

Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous

Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Squirrels; Guides, Brownies

U3A Groups (Bridge (x 2), Economics, Art, Shakespeare reading, Ukulele, Folk Groups)

Hearing Aid Clinic

Upholstery Classes

Art Workshops

Patricia Newman Dance School

Exercise classes (Heart 2 Heart, Balance class, Shibashiqiqong, NIA Sensory movement and dance)

Dramatots

Cheltenham Fostering Support Group

First Aid training

NHS Retirement Fellowship

Pittville Townswomen's Guild

Cheltenham Horticultural Society

Zion Church

St John's School

Angels Day Nursery

Cheltenham Bach Choir

Secretary's Report

Purpose of role - to enable the whole ministry of Highbury Congregational Church, by supporting the church leadership team and coordinating a variety of other roles and activities.

Report by Mary Buchanan, Church Secretary

Membership

New members: 0

Resignations: 0

Deaths: 4

Membership at the end of 2023: 95 (around 70 'active')

Regular adherents: around 35 (including Messy Church)

Highbury Leadership Team

At the AGM in March 2023 Janet Partington and Angela Pickles completed their terms as Deacons. Thanks to both for their contribution to church life in this way. Darryl Mills and Ruth Wyatt were elected to the Diaconate, Darryl after a well-deserved break and Ruth for the first time.

The structure of the Ministry Leaders' Team was reviewed during 2023, with the primary aim of improving the interaction between that team and the Diaconate. The following changes have now been implemented:

- Ministry Leaders have been renamed Ministry Coordinators
- Instead of being appointed for an unspecified period of time, each will be appointed for a three-year term, renewable for a second term (in line with the pattern for Deacons)
- Two Deacons' Meetings per annum will be combined Diaconate and Ministry Coordinators; Ministry Coordinators will be invited to other Deacons' meetings if there is a particular emphasis on their ministry area; each Ministry Coordinator will be linked to a specific Deacon and aim to have approximately annual informal reviews.

At the end of 2023 the Highbury Leadership Team consisted of:

Minister (ex-officio member of Diaconate and trustee): Jason Boyd

Secretary (ex-officio member of Diaconate and trustee): Mary Buchanan

Treasurer (ex-officio member of Diaconate and trustee): Roger Gregory

Elected Deacons (and trustees): Adrian Blazey, Sue Cole, Iain Macleod, Darryl Mills, Ruth Wyatt

Worship Ministry Coordinator: Maureen Williams

Children and Youth Ministry Coordinator: Andrea Lacey

Discipleship Ministry Coordinator: Helen Bloxham

Pastoral Care Ministry Coordinator: Laura MacLeod (Rachel Jacques, Louise Middleton)

Administration

With increased activity during 2023, both by the Church and by other tenants, the need for effective administration and organisation has increased. Keeping the church office tidy and the noticeboards up to date, managing the accumulation of clutter around the building, keeping our waste and recycling tidy, and monitoring cars in the car park is an unending task and a big thank you to Rachel Jacques for her contribution to this.

The church website is a bit more up and running than it was, although it is not yet as dynamic as we would wish. We continue to have a presence on YouTube and Facebook. Internal

communication is a combination of email, hardcopy letters, whatsapp and telephone. Improving our communications generally is a work in progress.

Health and Safety

During 2023 we updated our fire risk assessment and produced for the first time a general risk assessment (which replaced our very specific COVID risk assessment). Peter Harrison continues to oversee our fire safety equipment and Rachel Jacques is overall responsible for our First Aid equipment (including the defibrillator inside the building). In autumn 2023 we had an external defibrillator installed which is connected to the Circuit and thus accessible to the public/emergency services if required. Kitchen hygiene and general cleaning is overseen by Jean Gregory and team, including our excellent cleaner Helen Roberts.

We are grateful to all those above, plus those involved in Maintenance and Safeguarding (see below), for doing largely unseen but crucial jobs.

Maintenance

Report by Angela Pickles, Maintenance Coordinator

It is essential that the church buildings are kept in good condition which involves constant maintenance.

During 2023, the outer dining room doors have been repaired and the emergency exit doors in the hall replaced. After complaints from the neighbours, the outside lights were adjusted to their satisfaction while maintaining safe lighting in the car park.

There have been many plumbing issues and the heating system has required frequent attention.

In 2024, work is scheduled for the hall. Wooden cladding is due to be installed to protect the walls. The floor is to be sanded and varnished. New LED lights are to be fitted on the ceiling. The ensuite bathroom in the Manse is to be upgraded.

Safeguarding

Report by Nephesha Mary Michael, Safeguarding Officer

Highbury Church takes our Safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and adheres to our policy which is updated annually. All church members and users of our premises agree to abide by it. A hard copy is kept on the kitchen windowsill for anyone who finds that easier than accessing it online. When our updated policy has been agreed at our Annual Church meeting it will also be uploaded onto our website.

When I became the Safeguarding lead for Highbury it was also very much part of my professional practice. I am no longer working so keep up to date by online courses. These courses are also used by members of our pastoral care team and children's and young people's workers.

I am hoping that someone who can have more consistent direct contact with our children and young people than I am able to offer will be able to take over the Safeguarding Lead from me. Please feel free to discuss it with me if this is of interest to you. I would like to be able to step down whilst I am still available to support my successor.

Fabric Fund £10,530 deficiency
Gift and Legacy Fund £14,000 surplus
Organ and Visuals Fund £1,000 surplus

Early in the year we produced a budget for the **General Fund**, day to day income and expenditure excluding maintenance and legacies and gifts, to reflect our best estimates of how the year may turn out. There were many swings and roundabouts, but I am able to report a better than budget surplus to fund our requirements under the 5-year plan for maintenance. Thank you for your support in making this possible.

Movements in funds;

A) General Fund

Total year produced a surplus of £16,493 which was £7,038 better than budget.

Variances from budget include;

Income - £5,453 better includes;

- Standing orders/tax refund down by £678. The budget included increases from April that have not been realised in the year; which I guess is a reflection of the current economic uncertainty.
- Eric Burton's gift of £1,300
- Grants received down by £670 – year end claim not made to Bennington Hall Trust
- Miscellaneous income better by £381 – includes Community Event of £166 and £75 contribution from Girl Guides for anniversary frame
- Room Hire considerably better by £1,462 from increased activities and new clients.
- Wedding and funeral receipts £664 better than budget – includes Janet R and Barbara C memorial services.
- Outreach income £618 better than budget
- Dividend and interest receipts £2,386 better than budget from increased rates (currently 5.1%) and transfer of legacies to the current account

Expenditure - £1,585 less includes;

- Savings of £381 on Junior Church.
- Savings of £108 on piano tuning.
- Savings of £738 on Minister's retreat and subsistence expenses, and £188 on car mileage allowances
- Gas £437 savings, and electric £71 savings
- Savings of £387 on Manse water rates
- Savings of £122 on CF Ministry and Society Fund and SWMA subscriptions from a reduction in declared member numbers
- Church cleaning £482 more reflecting an increase in weekly hours from 1st August to cope with the increased room booking activity.
- Savings of £146 on Ministry Leaders expenses
- Miscellaneous expenditure £217 more than budget includes £150 spent on Girl Guide frame commemorating their recent anniversary
- Outreach expenditure £291 more; in line with increased income above
- Savings of £153 on Manse community charge from increase in rates less than budgeted for.
- Office equipment £126 more from increased printer consumables and website costs
- Photocopy hire charges £222 more from extra copy costs, particularly colour

B) Fabric Fund

Expenditure of £10,530 included;

- A&E annual inspections and call outs - £633
- Void Projects 5-year plan - £1,410
- Void Projects – doors, windows - £555

- Dave Mason, Manse boiler service and repair - £192
- Stallard & Co lighting and PAT testing – £1,932
- Elmtree Joinery hall fire doors - £5,400
- Other miscellaneous expenditure - £408

It is recommended that we transfer in £10,644 from the General Fund surplus to meet the 5-year maintenance plan requirements for 2023 – thank you for making this possible!

In addition, we would recommend a further transfer of £3,000 to cover extra activity and church wear and tear from increased room bookings, and to reflect that the 5-year maintenance plan is based on historical figures before current high inflation

Future work could include making the church more environmentally friendly by extensive insulation – in an old building like ours this would be very expensive, requiring extensive funds both by external grants and internal funds.

C) Organ and Visuals Fund

- The organ is considerably old and may soon require a refurbishment. Alan Berry has obtained a quote for refurbishment in the order of £7,000 to £7,500
- It is recommended that we transfer a further £2,500 from the General Fund to increase this Fund to £7,500
- Mary Clifford's estate left a legacy of £1,000 for organ and piano maintenance.

Giving to Others

Giving to others in the year amounted to £6,703 which included;

- £608 to the CF Mission and Society Fund
- £1,520 to CF South West Midlands Area
- £1,379 to local monthly charities
- Earthquake Appeal Turkey/Syria - £263
- Harvest Appeal to Agape hospital in Myanmar - £531
- Ukraine Appeal Christian Aid - £1,119
- Christmas Appeal Cornerstone - £538

Memorial services;

- Janet Rhodes Alzheimer's Research - £75
- Barbara Cullis Christian Aid - £306

Other giving/collections;

- Listening Post - £100
- World Day of Prayer - £264

This giving is 6.6% of our income

Unrestricted Funds

All the church funds are unrestricted.

The trustee policy is to retain at least 3 months' expenditure as "free" reserves within the General Fund to meet future shortfalls in income, or unexpected expenditure for 2024. The balance, after recommended year end transfers at 31st December, represents 6 month's current day to day General Fund expenditure.

Highbury Church

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

12 months to 31st December 2023

INCOME Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Offerings, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Envelopes & loose change	1101	648	376
STO & single cash/cheque	1102	49,224	46,106
Tax refund	1103	11,164	10,739
Gifts - Other	"	1,300	1,250
Legacies	1122	15,000	
Grants received	1200	366	2,436
Miscellaneous income	6110	536	357
Total - Incoming resources		78,238	61,264
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
Other room hire	1141	17,028	15,152
Church users room hire	1143	1,470	1,100
Weddings & Funerals	2801	1,069	485
Highbury News income	3402	95	25
Highbury News advertisers	3403	180	240
Scouts insurance	6105	134	172
Outreach Income	6700	2,844	2,236
Total - Incoming activities		22,820	19,410
Activities for generating Funds			
Fund raising	1131	0	
Investment Income			
Dividends & Interest	1151	2,786	282
Total Income		103,844	80,956
5			
EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			

<u>Ministry salary etc:</u>			
Minister's gross salary	5101	29,694	27,887
Minister's employers NI	5102	0	
Minister's pension EE and ER	5103	3,332	3,079
Car mileage allowance	5401	269	384
Children's Worker gross salary	5801	11,535	9,766
Children's Worker employers NI	5802	0	
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Preaching	2101	315	267
Junior Church/Sunday Special	2302	64	513
Video licence	2304	559	530
Organist	2501	425	527
Music	2502	0	
Piano/Organ Maintenance	2503	270	252
Pastoral	3201	0	
Pastoral gifts	3202	88	198
Ministry Leaders exps Joint	3216	0	122
Publicity/advertising	3404	0	
Neighbourhood cards	3405	0	
CF affiliations/SW Midlands area	3501	2,408	1,651
Other affiliations	3502	170	170
CF Ministry and Mission	3504	633	656
Worship resources	5115	261	235
Church equipment/furnishings	6109	0	
Miscellaneous expenditure	6801	259	35
Outreach expenditure	6800	851	578
Total - Outgoing activities		51,133	46,850

6

EXPENDITURE		TOTAL	TOTAL
Header	A/C	THIS	LAST
	code	YEAR	YEAR
		£	£
Support costs			
<u>Ministry expenses:</u>			
Travel, excluding Car	5116	71	
In -service training/retreat	5117	0	612
Subsistence	5118	0	126
<u>Manse expenses:</u>			
		0	
Manse insurance	5301	306	251
Manse - water	5304	261	698
Manse - community charge	5305	2,947	2,817
Manse - maintenance	5307	252	3,310
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
		0	
Project	6100	0	6,697
Church - Maintenance	6101	10,279	6,299
Gas	6102	3,339	3,560
Electricity	6103	2,225	2,378
Insurance	6104	2,663	2,536
Trade disposal	6106	479	409

Housekeeping	6301	147	182
Cleaning materials	6302	913	839
Cleaners gross pay	6501	4,912	3,950
Stationery/directory	6601	17	12
Postage	6602	25	52
Telephone	6603	716	622
Office equipment	6604	312	788
Payroll costs	6606	288	288
Photocopy hire/copy charge	6611	1,338	1,208
Photocopy paper	6612	57	48
Bank charges	6701	202	214
Legal costs	6702	0	
Recruitment costs	6703	0	
Professional fund raising	6705	0	
Total - Support costs		31,749	37,896
Total Expenditure		82,882	84,746

7

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

Income/Expenditure Header	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
	£	£
Income		
Incoming resources	78,238	61,264
Incoming activities	22,820	19,410
Fund raising	0	0
Dividends & interest	2,786	282
Total Income	103,844	80,956
Expenditure		
Outgoing activities	51,133	46,850
Support costs	31,749	37,896
Total Expenditure	82,882	84,746
All Funds surplus/(deficiency)	20,962	-3,790
Less transfers to other funds:		
Fabric/Flat Roof	10,531	4,413
Gifts and Legacy	-15,000	
Organ and Visuals	0	-4,000
Year end transfers 2023	-16,144	14,644
Gen. Funds surplus/(deficiency)	349	11,267

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Highbury Congregational Church

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the Examiner

As Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Accounting Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) issued in March 2005, UK Accounting Standards and the Charities Act 2011. As Trustees, you consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to;

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

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Trustees and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

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

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

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

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

Signed  _____

Date 12/02/24

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 1159085

Accounts

**HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH
Oxford Street
Cheltenham
GL52 6DU**



**ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS
2022**

Highbury Congregational Church

Making connections in friendship, faith and mission with Christ at the centre and open to all.

Ministry Leadership Team

Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Worship	Maureen Williams	worship@highburychurch.co.uk
Children	Andrea Lacey	children@highburychurch.co.uk
Discipleship	Helen Bloxham	
Pastoral Care	Laura MacLeod Louise Middleton Rachel Jacques	

Diaconate (and Trustees)

Secretary	Mary Buchanan	buchananm37@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Roger Gregory	treasurer@highburychurch.co.uk
Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Deacons	Adrian Blazey, Sue Cole, Iain MacLeod, Janet Partington, Angela Pickles	

Others

Highbury News	Sue Cole	news@highburychurch.co.uk
Safeguarding	Nephesha Michael	safeguarding@highburychurch.co.uk
Church Office	Admin	admin@highburychurch.co.uk

Website: www.highburychurch.co.uk

The Charitable Objects of Highbury Congregational Church

The principal purpose of the church is the advancement of the Christian Faith according to the principles and usages for the time being of Congregationalism and in accordance with any specific requirements in the foundation trusts. The church may also advance education, relieve need and carry out other charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Governing document, THE DECLARATION OF TRUST, was adopted by Congregational Federation Limited on the 13th day of June 2009 as a recommended governing document for Congregational Churches who are members of the Congregational Federation and for whom Congregational Federation Limited are appointed as holding trustees, the form having been previously agreed between Congregational Federation Limited and the Charity Commission and also having been approved by HM Revenue and Customs.

Highbury Congregational Church began in 1827 and has been part of the Congregational Federation since 1972. The church is also a registered charity 1159085. We have adopted the Congregational Federation's Declaration of Trust of 2009 as our Governing Document, supplemented by our own Working Practices Document (updated September 2022).

Whilst we work closely with other Congregational Churches, all we do is decided and funded by our own Church Members. We have no outside source of funding and we do not have any outside body over us. All who belong are welcomed into church membership on confession of faith in God and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Quarterly (and as required), Church Members meet for Church Meeting to seek the mind of Christ in shaping the life of the Church and setting the future direction of Church life. The Deacons serve the Church as Managing Trustees and ensure all the Church does is in keeping with its Charitable Objects as a Congregational Church and with reference to finances, safeguarding, health and safety, disability, employment and other legislation.

Our Mission

Our Mission is consonant with our Charitable Objects (as above):

Highbury Congregational Church is a community connecting in friendship, faith, and mission with Christ at the centre and open to all.

Minister's Report

This year we have begun to enjoy the benefits of the vaccination programme enabling us to be together without distancing and mask wearing. As confidence has grown, we have seen increasing numbers of people worshipping in the building whilst still ensuring online participation.

It is a pleasure to see families and children participating in morning worship. In particular, it was a delight to celebrate Evelyn Francis' baptism. Though our morning worship is more informal and inclusive of children, there remains a task for us to deepen our welcome and ensure that our worship is family friendly. There is nothing more delightful to me than the sound of children in our worship, making their way into the pulpit and exploring the wide space of the dais.

Messy Church, Community Café, Parent and Toddler Group, and HyTec are in person only and are thriving. The number of groups using the halls has gradually built up to pre-pandemic levels. It is a delight to have the building buzzing with activity.

My involvement at St. John's Primary School began the year in the Head Teacher's Office (!) conducting worship via Teams. This was an improvement from recording videos for teachers to use in the classroom but still far from ideal. It is an absolute pleasure to go into a packed assembly hall, play the piano, tell stories, and explore the value for the term with pupils and staff.

Mary Buchanan's willingness to take on the role of Church Secretary has made a significant difference to my ministry and to the whole life of Highbury. Mary had begun the process of getting the practical affairs of Highbury into order during the second half of 2021. With her appointment in March 2022, she continued the momentum. We have benefitted from her considerable administrative skills and spiritual and theological insight.

Nephesha Michael remained as a deacon for an additional year and finally laid down her responsibilities at the AGM. On behalf of the church, I express our gratitude for her service, particularly her empathetic and wise reading of people and situations. She continues a supportive role for Mary and as Safeguarding Lead.

Lorraine Gasside stepped down as Pastoral Care Ministry Leader. She served in this role from its inception. It is impossible to quantify the way in which Lorraine led her team in caring for the Highbury Church family. We know that Lorraine's care will continue but hopefully without the pressure of overall responsibility.

I was delighted when there was a grass roots desire for an Alpha Course. Janet Brown and Andrea Lacey were instrumental in drawing together a team of volunteers. The course has been well attended and people are making friendships and grappling with the big questions of life. We are already looking ahead to a course after Easter. Why not start praying for someone and bring them along to the course?

The Connect groups continue to meet in a variety of ways. Some are more active than others. Helen Bloxham has been key in drawing together the leaders of the groups. During the year, Connect groups were provided with discussion starters that accompanied sermon series on the Holy Habits themes of fellowship, making disciples, and on the covenant we have made together as a Congregational Church.

The Listening Exercise began with a small group at end of November 2021 and was progressed with a leadership away day. This was followed by several opportunities for the congregation to meet and discuss key questions. I am grateful to Mary for organising this

and for transcribing the discussions. My bout with a chest infection followed by COVID-19 could have slowed the process down. However, Mary with Karen Haden, met and trawled through the feedback. Main themes were identified, and we had a further unpacking of these at our December Church Meeting. This is now shaping our planning for the year ahead to be presented at the 2023 AGM.

One of the challenges of the Cheltenham church scene is that there is no Churches Together. After conversations with several colleagues, it has become clear to me that it is not likely to be re-established. I have become involved in a monthly meeting of church leaders for lunch (Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed). It has been good to build relationships. Who knows what will come of this?

On a different front, I have reached out to James White of The Cornerstone Centre, to explore mutual sharing with Highbury. I am hopeful that we will be able to develop a partnership.

It may be of interest that I had a face-to-face meeting with Alex Chalk, MP, at Highbury Church in January. I have been a regular correspondent regarding standards in public life and I asked if we could discuss matters. We were able to discuss local and national issues, including changes to marriage laws. He showed interest in the work of Highbury too. Whatever your political commitments, I found Alex to be a person of goodwill and integrity. It is important for us to pray for him and to continue to write to him in a constructive way for the public good.

At the September Church Meeting, I brought the words of a poster I had seen at a school. The quote was then turned on its head by our Church Secretary. Here are both sides of the coin:

Vision

Effort and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.

Purpose and direction are not enough without effort and courage.

At the December Church Meeting, we paused to give thanks for the life of Rev'd Eric Burton who served as our minister from 1966-1977. His was an energetic and fruitful ministry. His influence continued long after he left. In an interview with Richard Cleaves, Eric recounted an exploratory conversation with the deacons at Highbury.

Fred Wright, a deacon and former Science Master at the Grammar School, asked, 'Mr. Burton, if you come to this church, would you be prepared to experiment?'

Eric probed, 'What do you mean by experiment?'

Fred explained, 'Well it seems to me that you have a number of ideas that you would like to put into action. Would you be prepared to experiment?' There was a long pause whilst Eric contemplated his response. Before he could get his thoughts together, Fred clarified further, 'I think I might say, would you be prepared to experiment if we as deacons were prepared to recognise that sometimes your experiments might fail – if we continue to support you in spite of failure?'

Richard concluded the interview by asking Eric what his vision for Highbury would be for today. Eric didn't miss a beat: 'Be Thou my vision, Lord', and laughed infectiously.

My vision for the coming year is that we would keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. May Christ fill our vision as we live the good news. What is

that good news? God loves you and me. Jesus died and rose again for us. The Holy Spirit fills us so that we can live and speak of forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

Are we prepared to experiment and fail and to experiment again so that we can find ways to welcome people in our life of worship? At my mid-term appraisal meeting, Iain McLeod said that 'FAIL' stands for 'first attempt in learning'. What must change and develop in Highbury so that those who are not familiar with church will be put at ease and be able to relate to what we do? In a culture where people are used to interactive learning and discussions, how can we be more contemporary in our music and plain in our speaking and listening so that people will come to know Jesus as Lord?

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.C. Boyd', with a stylized flourish extending to the left.

Jason C. Boyd

Secretary's Report

Purpose of role - to be an enabler of the whole ministry of Highbury Congregational Church, by supporting the church leadership team and coordinating a variety of other roles and activities.

Report by Mary Buchanan, Church Secretary

Membership

New members: 0

Resignations: 2

Deaths: 1

Membership at the end of 2022: 98 total, 80 active

Regular adherents: around 40 (include Messy Church parents)

Leadership Team

At the AGM in March 2022 Iain MacLeod stood down as Church Secretary and Nephesha Michael retired from the diaconate. In September 2022 Lorraine Gasside retired as Pastoral Care Ministry Leader after nine years in the role. Thanks to all three for their steadfast service to the church over the years – and their continuing service in different ways.

In spring 2022 the Ministry Leaders agreed that a reduced team was more appropriate for a time of reduced resources and activity, and 'mothballed' the roles of Youth Ministry Leader (subsumed into Children's Work) and Mission and Outreach Leader. The structure of the Ministry Leaders Team will be revisited in 2023.

At the end of 2022 the Highbury Leadership Team consisted of:

Minister (ex-officio member of diaconate and trustee): Jason Boyd

Secretary (ex-officio member of diaconate and trustee): Mary Buchanan

Treasurer (ex-officio member of diaconate and trustee): Roger Gregory

Elected Deacons (and trustees): Adrian Blazey, Sue Cole, Iain Macleod, Janet Partington, Angela Pickles

Worship Ministry Leader: Maureen Williams

Children and Youth Ministry Leader: Andrea Lacey

Discipleship Ministry Leader: Helen Bloxham

Pastoral Care Ministry team: Laura MacLeod, Rachel Jacques, Louise Middleton

During the year we consolidated the pattern for annual appraisal for our paid staff (Minister, and Children and Families' Worker) and are working on more regular reviews for the ministry leaders.

Church Organisation

During the year the trustees revisited their key responsibilities under the Charity Commission requirements and tightened up some of our practices. This exercise, and the experience gained from 'doing church' under COVID restrictions, led us to update the Working Practices Document; the updated version was approved at the September 2022 Church Meeting.

Administration

Effective communication remains a challenge; the switch to predominantly email is great for many but always risks disenfranchising a few, so the hard copy option remains; whatsapp is excellent for online discussion, but not everyone is able to/wants to use the app; the church website is up and running, but there are still improvements to be made; our presence on Youtube and Facebook remains a useful method of communicating activities beyond the immediate congregation.

Keeping the church office organised and notices up to date, managing the accumulation of clutter around the building, keeping our waste and recycling tidy, and monitoring cars in the car park is a Sisyphean task – and there are no words enough to thank Rachel Jacques for her huge contribution to this.

Health and Safety

When our building is used by so many people it is incumbent on us to ensure it is a safe place to come. 2022 was thankfully marked by more or less an end to the COVID measures we had been obliged to introduce in 2020; the COVID Health and Safety Group has stood down (but is on standby!).

We are aiming to produce a more general risk assessment for church activity, but overall we are in good shape: our fire safety equipment is maintained by A&E and tested by Peter Harrison and we had a visit from the local fire service; the First Aid equipment (including the defibrillator) is kept up to date by Rachel Jacques; kitchen hygiene and cleaning is overseen by Jean Gregory and team, including our excellent cleaner Helen Roberts.

Treasurer's Report

Accounts to Year ended 31st December 2022

Background

This is seen to be the first "normal" year after the lifting of COVID restrictions, although things will never be the same again.

We are currently suffering high inflation and widespread industrial unrest from pressures to maintain living standards.

However, we can report a slow return of congregation to pre-COVID levels, a full diary for room hirers and a full complement at the Thursday café.

We are delighted to report that we have a fully "manned" secretarial and office function and good support for room bookings.

The church has responded well to the pressures of inflationary prices, and it helps that we secured fixed rate prices for 3 years from December 2021 for our gas and electricity supply.

A lot of work continues to be done by all those connected with streaming and recording services, and those keeping us safe in the church. Thank you for all your dedication.

Review of the accounts - Income & Expenditure, All Funds

Below is a summary of overall financial performance:

	Year 2022	Year 2021
	£	£
Incoming Resources:		
Offerings	60,993	58,868
Legacies	0	1,000
Gifts Fabric/General Fund	1,250	3,638
Gifts Flat Roof Fund	0	34,300
Grants Flat Roof Fund	0	47,600
Room letting	16,254	4,967
Investments and other income	6,232	2,821
Furlough income	0	2,168
Total Income	84,729	155,362
Resources used:		
Charitable objectives	-46,851	-43,979
Support costs:		
Maintenance	-9,609	-938
Project costs – Flat Roof	-6,697	-87,710
Other support costs	-21,589	-21,963
Total Expenditure	-84,746	-154,590
Excess of Incoming Resources over Resources used	£-17	£772
Net movement		

Total net movements in the year of-£17 deficiency include;

General Fund £15,040 surplus

Fabric Fund £8,359 deficiency

and Flat Roof Fund £6,698 deficiency

Early in the year we produced a budget for the **General Fund**, day to day income and expenses excluding maintenance and gifts; to reflect our best estimates of how the "normal" year may turn out.

There were many swings and roundabouts, but I am able to report a better than budget surplus to fund our requirements under the 5-year plan for maintenance. Thank you for your support in making this possible.

Movements in funds;

A) General Fund

Total year produced a surplus of £15,040 which was £5,250 better than budget.

Variances from budget include:

Income - £4,413 better includes

- Standing orders/tax refund better by £2,198 – thank you
- Gift Day £3,092 down and Harvest £749 down against budget
- Grants received of £2,436, which was £1,361 ahead of budget included;
£1,400 from Cleeve Hill Trust for Manse fencing and gates
£1,036 from Bennington Hall Trust for messy church etc.
- Misc. income and Outreach income were £433 better
- Room Hire £3,959 better – largely from returning/new clients

Expenditure - £836 less includes;

- Savings of £543 on preaching fees from fewer visiting ministers and their expenses
- £346 more on Junior Church, but grants received of £1,036 for Messy Church etc.
- Savings on organist fees from part waived charges
- £252 more on piano tuning from under-budgeting
- Savings of £438 on Minister's retreat expenses, but £208 more on car mileage allowances
- Gas £666 savings, but electric £619 more
- Savings of £163 on Manse water rates
- Extra £168 on pastoral gifts
- Savings of £307 on CF Ministry and Mission and SWMA subscriptions from a reduction in declared member numbers
- Housekeeping £237 saving
- Church cleaning £350 more to Cover Helen's holidays, where this was previously covered by volunteers

B) Fabric Fund

Expenditure of £9,609 included;

- A&E annual inspections and call outs - £892
- Void Projects 5-year plan - £1,440
- Dave Roberts Manse fencing - £2,665 (grant received of £1,400)
- Stallard & Co electrics and lighting – £1,756
- Mike Thorne – roofing to Church and Manse - £1,920

- D Mason – Manse burst pipe, new piping and boiler service - £645
- Plumb it – Church boiler service - £140

We received a gift of £1,250 to help towards the cost of lighting – thank you!

It is recommended that we transfer in £10,644 from the General Fund surplus to meet the 5 year maintenance plan requirements for 2022 – thank you for making this possible!

Future work could include making the church more environmentally friendly by extensive insulation – in an old building like ours this would be very expensive

C) Flat Roof Fund

Expenditure of £6,698 included;

- P & S Decorators – building works to lintels, repairs plastering and painting of ceilings - £4,619
- P& S Decorators – guttering parts, ceiling tiles and lighting -£1,479
- Void Projects – site inspections etc. - £600

There is a residual balance on the Fund of £2,170 and it is recommended to transfer this to the Fabric Fund

D) Organ and Visuals Fund new?

- The organ is considerably old and may soon require a refurbishment. Alan Berry has obtained a quote for refurbishment and this is in the order of £7,000 to £7,500
- It is recommended that we use the residual surplus on the General Fund of £4,000 to start such a Fund

Giving to Others

Giving to others in the year amounted to £5,030 which included;

- £656 to the CF Mission and Society Fund
- £656 to CF South West Midlands Area
- £2,009 to Christian Aid Ukraine
- £252 to Cheltenham Refugees
- Harvest Appeal - £516 to GARAS
- Christmas Appeal - £841 to Open Door

This giving is 6% of our income

Unrestricted Funds

All the church funds are unrestricted.

The trustee policy is to retain at least 3 months expenditure as “free” reserves within the General Fund to meet future shortfalls in income, or unexpected expenditure for 2023. The balance, after recommended year end transfers at 31st December, represents 6 month’s current day to day General Fund expenditure.

Highbury Church

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

12 months to 31st December 2022

INCOME Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Offerings, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Envelopes & loose change	1101	376	271
STO & single cash/cheque	1102	46,058	46,828
Tax refund	1103	10,736	10,415
Gifts - Flat Roof	1121	0	34,300
Gifts - Other	"	1,250	3,638
Legacies	1122	0	1,000
Gift Day	1123	3,233	
Harvest	1124	590	1,352
Grants received - Flat Roof	1200	0	48,675
Grants received - Other	"	2,436	
Furlough income	1201	0	2,169
Miscellaneous income	6110	358	38
Total - Incoming resources		65,037	148,686
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
Other room hire	1141	15,154	4,967
Church users room hire	1143	1,100	
Weddings & Funerals	2801	485	485
Highbury News income	3402	25	85
Highbury News advertisers	3403	240	240
Congregationalist income	3514	0	
Scouts insurance	6105	172	163
Photocopier income	6613	0	
Outreach income	6700	2,235	726
Total - Incoming activities		19,411	6,666
Activities for generating Funds			
Fund raising	1131	0	

Investment Income			
Dividends & Interest	1151	281	10
Total Income		84,729	155,362

5

EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
<u>Ministry salary etc:</u>			
Minister's gross salary	5101	27,887	26,812
Minister's employers NI	5102	0	
Minister's pension EE and ER	5103	3,079	3,066
Car mileage allowance	5401	384	88
Children's Worker gross salary	5801	9,768	9,424
Children's Worker employers NI	5802	0	
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Preaching	2101	267	175
Junior Church/Sunday Special	2302	514	165
Video licence	2304	530	496
Organist	2501	527	408
Music	2502	0	
Piano/Organ Maintenance	2503	252	70
Pastoral	3201	0	
Pastoral gifts	3202	198	29
Ministry Leaders exps Worship	3210	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Children	3211	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Youth	3212	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Discipleship	3213	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Pastoral Care	3214	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Mission & Outreach	3215	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Joint	3216	122	
Highbury News expenses	3401	0	
Publicity/advertising	3404	0	
Neighbourhood cards	3405	0	58
CF affiliations/SW Midlands area	3501	1,650	1,789
Other affiliations	3502	170	210
CF Ministry and Mission	3504	656	824

Congregationalist expenditure	3513	0	
Worship resources	5115	233	129
Church equipment/furnishings	6109	0	
Miscellaneous expenditure	6801	35	57
Outreach expenditure	6800	579	179
Total - Outgoing activities		46,851	43,979

6

EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Support costs			
<u>Ministry expenses:</u>			
Stationery	5112	0	
Telephone	5113	0	
Postage	5114	0	
Travel, excluding Car	5116	0	
In -service training/retreat	5117	612	45
Subsistence	5118	126	
<u>Manse expenses:</u>			
Manse insurance	5301	247	241
Manse - water	5304	701	713
Manse - community charge	5305	2,817	2,730
Manse - maintenance	5307	4,002	220
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Project	6100	6,697	66,293
Church - Maintenance	6101	5,607	22,135
Gas	6102	3,561	4,139
Electricity	6103	2,378	1,504
Insurance	6104	2,536	2,399
Trade disposal	6106	410	361
Housekeeping	6301	183	108
Cleaning materials	6302	837	506
Adminstrator salary	6401	0	2,401
Caretakers gross pay	6501	3,950	2,820
Stationery/directory	6601	12	46
Postage	6602	52	16
Telephone	6603	623	867
Office equipment	6604	788	885
Payroll costs	6606	288	288
Photocopy hire/copy charge	6611	1,208	1,234
Photocopy paper	6612	48	28
Bank charges	6701	212	182

Legal costs	6702	0	
Recruitment costs	6703	0	
Professional fund raising	6705	0	450
Total - Support costs		37,895	110,611
Total Expenditure		84,746	154,590

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

Income/Expenditure Header	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
	£	£
Income		
Incoming resources	65,037	148,686
Incoming activities	19,411	6,666
Fund raising	0	0
Dividends & interest	281	10
Total Income	84,729	155,362
Expenditure		
Outgoing activities	46,851	43,979
Support costs	37,895	110,611
Total Expenditure	84,746	154,590
All Funds surplus/(deficiency)	-17	772
Less transfers to other funds:		
Fabric	-2,091	-5,062
Flat Roof - gifts and Legacy	17,148	4,810
Legacy	0	
Training	0	
Mission projects	0	
Refurbishment	0	
Year end transfer	-14,644	
Revaluation	0	
Gen. Funds surplus/(deficiency)	396	520

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Highbury Congregational Church

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the Examiner

As Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Accounting Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) issued in March 2005, UK Accounting Standards and the Charities Act 2011. As Trustees, you consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

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

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Trustees and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

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

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

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

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

Signed Brian Sneddon

Date 12.2.2023.

Brian Sneddon
28 Chardwar Gardens
Bourton-on-Water
GL54 2BL

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 1159085

Accounts

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Oxford Street
Cheltenham
GL52 6DU



ANNUAL REPORTS AND ACCOUNTS
2020

Highbury Congregational Church

**Making connections in friendship. faith and mission,
with Christ at the centre and open to all.**

Ministry Leadership Team

Minister	Jason Boyd	revdjasoncboyd@gmail.com
Worship	Maureen Williams	worship@highburychurch.co.uk
Children	Andrea Lacey	children@highburychurch.co.uk
Youth	Mary Buchanan	youth@highburychurch.co.uk
Discipleship	Cynthia Hawkins	discipleship@highburychurch.co.uk
Pastoral Care	Lorraine Gasside, Louise Middleton, Rachel Jacques	pastoralcare@highburychurch.co.uk
Mission & Outreach	Karen H, Neil Saunders	mission@highburychurch.co.uk

The Diaconate

Secretary	Iain MacLeod	secretary@highburychurch.co.uk
Treasurer	Roger Gregory	treasurer@highburychurch.co.uk
Deacons	Adrian Blazey, Susan Cole, Nephesha Mary N Michael. Janet Partington, Angela Pickles	deacons@highburychurch.co.uk

Others

Highbury News	Susan Cole	news@highburychurch.co.uk
Safeguarding	Nephesha Mary Michael	safeguarding@highburychurch.co.uk
Church Office	Team of Admin Help	admin@highburychurch.co.uk 01242 522050

**Highbury Congregational Church belongs to
the Congregational Federation and is in partnership with
the Council for World Mission and Churches Together**

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

THE CHARITABLE OBJECTS OF HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The principal purpose of the church is the advancement of the Christian Faith according to the principles and usages for the time being of Congregationalism and in accordance with any specific requirements in the foundation trusts. The church may also advance education, relieve need and carry out other charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Governing document, THE DECLARATION OF TRUST, was adopted by Congregational Federation Limited on the 13th day of June 2009 as a recommended governing document for Congregational Churches who are members of the Congregational Federation and for whom Congregational Federation Limited are appointed as holding trustees, the form having been previously agreed between Congregational Federation Limited and the Charity Commission and also having been approved by HM Revenue and Customs, and it shall henceforth be known as, and referred to as, the **APPROVED GOVERNING DOCUMENT**.

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is consonant with our Charitable Objects (as above):
Highbury Congregational Church is a community connecting in friendship, faith, and mission with Christ at the centre and open to all.

REPORT OF THE DEACONS (The Managing Trustees)

Our history and governance

Highbury Congregational Church began in 1827 and is an independent Church that is part of the Congregational Federation.

Whilst we work closely with other Congregational Churches, all we do is decided and funded by our own Church Members.

We do not have any outside source of funding and we do not have any outside body over us.

All who belong are welcomed into church membership on confession of faith in God and Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Quarterly (and as required), Church Members meet for Church Meeting to seek the mind of Christ in shaping the life of the Church and setting the future direction of Church life.

The Deacons serve the Church as Managing Trustees and ensure all the Church does is in keeping with its Charitable Objects as a Congregational Church and with reference to finances, safeguarding, health and safety, disability, employment and other legislation.

We are part of the Congregational Federation and are registered as a charity 1159085.

We have adopted the Congregational Federation's Declaration of Trust as our Governing Document together with our own Working Practices Document (April 2015).

REPORTS TO THE ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING January 2020 - December 2020

MINISTER'S REPORT

I have written and re-written the opening sentence to this report several times over. I am resisting words that 2020 has taught us: unprecedented, social distancing, COVID-19 Secure, 'Hands-Face-Space', furlough, lockdown, tiers, 'eat out to help out', 'clap for carers', uptick, 'next slide please' and on and on. There! I got those out of the way. You will add more I am certain.

It was a year of two halves, although the first half was only two and half months in duration. A Highbury rhythm was beginning to develop as I settled into a new ministry: two services on a Sunday, Hy Tec, Thursday Café, Explore, delivering assemblies for St. John's Primary School, and meeting up with the Head at Pittville Secondary School.

Preparations for the Annual Church Meeting, including the nomination and election of deacons, were made. I found my way around Cheltenham on a dark, wet night, delivering nomination letters.

Richard Cleaves took the funeral of Joan Gardner and joined with me in the funerals of Ellen Baylis and Jocelyn Bell.

HyTec had a youth weekend with our area worker, Joy Howell, from 14th-16th February. Youth leaders were climbing the walls! To be fair, HyTec-ers were too, as we went to a climbing centre near Northleach. The young people led us in an amazing act of worship on Sunday morning.

As the news of the coronavirus was growing louder, we had a well-attended Ash Wednesday service in the Morton Brown Room. 'From dust you came and to dust you will return' were spoken as foreheads were marked with the ash of Palm Crosses.

Our Annual Church Meeting was well attended. People commented to me that there was an air of excitement and purpose. The financial challenge of repairing our leaky hall roof was juxtaposed with the vital work of CAP (Christians Against Poverty). With the new deacons elected, we were ready for the year ahead. Holy Habits was going to be our focus in the coming months.

The 15th March was a watershed moment. The church was busy with 70 plus in the morning service and a good number in the evening. We celebrated communion with cling film covered trays. There was a portentous mood. For many in our congregation, it was the last time they would worship in the building in 2020.

Churches were mandated to close that week.

Dazed by the extraordinariness of it all, the Leadership Team met via Google Hangouts. A plan was put in place for online worship and pastoral care with Lorraine, Rachel, and Louise spearheading efforts.

Adrian stepped up to support me in delivering a high-quality act of worship. The aim was to include as many people from across the congregation as possible.

Over the following weeks, Sharon set up a Zoom Coffee Morning after our online worship. This has been a vital replacement for the social contact we enjoyed with in-building worship. In the autumn, Cynthia kickstarted a socially distanced, bring-your-own-flask-and-a-biscuit Thursday coffee morning. This was forced to cease with the second lockdown. The few sessions were much appreciated.

It was a challenging time for our staff, with Julie Lane and Bridgette Seabourne furloughed and Andrea taking on administration responsibilities. Julie continues on furlough and Bridgette has taken redundancy. Bridgette's long service and dedication to keeping Highbury ship shape is enormously appreciated. She continues as part of the Highbury family. I am deeply grateful for the understanding and graciousness of Julie, Andrea, and Bridgette in this extraordinarily difficult time of change.

The Connect@Highbury sheet was redeveloped in format and has become the main tool for communication with the congregation. It was emailed, printed, and delivered every week by a number of faithful volunteers. From July, the Connect@Highbury sheet has been printed in A3 format for display in the notice board. This followed a constructive observation from one of our Highbury family members.

Sue Cole kept Highbury News going. At first it was sent by email only and then we managed to plug the gap with hard copies for those who do not have email.

Initially, I provided a daily reflection and prayer on YouTube. This was intended to sustain and encourage church members but soon began to reach a much wider network. Immediately after Easter, a rota of church members provided reflections for Wednesdays and Saturdays. This continued until the end of August. Mary B. organised this and it was a rich sharing in community.

Andrea met the challenges of lockdown by stepping out of her comfort zone. She soon became our own 'Blue Peter' star with her co-stars, Megan and Hugo. She organised Messy Church online with her team and, when it was permitted, we held a couple of in-building events in a COVID-19 Secure way. It has been a delight to work alongside Andrea in re-establishing the Parent and Toddler Group on Tuesday and the Junior Church meeting in-building on a Sunday.

The Church Leadership Team took the decision not to return to in-building worship until September. A COVID-19 Secure task force was formed. Mary B., Rachel, and Peter were key to developing the risk assessment. Viviane has been co-opted onto the group to support its considerable responsibilities.

Once I returned from three weeks annual leave in August, preparations began for in-building worship. Rob Lacey provided equipment and expertise gratis and, with Adrian, Iain, and Darryl, we are now in a position where we are able to provide livestreamed worship whether in-building worship is allowed or not.

Since re-opening the building for worship, we have had two funerals of church members: Vera Williams and Sheila Grimes. Funerals in these circumstances have been extremely distressing to families and that they were able to have the funerals in the church building was a consolation.

Central to my vision is inclusion. The congregation meets for worship both online and in-building. I ensure that people are able to participate on site or via recordings. Maureen has provided support in organising worship during my leave and also with readers and pray-ers.

Celebrating communion has demonstrated that even when we cannot physically share one loaf and one cup, by the Spirit of Jesus we are fed and united in God's love. We have received 6 new members at our Communion services in October and November, both in-building and online. This has been ground-breaking stuff which would have been unthinkable prior to the pandemic. God is teaching new things.

We have managed to continue Church Meetings via Zoom. Reports have been circulated well in advance of the meeting and, it has been a sign of the strength of our congregation, that the meetings have been very well attended. We have been on a constant learning curve and are thankful to Iain for facilitating those who do not have Zoom to enter the meeting via telephone.

I am indebted to our organists and to HySpirit. During the first lockdown, Richard S. and Alan, faithfully recorded the hymns for us. Richard has not been able to play for our in-building worship and we look forward to when that is possible again. Alan has taken on the lion's share of responsibility for music and I want to thank him for his willingness. Ian J. has played on a couple of occasions and we look forward to his continuing involvement in 2021. Hy Spirit has been providing us with a great range of worship songs. Thank you to everyone in the group for playing your part, though special thanks go to Adrian who has thrown himself into pulling it all together.

A huge achievement of 2020 is the coming together of our Discipleship and Mission and Outreach Ministry leaders to create the Connect Groups: Disciples Growing Disciples. Our meetings have been inspiring. I am grateful to Karen H. for enabling us to get the plan in place. Helen did a fantastic job of the survey and compiling the responses. Then Helen and Cynthia worked hard to get the first groups up and running.

At the end of October, all the Connect Group leaders met for resourcing and joined each other in envisioning how the groups would develop. My vision is that Connect Groups would spawn new Connect Groups and that Highbury disciples would grow in their own faith and in sharing their faith that others would come to know Jesus and grow as his disciples. Please continue to pray for this critical part of our church's ministry.

I am indebted to the commitment of our Treasurer, Roger. He invests a significant part of his time into his role. Being a treasurer is always a high commitment job but this year has required so much more. Roger has guided us through the process of reducing our expenditure whilst, at the same time, working closely with Ted and our fundraiser on grant applications for the roof fund. These efforts are beginning to bear fruit.

John leads the maintenance group. A quiet man with an ever-present smile, he has ensured that Highbury has new boilers. He has continued to do work in the Church and Manse.

Since returning to in-building worship, Karen W. and Marion have beautified our worship space with dry flower arrangements. Marion, always concerned about the ministry of flowers, put together posies for several weeks when I was allowed to go and visit folk.

It is impossible to mention everyone. I am grateful for Iain, our Church Secretary, who is wise and prayerful. I am thankful for a team of deacons who are working hard to fulfil their responsibilities as Acting Trustees. I am inspired by my Ministry Leaders, who have a vision for what Highbury is and is becoming.

What is clear to me is that God has allowed me to be your pastor at this moment in time. The Boyd family has experienced your welcome, warmth, and love throughout this year, and for that we give thanks to God.

I have made every effort to study scripture and life so that I am able to preach faithful to the Good News of Jesus Christ. I have attempted to be realistic: creating space for lament, nurturing hope, and encouraging faith. Preaching to a phone-camera in an empty church building and now to a video camera livestreaming to an online and in-building congregation has stretched me. Thank you for your patience and flexibility in all of this. I want you to know that I have prayed for you and covet your prayers.

I do not know what 2021 will bring. What I do know with certainty is that we go with God.

Yours,



Jason c. Boyd

TREASURER'S REPORT

Accounts to Year ended 31st December 2020

Background to year

Last year we reported a year of change, challenges and opportunities, following the appointment of Jason in September.

This year has changed in many ways we would never wish to experience again. This has put a severe personal strain on our congregation and room users as well as the church ministry and leadership team. A lot of work has been done by all those connected with screening and recording services, and those keeping us safe in the church. Thank you for all your dedication.

Covid 19 was declared a notifiable disease in England on the 5th March 2020.

On the 23rd March the government ordered the closure of all places of worship and banned all gatherings of more than two people in public and social events, including weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies.

On the 2nd April we made a claim under our insurances to cover loss of income from expected cancelled room bookings.

However, in line with the UK insurance market, we were advised that our policies are designed to cover standard risks and will not respond to losses arising as a result of a national epidemic or global pandemic.

Overview to year

We were faced with a big hole in our expected income for the future, as well as raising funds for a replacement flat roof over the hall and adjoining rooms. In addition we were required to replace the boilers in the church and this expense has created a huge deficit in our Fabric Fund reserves.

So the real challenges were to continue limited church services and activities, whenever and however possible, to fund our day to day activities and plan to fund the replacement flat roof.

We had a very generous response for these appeals, and your "one off" gifts and increased standing orders have made a tremendous difference to our day to day finances and the new Flat Roof Fund.

We have had to look very critically at our costs, and particularly our staffing costs to help offset the loss of room booking income.

We furloughed Julie our administrator and Bridgette our cleaner from the 1st April, and they have remained furloughed throughout the year.

However under the Government's Job Retention Scheme we have been able to pay them 80% of their salaries and reclaim up to 80% under the

Scheme. We have retained Julie on furlough into the new-year and will review her employment situation when things return to near normal again. Bridgette was offered reduced hours, reflecting the reduced need for non-furlough cleaning, but chose to accept redundancy instead. Andrea, our Children's and Family worker has accepted a 35% reduction in her hours from 1st January 2021. She has been key in maintaining our communications, particularly through Connect, in the absence of Julie.

I produced a **forecast** income and expenditure for 2020, based on a "normal" year, with a full year ministry, room bookings and complement of staff. This produced a deficiency of £650 on the day to day activities included in the **General Fund**.

Not surprisingly the actual results show wild swings from the forecast.

However I have continued to use this forecast throughout the year to highlight the many changes to our finances.

The financial year produced a **General Fund** surplus of £3,887, which is £4,537 better than forecast. This surplus will be used to shore up the Fabric Fund so we can contemplate carrying out limited maintenance in the New Year.

There were many variances from the forecast, and the major ones include;

Income;

- Main core income of standing orders and envelopes and loose change improved by £5,727 – thank you
- "One off" gifts were £7,375 – thank you
- Gift Day and Harvest receipts were £3,139 less than forecast
- Furlough income was £6,607 – thank you to the UK government for planning this and to you and future generations for funding it!
- Room hire income at £5,950 was £10,597 less than forecast.
- Outreach income from café and lunches etc. was £3,156 less than forecast.

Expenditure;

- Minister salary and expenses were £806 less than forecast
- Preaching costs for visiting ministers were £507 less than forecast
- Savings of £1,292 were made on organist fees – all our organists generously declined their fees until we get back to normal services
- Outreach expenditure on café and lunches etc. were £1,457 less than forecast.
- Church utility costs of gas and electric were £1,223 less – reflecting reduced demand.
- Non-minister salaries showed savings of £2,238, from our 80% furlough payments

- We incurred redundancy costs of £3,456
- We employed a professional fund raiser to help with funding our flat roof replacement and incurred £2,400 fees in the year

- **Giving to Others**

Giving to others in the year amounted to £5,400 which included £1,700 mission contributions to the Congregational Federation, with all other monies given by church members using the church as a posting box; CWM birthday, Christmas appeal to CHIKS, but monthly communion offerings only for the first three months of the year.

The Finance Group's review of the Year End recommended that the church make up the shortfall on the expected collections for the Harvest and Christmas appeals.

This giving is 5% of our total income.

Review of the accounts - Income & Expenditure, All Funds

Below is a summary of overall financial performance:

	Year 2020	Year 2019
Incoming Resources (£s)		
Offerings	60,278	57,690
Legacies	11,450	0
Gifts	22,053	0
Room letting	5,950	16,547
Investments and other income	4,027	11,470
Furlough income	6,607	
Total Income	10,365	85,707
	2020	2019
Resources used (£s):		
Charitable objectives	-50,065	-34,327
Support costs (£s):		
Maintenance	-19,358	-1,589
Project costs – Manse	0	-25,582
Other support costs	-31,784	-29,332
Total Expenditure	-101,207	-90,830
Excess of Incoming Resources over Resources used		
Net movement	9,158	-5,123

Total net movements of £9,158 include: General Fund £3,887, Fabric Fund -£19,358, Flat Roof Fund £25,128 and Gift and Legacy Fund -£500

Movements in other funds, apart from General Fund include;

Fabric Fund

- Expenditure of £19,358 included; new gas boilers £15,974, flat roof investigation and repair £1,770, car park white lines £450 and Manse gate and fencing £780
- It is recommended that we transfer in £3,500 from the General Fund surplus to allow routine maintenance to continue in the year ahead

Flat Roof Fund – newly created in 2020

- Total receipts of £25,128 include; Legacy from Richard Newton's estate – which specified that "such monies are added to the church's fabric to be used for repairs to the church building" – value £10,450
Gifts from the congregation of £14,678 – thank you

Gifts and Legacies

- Receipts include David Rogers legacy of £1,000
- Payments made for Harvest and Christmas shortfall of £1,500

Summary of all Funds

- **Closing balances were;**

General Fund £40,350

Fabric Fund £-525

Flat Roof Fund £25,128

Gift and Legacy Fund £14,612

Total balances are £79,565, which are £9,158 more than last year, in anticipation of funding the flat roof replacement

Unrestricted Funds

All the church funds are unrestricted.

The trustee policy is to retain at least 3 months expenditure as "free" reserves within the General Fund to meet future shortfalls in income, or unexpected expenditure for 2021. The balance at 31st December represents 6 month's current day to day General Fund expenditure.

Progress in replacing our Flat Roof

The church is having to replace the flat roof which covers the hall and adjoining rooms, and which are largely used for community purposes.

Ideally the work will be done in three stages in the spring/summer of 2021.

The estimated cost of this is in the order of £95,000, which we cannot afford without major outside funding of 70-80% of the cost.

Ted Horsfield and I started preparations for grant applications by producing a justification paper including; a summary application, flat roof history, use by the community, governance, benefitting people in our community and benefitting people through church. This would then be used as a template to cut and paste according to the grant provider's ethos.

However fund raising has now become very exacting and professional, and with the extra demands from charities affected by Covid-19 issues we felt we needed to improve our chances of success by engaging a Professional. After discussions with other churches we engaged Anthony Oliver Consulting.

Subsequently we have been promised firm grants from the following bodies;

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust - £8,500

South West Midlands Area of the Cong Fed - £3,000

Other applications include;

Allchurches Trust - £5,000 applied for

Garfield Weston Foundation – £20,000 applied for

In addition there are 9 other prospects which are being researched and planned for applications.

We were unsuccessful in applications to;

Severn Trent Community Fund – "not enough community impact"!

Summerfield Charitable Trust – they make a blanket contribution to the Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust, who recommended we try there – good advice!

Joseph Rank- "the Trust does not consider applications for church roof replacements or replacement boilers"

Enovert Community Trust - "As is now the pattern, the meeting was many times over-subscribed and unfortunately your project was not one of those selected for funding on this occasion"

Against a target funding requirement of £95,000 we now have £36,628, which means we are 39% of the way there – so still plenty of work to do!

Report by Roger Gregory (Treasurer)

HIGHBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED

31ST DECEMBER 2020

Index

Annual report

Income & Expenditure Account

Balance Sheet

Notes to Balance Sheet

Summary of Funds/Reserves

Movements in Funds;

General Fund – page no 1 and 2

Fabric, Gifts & Legacies and Flat Roof Funds – page 3

Independent Examiners Report

Highbury Church

Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

12 months to 31st December 2020

INCOME Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR £	TOTAL LAST YEAR £
Offerings, Legacies and similar incoming resources			
Envelopes & loose change	1101	1,897	4,063
STO & single cash/cheque	1102	41,818	34,774
Tax refund	1103	10,128	9,279
Gifts	1121	22,053	0
Legacies	1122	11,450	
Gift Day	1123	6,325	8,807
Harvest	1124	110	766
Grants received	1200	670	4,811
Furlough income	1201	6,607	0
Miscellaneous income	6110	688	1,102
Total - Incoming resources		101,746	63,602
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
Other room hire	1141	5,450	15,447
Church users room hire	1143	500	1,100
Weddings & Funerals	2801	420	185
Highbury News income	3402	880	576
Highbury News advertisers	3403	265	301
Congregationalist income	3514	0	63
Scouts insurance	6105	155	148
Photocopier income	6613	0	
Outreach income	6700	792	3,950
Total - Incoming activities		8,462	21,770
Activities for generating Funds			
Fund raising	1131	8	
Investment Income			
Dividends & Interest	1151	149	336
Total Income		110,365	85,708

EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives			
<u>Ministry salary etc:</u>			
Minister's gross salary	5101	26,436	8,658
Minister's employers NI	5102	0	
Minister's pension EE and ER	5103	2,969	972
Employers Insurance	5104	0	
Car mileage allowance	5401	208	151
Children's Worker gross salary	5801	14,245	13,857
Children's Worker employers NI	5802	0	
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Preaching	2101	333	3,222
Junior Church/Sunday Special	2302	91	265
Video licence	2304	490	426
Organist	2501	374	1,666
Music	2502	0	
Organ Tuning etc	2503	0	
Pastoral	3201	0	5
Pastoral gifts	3202	75	197
Ministry Leaders exps Worship	3210	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Children	3211	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Youth	3212	0	
Ministry Leaders exps Discipleship	3213	86	30
Ministry Leaders exps Pastoral Care	3214	12	45
Ministry Leaders exps Mission & Outreach	3215	0	3
Ministry Leaders exps Joint	3216	0	
Highbury News expenses	3401	0	21
Publicity/advertising	3404	0	
Neighbourhood cards	3405	0	132
CF affiliations/SW Midlands area	3501	1,816	1,479
Other affiliations	3502	1,600	310
CF Ministry & Society CWM Boxes & B'day	3504	880	800
Congregationalist expenditure	3513	0	112
Pastoral	5111	50	
Worship resources	5115	18	132
Church equipment/furnishings	6109	0	
Miscellaneous expenditure	6801	86	90
Outreach expenditure	6800	296	1,755
Total - Outgoing activities		50,065	34,328

EXPENDITURE Header	A/C code	TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Support costs			
<u>Ministry expenses:</u>			
Stationery	5112	0	
Telephone	5113	0	155
Postage	5114	0	
Travel, excluding Car	5116	0	
In -service training	5117	0	
Subsistence	5118	0	12
<u>Manse expenses:</u>			
Manse insurance	5301	233	261
Manse - gas	5302	0	70
Manse - electricity	5303	0	139
Manse - water	5304	171	293
Manse - community charge	5305	2,607	1,229
Manse - maintenance	5307	780	
<u>Other expenses:</u>			
Project	6100	0	25,583
Church - Maintenance	6101	18,578	1,589
Gas	6102	3,844	4,290
Electricity	6103	1,778	2,686
Insurance	6104	2,410	2,280
Trade disposal	6106	357	351
Housekeeping	6301	98	186
Cleaning materials	6302	843	677
Administrator salary	6401	4,645	5,329
Caretakers gross pay	6501	8,709	5,802
Assistant Caretakers gross pay	6503	394	1,104
Stationery/directory	6601	52	42
Postage	6602	123	124
Telephone	6603	868	874
Office equipment	6604	638	270
Payroll costs	6606	288	96
Photocopy hire/copy charge	6611	1,459	1,419
Photocopy paper	6612	110	194
Bank charges	6701	197	395
Legal costs	6702	0	
Recruitment costs	6703	0	53
Training non Minister	6704	-440	1,000
Professional fund raising	6705	2,400	0
Total - Support costs		51,142	56,503
Total Expenditure		101,207	90,831

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Income & Expenditure Account - all Funds

Income/Expenditure Header		TOTAL THIS YEAR	TOTAL LAST YEAR
		£	£
Income			
Incoming resources		101,746	63,602
Incoming activities		8,462	21,770
Fund raising		8	0
Dividends & interest		149	336
Total Income		110,365	85,708
Expenditure			
Outgoing activities		50,065	34,328
Support costs		51,142	56,503
Total Expenditure		101,207	90,831
All Funds surplus/(deficiency)		9,158	-5,123

Highbury Congregational Church

Balance Sheet As of: 31 December 2020

			2020	2019
Fixed assets				
7101	Manse		170,301.00	170,301.00
7106	Church Building		2,101,240.00	2,101,240.00
7111	Church Contents		118,701.38	118,701.38
7116	Outbuildings		33,175.00	33,175.00
Total Fixed assets			2,423,417.38	2,423,417.38
Current assets				
7506	Lloyds Current Account		20,457.96	11,129.58
7520	Charinco		0.00	0.00
7522	War Stock		0.00	0.00
7523	Petty Cash a/c		281.94	106.66
7524	Santander		0.00	0.00
7526	COIF Deposit Account		58,970.08	58,814.76
7527	Standard Life Investments		0.00	0.00
Z05	Accounts Receivable		9,431.00	7,630.79
Total Current assets			89,140.98	77,681.79
Liabilities				
3207PB	Gift Presentation		0.00	0.00
3505PB	M & M box & Birthday scheme		0.00	0.00
4101PB	Communion Collections		0.00	0.00
4102PB	Coffee After Service		0.00	0.00
6699	Agency collections		2,520.63	2,540.49
6910PB	flower account		0.00	0.00
6911PB	HyWay		0.00	0.00
8010	un-cleared cheques at Year End		0.00	0.00
Z04	Accounts Payable		8,446.31	6,124.82
Total Liabilities			10,966.94	8,665.31
Net Asset surplus (deficit)			2,501,591.42	2,492,433.86
Reserves				
	Excess / (deficit) to date		9,157.56	(45,785.13)
8100	Accumulated Fund		15,254.90	15,254.90
Z01	Starting balances		2,477,178.96	2,522,964.09
Z02	Gains and losses on investments		0.00	0.00
Total Reserves			2,501,591.42	2,492,433.86

Highbury Congregational Church

Notes to Balance Sheet

as at 31st December 2020

1 Fixed Assets are valued as per Insurance valuation of 2006.
(However the assets are insured at current day values)

2 Sundry debtors include:		£
	Gift aid reclaim	4,191
	CHIKS Christmas appeal	100
	Flat Roof gifts	500
	Manse grant - Cleeve Hill Church Fund	400
	Insurance prepaid for 2021	2,586
	Room booking - donations	500
	Scout insurance	155
	Furlough claim	766
	Other debtors	233
		£9,431

3 Sundry creditors include:		
	Utility costs	-885
	Tax and NI	-1,995
	Other payroll - redundancy etc	-3,536
	Cong Fed payments	-1,760
	Void Projects - roof investigation	-270
		-£8,446

4 Agency (PB accounts) include:		
	CWM Birthday	-200
	CCP - general funds	-690
	Flowers in church	315
	Toodler group	-77
	CHIKS sponsor money	144
	Christmas appeal - CHIKS	-1,473
	Brunel	-197
	Hytec	-443
	Bible Notes	100
		-£2,521

HIGHBURY CHURCH

Summary of Funds/Reserves actual as at 31st December 2020

	General Fund £	Fabric Fund £	Flat Roof Fund £	Gift & Legacy Fund £	SOFA Total all Funds £
brought forward 01.01.20	£36,463	£18,833	£0	£15,112	£70,408
December 2020 movements:					
income	84,236		25,128	1,000	110,364
expenditure	-80,349	-19,358		-1,500	-101,207
sub total - surplus/(deficiency)	£3,887	-£19,358	£25,128	-£500	9,157
final surplus/(deficiency)	3,887	-19,358	25,128	-500	9,157
Year end transfer	-3,500	3,500			0
carried forward 31.12.20	£36,850	£2,975	£25,128	£14,612	£79,565

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

From 01 January 2020 01 January 2019
To 31 December 2020 31 December 2019

General - General fund (Unrestricted) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Incoming resources

Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources

Envelope & loose cash	1,897.28	4,063.13
STO & single cash/cheque	41,815.78	34,774.00
Tax repaid	10,128.47	9,278.96
Gifts	7,375.00	0.00
Gift Day	6,325.00	8,806.51
Harvest	110.00	766.48
Grants Received	670.00	4,811.00
Furlough Income	6,607.42	0.00
Miscellaneous income	688.05	1,101.64
	75,617.00	63,601.72

Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects

3rd Party Room Hire	5,450.20	15,446.89
Church users room hire	500.00	1,100.25
Weddings & Funerals	420.00	185.00
Highbury News Income	880.00	576.00
Highbury News Advertisers	265.00	301.00
Congregationalist In	0.00	62.90
Scouts insurance	154.91	147.80
Outreach income	792.17	3,949.85
	8,462.28	21,769.69

Investment income

Dividends & Interest	156.94	336.68
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Total Incoming resources	84,236.22	85,708.09
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Resources used

Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects

Preaching	275.75	3,222.35
Junior church	148.42	265.18
Video Licence	489.00	425.99
Organist	374.00	1,666.00
Pastoral	0.00	5.00
Pastoral Gifts	75.00	197.02
Ministrey Leadres exps Discipleship	85.91	30.00
Ministry Leaders exps Pastoral Care	12.16	45.07
Ministry Leaders exps Mission Outreach	0.00	3.50
Highbury News Expenses	0.00	20.88
Neighbourhood Cards	0.00	131.76
CF affiliations	1,816.00	1,478.50
Other affiliations	100.00	310.00
CF Ministry & Mission Fund	880.00	800.00
Congregational Ex	0.00	112.00
Jasons Gross Salary	26,437.84	8,657.70
Pension for Jason	2,969.67	972.40
Worship resources	67.46	131.88
Car mileage allowance	207.90	150.75
Pastoral Placement payment	14,245.14	13,856.60
Outreach expenditure	295.60	1,755.17
Miscellaneous expenditure	85.81	90.20
	48,565.66	34,327.95

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

	From To	01 January 2020 31 December 2020	01 January 2019 31 December 2019
Support costs			
Professional Fund Raising		2,400.00	0.00
Telephone		0.00	155.00
Subsistence		0.00	12.09
Manse - insurance		232.10	260.50
Manse - gas		0.00	70.02
Manse - electricity		0.00	138.64
Manse - water		170.38	293.07
Manse - community charge		2,607.05	1,228.83
Gas		3,845.60	4,290.26
Electricity		1,776.20	2,686.03
Insurance		2,407.31	2,280.47
Trade disposal		359.45	351.00
Housekeeping		97.75	186.20
Cleaning Materials		841.80	676.92
Adminstrator salary		4,643.73	5,328.93
Caretakers Gross Pay		8,708.94	5,801.80
Assistant Caretaker Pay		394.50	1,104.00
Stationery		52.90	41.73
Postage		122.60	124.08
Office telephone		869.67	874.63
Office Equipment		638.30	269.93
Payroll		288.00	96.00
Photocopier hire		1,460.61	1,419.36
Photocopier paper		109.97	193.73
Bank charges		196.48	395.86
Recruitment costs		0.00	52.74
Training non Monister		(440.01)	0.00
		<u>31,783.33</u>	<u>28,331.82</u>
Total Resources used		80,348.99	62,659.77
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used		3,887.23	23,048.32
Transfers to/(from)		(3,500.00)	(23,000.00)
Brought forward balance		36,462.90	36,414.58
Carried forward balance		36,850.13	36,462.90

training - Training budget (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Resources used			
Support costs			
Training non Monister		0.00	1,000.00
Total Resources used		0.00	1,000.00
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used		0.00	(1,000.00)
Transfers to/(from)		0.00	1,000.00

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

From 01 January 2020 01 January 2019
To 31 December 2020 31 December 2019

Fabric - Church Maintenance (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Resources used		
Support costs		
Manse - maintenance	780.00	0.00
Project	0.00	25,582.85
Maintenance	18,578.17	1,588.85
Total Resources used	19,358.17	27,171.70
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used	(19,358.17)	(27,171.70)
Transfers to/(from)	3,500.00	23,000.00
Brought forward balance	18,832.47	23,004.17
Carried forward balance	2,974.30	18,832.47

Gifts - Gifts and Legacies (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Incoming resources		
Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources		
Legacies	1,000.00	0.00
Total Incoming resources	1,000.00	0.00
Resources used		
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects		
Other affiliations	1,500.00	0.00
Total Resources used	1,500.00	0.00
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used	(500.00)	0.00
Transfers to/(from)	0.00	(1,000.00)
Brought forward balance	15,112.49	16,112.49
Carried forward balance	14,612.49	15,112.49

Flatroof - Flat roof refurbishment (Designated) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Incoming resources		
Donations, Legacies and similar incoming resources		
Gifts	14,678.50	0.00
Legacies	10,450.00	0.00
Total Incoming resources	25,128.50	0.00
Excess of Incoming resources over Resources used	25,128.50	0.00
Carried forward balance	25,128.50	0.00

Highbury Congregational Church
Incoming resources and Resources used
Period: 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

From 01 January 2020 01 January 2019
To 31 December 2020 31 December 2019

Fixed - Manse, church building, car (Restricted) Fund Incoming resources and Resources used

Incoming resources	Brought forward balance	2,422,026.00	2,422,026.00
Donations	Carried forward balance	2,422,026.00	2,422,026.00
	Envelope & loose cash	1,467.28	1,063.13
	STC & single contributions	41,815.73	34,774.23
	Tax receipt	18,125.47	9,275.95
	Gifts	7,375.00	0.00
	Gift Day	2,325.00	2,896.51
	Harvest	110.00	788.45
	Grants Received	570.00	4,811.00
	Parlour Income	2,937.42	0.00
	Miscellaneous income	488.28	1,101.94
		<u>75,117.20</u>	<u>65,901.72</u>
Activities in furtherance of the church's objects	1st Party Room Hire	3,450.25	15,148.89
	Church events room hire	298.00	1,100.25
	Weddings & Funerals	420.00	180.00
	Highbury News Income	550.00	576.00
	Highbury News Advertisers	288.00	381.00
	Congregationalist In	0.00	82.50
	Service Insurance	154.21	147.50
	Currents Income	757.17	3,544.15
		<u>6,917.63</u>	<u>21,780.29</u>
Investment income	Dividends & Interest	155.94	384.82
	Total Incoming resources	<u>84,236.22</u>	<u>68,766.76</u>
Resources used	Activities in furtherance of the church's objects		
	Preaching	276.75	3,222.36
	Junior church	148.42	250.13
	Video Licence	420.00	420.00
	Organist	375.30	1,625.00
	Parsonal	0.00	0.00
	Pastoral Gifts	75.00	197.82
	Ministry Leaders exps Discipleship	25.37	24.00
	Ministry Leaders exps Pastoral Care	12.18	45.07
	Ministry Leaders exps Mission Outreach	0.00	3.95
	Highbury News Expenses	0.00	20.00
	Neighbourhood Cards	0.00	121.00
	CF activities	1,470.00	1,470.00
	Other activities	150.00	310.00
	CF Ministry & Mission Fund	800.00	800.00
	Congregational Ex	0.00	112.00
	Service Drivers Salary	25,437.84	9,887.70
	Passion for Jesus	1,391.07	972.48
	Youngs resources	7,274.00	101.00
	Car mileage allowance	207.00	150.75
	Pastoral Placement payment	14,245.14	13,650.00
	Outreach expenses	256.00	1,753.17
	Miscellaneous expenses	81.31	90.20
		<u>46,286.06</u>	<u>34,327.95</u>

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Highbury Congregational Church

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the Examiner

As Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Accounting Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005) issued in March 2005, UK Accounting Standards and the Charities Act 2011. As Trustees, you consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to;

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

Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Trustees and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's statement

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

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

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

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

Signed Brian Sneddon

Date 8.2.21

Brian Sneddon
28 Chardwar Gardens
Bourton-on-Water
GL54 2BL

MINISTRY LEADERS REPORTS

WORSHIP MINISTRY

Report by Leader Maureen Williams

It has been a difficult year, not least for our minister, Jason, who has been remarkable in the way he has kept our Church family together. For those of us able to be in our Church building when it has been allowed to be open, it has been a great blessing but of course with all the restrictions it isn't as we would like it to be. For many, especially the more infirm of our congregation, the separation has been difficult and I know they have missed the fellowship of our Church community.

Apart from three Sundays in the Summer, Jason has been with us throughout the year. We were privileged to welcome Rev Dr Janet Wootton, David Waters and our previous minister Richard Cleaves and his wife Felicity to conduct our services on line while Jason had a much-deserved holiday.

We are indebted to our organists who have been with us and made music throughout the year; Richard Sharpe who sadly is still finding it difficult to play, but who we hope will be with us again later in the new year; Alan Berry who has been at the helm most of the year and always raises our spirits with his playing; and Ian James who has kindly agreed to help with the rota. Our thoughts and prayers are with Frank Guppy and his wife Annie as we remember his commitment as organist and member for so many years. We give thanks to them all for their continued service to the Church.

We are also grateful for the contribution to worship given by the HySpirit group.

Without the Technology team none of the services could have been on line and we are so thankful for all the hard work that goes into organising that, especially as we know these are busy people with important jobs as well as families to consider.

I would also like to say a big thank you to all our Church members as well as friends, who have so willingly agreed to take part in our Worship by giving the readings and saying the prayers. Finally, when we appointed Jason to be our minister, none of us realised what would be in store for him. Indeed, he did not know what awaited him and all I can say is I think we have been so fortunate to have him leading us and caring for us throughout this difficult time. So, a big THANK YOU JASON for all you have done for us your preaching, your guidance and your kindness.

In a calendar I have been given by my Christian Brother friend for next December it says...

Wherever you go in life, Go with Love in your heart, Hope in your soul, and Joy in your mind, for LOVE, HOPE and JOY will take you far."

That is my hope for our Church family as we travel through 2021 together.

Church Flowers

Report by Karen Wilkes and Team

With the curtailments of services in March we have had little opportunity to utilize our skills. However, we have tried to adorn the church with silk and dried arrangements for the times we have been able to worship. Marion has been thoughtful in making up posies for Jason to take on visits, which I understand have been well received.

Let's pray that there will be an improvement across the country so that later in the year we are able to return to a new normal and enjoy our country, wildlife and flowers once again.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY

Disciples making Disciples

Report by Leader Cynthia Hawkins

This year has seen the development of small groups of members, who meet regularly for prayer, study and fellowship. Under Jason's leadership, 'Disciples making Disciples', and with practical help from Helen Bloxham, we now have 6 Connect Groups.

Prayers for Highbury, under the leadership of Katherine Stanley, has been working for many years. While lockdown

restrictions meant meetings had to be out of doors, numbers increased. Now they use a Conference call system, meeting each week.

Prayer Triplet: Judi Marsh has kept this group going, with each member taking it in turn to select a subject, and produce prayers, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month. Communication has always been by e-mail.

The Monday Morning Connect group started with Coffee Morning members agreeing to keep in touch, as soon as lockdown meant the Coffee Mornings had to close. It was agreed that each member would take it in turn to choose a passage of scripture, which would be read on Sundays, at 10am. After a few enjoyable sessions meeting for coffee and discussion based on the readings, a Conference call at 10.30am is used on 1st and 3rd Monday of the month.

The Monday Afternoon Group, with Jean and Roger Gregory, meet via Zoom, starting at 4pm. The 2-hour session provides fellowship, time for discussion of preaching by the Minister, and prayer

The Tuesday Group with Helen Bloxham and Viviane Boyd meet by Zoom, fortnightly.

The Saturday Group is led by Kate Blazey, once a month.

Using either Zoom or a Conference call, removes the restriction on numbers in a Group. We look forward to the time when we can develop not only links between Groups, but with others in the neighbourhood.

MISSION & OUTREACH MINISTRY

Name of the lead person: TBC

Report by Karen H

Aim of ministry or group: to make Jesus known in ways relevant for these times

Report of activity for 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic caused us to re-think our priorities. With an increased emphasis on "people" and "connections" rather than "buildings", we worked with the Discipleship team to introduce the new Highbury Connect Groups.

Connect Groups are small groups of people who meet regularly, to get to know each other better and to explore ideas together. They meet at different times of the day, on different days of the week, in gardens/homes when lockdown rules allowed and currently via on-line Zoom meetings or the phone, with meetings typically lasting an hour.

We encourage everyone to participate in a Connect Group. Please contact the church office for more information and find one that would suit you.

Planned activities for 2021: We hope established Connect Groups will introduce some social meetings suitable for inviting friends and/or family members along.

Many thanks to everyone who has been involved in starting the Connect Groups and for all those who have been praying.

Hy-Speed

(Highbury Digital Scalextric Club).

Team headed up by Adrian Blazey and Iain Wallington.

Report by Adrian Blazey.

Aim of Hy-Speed:

Our Mission is "to demonstrate God's love in the local community through slot car racing". Our objectives are:

- a) To build and strengthen relationships between Highbury Congregational Church members and between HCC and the local community.
- b) To provide space for a shared activity between parents/guardians and their children and strengthen family bonds.
- c) To create a non-judgmental, accepting environment in which everyone can relax and have fun racing slot cars.

2020 Activity: Having had a break to regroup in 2019 we relaunched in February 2020 with a positive race meeting including a mix of familiar and new faces. In early March with the looming global Coronavirus situation, we took the decision to cancel further meetings for the safety of all involved. Unfortunately, we were unable to return for the remainder of 2020.

Plans for 2021: Once it is safe to do so we aim to restart our race meetings at Highbury and continue to build relationships whilst having fun racing slot cars with those who attend. We would hope to take our track to the UK slot car festival when this event is next able to go ahead.

Thanks must go to our group of helpers including Sharon, Grace, Jason and Jeremy. As ever offers of help are greatly appreciated; please contact any of the team for more information.

Open the Book

Report by Jean Gregory

Our Open the Book sessions in Oakwood School began well in 2020, but came to an abrupt halt in March with the first lockdown. We have been unable to go into school since. We have kept in touch with school though, and we know that they are missing us as much as we are missing them!

When we can, we will resume our Thursday morning input to assembly time. Meanwhile our links with the Bible Society and the Open the Book training and news sharing remains virtual, as well as a focus for our prayers.

Community Café

Report by Angela Pickles

This is an important part of our community outreach, offering companionship and an opportunity for all ages to meet friends from church and the neighbourhood on Thursday mornings. Like many other groups it came to a sudden stop in mid- March. Cynthia did organise a social gathering in October where up to ten people could meet in the dining room, bringing their own refreshments and sitting socially distanced, but this only ran for four Thursdays before the second National lockdown came in.

We look forward to restarting when it is safe to do so.

Wednesday Lunch

Report by Jean Gregory

During 2020 the team has hosted only two of our planned lunches – January and February. Katherine Stanley has hung up her apron after many years of wonderful cooking – thank you Katherine! We were delighted to recruit Helen Bloxham to the team, and in April we were shocked and saddened to hear that our helper Janet had died very suddenly.

We anticipate restarting the monthly lunches when we can, and look forward to welcoming everyone to a sociable lunchtime again. We have missed seeing you all!

Cheltenham Street Pastors

Report by Susan Cole

Lead Person: Nigel Bennett

Aim: Witness of active Christians on town streets interacting and supporting, if necessary, those participating in night-time economy 10pm – 4am Fridays and Saturdays. Support by teams of Prayer Pastors.

2020: Much reduced activity by teams due to closure of venues. Often 2-hour patrols only. Some nights none.

2021: Hopes and prayers to return to normal service and to recruit more volunteers.

Thanks to all involved with planning, circulating reports and COVID-19 information.

PASTORAL CARE MINISTRY

Report by Leaders Lorraine Gasside, Rachel Jacques, Louise Middleton. (Deacon support/mentor Mary Michael)

During 2020 our main focus has been to keep contact with as many of the church family as possible within the restrictions imposed at the time. Visits have been made when it safe and practical help offered when necessary and safe.

Many of the church family have been happy to help and have willingly agreed to keep in touch with a few people each for which we have been grateful.

Rachel has been very involved with the COVID-19 safety group ensuring we can meet safely in the building to Worship. We thank her for her dedication and hard work on this task.

Louise has been working from home but has still managed lots of visiting and some shopping for church friends and again we thank her for that.

Lorraine has continued to send out the prayer message each week to encourage us all to uphold each other through these difficult times.

As a Team we would like to thank everyone for their support, encourage you to keep it up please.

Planning for 2021 will be to continue as we are and, in time, to resume face to face visiting when it is safe to do so and with the people that are able to help. We would always welcome offers of help from new visitors.

Please keep our work in your prayers. God bless.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MINISTRY

Report by Leader Andrea Lacey

Aim of ministry: To help children share Christian Friendship, explore Christian faith and enter into Christian Mission as a full part of the Church family. To help the Church to be fully supportive of children, as a child friendly Church, with Christ at the centre and open to all. Build on and develop children's work, build on relationships with other appropriate local links, such as uniformed organisations.

Report of activity for 2020

The year started off so well. Then, COVID-19 hit and we were all thrown into uncertainty of how to continue.

The family film afternoons were deemed impossible due to the numbers of people involved and the March film was the first casualty of that. It has not been possible to rejuvenate this outreach over the course of the year which ultimately impacts on the number of families I make contact with. Family films were a way of maintaining contact with families from toddler group, but also wider than that, providing outreach to the local community as well. They provided a good opportunity to make conversation with families before or after the film, which is not always possible at other times. I feel this is a great loss of outreach.

In an exhausting and ever-changing response to restrictions, we adapted services to suit.

ExploreTogether: ExploreTogether (SU initiative) is all-age and allows for differences in styles of learning and worship. We had already planned an ExploreTogether service for Passion Sunday on 29th March, and we were able to adapt this to run online.

We then ran another ExploreTogether in July, which focused on Matthew's version of Jesus walking on water (Matt 14, 22-33). Peter stepping out of the boat in an act of faith which faltered when he took his eyes off Jesus. At this stage of the year, this was an important point of focus as a congregation.

Then, on 22nd November, we held another recorded ExploreTogether service. The focus was on journeys and included some information from the Congregational Federation on the journey of the Mayflower 400 years ago. Our service also visited other journeys in the Bible. We found ourselves thinking about the journey that 2020 has been with the end still not in sight. So, the ExploreTogether service led us to focus on our own journeys and where we saw God on those journeys.

Sunday worship: Our first online service was 22nd March taking place on Mothering Sunday. Not knowing how long this period would continue for, I put together, and delivered packs to our families which contained some craft materials to support the Sunday activities we had planned.

We quickly had to adapt to recording videos from home for the Sunday services. I aimed to engage children with a hands-on activity where possible. These activities needed to be practical and inclusive, allowing children to be occupied

during the service whilst parents listened in. We appreciated that not everyone has access to a printer for activity sheets, and crafts need to use everyday household materials. The all-age address was supported by a subscription to Roots which provided worksheets and other material. Our budgerigar Hugo became quite popular during recordings

At the start of September, children started to return to school and it was exciting to be able to start to gather again in person. We continued to include an all-age focus in the service. Sadly, even though we could meet in church, activities in the hall were postponed for children to gather together. The Department of Education then ruled that junior church would fall into an 'out of school setting' classification, and follow similar rules as schools.

At the end of October, we were able to invite children and their families to join us in church. We shared in the communion service using the big screen as it was livestreamed.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, not all of the usual Junior Church helpers were able or comfortable to come to church on Sundays. When we were able to meet, I provided the all-age address and then took children to the hall for further activities. By November, restrictions were back in place and we were not able to meet, but then, reflecting the rollercoaster that 2020 was, worship services were able to run. Despite this, families felt more comfortable to stay at home.

With many of the outreach activities struggling to continue within COVID-19 restrictions, and the administrator being furloughed, I was asked to take on some of the necessary administration responsibilities required to support the functioning of the church. This became a roughly 15:5 hour split for my work and admin. I was grateful to Highbury for the value placed on the work I do, particularly at this time. In January 2021, reflecting reduced income to the church, my hours were reduced from 20 hours to 13 hours per week.

In view of this, some of the activities I coordinate are being combined to make the best use of my time. Previously my work only covered the second **Nativity Service**: This was a recorded service again, but included members of the congregation of all ages taking part. A script was used which gave families the opportunity to take a page and present it in their own way. The script sewed together and this was an amazing collaboration. Particularly inspiring was a Lego stop frame animation produced by one family.

By January we were again under high restriction (Tier 4), and it was decided not appropriate to meet for Junior Church.

Easter: Holy Week was approached with a Messy Church style of daily reflection, with a song and an activity for each day. This was an adaptation of the Messy Easter session we had planned. It reflected Matthew's gospel with a focus on how we live our lives, being fair and honest, actions speaking louder than words and how we share gifts and generosity. As a means of keeping connected with members of the congregation, I contributed to daily reflection and prayers when Jason was on leave. It was a pleasure, but somewhat daunting to step into this role. It felt like a valuable means of supporting the Highbury Congregation in much the same way as we did during the interregnum.

There was a realisation at this stage of the year that whilst screens and technology created a bridge to keep us going, they are a poor substitute for seeing people in the flesh. As a congregation, we became aware of the need to learn about ourselves and understand what aspects of our life requires prayer.

Messy Church: Messy Church continued for the duration of the lockdown period, with the first being on 24th March. We rapidly came to terms with appearing on YouTube and Jason and myself recorded the celebration and introduction with a handful of activities easy to do with material at home.

We continued to produce a Messy Church service each month (apart from August), where people could join in at a time to suit themselves. There was then the opportunity to join together on Zoom in place of our usual meeting time. Half of our families joined us on Zoom, and the remainder decided their children were easily distracted and confused by not seeing people in person. We were very pleased by the engagement received.

Planning meetings were carried out using Zoom. Although BRF supplied ideas for Messy Church at home, our Bible study of the verse often leads to a slightly different thread.

In September, we were in a position of being able to meet in church, albeit under restrictions. We continued to present the service and craft activities on YouTube and we enjoyed a Messy Church bring-your-own picnic in the hall. This was a joyful occasion and all of the families really appreciated the opportunity to come back into church after such a long time; there was a real sense of congregation.

With so much to consider in October, together with the school break, we postponed the planned Messy Church. We planned to meet instead on Tuesday 3rd November and roll November's over a week to take place on 1st December with a Christmassy theme. Again, restrictions changed and the November meet up was cancelled and instead held over Zoom.

For December we felt the strong urge to take Messy Church outside to embrace the missed Christingle as well. This took the theme of sharing the light and we were able to meet in the car park, socially distant and light home-made jam jar lanterns from a single source.

Baby and toddler group: We were sad to have to close with immediate effect in March as lockdown was announced. I kept in touch with many of the families during this time. Their desperation to be able to meet back up lead us to having a Zoom call with a small number. This was coupled with telephone calls from social services asking if our group was running again, for the support it provides and for new mums as well.

With this in mind I was keen to get the group started again. Plans were drawn up to meet under COVID-19 secure procedures and we started to meet a maximum number of 6 families on Tuesday mornings. According to guidance given, it was clear that baby and toddler groups were able to continue during lockdown as they were classified as support group for parents. It was a pleasure to be able to offer this to a small number, as many groups decided not to run at all.

We expanded into a second group based on demand, but still adhering to COVID-19-safe rules.

Following the lockdown announcement in January, the group meet-up decided for itself, and in the spirit of national lockdown, we decided not to meet at this time. Instead, we maintain contact and Zoom meet once a week, sharing a song and story with the children. It also provides an opportunity for meeting both groups together and catching up. A large part of this group is about building conversation and connections.

Light Party: In previous years we have acknowledged Halloween (31st October), with a Light Party. I held a Scripture Union trail around the church, in a similar style to the Experience Easter Outside, celebrating Light and Hope. The weather took a turn for the worse so I am unsure how this was received.

Nativity Trail: As it was hard to meet up for Christmas events at church, Mary and I (but mainly Mary) set out a Nativity Journey in the area round church to help to make connections – with each other, with the story and above all with the amazing love of God. Thank you to Mary B for the hard work involved organising this and the many people who contributed to the window displays.

Planned activities for 2021 *Changing role*

Sunday of the month for Sunday Special, with remaining Sundays being carried by Angela, Elaine and Laura. Moving on, the all-age part of the Sunday services will involve more members of the Junior Church volunteers. Instead of Sunday Special we are trialling the combination of Messy Church with our Sunday and Tuesday congregations.

January 2021 was the first time we have brought Messy Church to our Sunday Service and this will become a regular format for the 4th Sunday of the month. Messy Church is an all-age expression of church. Everything about our lives feels messy at the moment, so what better way than to share than with a Messy Church service!

I have been in awe of Highbury Church in delivering weekly services online and we should applaud ourselves in what we have achieved. One of my early reflections considered this period to be one of a gift of time with our families, although this has not been completely the case when grandparents have been shielding.

I hope that my endeavours have kept families connected with Highbury and engaged with church life and teaching/learning in the absence of being able to meet in person. I am grateful to Jason for his Ministry, guidance and support for my work during this period. Thank you to Mary B as my line manager and her commitment to our combined works. Thank you to the regular Messy Church team (Jean and Roger, Mary, Cynthia and Marguerite) and for those who help as required! Thank you also to the Junior Church Team, Angela, Laura and Elaine and for everyone who adds in their time and skills for ExploreTogether.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Report by Leader Mary Buchanan

Aim of ministry: To provide a safe space for teenagers and young adults to develop potential and explore Christian faith.

Activity in 2020: The main activity within this area of ministry is HyTec. With themes of 'Connections' and 'Creation', the highlights of this year of two 'halves' (before March/after March) are, in no particular order:

- **Connecting** with each other at a sleepover and climbing walls (at Far Peak, by Northleach)
- **Connecting** with the world through food (including Palestinian falafels, Canadian pancakes (when Sweep beat Chris in the final eat-off), fish and chips, Swedish meatballs)
- Celebrating HyTec's **creativity** with a bake-off and the summer lockdown challenge

- **Connecting** with **creation** and former HyTec-er Emma Rendle who came to talk about eXXpedition and plastic in the oceans
- **Connecting** with others for justice through supporting Black Lives Matter
- **Connecting creatively** to take HyTec on line; keeping **connected** even across 100s of miles
- **Connecting** with **creation** through making volcanoes, exploring space, finding out weird things about animals; through walks on Cleeve Hill and Lineover Woods
- **Connecting** with others in Highbury through making cards and participating in services (without having to get up for 10.3012)
- **Connecting** with each other and God in a magical glowstick prayer time

For all its hardships and tears, this has been a rich year in discovering more about each other, our world and our God. Planned activities for 2021: Planning in these times is hard – but our theme for the winter term is 'Resilience'. Mutual support and encouragement in uncertain times is crucial. We will continue to meet on line with safe gatherings in person when we can.

Thanks to

- HyTec Leaders and assistants: Matt Winton, Ruth Wyatt, Jason Boyd, Grace Blazey, Naomi Boyd, Jeremy Boyd, Eilidh MacLeod
- Everyone who has prayed for us and encouraged us
- Parents who have helped out and supported us
- All the young people themselves who are the very salt of the earth

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Charities 2020

Report by Nephesha Mary Michael

You really don't need me to tell you that we weren't gathering together during 2020! Not doing so meant that we couldn't take up collections for our monthly charities. This is something that Highbury has been doing since long before I came into membership and reporting on the chosen monthly charity was my first regular rôle as a member. My first interview was with Listening Post and I trotted along with my notebook and pen like a proper cub reporter. How times have changed!

It has always been a privilege to represent Highbury to the charities we have supported. Time and again people have been touched by our desire to represent Christ in our communities and have valued our prayer support as well as our financial gifts. Whilst our usual actives have been suspended we have made use of one of our new members to give some of our charities a degree of publicity and support. Richard Atkins has been glad to invite some of "our" charities onto his Sunday morning radio programme. Where possible he has tied this in with the month when Highbury would have supported them.

Some months ago, I asked if we needed to rethink our giving. As I asked then, Highbury is needing to raise money for our roof repairs so should we be focusing our giving on raising the funds we need? This is something that I hope that we will be able to decide at our Church Meeting. There will be many opinions to consider so I ask that you give it prayerful consideration in advance of our meeting.

Christian Aid 2020

Report by Laura MacLeod

Highbury Congregational Church supports the Cheltenham Christian Aid group to raise awareness and funds for the work of Christian Aid worldwide. Christian Aid is a global movement of people, churches and local organisations. We stand together for dignity, equality and justice to enable people to live a full life free from poverty. To find out more

visit <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/about-us> and also <https://www.cheltenhamca.com>

Sadly in 2020 the usual fundraising events such as door to door collection, soup lunches, Autumn Fayre and Carol singing could not take place because of COVID restrictions.

In 2021 we are planning an organised a sponsored walk with Christian Aid Cheltenham. More plans to follow once we are out of lockdown. The hope is that some other regular fundraising events will happen this year but we will just have to wait until it is safe to do so.

Many thanks to Louise and Marguerite who support the Christian Aid Cheltenham committee and to Highbury congregation and friends who continue to donate to Christian Aid during these difficult times.

Safeguarding Report

Report by Nephsha Mary Michael

The main body of Highbury's Safeguarding policy remains as it was agreed at the AGM in March 2020. Since the COVID-19 restrictions have curtailed much of the face-to-face contact with children and young people there has been a greater reliance on social media platforms. In the light of this we have a draft supplement drawn up relating to the use of social media and developing the existing section of our policy. This will be submitted for approval at the AGM. In the meantime, I am confident that all aspects of best practice are being followed.

I am concerned that the avoidance of face-to-face contact means that I have not been able to renew DBS checks. I will address this as soon as it is safe to do so.

Maintenance Report

Report by John Pickles

Urgent reactive maintenance has been required this last year to replace faulty boilers and make the hall roof watertight; further work being necessary.

A big thankyou goes to David Roberts, who has repaired the Manse fence and replaced the gates.

In 2021, much work will be necessary to catch up on repairs which have been delayed by the pandemic. Among the items needing attention are the porch at the Manse, and refurbishment of the hall including a lintel repair. We are going to be busy in 2021; there is always something needing attention. If you would like to help when it is safe again, please let me know.

Highbury News

Report by Susan Cole

Aim: Dissemination of news and reports to Church and other interested parties. Also, to inform, encourage, and notify.

2020: Eleven magazines published. Distributed to most recipients by email. Few printed copies delivered by hand or mail.

2021: Continue to produce monthly.

Thanks to contributors, to Andrea for printing and to those willing to deliver particularly through lockdown periods.

Community use of Highbury Rooms

Report by Peter Harrison, Room Booking Secretary

Due to COVID-19, room bookings in 2020 slumped to their lowest level for many years.

For the first three months things were normal but from April onwards all bookings, apart from Toddlers and Support groups (Narcotics and Gamblers Anonymous), were brought to a halt. However, because of room number restrictions, even Narcotics Anonymous had to cancel their meetings.

After the first lockdown the Upholstery Class were able to meet again but the second lockdown in November brought an end to their classes.

Under the current circumstances there is little more to be said and we can only hope that the situation will improve in the not-too-distant future.

Beaver Scout Colony, Cub Scout Pack, Scout Troop

No reports received.

11th Cheltenham (Highbury) Guides

Report by Tania Ashdown, Guider

2020: An unusual year for Highbury Guides, as we have gone through the ups and downs, changed plans, learnt new skills and found new ways to keep in touch.

In January we began as usual, working on badges and activities in the Guide Programme and making our plans for the year ahead including camps, sponsored swims and a trip to Disneyland Paris with Gloucester Guides.

On 2nd February, with Highbury Church, we welcomed Dr Emma Rendle (a previous Highbury Guide) to give a talk about plastic pollution on the ocean and her upcoming participation in the eXXpedition voyage to investigate this.

We also put up the displays from our 100th Birthday celebrations the previous November to share with more people.

On 21st-22nd February we joined with other guides from Battledown for a sleepover and then Brownies and Rainbows from the District to celebrate Thinking Day at the Guide Headquarters at Cowley. We all had a great time completing activities inside and outside from the Worldwide Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts Thinking Day

Challenge 2020. On 6th March the Guides took part the Women's Day of Prayer service at Highbury Church.

And then we went into lockdown...

In discussion with the other leaders, we decided that as the unit had managed to continue meeting for the previous 100 years we were not going to stop now, so on 27th March we ran our first virtual meeting via Zoom. We have continued meeting through the year and started again on 8th January 2021.

I would like to thank the Highbury Guide Leaders – Kate, Eilidh and Mrs Ashdown, who have continued to support all of our meetings, particularly Kate, who first found Zoom and has found many of the activities and ideas for us to use.

I would also like to thank all the guiding (and scouting) leaders who have organized and shared their online activities during the year which have given us some very enjoyable meetings. Our virtual meetings have also meant that some of our leaders who have moved away from Cheltenham have been able to join some of our meetings.

The number of guides joining the meetings during the year has varied but most of the guides have been able to join in some meetings and activities. Two guides have joined us from Brownies and three have made their Promise via Zoom. In our meetings we have played games, had quizzes, cooked together, tried various paper crafts (including origami), completed virtual Escape Rooms and worked on badges together.

Dr Emma Rendle returned to talk about her voyage and in November we joined guides around the country for a virtual meeting run by Norfolk Guiding Resource Centre to commemorate Remembrance Day.

Although we were not able to go camping Girlguiding Gloucestershire leaders created a Virtual Bubbs Hill Bash in June – a weekend full of online activities for everyone. Some of the Highbury Guides and Leaders took part (camping in their gardens or inside dens) and we held Zoom sessions to share what we had been doing. A similar weekend was arranged in the summer.

When restrictions were eased in the summer we were able to meet outside, and had a couple of meetings – one at Cowley playing Frisbee golf and the other (in torrential rain) at Holy Trinity School.

We were starting to plan for meeting inside again when the second lockdown started. We hope we will be able to have some face-to-face meetings again in the spring, but until then will continue our virtual meetings.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the Highbury Guide Leaders for all they have done this unusual year, and add our thanks to the guides and their families for tackling the technology and joining in our activities.

We would like to thank everyone at the church for their continuing support.

The original guide laws said "A Guide smiles and sings under all difficulties"- we may not have managed the singing on Zoom, but we have had many laughs and smiles and (as in our current laws) we have "faced challenges and learnt from experience" and will continue to do so in 2021.

We are happy to welcome any girls between the ages of 10 and 14 to Guides to join our activities this coming year.

Please get in touch if you are interested in finding out more about the unit. Contact us at 11cheltenhamguides@gmail.com

7th Cheltenham Brownies

Report by Christine Lodge (Brownie Leader)

2020 started well with the girls completing the Network stage 3 Skills builder and choosing which skills builders and unit meeting activities they would like to do next. We joined the District at Deer Park to celebrate Thinking Day with various crafts and activities both inside and out, based on a challenge badge Living Threads. After half term we had 3 new girls and worked in sixes to make a room box. We started Make a Change and Communicate Skills builders. Then came lockdown. We encouraged the girls to join in virtual events organised both nationally and by the county and suggested they may like to do Adventures at home which was available on the national website.

When we were at last able to meet in person, we held 2 meetings at Deer Park in August doing nature hunts and making/flying kites. In September we were able to meet in the playground at Holy Trinity School in 2 groups, as we were limited to 15 girls in a group. 3 girls had left us and 1 moved away but we also had 4 new girls. We managed to complete the Skills builders which had been started, did some trails in the dark and the new girls were able to make their Promise in the dark and wet. Unfortunately, out of 7 outdoor meetings, we had 4 wet ones but the girls still turned up. After half term we moved on to virtual meetings. We have done crafts, a scavenger hunt, singing and some adapted Unit Meeting activities.

2021 is going to be a new era for the Unit as both myself and Marion are 'retiring' after 46 and 23 years respectively. There have been many changes and challenges over that time but the last year has been the one of the most challenging years. The unit is going to carry on in the safe hands of June, Caroline and Ruth and I am sure the girls will have great fun and learn lots of new skills.

11th Cheltenham (Highbury) Brownies

Report by Corinne Hending

2020: We started 2020 by working on some new badges and welcoming some new Brownies to our group. We worked on different skills builders during the first term including Lead Stage 2 and Live Smart Stage 2 (Skills for my Future) and Feel Good Stage 2 (Be Well). These included lots of fun activities and games. We also managed to get a trip in to the Ski Slope in Gloucester where we went Tubing. A couple of Brownies made their promise on the Ski Slope which was a special evening.

When the world stopped and went into lockdown, we were all disappointed to have to stop coming to Brownies. Between March and August we did some of the Girlguiding's Adventures at Home and some of us completed some interest badges.

In September we started our Virtual meetings and we have been playing lots of fun games and have been enjoying different types of experiences online. We had a 'meet my pet' evening and we also had an evening based on 'What I am Thankful for'.

It has been a very different year for us but we have enjoyed still being able to spend time together and keep our guiding adventures going!

Planned Activities for 2021: We are starting 2021 as we ended 2020 with our online meetings. We are hoping that we will be able to meet again face to face soon when it is safe for us to do so. We are looking at how we can adapt activities that we would normally do at Brownies so we can still access and enjoy them at home. We look forward to being back in the Hall soon and having lots more fun!

We would like to thank everyone involved in the running and upkeep of the Church and Hall. We look forward to seeing you all again soon.

