

Hastings Unitarian Church CIO

Trustees' Annual Report

For the period from 1st October 2019 to 30th September 2020

Reference and Administration Detail

Charity Name:- Hastings Unitarian Church Charitable Incorporated Organization

Registered charity number:- 1166588

Charity's address:- Hastings Unitarian Church
South Terrace
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 1SA

Names of Charity's Trustees

1. Norman Williamson Chairman
2. Daniel Costley
3. Alan Larcombe
4. Joanna Lemon
5. Peter Sanders
6. Ida Ward
7. Frances Williamson
8. Safar Wisby

The Trustees were appointed at the annual general meeting

Names and addresses of advisers

1. The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches,
Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London, WC2R 3HY
2. London District and South Eastern Provincial Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London, WC2R 3HY.

Structure, Governance and Management

Description of the Charity's Trusts.

Governing Document: Constitution. (Revised addition adopted 3rd June 2018)

The Charity is constituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

Trustees are appointed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for a term of office of three years. By staggering the dates of office, three trustees will resign each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Following the formation of the CIO in April 2016 the first financial year was extended from April 2016 to September 2017 to fit with the Church's normal financial year of 1st October to 30th September. The first AGM was then held in the following June (2018), however the following two years it was moved to March and this was the intended Month for all further AGMs. Because of the CoViD 19 lockdown we have been forced to extend this year's AGM to May 2021 but we shall return to March next year. Because of the delay from the end of the financial year in September 2020 to the AGM in May 2021 some of the reports will cover a period from October 2019 to April 2021.

Objectives and Activities

The object of the CIO is the promotion of religion in accordance with the principles of the General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Summary of the main activities for the public benefit.

The Unitarian Church offers a place to meet and worship in an atmosphere of freedom. Our Unitarian Movement has a long and proud history dating back to the mid sixteenth century, however, there are no dogmas or creeds to adhere to and freedom of thought is encouraged with complete tolerance and respect to other religions. Membership is free and open to all who wish to join. Services are held every Sunday morning and subsidiary meetings may be held during the week for meditation, prayer and discussions. There are other groups such as circle dancing, poetry and knitting. It may also be used for weddings (including same sex), funerals and child naming. Other community groups and societies also hire the property for their meetings.

Except for the Lay Pastor, all trustees and officers of the Church are volunteers and receive no remuneration except for legitimate expenses.

Summary of Main Achievements of the Charity during the year.

In October 2019 the Church was showing signs of moving forward with a gradual increase in attendance and introduction of new features. Things looked bright as we moved towards Christmas and some members were busy as members of local choirs rehearsing and singing Christmas music. Just before Christmas several members of the choirs became very ill and this spread amongst the congregation into the early New Year. This resulted in a marked reduction of attendance to services and events over the Festive Season. The illness was labelled as a “Flu” like illness even though most had been given the Influenza vaccine and the symptoms were not typical. For some it was a slow recovery with considerable fatigue, and problems with lungs and muscles. A possible cause of the illness, although we have no positive proof, became clearer in February 2020 with the recognition of cases infected with Sars CoVi-2 virus and the development of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Things gradually returned to normal in the early New Year and we prepared for our annual general meeting which was held as scheduled on 1st March 2020, however we had some concerns with the increasing number of cases of Covid-19 in the local community and a decision was taken to suspend our Services. By the end of March an official lockdown was imposed and we prepared for the future, that at this stage seemed very unsure, especially as Stephen Crowther our Lay Pastor was also due to retire in April, just after Easter. We had started looking for a replacement Pastor but during a lockdown it was not possible to continue at that stage.

Following our closure of the Church in March Stephen suggested we open up on Sunday, just for individuals to enter for private prayer but this was abandoned after one week because of the need to sanitise the Church before and after opening and we were still not sure about the risk of infection. Two weeks later a full lockdown was imposed which meant all Churches closed. To keep the congregation together, Stephen decided to send out, by email or post, a written service every week, and then we would read this at home on Sunday morning at 11am. For those fortunate enough to be in a so-called bubble, they could share out the reading and some of us joined with others on the phone. Each week we would take it in turns to lead and decide who would read which part of the service, and this made us feel much more involved. As we proceeded, we added recorded music at the beginning and the end of the service. Then we found recordings of some hymns and we selected those we thought were appropriate for each service. For many of us and especially those who were shielding this became the highlight of our week and although we missed the fellowship of the congregation it had the advantage of not needing to dress up and travel in the wind

and rain.

As we moved closer to Easter the prospect of a period without a lay pastor was causing the trustees and Church committee some concern, however Stephen understood our worries and he agreed, without too much arm twisting to stay on until the pandemic eased and we were able to work towards finding a replacement. During this extended period Stephen continued to send out his weekly services. Our congregation were of an age group where much of the internet and its uses were a complete mystery, but we found ourselves suddenly faced with a new array of terms such as Zoom, Teams, Webinars, Streaming, YouTube and many others, and it became obvious that we had to explore these areas if we were to progress in the future.

During the Summer of 2020 the infection rate decreased and we were able to move forward with the selection of a new part-time Lay Pastor, and in September Stephen retired. In October 2020 the start of the next financial year we were able to appoint, Jennifer Sanders as our new Lay Pastor and as cases of Covid-19 had fallen we were able to reopen the Church for our Sunday services and this allowed Jennifer to get to know the Church. November showed a steady increase in the number of Covid-19 cases, followed by a rapid acceleration towards the end of the month as the new variant spread from Kent into Sussex. We decided to close the Church and it has remained closed up to May 2021. During this period we have held services every Sunday using Zoom. Other Zoom meetings such as "Heart and Soul" and committee meetings have also taken place. We have joined other groups virtually using Zoom or Microsoft teams including the local inter-faith society, the Festival for Unitarians South East (FUSE) and the General Assembly for Unitarians and Free Christian Churches annual general meeting.

During this period of closure we have maintained close contact with our congregation either by phone, email or Zoom and we have maintained our numbers. Unfortunately we did lose our organist, Tom McLelland-Young to Covid. Tom was an eminent musician, both as a performer and a composer and we shall miss him deeply. He now leaves a large void to be filled when we again open the Church. Having the Church closed for a long period does present some problems. We have to maintain some heating to protect the fabric of the building and also for our organ which Tom had played so beautifully. There are of course essential expenses which still have to be paid and yet our income has fallen as we are not earning from letting out the Church and donations are smaller. However, I think we are coming out of the pandemic in reasonable shape and we look forward to a brighter future.

Norman Williamson, Chairman of Trustees, April 2021

Lay Pastors Report:- Hastings October 2020-April 2021

This last year has seen so many challenges and changes with the Covid Pandemic not least at Hastings. It has been a year like no other and in time I'm sure we will be able to look back, digest and really take stock of the effects of a year of lockdowns.

As I write this report I can hardly believe 6 months have gone past since I walked through the doors of Hastings Unitarian Church as your Lay Leader. Stephen's hard work has brought stability and consistency to Hastings and for that I feel very grateful.

The warm welcome you gave me back in October has stayed with me during these months of isolation and I would also like to express my thanks for your support and help in those early weeks of getting to know the church and its layout. It's never easy making the transition from one leader to another, made all the more tricky with the pandemic and I have been greatly reassured by your warmth and thanks and willingness to try new things.

The church was only open a few weeks over September and October before rising infection rates in Hastings led us to take the step to close our doors and protect our congregation.

Services moved online in November. We have made huge efforts to ensure that all that wish to join, whether that be via phone link, care home internet access, or zoom have been able. A few of our members prefer to read the service at home and a weekly email or postings have ensured, for the most part, this has happened. Zoom is not ideal, it has its good and bad points and yet it has enabled us to see each other, worship together and for some has created a different type of intimacy and sharing that may not have happened in the church.

Our task now is to set out a gentle and considered return to live services that we can sustain, that can be inclusive and continue to embrace technology. It is as I see it, a new chapter in the life of Hastings Congregation. Nothing stays the same, with nearly a year away from the church and the original desire to have everything back as it was, can now be an opportunity to review, pause and look at what works well and what not so well. But above all it is a time to reconnect, to be with each other again, to pray together, to be still together, to be open to the new and mourn the old.

Heart and Soul meetings also started online on the last Tuesday of the month in December and continue with the wonderful support of Safar. Thank you Safar it is a joy to work with you. Heart and soul will continue and at some point return to a live gathering or combined with online.

One of the advantages of online services is the ability to welcome service leaders from further afield, for example:- Jef Jones, Duncan Voice, Ashley Hills, Susie Courthauld, Stephanie Bishby, as well as our members, Safar, Alan, Peter and myself. Joining forces on occasion with Brighton and Ditchling has brought that connection with other congregations that live services don't. We will be working with the Unitarian Digital Resources network to explore further ways to provide hybrid services.

As a congregation we have kept mainly well from Covid but were all saddened at the recent death of Tom McLelland-Young, a member for many years who composed and played organ music regularly at the Hastings services. His recent funeral reminded me of what an incredible tenacious and talented man he was and there will be an empty space at the organ where Tom once was. A memorial service will be planned for him later in the year.

Behind the scenes, well mainly at home in front of the computer! There has been progress. I am delighted to report that the LDPA will be funding a new website for Hastings. It will be along the same lines as the <https://www.ldpaunitarians.org>

Simple and easy to navigate and one that we can also put our own stamp on. This, I see as an exciting and positive move forward. This last year has seen an increase in people searching for spiritual nourishment and using online sources as a way of connection. With our time left attending online services it is hoped we can record some of these to use on our website when it goes live.

Four of us have been attending a bi-weekly course run online by Rev Andy Pakula, of New Unity, and Rory Castle Jones, Unitarian student minister, entitled 'Leading Change in the Congregation.' It has been a lively learning space and given us food for thought especially at this time. Peter, Safar, Alan and myself have been meeting online in between each session which has brought an opportunity to discuss ideas, think and laugh together. My hope is that we share some of this with you in a group setting as we return to church and look at how we are as a congregation and how we want to be going forward.

I have enjoyed getting to know you all a little more during these past seven months and look forward to planning some credo walks with you now that we can mix again. Inclusion is an important part of my ministry and there will be further regular opportunities for Congregational members to share at services.

But for now I want to say thank you to you all for your kindness and welcome, support, laughter and sharing. My commitment to lead and serve you to the best of my ability in the light of spirit, grows with each passing day.

Blessings

Jennifer Sanders - Lay Pastor, The Hastings Congregation
April 2021

Report of the Chairman of the Congregation

Hopefully, we will soon come out of the lockdown and get back to our regular Sunday services. How I've missed you all. Zoom has been a useful substitute, and I guess has moved the church on in using technology, but I'm sure that we are all looking forward to our face-to-face meetings again.

Sadly, we will have to do without the beautiful organ playing of Tom who passed away earlier this year.

Our Chair of Trustees, Norman, is retiring from the post, and the church owes an enormous debt of gratitude to him for setting up our trustees and steering us in the right direction.

Thanks to all our serving officers for their work throughout the year and thank you all for your help and assistance to me during this difficult year.

Best wishes to you all Alan Larcombe. 2nd May 2021

HASTINGS UNITARIAN CHURCH CIO A.G.M. 2ND MAY 2021
LETTINGS REPORT FROM FRANCES WILLIAMSON.

In my last report my opening line stated that 'It had been an eventful year', well this year has been completely unprecedented and totally unforeseen for most of us, although there are doubtless many eminent scientists around the world who may beg to differ. This report will differ as well in many respects compared to previous ones owing to the complete lack of activity in the church, none of our previous clients, either regular or who have joined us more recently have been able to attend during the periods of 'lockdown'.

I refer first to our long established groups whose hirings were as follows:

Circle Dancers who met Mondays and Thursdays mornings.

The Class Choir who met every Wednesday evening.

Townswomen's Guild who met every fourth Friday.

Post Office Pensioners who met on the third Thursday (on alternate months).

We were also able to assist several less regular groups and one off bookings.

The Samaritans, Music in Churches, The U3A (Universe of the third age),

The Heart of Hastings (i.e. social housing) and the local Buddhists.

And our own Heart and Soul met in the evening on the last Thursday of the month, and we also held workshops on Saturday afternoons.

The Reiki sessions held monthly on Thursday afternoons were also well received.

Our more recent clients from 2019 till March 2020 were namely :

Narcotics Anonymous who joined us in June 2019 and met every Saturday morning.

The Hastings and Rother Intergroup with Addiction who had several Tuesday evening meetings throughout the year.

The Interfaith Forum for Hastings and Rother have held several meetings on Tuesday evenings with us, and the Unitarian Church subsequently joined their organisation in 2019. They met for their AGM in November 2019 and in January 2020.

And finally The International Society of Krishna Consciousness first joined us in February 2019, and met in the evening on the first and third Thursday in the month.

In accordance with Government guidelines all hirings of the church had ceased by April 2020. However thanks to the technology of Zoom several meetings have continued. Along with Sunday worship with the arrangement for a limited personal attendance. Heart and Soul were also able to continue monthly via Zoom on Tuesday afternoons.

The Interfaith Forum has also met online with several very interesting speakers and topics, the computer and the shared screen have been a useful alternative to having a speaker in person using slides projected onto a large screen in our church, and although that doesn't provide any lettings income for the church, there is no need put out up to fifty chairs and no refreshments or facilities are required.

On a more positive note as we emerge into what we hope will be some form of normality a number of groups have already announced their wish to return to our church.

The Townswomen's Guild plan to return on the 24th of June 2021. They have requested that tables and chairs are put out for them and they will let us know about the numbers and layout nearer the time.

Narcotics Anonymous also contacted me expressing their wish to return soon. I did ask them to confirm that they have their own designated cleaner who will sanitize where necessary, as yet I haven't heard back from them about that or the exact date they wish to return.

The Interfaith Forum will also return and they have two dates booked with us - Tuesday 13th of July and Tuesday 9th of November.

And finally The International Society Of Krishna Consciousness (or Iskcon for short) will return in July and they will meet on the 2nd & 4th Thursday in the month.

Depending on how things develop in the future it is hoped that we can welcome other groups back such as The Class Choir, The Circle Dancers, and even possibly Reiki sessions, and groups like the Samaritans may be needed more than ever.

On a more somber note, having sadly lost our organist Tom who succumbed to CoVID no one has played the organ in the church since, however we hoped that will also change, as among others our previous organist Stephen Page has expressed an interest in playing our organ again if only to help maintain it.

Although we may not be through the tunnel yet, let us all hope and pray that we will finally see the light at the end of it.

This ends the lettings report.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signatures:	<u>N. Williamson</u>	<u>Mrs F M Williamson</u>
Full name:	<u>NORMAN WILLIAMSON</u>	<u>MRS FRANCES M WILLIAMSON</u>
Position held:	<u>Chair of Trustees</u>	<u>Trustee</u>
Date:	<u>2nd May 2021</u>	<u>2nd May 2021</u>



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Hastings Unitarian Church CIO

On accounts for the year
ended

30th September 2020

Charity no
(if any)

1166588

Set out on pages

1 - 2

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended

Responsibilities and
basis of report

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

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

[The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of [insert name of applicable listed body]]. *Delete [] if not applicable.*

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

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

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

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

John Stent

Date:

04/05/21

Name:

JOHN STENT

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body

—

(If any):

—

Address:

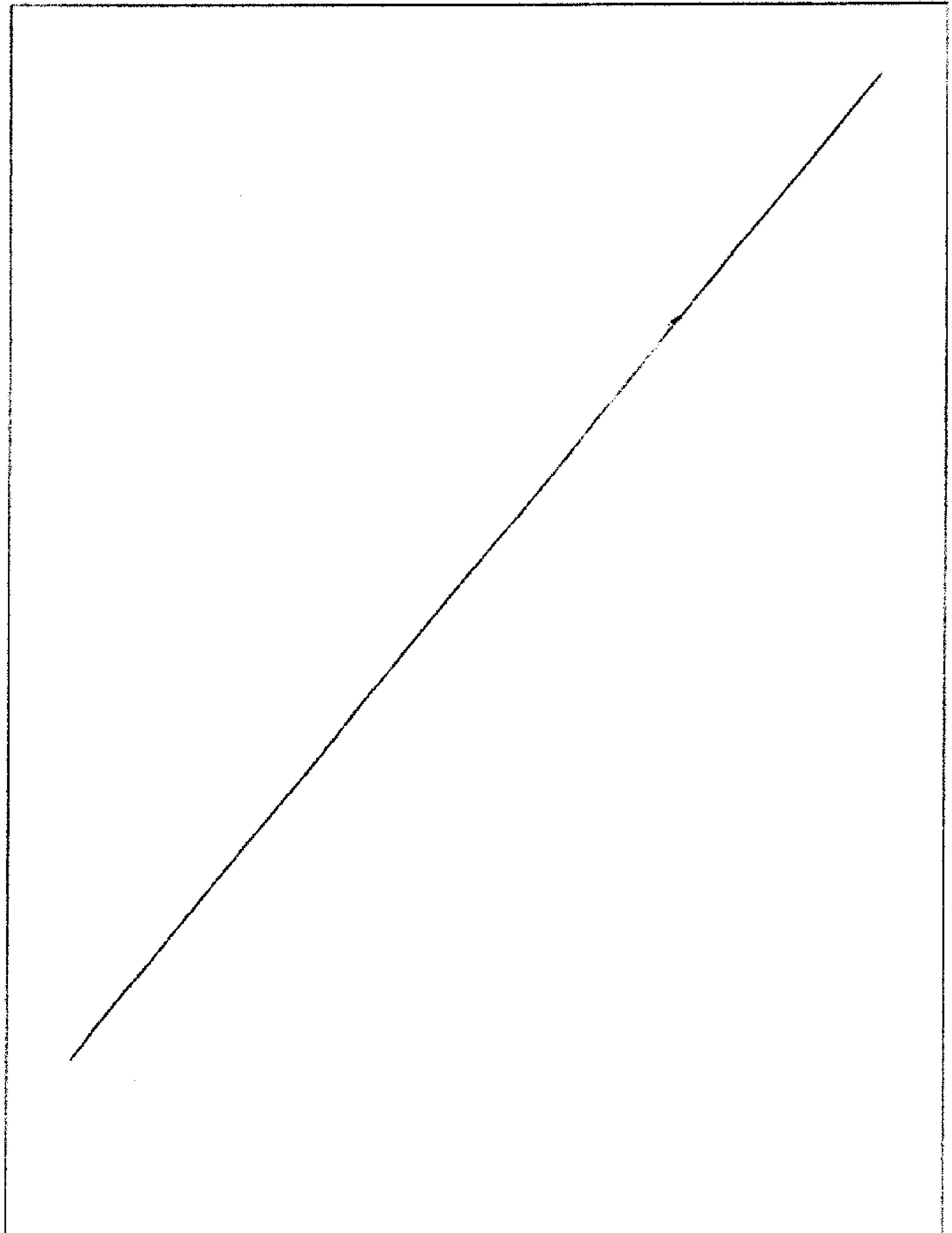
29 MONTSERRAT, WEST PARADE,
BEXHILL-ON-SEA
EAST SUSSEX, TN21 9AS

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.



Hastings Unitarian Church CIO
Receipts and Payments Account
for the year ended 30th September 2020

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	2,019
	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts					
Collections	6,065			6,065	4,552
Gift Aid	394			394	3,130
Grants and other	20,698			20,698	3,817
Use of Premises - Lettings	2,551			2,551	4,666
Donations at events	4			4	1,109
Investment Interest - Unit Trusts	4,207			4,207	4,259
Bank Interest	-			-	-
Building Fund	85			85	181
Legacy: Ann Holden	-			-	22,000
Coffee donations for local charities	191			191	375
Insurance claim	-			-	-
Books and magazines	-			-	-
Reserves	-			-	-
Sub total (gross income)	34,195	-	-	34,195	44,089
Asset and Investment Sales:					
Unit Trusts	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total Receipts	34,195	-	-	34,195	44,089
Payments					
Lay Pastor and other Pulpit Fees	6,960			6,960	8,472
Organist's fees and Organ Repairs	1,005			1,005	1,875
Caretaking and cleaning	1,615			1,615	2,906
Covid protection	94			94	-
Insurances	1,093			1,093	1,092
Lighting - Heating - Water	2,293			2,293	2,509
Repairs and Renewals	2,202			2,202	3,214
Audio Equipment				-	-
Circle Dancing organiser's fee	260			260	270
Postage, Stationery and Refreshments				-	112
Magazines and Newsletters	70			70	105
Legal Fees				-	-
Accountancy fees - Book Keeping	90			90	90
Bank safe custody	45			45	-
Architecture fees				-	-
General Assembly Quota	420			420	350
Donation to Chatham Unitarian Church	50			50	-
Petty Cash imprest				-	160
Coffee donations for local charities				-	592
Subscriptions	120			120	240

Music licences	161			161	-
Misc Purchases	175			175	708
History Book	432			432	-
LDPA refund re Northiam Church	1399			1,399	-
Sub-total payments	18,484	-	-	18,484	22,693
Asset and Investment Purchases:					
Unit Trusts	40,000	22,000	-	62,000	-
Total payments	58,484	22,000	-	80,484	22,693
Net of receipts/(payments)	-24,289	-22,000	0	-46,289	21,396
Cash funds last period end	57,129	0	0	57,129	35,733
Cash funds this year end	32,840	-22,000	0	10,840	57,129

Hastings Unitarian Church CIO
Assets and Liabilities as at 30th September 2020

	<u>Unrestricted Funds</u>	<u>Restricted Funds</u>	<u>Endowment Funds</u>	<u>2020 Total</u>
Cash funds:				
Bank Current account	10,840		-	10,840
Cash in Hand	-	-	-	-
Total cash funds	<u>10,840</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,840</u>
Investment assets:				
Unit Trusts	102,315	16,743		119,058
Assets retained for the charity's own use:				
Church building	845,488	-	-	845,488
Pipe organ	319,216	-	-	319,216
	<u>1,267,019</u>	<u>16,743</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,283,762</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	1,277,859	16,743	-	1,294,602

Notes:

Organ and Church building are shown at insurance valuation.

Approved by the Trustees on the 2nd May 2021 and signed on their behalf by

N. Williamson

Chair and Trustee

M. J. Williamson

Trustee