

Trust report for 2024

Prepared on behalf of the trustees by M Emlyn Humphries, administrator.

AGM 27th April 2025 report for year ending December 2024.

During 2024 we saw our Sunday morning meeting shrink so that there are most times only 2 or 3 gathering and some Sundays there can be no meeting. The quiet meeting continues on Wednesdays and is often better attended.

In May the Christian School (Takeley) closed. Very quickly in July a new tenant was found, and through due process the handbook changed to allow the chapel to be hired out. Income was lost because of the school closure and additional responsibilities fell, to the Church.

We have worked to ensure the administration of the trust is efficient. A lot of work was necessary to establish the Church as the landlord with the utility companies as the school as guests had taken on these expenses and so was not viewed as tenants but owners. As a church we determined to offer grants to staff where there was hardship and join with the school in enabling pupils to complete their GCSEs. This amounted to more than £2000 which has not been recovered through gifts as expected.

The new tenants did not start trading immediately and the Church supported them with a reduced rent during 2024. A lease was signed in October. From May to October the church relied on giving and some income from hiring. Sufficient rent was collected to cover costs.

Costs have included utilities for the Chapel, ground maintenance and repairs to fencing as well as buying heaters and consumables. Hiring of the Chapel by the Havers Community Church and regular giving has covered the costs of utilities in the chapel but not the rest.

The only events that have happened were two meetings of Bishops Stortford Vineyard and one of the Bulgarian Fellowship. The youth meetings that were happening on a Saturday for the Bulgarian church stopped.

The gardens continued to be a green space for the village and limited meetings happened for the Gardening group. A polytunnel was erected on the site but did not prove very effective because of a lack of members.

At the end of October, the School portacabin was removed from the site.

The trustees meet regularly and communicate regularly electronically. At the end of the year one trustee moved to Northumberland and two moved out of the village. None of the trustees by the end of the year were resident in Takeley.

The end of the year began a period of reflection on the mission of the church. With the arrival in November of a pastor from the Philippines who started attending and became a member, the meetings started a period of evolution to be as welcoming of others as possible. This included singing and elements of liturgy but the basics practice of sharing personal responses to the readings from the day taken from the Common Lectionary. The Bible text used is the Revised Standard Version.

One development was the extension of the Wednesday meeting to include soup. No additional people have joined. This, the Sunday meeting and occasional articles on the website are the outreach of the church. There is an active WhatsApp group that keeps members informed as well as email communication. Membership remained static during the year with most members meeting very occasionally. Some members have not communicated with the church for many months.

Mr Humphries has continued to facilitate the meetings in the chapel and is committed to continuing in the hope others would join.

Takeley Chapel Community is a gathering of people who commit to the basis of faith of Takeley Congregational Church. It's not perfect and is not a credal statement as we are a congregational church so it's the start of a conversation. Our conviction is there is a lot to recommend the Church and scope to see the community grow, God willing. This is the basis that we continued to support the continuing congregation at Takeley during 2024.