

Strathmore Road **Methodist** Church

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts

Year ended 31 August 2021

Registered Charity
Number 1179206
(England & Wales)



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1. Legal and Administration Information

a. Trustees and Responsibilities (at date of approval)

Rev Ann Varker	(Chair)		
Alistair Clamp	(Church Secretary)	Gillian Johnson	(Pastoral Secretary)
Jill Catterall	(Church Treasurer)	Trevor Peacock	(Property Steward)
Ranjith Rosa	(Development Project Treasurer)	Keith Crulley	(Youth Worker)
James Clark	(Church Steward)	Fiona Buckley	
Lily Collinson	(Church Steward)	Jim Clark	
Mary Glease	(Church Steward)	Sandra Dixon	
Linda Innes	(Church Steward)	Ryan Heslop	
David Johnson	(Church Steward)	Ian Holmes	
Helen Johnson	(Church Steward)	Andy Innes	
Deborah Proud	(Church Steward)	Evelyn Kane	
Lesley Stamp	(Church Steward)	Kris Manuel	
Eileen Wright	(Church Steward)	Eunice Peacock	
		David Robson	
		Rachel Smith	

b. Principal Address

Strathmore Road Methodist Church
Strathmore Road
Rowlands Gill
NE39 1HX

c. Property Custodian Trustees

The Trustees for Methodist
Church Purposes
Central Buildings
Oldham Street
Manchester
M1 5JQ

d. Bankers

Lloyds Bank
44 Front Street
Whickham
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE16 4DS

Central Finance Board of the
Methodist Church
9 Bonhill Street
London
EC2A 4PE

CAF Bank
5 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill West
Malling
ME194TA

The Trustees for
Methodist Church Purposes
Central Buildings
Oldham Street
Manchester
M1 5JQ

2. Structure, Governance and Management

The Methodist Church is said to have been created after John Wesley's conversion on 24 May 1738 and is a Free Church. Strathmore Road Methodist Church (SRMC) is part of the South West Tyneside Circuit and Newcastle upon Tyne District of The Methodist Church, the governing body of which is the annual Conference of The Methodist Church. The Methodist Church Act 1976 gives the authority under which The Methodist Church acts. The constitution, practice and discipline of The Methodist Church, together with The Deed of Union (Act of 1929 adopted 1932), govern the objectives and activities of The Methodist Church.

In general, The Methodist Church is excepted from the need to register as a charity by the combined effects of Section 46(4) (A) of The Charities Act 1993 and Paragraph 4(2)(C) of the Charities (exception from registration) Regulations 1996 as amended by Statutory Instrument 2014 No 242. Strathmore Road Methodist Church ("the Church") however, registered as a separate Registered Charity, number 1179206, in England and Wales, effective from 16 July 2018.

The Church's Managing Trustees listed above, are all lay people, except for the Minister (Rev. Ann Varker), who is ordained by The Methodist Church and stationed to the South West Tyneside Circuit. The Youth Worker (Keith Crulley) is employed by SRMC.

The Managing Trustees meet at least three times per year as the Church Council. They take all major decisions and delegate some of their day-to-day responsibility to a Leadership Team, all of whom are Trustees. The Church Council is chaired by the Minister.

The Trustees who have served during the year and since the year-end are appointed annually by the Church, by the general meeting, or by being ex-officio. The Church's day-to-day activities are managed by those appointed to do so by the Church Council, including the Leadership Team, the Pastoral Committee, the Finance & Property Committee, the Worship Team and the Youth Worker.

During the year ended 31 August 2021 and up to the date of approval of the Report and accounts, the following changes in Trustees took place:

- Appointments effective from 1 September 2020 - Rev Ann Varker
- Appointments effective from 5 September 2021 - Helen Johnson, Deborah Proud
- Retirements effective from 5 September 2021 - David Thompson

3. Objectives and Mission

SRMC seeks to be a loving, welcoming and active Christian community, serving and sharing with the world around us, following the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. Currently, we serve the world and community by providing premises for church, community and charitable use, as well as working with children and youth, refugees, the elderly and the socially disadvantaged.

Section 4 of The Methodist Church Act 1976 states:

The purposes of The Methodist Church are and shall be, purposes deemed to have been since the date of union the advancement of

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

SRMC Mission Statement

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we seek to live our lives as a loving community with each other and the world around us, following the example and teaching of Jesus Christ and worshipping God.

As a church we seek to be.....

A loving community to:

- Offer pastoral support, fellowship and prayer to all recognising that it is an expression of God's love
- Be a welcoming church that promotes a sense of belonging and values every member
- Share the good news of God's love made known through Jesus Christ with all ages
- Be aware of the needs that arise in the local community and wider world and respond as we are able
- Engage with other Churches and organisations to promote justice and peace and bring good to our world as part of God's mission

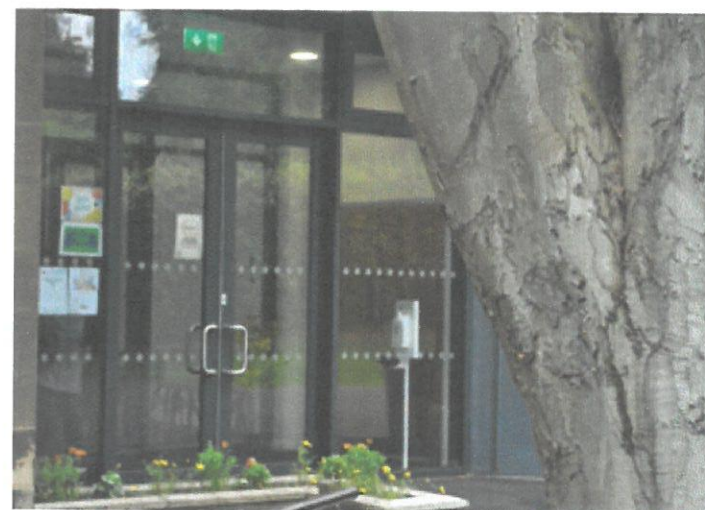
Following Jesus to:

- Help people grow and sustain their faith through Biblical teaching, fellowship and prayer
- Encourage everyone to use their gifts and exercise their ministry in the church and in daily life
- Provide opportunities for people of different stages of faith to explore the way of Christ
- Promote a pattern of whole life discipleship that recognises that being a Christian impacts all aspects of life and calls for responsible stewardship of money, time and resources
- Enable the nurture and development of children and young people in the Christian faith

Worshipping God:

- Worship in ways that are honouring to God, that help us focus upon Jesus Christ and increase our awareness of his presence through the Holy Spirit
- Develop opportunities for prayer and spending time seeking God
- Provide worship that is welcoming, family friendly, and accessible to people of different abilities
- Encourage participation in worship, recognising and utilising the talents and gifts of the congregation
- Develop forms of worship that are relevant to the world in which we live, that are uplifting, challenging and of good quality.

Strathmore Road Methodist Church in Rowlands Gill joined with Chopwell Methodist Church on the 1st September 2019 to become one church on two sites. Whilst Covid-19 restrictions have provided everyday challenges, the joint churches have sought to explore together what it means to be one church family, with two centres of mission. The Church is now seeking to develop its mission and witness across the Derwent Valley. In so doing, we encourage lifelong learning in the Christian faith and seek to provide opportunities for people to develop their faith and understanding.



Strathmore Road Methodist Church at Chopwell

4. Activities and Achievements

a) Worship Activities and Groups for All

The Church currently has 152 members, encompassing all ages, including a thriving ministry among families, children and youth. This last year, regular Sunday morning and evening services have been disrupted somewhat by Covid-19 restrictions. However, we have maintained weekly contact with all members by offering an online morning service, which has been well attended. We were able to recommence in-person services towards the end of the year.

Within the Church people appreciate different forms of worship and we value being able to offer a diversity of styles in our services, to enable people to encounter the living God and express their worship.

Our Sunday morning services at Rowlands Gill continue to be geared towards all ages and use contemporary music, media and performing arts. Most Sundays we have a short time of worship together before the children and young people move into Sunday Club where there are groups for children aged 4 to 16. Family services are held throughout the year when all ages worship together.

At the same time, a morning service is offered at Chopwell. Pre-Covid this comprised an informal 'around the table' style that includes traditional elements of worship with space for conversation and prayer. With the need for social distancing during the year, worship offered has been short and more traditional in style.

The Sunday evening service held at Rowlands Gill also re-commenced towards the end of the year and this service aims to utilise the best in traditional Methodist worship with the aid of a pipe organ. Holy Communion is celebrated on a monthly basis in all three services.



Discipleship Groups

We encourage lifelong learning in the Christian faith and seek to provide opportunities for people to develop their faith and understanding.

Pre-pandemic, three discipleship groups were able to meet in homes fortnightly, two in the evening and one during the day. However, following the restrictions brought in due to Covid-19, only one group was able to continue meeting online and one other group met occasionally in open spaces and gardens. These groups offer encouragement, fellowship, Bible study and prayer. Where a series is being followed in the Sunday services, the discipleship groups will often follow the series with Bible studies. At other times groups will decide on the topic to study.

In addition, there is also a pastoral group which met more informally outdoors for fellowship and support.

Prayer Meeting

The Church is committed to regular prayer. Conversation with and listening to God is at the centre of our worship, fellowship and activities. Since the Covid-19 pandemic began in March 2020, the desire and need for prayer has become more pressing. Many members have found comfort in meeting together to pray, as they are connecting with one another and with God.

A regular prayer meeting continued up to May 2021 online with around a dozen people attending, praying for fears, concerns and the needs of loved ones. Meeting in person resumed when Covid-19 restrictions allowed. It has been a source of comfort and inspiration in this extremely challenging time.

Prayer Chain

A number of years ago a WhatsApp group of members was started to provide prayer support to those in need, ill health or difficult situations. Prayer needs are identified and information is shared to the group, with strictest confidence observed. Members pray individually in their own homes. Regular responses are shared. The prayer chain has provided great comfort to many people and has fortunately continued throughout the pandemic.

Strathmore Road Methodist Church at Chopwell

Chopwell Methodist Church has a traditional Sunday Worship but is open to new ideas. There is a small regular congregation and we welcome everyone.

The Wednesday morning coffee pop-in has not yet restarted due to Covid-19 restrictions however it is hoped that that too will recommence in the near future along with the monthly coffee morning.

The Church held an Outdoor Ice-cream Parlour in the Car Park at the end of school holidays for all the children in the community. 'Fortum' held an event in the Church advising on Insulation for homes in the local River Streets, with possible grants for people who are eligible. Chopwell Methodist Church is still being used as a Polling Station every year.

b) Children and Youth Group Activities for All

The Church has a well-established children and families ministry, based around a few regular core groups as well as a number of different one-off events. Our activities enable us as a church to reach children ranging from newborn up to 18 years old. Our regular activities include Sunday Club (a weekly club for children of all ages taking place alongside Sunday morning worship), Sparks (a monthly Saturday morning club for children aged 5-10) and Messy Church (a bi-monthly gathering for families of all ages on a Sunday afternoon based around crafts, worship and a family meal) and several other groups. The Covid-19 pandemic has prevented several of our usual events from taking place such as, our Summer Fair however, WhatsApp groups and online meetings have been used to maintain contact amongst our families.

Sunday Club

Sunday Club is a group that provides for children ages 4-16 on a Sunday morning during church. With Sunday mornings looking very different and not allowed to be face to face, Sunday Club had to adapt to fit the new Church services online. Sunday Club online times include a children's address which was led by the worship leader or a volunteer. The children were often given tasks related to that week's Bible readings or children's address topic. The children would usually complete these tasks throughout the service and were asked to present their work at the end of the main online service. As the summer approached plans were made to recommence face to face Sunday Club meetings again in September 2021, Covid restrictions permitting.



Sparks

Sparks is a group for children aged 5-10, held every second Saturday of the month during term time. We meet for plenty of games, crafts, snacks and lots of opportunities to 'pie' leaders in the face! Each week there is a visit from our resident storyteller, who brings us a new and exciting Bible story. Sparks is a morning of fun and noise for kids in the large hall, and a morning of peace and quiet, the Saturday papers and a freshly brewed tea or coffee for the parents in the small hall. Sparks also hosts a number of different events throughout the year, including a Christmas party and Summer BBQ. During the Covid-19 pandemic we have held Sparks get togethers online. Crafts, stories and interactive games all in the comfort of our own homes. The children have enjoyed seeing each other when they were not able to see friends at school. As restrictions ease, we are planning to meet back again in person.

Rock Solid

Rock Solid meets every other Sunday evening and is for boys and girls aged 9 to 13. A fun-packed evening of games, discussion, competitions and thought about the big issues that affect life... friends, parents, school, the future and what God has to say about them. Rock Solid has moved online during the lockdown and the young people have continued to enjoy meeting for scavenger hunts, games, discussions and Bible studies, not to mention a valuable resource to talk to their friends and catch up with each other's news. We have been able to meet again in person with social distancing guidelines in place and although we can't yet do everything we used to, we have had 'bring your own bean bag movie nights' and socially distanced games. It's been great to be able to get back to some in-person sessions and see how much everyone has changed!

ID

ID is a group for boys aged 13 and over. It takes place on alternate Sundays to Rock Solid. ID is a great opportunity for youngsters to hang out, play games as well as chat and discuss issues that affect their lives. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that summer youth camps were cancelled and the older group were harder to attract to online sessions. Real life socially distanced meetings occurred throughout the summer, following strict guidelines and it was a real highlight to meet around a fire, share a BBQ and make pizzas in an outdoor setting. As restrictions ease, we are gradually phasing back to in-person sessions at the church but the fire pit is still a big draw!



Messy Church

Messy Church is part of the Bible Reading Fellowship. It is a form of church that involves creativity, celebration and hospitality. It is primarily for people who don't belong to another form of church. Messy Church met on Sunday afternoon every two months and was led by the Minister and a group of enthusiastic volunteers. However, since Covid-19 restrictions were imposed, Messy Church has been unable to meet.

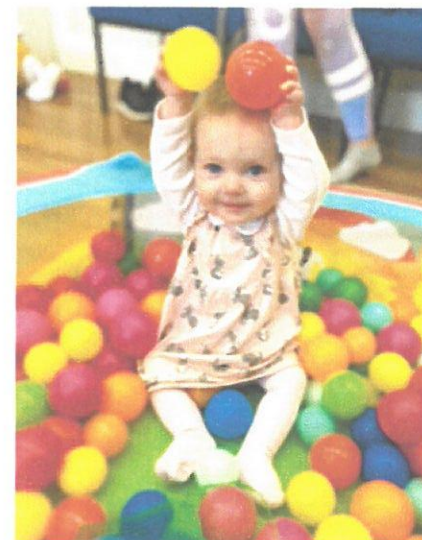
New Youth Team

Our relatively new team of youth leaders formed last year has continued to meet and pray and plan each month as well as planning for when Covid-19 restrictions enable recommencement of previous activities. The team has an oversight of all activities and groups connected with children's and youth work.

c) Other Activities for the Church and Local Community

Little Gems

Little Gems has been running for over three years now and has become a huge success. Our group is made up of parents from the local community with their babies and toddlers. A couple of Church members attend but we are very much a community group. We meet every Wednesday morning in term time for two hours of play, music, coffee and crafts. The aim of Little Gems is not only to allow our children to socialise and develop new skills, but for parents to relax, chat and compare joys and troubles on all things parenting! Due to the popularity and growth of the group, with an average of 30 children per week, we have relocated into the large hall of our refurbished premises and occasionally use the small hall for overspill. We have a superb team of volunteers from SRMC who support with set up, set down, welcoming, serving drinks and engaging in conversations with our guests. Little Gems was unable to meet regularly for a long time during the pandemic, but our group were keen to be back together once restrictions eased and we continue to grow from strength to strength.



Bridges

The Bridges group was formed in 1992. It aims to make a bridge between the Church and the local community. Over the years the group has organised many community events and festivals. The Church's current community projects - a weekly drop-in for local refugee families, community football and the 'Holiday Fun' scheme for local children - all originated from the Bridges group. In addition, many fundraising events have been organised for the benefit of various charities.

With the continuing pandemic and opportunities to meet being restricted, the group have adapted by organising events online. Activities have included a quiz night, a Christmas concert and a 'Geordie Burns night'. Unable to hold the annual Church family and friends' holiday in Keswick in February 2021, Bridges hosted an online holiday event covering 17 Lake District themed activities normally undertaken on the holiday. In addition, the annual car treasure hunt was adapted to an 'on foot' hunt around a local forest park.

The group continues to focus on building and maintaining relationships with the wider Church family and the local community.

Men's Breakfast group

The Men's Breakfast group has been meeting for more than 30 years. It offers the men of the Church opportunities to get together, invite friends and socialise around a varied programme of events and activities. Meeting monthly over an early Saturday morning breakfast or a pint in a local pub on Friday evenings, activities include speakers from charities and other organisations, visits to places of interest, local history and countryside walks. Around 15 to 18 people regularly attend each month.

This past year's activities have once again been curtailed due to lockdowns and Covid-19 restrictions. However, meeting online, the group enjoyed presentations on mission work in Kenya, an Arctic Circle adventure and a local history talk. A virtual tour of Newcastle's old inns and taverns provided for the annual Christmas get together and we were able to meet and get to know our new minister for an online coffee morning.

On the relaxation of restrictions, the group were able to meet outdoors with a local village heritage walk and a visit to a nearby community garden. The group has continued to keep in touch with all its members by telephone.



Open Doors

Open Doors began over 36 years ago as an open and ecumenical group for women of all ages from Rowlands Gill and the surrounding area, to develop friendship and fellowship by sharing different Christian viewpoints and common concerns in a friendly and caring atmosphere. Open Doors is a welcoming fellowship for women and meets on Friday mornings during school term time. There is a varied programme with speakers (some informative, some inspirational) and activities (sometimes creative, sometimes recreational). We meet informally and chat over coffee, with no 'fixed' membership as such, friends drop in and out as often or as little as they wish.

From the start of lockdown, we were one of the first groups at SRMC to utilise online meetings for fellowship and to keep connected. We extended the welcome to friends outside our local area. We have continued to meet weekly online, which has taken us from well-building projects in Burkino Faso, to dog rides in the Arctic Circle. We've shared directly with friends experiencing the pandemic in both Texas and the UAE. We have zoomed with a Youtuber offering mindful drawing and recorded our own online nativity play. A local charity, MHA Gateshead Communities West, gave us a taste of '*Keep smiling through 2020*' with their challenges and successes providing support for older vulnerable people. We've had a virtual Macmillan coffee morning for fund raising. In July 2021 we had a real live garden coffee meet up escaping from our digital screens. Perhaps all these events were summarised by one of our 'in house' speakers reflecting on "the human chain, the power of working together".

Ladies Club

The Ladies Club first met in 1962 and continues to 'meet' despite the hazards Covid-19 has caused. We all kept in touch during the periods of lockdown and are planning to meet for the first time in person in a long while, at the beginning of September 2021. We plan to meet on the second Friday of each month however, this will be with caution and we will take things a step at a time.

Spread Drama Group

Spread is a performing arts group that meets weekly during term time. The aim is to provide an inclusive drama group rooted in the belief that drama enables confidence building, socialising, and aids mental health. The group is intergenerational and is accessible for all. Young learn from old and old from young. They perform at least one production a year, including an affordable pantomime for the community. Lockdown made it hard to meet in person but Spread continued to meet online for drama sessions. Towards the summer, Spread met in person several times for several outdoor and socially distanced drama sessions. The group then started preparations for a winter pantomime of Dick Whittington.

Contact Magazine

The editors of the quarterly Church Magazine 'Contact' have again found this a particularly challenging year, due to the closure of the Church premises for the majority of the time with most worship and meetings ceased because of Covid-19 restrictions. Items in 'Contact' usually reflect the current activities occurring within our Church, and heavily rely on items and reports of events being submitted by its members. The Church year is highlighted in each edition and details of all forthcoming events are advertised.

Notwithstanding the Church closure for many activities, it was felt by the editors that the Church magazine should continue as a way to keep in touch with each other and to provide an additional contact with Church members and friends. The various editions of 'Contact' have featured personal stories of how we coped and survived during complete lockdown, what we've got up to as individuals and providing a wider hope to one another that restrictions will soon be lifted enabling activities to return more to normality.

Church Community WhatsApp

Covid-19 restrictions effectively closed down much of our worship and meetings during the year, so we've continued to maintain the WhatsApp group created in the previous year, to reduce isolation and aid communication. This group continues to offer support and friendship in an instant, direct way. The space continues to be used for prayers, news, sharing photographs and experiences, chitchat and supportive encouragement. Both clergy and laity use the group, and it connects members across a wide age span and background. It has been a lifeline to those who are restricted to their homes particularly during times when we have been unable to meet face to face. This new method of contact is something we are now actively seeking to expand.

d) Other Activities to Help and Support the Local Community

Rowlands Gill & Highfield Mutual Aid Group

SRMC works as part of the Mutual Aid Group which formed early in 2020 in response to the first Covid-19 lockdown. Consisting of representatives from local community groups, councillors and volunteers, the group continues to meet together on a monthly basis in order to support each other and the local community.

At Christmas 2020 the group was able co-ordinate provision of food hampers containing everything required for Christmas Lunch, enough to feed 263 people in 63 families. SRMC was able to provide a Christmas storybook and all of the required items and instructions for each family to make a Christingle, for inclusion in the hampers. Our local community was incredibly generous with donations and we were able to send some donations across to Blaydon Methodist Church who also delivered 50 Christmas hampers. The group also supported MHA Communities to provide 160 Christmas 'bags of joy' to their members and isolated older people in our community.

A main focus of the work during 2021 was supporting Highfield residents with their aim to re-open an empty Council owned building on the Pipe Bridge Estate, the old Children and Families Centre. Work is progressing well and there is cautious optimism that the building will open to the community during 2022 with community support workers based there.

Rescued Food Market

Since February 2021 a weekly 'rescued food' market has operated from the Church halls. This offers surplus food collected from supermarkets free to visitors, some of whom offer a voluntary financial donation in return. The market is open to anyone and is attended by up to 50 people each week. It attracts a wide range of customers from those in financial difficulties, to people concerned about the environment and wishing to reduce food waste.

The market is run in partnership with *The Pickle Palace* a local community interest group which has operated in the area for about 5 years. Several volunteers from the Church and the wider community are involved in collecting food, welcoming customers, running the market, and clearing away.



Syrian refugee `drop in`

The Drop In meets weekly on a Monday morning at St Barnabas Church Hall and is run by volunteers from both SRMC and St. Barnabas Churches. We aim to befriend and support the Syrian refugees living in the area. Our support takes the form of familiarising the families with the local community, bus travel and surrounding amenities, also encouraging English conversation to aid integration and independence. The families are adapting to their change in environment at their own pace. We are aware that the families who have been here the longest require less support now and in turn offer relevant support to those that have arrived more recently. Obviously, due to the pandemic the drop-in has not taken place. However, contact remained with the Syrian families and continuing help is offered with appliance repairs, college assignments and communication. Plans are underway to re-start the drop in, following government guidelines.

Summer 'Holiday Fun'

This group originated from the "Holiday Hunger" concerns over six years ago, providing meals and activities for local disadvantaged children during the summer school holiday period when free school meals are not available. We aim to befriend and build relationships with the families of those children attending. Food bank vouchers are available each week.

In 2020 the pandemic prevented this from happening. However, in summer 2021 due to hard work and planning from a dedicated team, we were able to provide breakfast and a simple 2 course cooked meal, along with sport, crafts and other enriching activities. We also arranged bus excursions to Gibside and Chopwell Woods, where, armed with prepared packed lunches and with the help of local organisations, we provided various activities including nature trails, team games and the ever-popular den building.

Football

Every Thursday teatime (except in Winter) we run an outreach football group on Highfield Green in partnership with other local churches and Ambassadors Football. We run matches for children from 4 years to teenagers with lots of chat and fellowship on the sidelines too. This provides healthy activity for the local children and helps promote community development and cohesion. Several Syrian families have moved into the area and we wanted to support them and assist their integration into their community. The impact this has had on all children and young people in this area has exceeded our expectations. The young people have appreciated the activity and some are now coming to other Church-based events, such as Rock Solid. Again, the impact of Covid-19 restrictions applied to the football. However, recent relaxation of those restrictions has allowed the activity to recommence.

e) Other activities wider than the local Community

The Church has a growing awareness of being part of a global community.

Eco-Church

Responding to our stewardship of the planet.

Work on Eco church continued during the year. Considerable progress has been made in the church garden at Strathmore Road with new wildlife-friendly planting and a new bug hotel and hedgehog house installed. New trees were planted, as well as some fruit bushes and herbs. A botany survey was conducted by Durham Wildlife Trust which gave us some pointers for future improvements. The building energy efficiency has been improved by a more efficient boiler and lighting and improved insulation, installed as part of our redevelopment project. Events involving the local community included bike repair workshops in the Church and in the community. Awareness raising of environmental issues continued in lockdown via the Church WhatsApp group with lots of tips, advice and information being shared. *Plastic free July* and *30 days wild in May* were two month-long events supported by daily tips and ideas on lifestyle and 'eco efficiency'. An online presentation from a Gold Award winning Eco Church in February provided further inspiration and encouragement. We held a Church service focussed on environmental issues on *Climate Change Sunday* and all members were asked to commit to living more sustainably.



The Church Leadership Team and Church Council have approved the plan to seek the Silver Award by the end of 2021, delayed from Spring 2021 due to Covid restrictions.

South Africa

Our Church community continues to support the work of Ebenezer Mission in Izingolweni, South Africa where all aspects of their work are growing. More and more people are attending worship and Bible study and the work among the young people is also thriving. The creche now has full time teachers and numbers are rising rapidly. The after-school homework club which helps young people with their school-work and offers them a meal, has been very successful. One of the young men has now been accepted for a place on a college course which will lead to an Engineering degree. This involved him having to move away from Izingolweni to be within traveling distance of the college and a donation was sent from our Church to help support him in his new venture.

5. Opening the Doors – Church Development Project at Rowlands Gill

At the end of the 2020 financial year, we were in the midst of the Development construction period with work progressing well. We did experience some delays, mainly as a result of weather and some small design adjustments being required. The scheduled 18-week programme extended to 22 weeks with the practical completion certificate for the building contract works being issued on 1st December 2020. Furnishings and building contents were then returned from storage and the building was handed over to the Church leadership team on 16th December. This enabled the Church to open for a service on Sunday 20th December. A *Journey To Bethlehem* event was held during the following week with the Nativity story created using a number of stations placed around the building. Church and community members were able to book a time slot and follow a one-way route around the building in a Covid-secure manner. A Christmas Day service was also held.

With the Church having been open for 2 services over Christmas it was then again closed as the New Year lockdown restrictions were imposed. Throughout the Spring and into Summer 2021 we began to slowly open up again with hybrid morning services, restricted numbers of evening services and user groups returning in a distanced and Covid-secure manner.

The project has now been completed as per the contracted design, within budget and we are very satisfied with the quality of work delivered. The visual impact on the building is very evident. The objectives to unite our separate Church and Church Hall buildings, opening them up to be more welcoming, accessible, and comfortable with facilities fit for the 21st Century, have all been achieved as planned. The real impact of the Development project for Church and community users will only become evident as Covid-19 restrictions ease further and the building is able to be fully occupied.

A celebration weekend is planned during September 2021 to formally open the buildings and to celebrate the very special achievements of so many people. We offer our grateful thanks to all those funders who supported us so generously.



6. Financial Review

The Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021 are set out at the end of the Trustees' Report. The Church funds are made up of a general unrestricted fund, a restricted fund – the Benevolent Fund, an endowment fund – the Development Fund, and the funds of three Internal Organisations – the Children & Youth Project, Bridges and the Spread Drama Group. Only the unrestricted fund is available to meet the day to day running costs of the Church.

Unrestricted fund

During the year ended 31 August 2021 there was a deficit of payments over receipts of £1,418 (2020: surplus £1,817) before a transfer to the Children & Youth Project of £5,000 (2020: £5,000). Bills were paid promptly and the outstanding liabilities at the year-end (i.e. invoices relating to before the year-end paid after the year-end) amounted to £129 (2020: £166). Collections and funds raised specifically for other charities or external organisations are excluded from both receipts and payments.

The Finance and Property Committee reviews the budget each June for the following year and the net deficit of £1,418 compared favourably with the budgeted deficit of £7,239 (before internal transfers), despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The primary reason for the lower deficit was the receipt of a Local Authority Covid Grant of £10,572, to compensate for lost rental income during the pandemic, which is included in "Other receipts" in the Accounts.

Offerings and tax recovered via gift aid totalled £60,800 which was lower than last year's total of £73,289, primarily because last year included gift aid tax refunds for the two tax years ended 5 April 2019 and 2020, totalling £22,047, as compared with the usual one tax refund. Letting receipts from hiring out the premises were affected during the year by the closure of the Church buildings for the redevelopment from September to December 2020 and also restrictions due to the pandemic. Receipts fell to £3,260 from £4,655 last year, reflecting the fact that some hirers did not return following the lifting of restrictions and other groups restarted but for a reduced number of hours per week.

Within payments from the unrestricted fund there are three major areas over which the Church has little control: i) the Circuit assessment; ii) property repairs; and iii) utility bills. Repairs at Strathmore Road were kept to a minimum this year in view of the redevelopment of the building. Utility costs are monitored closely and steps taken to obtain the most cost-effective contracts. We wish to record our grateful thanks to all those who work tirelessly to carry out repairs and maintenance to the Church buildings and grounds and keep costs to a minimum.

Restricted Fund

The Benevolent Fund is available to make small payments at the Minister's discretion in cases of individual hardship or poverty. There was a payment of £20 and no receipts during the year, so the balance carried forward was £180 (2020: £200).

Endowment Fund

The purpose of the Development Fund is described above under "Opening the Doors". In accordance with guidance issued by the Methodist Church in July 2019, "Accounting for tangible fixed assets", donations intended to provide an asset for long-term use, i.e. a fixed asset, should be classified as an expendable endowment and not a restricted income fund. Consequently, the Development Fund has been classified as an expendable endowment in the accounts. During the year, the fund received £173,995 (2020: £276,538) including a loan of £30,000, and made payments of £461,967 (2020: £147,270) resulting in a balance carried forward of £39,069 (2020: £327,041). There was no outstanding payment due at the year-end (2020: £259).

Internal Organisations

The Internal Organisations manage their finances separately from the main Church funds but report to the Church Council. The Children & Youth Project made net payments during the year of £5,693 (2020: £3,955) before receipt of the transfer of £5,000 from the Church unrestricted fund. Bridges made net payments for the year of £770 (2020: £1,215). Spread Drama Group made net payments of £60 (2020 net receipts: £2,174).

Further information on all funds is provided in the accounts and the notes to the accounts.

Reserves policy

Unrestricted funds

The appropriate level of general reserves is considered to be the amount necessary to cover 6 months' operations. General Church running expenses for the current year ending 31 August 2022 are expected to be around £88,000 (2020: £85,000) per annum. Therefore, the required reserves for unrestricted funds are £44,000 (2020: £42,500). The general funds at the year-end are approximately £6,000 less than this required reserve. The Church Council is aware of the continuing need to build up the reserves but this has been difficult while fundraising was focusing on the Development Project and as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Internal Organisations

The Children & Youth Project receives funding from time to time which is allocated to particular projects, but all funds held by this account (£28,666 at the year-end) are treated as restricted to paying the salaries of the Youth worker and the activities, such as Sunday Club and Messy Church, for children and youth generally. The sources of funding vary and it is important to retain reserves of £7,000 (2020: £15,100) to enable the project to continue planned operations for at least 6 months in the event of an unexpected fall in funding, and to meet any redundancy and related costs in the event of its termination. The reserves in excess of these amounts are committed to fund the recruitment of a new Children and Families worker during 2021-22.

Bridges and Spread do not aim to make a significant surplus and the current reserves of around £11,500 (2020: £12,300) enable them to carry on their activities, especially the community projects, in the following year. Funds held by the Internal Organisations are not available to meet general Church expenses.

Endowment Fund

The Development Fund is made up of specific donations, grants, and a loan, net of payments, totalling £39,069 (2020: £327,041), relating to the development of the Church building at Strathmore Road, which started in summer 2020 and was completed by December 2020. An interest free loan of £30,000 was secured in October 2020 from The William Leech Charity to cover a short-term funding gap, and is repayable in 5 equal instalments of £6,000, starting on 1 October 2021. The endowment funds are required to repay the loan and meet any final costs of the development. Further details can be found earlier in the Report under "Opening the Doors".

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by



Rev Ann Varker

Date: 24/04/22

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH Charity no 1179206
ON THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021**

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an 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 Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

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

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

Signed by



Date

3/5/2022

Peter Nemes FCCA
Glenavon, Peth Lane, Ryton, NE40 3PB

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

CHURCH
excluding Internal Organisations

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Fund Benevolent	Endowment Fund Development	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020
	1	£	£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS	2					
Offerings and Tax recovered	3	60,800		143,905	204,705	346,706
Bank interest		56	0	90	146	1,312
Lettings		3,260	0	0	3,260	4,655
Other receipts		10,691	0	30,000	40,691	3,655
TOTAL RECEIPTS		<u>74,807</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>173,995</u>	<u>248,802</u>	<u>356,328</u>
PAYMENTS	4					
Circuit Assessment	5	59,000	0	0	59,000	57,875
Donations		416	20	0	436	200
Repairs and Maintenance		2,779	0	0	2,779	3,514
Utilities		7,746	0	0	7,746	8,883
Endowment payments		0	0	461,770	461,770	147,078
Other payments		6,284	0	197	6,481	7,669
TOTAL PAYMENTS		<u>76,225</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>461,967</u>	<u>538,212</u>	<u>225,219</u>
NET (PAYMENTS)/RECEIPTS FOR THE YEAR		<u>-1,418</u>	<u>-20</u>	<u>-287,972</u>	<u>-289,410</u>	<u>131,109</u>
Total funds brought forward		44,679	200	327,041	371,920	245,811
Transfers with Internal Organisations	6	-5,000	0		-5,000	-5,000
CHURCH FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	8 & 9	<u>38,261</u>	<u>180</u>	<u>39,069</u>	<u>77,510</u>	<u>371,920</u>

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS REPORTING TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL	Notes			Net receipts/ (payments)	Transfers	Opening balances	Closing balances
		Receipts	Payments		with Church		
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Children & Youth Project		2,257	7,950	-5,693	5,000	29,358	28,665
Bridges		3,426	4,196	-770	0	8,835	8,065
Spread Drama Group		0	60	-60	0	3,526	3,466
Total of Internal Organisations		5,683	12,206	-6,523	5,000	41,719	40,196
Church totals from previous page		248,802	538,212	-289,410	-5,000	371,920	77,510
TOTAL FOR CHURCH INCLUDING INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS		254,485	550,418	-295,933	0	413,639	117,706

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

CHURCH FUNDS HELD AT 31 AUGUST

Cash in hand	
Bank Current accounts	
Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Deposit account	
Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes Deposit account	
Total of Church accounts	
Total funds held by Internal Organisations	
TOTAL CASH FUNDS	

Notes

Opening
balances
2020

Closing
balances 2021

£

£

314

200

271,708

45,054

39,200

32,256

60,698

0

371,920

77,510

41,719

40,196

413,639

117,706

OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Land and buildings	
Plant and equipment at insured value	
Loan for redevelopment	
Other liabilities	

9

3,206,372

3,155,717

142,802

142,944

11

0

30,000

425

129

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by:



Rev. Ann Varker, Chair



Jill N Catterall, Treasurer

Date: 24/04/22

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

- 1 **Accounting basis** - The accounts have been prepared on the cash basis. "Gross income" for the purpose of determining whether accruals accounting is required, excludes receipts of endowment capital. The gross income of the Church for the year ended 31 August 2021 for this purpose is therefore, total receipts of £254,485 less endowment capital receipts of £173,995, giving a figure of £80,490. As this is less than the threshold of £250,000, accruals accounting is not required.
- 2 **Receipts** do not include collections or funds raised specifically for other charities or external organisations. See note 7 for details of these amounts.
- 3 **Offerings and Tax recovered** for 2021 for the Church Unrestricted funds includes one claim for Gift Aid of £10,333, compared to two claims in 2020 for the years ended 5 April 2019 and 2020, totalling £22,047.
- 4 **Payments** do not include the passing on of amounts collected or raised specifically for other charities or external organisations. See Note 7 for details of these amounts.
- 5 **The Circuit Assessment** is the Church's share of the Circuit's annual costs, primarily relating to Ministers' salaries and housing.
- 6 **Transfers with Internal Organisations** - During the year the Church contributed £5,000 (2020: £5,000) to the Children & Youth Project.

7 **Money received and passed on to external organisations**

	2021				2020
	Church	Youth	Bridges	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Brought forward	132	0	0	132	492
Collections/Receipts	355	0	2,495	2,850	11,324
Payments	-487	0	-145	-632	-11,684
Balance still to be paid at 31 August 2021	0	0	2,350	2,350	132

The receipts and payments for Bridges relate primarily to the annual Church holiday to Keswick.

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

8 Restricted Fund - The Church has one restricted fund known as the Benevolent Fund, which is available for the Minister to spend at her discretion in cases of individual hardship or poverty.

9 Endowment Fund - The Church has one endowment fund known as the Development Fund which is for a major building project to extend and redevelop the Church buildings.

In accordance with guidance issued by the Methodist Church in July 2019, "Accounting for tangible fixed assets", donations intended to provide an asset for long-term use, i.e. a fixed asset, should be classified as an expendable endowment and not a restricted income fund. Consequently, the Development Fund has been classified as an expendable endowment.

The Endowment Fund has been shown in a separate column in the Receipts and Payments Account and an analysis is provided below, showing the comparative figures for the prior year.

	2021	2020
	£	£
Receipts		
Donations and grants	143,905	273,417
Bank interest	90	1,066
Loan	30,000	0
Fund raising events	0	2,055
	<u>173,995</u>	<u>276,538</u>
Payments		
Building project payments	-461,770	-147,078
Bank charges	-197	-192
Net (payments)/receipts	<u>-287,972</u>	<u>129,268</u>
Funds brought forward	327,041	197,773
Transfers from Unrestricted Funds or Internal Organisations	0	0
Funds carried forward	<u>39,069</u>	<u>327,041</u>

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2021
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

- 10 Land and buildings** - The Church land and buildings are owned by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes as custodians. The Church at Strathmore Road opened in 1902 and the halls were added in 1958 but there is no information available about their historic costs. In conjunction with the redevelopment of the Church buildings, the Trustees have estimated the value of the land, based on average land values in Gateshead. Prior to 2019 the value of the land had not been included in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. The existing buildings are included at their insurance value in accordance with Methodist Church guidance.

	2021	2020
	£	£
Land at Strathmore Road - estimated value	388,000	388,000
Existing buildings - insurance value		2,283,059
Cost of building project (payments from endowment)*		200,987
Insurance value of redeveloped buildings	<u>2,433,059</u>	
	2,821,059	<u>2,872,046</u>
Chopwell Methodist Church - insurance value	<u>334,658</u>	<u>334,326</u>
	<u>3,155,717</u>	<u>3,206,372</u>

* Note only: Cost of redevelopment to 31 August 2021 £662,954.

- 11 Loan** - In October 2020 The William Leech Charity made a loan of £30,000 to cover completion of the redevelopment of the Church buildings, prior to receipt of an equivalent amount of pledged donations. The loan is interest-free and is repayable in 5 equal, annual instalments starting in October 2021.