

Year ended 31 August 2024

# Trustees' Annual Report

Strathmore Road Methodist Church



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# Structure & Management



The Methodist Church is said to have been created after John Wesley's conversion and is a Free Church. Strathmore Road Methodist Church (SRMC) includes premises both in Rowlands Gill and Chopwell and 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. SRMC ('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 below 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) and Children's & Families Pastor (Ruth Hallatt) are employed by SRMC together with two Youth Outreach Pioneers (Heather Woods and Barry Watkins).

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 Workers.





# Our Objectives

Strathmore Road Methodist Church (SRMC) seeks to be a loving, welcoming and active Christian community, by serving others, sharing our resources, and following the example of Jesus Christ.

To best serve our local and global community, we follow the guidance of The Methodist Church Act (1976). We devote our premises to church, community and charitable use, as well as working with children, refugees, the elderly and the socially disadvantaged.

On 1st September 2019, SRMC in Rowlands Gill joined with Chopwell Methodist Church to become one church on two sites. The members of both churches have sought to explore together what it means to be one church family, with two centres of mission. In so doing, we encourage lifelong learning in the Christian faith and seek to provide opportunities for people to develop their discipleship and understanding.

The church commits to safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility for children and vulnerable adults, in accordance with the Church Safeguarding Policy and informed by current legislation and accepted good practice.





# Our 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 loving community:**

We welcome all and create a sense of belonging and family.  
We share the message of God's love with people of all ages.  
We offer pastoral support, fellowship and prayer.  
We promote social justice and peace and bring good to the world.  
We engage with other churches, charities and organisations.

## **Following the example of Christ:**

We help people grow in faith through biblical teaching and prayer.  
We encourage everyone to use their gifts in church and daily life.  
We promote whole-life discipleship that recognises the call for responsible stewardship of money, time and resources.  
We nurture and develop children and young people in their faith.

## **Worshipping God:**

We worship in ways that honour God, help us focus on Jesus and increase our awareness of the Holy Spirit.  
We worship in ways that are accessible to all; that are uplifting, relevant, challenging and of good quality.  
We encourage the use of talents of the congregation in worship.



# Activities

## Sunday Morning Worship

SRMC has 123 members, encompassing all ages, including a thriving ministry among families, children and youth. Within the church, people appreciate different forms of worship and the church values being able to offer a diversity of styles in its services to enable people to encounter the living God and express their worship. Our Sunday morning services at Rowlands Gill are geared towards all ages and use contemporary music, media and performing arts. Most Sundays 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. Once a month the young people attend a Forest Church service. We also have regular Local Worship Sundays – here we work without a local preacher/minister and invite speakers from a range of organisations or give a platform for testimony within our own church. This year, Sunday mornings have included themes on war in Gaza and the plight of Palestinians, poverty, supporting families and climate change, along with powerful testimony from the everyday lives of our congregation.

During the summer we ran each Sunday morning service as a Café Church. We are on a journey to make our Sunday morning worship as rich and inclusive as possible. We are planning in the upcoming year to hold monthly 'Together' services as we seek to meet God together as an intergenerational family. We also have several members of the congregation training to be Worship Leaders. Through this we hope to widen the net of worship styles, liturgy and voices within our services.

Over the past year, Sunday morning worship has changed at Chopwell due to new families who have joined us. The regular congregation has welcomed these families and continue to have a traditional Sunday morning service. Due to the growing numbers of children, there has been the introduction of children's activities during the Sunday services.

The Sunday evening service held at Rowlands Gill also 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.





Sunday Club continues to comprise of two groups for ages 4-16 on a Sunday morning split into 'Bubbles' and 'Xstream'. Everybody begins the service together then the children go into their own groups for games, Bible stories, crafts, chat and prayer. The volunteers from SRMC have been able to get together twice over the past year to have training sessions. In the training sessions we have clarified our vision of Sunday Club, learnt more about supporting all children in groups and have had time to pray and worship together.

Forest Church happens monthly in place of Sunday Clubs. It is a relaxed, inclusive space where we seek to increase our spirituality through engagement with nature. Using a small wooded space behind the church, we meet in a circle, usually round a fire pit. The group is aimed at children and their accompanying parents. Throughout the year we have celebrated the solstices, Candlemass, Advent and Easter. We have looked at the importance of trees, observed the season changes, planted potatoes, scattered wild seeds, toasted apples, crumpets and marshmallows, practised gratefulness, mindfulness, meditated and sang songs.

This year we have introduced curiosity bags for little ones and diggers and spades to facilitate muddy play. Although we meet primarily for families, we have held a winter solstice gathering for adults and ran Forest Church events at coffee mornings, services and Christmas events. We have seen regular faces and new ones this year, with several families coming especially because it is Forest Church. The outdoors allows an informal space for those who find church intimidating or triggering. It also allows young people who need space to move and explore the opportunity to do so. We have an excellent team of volunteers who value the child and nature-led ethos and who bring their own outdoor skills to the sessions.

Next year, we hope to run more Forest Church events outside of the usual time, engage more young people in leading, make our space more inclusive of neurodiversity and include a space for babies and their parents.





# Children & Youth

Over the last year we have been able to expand the groups that we offer to children both within our church and the local area. Our activities enable the church to reach children ranging from newborn up to 16 years old.

Sparks is a group for children in Reception to year 4 who meet on a Saturday afternoon once a month. The children play games, enjoy a Bible story and then complete crafts based on the story. We have been able to advertise this club in our local primary schools over the past year which has introduced us to new families.

Little Gems is a well-established group for toddlers and babies, together with their parents and grandparents, from the church and community to join together and build relationships. It meets fortnightly on a Wednesday morning for two hours where people can drop in for a play, a cuppa and a chat. The play activities for the toddlers in the sessions have had more of a faith focus over the last year to support our aim of sharing Jesus with our local community. The Little Gems team of volunteers has grown in the past year to support the set-up, set down, welcoming, serving drinks and engaging in conversations with all those who attend. There continues to be a clothes swap rail and parents frequently exchange toys and books. We have also supported local businesses with Christmas and summer fayres and baby photoshoots.

Rock Solid meets every other Sunday evening and is for children in school years 5-7. A fun-packed evening of games, discussion, competitions and thoughts about the big issues that affect life: friends, parents, school, the future...and what God has to say about them. We recently thought about the connection between science and religion and looked at how God is seen in the scientific world. Rock Solid are an inquisitive group that don't mind asking the hard questions.





I.D. is a group for boys in school years 8+. It takes place on alternate Sundays to Rock Solid. I.D. is a great opportunity for lads to hang out, play games as well as chat and discuss issues that affect their lives.

Wonder is a group for young women who are in Year 8 or above. This group was born out of the need for a group for girls at the church who have come through Rock Solid and aims to provide a safe environment to explore friendships with peers, discuss important societal topics and pray. Aspirations for the coming year are to continue to build a safe and encouraging environment for girls where they can feel valued.

For the older children, we started a house group style session aimed at the Rock Solid aged group where we explore our faith through discussions, Bible studies and learn more about prayer and worship. They are a lively group who come with lots of questions and ideas. Recently we based our studies on people in the Bible like Samuel, David and Ruth.

At the end of the summer we take interested young people aged 11-18 to a Christian youth camp near Thirsk called Kairos. This is an opportunity to meet other Christians from other youth groups and explore faith together. Lots of sports, crafts, activities and fun during the day with great teaching and worship too. Young people enjoy experiencing worship in a lively setting and often connect with God in new ways away from their home church setting. The young people often describe it as a 'mountain top' experience helping them to grow in their faith.

One of the areas that we would like to see grow is young people leading worship in the church. We have started a youth band practice once a month where young people who might never have picked up an instrument

in their life are welcome to come and be part of a worship team in a safe and nurturing environment. We have been blown away by the first few practices and can't wait to see the young people leading worship in services for the whole church.

Our links with the local primary schools have really flourished over the past year as our Children and Families' Pastor has visited schools to deliver assemblies and support RE sessions. She has also supported after school clubs and invited schools to visit our church building for various events. A team of volunteers have set up prayer spaces in our local schools at prominent times in the year.





# Holiday Fun

We have now been running Holiday Fun for nine years. Working with our partnership churches in Rowlands Gill, we aim to provide meals and activities for children of families on a limited budget during the school holidays. During the year September 2023 to August 2024, we ran the club during Christmas, Easter and summer holidays providing breakfast and a two course cooked lunch for the children. In compliance with the Brighten the Day Fund, our meals are nourishing and healthy. We provide activities that are enriching and we aim to give the children an experience of things they may not have had an opportunity to try before. This year's activities included a scientist who led the children in experiments and made science fun, ukelele playing, modelling with recycled waste and problem solving. Physical activities included mini Olympics, Kalma Yoga, wide games and archery. Each week a craft or artistic activity was planned. As in previous years, we took the children on a coach outing to Lanchester and used a school site to do den building, cooking on a fire pit and other forest fun activities. We are fortunate to have a large number of volunteer helpers for Holiday Fun. The age of volunteers varies, however most are in the over 60s age bracket, bringing a wonderful inter-generational aspect to the club. Most meals were prepared and cooked by our volunteers, but we have also used a Communities Gateshead C.I.C to provide two of our cooked lunches this year. We work closely with our local schools to contact eligible families and also with GMBC.







# Discipleship Groups

SRMC encourages lifelong learning in the Christian faith and seeks to provide opportunities for people to develop their faith and understanding.

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. We held an Alpha Course this year which led to new groups forming. We have groups now meeting during the day as well as in the evening and look forward to a new evening group for parents which will meet on Zoom.

We have several groups that meet with a pastoral focus. For us at SRMC 'Learning and Caring' truly belong together.

# Quiet Space

Quiet Space is where we practise the ancient Christian tradition of contemplative prayer. It is held monthly in the church and open to the church, circuit and local community. It is an opportunity to gather together to seek God in a time of silence and is a welcome break from the hurry of the day.

Waiting on God in stillness allows our bodies and minds to relax as we seek to hear and be transformed by God.





# Coffee Mornings

We have been pleased to hold two regular coffee mornings over this last year, on the first Saturday of each month - one at Chopwell church and one at Rowlands Gill. Our Chopwell coffee morning has been going strong for several years now and is visited by a dedicated and regular group of coffee drinkers! The morning welcomes all visitors and provides the opportunity for them to spend some social time together. At Rowlands Gill, our coffee mornings started in September 2022 as a response to 'post-Covid blues' and also to raise much needed funds. These mornings are hosted by different groups in the church throughout the year and have been really appreciated in bringing people across the wide spectrum of the church together. It was originally planned to run the mornings for a year or so however there's a definite movement towards continuing the effort for the foreseeable future.



# Wednesday Gang

Wednesday mornings have been the time when a small group of members have gathered together to address all sorts of property matters. This happy band of pilgrims willingly give their time and talents to not only look after the large grounds surrounding the church, but also to attend to all sorts of manual jobs from leaf clearing to roof repairs, from unblocking drains to woodwork painting and everything and anything in between. We are thankful for the time that the group offers freely and the dedicated attention to the many jobs completed in order to help maintain the premises and keep them in good order.



# Rescued Food Market

Since February 2021, a weekly Rescued Food Market has operated from Rowlands Gill. This offers surplus food collected from supermarkets in return for a donation. The market is open to anyone and 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 has the twin benefits of helping meet our Eco Church objectives while providing a further opportunity to serve our local community. The market is attended by up to 50 people each week and it is estimated to have rescued over 18 tonnes of food each year that would otherwise have been wasted. A number of volunteers from the church, nearby local churches and the wider community are involved in collecting food, welcoming customers, running the market and clearing away. At the beginning of August 2024, the three year partnership with The Pickle Palace (a local community interest company) came to an end. Since then the SRMC Community Hub has taken over the operation of the market and plans to more fully integrate it into other community activities.

# Citizens Advice

Since 2021, members of the community can visit a trained Citizens Advice advisor at SRMC on a drop-in basis. This dovetails well with other Community Hub activities as visitors can use the cafe, Warm Space and Rescued Food Market before or after their appointment. Clients appreciate having the service based in the local community as it enables return visits without inconvenience and costs of a visit to central Gateshead.

# Warm Spaces

With support from Gateshead Council (GMBC), Rowlands Gill church continues to operate a weekly 'Warm Space' on Monday mornings. The aim of Warm Spaces is to provide a safe and respectful atmosphere for anyone having difficulty with energy costs and keeping warm. Anyone in the community is welcome to use the building to keep warm, meet friends over a free hot drink and use our pay as you feel cafe. We also offer free wi-fi access, mobile phone charging and a small bring-and-take library. Although initially intended for winter months, GMBC and the Church quickly recognised the year-round value of providing a warm welcome and a positive friendly environment for people to come together. During the year, the Hub has hosted three 'road shows' on energy efficiency and housing advice. Visitors to the Warm Space also benefit from the cafe, Citizens Advice drop-in and the Rescued Food Market.

# Spread Drama Group

Spread Drama Group returned following its usual summer hiatus in September 2023 heading straight into rehearsals for our December pantomime. Throughout September to early December we worked alongside 20 individuals of diverse ages, backgrounds and needs, some regular attenders of the church and others not at all, developing their theatrical skills as well as building up their confidence. We work hard throughout the year to create a loving, caring and supportive community within our cast and wider team, and this is always incredibly evident as we prepare for the pantomime. In December we welcomed over 500 people from the community to watch our pantomime, offering entertainment at an affordable cost, whilst also bringing the wider community together on the church site. Our mission as a team has nearly always been two-fold. Firstly, supporting the individuals who join us regularly throughout the year and join the cast of our pantomime: building them up, supporting them and creating an environment where they feel safe and valued in. Secondly, to offer something to the community. Something of value that brings the community together that reminds them that church comes in many different forms: sometimes it's a traditional service with a sermon and some hymns and at other times it's a community of people singing, dancing, wearing silly costumes and supporting one another through life.



"Spread for me is an escape from the real world. Whenever I'm there, I forget about everything else going on. The people, the atmosphere, the chaos leads to an enjoyable time every Wednesday, regardless of whether we're in panto season or not. I love going, and I'm gutted any time I have to miss it. It's the most fun I have and I have the people/the family that we have there to thank for that."



# Justice Group

The Justice Group was formed in October 2023 in response to the tragic events in the Middle East. Our original mission was to reflect and explore how we as a whole church might respond to the events in Israel/Palestine and support the ongoing work of other organisations working for peace and stability in the region. Initially a small group of individuals met to pray, talk, discern and to act. We arranged for Rev David Hardman to join us in June, when we hosted an open evening in a local pub. We invited the wider congregation, Circuit and District to join us for an opportunity to learn and ask questions about what was happening in the Middle East and consider how we might respond as individuals and communities. As well as the open evening, David led a challenging act of worship during our morning worship service which has inspired us to plan further action throughout the year. It became quickly evident that this group was also passionate about wider issues of justice and so we decided to expand its mission and continue to explore and inspire action regarding other justice issues such as the climate crisis and poverty.

# Eco Church

SRMC recognises its responsibility of Stewardship of the Earth and uses the Eco Church framework to support its aims. SRMC retained its Eco Church Silver status and continued to hold activities to maintain awareness of our role in protecting and enhancing our environment. Of particular note was a Repair, Reuse and Recycle event held in partnership with Transitions in West Gateshead at Rowlands Gill. The event showcased local environmental groups such as Gibside Community Farm, the local community orchard and 'Recycle yer bike'. A bring-and-take table enabled unwanted items to be shared with the community. Repairs were made to prolong the life of clothing, mechanical and electrical items brought on the day. Information boards and screens presented information on global environmental issues. Flower bulbs were planted in the church garden to encourage wildlife and pollinators. The event was attended by over 100 people from the church and local community. Chopwell church partnered in a similar event focusing on clothing repairs and a bring-and-take table. Climate Sunday Services were held during the year and Forest Church enabled younger members to celebrate God in the church garden, which is regularly maintained to promote and encourage bird and insect life. We continue to recycle pre-loved adult's and children's clothes and household items at various events taking place in the church. Further improvements to the energy efficiency of the building are required to enable us to apply for Eco Church Gold Award. To this end a funding application was made shortly before the year end to support our progress to 'net zero' carbon emissions.

# Chopwell

The monthly Coffee Mornings are well attended. The Community Garden is regularly tended and is used occasionally by church members and more so by the local youth.

On Wednesdays, our Youth Outreach Pioneers hold a coffee morning in conjunction with members of the congregation. It aims to open the doors of the church to the local community and provide an opportunity to meet and engage with others. It is our opportunity to show Jesus' love to anyone that comes.

With Bairns is a free stay-and-play session for parents or carers of children in Chopwell that happens weekly on Wednesdays after the coffee morning. We have toys and a sensory exploration area laid out in the church for children aged 0-5. This is the newest of our outreach provisions and the aim is to engage with families and carers, bringing them into the church and introducing themes through play. This will hopefully give us a space to help with the needs of families in the area, as well as provide an opportunity to invite them to church services and events throughout the year.

# Chop-Fest

Chop-Fest was a community festival in Chopwell that we held on the 27th July 2024. The aim was to bring members of the community together on grounds opposite the church at a free event. We collaborated with local organisations, the council and volunteers to make this happen. We had over 160 people attend plus approximately 35 volunteers across the four hour event. It gave us an opportunity to speak to the community, show them what was happening in the area over the summer, build relationships with other organisations and place value on a community that hasn't always felt seen. We plan to do it again in 2025 to show that as a church, we are here for the long haul. We hope that this leads to conversations and interactions about the community's understanding, perception or own experiences of the Christian faith and relationships with Jesus.





# Bridges

The Bridges group aims to provide a 'bridge' between church and the locality. Their mission is to create opportunities to build relationships with those on the fringes and across the wider church and local community. They also provide opportunities for spouses, family, neighbours and friends who don't wish to attend church to be involved in the larger community here at SRMC. Generations mixing and connecting is an important element of the group's focus. They run an annual church family picnic which includes church families and those in the community that the church has built relationships with e.g. local Syrian families. Bridges organised two walks last year and also support other groups in the church with events. They provide organisation, funding and 'graft' when needed. This year, Bridges supported a community BBQ at the church to mark the new academic year. This included crafts, games and free food and drink. They also supported the Youth Outreach Pioneers to hold Chop-Fest in Chopwell. This included a free BBQ, music, stalls and games. The heart and soul of the Bridges calendar is the church family holiday to Keswick. This takes place over a week in February half term. This year the holiday saw 90 people attend for some or all of the week. This includes families, couples, single people, young and old. During the week there is worship, walking, meals, entertainment and an annual car treasure hunt. The accommodation includes the Keswick Convention Centre and some local holiday homes. Over the week we take time to chat and listen, break bread, walk together and live in 'community'. For many attendees it is both a holiday and a spiritual top-up. Relationships are formed and solidified – alongside much laughter.



"A group of about 25 walked from Warkworth to Alnmouth along the beach. A distance of about six miles. Having stopped for a picnic we were about to set off again but had to wait while a young lady aged about 6 months had her nappy changed. **It struck me that there can't be many organisations where a group with ages spanning 8 decades (with people representing all of the decades) could join together for such a pleasant sociable event!"**

# Community Football

This continues to be a popular and appreciated activity for the young people and parents/carers in Highfield. Continuing to cater for different ages across the school years, there are four age groups that play for 30 minutes each. We have good opportunities to speak with the adults that are with the young people as well as the young people as they wait for their turns to play. On the pitch, exercise, respect and teamwork are just some of the values gained.

Rooted is a youth group which follows football at Highfield, held at Rowlands Gill church for year 9, 10 and 11. Starting in May, the group emerged out of the oldest football group and developed into a core group of six lads. We use Scripture Union's resource, 'Rooted' and put a sports theme to it. We have fun together doing sports, eating food, exploring life and faith. During the summer, we took the group for two sessions of kayaking and raft building. This was something that none of them had done before, and they said: "This is the best thing we have ever done" as they were challenged in many ways, being pushed out of their comfort zones, achieving beyond what they believed possible.





# Open Doors

Open Doors is an ecumenical women's group which meets weekly at Rowlands Gill. The aim of the group is to provide friendship in a supportive, caring community for women of all church backgrounds and none. Over the past year, speakers have given personal testimony of their faith, considered issues of environmental importance and challenged the group with topics of social justice. Craft mornings and quizzes have built relationships and members have been encouraged to lead sessions thus fostering greater self-confidence. Charity fundraising activities have been very successful and enjoyable and have led to wider community links. Regular times of prayer and devotional mornings have increased spiritual awareness and built up members' knowledge of the Christian faith. The close relationships within the group have welcomed several new members this year and have provided a safe space for exploring, learning and discipleship. Over the next year the aim is to build on these foundations to welcome and support more women into the church community.





# Men's Breakfast

The Men's Breakfast is a long-established group which offers opportunities to develop friendships through a programme of interesting events and activities. Although the group is primarily aimed at men, the activities are open to all. Meeting for an early Saturday morning breakfast or over a pint in a local pub on a Friday evening, activities range from Christian testimony or talks to visits to places of interest and guided walks. The year commenced by helping out and cooking at the church's community barbeque and family fun day. In October, some of the younger guys from the church joined us for our annual retreat at Minsteracres and it was great to reflect on the Bible and worship together. Our Christmas celebration meal attracted 24 men with ages ranging from 20s to 80s. On a cold and bright January morning the group donned hard hats and high-vis vests for an extremely interesting tour of the Council's Waste Disposal and Recycling Centre. On a beautiful spring morning in April we enjoyed breakfast overlooking the peaceful Derwent Reservoir. This was followed by an introduction to the art of sailing by one of our group members. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the introduction of Red Kites into our valley, we were given a special presentation by the Friends of the Red Kites. An early morning city centre breakfast and a guided walk around Graingertown and Newcastle's famous Grainger Market concluded our programme before the summer break.



"Having recently been welcomed into the congregation at SRMC, I was invited to join their Men's Breakfast group, which I have found to be a marvellous informal way of getting to know members of the congregation outside of church. After the fellowship of breakfast, informative visits to local places of interest are organised, where the chat continues."



# Financial Review

**The Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2024 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 Benevolence 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 2024 there was a surplus of receipts over payments of £30,198 (2023: surplus of receipts over payments of £32,395) before an internal transfer to the Children & Youth Project of £6,000 (2023: £5,000 and the Development Fund of £2,000) and a transfer from Spread of £500 (2023: £750 and Bridges of £660) totalling a net transfer of £5,500 (2023: £5,590). 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 £367 (2023: £119). Collections and funds raised specifically for other charities or external organisations are excluded from both receipts and payments. At the year-end the balance on the Unrestricted fund stood at £88,604 (2023: £63,906).

The Finance and Property Committee reviews the budget each June for the following year and the net surplus after internal transfers of £24,698 compared favourably with the budgeted surplus at the start of the year of £3,600 (after budgeted internal transfers). The reasons for the surplus were primarily due to increased letting of the premises, successful fundraising events, a legacy and higher interest income, together with cost savings on property maintenance. During the year a new photocopier/printer was purchased at a cost of £2,340, which is included in 'Other Payments'.

Offerings and tax recovered via gift aid totalled £91,156 (2023: £91,391). Letting receipts from hiring out the premises improved from £10,610 last year to £16,229 this year, which includes letting of the former caretaker's flat.

Within payments from the unrestricted fund there are three major areas over which the Church has little control: the Circuit assessment; property repairs; utility bills. Repairs at Rowlands Gill were kept to a minimum again this year following the redevelopment of the building in 2020. Utility costs are monitored very closely and steps taken to obtain the most cost-effective, green energy 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, clean the premises on a regular basis and minimise the utility and other costs.

## **Restricted Fund**

The Benevolence Fund is available to make payments at the Minister's discretion in cases of individual hardship or poverty. There were receipts of £5,236 (2023: £285) and payments totalling £3,194 (2023: £124), resulting in a balance carried forward of £2,381 (2023: £339). Receipts included two grants from GMBC, totalling £3,675, to help support individuals and families suffering hardship as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

## **Endowment Fund**

The Development Fund was established to finance the redevelopment of the Church buildings at Rowlands Gill. 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 £3,134 (2023: £3,154 and a transfer from the Church unrestricted funds of £2,000, as a contribution towards the cost of the refurbishment of the former caretaker's flat). The Fund made payments of £6,150 (2023: £28,763). Payments during the year included the repayment of the third instalment of £6,000 of the loan of £30,000 received from The William Leech Charity in the year ended 31 August 2021. The balance on the Fund carried forward was £6,176 (2023: £9,192).

## **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 £8,729 (2023: net receipts £43,931) before receipt of the transfer of £6,000 (2023: £5,000) from the Church unrestricted fund. The balance at the year-end was £69,528 (2023: £72,257).

Bridges had net receipts for the year of £196 (2023: £439 before a transfer to the Church unrestricted fund of £660, being the proceeds of a fundraising event). This resulted in a balance of £9,003 (2023: £8,807) at the year-end.

Spread Drama Group had net receipts of £1,009 (2023: £1,412) before a transfer to the Church unrestricted fund of £500 (2023: £750), being a donation towards heating and lighting costs, leaving a balance carried forward at the year-end of £5,487 (2023: £4,978).

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



# Reserves Policy

## Unrestricted funds

The Church recognises the need to maintain a reserve in the General Fund to enable it to function effectively. Additionally, the Church considers it appropriate to maintain a reserve as a contingency, for unplanned expenditure or indeed, reduced income. The Trustees have established their mission aims, including the resources available in terms of people, property and money. Mission initiatives and projects are fully costed, or estimates made of projected costs which incorporate the needs of the buildings and the necessary requirements of the Quinquennial Inspection Report(s). The Church Council is aware of the continuing need to maintain an appropriate level of reserves and has agreed that any General Fund reserve should be a minimum of £40,000 and not normally exceed six months operational expenditure. In conjunction with the Finance & Property Committee, the Treasurer monitors the reserve and reviews this policy annually.

The Church Council recognises the need to be accountable as Charity Trustees for all income and expenditure and in that regard, submits an Annual Report in accordance with the requirements of the Methodist Conference and the Charity Commission guidance in CC19. The Reserves Policy set out herein is recorded in the Trustees' minutes and the Annual Report.

The Church running expenses for the current year ending 31 August 2025 are expected to be around £125,835 (2024: £96,900). Therefore, the required reserve for unrestricted funds is between £40,000 and £62,900 (2024: £48,450). The General Fund at 31 August 2024 was approximately £25,700 more than six months operational expenditure, primarily due to a large number of fundraising events during the year and some one-off grants and legacies received. Also, some £10,000 of property work anticipated was unable to be executed in the year and has therefore been carried forward and is included in the figure of £125,835 above. The reserves now available will assist with a budget for the Church to carry out some essential repair work to its buildings and thereby to continue its outreach work in the local communities of Rowlands Gill and Chopwell.

## **Restricted Fund**

The Benevolence Fund is distributable at the Minister's discretion to those in need. During the year ended 31 August 2024, grants totalling £3,675 were received from GMBC and collections at Communion Services have been made in favour of the fund. The result of which is that the Church has been able to significantly increase the support it is able to offer those in need. This support has been co-ordinated by a small team led by the Minister, in conjunction with the Community Hub. See Page 14 of the Report for more details.

## **Internal Organisations**

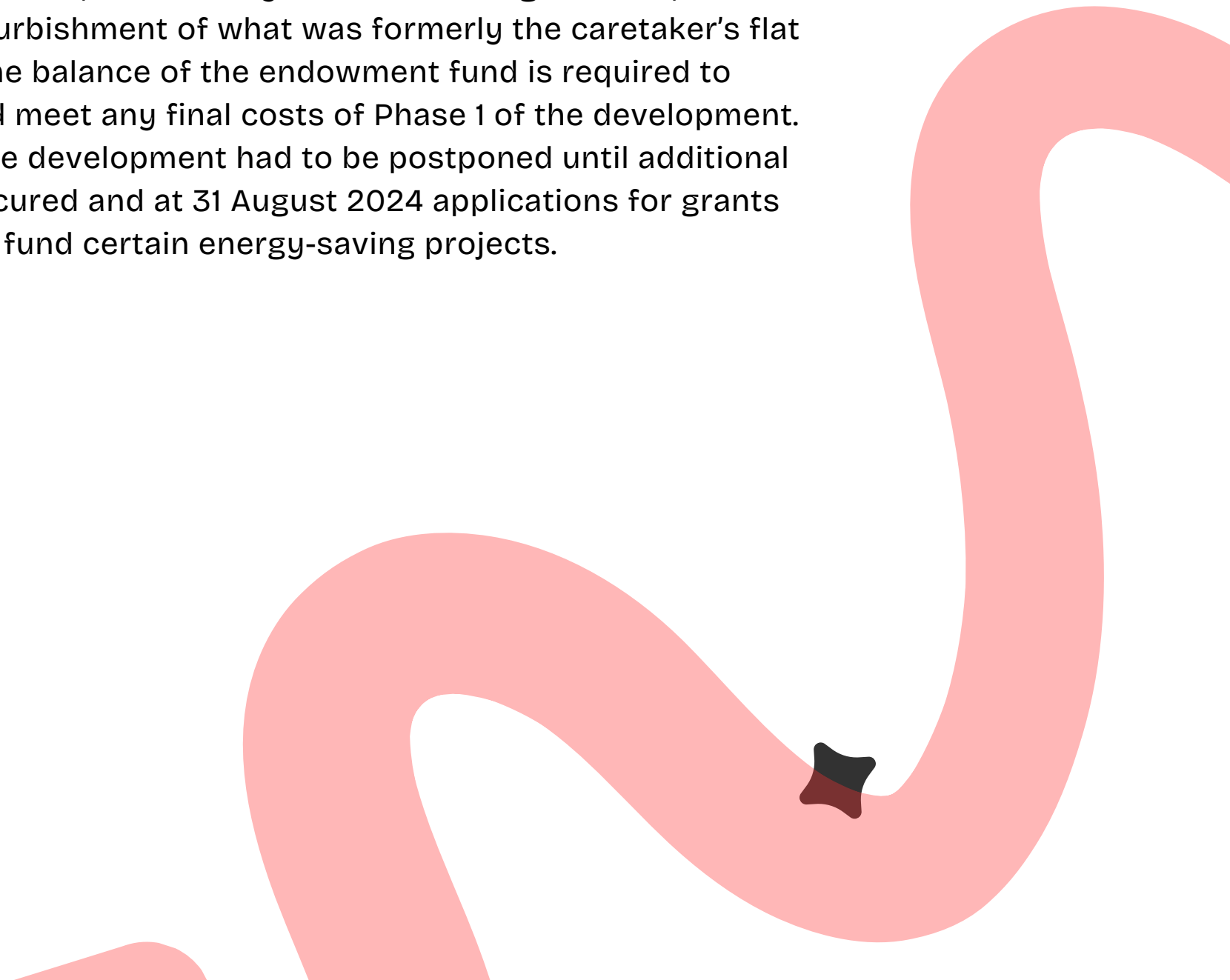
Children & Youth Project – this account receives funding from time to time which is allocated to particular projects however, all funds held in this account are treated as restricted to paying the salaries of lay employees and supporting activities such as Sunday Club and for children and youth generally. The sources of funding vary however, it is important to retain an appropriate level of reserves to enable the project to continue planned operations for at least six months in the event of an unexpected fall in income. The Project currently employs four part-time Children and Youth workers. Consequently, all funds are committed until 2027 at the earliest.

Bridges and Spread do not aim to make a significant surplus and any reserves are held to enable them to carry on with their activities, including their 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, relating to the development of the Church building at Strathmore Road, the first phase of which started in summer 2020 and was largely 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. The balance remaining at 31 August 2024 was £12,000. In the year ended 31 August 2023, the upgrading and refurbishment of what was formerly the caretaker's flat was completed. The balance of the endowment fund is required to repay the loan and meet any final costs of Phase 1 of the development. Certain parts of the development had to be postponed until additional funds could be secured and at 31 August 2024 applications for grants had been made to fund certain energy-saving projects.





# Trustees

- Helen Braun
- John Clark
- Lily Collinson
- Hannah Dawson
- Ann Dixon - from May 24
- Jill Emmanuel
- Sandra Dixon
- Mary Glease
- William Gray
- Marie Hutchinson
- Pete Hutchinson
- Andy Innes - until May 2024
- Linda Innes
- David Johnson
- Gillian Johnson
- Helen Johnson
- Bryn Lauder - until February 2024
- Rachel Lauder - until February 2024
- Tracy Lauder
- Sharon Mackie
- Simon Mackie
- Christine Middlemiss
- Eunice Peacock
- Trevor Peacock
- Colin Robson
- David Robson
- Sue Robson
- Ranjith Rosa
- Boomie Shodeinde - from April 24
- Marie Sidgwick - from May 24
- Josh Simpson - from May 24
- Keith Stamp
- David Thompson
- Eileen Wright
- Keith Crulley - Youth Worker
- Ruth Hallatt - Children and Families' Pastor
- Jill Warden - Treasurer
- Rev Ann Varker - Chair (Minister)

# Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved this Annual Trustees' Report.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

**Signature(s)**

**Full name(s)**

Ann Margaret Varker

**Position(s)**

Chair of Trustees

**Date**

30/04/25



**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH Charity no 1179206  
ON THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

**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 07/05/25

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

**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH**  
**YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT**

<b>CHURCH</b> <b>excluding Internal Organisations</b>	<b>Note</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b> <b>Funds</b>	<b>Restricted</b> <b>Fund</b> <b>Benevolence</b>	<b>Endowment</b> <b>Fund</b> <b>Development</b>	<b>Total</b> <b>Funds</b> <b>2024</b>	<b>Total</b> <b>Funds</b> <b>2023</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>	<b>2</b>					
Offerings and Tax recovered	3	91,042	1561	3,120	95,723	94,511
Bank interest		3,775	0	14	3,789	1,662
Lettings		16,343	0	0	16,343	10,610
Other receipts		16,864	3,675	0	20,539	15,172
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>		<b>128,024</b>	<b>5,236</b>	<b>3,134</b>	<b>136,394</b>	<b>121,955</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>					
Circuit Assessment	5	64,744	0	0	64,744	61,024
Donations		8	0	0	8	8
Repairs and Maintenance		4,900	0	0	4,900	4,249
Utilities		15,961	0	0	15,961	15,282
Endowment payments		0	0	6,090	6,090	28,703
Other payments		12,213	3,194	60	15,467	5,742
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>		<b>97,826</b>	<b>3,194</b>	<b>6,150</b>	<b>107,170</b>	<b>115,008</b>
<b>NET (PAYMENTS)/RECEIPTS FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>30,198</b>	<b>2,042</b>	<b>-3,016</b>	<b>29,224</b>	<b>6,947</b>
Total funds brought forward		63,906	339	9,192	73,437	70,080
Transfers with Internal Funds & Organisations	6	-5,500	0	0	-5,500	-3,590
<b>CHURCH FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>8 &amp; 9</b>	<b>88,604</b>	<b>2,381</b>	<b>6,176</b>	<b>97,161</b>	<b>73,437</b>



**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH  
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024  
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT**

<b>INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS REPORTING TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Receipts £</b>	<b>Payments £</b>	<b>Net receipts/ (payments) £</b>	<b>Transfers with Church £</b>	<b>Opening balances £</b>	<b>Closing balances £</b>
Children & Youth Project		81,890	90,619	-8,729	6,000	72,257	69,528
Bridges		6,458	6,262	196	0	8,807	9,003
Spread Drama Group		6,302	5,293	1,009	-500	4,978	5,487
<b>Total of Internal Organisations</b>		<b>94,650</b>	<b>102,174</b>	<b>-7,524</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>86,042</b>	<b>84,018</b>
Church totals from previous page		136,194	107,170	29,224	-5,500	73,437	97,161
<b>TOTAL FOR CHURCH INCLUDING INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS</b>		<b>231,044</b>	<b>209,344</b>	<b>21,700</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>159,479</b>	<b>181,179</b>

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**

<b>CHURCH FUNDS HELD AT 31 AUGUST</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Opening balances 2023 £</b>	<b>Closing balances 2024 £</b>
Cash in hand		228	658
Bank Current accounts		14,574	8,538
Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Deposit account		58,635	87,965
<b>Total of Church accounts</b>		<b>73,437</b>	<b>97,161</b>
<b>Total funds held by Internal Organisations</b>		<b>86,042</b>	<b>84,018</b>
<b>TOTAL CASH FUNDS</b>		<b>159,479</b>	<b>181,179</b>
<b>OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES</b>			
Land and buildings	10	3,767,407	4,058,832
Plant and equipment at insured value		174,536	178,898
Loan for redevelopment	11	18,000	12,000
Other liabilities		119	367

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by:

Rev. Ann Varker, Chair

Jill N Warden, Treasurer

Date 30/04/25

**YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**  
**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 2024 for this purpose is therefore, total receipts of £231,044 less endowment capital receipts of £3,134 giving a figure of £227,910. 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 2024 for the Church Unrestricted funds includes Gift Aid of £15,030 (2023: £15,058).
- 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 Funds & Organisations** - During the year the Church transferred £6,000 to the Youth & Children Project and received a transfer of £500 from Spread. (2023: transferred £2,000 to the Development Fund, as a contribution towards the cost of the refurbishment of what was formerly the caretaker's flat, and received transfers from Bridges of £660 and Spread of £750.)

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

	<b>2024</b>				<b>2023</b>
	<b>Church</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Bridges</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Brought forward			990	990	1,260
Collections/Receipts	1,218		12,980	14,198	13,050
Payments	-1,036		-13,310	-14,346	-13,320
Balance still to be paid at 31 August	182	0	660	842	990

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



**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH**  
**YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**  
**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)**

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

**9 Endowment Fund - Development Fund**

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 for the extension and redevelopment of the Church building at Strathmore Road has been classified as an expendable endowment.

The receipts and payments of the Endowment Fund have been shown in a separate column and an analysis is provided below, showing the comparative figures for the prior year.

	Year ended 31 August	
	2024	2023
	£	£
Receipts		
Donations and grants	3,120	3,120
Bank interest	14	34
	<u>3,134</u>	<u>3,154</u>
Payments		
Building project payments	-90	-22,703
Bank charges	-60	-60
Loan repayment	-6,000	-6,000
Net (payments)/receipts	<u>-3,016</u>	<u>-25,609</u>
Funds brought forward	9,192	32,801
Transfer from/to Unrestricted Funds (see Note 6)	0	2,000
Funds carried forward	<u>6,176</u>	<u>9,192</u>

**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH**  
**YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024**  
**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. The 2023 land value was based on a valuation in 2019. After 5 years the value has been reviewed and has been increased by £2,000. The existing buildings are included at their insurance value in accordance with Methodist Church guidance.

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	£	£
Land at Strathmore Road - estimated value	390,000	388,000
Insurance value of redeveloped buildings	<u>3,250,000</u>	<u>2,970,787</u>
	3,640,000	3,358,787
Chopwell Methodist Church - insurance value	<u>418,832</u>	<u>408,620</u>
	<u>4,058,832</u>	<u>3,767,407</u>

\* Note only: Cost of redevelopment to 31 August 2024 £692,141.

- 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 repayable in 5 equal, annual instalments, the first being paid in October 2021.



# Strathmore Road Methodist Church

Strathmore Road Rowlands Gill  
Tyne and Wear  
NE39 1HX



Charity: 1179206



[rowlandsgill.org.uk](https://rowlandsgill.org.uk)

