

BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

England & Wales · Charity number 1179832

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2018-09-06

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

Contact

Address Brighton Unitarian Church
New Road
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Activities

Objects: THE OBJECT OF THE CIO IS THE PROMOTION OF RELIGION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

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

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space
- **What:** Religious Activities
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Brighton And Hove

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-09-30	£104,642	£108,510	-	-
2023-09-30	£78,017	£86,029	-	-
2022-09-30	£98,518	£73,584	-	-
2021-09-30	£56,073	£64,874	-	-
2020-09-30	£54,128	£95,879	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
David Norman Roe		2025-01-26
David Stuart Deeks		2026-01-25
John Jeremy Robert Naish		2024-01-28
Lucy Catherine Mair		2026-01-25
Michael John Waite		2025-01-26
Raymond William John Bate		2025-01-26
Simon John Blackmore		2024-01-28

BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1179832

Accounts

Brighton **Unitarians**

*Annual Report and Accounts
relating to the Financial Year
2023/24*



*Presented at the Annual General Meeting
held at Brighton Unitarian Church
Sunday 26th January 2025 at 12.30pm*

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Committee 2024

Officers:

Chair: Jo Howarth
Secretary: Helen White
Treasurer: Trisha Purchas
Other Committee Members:
John Naish
Matthew Chambers
Simon Blackmore

Administrator/Venue Manager:

Catherine Stead

Caretaker/Duty Manager: Stuart Lee



ABOVE In September Rev'd Jennifer Sanders was called to serve and ordained into the Brighton ministry.

Chair's Report

Our job, as your chosen management team, is to make the Sunday services an oasis of calm and spiritual fulfilment, whatever else is happening. We mainly did that, so this year has been cheering for those of us beavering away behind the scenes. But have no doubt some generous people have given a lot to keep us afloat through 2024.

So some big **Thank You's**: to the volunteers on the 2024 Committee, the heart of our Church. To Matthew: for introducing some financial know-how and forging ahead with ideas to keep us solvent now we can see how risky our position is. For John: with his invaluable knowledge of our history. For Simon who pulls together our community, supporting Jennifer, safeguarding and organising our Sunday coffees. We are losing Trisha, who hosted meetings at her home and single-handedly raised hundreds with her fabulous crafts; and Helen White who designs our promotional publicity. I do hope we can still call on them now that they are stepping down.

Often we are responding to crises; the building generally provides those. We've had the roof leak, the boiler and the rotten doors, as well as raising funds to complete the refurb of our windows. That means sending grant applications with Victor's help.

We manage four employees and freelance maintenance, HR, bookkeeping and payroll support. All contracts must comply with the law, and much of this year (and our budget) has been spent on that. Jen Barton's help meant it has not been as overwhelming as it might.

We now know our services cost around £500 a week to run. Jennifer, our Minister, works for us 3 days a week. Cat, our administrator, runs the building on 4 days. She has raised our income from hirings by 25% this year for which we are hugely grateful. Both Cat and Jennifer need close support from the Committee, and the monthly meetings give them a chance to share issues and successes.

Stuart, who runs the service tech also supports our hirers. His hours are mad so we are hugely grateful he makes it work. Also Barbara our glorious and understanding cleaner. Christine Clark-Lowes, our bookkeeper, retired this year. The Committee are transitory and we miss Christine's long-term knowledge but welcome to Alison.

We rely on the income produced by our hugely successful Friday fundraising concerts. They are down to the incredible work of Phillida and Marion, working with Cat. Attend if you can and offer help if possible.

Fanny has helped with services and run fundraising bars at events. Kathy also does so much to source our musicians and Sunday speakers.

Thanks, Caroline, for creating our newsletter over several years. Maybe you fancy being our new editor, keeping us connected. If you have an idea for fundraising or skills to help with anything do contact the office or me by email chair@brightonunitarian.org.uk

Thank you to all who make this place special.

Jo Howarth

Ministers Report

As I write this I am putting the final touches on the Carol Service, our final service before Christmas, and it's been another busy year in the church.

The first half of the year saw the completion of three years of study and at the General Assembly AGM I was invited to join the Roll of Ministers.

At our AGM we welcomed three new members to the committee. They have all worked hard to look after the finances and management of our church. With committed team-work we ended our financial year in a better position than we had first expected.

We welcomed seven new members to the church in the first membership service of its kind (pictured below). This will be an annual event and will in future invite existing members to renew their commitment to their spiritual path. We have continued to grow as a church and the next membership service we hope to welcome a further seven.

Quiet Reflection – This space on a Wednesday, providing an opportunity for people to gather in the middle of the week for some spiritual nourishment as well as a catch up and a cuppa, is growing. There is now a core number of people attending, some of whom prefer this gathering to that of a more formal Sunday service.

Elements – This was a course run in spring of this year in the evening and was well attended giving people the opportunity to explore nature's elements within a spiritual framework.

We had our anniversary picnic again this year in the grounds of the Pavilion with new people to the church as well as those with decades of membership, from early 20s to those in their 80s! It reflected the diversity of those coming to church.

The ordination and induction took place in September of this year. After months of preparation the church was full of members, regular attendees, friends and family. It was a beautiful moment in the history of the church and signals the formal commitment from both the congregation and myself as we work together to grow the church, support the local community and carry the message of Unitarianism throughout our city.

I have spent a lot of my time being in the church speaking to a variety of people who come through our doors. So much of ministry is being with the person in front of you at any given moment, whether that is offering a cuppa, pastoral care or spiritual direction, sharing the message of Unitarianism, running groups and weekly reflection, praying for and with others, developing a safeguarding team, delivering services and keeping the doors open for those that need to connect and grow in their spiritual lives.

We are extraordinarily blessed with a building in the heart of the city – its position reminds us of the eclectic mix of people in our community and the need that surrounds us.

There is so much more that we can do and I see 2025 as building on the commitments we have made to each other this year. I have seen this in action when I took some weeks away from work and the support and help you have offered me and each other.

I would like to thank all of you who come to this sacred space in the heart of the city. You all support BUC in your own unique way and help to keep this church vibrant and forward thinking.

Rev'd Jennifer Sanders



PICTURED LEFT *We welcomed 7 new members to the church in our first membership service*



Church Administrator's Report

We are fortunate to have a great team in place taking care of our beautiful building and all the events that happen within it, with Stuart Lee our Caretaker/Duty Manager ably supported by Pete Tulley and Simon Ashcroft, and our invaluable cleaner Barbara Lowe.

Rites of Passage: Three weddings (and three funerals) have been held in the church in the past financial year bringing in £6,515.50. We currently have three weddings booked in for 2025, and one for 2026.

We have seen a very welcome 25% increase in income from hirings this past financial year:

2022 lettings and fees - £49,237.05
2023 lettings and fees - £52,235.46
2024 lettings and fees - £65,218.10

This includes £540 from piano hire (last year £266.90) and we continue to be grateful to Nicola Grunberg for the loan of her vintage model O Steinway grand which attracts such high calibre musicians to rehearse, record, film and perform here at the church. (Nicola's history of the piano can be viewed at: www.brightonunitarian.org.uk/our-piano)

We are now approaching maximum capacity in the hall on some days of the week, and will be implementing another increase in hire fees in the spring to meet our lettings income target for the next financial year.

In the summer we undertook a survey of all our regular hirers, to which 20 groups representing 500+ individuals responded, gaining fascinating insights into the regular users of our spaces. Their feedback on how they value us as a venue made us proud to be able to support their many and varied activities, and we will be exploring ways to build on what we offer them in the future.

In May 2024 we hosted 11 Brighton Fringe/Festival events, including two circus performances and a John Mann piano recital (arranged by the Max Miller Society), plus The Great Escape music festival, all of which generated £4,792.75 in hire fees (last year £5,369). Thanks to a team of volunteers organised by Fanny Tulley we made a further £477.60 in profit on bars during this time.

Our Friday lunchtime fundraising concerts now attract an average audience of 68, resulting in a profit of £5,456.08 for the church this past financial year, thanks to the dedication of volunteers Marion Bance and Phillida Simpson. All our 2025 performers and dates are already confirmed and in the new year I will start work programming 2026.

Our 2025 Brighton Fringe bookings already include a rock opera as well as performances of dance, music and theatre, and the church diary is already looking pleasingly full throughout 2025, particularly on Saturdays.

Cat Stead
Church Administrator/Venue Manager

Treasurer's Report

At the start of the year, Trisha Purchas generously took on the official title of Treasurer when George Dean was unable to continue due to ill health; in early 2024 I was happy to take forward this role with support from Christine Clark-Lowes and Cat Stead. The church owes a great debt of gratitude to Christine for the many years she has dedicated to acting as our financial record-keeper and for ensuring such a smooth handover over recent months to Alison Forsyth who we now welcome into this role.

Despite a decline in the rate of inflation over the year, the cost of living has remained a significant concern for many and been one of the drivers of an increased demand upon charities in general. This has contributed to a more competitive fundraising environment – a fact that highlights our own need to continue to diversify our income streams and control our operational costs. However, within this broader context, it is gratifying to report an overall picture that whilst challenging is encouraging.

It is positive to report that this year's figures appear to indicate that a multi-year trend of reducing income from Donations & Offertory is now reversing. After the pandemic, the use of cash was understandably reduced and establishing consistent mechanisms for collections at our services has taken time. However, with an increasing church membership and growing awareness of the value of a regular contribution via standing order, we can hope to see this income stream continue to grow.

Our Lettings income saw an impressive 25% increase on the previous year. Whilst an increase in our rates early in the year contributed to this, much of the credit for this should go to our Administrator, Cat Stead, whose tremendous expertise and efforts maximised our earned income through the year from a wide range of sources. It was encouraging to see other income sources such as our General Fundraising and Rights of Passage also increase, but it was Lettings that was the foundation that helped increase our income overall for the year by 34% to £104,642.

Set against this, our expenditure increased by 26% compared to 2022/23. Whilst our Support Costs remained steady, the balancing payment for our new boilers of nearly £10,000 was a significant contributor to our Management & Administration costs increasing by 17%. Costs covered within Ministry increased to more fully reflect a full year's costs – roughly only half a year being relevant in our 2022/23 figures. As a result, full payments for the year were £108,510. This unfortunately meant another year of deficit, of £3,868, but at just less than half the level of the prior year.

Trustees have approved a balanced budget for 2024/25 that presents challenges for both our fundraising and cost control. With a focus on maximising the opportunities to meet capital repairs and costs from grant fundraising, the hope is we can continue to improve on the progress made this year.

Matthew Chambers
Acting Treasurer

BUC Account Figures 2023/2024

	FY 2023-2024	FY 2022-2023
A RECEIPTS		
1 Donations & Offertory		
Offertory	2,662.64	1,356.78
General Donations	8,340.33	7,430.62
Legacy	0.00	0.00
Subtotal	11,002.97	8,787.40
2 HMRC		
Gift Aid tax reclaim	2,424.79	1,839.14
Subtotal	2,424.79	1,839.14
3 Grants		
General Baptist Assembly	330.00	0.00
Highgate Hill	1,125.00	770.17
Subtotal	1,455.00	770.17
4 Bank Interest		
Gold & Gen accounts	1,046.74	756.13
Subtotal	1,046.74	756.13
5 Lettings and fees		
Hirings and other fees	65,218.10	52,126.34
PRS payments from hirers	467.20	514.40
Subtotal	65,685.30	52,640.74
6 Other income		
Rites of passage	6,515.50	4,050.00
VAT claimed back	2,505.21	247.30
General Fundraising activity	9,661.09	7,472.74
Investment withdrawal	0.00	0.00
Charitable donations	361.65	130.00
GA Quota subs rec'd	945.00	840.00
Insurance claim	0.00	0.00
Miscellaneous Income	3,039.18	483.39
Subtotal	23,027.63	13,223.43
TOTAL RECEIPTS	104,642.43	78,017.01
B PAYMENTS		
1 Ministry		
Stipend & Manse	19,184.46	9,352.28
Ministry expenses	574.18	862.99
Pulpit fees paid	1,133.80	1,848.00
Subtotal	20,892.44	12,063.27
2 HMRC		
Tax and NI	7,379.04	4,897.87
Subtotal	7,379.04	4,897.87

3 Support costs		
Gifts, flowers, etc.	923.25	1,035.61
Travel expenses	448.83	269.19
Rites of Passage fees and expenses	2,545.00	2,070.00
Committee expenses	1,952.31	1,206.31
Organ and piano	1,882.00	2,197.00
Printing, advertising, etc.	644.74	623.23
Charitable donations	319.42	259.49
Denomination subscriptions	1,235.00	1,463.75
Subscriptions to periodicals	74.00	74.00
Subtotal	10,024.55	9,198.58
4 Management & Administration		
Administrator salary	17,550.30	15,939.08
NEST (all employees)	2,547.77	1,067.88
Cleaner's salary	3,646.89	3,979.79
Caretaking salaries	8,763.17	7,537.63
Record Keeper	2,164.08	4,024.88
Light and heat	4,410.41	6,981.09
Water rates	0.00	0.00
Telephone	596.76	598.95
Repairs and renewals	17,244.52	9,692.03
Furniture and equipment	2,178.00	739.60
Kitchen supplies	2,795.57	2,253.36
Postage and stationery	1,106.89	755.45
Website, streaming, etc.	110.33	500.83
Investment	0.00	0.00
Insurance	4,116.99	3,678.01
PRS; CCLI; PPL	1,805.59	671.48
Accountancy and payroll	757.00	757.00
Bank charges	132.75	123.00
Refunds	286.90	569.00
Subtotal	70,213.92	59,869.06
TOTAL PAYMENTS	108,509.95	86,028.78
Funding		
General a/c	6,153.27	5,543.77
Gold a/c	44,268.05	48,730.48
HSBC a/c	234.06	234.06
Petty Cash	37.14	51.73
Floats	80.00	80.00
Total	50,772.52	54,640.04
Balance from last financial year	54,640.04	62,651.81
Receipts - Payments this year	(3,867.52)	(8,011.77)
	50,772.52	54,640.04
BNY Mellon investment portfolio	107,384.58	97,284.68
Note: figure shows investment value as of 30 September. Income is re-invested; any other transactions are recorded above		

Report on the Church Accounts by the Independent Examiner

Overview

The Books of Account were found to accurately represent the financial position of the Brighton Unitarian Church for the Year Ended 30th September 2024. It should be noted that the Books are maintained on a cash basis, rather than on an accruals basis.

Financial Statements

I have checked the FY 2023/24 AGM Statement and agreed the final presentation. Figures from the General Account cashbook and other sources have been carried forward correctly to this statement. I can also confirm that the closing balances are correctly stated and that the FY 2022/23 comparatives have also been brought forward correctly.

BNY Mellon

I can confirm that the value of the investment now stands at £ 107,384.58 as at 30th September 2024.

General Account & Building Appeal Fund Cashbooks

In line with usual practice, the Books of Account were subject to an interim audit as at 31st July 2024. This change has been made to reduce the volume of work at the year-end given the time constraints at this time. The change has proved very useful and the practice is now an established routine.

The General Account is structured in such a way that record keeping is transparent, enabling more convenient auditing. A convenient record is also kept of receipts not banked and payments not

cash at each month end. Such record keeping reduces risk and enables greater control and understanding of the 'Finances'.

Receipts

Receipts were sampled and both the receipt in the bank account and its accurate recording in the cashbook confirmed.

Payments

Backing documentation was examined for all invoiced payments with a value of £50 and above. The majority of documents carried sufficient payment details to enable the appropriate records to be validated. The same invoices were traced to entries in the BUC General Bank Account and all were found to be accurate. Invoices were generally booked correctly and carried forward correctly to the financial statements.

Petty Cash

The petty cash account was checked for the accurate recording of funding transfers; addition and balances carried forward were checked for accuracy.

Generally

Record keeping was thorough and detailed, with little risk of material misstatement. This has the benefit of not only facilitating the audit, but more importantly, evidences good financial control and minimises the risk of error.

Donald Simmons

ACCOUNTANT ACMA CGMA
16th December 2024



PICTURED ABOVE *The Worshipful Mayor of Brighton & Hove, Councillor Mohammed Asaduzzaman with Rev'd Jennifer Sanders and Cat Stead*

Brighton Unitarian Church



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Accounts

Brighton **Unitarian** *Church*

*Annual Report and Accounts
relating to the Financial Year
2022/23*



*Presented at the Annual General Meeting
held at Brighton Unitarian Church
Sunday 28th January 2024 at 12.30pm*

Minister Elect

Jennifer Sanders

Committee

Joanne Howarth (Co-Chair)

Rev Susie Courtault (Co-Chair)

Francis Clark-Lowes (Treasurer)

Helen White (Secretary)

Julia Badger

Trisha Purchas

Finance Officer

George Dean

Church Administrator / Venue Manager

Catherine Stead

Caretaker / Duty Manager

Stuart Lee

Membership: 33

Co-Chairs' Report

We started this year with no Minister and a brand-new Administrator and Caretaker. Our Church has been changing and growing and our job on the Management Committee has been to support and nourish the wonderful people that keep our beautiful building open and our wider community supported. Grateful thanks to Cat Stead for her inspirational work running the Church. Thanks to Stuart Lee for being our warm and practical face for hirers, and for maintaining the live-streaming of services beyond the pandemic; and to Barbara Lowe for keeping things shipshape and clean. Special thanks to Christine Clark-Lowes: not just as an impeccable financial record keeper but whose longstanding knowledge of our Church has been invaluable in all our decision making. She is retiring in September 2024 and we will miss her hugely.

In March we were joined by Jennifer Sanders as our Minister Elect. Jennifer is with us for 3 days a week, writing and leading 2 services a month and doing a wealth of community and spiritual duties the rest of the time. Currently they are still studying to be a Minister, and their Unitarian tutors have been on hand to help us with our transition to having a leader. At our Congregational meeting (to acknowledge Jennifer's first 6 months) everyone appreciated the highlights of the summer, including the anniversary picnic, the Death Café and hosting the Unitarian LGBTQ+ exhibition for Pride.

Jennifer was particularly valued for the way they dealt with the shocking news of the death in May of Jef Jones, our much-loved friend and retired Lay Leader. They brought together and held our spiritual community, as well as his family and friends in the wider Unitarian movement: organising vigils and reaching out to anyone who needed support. In early September the Congregation, alongside Jef's son Micky, opened its doors for a celebration of Jef's life. People shared their knowledge of Jef's favourite hymns and music and read some of the poems he had been working on latterly and which he was keen for us to share. We were honoured that Micky read a poem himself. Jef will be profoundly missed by all of us he inspired so much at this Church.

We also sadly lost our longstanding member Anne Antram in January, whose family has given us one of her beautiful paintings to put in the vestry.

Our Friday Lunchtime Concerts are just getting better and better thanks to Cat, Phillida and Marion. Lunchtime reflection continues on a Wednesday with Jennifer and with Pamela playing piano, as well as regular weddings, baby blessings and funerals in our sacred space.

FUSE was in June this year, and a large group of us went to Aylesford Priory where we took part in workshops and listened to an inspiring speaker on the theme of Seeking Paradise. This annual gathering of Unitarians from the Southeast is a wonderfully revitalizing event to be part of.

Practically, we have been working hard to modernize our Church and make it more sustainable. Our old boiler finally crunched to a halt. After months of research on Heat pumps, we had to admit the technology is not yet there for our needs, so we have stayed with gas for now. Meanwhile Jennifer has been working with Eco Church to clean up our act, and in the office they are overhauling our muddled computer systems to be more streamlined and closer to paper free.

The way we donate has revolutionised: though some miss handing around the collection bags, direct debits and our card reader are much preferred by others. Livestreaming has been an ongoing issue. We started in Lockdown with some basic kit, however, the huge costs to upgrade the quality have been the subject of much debate. Big thanks to Pete Tulley, our maintenance saviour, for all he has done to bring the sound up to scratch.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to our Sunday services, we could not exist without your help. To Helen Lee and Simon for co ordinating the coffee makers, and all of you who have stepped into those important jobs. To our musicians Kathy, Pamela, Stuart Deeks, Nicola and Zhanna and to Beth for decorating our Church, before moving to Hastings. To those of you, like Brian Trisha, Bella, Matthew, Fanny and Diana who have led and contributed to community services; and to all the visiting speakers who have come, or livestreamed, from afar: we always value your input on Service leaders you would like us to invite.

Thanks to Stuart Deeks for starting the Irregular Choir. It meets when people are free, anyone is welcome and it is a thriving new addition to our church worship.

I personally want to thank those have helped with communication and research while I have been away from Brighton. To Jen Barton, Fanny Tulley and Ann Woodhead, to the Heart and Soul team including Katherine Malthouse; and Caroline Drijver for the invaluable *Newsletter*.

Most of all, thanks to the Trustees who commit monthly to dealing with the nitty gritty of the business of our venue, so we can afford to keep the Church open and have a Minister. All this means we can meet on a Sunday in our calm, spiritual space, free to open our hearts and breathe. Thank you: Trisha Purchas for your fundraising; Helen White for your designing and research; George Dean for explaining the figures so clearly. Thank you for everything and I wish you peace as you move on: Francis Clark-Lowes, Julia Badger and my dear fellow Chair Susie Courtault.

Jo Howarth with Susie Courtault
Co-Chairs

Minister Elect's Report

I first walked through the red doors of BUC back in 2011 to support one of Stephen Crowther's early services. Little did I know that 12 years later, at the start of 2023, I would be working my last few weeks as Lay Pastor at Hastings and preparing to join Brighton Unitarian Church as your Minister Elect.

There was a growing anticipation in the first 3 months of the year for us both as we approached the start of a new chapter in our church - and I was met with some degree of relief when I finally arrived! The past two years had been an exhausting time for the committee and the church: seeking a new minister, other staff changes and the pandemic. So, it was a welcome opportunity for the committee to let go of some of the enormous holding that had occurred.

Just before taking my first service as your Minister Elect at the end of March someone pointed out I had a flat tyre! They jokingly said: "you're not going anywhere now!" It was definitely a sign! I want to say thank you for your welcome in the first few weeks of ministry. Although many knew me as a congregant and member, it was a huge change for us all to get used to and I appreciate your support.

This was made all the more challenging by the death of Jef Jones, BUC former Lay Leader, just 5 weeks into my ministry. It was a difficult time for many of you as you grieved this loss with confusion, shock, sadness and seemingly no formal way to say your goodbyes. I saw how many of you looked after each other at this time and am both grateful and honoured to have led you through this difficult time. The church had two services in response to Jef's death within days and later in the year held a service of thanksgiving for him. There were many involved in making this happen and I express my thanks to them here for their support and hard work. Many attended this service - those who had known Jef as their Lay Leader, as a friend and colleague, father and fellow Unitarian. The service reflected the richness of Jef's writings of poetry, services and articles - as well as a number of personal tributes and, of course, some of his favourite music. In time, his last set of poems will be published and shared in the church.

The summer brought us a celebration of our 203rd Anniversary with a picnic in the grounds of the Royal Pavilion - a nod to the Prince Regent who over 200 years ago sold the land where our building was established.

We had a gathering in the woods at Stanmer Park to celebrate the summer solstice and there was a large contingent of us who attended FUSE (the Festival of Unitarians in the South East). PRIDE is such a huge celebration in Brighton, and we played our part by opening the church over the weekend offering a quiet place for revellers as well as an opportunity to look at the LGBT+ voices pop up exhibition. It was a joyful and busy weekend including an impromptu blessing of a couple who had just got engaged!

We said goodbye for now to Stephen Crowther, a member of our church who took the decision to step back from leading services at BUC and the district to support his husband, Charlie. We sent our best wishes at his last service in October.

Our Sunday services have been rich with a mixture of established and new service leaders including the President of the General Assembly, Vince McCully, in October who led a service complete with puppets, Ann Howell, Social Action Officer for the General Assembly, and Rev Julio Torres from Lewisham who will return in 2024 along with some new faces.

There is a rich talent of singers, songwriters, musicians, readers, actors and writers in our congregation - and it brings me great joy to include this in our Sunday services along with our established pianists who have brought such an eclectic mix of music. Unitarian services at BUC are a place for all and I look forward to discovering more hidden talent amongst us in 2024 to broaden our inclusive worship.

The Wednesday Quiet Reflection grows slowly with two or three that come when able and an ongoing appreciation that the church is open more for private prayer and group reflection. In addition, from January Reiki Healing will be offered on a Wednesday from 2-4pm by Mike, a regular at the church.

We ran our first 6-week course in late Autumn focusing on Prayer and Meditation and a new course will run in February and early summer 2024, along with the opportunity for those that wish to have occasional worship in nature.

There has always been the opportunity for those coming to church for a while to think about becoming a member and this is something I'd like to develop into a more meaningful spiritual commitment; acknowledging and celebrating our new members in a special service, the opportunity for existing members to revisit their own commitment and a chance for those who are new or considering this to understand more what this means. To reflect this, we will hold a membership service in the early part of 2024.

There is so much more to do: to reach those that are searching for a spiritual path that they can be fully present as themselves, to explore what it means to be a Unitarian in the changing landscape of world events, and to look at how we can offer a variety of events, courses, worship and community activities in addition to the Sunday services. It is important that as a community we decide together where best we can focus our plans, talents, skills and resources - and at the AGM we will begin our discussion together around our hopes and plans regarding social action and how we as a community can support causes that need our help in the Brighton area.

On the rare occasion which brings an opportunity to draw breath, I am struck by the diversity of groups that use our most precious building. Our church has been

full to bursting on many occasions this year and then settles itself in quietness for those that enter to light a candle and feel the peace and tranquility and sacredness of our church.

I feel blessed to be your Minister Elect in such a diverse and everchanging role with no two days the same. That brings with it the responsibility and honour to lead and serve you spiritually.

As I finish my last few training assignments, the hope is that I will complete my Viva in time to join the Roll of Ministers at the AGM of the GA in April 2024 complete with an ordination and celebration at BUC in the Spring.

My door is open to you all to come and ask questions, make suggestions, share your spiritual path. There has been a growing need for pastoral care and with the continued development of the vestry, we can provide a safe and supportive space to explore these questions of faith.

As I write, we are about to enter into the week leading up to Christmas, full of symbolism and tradition, followed by our AGM in a new year with a new committee, new ideas and hope for our growing community.

2024 will, I believe, be an unfolding and exciting chapter for our church of which we are all an important part.

Blessings to you all.

Jennifer Sanders
Minister Elect

BUC Account Figures

	FY 2022- 2023	FY 2021- 2022
A RECEIPTS		
1 Donations & Offertory		
To General a/c	7,197.62	7,961.11
To Gold a/c	1,589.78	897.77
Legacy	0.00	0.00
Subtotal	8,787.40	8,858.88
2 HMRC		
Gift Aid tax reclaim	1,839.14	2,199.40
Subtotal	1,839.14	2,199.40
3 Grants		
General Baptist Assembly	0.00	385.00
Highgate Hill	770.17	0.00
LDPA	0.00	444.99
Subtotal	770.17	829.99
4 Bank Interest		
Gold & Gen accounts	756.13	81.60
Subtotal	756.13	81.60
5 Lettings and fees		
Hirings and other fees	52,126.34	49,237.05
PRS payments from hirers	514.40	158.10
Subtotal	52,640.74	49,395.15
6 Other income		
Rites of passage	4,050.00	5,369.00
VAT claimed back	247.30	162.02
General Fundraising activity	7,472.74	3,840.78
Investment withdrawal	0.00	0.00
Charitable donations	130.00	475.25
GA Quota subs rec'd	840.00	140.00
Insurance claim	0.00	25,899.37
Miscellaneous Income	483.39	1,266.26
Subtotal	13,223.43	37,152.68
TOTAL RECEIPTS	78,017.01	98,517.70

B PAYMENTS

1 Ministry		
Stipend & Manse	9,352.28	0.00
Ministry expenses	862.99	0.00
Pulpit fees paid	1,848.00	2,275.00
Subtotal	12,063.27	2,275.00

2	HMRC		
	Tax and NI	4,897.87	5,375.27
		Subtotal	4,897.87
			5,375.27
3	Support costs		
	Gifts, flowers, etc.	1,035.61	1,486.56
	Travel expenses	269.19	400.76
	Rites of Passage fees and expenses	2,070.00	1,754.85
	Committee expenses	1,206.31	2,279.57
	Organ and piano	2,197.00	800.00
	Printing, advertising, etc.	623.23	612.52
	Charitable donations	259.49	475.25
	Denomination subscriptions	1,463.75	1,640.00
	Subscriptions to periodicals	74.00	66.00
		Subtotal	9,198.58
			9,515.51
4	Management & Administration		
	Administrator salary	15,939.08	12,497.40
	NEST (all employees)	1,067.88	0.00
	Cleaner's salary	3,979.79	3,693.62
	Caretaking salaries	7,537.63	13,616.32
	Record Keeper	4,024.88	2,762.55
	Light and heat	6,981.09	4,508.70
	Water rates	0.00	193.38
	Telephone	598.95	556.06
	Repairs and renewals	9,692.03	10,714.64
	Furniture and equipment	739.60	444.99
	Kitchen supplies	2,253.36	1,006.19
	Postage and stationery	755.45	367.44
	Website, streaming, etc.	500.83	383.95
	Investment	0.00	0.00
	Insurance	3,678.01	3,408.96
	PRS; CCLI; PPL	671.48	822.04
	Accountancy and payroll	757.00	685.00
	Bank charges	123.00	136.80
	Refunds	569.00	620.00
		Subtotal	59,869.06
			56,418.04
	Total Payments	86,028.78	73,583.82
	Funding		
	General a/c	5,543.77	14,733.13
	Gold a/c	48,730.48	47,661.83
	HSBC a/c	234.06	174.06
	Petty Cash	51.73	2.79
	Floats	80.00	80.00
	Total	54,640.04	62,651.81
	Balance from last financial year	62,651.81	37,717.93
	Receipts - Payments this year	(8,011.77)	24,933.88
		54,640.04	62,651.81
	BNY Mellon investment portfolio	97,284.68	99,814.67

Report of the Independent Examiner on the BUC Accounts

Overview

The Books of Account were found to accurately represent the financial position of the Brighton Unitarian Church for the Year Ended 30th September 2023. It should be noted that the Books are maintained on a cash basis, rather than on an accruals basis.

Financial Statements

I have checked the FY 2022/23 AGM Statement and agreed the final presentation. Figures from the General Account cashbook and other sources have been carried forward correctly to this statement. I can also confirm that the closing balances are correctly stated and that the FY 2021/22 comparatives have also been brought forward correctly.

BNY Mellon

This investment was established in July 2019 with an initial investment of £75,000 and a further £25,000 was invested in September 2021. I can confirm that the value of the investment now stands at £97,284.68 as at 30th September 2023.

General & Gold Account Cashbooks

In line with usual practice, the Books of Account were subject to an interim audit as at 31st July 2023. This change has been made to reduce the volume of work at the year-end given the time constraints at this time. The change has proved very useful and the practice is now an established routine.

The General Account is structured in such a way that record keeping is transparent, enabling more convenient auditing. A convenient record is also kept of receipts not banked and payments not cashed at each month end. Such record keeping reduces risk and enables greater control and understanding of the 'Finances'.

Receipts

Receipts were sampled and both the receipt in the bank account and its accurate recording in the cashbook confirmed.

Payments

Backing documentation was examined for all invoiced payments with a value of £50 and above. The majority of documents carried sufficient payment details to enable the appropriate records to be validated. The same invoices were traced to entries in the BUC General Bank Account and all were found to be accurate. Invoices were generally booked correctly and carried forward correctly to the financial statements.

Petty Cash

The petty cash account was checked for the accurate recording of funding transfers; addition and balances carried forward were checked for accuracy.

Generally

Record keeping was thorough and detailed, with little risk of material misstatement. This has the benefit of not only facilitating the audit, but more importantly, evidences good financial control and minimises the risk of error.

Donald Simmons ACMA CGMA

Accountant. 29th November 2023

Treasurer's Report

The procedures by which our Church's governance is ruled are based firstly on the constitution adopted in 2018, which complies with Charity Commission rules, secondly by the Policy and Procedure document drawn up by a sub-committee which I chaired back in 2013, and thirdly by agreed amendments to that document made by the Committee since then. [Updating the Policy and Procedure document in accordance with our more recent Constitution and Committee amendments is a job waiting for an enthusiastic volunteer.]

At the time of our last AGM, in January 2023, no one had come forward to fulfil the role of Treasurer vacated by Kathy Pitt. Our understanding was that we needed to find a trustee who had served for at least six months and who was willing to take on that role. Moreover, that person, as with all trustees, had to be a Unitarian.

George Dean, the Quaker's Treasurer, offered to take on *our* Treasurer office in addition, on a *pro bono* (unpaid) basis. To get around the constitutional and procedural difficulties in accepting this kind offer, I agreed to act as the official Treasurer, while leaving George to do the bulk of the work as my assistant. He has done an excellent job, requiring only a minimum of input from me, for which I'm very grateful. He has also written his own report, which follows.

Francis Clark-Lowes

Finance Officer's Report

As Kathy Pitt reported in last year's report, there has been a steady recovery from the pandemic despite the inflationary pressures gripping the country at present. I am pleased to report this has continued in the accounting year ended 30th September 2023.

Upon replacing Kathy, I prepared an evolving budget to enable me to acquaint myself with the position for the current year. Although income was improving the appointment of a new lay leader Jennifer Sanders needed to be accounted for. It was apparent present conditions would result in a deficit for the year. As the figures filtered through, a critical evaluation showed that an element of fund raising was going to be important. Some price rises needed to be seriously considered.

Raising hiring rates is always a sensitive issue. One never knows how the increases will affect footfall in the building thus potentially proving counter-productive. It needs to be recognised that our hirers are subject to the same inflationary pressures as ourselves. Revisions were prepared for implementation in 2023-4.

Although reserves remain strong because of the successful insurance claim in 2022, it is important that we can be as self-sufficient as possible on a day-to-day basis in the coming year. In addition to the deficit for the year ending 30th September, heavy expenditure in the 2023-24 year on the church heating system has had to come out of reserves.

As reported by Kathy last year I need to thank several people for nursing me through this year's learning curve. Kathy herself has provided me with her invaluable experience, Christine Clark-Lowes has sent me the day-to-day figures, and Cat Stead's immense common sense has been invaluable when I might have retreated too much into my accountant's Quaker business methods. Joanne Howarth and the Committee have shown me far more patience than I have probably deserved.

Thank you.

George Dean

Church Administrator/Venue Manager's Report

Myself and Stuart Lee, our Caretaker/Duty Manager, have now been working at the church for over a year, and what a busy year it has been!

Rites of Passage: A funeral and four weddings have been held in the church in the past financial year bringing in £4,050 plus two memorial services. To round off the calendar year, a wedding took place three days before Christmas. We currently have three weddings booked in for 2024, including one on the Sunday of Pride, with enquiries already coming in for 2025.

We have seen an increase in hirings, and thus income, this past year:

2021 lettings and fees - £28,205.85

2022 lettings and fees - £49,237.05

2023 lettings and fees - £52,235.46

We expect this trend to continue, having implemented a 10% increase in our hire fees for the new financial year (starting in October 2023). This was done sensitively, taking into account our regular hirer's circumstances and the wider cost of living situation, and for some groups this increase was deferred to January.

The figures above include piano hire which generated £266.90 in the last financial year. We continue to be most grateful to Nicola Grunberg for the loan of her magnificent Steinway grand which is an additional attraction for musicians to perform at the church.

The diary for 2024 is looking quite full, which we hope is a sign of another good, busy year for us.

In May 2023 we hosted 12 Brighton Fringe/Festival events plus The Great Escape music festival for three days, which brought in a total of £5,369 in hire fees.

Our current regular hirers include: Pathways to Health, who offer low-cost acupuncture for people with long-term health problems; Amaze: a charity which supports families with special education needs and disabilities; and a Cocaine Anonymous Support group. Music features heavily in our weekly timetable with African drumming, three choirs and a Soulful Singing workshop plus a children's music group and monthly Pianobaths.

New regular hirers in the past year include the European Movement Sussex, Survivors Network, Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra Friends' recitals and candlelit Labyrinth walks to mark the Solstices organised by Brighton & Hove Centre for Spirituality. We have also welcomed back Carousel: a charity that supports and champions learning disabled artists and young people, who ran creative workshops here for young people in the school holidays, and BREMF, the Brighton Early Music Festival.

Our building is heavily used by Brighton & Hove's University of the Third Age (U3A) with regular classes including Jazz appreciation, Chair Yoga, Art, Scottish Country Dancing, and from January 2024, Drawing.

We are a well-established venue for craft and wellbeing fairs with our two regular hirers (Rainbow Crafts and Beau Events) as well as the Seaside Sisterhood and Sussex Cancer Fund all booked in again for 2024. Our very own Trisha Purchas regularly has a stand at the Rainbow Craft Fairs, helping her raise an amazing £700 for the church in the last year. On the fundraising front, just a reminder that we have some newly printed BUC mugs for sale at just £8 - dishwasher-proof, microwave-safe and produced by a local social enterprise.

Brighton Bike Tours continue to rent two sheds from us in the North passageway and in conjunction with Brighton & Hove Council and Brighton Bike Hub, they ran a number of led bike rides for refugees this year, where participants met up in the church beforehand and then enjoyed a communal lunch together afterwards. One of our parking spaces is permanently rented to our neighbour Mister Smith and our other neighbour Pinocchio's pay us an annual fee for access to their kitchen via our South passageway.

Audiences attending our Friday lunchtime fund-raising concerts now average 53, and the concerts made a profit of just under £5,000 for the church this year thanks to the hard work of Marion Bance and Phillida Simpson, the latter ably assisted by Tony Tree. Marion has already programmed the whole of 2024 so it will be my daunting responsibility to start programming for 2025 shortly, with her guidance.

Barbara Lowe, our very own domestic goddess, continues to work tirelessly keeping the church clean in just three days a week. In the summer she was nominated as Best Housekeeper in the National Housing with Care Awards for her work at Brighton & Hove Foyer (Sanctuary supported living), one of just 5 nominees nationwide. Although she didn't win, she enjoyed an all-expenses-paid trip to London for an Awards dinner/dance and overnight stay in a Mayfair hotel.

As part of our continuing quest to become more environmentally friendly we have a compost caddy from the White Street Community Garden (one of Brighton & Hove Food Partnership's community composting schemes), and thanks to Jennifer our cleaning and sanitary supplies are now all eco friendly.

The Hallmaster room booking software purchased in April is being populated with the church's details and tweaked to meet our requirements in the hope that we can move away from our current paper diary system within the next 3-4 months. There will be a period of time where both systems will be running in parallel to check that nothing has been missed off, so please do bear with us if processes take a little longer until we are ready to fully embrace the digital age.

In other news, our 33-year-old boiler finally failed its annual service in September and was replaced with two modern boilers working in tandem. The final cost was £13,500.

To conclude, I am loving working here at the church and can hardly believe it has been a year already. No two days are alike and the activities taking place in the building are so incredibly diverse. My thanks to everyone for making me feel so welcome and for all their help and practical support - I couldn't wish for a better workplace or team. Time truly flies when you are doing something you love!

Cat Stead

Church Administrator/Venue Manager

Brighton **Unitarian** *Church*



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BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1179832

Accounts

Brighton **Unitarian** *Church*

Annual Report 2022



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Committee 2022

Officers:
Joint Chairs:
Jo Howarth and Susie Courtault
Secretary: Helen White
Treasurer: Kathy Pitt
Other Committee Members:
Francis Clark-Lowes
Julia Badger

BELOW A variety of Friday lunchtime concerts were held, including a fund raiser for Ukraine with pianist Ivan Hovurun. Photo below and cover photo by Sarah West.



Co-Chairs' Report

There has been a lot of hard work done this year by you all to maintain the vibrancy of our Church, our community and the business that supports it, without a permanent spiritual leader and sometimes without an administrator. It has been a year for losing and finding people: inspired by the insights gained in our congregational conversation of November 2021. Most of you will remember that we came together and explored how we see ourselves, our priorities and who we want to be, in preparation for starting the search for our Minister. Well, thanks to you all, we are approaching our goals.

At the beginning of this year we were still enduring Covid restrictions so had many discussions about when to relax the safety measures. We brought back refreshments into the church in February but still wore masks during hymns with chairs socially distanced for several weeks. Thank you to all who have got involved to make our Sunday services so inspiring, welcoming and varied, especially Jen Barton for co-ordinating services on a weekly basis and operating zoom and livestreaming; for Susie for taking on the pulpit rota as well as leading services; to Helen Lee for organizing the setting up Team and to our wonderful musicians Kathy, Pamela and Stuart, Nicola and Zhanna while Maurice Rigby, our organist, retired. We will miss him bringing our organ to life so beautifully over the years.

Heart and Soul, organized by Jen Barton and Katherine Malthouse, proved a

popular online spiritual space twice a month, and always welcomes new faces. While many enjoyed meditation and prayer with Music and Silence on Wednesday lunchtimes, with Pamela and Susie holding the space.

A variety of Friday lunchtime concerts were held, including a fund raiser for Ukraine with pianist Ivan Hovurun with the Mayor in attendance, who made a heart-warming speech. Thanks to Phillida and Marion Bance for their commitment and hard work sustaining these hugely popular fundraising events.



Over the year our congregation has grown, while some old faces moved away. We have received huge benefits from The Unitarian General Assembly, with free legal advice in our searches for staff and minister, as well as the spiritual guidance of the wider Unitarian community. We can access this support



thanks to those of you who have become Members of our Church. It costs us £35 a year per member, but we get so much back, and of course members have use of the building for free or at special rates for special events. If you care to become a member ask for Ann Woodhead, our welcoming membership secretary.

We have always been short of storage space (our chairs have no regular home), so an enterprising group tackled clearing the vestry, as Weddings started up again. In our endeavor to host more Rites of Passage services they re-imagined how we can use the cosy space for weddings; as a musicians' green room and as a quiet retreat.

Thanks to our Church Manager Ashleigh our building was recovering and buzzing again with regular hirers, but in February

he left us for a full time job. We acted on your suggestions to find a new Manager with the experience to expand our business; developing our music events, rites of passage and other events to raise enough money to pay our new Minister for a full 3 days a week. Alison Forsyth was appointed but chose to leave at the end of 6 months, suggesting we could rethink the hours required to fulfill the brief. Acknowledging the dual nature of the post we re-named it Church Administrator/Venue Manager and expanded the hours to 26 a week before re-advertising. In October we appointed Cat Stead, just the person we dreamed of a year earlier. For the time being she will be in every day to bring things up to speed. We are very grateful to Christine Clark-Lowes and Sarah West who saved the Church by keeping things going in the meantime.

Simultaneously we advertised for a new Caretaker after Tom moved to a more stable job. This brought us Stuart Lee, a great addition to our team, who joins us from the Theatre Royal.

We will be complete when we have our Minister. The hard-working search party overseeing the process comprised of Fanny Tulley, Anne Woodhead, Jen Barton, Julia Badger and John Naish, while Sarah West created a beautiful video to promote our search for a Minister and the advert went live in April.

There were five applications for the post, and a rigorous interview process guided by Ruth Jones, a personnel consultant employed for us by the Unitarian General Assembly. Church members and congregation were included, giving their feedback in the final stages, following a service by the final candidates.

In September we were very happy to offer the post of Lay Leader to Jennifer Sanders, a long time member of our Church. Jennifer is training to be a Unitarian Minister and will join us at the end of March 2023.

On top of this the trustees: Susie Courtault, Jo Howarth, Francis Clark-Lowes, Julia Badger, Helen White and Kathy Pitt have met once a month to keep everything rolling along, and we are hugely grateful but very sad that Kathy will be leaving us after doing an amazing job as Treasurer for all these years, including patiently chasing up the large compensation claim we have recently received for Covid losses. With no volunteers in the Church feeling able to take her place we will have to employ a

professional. So we will need to do a lot more fundraising, and canny running of our building, to pay the increased hours of our employees and to reach out and help the many in need beyond our walls. All your ideas are gratefully accepted.

Thanks to Caroline Drijver who has creatively compiled our newsletter for the last year, and to Helen and Jeanette Webb for attending the GA conference and keeping us in touch with the heated debates. Fanny has given the committee and the Chairs a lot of her expertise and support during this past year, facilitating services and coordinating activities

In fact we would like to thank all the members of the church and our friends and supporters for stepping up this year - for doing teas and coffees, for bringing their craft objects and fund-raising for the church, for being on the welcome rota, for helping with congregational services, all those on the committee, for bringing flowers and decorating the church, for everyone who has stepped up. We couldn't have done it without you.

Jo Howarth and Susie Courtault

Co-Chairs who would like to thank each other for their support and kindness. Our effective co-working has enabled us to carry out this quite daunting task during this roller-coaster of a year.



Church Administrator's Report

As reported in the Co-Chair Report, there have been some significant staffing changes over the year - so we will start 2023 with a new team: Stuart Lee is our Caretaker/Duty Manager and I, Cat Stead, am the Church Administrator/Venue Manager.

Stuart also works on Stage Door at the Theatre Royal and was already familiar with the church as a venue for music gigs he had been involved with. He was very excited to be given keys to our Grade II listed building.

I was previously the General Administrator for the Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra and have been a regular visitor to, and hirer of, the church over the past 20+ years, attending many concerts here and using the space for concerts and events for the orchestra and local choirs and singing groups I am involved with.

Rites of Passage: five weddings were held in the church this year, which has brought in £5,369 and we have held a child naming ceremony and have three weddings booked in for 2023, with enquiries for two more.

There has been a pleasing return to more normal/pre-Covid levels of hirings, and thus income, this past year:

- 2019 lettings and fees - £46,055.15
- 2020 lettings and fees - £18,918.48
- 2021 lettings and fees - £28,205.85
- 2022 lettings and fees - £49,237.05

In May 2022 we hosted 11 Fringe/Festival events plus The Great Escape for three days, which brought in a total of £7,888 in hire fees.

Audiences attending our Friday lunchtime fund-raising concerts have returned to pre-Covid levels and the concerts made a profit of nearly £2,400 for the church this year thanks to the hard work of Marion and Phillida. Marion reports that all dates for 2023 are now booked so 2024 dates are being looked at. She will be handing over the administration of the concerts in the new year.

Our membership of mushRoom (allowing people to book online to play our pianos) continues to be popular, and lucrative, and one of our parking spaces is permanently hired out, although Pinocchios no longer require the use of our portico. Brighton Bike Tours now rent two sheds from us.

Our current regular hirers include: Pathways to Health: low-cost acupuncture for people affected by stress, anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol, and those living with HIV; Amaze: a charity which supports families with special education needs and disabilities; African drumming, two dance groups and Soulful Singing; a Jazz appreciation group, Chair Yoga and an Art class, all from the University of the Third Age; a Russian choir, a pop choir and an amateur choir; a regular childrens' music group and two Cocaine Anonymous Support groups. Penny Loosemore's innovative 'Pianobaths' have

proved popular and are booked in on a monthly basis for the next year. We are also now a regular venue for craft fairs, with two different companies having booked 14 Saturdays between them in 2023.

Barbara has, as ever, been working tirelessly keeping the church clean, and continues to come in three days a week, which the increased levels of bookings requires.

During her time as Church Manager Alison had explored the use of a computerised booking system, with a free trial of the Hallmaster room booking software recommended by the General Assembly. Substantial progress was made on setting this up, but for now it is on hold until the new team has settled in and have the time to continue with this.

The free trial period has been frozen so the work done so far will not be lost.

The LDPA District Minister (Unitarians in London and the South East) kindly helped us purchase equipment for live-streaming (computer, camera and microphones) which will be attractive to potential hirers as well as useful for us. This grant was to thank our church for hosting their online FUSE (Festival of Unitarians in the South East) which was broadcast live from the Church in February 2021 and 2022.

In other news, the smaller of our two boilers broke in July and was replaced.

2023 is looking pleasingly busy in the diary which we hope is a sign of another good, busy year for us.

Cat Stead
Church Administrator/
Venue Manager



Treasurer's Report

Financially this has been an unusual year. We've gradually wound back up to 'normal' after the pandemic, with hirings of the church and hall showing a very healthy profit. And our Rites of Passage income has also picked up, as would be expected. Savings have included a Minister's stipend and associated expenses.

One additional source of income was the claim that we made to our Insurers for loss of income during the pandemic. This took several months of preparation but was worth it; as we received £26,000 which was well in excess of expectations. I'd like to thank to Ashleigh Ward for his help in writing the submission.

Having had several years of staff stability, this last turned out to be a year of change. I'm delighted that we now have Cat (Administrator) and Stuart (Caretaker) in place, with a new lay-leader to join us in the Spring.

Our investment with BNY Mellon has, like many investment portfolios, suffered in the recent economic and political uncertainty. As at the time of writing, things are looking a little less bleak and we are now hopefully on an upward spiral.

During the year, I asked members to set up a Standing order to cover the cost of their General Assembly subscription (currently £35). I'm intending that this will start as of next March. We are responsible for this 'per capita' levy for

everyone on our membership list and it makes sense to keep the payments separate from any donations or regular standing orders to the church. If you haven't set this up already, we would be very grateful if you could do so for 2023. The GA have been enormously helpful in our recent search to find a new Minister, giving time, expertise and advice.

This is my last Report as Treasurer, as I'm retiring at the AGM. The day-to-day work that is done by our Record-Keeper, Christine Clark-Lowes deserves huge thanks. She is the person who 'keeps the financial ship afloat'. Thank you from us all.

Kathy Pitt
Treasurer



Report on the Church Accounts by the Independent Examiner

Overview

The Books of Account were found to accurately represent the financial position of the Brighton Unitarian Church for the Year Ended 30th September 2022. It should be noted that the Books are maintained on a cash basis, rather than on an accruals basis.

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I have checked the FY 2021/22 AGM Statement and agreed the final presentation. Figures from the General Account cashbook and other sources have been carried forward correctly to this statement. I can also confirm that the closing balances are correctly stated and that the FY 2020/21 comparatives have also been brought forward correctly.

BNY Mellon

This investment was established in July 2019 with an initial investment of £75,000 and a further £25,000 was invested in September 2021. I can confirm that the value of the investment now stands at £99,814.67 as at 30th September 2022.

General Account & Building Appeal Fund Cashbooks

In line with usual practice, the Books of Account were subject to an interim audit as at 31st July 2022. This change has been made to reduce the volume of work at the year-end given the time constraints at this time. The change has proved very useful and the practice is now an established routine.

The General Account is structured in such a way that record keeping is

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Receipts were sampled and both the receipt in the bank account and its accurate recording in the cashbook confirmed.

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Petty Cash

The petty cash account was checked for the accurate recording of funding transfers; addition and balances carried forward were checked for accuracy.

Generally

Record keeping was thorough and detailed, with little risk of material misstatement. This has the benefit of not only facilitating the audit, but more importantly, evidences good financial control and minimises the risk of error.

Donald Simmons

Auditor

BUC Account Figures 2021/2022

	FY 2021- 2022	FY 2020- 2021
A RECEIPTS		
1 Donations & Offertory		
To General a/c	7,961.11	10,385.69
To Gold a/c	897.77	429.90
Legacy	0.00	0.00
Subtotal	<u>8,858.88</u>	<u>10,815.59</u>
2 HMRC		
Gift Aid tax reclaim	2,199.40	2,228.45
Subtotal	<u>2,199.40</u>	<u>2,228.45</u>
3 Grants		
General Baptist Assembly	385.00	385.00
National Churches Trust	0.00	0.00
Highgate Hill	0.00	900.00
New Gravel Pit	0.00	2,912.80
Hibbert Trust	0.00	0.00
LDPA	444.99	8.40
Subtotal	<u>829.99</u>	<u>4,206.20</u>
4 Bank Interest		
Gold & Gen accounts	81.60	2.47
Subtotal	<u>81.60</u>	<u>2.47</u>
5 Lettings and fees		
Hirings and other fees	49,237.05	27,785.85
PRS payments from hirers	158.10	0.00
Subtotal	<u>49,395.15</u>	<u>27,785.85</u>
6 Other income		
Rites of passage	5,369.00	870.00
VAT claimed back	162.02	0.00
General Fundraising activity	3,840.78	1,385.22
Charitable donations	475.25	0.00
GA Quota subs rec'd	140.00	35.00
Insurance claim	25,899.37	0.00
Miscellaneous Income	1,266.26	928.38
Subtotal	<u>37,152.68</u>	<u>3,218.60</u>
TOTAL RECEIPTS	98,517.70	48,257.16
B PAYMENTS		
1 Ministry		
Lay Leader's stipend	0.00	9,434.74
Ministry expenses	0.00	360.00
Pulpit fees paid	2,275.00	1,400.00
Subtotal	<u>2,275.00</u>	<u>11,194.74</u>

Brighton Unitarian Church



Brighton Unitarian Church
New Road, Brighton BN1 1UF
Web brightonunitarian.org.uk
Email buc@brightonunitarian.org.uk
Tel 01273 696022

BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1179832

Accounts

Brighton Unitarian Church

Annual Report 2021



**Brighton Unitarian Church New Road Brighton
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**A sacred space
in the heart of Brighton**

Committee 2021

Officers:

Joint Chairs: Jo Howarth & Susie Courtault

Secretary: Francis Clark-Lowes

Treasurer: Kathy Pitt

Other Committee Members:

Helen White

Heather Duff

Chairs' Report

In 2021 we gradually opened up from lockdown into the new normal. We lost people we loved, some of whom moved elsewhere: Jef Jones our Lay Leader in March; Martin our caretaker; Martin Whitell, our District Minister and several members. Others very sadly passed away; Peter Badger, Stephen Whittington and Jeannette Cragg. Some we still hope to see walk through our red doors whenever they are happy to return.

We've also seen new faces, or half faces, as we greeted new masked congregation members and our superb new Caretaker Tom Vidler, who has also facilitated our return to the Church for services.

The new volunteer trustees: Jo Howarth, Susie Courtault, Helen White, Heather Duff, Francis Clark-Lowes and Kathy Pitt, met monthly on Zoom. Running our church has meant learning many new skills just to maintain our core activities, the services and spiritual community, without a Leaders support.

For services we are hugely grateful to the pioneering online Zoom hosts: Helen White, Heather and Jen Barton, doing an incredibly demanding job holding a congregation and visiting speakers, with all their various idiosyncrasies. Thanks too to those service leaders who took the risk and succeeded in creating a sacred space in each of our homes.

Following the Government's 'roadmap' we got back into the Church in May, with the intrepid Stephen Crowther leading a Zoom hybrid service, facilitated by Jen Barton. Jen worked many hours with Pete Tulley, setting up a workable system so, as the Church reopened, those who wanted could stay home and still socialize afterwards. Although this was technically complex, we carried on until the numbers we had in the Church far exceeded those at home. For now we hope to continue to livestream on You Tube as long as it is needed, and we can afford it.

Without Jef, and with travel restrictions, we joined many other churches in the South East who found it hard to find service leaders. So we are very grateful to the Pulpit Rota team (Trisha Purchas, Susie and Helen White) for their miraculous work in keeping the pulpit rota full, to Plymouth and Kensington for inviting us to join them online once a month, to Jen Barton again for co-ordinating services and liaising between all the people involved, to Kathy for finding pianists and for Pamela, Stuart and Kathy herself for playing. New service leaders have joined us from far and wide, including Rev Fay Barratt from Manchester and Dr Eleanor Chiari from London, while our own Stephen Crowther and Susie Courtault held most regular services. We have also enjoyed congregation-led services.

Although Rev Duncan Voice (Horsham/Ditchling) has offered pastoral support, many have been feeling the loss of a spiritual anchor after Jef's departure. However, this time has allowed us to have different voices ministering to us, the essence of Unitarianism.

New normal is still spaced chairs, singing in masks, donating online and lighting separate candles rather than passing objects between us. But otherwise, services are familiar, and our church has returned to being the spiritual oasis it always was for many of us. We now enjoy post-service coffee off the trolley as the weather is getting colder, after our summer visits to Pavilion Gardens café, thanks to the refreshments volunteers.

At the height of the pandemic many missed our sacred space so, when able, Susie opened the church up on a Wednesday lunchtime: lighting a candle and holding a meditative space, where people could safely come and be. Pamela Nickels joined to play piano between the times of stillness, and folk have come in and sat for a while appreciating the

peace. On Fridays our very popular lunch-time concerts restarted, thanks to Marion and Phyllida Simpson. Meanwhile 'Heart and Soul' has continued online two Thursdays a month, where it can reach out to participants beyond Brighton. Thanks to Katherine Malt-house for coordinating these evenings of themed prayer, meditative practice and deep sharing. The prayer tree has also continued every week.

Throughout this time our building has come alive with hirers and events thanks to Ashleigh Ward, our Church Manager, so we are gradually building up our income to a point where we can think about employing a new spiritual leader.

Thanks to Fanny Tulley, Ann Woodhead and Jen Barton for initial research and liaison with the General Assembly about the process, and to John and Julia Badger for joining them to create our 'search party'. Once we had completed the requisite 6 months without a leader, they organised two 'Congregational Conversations' to ensure everyone could be involved in creating our future. The first was a lively and interesting introduction facilitated by Jo Howarth. The second, facilitated by professional community and organizational development expert Yvonne Rivers, threw up many interesting questions for us to take forward to the next stage.

We are grateful for our committee member Heather's extensive work helping us with the human resources input, both in our leader search and in employing our caretaker.

Our first 'conversation' coincided with a fabulous weekend of celebration of our 200 years as a church - postponed last year because of Covid and held in November. Ashleigh organized a Friday night music evening with a light show projected onto the church exterior. On Saturday there was a market and workshops with our hirers, to give an idea of exactly what is on offer here. On Sunday we welcomed Jim Corrigan, recently in post as District Minister, who joined us for our service - 'Unitarian church Brighton past, present and future'. Several members went to Pinocchio's with Jim for a celebration afterwards.

In November we also joined with the Interfaith Contact Group, the Quakers, Fabrica and the Dome for a 'Day of Compassion' - Brighton and Hove's tribute to the NHS workers who served us all so well during the pandemic. After our service we offered a Death Café, led by Fanny.

Since leaving as Chair Caroline Drijver has kept us up to date with all these adaptations to our strange times in the digital newsletter and will continue as we move into the new year.

Jo Howarth and Susie Courtault (Co-Chairs, Nov 25, 2021)

Secretary's Report

I took on the role of secretary at the last AGM at a difficult time for the church and a very busy one for me. We were in the middle of lockdown, and Christine and I were moving house. Through the year I have also been preoccupied with other matters in my own life, some of them unforeseen and requiring urgent attention.

I had been on the committee between 2009 and 2014, but much had changed since then. I therefore needed to catch up, in particular with our new status as a Charitable Incorporated Institution (CIO). I also felt a need to define what my role would be. My previous experience as a secretary preceded the advent of online communication. The Secretary's role as a conduit for communication between the outside world and the organization s/he serves has largely been replaced by a less defined situation where messages fly back and

forth to multiple recipients, with the division of responsibility for dealing with them sometimes being unclear. This is a wider social problem of our time, and will hopefully in time be resolved.

I felt I could more profitably occupy my time focusing on the mechanics of our operation, and the important matter of record keeping. On the first, I laid out a timetable to be followed each month by myself, the Committee and Ashleigh, the Office Manager. In the event, there were problems, some of them on my side, but I hope my successor will build on this experience. On the second matter, I was concerned to ensure that the committee minutes were a useful record, and to this purpose I liaised with our minute-taker, Ashleigh.

Notes on the Secretary's role, and on minute taking, together with the timetable referred to, have been filed for future reference.

A task which remains outstanding, but which I didn't have time for, is the updating of our Policy and Procedure document. This was produced by a sub-committee consisting of Caroline Drijver, Paul Taylor and myself some eight years ago, and it is now out of date in a number of respects. Jen Barton, our Election Manager, has been interpreting it in the light of the new constitution introduced when we became a CIO in 2018, but would find her task easier if the two documents were properly aligned with one another.

Treasurer's and Independent Examiner's Reports

Our financial year runs from 1 October - 30 September. Many of the recent 12 months were spent in lockdown, with little or no activity permitted in either our church or the hall. Bearing that in mind, our accounts show a healthier picture than might have been anticipated. And thanks to Ashleigh's initiative and stewardship, our hall hirings have been on a par with those for the same period in the previous year (although it should be remembered that in a non-pandemic year such as 2018/2019, our income reached £46K). However, our income from Rites of Passage has been hit hard, especially as weddings nationally have been in a state of flux and uncertainty.

We were the beneficiaries of two legacies from past members: one from Steve Whittington (£5,000) and the other from Jeanette Cragg (£20,000). These have been invested with our original £75,000 with BNY Mellon. The committee intends to use the legacies at a future date for specific Memorial Projects.

Other positives include the completion of the North windows by Pete Tulley. They now look beautiful and - most importantly - are water-tight. We received a grant of £10,000 from New Gravel Pit Fund (a Unitarian charity) to help offset the cost of this project.

An obvious saving for the last half-year has been a Minister/Lay-leader's stipend as Jef left us at the end of March. This situation will change and it is to be hoped that by the time of writing the next report we will have a new incumbent in place. Various costings continue to be done in respect of this. Finding a new minister will continue to be the main item on the committee's agenda.

The day-to-day work of overseeing our finances continues to be done by Christine Clark-Lowes. Her ability to make sure that all our financial concerns are in order is second-to-none. The church owes her a huge debt of thanks for her patience and expertise. As, of course, do I - thank you Christine!

Kathy Pitt
December 2021

Account activity for Annual General Meeting January 2022

	FY 2020-2021	FY 2019-2020
A RECEIPTS		
1 Donations & Offertory		
To General a/c	10,385.69	11,503.14
To Gold a/c	429.90	658.14
Legacy	0.00	0.00
Subtotal	10,815.59	12,161.28
2 HMRC		
Gift Aid tax reclaim	2,228.45	2,893.62
Subtotal	2,228.45	2,893.62
3 Grants		
General Baptist Assembly	385.00	385.00
National Churches Trust	0.00	1,500.00
Highgate Hill	900.00	1,850.00
New Gravel Pit	10,000.00	0.00
Hibbert Trust	600.00	0.00
LDPA	137.40	1,000.00
Subtotal	12,022.40	4,735.00
4 Bank and Investment activity		
Investment income	0.00	0.00
Bank interest other accounts	2.47	88.80
Subtotal	2.47	88.80
5 Lettings and fees		
Hirings and other fees	27,785.85	27,385.87
PRS payments from hirers	0.00	211.08
Subtotal	27,785.85	27,596.95
6 Other income		
Rites of passage	870.00	3,988.50
VAT claimed back	0.00	0.00
General Fundraising activity	1,385.22	2,067.56
Charitable donations	0.00	0.00
GA Quota subs rec'd	35.00	0.00
Insurance claim	0.00	0.00
Miscellaneous Income	928.38	597.10
Subtotal	3,218.60	6,653.16
TOTAL RECEIPTS	56,073.36	54,128.81
B PAYMENTS		
1 Ministry		
Lay Leader's stipend	9,434.74	18,632.42
Ministry expenses	360.00	896.49
Pulpit fees paid	1,400.00	777.45
Subtotal	11,194.74	20,306.36
2 HMRC		
Tax and NI	4,251.00	5,441.77
Subtotal	4,251.00	5,441.77

3 Support costs

Gifts, flowers, etc.	1,095.42	572.38
Travel expenses (eg GA fees; bus pass Jef)	86.38	708.41
Rites of Passage fees and expenses	677.00	731.00
Committee expenses	126.35	1,460.33
Organ and piano	317.00	1,086.00
Printing, advertising, etc.	234.00	102.40
General Fundraising costs	0.00	0.00
Charitable donations	0.00	175.00
Denomination subscriptions	1,670.00	1,840.00
Subscriptions to periodicals	60.00	60.00
Subtotal	4,266.15	6,735.52

4 Management & Administration

Church Manager's salary & pension	14,043.73	12,959.24
Cleaner's salary	2,650.46	2,667.04
Caretaking salaries	4,628.53	12,430.15
Record Keeper	2,097.31	2,079.96
Light and heat	2,494.34	3,213.51
Water rates	322.02	345.85
Telephone	576.83	412.70
Repairs and renewals	11,461.98	22,019.69
Furniture and equipment	1,427.75	1,832.61
Kitchen supplies	377.40	516.95
Postage and stationery	226.06	135.06
Website, streaming, etc.	489.59	75.00
Investment	0.00	0.00
Insurance	3,218.04	3,037.89
Performing Rights Society	270.91	518.96
Accountancy and payroll	685.00	785.00
Bank charges Gen a/c	87.50	66.00
Hiring/key refund	104.50	300.00
Subtotal	45,161.95	63,395.61

TOTAL PAYMENTS **64,873.84** **95,879.26**

Funding

General a/c	17,910.69	6,155.96
Gold a/c	19,489.64	39,831.60
HSBC a/c	230.86	430.86
Petty Cash	6.74	19.99
Other Floats	80.00	80.00
Total	37,717.93	46,518.41

Balance from last financial year	46,518.41	88,268.86
Receipts - Payments this year	(8,800.48)	(41,750.45)
	37,717.93	46,518.41

BNY Mellon investment portfolio **111,098.67**

Note: figure shows investment value as of 30 September 2021.

No transactions on investment will be shown, as any income is re-invested.

Note: lump sum of £25,000 transferred from General a/c to investment portfolio September 2020.

BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH
REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER TO THE BUC TREASURER
YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Overview

The Books of Account were found to accurately represent the financial position of the Brighton Unitarian Church for the Year Ended 30th September 2021. It should be noted that the Books are maintained on a cash basis, rather than on an accruals basis.

Financial Statements

I have checked the FY 2020/21 AGM Statement and agreed the final presentation. Figures from the General Account cashbook and other sources have been carried forward correctly to this statement. I can also confirm that the closing balances are correctly stated and that the FY 2019/20 comparatives have also been brought forward correctly.

BNY Mellon

This investment was established in July 2019 with an initial investment of £75,000. I can confirm that the value of the investment now stands at £111,098.66 as at 30th September 2021.

General Account & Building Appeal Fund Cashbooks

In line with usual practice, the Books of Account were subject to an interim audit as at 30th June 2021. This change has been made to reduce the volume of work at the year-end given the time constraints at this time. The change has proved very useful and the practice is now an established routine.

It should also be noted that due to the pandemic, the number of transactions were less than usual due to the reduced activity in the financial year, affecting both income and expenses.

The General Account is structured in such a way that record keeping is transparent, enabling more convenient auditing. A convenient record is also kept of receipts not banked and payments not cashed at each month end. Such record keeping reduces risk and enables greater control and understanding of the 'Finances'.

Receipts

Receipts were sampled and both the receipt in the bank account and its accurate recording in the cashbook confirmed.

Payments

Backing documentation was examined for all invoiced payments with a value of £50 and above. The majority of documents carried sufficient payment details to enable the appropriate records to be validated. The same invoices were traced to entries in the BUC General Bank Account and all were found to be accurate. Invoices were generally booked correctly and carried forward correctly to the financial statements.

Petty Cash

The petty cash account was checked for the accurate recording of funding transfers; addition and balances carried forward were checked for accuracy.

Generally

Record keeping was thorough and detailed, with little risk of material misstatement. This has the benefit of not only facilitating the audit, but more importantly, evidences good financial control and minimises the risk of error.

Donald Simmons ACMA CGMA
27th November 2021

Office Manager's Report

It has been another strange year as predicted but I am very happy to see a normal level of hirings in the last quarter.

2020 lettings and fees - £28,936.71
2021 lettings and fees - £28,205.85

The year started off in lockdown but the committee and I decided to let the support groups carry on meeting inside the hall. This was in-line with the Government guidance at the time and we believed that now more than ever it was important for these support groups to meet.

As well as Jef leaving at the start of the year our caretaker, Martin Holliday, left the church in February. During March we recruited and interviewed for a new caretaker with the help of Jef and Heather Duff. In April we hired our new caretaker, Tom Vidler. At the final interview he got to meet the Committee Chairs and we all agreed that his clear empathy would work well here in the church especially around the more sensitive events we hold here. Tom has been a great asset to the church, and I constantly get good feedback about him. Barbara Lowe has been working hard keeping the church clean and we have her in 3 days a week now as part of our covid-secure policy instead of 2 days a week previously. Thanks to the Sarah West and the LDPA we were able to invest in some good quality streaming equipment, this means that we now can livestream services and offer this to hirers as an extra hire cost.

Towards late spring the committee and I decided to let people in for rehearsals and streaming sessions (with no audience), again in line with the Government advice. I signed us to a new company called Find Mushroom, which is like Airbnb but for musical instruments, it has been very successful for us with people hiring our piano, and we have become their top user in the Brighton area. I also made an agreement with our neighbour, Pinnocchios, to use the portico once again in April and hired out one of the parking spaces permanently. So we were starting to get some income again even when events couldn't happen.

At the end of March things started to change with the pandemic in the UK and some small, controlled events were allowed back but most were still unsure, so Brighton Fringe delayed their festival for another month. I was able to move everyone over to June and we had about a third of the normal amount of Fringe hirers.

We restarted our Friday Lunchtime Concert's in May with a limited audience capacity, over the year the audience numbers have built up again and we are averaging at the same capacity now as before the pandemic.

June was a setback as a lot of event managers were expecting to put on events after 21st June when all restrictions were going to be dropped. So we saw a lot of cancellations in July, when the date was changed, but I managed to move most of them till after 19th July.

There is an ongoing problem with graffiti on the outside of our church, but because of the CCTV we put outside of last year we managed to catch the main culprit and handed over the footage to the police. The police caught the suspect, arrested him and took him to court where he pled guilty. Now thanks to Peter Tulley we have repainted the church and added an anti-graffiti layer which would make it easier to remove in 6 months' time. Kathy Pitt is now going to try and claim the cost from our insurers.

July and August were quiet months for us, hiring wise. They normally are the quiet months but this year I think a lot of people were travelling to see family so it was even quieter than normal.

From September for the first time in my job here, bookings were returning and we have been almost fully booked for the last quarter of the year.

In October we decided to celebrate our Bicentenary (2020) as we didn't get to celebrate too much last year. This was a full weekend event with live music, poems and performances on Friday night. On Saturday we had a craft fair and stalls and demos from our regular hirers and the special Bicentenary Service on the Sunday. This was a successful event with a lot of new people coming inside the building and seeing it for the first time. The bands, artists and regular hirers all really appreciated the event and would like to know if we are going to do something similar again.

Our current regular hirers are as follows:

Pathways to Health – low-cost acupuncture for people affected by stress, anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol, and those living with HIV.

Amaze – which gives support to families with special education needs and disabilities.

African Drumming – a jazz appreciation group from the University of the Third Age.

A Russian choir – a pop choir and an amateur choir.

Kids groups – we now have 3 different such groups, with another one starting in January 2022.

Beau Natural – frequent craft fairs

Also the following support groups:

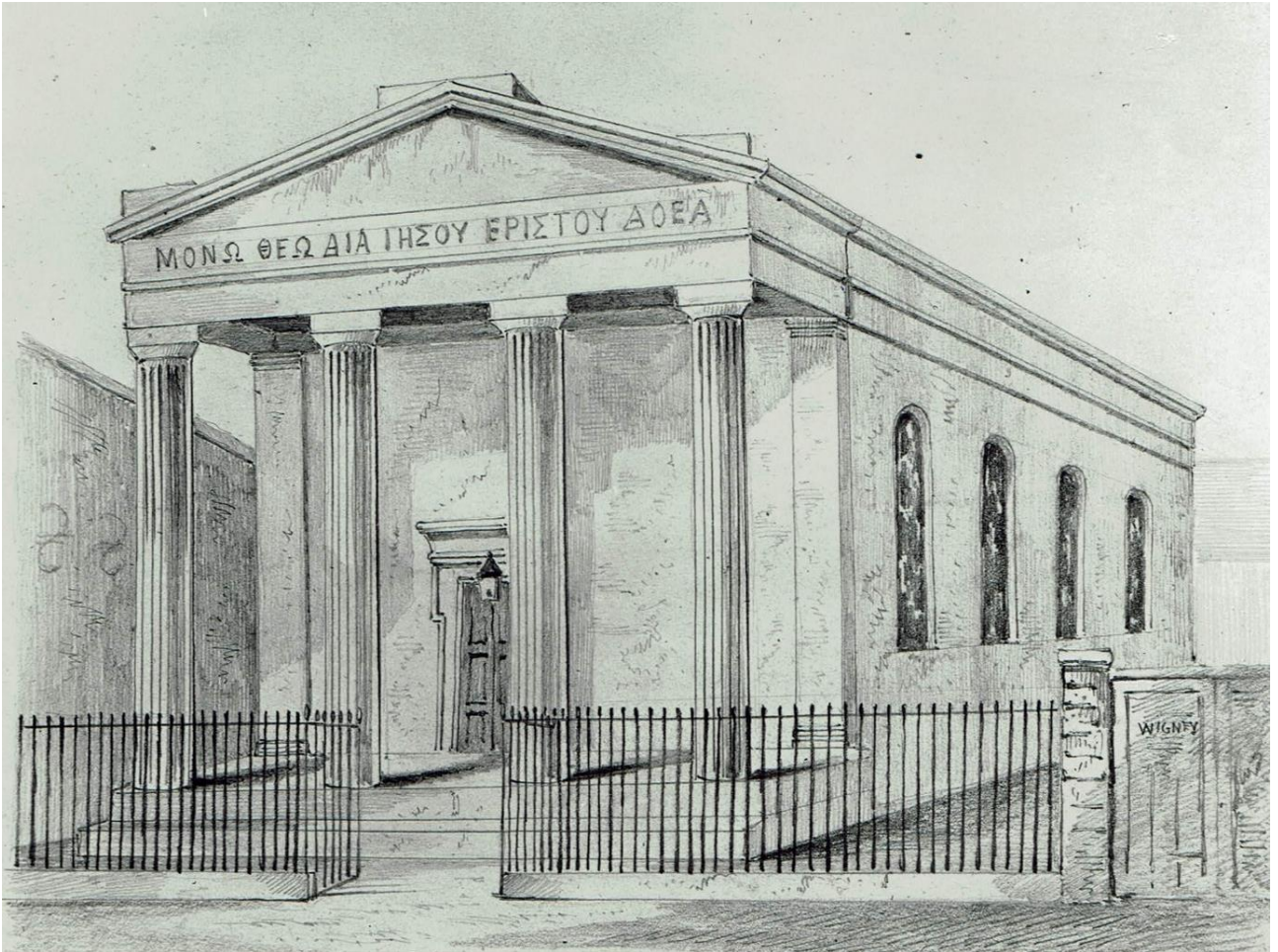
Alcohol Anonymous

Cocaine Anonymous

Marijuana Anonymous

2022 is looking really good in the diary and I hope that is a sign of a good, busy year for us.





BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1179832

Accounts

Brighton Unitarian Church

Annual Report 2020



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A sacred space
in the heart of Brighton

Committee 2020

Officers:

Chair: Caroline Drijver

Secretary: Jennifer Sanders

Treasurer: Kathy Pitt

Other Committee Members:

Jeanette Webb

Jo Howarth

Susie Courthauld

Nic Cook

Chair's Report

In last year's report I noted what a pleasure it was to see our beautiful newly restored portico, and while it is still beautiful, most of us have not seen it often or at all for the last ten months. A couple of months after the last AGM the world changed and we have found ourselves for the most part meeting and having services remotely, with some of us not being or feeling able to do this. Zoom has, for now, taken on the same status as other bywords for products, such as Biro and Hoover.

This time last year we knew that we had a challenging year ahead of us, with many changes, but this one has taken us all unawares and knocked us off our proverbial feet. And still we are here, thanks to the steadfastness of all of us, technology, and knowing we have a home. Many of us are suffering in different ways, and some of us discovering new ways of living. While we are still here as a congregation, we have sadly lost three of our friends. Our thoughts are with the loved ones of Jeanette Cragg, Stephen Whittington and Peter Badger who passed away this year.

This year the Management Committee has consisted of Kathy Pitt (as Treasurer), Jennifer Sanders (as Secretary), Jeannette Webb, Jo Howarth, recently co-opted Susie Courtault and Nick Cook, with myself as Chair. The committee has met with our Lay Leader, Jef Jones, once a month over the last year to consider the running of the church, including the building, and our relationship with the wider community. Of course, none of this matters much unless we also hold our Unitarian community central to our thoughts. We have also been joined in the meetings by Ashleigh Ward, our Church Manager, allowing us a close relationship with him.

As you all know, Jef will be with us until the end of March as he offered to stay an extra six months once news of the Coronavirus Pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures hit us in March 2020. This has provided us with immeasurable support during a historically challenging time. I haven't looked through the archives, but this is probably the first time that our church has closed its doors since its opening in 1821. The committee is aware of the great impact that Jef's leaving at the end of March will have on many of us, and trust that we can support each other through this time.

One of the most invisible roles we have is that of Safeguarding Lead. Ann Woodhead has been our Safeguarding Lead until earlier in the year, a role she carried out with necessary level-headedness and discretion. That this role goes largely unseen and unnoticed is a tribute to its success, but it is a vital role within any organisation such as ours. We are very grateful to the time and effort that Ann put into this. I am pleased to say that Susie Courtault has agreed to take this on. Thank you, Susie.

I am really pleased to let you know that our website has now gone live and can be found at <https://www.brightonunitarian.org.uk/> Thank you so much to Ashleigh for creating this, and for all those who contributed to it in various ways. A special mention of thanks goes to Christine and Francis Clark-Lowes for the historic timeline, Tony Tree for allowing us to use his photography, and those who contributed to the previous website as some pages have been directly lifted from there.

Once again our thanks to Tricia Purchas who has worked throughout the year to ensure we have a range of service leaders, and Kathy Pitt for organising the music rota and play-

ing the piano for us while it was still possible. Our thanks also to Pamela Nickels, Stuart Deeks, Kathy Pitt, Joe Ward, Maurice Rigby and to everyone who has played the piano or organ for us in this last year.

As well as our regular Sunday Services, Jef, Jennifer and volunteers have also been running the Heart and Soul gatherings on Thursday evenings which has continued to be highly successful on Zoom

Sadly we had to stop the Welcome Café, but hope to re-start this in 2021 as long as we have someone to co-ordinate this. Thanks to Trisha Purchas for organising this to date, and Trisha would be happy to brief anyone willing to take this on.

We have lost many hirers during this pandemic. Some are waiting in the wings to return, and for some their business may not survive. We are pleased to have been able to accommodate some community groups who are offering support to vulnerable people during this time. Ashleigh and Jef have worked hard to make the building COVID-19 safe, with clear instructions to hirers. Barbara has continued to keep the church clean and Martin Holliday, our caretaker, continues to offer us his support. Our many thanks to Barbara and Martin, and also Pete Tulley for his ongoing maintenance support.



The closure of the church has offered the opportunity for Pete Tulley and his colleague Guy Williams to work on the second window on the North side to be restored. This is looking beautiful and let's in the soft northern light.

Another beautiful addition to the church is Jeanette's hanging which you will see by the piano in the church and on the front cover. Thank you so much to Jeanette and those who contributed to this work or art.

In the months leading up to the lockdown Fanny, Jo and Stephen were looking into new staging. There were numerous creative discussions taking place which will be resumed when we are able. Thanks for the thought and time put into this.

Our many thanks to Helen Lee for organising the setting up of the rota while we were still having our services in the church. The setting up has continued in a different form, with a great deal of technical know-how from Sarah West. Other technical support has come from Jo Howarth and Jen Barton, with Jen Barton, Jo Howarth, Heather Duff and Bella Cranmore hosting the Zoom services.

Our grateful thanks to all of you who have contributed to the teas and coffees and the washing and clearing up afterwards. Also to those of you who have set up and set down the church, and Anne Uzochukwu for the flowers.

There are people who are not included in this list as I do not know where to stop, and I am sorry to anyone who has been missed out, but you know what you have contributed and I hope you all know that your contributions are highly valued.

And of course, as Rev. Jane Barton once said, the first duty of a congregation is to congregate, and this we have continued to do

Caroline Drijver

Lay Pastors Report

Of course 2020 was a difficult year for the world and for the precious corner of it that is our church. As a result of Covid 19 our sacred space has been closed for most of the year. We have been obliged to broadcast our services on line and not being able to meet in our church has been a significant spiritual loss. Many of our members have coped very well with this and the other necessary restrictions on daily life: some have even thrived on the quietness and stillness, especially during the spring and summer. Others though have struggled, and for many this has been a time of weariness and anxiety.

There have been some things to celebrate. In March our community pulled together with great resolve, good cheer and mutual support. A version of church life has continued on-line and this has meant a great deal to people. A significant minority of members have chosen not to attend online services; for some they are just not the same as a service in church. They have understandably chosen either to watch the recording later or read the text when these have been available. For many however our on line Sunday services and weekly Heart and Soul gatherings have made a real and positive difference. Indeed we have some new members from outside of Brighton who now come regularly to online services. I'd like to thank Jen Barton, Jo Howarth, Sarah West and Jennifer Sanders for enabling us to make our ministry accessible in this way.

Another cause for celebration has been our bicentenary. We held two short services in the church on the anniversary itself, August 20th, followed by an extended Sunday service on line. Our founders could not have imagined the two hundredth birthday of the church being marked by a socially distanced congregation wearing face masks! I think though that they would be encouraged by our continuing commitment to a free religious faith. They might have been heartened too by the extended online Sunday service at which four members spoke eloquently of their visions of our future. In the same service we heard messages of congratulation from Mrs Anne Mills, Vice President of the General Assembly, Rev Martin Whittel, District Minister and the Right Hon Caroline Lucas MP.

Given the unusual nature of 2020 I'd like to thank our committee, who have worked extremely hard over the course of the year to manoeuvre the church through a series of complex and demanding challenges. Thank you Caroline, Kathy, Jennifer, Jo and Jeanette. You will read in our treasurer's report that the financial impact of the pandemic on our funds has been serious; our income from lettings has been severely reduced. We must not take our church for granted. It is only made possible by its financial viability and by the substantial time and work that committee members and other volunteers put in, often unseen by the wider congregation.

Sadly 2020 has seen the loss of three dear friends; Steve Whittington, Jeanette Cragg and Peter Badger. We miss them a lot.

I would like to end on a personal note. I was planning to retire from my role as Lay Pastor in September but when it became clear how serious and long-lasting the pandemic would be, I undertook to stay until March of 2021. Of course I have been sad that during my last year I have not been able to lead many services in our lovely space, but I am glad to be able to continue working as Lay Pastor until the spring.

This is my last report to the membership. I began my lay ministry in May 2010 and those were very different days. Words such as populism and pandemic were rarely heard: the term Brexit was not yet coined. In 2010 we could not have imagined how inspiring and unifying the London Olympics would be and how divisive the second half of the decade would become. Ten years ago I was both daunted and excited by the prospect of serving as your Lay Leader. I had been invited to apply for that role by the congregation - I felt humbled to say the least by that invitation and grateful for the opportunity. I still am.

I started coming to church in 2001, drawn by the wisdom and inspiration of Rev Jane Barton. At the service to mark my induction as Lay Leader in 2010 I undertook to follow Jane's example and honour the church in its commitment to spirituality, reason and religious inquiry. Drawing on her example I have tried to build a ministry of prayer, mysticism and ideas. As I look forward to my life after Brighton Unitarian Church I am still convinced that our liberal, religious mission is a great blessing and a much needed gift to the world.

Finally I was lucky in the first years of my time as Lay Pastor to have the advice and support of my dear friends, Rev Linda Hart and the late Rev Jane Barraclough. I would like to thank my current spiritual director, Father John Wall for all his excellent counsel and support.

Jef Jones

Managers' Report

Due to the pandemic events and bookings were down on average by 80%.

2019 lettings and fee - £46,055.15

2020 lettings and fee - £18,918.48

Loss due to events that had to cancel or regular hirers that can't return - £39,665

Refunds £1,484

We closed the church on 18th March slightly ahead of lockdown which came into effect on the 23rd March. We then kept the church completely closed for a while as we kept the congregations safety in mind. Whilst we were closed I hired out the portico to our neighbours Pinocchio's who used it for alfresco seating area for their restaurant which proved to be a good marriage as we couldn't make any income any other way and we even got a half a page feature in our local paper: The Argus.

Because of this pandemic and being close it meant the church turned more digital. With an extra facebook support page, live Lunchtime Concerts streamed to facebook and zoom which has been used twice a week for the Sunday service and heart & soul. We

also now have a brand-new website which I have created to make it easier for people to reach our new online services and clear pages for hirers too.

Instead of opening on the 5th July we decided to open again on 20th August for the bicentenary and non-church related events could return from 24th August. I came up with a re-opening road map (which can be found on our website) to stagger events back depending on their risk after they've returned a covid-19 risk assessment. We saw 4 of our regular hirers come back out of 9 as the rest couldn't come back due to the covid-secure measurements in place or they chose not to run their workshops during a pandemic.

Marion, Phillida and myself decided to cancel the Lunchtime Concerts for the time being, keeping the customers safety a priority. We are planning to open them again in March 2021 if the current situation doesn't worsen.

We were once again ordered to close from 5th November till 2nd December. However support groups and individual prayer could continue throughout this time so we had 2 hirers still using the space once a week and private prayer every Wednesday.

The pandemic has meant that the type of hirers has changed with a lot more people hiring to record music videos and more support groups. This includes Team Domenica – which help disabled people get into work. Pathways to health – low-cost acupuncture for people affected by stress, anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol, and those living with HIV. Amaze – which gives support to families with special education needs and disabilities.

Brighton Fringe obviously didn't go ahead as planned in May, however they ran a much smaller Fringe in October, and we housed 3 events here which were all very successful. Due to social distancing and the government restrictions our capacity of the venue has gone down from 150 to 28 in the church space and 16 in the hall. Due to these restrictions one of the Fringe performances had a 4 night run and booked extra dates due to selling out. All other Fringe bookings have been moved to 2021 expect 2 which wanted a refund.

One of the plus sides of this pandemic is that Pete Tulley got to continue to restore the windows with very little disturbance of events. Due to social distancing he had to work alone but has finished the windows and they look great. He has also been doing other odd jobs so the church is feeling fresh and has recently started on the quinquennial report, like fixing the disabled ramp in the north gate passage, the window in the hall sorting out the opening and closing mechanism and cleaning the guttering.

We also got CCTV installed for outside the front of the church and we now have an outdoor plug phase plug to accommodate bigger outdoor events like Brighton Fringe.

Our weddings bookings have all been moved to next year so we didn't have any cancellations for that and still had 2 small wedding ceremonies in September

Ashleigh Ward

Treasurer's Report

Owing to the pandemic, this year's Report is not going to make for happy reading. The first five months of our financial year (October 2019 - February 2020) were 'business as usual', then the catastrophe of the virus hit us hard from March onwards. Added to this have been a few extra expenses, the major one being our commitment to repairing the remaining two unsafe windows. It would be true to say that this has been a challenging year all round.

The accounts highlight once again just how dependent we are on our income from hirers. Following Marion's departure at the end of 2019, our new Office Manager, Ashleigh has continued to promote the church as a major event venue in Brighton. We do need to recognise that financially we are dependent on hirers in order to keep our doors open. Even with only 5 months of 'business as usual' our hiring income was double that of our annual income from our members and visitors.

There have been some new and positive developments. Letting our forecourt and steps to Pinocchio's next door over the summer gave us both some much-needed funds. We also now have a long-overdue CCTV system in place. The office has been given a facelift and when our finances allow, the vestry will be overhauled. Thanks to a gift from a member we have bought a projector, and a live-streaming system is in the process of being purchased (we are grateful to the LDPA for a generous donation of £1000 towards this). Our Quinquennial Review - the 5-yearly comprehensive survey of the church - was made in August, some repair suggestions were made and Pete has already made a start with these. The good news was that nothing of major significance was found, unlike at the previous Review in 2015.

The lifting of pandemic restrictions cannot come soon enough. Any suggestions for exploring other avenues of income (also for help to implement them) would be appreciated. We have had to use much of the funds in our Gold Reserve Account to keep us afloat during this last financial year. Our investment of £75,000 remains untouched and has even notionally earned a few thousand interest. We are keeping a careful eye on the situation and remain hopeful that the Report for the next financial year will be more optimistic.

And finally - I must thank our book-keeper, Christine, for her unfailing patience and efficiency when dealing with my many requests and queries. This job would be impossible without her!

Kathy Pitt
November 2020

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

			FY 2020	FY 2019
A	RECEIPTS			
1	Donations & Offertory			
	To General a/c		11,503.14	10,106.10
	To Gold a/c		658.14	2,036.36
	Legacy		0.00	0.00
		Subtotal	12,161.28	12,142.46
2	HMRC			
	Gift Aid tax reclaim		2,893.62	8,511.64
		Subtotal	2,893.62	8,511.64
3	Grants			
	General Baptist Assembly		385.00	273.00
	National Churches Trust		1,500.00	0.00
	Highgate Hill		1,850.00	1,950.00
	LDPA		1,000.00	0.00
		Subtotal	4,735.00	2,223.00
4	Bank and Investment activity			
	Investment income		0.00	0.00
	Bank interest other accounts		88.80	213.51
		Subtotal	88.80	213.51
5	Lettings and fees			
	Hirings and other fees		27,385.87	46,055.15
	PRS payments from hirers		211.08	588.67

		Subtotal	27,596.95	46,643.82
6	PRP Receipts			
	Donations		0.00	2,383.35
	Heritage Lottery Fund		0.00	144,188.00
	New Gravel Pit		0.00	5,000.00
	Sussex Historic Churches		0.00	10,000.00
		Subtotal	0.00	161,571.35
7	Other income			
	Rites of passage		3,988.50	3,676.75
	General Fundraising activity		2,067.56	10,212.44
	Charitable donations		0.00	0.00
	Inquirer subscriptions		0.00	0.00
	GA quota payments		0.00	0.00
	Insurance claim		0.00	0.00
	Miscellaneous Income		597.10	221.04
		Subtotal	6,653.16	14,110.23
	TOTAL RECEIPTS		54,128.81	245,416.01
B	PAYMENTS			
1	Ministry			
	Lay Leader's stipend		18,632.42	18,012.42
	Ministry expenses		896.49	5,247.90
	Pulpit fees paid		777.45	492.00
		Subtotal	20,306.36	23,752.32

2	HMRC			
	Tax and NI		5,441.77	5,230.68
		Subtotal	5,441.77	5,230.68
3	Support costs			
	Gifts, flowers, etc.		572.38	1,174.88
	Travel expenses (eg GA fees; bus pass Jef)		708.41	704.50
	Rites of Passage fees and expenses		731.00	975.00
	Committee expenses		1,460.33	1,353.52
	Organ and piano		1,086.00	1,364.00
	Printing, advertising, etc.		102.40	473.80
	General Fundraising costs		0.00	0.00
	Charitable donations		175.00	0.00
	Denomination subscriptions		1,840.00	1,745.00
	Subscriptions to periodicals		60.00	60.00
		Subtotal	6,735.52	7,850.70
4	Management & Administration			
	Church Manager's salary & pension		12,959.24	10,578.66
	Cleaner's salary		2,667.04	2,670.10
	Caretaking salaries		12,430.15	11,363.82
	Record Keeper		2,079.96	2,079.96
	Light and heat		3,213.51	3,376.67
	Water rates		345.85	403.71
	Telephone		412.70	623.11
	Repairs and renewals		22,019.69	6,944.84
	Furniture and equipment		1,832.61	183.79
	Kitchen supplies		516.95	1,504.03

	Postage and stationery		135.06	255.50
	Website		75.00	200.44
	Investment		0.00	75,000.00
	Insurance		3,037.89	2,892.03
	Performing Rights Society		518.96	1,125.33
	Accountancy and payroll		785.00	805.00
	Bank charges Gen a/c		66.00	60.00
	Hiring/key refund		1,850.84	183.00
		Subtotal	64,946.45	120,249.99
5	PRP Delivery Costs			
	Architect and Surveyor		0.00	39,302.15
	Builder		0.00	65,561.74
	Other		0.00	7,348.86
		Subtotal	0.00	112,212.75
	Total Payments		95,879.26	269,296.44
	Funding			
	General a/c		6,155.96	3,479.15
	Gold a/c		39,831.60	84,146.39
	HSBC a/c		430.86	550.86
	Petty Cash		19.99	12.46
	Other Floats		80.00	80.00
	Total		46,518.41	88,268.86

	Balance from last financial year		88,268.86	112,149.29
	Receipts - Payments this year		(41,750.45)	(23,880.43)
			46,518.41	88,268.86

-

				FY 2020	FY 2019
A	RECEIPTS				
1	Donations & Offertory				
	To General a/c			11,503.14	10,106.10
	To Gold a/c			658.14	2,036.36
	Legacy			0.00	0.00
			Subtotal	12,161.28	12,142.46
2	HMRC				
	Gift Aid tax reclaim			2,893.62	8,511.64
			Subtotal	2,893.62	8,511.64
3	Grants				
	General Baptist Assembly			385.00	273.00
	National Churches Trust			1,500.00	0.00
	Highgate Hill			1,850.00	1,950.00
	LDPA			1,000.00	0.00
			Subtotal	4,735.00	2,223.00
4	Bank and Investment activity				
	Investment income			0.00	0.00
	Bank interest other accounts			88.80	213.51
			Subtotal	88.80	213.51
5	Lettings and fees				
	Hirings and other fees			27,385.87	46,055.15
	PRS payments from hirers			211.08	588.67
			Subtotal	27,596.95	46,643.82
6	PRP Receipts				
	Donations			0.00	2,383.35
	Heritage Lottery Fund			0.00	144,188.00
	New Gravel Pit			0.00	5,000.00
	Sussex Historic Churches			0.00	10,000.00
			Subtotal	0.00	161,571.35
7	Other income				
	Rites of passage			3,988.50	3,676.75
	General Fundraising activity			2,067.56	10,212.44
	Charitable donations			0.00	0.00
	Inquirer subscriptions			0.00	0.00
	GA quota payments			0.00	0.00
	Insurance claim			0.00	0.00
	Miscellaneous Income			597.10	221.04
			Subtotal	6,653.16	14,110.23
	TOTAL RECEIPTS			54,128.81	245,416.01
B	PAYMENTS				

1	Ministry				
	Lay Leader's stipend			18,632.42	18,012.42
	Ministry expenses			896.49	5,247.90
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	Gifts, flowers, etc.			572.38	1,174.88
	Travel expenses (eg GA fees; bus pass Jef)			708.41	704.50
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	Committee expenses			1,460.33	1,353.52
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	Printing, advertising, etc.			102.40	473.80
	General Fundraising costs			0.00	0.00
	Charitable donations			175.00	0.00
	Denomination subscriptions			1,840.00	1,745.00
	Subscriptions to periodicals			60.00	60.00
			Subtotal	6,735.52	7,850.70
4	Management & Administration				
	Church Manager's salary & pension			12,959.24	10,578.66
	Cleaner's salary			2,667.04	2,670.10
	Caretaking salaries			12,430.15	11,363.82
	Record Keeper			2,079.96	2,079.96
	Light and heat			3,213.51	3,376.67
	Water rates			345.85	403.71
	Telephone			412.70	623.11
	Repairs and renewals			22,019.69	6,944.84
	Furniture and equipment			1,832.61	183.79
	Kitchen supplies			516.95	1,504.03
	Postage and stationery			135.06	255.50
	Website			75.00	200.44
	Investment			0.00	75,000.00
	Insurance			3,037.89	2,892.03
	Performing Rights Society			518.96	1,125.33
	Accountancy and payroll			785.00	805.00
	Bank charges Gen a/c			66.00	60.00
	Hiring/key refund			1,850.84	183.00
			Subtotal	64,946.45	120,249.99
5	PRP Delivery Costs				
	Architect and Surveyor			0.00	39,302.15
	Builder			0.00	65,561.74
	Other			0.00	7,348.86
			Subtotal	0.00	112,212.75

	Total Payments			95,879.26	269,296.44
	Funding				
	General a/c			6,155.96	3,479.15
	Gold a/c			39,831.60	84,146.39
	HSBC a/c			430.86	550.86
	Petty Cash			19.99	12.46
	Other Floats			80.00	80.00
	Total			46,518.41	88,268.86
	Balance from last financial year			88,268.86	112,149.29
	Receipts - Payments this year			(41,750.45)	(23,880.43)
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	Highgate Hill			1,850.00	1,950.00	
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			Subtotal	6,653.16	14,110.23	
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	Repairs and renewals			22,019.69	6,944.84		Note:
	Furniture and equipment			1,832.61	183.79		Note:
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	Website			75.00	200.44		
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				46,518.41	88,268.86		

BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH
REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER TO THE BUC TREASURER
YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Overview

The Books of Account were found to accurately represent the financial position of the Brighton Unitarian Church for the Year Ended 30th September 2020. It should be noted that the Books are maintained on a cash basis, rather than on an accruals basis.

Financial Statements

I have checked the FY 2019/20 Statement and agreed the final presentation. Figures from the General Account cashbook and other sources have been carried forward correctly to this statement. I can also confirm that the closing balances are correctly stated and that the FY 2018/19 comparatives have also been brought forward correctly.

BNY Mellon

This investment was established in July 2019 with an initial investment of £75,000. I can confirm that the value of the investment now stands at £79,125.56 as at 30th September 2020.

General Account & Building Appeal Fund Cashbooks

Previously the Books of Account would have been subject to an interim audit as at 30th June 2020. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic this did not take place this year. All work therefore took place following the end of the financial year. It should also be noted that due to the pandemic, the number of transactions were less than usual due to the reduced activity in the second half of the financial year, affecting both income and expenses.

The General Account is structured in such a way that record keeping is transparent, enabling more convenient auditing. A convenient record is also kept of receipts not banked and payments not cashed at each month end. Such record keeping reduces risk and enables greater control and understanding of the 'Finances'.

Receipts

Receipts were sampled and both the receipt in the bank account and its accurate recording in the cashbook confirmed.

Payments

Backing documentation was examined for all invoiced payments with a value of £50 and above. The majority of documents carried sufficient payment details to enable the appropriate records to be validated. Invoices were generally booked correctly and carried forward correctly to the financial statements.

Petty Cash

The petty cash account was checked for the accurate recording of funding transfers; addition and balances carried forward were checked for accuracy.

Generally

Record keeping was thorough and detailed, with little risk of material mis-statement. This has the benefit of not only facilitating the audit, but more importantly, evidences good financial control and minimises the risk of error.

Donald Simmons ACMA CGMA
28th November 2020