

Brighton Unitarian Church
Annual Report 2020



**Brighton Unitarian Church New Road Brighton
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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 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

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	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
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	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		Note:
	Furniture and equipment			1,832.61	183.79		Note:
	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		Note:
	Hiring/key refund			1,850.84	183.00		Note:
			Subtotal	64,946.45	120,249.99		
5	PRP Delivery Costs						
	Architect and Surveyor			0.00	39,302.15		Note:
	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		

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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