

# *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

**T**here 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

**A**s 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 Pinoccchios 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.

## Financial Statements

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

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**  
Auditor

# BUC Account Figures 2021/2022

	FY 2021- 2022	FY 2020- 2021
<b>A RECEIPTS</b>		
<b>1 Donations &amp; Offertory</b>		
To General a/c	7,961.11	10,385.69
To Gold a/c	897.77	429.90
Legacy	0.00	0.00
Subtotal	<b>8,858.88</b>	<b>10,815.59</b>
<b>2 HMRC</b>		
Gift Aid tax reclaim	2,199.40	2,228.45
Subtotal	<b>2,199.40</b>	<b>2,228.45</b>
<b>3 Grants</b>		
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	<b>829.99</b>	<b>4,206.20</b>
<b>4 Bank Interest</b>		
Gold & Gen accounts	81.60	2.47
Subtotal	<b>81.60</b>	<b>2.47</b>
<b>5 Lettings and fees</b>		
Hirings and other fees	49,237.05	27,785.85
PRS payments from hirers	158.10	0.00
Subtotal	<b>49,395.15</b>	<b>27,785.85</b>
<b>6 Other income</b>		
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	<b>37,152.68</b>	<b>3,218.60</b>
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>98,517.70</b>	<b>48,257.16</b>
<b>B PAYMENTS</b>		
<b>1 Ministry</b>		
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	<b>2,275.00</b>	<b>11,194.74</b>



<b>2 HMRC</b>		
Tax and NI	5,375.27	4,251.00
Subtotal	<b>5,375.27</b>	<b>4,251.00</b>
<b>3 Support costs</b>		
Gifts, flowers, etc.	1,486.56	1,095.42
Travel expenses (eg GA fees; bus pass Jef)	400.76	86.38
Rites of Passage fees and expenses	1,754.85	677.00
Committee expenses	2,279.57	126.35
Organ and piano	800.00	317.00
Printing, advertising, etc.	612.52	105.00
General Fundraising costs	0.00	0.00
Charitable donations	475.25	0.00
Denomination subscriptions	1,640.00	1,670.00
Subscriptions to periodicals	66.00	60.00
Subtotal	<b>9,515.51</b>	<b>4,137.15</b>
<b>4 Management &amp; Administration</b>		
Church Manager's salary & pension	12,497.40	14,043.73
Cleaner's salary	3,693.62	2,650.46
Caretaking salaries	13,616.32	4,628.53
Record Keeper	2,762.55	2,097.31
Light and heat	4,508.70	2,494.34
Water rates	193.38	322.02
Telephone	556.06	576.83
Repairs and renewals	10,714.64	3,774.78
Furniture and equipment	444.99	1,427.75
Kitchen supplies	1,006.19	377.40
Postage and stationery	367.44	226.06
Website, streaming, etc.	383.95	489.59
Investment	0.00	0.00
Insurance	3,408.96	3,218.04
Performing Rights Society	822.04	270.91
Accountancy and payroll	685.00	685.00
Bank charges	136.80	87.50
Refunds	620.00	103.50
Subtotal	<b>56,418.04</b>	<b>37,473.75</b>
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>73,583.82</b>	<b>57,056.64</b>
<b>Funding</b>		
General a/c	14,733.13	17,910.69
Gold a/c	47,661.83	19,489.64
HSBC a/c	174.06	230.86
Petty Cash	2.79	6.74
Floats	80.00	80.00
Total	<b>62,651.81</b>	<b>37,717.93</b>
Balance from last financial year	37,717.93	46,518.41
Receipts - Payments this year	24,933.88	(8,800.48)
	<b>62,651.81</b>	<b>37,717.93</b>
BNY Mellon investment portfolio	<b>99,814.67</b>	<b>111,098.66</b>
Note: figure shows investment value as of 30 September.		
No transactions on investment will be shown, as any income is re-invested.		

# *Brighton* **Unitarian** *Church*



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