



**Annual  
Fellowship  
Meeting 9:45am  
25<sup>th</sup> March  
2023.  
Reports**

## **Contents.**

<b>Elders' Report, March 2023.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Bethany Evangelical Church Trustees.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Bible Reading Group.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Bethany Church web site 2023.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Tuesday Night (Zoom) Prayer Meeting.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>"Coffee and Chat" .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ACCOUNTS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Secretary's report.....</b>	<b>12</b>

## **Elders' Report, March 2023**

The members of the Oversight at Bethany are Steve Crago, John Peck, Robert Wills and Phil Edwards.

We would like to start by once again saying thank you for your prayers and your support during the past year.

After two years in which the life of the church was severely disrupted by the restrictions and safety measures made necessary by the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, 2022 saw us return to something approaching normal life.

Although several of the congregation contracted COVID-19 during the early months of the year, this did not significantly affect the work of the church – its meetings and activities.

However, some of the changes to how we do things adopted during 2020-2021 have been kept, as they appeared to work and were considered by many to be an improvement on how we were doing things before.

Firstly, the weekly prayer meeting has continued to be held on Zoom as it turned out that this is actually better attended than prayer meetings held physically were.

Secondly, we have kept to holding a single Sunday morning service per week at 10.30am which includes the Breaking of Bread (as opposed to holding a separate Breaking of Bread service prior to the main Family Service). The new arrangement has a number of advantages. The previous two service arrangement risked splitting the congregation into those who only attended the first service and those who only attended the second. Also, it had been noted with the old system that if one did attend both services it made for a long morning and one had to do a lot of singing. Another advantage of the new single service is that it discourages the preacher from speaking for too long (well, that's the theory anyway).

Typically over 30 people now attend the Sunday morning services.

Several people have expressed regret about losing our traditional open Breaking of Bread service. We are not expecting to return to that (at least in the foreseeable future) but there is a place for such Breaking of Bread services to mark special church occasions. Two times our traditional Breaking of Bread services were held in 2022 – one on Good Friday (April 15th) and one on Christmas Eve.

Here is a summary of events during the past year:

### **March**

On 13<sup>th</sup> March we were visited by Aurel Vidal of the International Mission to Jewish People) who spoke to us in the Sunday morning service about his work amongst Jewish people in France (and in particular, Paris).

### Annual Fellowship Meeting

Our Annual Fellowship Meeting was held on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

The devotions and worship time were meant to be taken by Phil Edwards, but he was unable to attend due to contracting Covid-19, and his message (from Ezra 3:8-13 and 1 Thessalonians 5:5-18) was instead read out by Steve Crago.

During this meeting the *Church's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy* was reviewed and accepted. It was subsequently signed off at the next Oversight Meeting on 07/05/2022. As part of this Sharon Bollen was reappointed as Church Safeguarding Officer.

### April - June

Anne Adams went to be with the Lord on 10th April. Her funeral was held at Bethany on Thursday 19th May.

In the months April to June we had a number of visiting speakers on Sunday mornings, some of whom are representatives of missionary organisations. These were:

David Malam (SASRA) on 24/04/2022

Graham Chewter (Trinitarian Bible Society) on 08/05/2022

Stephen Gillham (Counties) on 22/05/2022

John Maxwell on 12/06/2022

On the weekend on 18-20<sup>th</sup> June we were visited by a group of overseas students from Friends International in Guildford. On the Saturday we welcomed them with a buffet lunch; on the Sunday Hugh Griffin of Friends International led the morning service; and on the Monday some of the congregation joined the students on a walk from Freshwater to Alum Bay.

### July

Since December 2007 the Bible readings and subjects preached upon in the Sunday morning services had followed a programme of systematic teaching and readings intended to cover all parts of the Bible. The idea behind this was to avoid the danger of just hearing messages from the familiar and "comfortable" portions of scripture, and not to shy away from unfamiliar or challenging passages. The programme was produced by Don Piper up until 2015 and continued by Phil Edwards thereafter. This scheme

was completed on 31<sup>st</sup> July by Roger Fruen when he spoke on Joshua's farewell address from the book of Joshua chapters 23 & 24.

## September

In September we commenced a new series of messages in the Sunday morning services, with readings taken from Matthew Chapters 4-7. This includes "The Sermon on the mount" - practical teaching by Jesus, aimed at teaching His disciples how to live their lives day by day in a way that pleases God.

Following the recent conversion of the Trust which runs Bethany from a Registered Charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, we received a request from HMRC requiring us to fill in a Corporation Tax form covering the year 2021. This was submitted on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Many thanks to Roger Fruen and his sister Becci Bell (who is an accountant) for their invaluable assistance in completing this online form.

Note: Bethany was not, of course, required to pay any tax. Indeed, HMRC gives *us* money via the Gift Aid scheme (see the Treasurer's report).

On 18th September Pete Luther and Marie Andrews of Revive came and spoke to us in the Sunday morning service about their work.

## Operation Christmas Child shoebox appeal

Once again, this year Operation Christmas Child gave people the option to "Pack a Shoebox Online", and we know that a number of people in the congregation took up this option (as they have done for the last couple of years).

## December

In December Phil Edwards announced to the rest of the oversight that he would be retiring (not standing for reappointment) as a Trustee in April 2023, and that he would be standing down as a member of the oversight at the same time. In practical terms the congregation may not notice any difference - he will still be active in the church, preaching and leading services after this date (much as another former member of the oversight, Roger Fruen, does).

## Christmas

This year saw our Christmas programme of events return to something approaching normality. Although there was no December Craft morning, more of the other traditional events took place.

On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> a fellowship Christmas dinner was held at 4.30pm and enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Rhoda and Andrew who organised this. Thanks also to Sharon Bollen who organised the quiz.

We held our 6pm Candlelit service of nine lessons and carols on Sunday 18th December. This service was successfully live streamed on Zoom.

On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> at 6.15pm a small group of singers went carol singing around the streets of Newport. This seemed to be appreciated by all who heard it (especially when they discovered that we were not collecting money) – including two men from Vectis radio, who (on the street) interviewed Steve and Phil, and who broadcast the interview plus a rendering of “Silent Night” on their program on 23<sup>rd</sup> December.

As Christmas Day was a Sunday this year, it was decided to hold a separate traditional Breaking of Bread service on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am and keep the Sunday service as a short Family service. The Service on Christmas Day was led by Phil Edwards.

It had been planned to have a party on New Year’s Eve, but this had to be cancelled due to important other commitments of some of the key people.

### January 2023

For many years members of Bethany have been collecting postage stamps for the Leprosy Mission which they sold to raise funds. In January we learned that they would no longer be doing this, and would not be accepting stamps after March 2023.

Many thanks to all who have collected stamps for them over the years. The Leprosy Mission posted this “thank you” on their website, which we reproduce here:

*“We want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has collected stamps to raise funds for people affected by leprosy. We know that so many of you have spent precious time collecting, cutting and trimming with great care. Over the years you have raised thousands of pounds and transformed lives across Africa and Asia – all with stamps! It’s been a joy to receive bags and parcels at the office, all packed and posted with love.*

*Good stewardship of funds and resources is at the forefront of everything we do, so that we can send as much money as possible to help those with leprosy. In the last couple of years, the value of stamps has greatly reduced. Now that bar-coded stamps have been introduced, stamp value has been further decreased. Sadly, we have now reached the point where used stamps no longer raise the money they did in years gone by.”*

February 2023

Roger Moore went to be with the Lord on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. His funeral was held at Bethany on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February.

## **Bethany Evangelical Church Trustees** **(as at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023)**

Name of trust: Bethany (Isle of Wight) Trust.  
(Charity Commission for England and Wales registration number: 1182622)

S Crago (Secretary; cheque signatory).  
P Edwards.  
J Peck (cheque signatory; appointed person for marriages).  
R Wills.  
P Young.

Note: Under the trust's constitution (paragraphs 9-12), the Trustees are appointed for fixed terms, but are eligible for reappointment after these terms expire.

The initial terms for which Robert Wills and Peter Young were appointed expired in 2022, but they agreed to continue as trustees for 3 years from 31/12/2022, and were reappointed (at the Elders/Trustees meeting of 15th October 2022).

Phil Edwards will not be standing for reappointment this year, and will retire as a Trustee on 13th April 2023.

## **Bible Reading Group**

After Covid around the end of 2021, Tess started a small group in her home for people who wanted to know more about the Bible. This group began reading the gospels of Matthew and Mark.

In 2022 that group moved to meeting at Bethany on Wednesday evenings. We'd had such a group before, for some years since an Alpha course.

Now the group functions as an outreach and a help for people who don't regularly attend church or don't already know much about the Bible. Recently it also seems to be a useful way for us to welcome and get to know people who have started coming to Bethany.

We aim to meet fortnightly and we're usually about a dozen people. We have supper and a relaxing time of fellowship together, then read a Bible passage (at present continuing the gospel of Mark). We follow this by a short discussion and a prayer time. We try to be flexible and responsive to the needs of people in the group. It has to be said that it's not really a Bible study; we keep it at a fairly basic level for people who might not know the scriptures well.

Anyone is welcome but we always need to know numbers in advance for catering, so if you want to come or bring anyone, please let Robert, Valerie or Tess know first. Also, please pray for us.

**Robert Wills - March 2023**

## **Bethany Church web site 2023**

### New Look

At the beginning of 2022 Bethany website received a major face lift and a new fresh look which includes loads of useful links such as **What is Christianity** and explains **What we believe**, there are links and **news** and **future events** specifically for Bethany information including our **monthly diary** and **general notices** together with **external links** to many **Island Christian activities** and links to **external organisations**. The **Sermons** on Sunday are recorded and can be listened to again via the **Sermons** link, some even have **videos**. At the foot of each page there is a link to our **Facebook** site.



## Church visitors

Bethany web site has proved a popular source of information for visitors and holiday makers who search for a Church to attend. Visitors to the website can read about our **Bethany Church history** and our links with the **Isle of Wight Youth for Christ** team. There is a link to help people **find us** on Google Maps, together with general **service times**. They can **contact us** via a secure messaging service. Through this website resource we have been pleased to receive a number of holidaying/visiting Christians where we have shared time and have worshipped together.

## Members link

**Members** of Bethany have access to this area via a **secure password** entry system. Here you will find a **zoom link** to the Tuesday night prayer meeting, an outline of who **our elders** are and specific **items of prayers** for them as they endeavour to guide Bethany on our behalf. There are links identifying our **charitable status**, our **Church trustees** and links to our **AGM and reports**, **cleaning rotas**, and **offerings** to **missionary societies**. There is a link to one of our own members receiving the MBE for her work as a **missionary**, the presentation was from the late Queen Elizabeth. There is a **picture gallery** of members past and present and a County Press article of the **1976 opening of Bethany** Evangelical Church in Union Street.

## Bethany Web

My hope is the website directs users to recognise we are a group of Christians who believe that the teachings of the Bible and Good News of Jesus Christ is fundamental to us as Evangelical Christians.

Note:

1. If you require the Members password please contact me.
2. All the words in **bold and Italic** above are links you can find on the website.
3. If you have photos you would like shared in the picture gallery please contact me.

Phil Harris

[www.bethanyiow.co.uk](http://www.bethanyiow.co.uk)

## **Tuesday Night (Zoom) Prayer Meeting**

Before the Zoom Prayer meeting on Tuesday, I send out an invitation by Email giving the link to the Zoom meeting and to ask if anything should be prayed for. Various friends may send details of things to be prayed for which I put in to a document and then email out to those (about 9 in number) that have asked for these details. Then Tuesday I send out a WhatsApp message to again give the details of the Zoom Meeting with a link as a reminder.

If you have anything for prayer, please let us know.

The format for the Zoom prayer meeting is to have a brief reading from the Bible with a reflection on it and then to show the list of prayer items to all on Zoom so that they can see it (not everyone has a printer). There is an opportunity for all to pray and at the end there is some time for fellowship.

**Steve Crago**

## **“Coffee and Chat”**

You may remember that the ladies Coffee and Chat started meeting via zoom in October 2020, during the Covid pandemic.

For about a year now we have been meeting every other Thursday morning at Bethany where we have a drink and a chat, and also share a bible reading. It has been nice to renew friendships with those who were at Bethany in the past and also make new friends. The numbers can vary between five and eleven.

Every now and then we enjoy meeting up at a tea room or coffee shop, we even had a picnic last summer.

Two additional coffee mornings were held on a Saturday - 26th March and 4th June, where everyone (including the men) were welcome to come along. The late Queen's Platinum Jubilee was the theme for the 4th June. Cakes and a quiz seem to go well together! Having a coffee morning on a Saturday enables those who are working during the week to come along too. It's also a time when we can invite friends and enjoy a chat over a drink and a piece of cake.

**Julia Crago**

# ACCOUNTS

## BETHANY EVANGELICAL CHURCH - 2022 Accounts

	INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
	£	£	£	£
General offerings/donations/interest	12,940	8,875		
	1,168			
Gift aid payment (HMRC)	8	958		
Special offerings	638	218	1,400	2,480
Gifts to speakers			1,115	315
Catering			194	
Building Fund			63	3,377
Gas, water & electricity	372	168	4,706	4,322
Books & stationery	22		232	200
Equipment			1,708	
Maintenance/Miscellaneous	154		2,414	1,971
	15,294	10,219	11,832	12,665
Totals	94	9	2	
	3,462	-		
income less expenditure	2	2,447		
	36,987			
Balance at 01 01 22	40,449			
Balance at 31 12 22	49			

Here is the treasurer's report for 2022. Thank you again for trusting me in the role.

Income was up from that received in either 2020 or 2021. People are being very generous, with several giving by standing order. A number of people have signed up to the Gift Aid scheme which has increased the value of their donations. I realise that not everyone is able to do this, but thank you to those who have.

Unlike in 2020 and 2021, income this year has exceeded expenditure. However, please note that the balance is inflated by the fact that over £1000 of outgoings were delayed until January 2023, due to the cheque book being held up in the post during December.

## **Secretary's report**

I would like to commend to you this verse from God's word:

This is about hope and encouragement and the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

### **2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (NIV/UK)**

*<sup>21</sup> It is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, <sup>22</sup> set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

Paul has been discussing his travel arrangements concerning his coming to the Corinthian church. They seem to think that Paul isn't good at keeping his promises. And this leads Paul to think about promises. Paul assures them that he will come to them but had refrained before because it would not have been good for them. So he wrote a letter addressing the issues that they have, but also says that with God's help, he will come to them.

Then he thinks about God's promises and that God has commissioned us and enables us to stand firm for Jesus. And why should we do this? Because he has placed the Holy Spirit in our hearts, the first instalment of everything he has promised us. We are a work in progress but one day we shall see Jesus and will be transformed and will be like him.

Thank you again for all your prayerful support for the Elders as we seek to serve yourselves. Also to all who work behind the 'scenes', we thank you.

We are grateful to have seen more come and join us on Sunday mornings, God is gracious.

The number of members of Bethany is about 66.

Last thing, I should mention the other activities that happen at Bethany. Youth for Christ operate out of the Homestead and occasionally use the Bethany building, the Medina Community Choir is using the Bethany building on Monday and Thursday evening and the Hebron Pentecostal Church are using the side hall for a prayer meeting on Sunday from 2 to 5pm.

**Steve Crago**