



**Annual Fellowship
Meeting 9:45am
16th March 2024.
Reports**

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Elders' Report, March 2024

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

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

We continue to have a Sunday morning meeting Family Service at 10:30am which incorporated the 2 meetings we used to have. This is followed by refreshments with Tea and Coffee etc. This is a time when we can have fellowship together and discuss what we have heard in the meeting.

The prayer meeting continues in Zoom with a Bible reading to start with and then we look at the list of prayer items that have been raised. People may raise additional things that they know about for prayer. We don't raise personal items for prayer on behalf of others unless we have been asked to do so.

Typically, over 30 people attend the Sunday morning services.

There were various things that happened in 2023.

March 2023.

The main piano had a broken sustain foot pedal mechanism and was old. A newer replacement was required.

We noticed that our numbers have increased, but we couldn't identify a particular reason.

All infrared heaters were working and a problem trip switch had been replaced. Cost of running the heating is better than we thought it might be.

On the 17th March, SSE put smart meter in Bethany. Homestead meter should be done at some point.

Annual Fellowship meeting 23 March 2023.

Robert did the Bible reading and message. Then there were reports followed by prayer and singing and then lunch. Various issues were raised:

Safeguarding:

Lois spoke about the Safeguarding Policy and asked if a copy could be pinned to the Notice Board. This was done. Roger reminded us that we should be reviewing the Safeguarding Policy every year and included at the AFM. Sharon mentioned that there is training for safeguarding.

Missionary Spot.

In the Family Service we haven't had a Missionary Spot or video about Missionary work for some time. Could this be included? Time constraints make this difficult.

Website use and WhatsApp.

Phil Harris mentioned the use of the Bethany Website and it was also said that visitors and newcomers had used the site to find out about us. One couple had listened to all the January messages before coming to us.

WhatsApp was being used like a prayer chain and more. The only issue with it is that those on the prayer chain who aren't on WhatsApp can miss out on what is happening unless someone rings them.

Home Bible Study group.

Could this be set up? There was a suggestion that this could be in the afternoon while it is still light. The Elders are stretched already with speaking duties as there are fewer visiting speakers. No answer to this and no one has stepped forward to do this.

Ladies Meeting.

The Ladies meeting stopped with the Covid Pandemic and was unlikely to start again as its numbers had diminished before closure.

It was said that the Coffee and Chat Ladies' group was not a replacement for this as it was just a get together to which women could bring friends to and talk perhaps about the difficulties they were having. This group can't be seen as a replacement for the Ladies meeting.

Julia mentioned that there was to be a Coffee Morning Cream Tea on Monday the 8th April celebrating the Kings Coronation. 10:30am.

Issues raised by Andrew:

There weren't enough chairs in the main hall. Seating plan was updated and chairs added.

Craft Afternoon, Jo Bingham may be able to get this going again but Jo and Paul are still visiting parents on the mainland quite often.

A suggestion was made about refreshments in the foyer. This could happen in in the Summer.

The Kitchen was mentioned and it was said the oven space was difficult. But a case for change can't be made just for one event per year.

Home Bible Study groups were disappearing before Covid19, so who would be interested? Probably not many. See comment on this above.

New hymns, we do this when we can but the aim is to choose something appropriate to the subject.

Issue raised by Ann Pembroke:

Ann suggested that we were not following the words of Jesus in how we conducted the Breaking of Bread and that it was something that the Elders did.

The Elders response was that it doesn't have to be served by elders. Also, we don't know how many cups the disciples had. There have been suggestions that each disciple would have their own cup. Further to this, some have said that they would rather have separate cups because of health issues. The trays and small cups were obtained before we heard of Covid and when we first had the Lord's Supper together when the restrictions were lifted, we brought our own glasses to cope with the Covid issue. We don't need to be prescriptive about how this is done, also God sees the heart, and so it is the attitude with which we do this that is important.

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The special offering held Sunday (26th March) for the Syrian / Turkey earthquake disaster came to £377.95. We sent it through WorldShare who are working in those regions.

April.

On the 7th we had a Good Friday Breaking of Bread followed by refreshments. Then some joined the Walk of Witness in Newport at 12:30pm starting at the Congregational Church. This gave us the opportunity to talk to anyone that asked us what we were doing. Many people joined this from the Churches in Newport and there were refreshments at the end.

We welcomed Sharon Bollen as a trustee to the group. Sharon joined us for the standard 3 year period. Phil Edwards retired from Oversight and being a Trustee.

We have seen an increase in our numbers and couldn't see that we could take any credit for it. We were still doing what we have done before, that is faithfully sticking to God's word whether it is the nice parts or the more difficult parts. We did have a speaker from Tear Fund who felt strongly that God was telling her to say that we should continue doing what we were already doing.

On Monday 10th April we had a little walk at Firestone Copse at 3pm led by Paul Coleman. We were joined by various friends and had a great time with

Paul looking at trees and plants that usually we would have ignored like the lungwort. The weather was good.

We were sad to lose Joyce Wells who passed away on Saturday 29th April at 3:30am after a short illness. The funeral was on 25th May at 12 noon at St John's Church Newport.

Visiting speakers this month: on the 2nd, Andy Peck and on 23rd David Malam – SASRA.

May.

We were still looking for a new piano, various friends were looking for one on our behalf.

We had a Coronation Celebration Cream Tea on Monday 8th May 10am to 12 noon at Bethany. There was cake, cream teas, coffee, tea and a craft table for the kids. A competition to pin the jewel on the Kings Crown and a quiz. The refreshments were free and all were welcomed. It did seem to encourage renewal of friendships.

John Peck mentioned that refreshments after the Sunday morning meeting were working well. Allowed people to chat and catch up with each other and discuss the talk that we had in the meeting.

Numbers creeping up, about 40 people in attendance.

John Peck stepped down from the attendance of the Oversight and Trustee meeting but still remains as a member of the Oversight and is still a trustee.

On Sunday 21st we had a fellowship lunch and Stephen Gillham spoke on the Return of the Lord and also did an update on the work of Bible Education Services.

Visiting speaker this month: on the 21st, Stephen Gillham - Dorset.

June.

We reviewed Bethany's safeguarding policy and signed it. A scanned copy was put on the notice board. This will have to be reviewed annually.

The team tasked with sourcing a new piano had sourced one from Freshwater going for £850. A donor has covered the cost.

The Oversight and Trustees looked at the document detailing the proposal and purpose of the Newport Youth Worker as published by CWTN (Churches Working Together in Newport group) and agreed with it in principle.

Numbers attending had tailed off slightly. Could be due to illness and holidays.

During the year the question came up as to why we don't give out the weekly offerings any more. The main reason is that more than half of the money coming in is through Standing Orders direct from people's banks and to publish just the amount put in the box would be misleading. However, when we have a special offering, that is given out as part of the notices.

This month the congregation number peaked at about 49 people.

Visiting speaker this month: on the 11th, John Maxwell - Swindon.

July.

On Saturday 29th July we had an open lunch at Ann Pembroke's home in the garden. Some went on a tour of Great Whitcombe Manor while others enjoyed the garden. We met some new people and had a great time.

August.

Lois invited us to her cottage in Freshwater after church on Sunday 6th August for a 'bring and share' lunch. Lois provided the jacket potatoes. It was really nice to be together in Lois's Garden again.

We agreed that the piano sounded good and hoped to use it more often.

In August we did a series called "Their walk with God", the subjects being Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. The subjects linked nicely together and were good. It wasn't however that different to our normal Family Service. We are somewhat restricted by having the Breaking of Bread as part of the meeting.

September.

The Oversight and Trustees discussed the support of the Newport Youth Worker and decided to send £200 to the work and also discuss our support at the AFM in 2024. We also said that we needed more trustees and start looking for a successor for the Secretary.

Visiting speaker this month: on the 10th, Bob White - Carisbrooke Priory.

October.

We had a special collection over 2 weeks (1st and 8th October) for Tear Fund and Food Bank. The money collected to be distributed between the two charities came to £688.

An observation was made that we were missing most(all) of the occasional attenders on Sunday (15th October). We were down to 30 people.

November.

Thank you to Andrew and his team for putting up the decorations for Christmas including a stunning 'curtain' array of lights hanging from the ceiling.

Lois Cooper told us that monies collected from the SASRA drums (Soldiers and Aviators Readers Association) was £272.93. "SASRA provides the serving personnel of the British Army and Royal Air Force with a practical and constant experience of the Christian Faith through living and working alongside them in their units". Several members of Bethany have drums which are used for putting by money for their work.

Hebron Church celebrated their anniversary on Sunday 12th November, one year since they first started meeting in Sunday afternoon in the side hall. They invited us to be part of that celebration by joining them in a lunchtime meal. It went very well and also they gave us a gift of £1000.

Jo and Paul Bingham had a wedding anniversary celebration on Saturday 25th November. There was Barn Dancing, food, quiz and great time reminiscing.

December.

We welcomed Paul Crago as trustee on 2nd December for Bethany (Isle of Wight) Trust. Paul joined us as a trustee for the standard 3 year period. Steve Crago's term finished at the end of the year, Steve said that he was willing to stand again as a trustee. Sharon proposed that Steve should continue as a trustee and Robert seconded.

Visiting speaker this month: on the 10th, Pete Luther - Revive.

Phil Harris revamped the Bethany Website for Christmas to include that activities we were doing. Robert Wills designed a leaflet as a handout about the activities which were:

Candle lit carol service on Sunday evening 6pm December 17th.

Carol singing around the town on Wednesday 21st December at 6:15pm.

Christmas meal Saturday 23rd at 4pm which was organised by Rhoda, Andrew and family.

Sunday 24th our morning meeting was an open time of worship and Breaking of Bread.

Christmas Day (Monday) 10:30am celebration was led by Shelia Dolby (Rhoda's sister).

We didn't have a Craft Afternoon. If we want to have it again, the organisation of it would have to happen earlier.

January 2024.

Visiting speaker this month: on the 21st, Gabby North - Leprosy Mission.

February 2024.

We found that Bethany will have to do a tax return again. Roger Fruen and Becci Bell are happy to help with this.

Numbers at Bethany (29) not so healthy. Many away due to ill health.

John Hassett has been putting up the posters at the front of Bethany for some years, for which we are most grateful. Is there anyone who is willing to take this on?

Other events.

Throughout the year, Youth for Christ have held events on Friday for young people. Also, they have a prayer meeting for all the Church Workers on the Island on Monday morning.

The Medina Community Choir regularly hold a practice on Monday and Thursday evenings. Hebron Church use the side hall of the Bethany building for their meeting on Sunday afternoon at 2pm to about 5pm.

Good News for Everyone (formerly Gideons) had a Strawberry tea on Saturday 10th June 2023 at 3pm.

Bethany Evangelical Church Trustees **(as at 1st January 2024)**

Name of trust: Bethany (Isle of Wight) Trust.

(Charity Commission for England and Wales registration number: 1182622)

S Crago (Secretary; cheque signatory).

S Bollen (appointed person for marriages).

J Peck (cheque signatory; appointed person for marriages).

P Crago.

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.

Sharon Bollen joined us as a trustee for 3 years from 15th April 2023. This appointment was made at an Elders/Trustees meeting on the same date. The initial terms for which Steve Crago was appointed expired at the end of 2023, but he agreed to continue as trustee for 3 years from 01/01/2024, and was reappointed (at the Elders/Trustees meeting of 2nd December 2023). Also at this meeting, Paul Crago joined us as a trustee for 3 years.

Bible Reading Group

The Bible Reading group meets at Bethany in the side hall on Wednesday evenings.

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

We usually don't meet in the winter months as it's unattractive for people to come out. We've just started again with the first meeting this year on the 28th February.

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 the moment we're following Paul's journeys in Acts and dipping for an overview of the letters he wrote later to the places he visited. 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 2024

Bethany Church web site 2024

Phil Harris www.bethanyiow.co.uk

History

Our Bethany website is 26 years old !

The original Bethany website was conceived and produced in 1998 and was originally designed to offer Bethany a foothold on the ever growing and mystical World Wide Web (WWW).

I remember some of the Bethany elders at the time asked for all the documentation that would be uploaded to the WWW before permission was given ...I took pleasure in providing all the lines of code for their perusal.. !!

Coding Language

Web design and tools for writing script or code in the 90's were expensive, so the first attempt at writing Bethany's website script was written longhand using a web language called HyperText Markup Language (HTML). This code or language originally defined the content and structure of web "pages".

Over the years there have been many iterations of our website together with much innovation in web design and technology. I still write the code long hand (old fashioned I guess) but the language has changed considerably. Now web design requires a specific language for specifying the presentation of a "webpage" called; Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) which is considered the bedrock technology of the World Wide Web alongside scripting languages such as HTML, JavaScript and Extensible Markup Language (XML).

My Report

Well done for ploughing through the above! When Steve asked for a report on the website for the **AGM**, I thought it a good opportunity to let you know how our website was written and what is required to keep it going and up to date.

If you have not already done so please take a look at the website, which has many useful links such as **What is Christianity** and explains **What we believe**, there are links to **news** and our monthly Church **diary** with general notices together with **external links** to many Island Christian activities and links to **external** Christian organisations. Each Sunday our **Sermons** are recorded and can be listened to again. At the foot of each page there is a link to our **Facebook** site.

Church visitors

Bethany website 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. People can **find us** on Google Maps, together with general **service times**. Readers can **contact us** via a secure messaging service.

Bethany Members

The Bethany family has 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** and **trustees** are. Our **charitable status**, previous AGM **reports**, **cleaning rotas**, and **offerings** to missionary societies, are all available to view.

Bethany Web

My hope is the Bethany website directs users to recognise us as 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.

Light for Bulgaria Coffee Morning

On Saturday 18th November 2023 we were pleased to host a Coffee Morning to raise awareness and funds for the work of Light for Bulgaria.

The morning included refreshments; tea/coffee and a variety of cakes & cookies; a video from LBF founder Michelle Lineros and there was a table of my own Bulgarian memories and photographs to browse. There was also a craft table to keep children entertained and the craftily inclined occupied making some pre-Christmas crafts.

The coffee morning raised £345.

With thanks to Julia Crago, Jane Salmon, Steve Crago and everyone who donated cakes.

Sharon Bollen

Tuesday Night (Zoom) Prayer Meeting

Before the Zoom Prayer meeting on Tuesday, I send out an invitation by email to 35 addresses 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. Then on Tuesday at about 5pm, I email the prayer requests to those (about 12 in number) that have asked for these details. Then 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. Some like to print off the Prayer Requests so that they can pray for these things throughout the week.

Steve Crago

“Coffee and Chat”

The Coffee and Chat group for ladies still meet together every other Thursday morning at 10.30am at Bethany for about an hour and a half. We also enjoy meeting up in coffee shops or tea rooms for coffee or even lunch. On one occasion we went to the Brading Roman Villa and had a great time making a mosaic tile coaster.

Last year was the year of the coronation of King Charles III. To celebrate this, on Monday 8th May, we had a Coronation Cream Tea coffee morning at Bethany where all were welcome to come along.

Ladies, you are welcome to join us any time. The dates that we meet are on the notice board in the foyer at Bethany.

Julia Crago

ACCOUNTS

BETHANY EVANGELICAL CHURCH – 2023 Accounts

	INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
	£	£	£	£
General offerings/donations/interest	16,640	12,940		
Gift aid payment (HMRC)	1,831	1,168		
Special offerings*	1,066	638	3,900	1,400
Gifts to speakers			850	1,115
Catering			330	194
Building Fund			219	63
Gas, water & electricity	288	372	9,598	4,706
Books & stationery		22	150	232
Equipment	1,200		1,395	1,708
Maintenance/Miscellaneous		154	3,516	2,414
Totals	21,025	15,294	19,958	11,832
income less expenditure	1,067			
Balance at 01 01 23	40,449			
Balance at 31 12 23	41,518			

* Special Offerings is the sum of Special Offerings, Missionary Fund, Retired Missionary Fund

Here is the treasurer's report for 2023. Thank you again for trusting me in the role.

Income was up from that received in 2022, but then again, so was expenditure. In particular, special gifts/offerings (including some gifts intended to be made in December 2022 which were delayed until January 2023, due to the cheque book being held up in the post), and utility bills. There are three reasons for this: firstly the rise in energy prices experienced by everyone in this country during 2023; secondly, the hall is now in constant use, unlike in the previous few years when the hall was closed for extended periods due to Covid-19 lockdowns; and thirdly, for several years our energy bills have been based on estimates (despite us providing the companies with accurate meter readings), and this year, following the installation of smart meters, this has been rectified. This third factor was a one-off correction.

Nevertheless, income this year has again slightly exceeded expenditure.

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.

Helen Edwards (Treasurer)

February 2024

Secretary's report 2024

I would like to commend to you this verse from God's word about how to be Blessed by God:

Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV/UK)

¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

The Meaning of the Word Blessed in this Psalm is happiness that God-given security and prosperity produce. When the Bible says "Blessed is the one...", it means happy or fulfilled. We are blessed when we follow and obey God's word. I wish that you all would be blessed in 2024.

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Thank you again for all your prayerful support for the Elders as we seek to serve you.

I would like to say thank you to Phil Edwards for the Bible readings that we have for each Sunday. This continues the process by which we read God's word each Sunday which was begun by Don Piper. Thank you to those who clean and do refreshments, meals and so many other things that aren't noticed by all.

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 69.

Steve Crago