

For the year to 30th September 2023

Objectives

The charity's objectives are defined in the constitution as follows:

"The promotion and practice of the Christian faith as expressed in the 'Articles of Religion of The Free Methodist Church in the United Kingdom' by organising regular meetings for worship, teaching, community support, evangelism and prayer and by supporting other organisations who share similar aims. These objectives will be carried out primarily, but not exclusively, in Bentham and surrounding areas."

The trustees consider that they have met these objectives by the following activities:

We have continued to meet in Low Bentham Victoria Institute for Sunday morning worship services. Our service has a mix of contemporary and traditional Christian music and a time of Bible based teaching as well as prayer.

We provide a play area for children attending this service and also encourage children of primary school age to attend our Sunday school classes which run from approximately half way through our main service.

Including children, our attendance at Sunday worship averages 65.

We offer a fortnightly (in season) meeting in the home of one of the trustees. This meeting is called "Firepit" and an average of 8-9 young adults attend. Our Sunday evening Youth service is held bi-monthly in a second community hall, Burton Pavilion, and our young adults meet together with others from the surrounding communities to enjoy fellowship and hearing from invited guest speakers. Average attendance at this event is 25.

We hold prayer meetings and house groups in alternate weeks in the homes of our members. We continue to offer a Zoom option for any unable to attend prayer meeting in person. The house groups attract about 30 members and we offer two evening and one afternoon groups.

In August 2023, we organised a weekly "Picnic in the Park" for pre-school children and their guardians and carers. Again, this was held in Burton Pavilion and on the Sunday afternoon at the close of August, we held a community barbecue which was very well attended.

A ladies group meets irregularly for fellowship and Bible study and a men's group meets occasionally for breakfast and for a local walk.

After much prayerful consideration, a part-time pastor was appointed effective 1st February 2023. We have already experienced the positive effects of this appointment and look forward to further benefiting from the appointment.

We continue to reserve a minimum 10% of our income to other causes and have nominated five to receive a share of this support this year:

- Adullam Programme, a recovery programme in Lancaster.
- Project Scotland, a start up in a deprived area of Glasgow.
- The Pantry, a food club in Bentham.
- Bentham Older People Together, a friendship club.
- Sportsreach, using sport to take the gospel mainly to the UK and Europe.
- Open Doors, working with the persecuted church internationally.

At the annual meeting held on 17th February 2023, our members voted unanimously to become full members of the Free Methodist Church in the UK effective from 30th April 2023.

Finance

The charity continues to rely on the free will offerings of its members, many of whom choose to remit directly to the bank account and the church is able to benefit from the government Gift Aid scheme.

A summary of the year is as follows:

Free will offerings		£	33,552
Income tax recovered			7,658
Total income in the period		£	41,210
Stipend and employee costs	£	17,299	
Visiting Speakers		1,423	
Room Hire		2,058	
Licences and Safeguarding		3,039	
Insurance		442	
Other expenses		1,750	
Total expenses in the period		26,011	
Other causes		9,503	
Expenses and other causes			35,514
Surplus for the period		£	5,696
Bank balance at start of period			47,784
Bank balance at end of period		£	53,480

Governance

Rev Dr Marcella Marcie Potts resigned as a trustee prior to the annual meeting held on 17th February 2023 and the newly appointed pastor, Alan Parkinson was proposed as a replacement. The annual meeting voted by ballot and, together with the pastor,

Mr Thomas Fawcett,
Mr David Lawson and
Mr Steven Lawson were unanimously appointed as trustees.

The trustees will continue to meet monthly, as the “Pastoral LeadershipTeam” to provide spiritual oversight and direction to the church. They will be assisted by the “Administrative Leadership Team” who will provide advice on practical matters and will meet with the PLT on a quarterly basis.

Other than the pastor, who is paid a stipend in accordance with Free Methodist conference guidelines, and the reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the church, including travel, none of the trustees are remunerated for their services.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:
Alan Parkinson (Chairman), 9th July 2024