

For the year to 30th September 2024**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 have met these objectives by the following activities:

We have continued to meet in Low Bentham Victoria Institute (LBVI) 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. For a period of about six weeks, we were unable to meet whilst the LBVI underwent a refurbishment of the public meeting rooms. For this period, we met in Burton Pavilion, a venue that we have previously hired for weeknight and special events.

Children's attendance at our services is encouraged and we have an active Sunday school providing two age appropriate classes. Children attend and sit with their parents until approximately half way through our service when they leave for their Sunday school classes.

The number attending our Sunday service has grown steadily. We have welcomed new families and two new couples and our average attendance, including children, is now 62. At special dates in the Christian calendar, we have been pleased to record up to 90 worshippers.

In August 2024, we gathered a team of seven of our members for a project with an associated newly planted church in Glasgow. Along with finance to the church, we provided administrative and catering assistance to a sports camp and children's work in a needy area of the city.

In September 2024, two of our regular worshippers were baptised by immersion in the garden area of LBVI.

Young adults from within our church families and others are welcomed to "Firepit", meeting in the home of one of our trustees and in alternate months, we host a youth service in the Burton Pavilion.

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. The groups address questions relating to the previous Sunday's messages and are an important way for our members to grow their faith.

We have tried to reach out into our community holding events such as a barbecue, children's Christmas crafts and Christmas wreath making. Similar events will continue so long as we can find those members able to take a leading role in such.

Our ladies group continues to meet for fellowship on an ad hoc basis and a men's group meets occasionally for breakfast and / or a local walk.

As a church, we participate in events as part of the Churches Together in Bentham group. Such events have included a Good Friday service, an Easter Sunday sunrise service and a monthly gathering in a local supported living complex.

We continue to enjoy the ministry of our pastor and his wife and believe that we see the results of that appointment both in increased numbers and an increasing depth of commitment and growth in the faith of our members.

We reserve a minimum 10% of our income to support other causes and have nominated five local and international charities to receive a share 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.
- Josiah Ventures, offering spiritual and educational support in Eastern Europe

Governance

The trustees continue to meet monthly, as the "Pastoral Leadership Team" to provide spiritual oversight and direction to the church. They are assisted by the "Administrative Leadership Team" who provide advice on practical matters and 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.

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 below:

Free will offerings		£	37,178
Income tax recovered			8,855
Total income in the period		£	46,033
Stipend and employee costs	£	28,152	
Visiting Speakers		2,268	
Room Hire		2,505	
Licences and Safeguarding		3,993	
Insurance		1,147	
Glasgow mission trip		1,845	
Other expenses		5,632	
Total expenses in the period		45,542	
Other causes		5,765	
Expenses and other causes		£	51,307
Deficit for the period		£	5,274
Bank balance at start of period			53,481
Bank balance at end of period		£	48,207

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

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Alan Parkinson (Chairman), I'll date it when we're good to go!