

Ministers report - Downley

It doesn't seem possible that a year has passed since I made my last report to you. A lot has happened in the last 12 months, as a church, as a circuit and I hope that you will see this report as a snapshot of what has happened.

Our membership remains stable. It currently stands at 14, but in the coming months I expect it to drop to 12 due to Nelly and David transferring their membership following their move. On top of this we have 6 chapel attenders. Two of our members moved into nursing homes during the year but are being regularly visited by Clive and Dilys Knapman plus others.

We continue to maintain good links with the nursery who lease our premises. They now have a new manager which has meant a change in how things are run and who we make contact with. Last year we held joint events in the church at both Christmas and Easter which were well attended by the families. It is always good to see the church so full, and you never know what seeds are planted at such events.

Two new community initiatives have started up since last year. We are opening our doors more regularly for prayer on a Monday – even though people are not streaming in, we are offering a presence in the community and those who do come appreciate the space we provide and have left requests for prayer. The bi-monthly film afternoons regularly attract 30+ people from the village who appreciate the film, refreshments and the fellowship. We have also donated Christmas food hampers to several families in need at The Disraeli school and this has been much appreciated. Local charities such as Growing Hope have also benefitted from donations.

My thanks goes to the stewards who ensure that everything is in place for worship to happen on a Sunday. I am grateful to Martyn Baker and his property 'team' for the work they do keeping the building going. A new boiler system is due to be put in soon which has taken a lot of planning, plus liaising with the nursery who will temporarily have to move out whilst some of the work is done. This system will be easier for us to control and will be more efficient.

Together we have written our mission plan, a document which recognises what we do well, what we can do better or try for the first time. This is a living document which we will keep referring to as we make decisions as a church about our purpose and work as Christians and I have included it below.

We continue to work alongside our ecumenical colleagues on joint community ventures such as Carols on the Common, the Easter Sunrise Service, and Downley Day.

Finally, thank you all for your continued hard work and dedication. We could not open our doors without you.

Rev Rachael Prince

Minister of Downley Methodist Church

Downley Methodist Church Strategic Mission Plan

Autumn 2025

Summary

This mission plan is not set in stone - it will change and grow as we continue our mission and ministry alongside the community we serve. We are committed to working on plans for worship, learning, service and evangelism, we seek to engage with the opportunities we have to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who wish to hear and respond.

Introduction

Downley Methodist church is situated in the village of Downley. It has a recorded membership of 14 with a Sunday congregation being around 8-10 people. There are a further 4 people on the community roll, some of which come to church. Four ladies started attending following the closure of The Avenue, two of which transferred their membership.

Downley are a faithful congregation who are residents in the village and involved in lots of village activities. The chapel is financially strong; the building has a seven year lease with the Chiltern Hills Montessori Nursery which provides a regular income plus a significant legacy left to them by a member.

The process

The discussions that led to this mission plan took place following a church council meeting. Prior to this, questionnaire had been circulated to the congregation to start their thinking.

The questions were:

1. Where do you see the Holy Spirit (kindness/patience/compassion) at work through our church?
2. Where do you see the Holy Spirit (hospitality, love, generosity) at work in our community?
3. The purpose of the church is to explore faith and encounter grace - what does that mean to you?
4. Praying, looking, hoping - these are the key words for mission - what do they mean to you?
5. Are there any words from Scripture, or a song, or a poem which you sense is particularly relevant for our situation, that we could learn from?
6. What are the things that you most value about the church community at Downley?

Our discussions together centred around the 'Our calling' headings. In each we discussed what we did well, what we could do better, and what might we like to try.

Worship:

Do well:

1. Welcoming.
2. Fellowship with each other including over coffee in the hall following worship.
3. Cope with increasing number of Local Arrangements 'locally'
4. Open to different worship styles.

Do better:

1. Better use of microphones (once the new system is installed)
2. Increase our presence on Facebook.

Try:

1. Different worship styles, eg. Café worship.
2. Consider reduction in frequency of communion to allow for more creativity when Rev. Rachael is leading worship.
3. Make better links with the film afternoon audience (eg. Offer an invitation to come to the Carol Service)
4. Explore possibility of worship at different times, eg. Afternoon Carol Service.

Learning and Caring:

Do well:

1. Fellowship and pastoral care within the congregation, including visiting folk in care homes.
2. Extending pastoral care to those in the village by taking the church flowers to someone who would appreciate them.
3. Opening the worship area for prayer regularly for the local community.

Do better:

1. The regular bible study has stopped
2. Continue maintenance work on the building to make it warm and welcoming to all who use our building

Try:

1. Zoom Circuit Bible studies for Lent and Advent will continue to be encouraged.
2. Investigate setting up a small group for bible study that is for a defined period eg. 4 weeks at a time.
3. Investigate having a prayer board or prayer tree.

Service:

Do well:

1. Support local and national charities financially and practically, eg. Christmas hampers for families in need at Disraeli school.
2. Being a Christian presence in local community groups
3. Working together with the other churches in Downley.
4. Linking and working with community groups, eg. Hosting the Open Gardens tea.
5. Working with the nursery at Christmas and Easter.

Do better:

1. Continue to build relationships with the nursery.
2. Discovering what people in the village need and finding out who we can work with.

Try:

1. Make ourselves more visible with new signage
2. Find out the needs of the community through conversations with those we encounter at the Film Afternoons, and in the community groups we volunteer at.

Evangelism

Do well:

1. Film Afternoons regularly attract over 30 people
2. Regularly opening the Chapel for prayer.
3. Working with the Nursery to put on events at Christmas and Easter.

Do better:

1. Improve our online presence either on Facebook or through the website.
2. Find ways to connect at other times with those who come to the Film Afternoon.
3. Make links with the families who are connected with the nursery.

Try:

1. Better signage – we currently don't have anything that visibly says who we are.
2. Purchasing some new posters to put in the noticeboard on the railings.
3. Start a community roll of those who come to the Film Afternoon.
4. Nativity Trail – a simple trail around the village for families to complete together during the month of December.

DOWNLEY METHODIST

Church

Church - Short
Form

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025

SECTION A

a1	RECEIPTS	Note
a2	Offerings and Tax recovered	
a3	Bank and CFB interest & investment income	
a4	Lettings	
a5	Other receipts	
a6	TOTAL RECEIPTS	

This year's amount
to the nearest £

£
5,310
17,368
9,126
8,301
40,104

Last year's amount to
the nearest £

£
8,847
20,389
17,560
46,796

SECTION B

b1	PAYMENTS	
b2	Circuit Assessment or Share	
b3	Donations	
b4	Repairs and Maintenance	
b5	Utilities (Insurances, water charges, heating & lighting)	
b6	Other payments	
b7	TOTAL PAYMENTS	

24,800
5,257
3,573
5,974
761
40,364

22,000
3,601
10,859
9,252
4,780
50,492

SECTION C

c1	NET RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR	(a6 - b7)
c2	Total funds brought forward from last year	
c3	TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR	(c1 + c2)
c4	State here the total of any other assets of the Church	
c5	State here the total of any liabilities of the Church	
c6	State here the insured value of the Church premises and contents	

(260)

(3,696)

419,146 (c7)

422,842

418,886

419,146 (c7)

SECTION D ANALYSIS OF FUNDS

d1	Balances held at TMCP at 31 August	
d2	Balances held at CFB at 31 August	
d3	Bank and cash balances at 31 August	
d4	TOTAL (= Box c3)	

373,634
45,252
418,886

357,733
61,413
419,146

SECTION E

FOR INFORMATION ONLY: MONEY RECEIVED AND PASSED ON TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

(these amounts are not to be included in total receipts/payments figures above)

e1	Balance brought forward from last year	
e2	Offerings/Gifts - received for external organisations	
e3	Offerings/Gifts - passed to external organisations	
e4	BALANCE STILL TO BE PAID	(e1+e2-e3)

750
750

850
850

Name of Church DOWNLEY METHODIST No

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below*) which give me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

I have/have not* obtained independent verification of all investments with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes or held in other trusts, bank balances and funds at the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church which are individually in excess of £10,000 (ten thousand pounds) at the balance sheet date.

Signature of independent examiner 

Name of independent examiner Ian Prince

Relevant professional qualification of independent examiner ACMA

Name of firm (where appropriate)

Address 1 Fleet Close Hughenden Valley

..... Post Code HP14 4LL

Date 15 October 2025

* delete or circle as appropriate