

Fivehead Baptist Church Reports Jan-Dec 2024

• Minister and Secretary Report

We are very grateful to God, to our members and congregation, and to our local community for the past year at Fivehead Baptist Church. As a worshipping community and a local charitable cause we have been able to make a real difference in people's lives as we receive and share God's love with all. Our faith is rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus who calls us to a life of loving service towards one another.

We continue to provide spaces for gathered worship and reflection each week where we can listen to God and inspire each other in our journey of faith. All are welcome at these meetings. Sunday mornings are our main worship time during which we focus on the good news of God and his grace, sing together in worship, offer prayers for each other and the world, and think about what the Bible says and how it applies in our daily lives. During the year we particularly focused on Genesis 1-11 and its message about human identity, purpose, and the importance of listening to God's voice. We followed this during the week with our Tuesday evening homegroups where we had opportunity to support and pray for one another and discuss the previous Sunday's Bible passage together. These have been well attended and beneficial times.

As usual we enjoyed special Sunday celebrations at Easter, Pentecost, Harvest Thanksgiving, and Christmas. We also joined with St Martin's Parish Church for a joint Remembrance Sunday service in November.

The "all-age" Sunday services continued on the third Sunday of each month for most of the year. After some discussion and prayer the leadership suggested opening The Stable Café on the first Sunday of each month alongside the service in the main church building. Free tea, coffee, and cake would be offered 10am-12noon. The aim of this is to make the whole premises available to everyone in the community and to break down some of the barriers between church and local community. The services are streamed into the back room of The Stable for any who wish to "listen in" to the service. It is also hoped this offers a more flexible, stress-free approach for parents coming to church with young children. A Bible story craft is also provided in the church hall during the morning. The first "Stable Sunday" in December was very encouraging. Families enjoyed the flexibility of taking the children where they preferred while still having access to the church service. We had a number of visitors from the village who made use of the café space and this encouraged conversation and mingling of church congregation with local people. The time after the service had finished was particularly beneficial as it gave church attenders the opportunity to move into the cafe and meet/catch up with people from the local community who had popped in for a drink. We will continue the Stable Sundays and review things during 2025.

Other regular groups have continued through 2024: Women On Wednesday, Men On Thursday, St Martin's Close discussion group, Saturday Men's Breakfast, and Contact Lunch which provides a meal and friendship to those living alone. Each of these groups serves people in our local area offering support, friendship, and spiritual guidance.

Two new prayer groups were started during 2024, headed up by Jill (one of our church members). The first is a Sunday morning prayer time before the service. The other is a Thursday afternoon prayer group for local and worldwide matters which ran until late 2024.

As well as the activities run by the church we have also opened our buildings to host various outside groups including a Mental Health Support Group, Folk Nights, Craft Group, the local Drama Group, and a county choir. Our minister also continues to write in the Village magazine and visits Curry Rivel School once each term to lead their Collective Worship assembly.

At the beginning of the year "Pastoral Care Groups" were introduced as a practical way for members of the congregation to support each other in times of need. The groups are intended to help us be aware of any needs among the church family. Each group contains a number of people who regularly attend the church, arranged loosely by geographical area. They are a reminder that pastoral care is a shared ministry and will help everyone offer support to those living nearby.

We continue to support other charitable causes around the world, including our regular financial support of three Christian missions: BMS World Mission, Toybox children's charity, and the SWBA Home Mission Fund. During the year we had visiting speakers from BMS and Safe Families join us on a Sunday and raised funds for both causes. In November we held a very successful TEARfund Big Quiz fundraising evening which was well attended by people of all ages. Our church Mission Team meets regularly to ensure we keep a focus on missionary/charity work both locally and overseas. In February we held a "World Mission Sunday" service to focus on this aspect of our faith.

During October three of our church members (Laurie, Karen, and Glynis) travelled to Kenya to visit the ICFEM Dreamland Hospital project which we have supported over the years. The trip was very encouraging and reminded us of the importance of our support for this mission in Africa. Upon their return Laurie, Karen, and Glynis gave two presentations to the church and local community about the trip and raised further funds for the mission.

During the year we discussed the role of Treasurer in the church and the amount of work it entails. It was decided to assemble a finance team to assist the church treasurer with the various jobs involved. A team of three plus the Treasurer has been assembled.

Our connection to the Baptist Union remains an important link with the wider Baptist family. Our minister, Matt, met regularly with other church leaders in the South West via the monthly "cluster" meetings. In January some of our leadership team attended a Leaders Day held in Wellington. In November we took part in a "pulpit exchange"; Matt preached at Wellington Baptist Church and Tommy Pratt from Minehead Baptist Church joined us at FBC. In May our minister, Matt, attended the annual Baptist Assembly in Telford where he received his official welcome as a fully accredited minister of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

The Stable report will show that 2024 was an extremely encouraging year for the community café. The Stable has been very busy and continues to be a real blessing to our local community in many different ways. The Children's Art Competition in spring was an added blessing.

Work was done on the church/café drains during the year which has significantly improved the drainage. In May we replaced the boiler in The Manse. A risk assessment was carried out for the church building and outside area.

It has been good to welcome many into church life and to see God work in people's lives in so many ways. It has been a difficult year for some in our fellowship due to illness, surgery, or treatments. We also said goodbye to Maureen who died in November. We take great comfort in

knowing she is with Jesus our Saviour, in the joy and peace of his love. We have welcomed one person into membership this past year. Our membership currently stands at 40.

As a church we thank God for all his goodness and thank all in our congregation who give so much to the fellowship. It is God's work, who calls us into the blessing of his kingdom, and we look to him for the future.

Rev. Matthew Cottingham – Pastor

Judy Male – Secretary

● **Mission Team Report**

The Mission Team comprises Matt, Pete & Gaynor White, Ian & Joan Sherwood and Laurie & Karen Burn. The last team meeting was in September when we agreed that there is a need to keep the church regularly informed about mission work, both local and overseas. In order to avoid information overload we should concentrate on a small number of selected OVERSEAS MISSIONS. These are:

BMS World Mission - <https://bmsworldmission.org/>

As we are a Baptist Church it is vital for us to support the Baptist family in world mission. Ruth Whiter's visit in February 2024 was much appreciated but we need to provide ongoing information to keep interest current. We agreed:

1. To establish a named link BMS missionary to build a relationship with the congregation. Matt undertook to enquire with BMS.
2. To include a section from BMS Prayer Guide in each week's notices to focus church prayers (intercessions in church and housegroup) (Matt to liaise with Judy)
3. That this year's Harvest Appeal on October 13th would be for BMS work in Bangladesh.

Toybox - <https://toybox.org.uk/>

The regular giving to Toybox using Eric and his pig family is a good way to keep children's focus on world mission. Worship leaders should regularly include reference in the services. We agreed that Toybox should be our Christmas Charity Appeal for 2024.

IcFEM Dreamland Mission - www.dreamlandmission.org

We have personal connections with Kenyan Mission known as IcFEM (Inter-Christian Fellowships' Evangelical Mission) through Laurie, Karen and Glynis who returned to Kenya from 14th October to 1st November this year. The UK charity which supports work in Kenya is now a CIO called IcFEM Dreamland Mission, so named because the land where the hospital and school are built was donated to the mission as a result of a dream by the landowner! Two presentations were given to the church (in September and on our return in November, plus an open meeting on a Tuesday evening in November, attended by a number of people from the local community. The Stable Cafe has regularly raised funds for Dreamland Hospital.

OTHER OVERSEAS MISSIONS for occasional, one-off focus include:

TEAR Fund - <https://www.tearfund.org/>

Gaynor supplies regular magazines to the congregation. Occasional updates might be given in services. The TEAR Fund Big Quiz was held on Saturday 16th November.

Hope Now - working in Ukraine. Occasional updates to be brought by Gaynor.

TWAM (Tools with a Mission) - collecting and distributing unwanted tools for use by tradespeople in Africa. There is now a new local collector in Langport, so anyone wanting to dispose of any old tools, including sewing machines, carpentry or engineering tools can speak to Laurie for details.

Shoe Boxes - No organised collection at FBC this year, but anyone who wanted to provide a shoe box, was linked to other local churches who were collecting.

Romania - Ian & Joan have many years' experience of working in Romania. Possible future talk/presentation?

REGULAR LOCAL MISSION we support includes:

The Stable Cafe - this is the main outreach focus of the church in our village

Contact Lunches - Monthly lunches for single people

Baptist Home Mission - the work of the Baptist family in the UK

Safe Families - after a recent presentation at church, Safe Families are holding regular team meetings in The Stable and at least one FBC member is getting involved.

Re-Engage teas for elderly - We host afternoon tea in The Stable a couple of times a year.

Laurie Burn

● The Stable Annual Report

2024 was a very good year for us, we recruited 4 new volunteers, bringing our workforce up to 22. We have 4 regular bakers, although this means we do have to buy in cakes periodically from 2 fairly local ladies.

A big change to our routine was learning how to use the new coffee machine, a bit daunting for some of us but so worthwhile. We are always looking to improve our products and have extended our range of paninis and Gluten free goods.

Our walls have been decorated by local artists this year, in June we held a Children's Art competition, from the village and neighbouring schools.

We had a couple of large expenses this year!

1. A Barista coffee machine

2. Repair to the Church drains
3. New decking and chairs which have meant the garden is used much more.
4. Replaced the sail cover.

See finance report for costs.

Gifts

At the end of the year we sent £500 each to :-

Water Aid

World Vision

Bristol Heart Foundation

Bold and Brave Taunton (Young Somerset)

Our Tips

RAFT £400

Safe Families (see Finance report)

Our MacMillan Day in September raised £200 with the daily takings and the donation box.

Twice a year we host an afternoon tea for a group of people from the Somerton area, (Re-Engage) this is very popular and we may have to consider moving into the Church building if numbers continue to grow.

In December we hosted our first Sunday morning outreach, by opening the café and streaming the service from next door, offering free coffee and cake (donations accepted).

We continue to serve our local residents and visitors passing through.
It is a privilege for me to be involved in this outreach.

Glynis Boucher.

● Children and Youth Work Report

We continue to build our children's & young people's work (CYP) around our "Values Statement" which focuses on 7 values of the Christian faith: Love, Gratitude, Self-Worth, Belonging, Forgiveness, Creativity, Purpose. We are very grateful to all those in the church who volunteer to help with our CYP work. It is important that we pass on these healthy values to the next generation, give them good role-models to learn from, and point them to the love of Jesus. All volunteers are DBS checked and informed of our Safeguarding Policy.

Sunday Morning

The Sunday morning children and youth work ("Sunday Rocks") has continued in the form of two age groups who meet in the two adjoining rooms upstairs. All ages join the main service to begin with where there is usually a children's talk of some sort. Part way through the service they go to their groups upstairs, which are led by at least two adults.

The younger group have continued following the "Aslan" Bible lesson material which gives outlines and ideas for each session based on a Bible passage. Leaders are free to use this or do their own thing.

The older group have a less structured, more conversational format where leaders encourage them to share and talk about whatever they want. As a leadership we have discussed during the year whether video content such as The Bible Project or Youth Alpha would be a better basis for discussion.

In the first half of the year we tried a new format with the older group for the first Sunday of each month. The group (named "TEN30") met in The Stable cafe from 10:30am. Hot and cold drinks and some form of light breakfast was provided (e.g. pancakes, waffles, toast). Games/activities were available and discussion was encouraged. Again, the approach was intentionally informal, allowing the youngsters to ask their own questions about life and faith. After trying this for 6 months it was reviewed and decided there was not sufficient energy for the new format to continue at present.

After the summer break the church leadership spent time discussing the way forward for our engagement with the younger generation. It was recognised that times have changed significantly and the social structures young people grow up within today are very different to the past. Connection with church and religion needs looking at in a fresh way. Discussion is ongoing about how we best go forward.

These discussions opened up a broader question about church's engagement with the local community and families in particular. From this the new "Stable Sundays" idea came about where the cafe is opened on the first Sunday of each month alongside church as a way to better use this God-given resource for all the community. Although Stable Sundays are about everyone in the local community it is hoped it will offer a more flexible approach to Sunday mornings for families and young people who may find the space more accessible. Stable Sundays will replace the All-Age services which had been held on each third Sunday of the month.

Thursday Youth Cafe

After a break at the beginning of the year, Youth Cafe was re-launched in the spring. Posters and fliers were sent to nearby schools and other local places. Numbers have been encouraging since re-opening with around 4-6 young people present most Thursday evenings, though occasionally more.

Art Competition

The Stable held an art competition for children and young people in the spring, on the theme of "Nature". This was very successful with a good number of entries. Some local schools included it as part of their art lessons. A local artist helped judge the winning entries in three age brackets and the winners gathered with their families at The Stable to receive their prizes (Hobbycraft vouchers). The exhibition was a great way to celebrate and encourage young artistic talent in the area and also focus on the importance of the natural world around us.

Matt Cottington

● **Contact Lunch Report**

The lunches which have been running for just over 6 years continue to be well received by those who attend.

For those of you who like numbers, I have worked out that we have served 191 meals this year. Numbers have been low some months as guests for various reasons have had to cancel, sometimes at short notice. For several people we have supplied a 'home delivery service'!

The lunches are open to all who live on their own in the village or for church members who live alone, wherever that might be and are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

As folk get older, several find it more difficult to attend. We are very grateful to Wendy Cutts for obtaining a wheelchair that can be used by anyone attending church-based functions. Unfortunately, the person who we hoped to be able to use it to get into the lunches has been unwell since we have had the chair and so it has not been tested out!

If you know of anyone who would benefit from these lunches, please tell them about these get-togethers. They are good value (I think) at £4 for a cooked 2 course lunch followed by tea or coffee.

Thank you to all the helpers who come month by month to serve the guests and make them feel welcome.

Karen Burn

● **Men On Thursday (MoT) Report**

Another rather peaceful year after the past years of Covid precautions and a pleasure to be able to meet and share time in fellowship with other men. Our time together admittedly tends to be a time when we can discuss matters ranging from the extremes of world affairs to matters which perhaps more directly affect the fellowship and ourselves. We tend to be rather thin-on-the-ground at times though there are usually three regular 'gents' and another one or two a little less frequently. A visit to Yeovilton was organised this year though a couple of folk missed it for various reasons and so look forward to going in the near future.

Paul Douglass

● **Women On Wednesday (WOW) Report**

January

Janice left as leader of WoW due to other commitments. We carried on for the rest of the year with various ladies leading.

Studies: One week discussing what we would study., one week praying and sharing.

February and March

We watched and discussed the film "Chocolat" and studied a Lent course alongside it.
Led by Margaret and various other ladies.
Prayer and share nibbles.

April, May and June

Prayer and share Easter nibbles.
We watched and discussed the film "The War Room"

Completed a 15 week study by Bill Hybel titled. "Too busy not to pray" Led by Lorna and various other ladies.
Various prayer and praise mornings.

July and August

We went to Yandles cafe for coffee and cakes.
We made clay crosses and pots led by Vicki.

We had lunch together at Monkton Elm Garden Centre. We then had a 7 week summer break. During this time we met for tea/coffee, chat and prayer in various houses

September

We decorated the church for harvest festival.
Finished painting our clay crosses and pots.
We took down all the harvest decorations.

October and November

"Through the Word" study led by Lorna and various ladies.

Prayer and share.

December

Decorated the church for Christmas
Chose a hymn or prayer to share, showing the goodness of God.
Christmas lunch together in the local pub.

Mary Peto

● **FIVEHEAD FOLK NIGHTS Report**

Laurie and Karen have been running Folk Music Nights in Fivehead since 2017, originally meeting monthly in The Crown Inn. However, in April 2024 the then landlords of the pub cancelled our booking, so we asked the Deacons if we could meet in the Baptist Church instead. This proved so popular that we have moved permanently to the church as it has better acoustics, more room and more comfortable seating. The church members agreed to this, subject to a no-alcohol policy.

Instead we have a coffee bar, run by Karen, Glynis and Anne, which covers the cost of using the building.

On the second Saturday of each month we start at 7.30pm with "floorsingers" - i.e. anyone who turns up can sing or play - then at 9.00pm we have an invited guest artist or group who sing/play until 10.00pm. Music has included talented local groups such as Arquebus (lively 3 piece band playing Klezma music, plus original songs and tunes), Tim O'Dowd & Alex Percy with a fantastic Irish Night on Uilleann pipes and guitar, plus a surprise young Irish dancer, David & Issy Emeney from Cheddar (traditional English and original story songs) and the unique duo Wildwood Jack. Our December evening guest was Cord of 3, comprising members of the worship group from St John's Church Yeovil. Guest artists are paid by voluntary donations from the audience.

The church also gave permission for us to hold an extra Christmas concert with the wonderful Devonian singer Jim Causley, who brought us his delightful "Causley Christmas" concert of local folk carols, stories, songs and poems by his relative, the Cornish poet Charles Causley.

These Fivehead Folk Nights are not an "official" church activity, nor specifically "Christian" but they bring in audiences of 30+ (sometimes over 50!) local people and provide opportunities for engaging in relationships and conversations with a wide range of people. On numerous occasions, people ask questions about the church and our faith, so I am grateful that the church permits us to meet. In my book, this is very much a gospel activity!

Laurie Burn

● **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding within the church is led by our Safeguarding Team which includes:

Anne Burnham (Safeguarding Trustee)

Laurie Burn (Designated Person for Safeguarding)

Paul Douglass (Designated Person for Safeguarding)

Ruta Lusite (Deputy Designated Person for Safeguarding)

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out for all who are involved with the young people in any way, including those helping in the Stable as there are sometimes young people who help serve in there. Safeguarding is not limited to ensuring the safety of young people, but can be applied to all ages and if you have any concerns, please don't hesitate to talk to one of those named above or our Pastor, Matt Cottington.

Policy Statement on Safeguarding Children in Fivehead Baptist Church

(referred to as "the church" in the Policy Statement)

This statement was agreed at the church meeting held on 16th June 2015.

It will be read annually at the Annual Church Meeting where progress in carrying it out will be monitored.

In fulfilling the Church's vision:

- we welcome children into the life of our community
- have a programme of events for children
- make our premises available to organisations working with children

The church recognises its responsibilities for the safeguarding of all young people under the age of 18 (regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability) as set out in The Children Act 1989 and 2004, Safe from Harm (HM Government 1994) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2013).

As members of this church we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all associated with the church and will pray for them regularly.

In pursuit of this we commit ourselves to the following policies and to the development of procedures to ensure their implementation.

Prevention and reporting of abuse

It is the duty of each church member to prevent the physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse of children. It is the duty of each church member to respond to concerns about the well-being of children and to report any child abuse disclosed, discovered or suspected. The church will fully co-operate with any statutory investigation into any suspected abuse linked with the church.

Safe recruitment, support and supervision of workers

The church will exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children, whether paid or volunteer. All workers will be provided with appropriate training, support and supervision to promote the safekeeping of children.

Respecting children

The church will adopt a code of behaviour for all who are appointed to work with children so that all children are shown the respect that is due to them.

Safe working practices

The church is committed to providing a safe environment for activities with children and will adopt ways of working with them that promote their safety and well-being.

A safe community

The church is committed to the prevention of bullying of children. The church will work to ensure that the behaviour of any who may pose a risk to children and young people in the community of the church is managed appropriately.

Fivehead Baptist Church

Receipts & Payments Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Stable Funds (restricted)	Total Funds 31/12/2024 £	31/12/2023 £
Receipts:					
Weekly offering/Regular gifts	32964.00			32964.00	31849.00
Childrens collections/Toybox	14.00			14.00	43.00
Miscellaneous Receipts:					
BMS Birthday scheme	175.00			175.00	70.00
Special Offerings	4559.00			4559.00	892.00
Hire Church Premises	910.00			910.00	166.00
HMRC Gift Aid	15734.00			15734.00	996.00
Miscellaneous income	635.00			635.00	0.00
Bank Interest	411.00			411.00	339.00
Total Church Receipts	55,402.00	0.00	0.00	55402.00	34355.00
BUC Fund Interest		148.00		148.00	186.00
The Stable:					
Stable Tips			599.00	599.00	715.00
Net receipts - The Stable	20,573.00			20573.00	14817.00
	20,573.00	0.00	599.00	21172.00	15532.00
Gross Income	75,975.00	148.00	599.00	76722.00	50073.00
Payments:					
Ministry salary, pension contributions & expenses	25701.00			25701.00	23626.00
Manse: Water rates, Council Tax & Insurance	8722.00			8722.00	3471.00
Church maintenance, cleaning & admin expenses	4653.00			4653.00	8849.00
Mission	5334.00			5334.00	4855.00
Youth & childrens work	207.00			207.00	244.00
Total payments	44,617.00	0.00	0.00	44617.00	41045.00
The Stable:					
Donations from Stable tips	509.00		599.00	1108.00	1070.00
Stable Café donations	0.00			0.00	4000.00
Stable Café Utilities, Consumables, Isle Abbotts	25,508.00			25508.00	10645.00
	26,017.00		599.00	26616.00	15715.00
Gross Expenditure	70,634.00	0.00	0.00	71233.00	56760.00
Net Income/(Expenditure)	5,341.00	148.00		5489.00	-6687.00
Cash funds at previous year end	45,393.00	6,467.00		51860.00	58547.00
Cash Funds at year end	50,734.00	6,615.00	0.00	57349.00	51860.00
Cash & Bank balances:					
Nat West Bank - General fund	28,772.00			28772.00	28361.00
Nat West Bank - The Stable	6,800.00			6800.00	12412.00
Co-operative Bank	15,162.00			15162.00	4620.00
BU Corporation Account		6,615.00		6615.00	6467.00
	50,734.00	6,615.00	0.00	57349.00	51860.00

Independent Examiner's report to the trustees of the
Fivehead Baptist Church

I report on the accounts for the year ended **31 December 2024**

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Church trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Church trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under Section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act)) and that an independent examination is required instead.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under Section 145 of the Charities Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission (under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act); and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the church and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statements below.

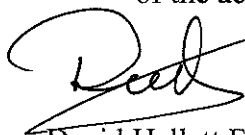
Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act

have not been met; or

- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



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16 January 2026