

German-speaking Lutheran Congregation Oxford Annual Report 2024

The Pastoral Office

After the departure of Pastor Lars Klehn from the congregation in August 2023, Pastoral Referent Udo Bauer fully took over pastoral duties. Since the summer of 2023, following Pastor Klehn's departure and the unsuccessful attempt to appoint a new pastoral assistant, Mr Bauer has held a full-time position. He carried out the pastoral office and almost all related activities to an impressive extent. The Church Council and the entire Oxford congregation express their sincere gratitude to Pastor Bauer for his dedication and service.

The Church Council, in close consultation with the Christ Church congregation and thus the entire PAB, considers it a priority to recruit a new pastor for the congregation as soon as possible. This requires close cooperation with both the EKD as the sending church and the Synod as the employer. The Church Council remains in active contact with both institutions.

Since a regular reappointment of the pastorate is not possible before autumn 2025, the Church Council and the PAB see it as their responsibility to find relief for Pastor Bauer before then. We are therefore in contact with a candidate who may be able to begin work within the PAB as early as spring or summer. We will keep the congregation informed.

Our thanks go to Pastor Klehn for his dedicated work in the Oxford congregation and to Pastor Bauer for his tireless commitment, which has made it possible to continue essential church activities. We would also like to thank Lena Bull, who supports the administrative work of the Synod and the PAB and provides the congregation with invaluable advice and assistance. Since mid-2023, Lena has been supported by Anna Machens, who works in the PAB office and ensures that the parish newsletter is distributed punctually and full of interesting information.

Church Services

Congregational services continued in 2023, taking place on the first Sunday of each month. Additional services were held at Christmas, Good Friday, Christmas Eve, and Easter. As before, we are particularly reliant on the hospitality of our Anglican friends at St Mary the Virgin, and we are very grateful that we may continue to use their church for our services. The effects of the coronavirus pandemic and its related restrictions on worship are now barely noticeable. Holy Communion is once again celebrated regularly, and singing and the sharing of peace are once more permitted.

Each month, a Family Church service is also held, aimed particularly at children up to the age of eight. Family Church has now become an integral part of church life in Oxford and often serves as an introduction for new members to the congregation. The Church Council would like to thank the Family Church team—Lucie Abeler-Dörner, Annette von Delft, and Patricia Zachhuber—for planning and conducting these services, which usually take place without a pastor present.

To enable older children and young people to continue participating in church life, a youth programme has been developed that offers activities every four to six weeks—for example, a film night with supper at the parish house, a pizza-making evening, and an outing to the Oxford Ice Rink. Both the Family Church and the youth activities have been well attended.

Visiting Days

Despite the absence of a second pastor since August 2023, regular visiting days have continued. Pastor Bauer aims to be in Oxford roughly once a month to visit congregation members who wish to see him outside of services.

The Church Council is aware that many congregation members also care for one another outside of regular church activities. We owe them our heartfelt thanks, as a church community like ours thrives on lived fellowship and the mutual care of its members.

Confirmation work

No confirmations took place in Oxford in 2023. However, in summer 2023, five young members of the congregation began their confirmation classes, which started in early summer and culminated in a two-week summer camp in Sweden. This camp was made possible through the efforts of Pastor **Lars Klehn** and a group of volunteer teamers who led activities and worked with the confirmands.

After Pastor Klehn's departure in August 2023, replacements had to be found to ensure that the confirmations could still take place in 2024. Pastor Kerstin Ohmer from East England and Pastor Silke Halfmann from East London kindly agreed to take over. Meetings with the confirmands have continued both via Zoom and in person in London. Although the classes have been less extensive this year due to the pastoral shortage, the Church Council is pleased that the confirmands will be confirmed in May 2024 at St Mary the Virgin. A preparatory Sunday will be held in April, and until then the confirmands will continue meeting in person and online with Pastors Halfmann and Ohmer.

Families wishing to start confirmation classes this year are asked to inform the Church Council or the pastoral team as soon as possible.

Ecumenism

The Oxford congregation continues to maintain close contact with the Anglican community of St Mary the Virgin. The church continues to make its space available to us. As in previous years, a joint Advent service was held with the Anglican congregation, followed by a Christmas reception hosted by our church. Relations with other religious groups are often maintained through Churches Together.

Church Council

Since summer 2023, the work of the Church Council has largely focused on addressing the gaps left by Pastor Klehn's departure. Much joint work has been carried out with both the Synod and partner congregations within the PAB. Otherwise, the Council is doing its utmost to ensure that church life continues—and even grows—despite having only one pastor.

The Church Council currently meets about once a month but remains in close contact between meetings to address organisational matters promptly without always calling a formal session. Unfortunately, Anja Shortland decided to step down from the Council for at least the coming year. Fortunately, Elisabeth von Braunschweig, a relatively new member of the congregation, has kindly agreed to join the Council.

Parish House

Thanks to Family Church, youth activities, and other events, the parish house on Lathbury Road remains an important part of church life. The rental income from two flats on Lathbury Road continues to provide stable finances for the congregation. The renovation work completed in 2022 meant that only minor repairs

were required in 2023. Our thanks go to Sandra Hay, who continues to look after the house and efficiently handles all necessary tasks and repairs.

The tenants at Lathbury Road 15b changed in summer 2023. Unfortunately, it seems the flat will again change tenants in summer 2024, as the current family plans to return to their home country. The Church Council will ensure new tenants are found. If any congregation members know of potential tenants, please let the Church Council know.

Outlook

Pastor Klehn's departure deeply affected both the congregation and its work, compelling everyone—especially Pastor Bauer—to take the initiative in maintaining and shaping church life. So far, this has succeeded reasonably well. Nonetheless, the main focus in the coming months will continue to be the timely and successful appointment of a new pastor.

The Church Council is especially pleased that five young people from our congregation will be confirmed this year and that at least one or two children are likely to be baptised.

We look forward to continuing lively exchanges with our members, partner congregations, and other groups in 2024 to gather valuable inspiration for our communal life.

On behalf of the Church Council

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G. v. Billerbeck', written in a cursive style.

Günther v. Billerbeck

Financial Report of the German Church Oxford, Annual Accounts 2024

The financial situation of the German Church Oxford remains sound. At the end of 2024, liquid assets, including the PAB account, amounted to £187,629. These reserves enable the congregation to maintain the property on Lathbury Road. At the same time, this ensures that sufficient funds are available to finance new initiatives within the congregation.

In 2024, the congregation's income amounted to £63,879. The majority of this income came from rental payments for the flats at 15B and 15C Lathbury Road as well as for the parish hall at 15A (£52,993), followed by membership contributions (£7,502). Membership contributions were higher than in the previous year. Two families have left the congregation, and one new family has joined. For 2025, rental and membership income is expected to be at a similar level, along with a Gift Aid refund from HMRC of £3,132.

The congregation's expenditure in the past year amounted to £37,832. The largest items of expenditure were the membership contributions to the Synod and the PAB (£22,617), as well as maintenance, repair work, and purchases for the property at Lathbury Road (£7,925). The slightly lower Synod contributions compared with the previous year are due to the vacancy in the pastorate. Slightly higher Synod contributions are expected for 2025.

Further expenses arose from activities such as the Family Church, new initiatives for older children (film evenings, games nights, escape room visits, ice skating) and the joint Carol Service with the Anglican congregation at St Mary's.

In the PAB account, Oxford's share of accumulated savings exceeded £10,000. As the PAB account is primarily intended as a transit account, these funds were reduced during 2024. Consequently, the PAB account recorded a deficit of £7,832.

The congregation recorded a surplus of £26,047 in 2024, which, together with the PAB deficit, results in an overall surplus of £18,215. A similarly high surplus is expected for the 2025 financial year.

In the coming years, costs for the pastorate and the Synod contribution are expected to rise, as following Brexit the Synod has become the sole employer of all pastors and administrative staff, which has led to an increased administrative workload. Thanks to the renovation of the flat at 15B Lathbury Road and the associated increase in rental income, the congregation is in a position to cover these higher costs. However, due to these additional expenses, the level of reserves prior to the renovation will be reached later than expected. Given the high interest rates, the congregation's reserves should be invested to achieve a better return.

A detailed breakdown of all income and expenditure can be found in the annual accounts in the appendix. The accounts were reviewed by Jochen Hoffmann, Treasurer of the St Albans congregation, to whom I would like to express my sincere thanks for his time and effort.



Treasurer

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A	Independent Examiner's Report		
Report to the trustees/ members of	Charity Name German Lutheran Congregation Oxford		
On accounts for the year ended	31 December 2024	Charity no	286646
Set out on pages	3		
Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner	<p>The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Charities Act") and that an independent examination is needed.</p> <p>It is my responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 independent examiner's statement	<p>My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity 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 the 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 statement below.</p>		

**Independent
examiner's
statement**

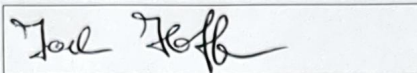
In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I 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.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:



Date:

3/5/25

Name:

Jochen Hoffmann

Relevant
professional
qualification(s) or
body (if any):

N/A

Address:

14 Hopground Close, St Albans, AL1 5TA

Section B

Disclosure

R Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose (only complete if applicable)

N/A

Finanübersicht Oxford 2024 alle Zahlen in GBP

Jahr	Haushalt 2024	Abrechnung 2024	Haushalt 2025
Einnahmen	62,600	63,879	64,832
Mitgliedsbeiträge / Spenden	5,000	7,502	7,500
Gift Aid	3,000	0	3,132
Mieteinnahmen	53,000	52,993	51,500
Schröder 1905 Trust (KW II Fund)	700	1,679	1,500
Zinsen	900	1,299	1,200
Erstattungen	0	406	0
Ausgaben	34,425	37,832	42,835
Synode und PAB	20,000	22,617	26,875
Organist	300	735	1,400
Gottesdienst		610	600
Gemeindearbeit	500	1,355	1,400
Jugendarbeit		1,036	1,200
Haus / Garten	11,215	7,925	8,000
Wasser/Strom/Gas/Reinigung/Council Tax	2,000	3,169	3,000
Anschaffungen	300	329	300
Kontogebühren	60	55	60
Sonstige	50	0	0
PAB anteilig	0	-7,832	0
Überschuss / Defizit	28,175	18,215	21,997
Vermögen 1. Januar		169,414	
Vermögen 31. Dezember		187,629	

Weiter Informationen zum Jahresende

Charity number 0

Anzahl der Gottesdienstteilnehmer 15
Anzahl der Mitglieder 59
Anzahl der erwachsenen Mitglieder 36
Anzahl der Gemeindebriefbezieher 60

Eigentum Gemeindehaus
Geschätzter Wert £2,000,000

Die Jahresabrechnung wurde dem Kirchenvorstand per Email am 28. April 2025 vorgelegt.

Die Abrechnung wurde am 3. Mai 2025 von Jochen Hoffmann geprüft.

Die Entlastung des Kirchenvorstandes wird in der Gemeindeversammlung am 4. Mai 2025 stattfinden.

Oxford, 30. April 2025

Lucie Abeler-Dörner

Lucie Abeler-Dörner, Schatzmeisterin

Oxford, 4. Mai 2025

Uwe Vetter
Uwe Vetter, Pfarrer