

A photograph of the Strathmore Road Methodist Church. The building is a two-story brick structure with a modern glass entrance. Large, leafy trees are in the foreground and background. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the image, containing the church's name and report details.

Strathmore Road Church

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts

Year ended 31 August 2023

Registered Charity Number 1179206

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1. Legal and Administration Information

a. Trustees and Responsibilities (at date of approval)

Ex-officio Members of Church Council

Rev. Ann Varker..... Minister
Gillian Johnson..... Pastoral Committee Secretary
Jill Warden..... Church Treasurer
Keith Crulley..... Lay Youth Worker
Sue Robson..... Church Council Secretary

Co-opted Members of Church Council

William Gray..... Children and Youth Matters Convenor
Ruth Hallatt Children's & Families Pastor
Trevor Peacock..... Property Steward
Colin Robson..... Property and Finance Committee Chair
Keith Stamp Eco Church

Leadership Stewards

Linda Innes
David Johnson
Helen Johnson
Christine Middlemiss
Sharon Mackie

Chopwell Stewards

Lilly Collinson
Mary Glease
Eileen Wright

Church Member Representatives to Church Council

Helen Braun
John Clark
Hannah Dawson
Sandra Dixon
Jill Emmanuel
Ryan Heslop
Andy Innes
Simon Mackie
Eunice Peacock
David Robson
Ranjith Rosa
Keith Stamp
David Thompson

b. Principal Address

Strathmore Road Methodist Church
 Strathmore Road
 Rowlands Gill
 NE39 1HX

c. Property Custodian Trustees

The Trustees for Methodist
 Church Purposes
 Central Buildings
 Oldham Street
 Manchester
 M1 5JQ

d. Bankers

Lloyds Bank plc 44 Front Street Whickham Newcastle Upon Tyne NE16 4DS (until February 2024)	The Co-operative Bank plc 1 Balloon Street Manchester M60 4EP (from February 2024)	Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church 9 Bonhill Street London EC2A 4PE	CAF Bank 5 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling ME19 4TA
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2. Structure, Governance and Management

The Methodist Church is said to have been created after John Wesley's conversion on 24 May 1738 and is a Free Church. Strathmore Road Methodist Church (SRMC) is part of the South West Tyneside Circuit and Newcastle upon Tyne District of The Methodist Church, the governing body of which is the annual conference of The Methodist Church. The Methodist Church Act 1976 gives the authority under which The Methodist Church acts. The constitution, practice and discipline of The Methodist Church, together with The Deed of Union (Act of 1929 adopted 1932), govern the objectives and activities of The Methodist Church.

In general, The Methodist Church is excepted from the need to register as a charity by the combined effects of Section 46(4) (A) of The Charities Act 1993 and Paragraph 4(2)(C) of the Charities (exception from registration) Regulations 1996 as amended by Statutory Instrument 2014 No 242. Strathmore Road Methodist Church ("the Church") however, registered as a separate Registered Charity, number 1179206, in England and Wales, effective from 16 July 2018.

The Church's Managing Trustees listed above, are all lay people, except for the Minister (Rev. Ann Varker), who is ordained by The Methodist Church and stationed to the South West Tyneside Circuit. The Youth Worker (Keith Crulley) and Children's & Families Pastor (Ruth Hallett) are employed by SRMC.

The Managing Trustees meet at least three times per year as the Church Council. They take all major decisions and delegate some of their day-to-day responsibility to a Leadership Team, all of whom are Trustees. The Church Council is chaired by the Minister.

The Trustees who have served during the year and since the year-end are appointed annually by the Church, by the general meeting, or by being ex-officio. The Church's day-to-day activities are managed by those appointed to do so by the Church Council, including the Leadership Team, the Pastoral Committee, the Finance & Property Committee, the Worship Team and the Youth Workers.

During the year ended 31 August 2023 and up to the date of approval of the Report and accounts, the following changes in Trustees took place:

New appointments:

October 2022 - Keith Stamp

June 2023 - Ruth Lindridge, Sharon Mackie & David Thompson

Retirements:

May 2023 - Ian Holmes, Jim Clark & Lesley Stamp; July 2023 – James Clark; September 2023 - Ruth Lindridge; February 2024 - Bryn Lauder & Rachel Lauder

3. Objectives and Mission

SRMC seeks to be a loving, welcoming and active Christian community, serving and sharing with the world around us, following the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. Currently, to serve the world and community by providing premises for church, community and charitable use, as well as working with children and youth, refugees, the elderly and the socially disadvantaged.

Section 4 of The Methodist Church Act 1976 states:

The purposes of The Methodist Church are and shall be, purposes deemed to have been since the date of union the advancement of

- a) the Christian faith in accordance with the doctrinal standards and the discipline of The Methodist Church
- b) any charitable purpose for the time being of any Connexional, District, Circuit, local or other organisation of The Methodist Church
- c) any charitable purpose for the time being of any society or institution being a society or institution subsidiary or ancillary to The Methodist Church
- d) any purpose for the time being of any charity being a charity subsidiary or ancillary to The Methodist Church.

SRMC Mission Statement

***With the help of the Holy Spirit, we seek to live our lives as a loving community with each other
and the world around us,
following the example and teaching of Jesus Christ and worshipping God.***

As a church we seek to be:

A loving community to

- Offer pastoral support, fellowship and prayer to all recognising that it is an expression of God's love
- Be a welcoming church that promotes a sense of belonging and values every member
- Share the good news of God's love made known through Jesus Christ with all ages
- Be aware of the needs that arise in the local community and wider world and respond as we are able
- Engage with other Churches and organisations to promote justice and peace and bring good to our world as part of God's mission

Following Jesus to:

- Help people grow and sustain their faith through Biblical teaching, fellowship and prayer
- Encourage everyone to use their gifts and exercise their ministry in the church and in daily life
- Provide opportunities for people of different stages of faith to explore the way of Christ
- Promote a pattern of whole life discipleship that recognises that being a Christian impacts all aspects of life and calls for responsible stewardship of money, time and resources
- Enable the nurture and development of children and young people in the Christian Faith



Worshipping God:

- Worship in ways that are honouring to God, that help us focus upon Jesus Christ and increase our awareness of his presence through the Holy Spirit
- Develop opportunities for prayer and spending time seeking God
- Provide worship that is welcoming, family friendly, and accessible to people of different abilities
- Encourage participation in worship, recognising and utilising the talents and gifts of the congregation
- Develop forms of worship that are relevant to the world in which we live, that are uplifting, challenging and of good quality.

Strathmore Road Methodist Church in Rowlands Gill joined with Chopwell Methodist Church on the 1 September 2019 to become one church on two sites. The members of both churches have sought to explore together what it means to be one church family, with two centres of mission. In so doing, we encourage lifelong learning in the Christian faith and seek to provide opportunities for people to develop their faith and understanding.

The Church commits to safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility for children and adults, in accordance with the Church Safeguarding Policy and informed by current legislation and accepted good practice.



Strathmore Road Methodist Church at Chopwell

4. Activities and Achievements

a) Worship Activities and Groups for All

The Church currently has 123 members, encompassing all ages, including a thriving ministry among families, children and youth.

Within the Church people appreciate different forms of worship and the church values being able to offer a diversity of styles in its services, to enable people to encounter the living God and express their worship.

Our Sunday morning services at Rowlands Gill continue to be geared towards all ages and use contemporary music, media and performing arts. Most Sundays there is a short time of worship together before the children and young people move into Sunday Club where there are groups for children aged 4 to 16. Occasional all-age services are held on Sunday mornings to enable all generations to worship together.

At the same time, a morning service is offered at Chopwell which includes traditional elements of worship with space for conversation and prayer.

The Sunday evening service held at Rowlands Gill also aims to utilise the best in traditional Methodist worship with the aid of a pipe organ. Holy Communion is celebrated on a monthly basis in all three services.

The church organised a prayer vigil regarding global warming and has regular Climate Sunday Services as part of our commitment to Eco Church



Discipleship Groups

SRMC encourages lifelong learning in the Christian faith and seeks to provide opportunities for people to develop their faith and understanding.

These groups offer encouragement, fellowship, Bible study and prayer. Where a series is being followed in the Sunday services, the discipleship groups will often follow the series with Bible studies. At other times groups will decide on the topic to study.

In addition, there is also a pastoral group which meets informally for fellowship and support.



Prayer Chain

A number of years ago a WhatsApp group of 27 members was started to provide prayer support to those in need, ill health and difficult situations. Prayer needs are identified and information is shared to the group, with strictest confidence observed. Members pray individually in their own homes. Regular responses are shared. The prayer chain has provided great comfort to many people.

Strathmore Road Methodist Church at Chopwell

Chopwell Methodist Church has a traditional Sunday worship. There is a small regular congregation who welcome everyone to the services. The Monthly Coffee Morning is also well attended.

The Community Garden is regularly tended and is used regularly by church members and the community for quiet reflection.

b) Children and Youth Group Activities for All



The Church has a well-established children, youth and families ministry, based around a few regular core groups as well as a number of different one-off events. Our activities enable the Church to reach children ranging from new-born up to 18 years old. Regular activities include Sunday Club (a weekly club for children of all ages taking place alongside Sunday morning worship), Sparks (a monthly Saturday morning club for children aged 5-10) and several other groups aimed at young people.

Sunday Club

Sunday Club provides two groups for ages 4-18 on a Sunday morning split into 'Bubbles' and 'Xstream'. Everybody begins the service together then the children go into their own groups for games, Bible stories, crafts, chat, and prayer. It is a lively and thriving group that enjoys getting stuck into the theme of the day. Once a month they meet together for 'Forest Church' around a campfire where the addition of marshmallows and hot chocolate is a welcome treat. They have enjoyed getting to know the church grounds and helping with the church's commitment to 'eco-church' status.



Sparks

Sparks is a group for children aged 5-10 held monthly during term time. We meet from 2:00pm-3:30pm on a Saturday where we learn more about God, Jesus and The Bible together. There is also plenty of time for games, crafts, and snacks.

Rock Solid

Rock Solid meets every other Sunday evening and is for young people aged 9 to 13. A fun-packed evening of games, discussion, competitions and thought about the big issues that affect life, friends, parents, school, the future and what God has to say about them. They also enjoy regular socials like movie nights.

ID

ID is a group for boys aged 13 and over. It takes place on alternate Sundays to Rock Solid. ID is a great opportunity for youngsters to hang out, play games as well as chat and discuss issues that affect their lives.

Girls Group

Girls group is a new group for girls aged 9-14 meeting on Sunday nights every other week. They play games, chat, pray, get to know the Bible and enjoy keeping their own journals of their faith journeys. They are a lively bunch who enjoy looking at creative ways to pray and worship.



Children's & Families Pastor

After a lengthy recruitment process, the Church was delighted to welcome Ruth Hallatt as the new Children's and Families Pastor from 1 June 2023. As well as being involved in the children's activities within the Church, her role includes building effective working relationships with staff in local primary schools, and leading assemblies, classroom sessions and extra-curricular activities in these schools.

c) Other Activities for the Church and Local Community

Little Gems

Little Gems is community focused and is made up of parents from the local area with their babies and toddlers who meet on alternate Wednesday mornings in term time for play, coffee and crafts. The aim of Little Gems is not only to allow our children to socialise and develop new skills, but for parents, grandparents and carers to relax, chat and compare joys and troubles on all things parenting. Meeting in the large hall, hot drinks and snacks are served in the small hall. There is a clothes swap rail and parents frequently exchange toys and books. The willing team of volunteers from SRMC support the set up, set down, welcoming, serving drinks and engaging in conversations with all those who attend.



Bridges

The Bridges group was formed in 1992. It aims to make a bridge between the Church and the local community. Over the years the group has organised many community events and festivals. Some of the Church's current community projects eg the drop-in for local refugee families, community football and the 'holiday fun' scheme for local children - all originated from the Bridges group. Many fundraising events have been organised for the benefit of various charities.

The programme of events started with an annual walk again this year following the St Cuthbert's Way to Lindisfarne. In the Christmas holiday 50 people joined in a family walk in the local forest park, concluding with a buffet lunch in the nearby golf club. More than 70 people attended a week-long holiday in the Lake District, partaking in a variety of outdoor and indoor activities.

In June the group organised a farewell celebration for one of our families leaving the area. The annual Church family picnic rounded off the year on a lovely summer's day.

The group continues to focus on building and maintain relationships with the wider church family and the local community.

Men's Breakfast group

The Men's Breakfast group has been meeting for more than 30 years. It offers the men of the Church opportunities to meet together, invite friends and socialise around a varied programme of events and activities.

Meeting monthly over an early Saturday morning breakfast, or a pint in a local pub on Friday evenings, activities include speakers from charities and other organisations, visits to places of interest, local history and countryside walks. Around 12 to 18 people regularly attend each month.

Activities in 2022 started with an open evening in a local pub and a talk by one of our members on 'The Camino de Santiago de Compostela' which attracted over 40 people. The group hosted a coffee morning and fund raising car wash and then in November we held an annual retreat. The year was rounded off with an annual dinner in the local pub.

The new year saw us exploring Blanchland Abbey, spending a morning at The Chopwell Regeneration Project and a guided walk around Sunderland. Our programme ended with a visit to a local garden reclaimed from an open cast mining site.



Open Doors

Open Doors began over 40 years ago as an open and ecumenical group for women of all ages from Rowlands Gill and the surrounding area, to develop friendship and fellowship by sharing different Christian viewpoints and common concerns in a friendly and caring atmosphere. Open Doors is a welcoming fellowship for women and meets on Friday mornings during school term time. There is a varied programme with speakers (some informative, some inspirational) and activities (sometimes creative, sometimes recreational). The group meets informally and chat over coffee, with no fixed membership as such and friends drop in and out as often or as rarely as they wish.



Spread Drama Group

Spread is a performing arts group that meets weekly during term time. The aim is to provide an inclusive drama group rooted in the belief that drama enables confidence building, socialising, and aids mental health. The group is intergenerational and is accessible for all. Young learn from old and old from young. The group performs at least one production a year, including an affordable pantomime for the community.

The Way Weekend

In October 2022, SRMC hosted a Circuit event named THE WAY. Taking inspiration from the bible passage in Acts which tells of the first followers of Christ who followed 'the way'. This was a whole weekend of Worship, Prayer, Preaching, Teaching and Fellowship. The weekend was made up of main worship meetings, talks and seminars led by both local and visiting speakers from other churches and denominations.

As well as providing space to discuss and share our faith walk with each other, it was a wonderful weekend of drawing closer to God as a family and spending time in His presence together. A full children's programme was also arranged and facilitated by Circuit Children and Youth Workers.

The weekend was well attended and very much enjoyed by everyone who came along.



The Way

Following the success of the weekend, there is now a monthly Way service which takes place across different churches in the South West Tyneside Circuit. An informal style service which gathers together to seek Christ through biblical teaching, worship and prayer to which all are welcome.

d) Other Activities to Help and Support the Local Community

**PROVIDING SPACES WITH
RESPECT, DIGNITY & WARMTH**



Warm Spaces

Gateshead Council has encouraged local organisations to offer their accommodation as Warm Spaces in winter in order to support those struggling with the cost of living crisis. The warm spaces are places where people can come and receive a warm welcome, get warm, have a free hot drink, maybe grab a snack and charge their phone. The opening hours for SRMC Warm Space have been increased over the winter months with soup and a roll being offered as well as hot drinks, biscuits and cake. A bring and swap library is now available with visitors often sharing their recommendations and comments on the books available. Free Wi Fi and phone charging is available.

Rescued Food Market

Since February 2021 a weekly ‘rescued food’ market has operated from the Church halls. This offers surplus food collected from supermarkets. Customers pay a £3.00 donation in return for a large bag of groceries including fresh fruit and vegetables, tinned and frozen food as well as pastries, bread and dried goods. For those in financial difficulty a ‘pay forward’ system is in place so food can be offered free. The market is open to anyone and is attended by up to 60 people each week. It attracts a wide range of customers from those in financial difficulties, to people concerned about the environment and wishing to reduce food waste.

Customer comments include ***‘this has been a life saver for me’, ‘we love coming here, there is such a lovely atmosphere’.***

The market is run in partnership with The Pickle Palace a local community interest group which has operated in the area for about 7 years. A number of volunteers from the Church and the wider community are involved in collecting food, welcoming customers, running the market, and clearing away.

Pay as You Feel Café

The Church Café is open on Mondays (excluding bank holidays) from 9am until 1pm. It's a Pay as you Feel Café where you'll receive a warm welcome. We serve cereals, pastries, cake, biscuits, soup, tea, coffee and cold drinks in a pleasant room overlooking the garden. Food choices vary according to what is available from the rescued food market. Numbers attending the cafe have increased recently with more people staying for the soup and roll lunch and using it as a warm, comfortable place to relax and chat to volunteers and other customers.

The café operates alongside a rescued food market and a Citizens' Advice Drop-In.



Partnership Churches

Along with partnership churches of St Barnabas and St Patricks, SRMC is honoured to work and support friends from Syria and more recently the Ukraine.

Note: SRMC premises

The major premises redevelopment at Strathmore Road site was completed in early 2021 and it has been pleasing over the last couple of years to see how much more the premises are now being used by the Church membership and by the local Community. The fully accessible Worship area and both Main and Small Halls are regularly booked out for activities and events for some part of each day of the week. Whilst this naturally carries a cost for running and maintenance of the premises, particularly Utility costs in winter months, the Trustees are confident that the increased use of the premises is only to the benefit of members and visitors alike.

Ukrainian refugee `drop in`

The Drop In was meeting weekly on a Wednesday morning at St Barnabas Church Hall for part of the year and was run by volunteers from both Strathmore Road and St. Barnabas Churches. It was attended by several of Gateshead Council support team with the aim of supporting Ukrainian refugees in matters such as housing, employment, school placements and accessing services. The Support team members and volunteers, provided the environment where refugees were helped to familiarise themselves with their local surroundings, whilst providing a comfortable and friendly meeting space.



“Holiday Fun” – held over Easter & Summer school holidays

This group originated from the “Holiday Hunger” concerns over 6 years ago. Meals and activities are provided for local disadvantaged children during the Easter and Summer school holiday period when free school meals are not available. The aim is to befriend and build relationships with the families of those children attending.

This activity has now run for 9 years missing one year due to Covid. It is held weekly on Wednesdays during the Easter and Summer holidays at Strathmore Road Church and this year there were 40-50 children attended each week. There were 48 volunteers sought from each of the churches in Rowlands Gill. Two meals were provided each day - breakfast and a two course lunch. Healthy meals are served up including several portions of fresh fruit and vegetables. The activities are enriching and aim to encourage exercise and wellbeing. This year there were organised outings on three of the days in summer.

Football

The local community football project has proved extremely popular again this year. Partnering with Ambassadors Football, sessions are run each Thursday evening during the lighter nights April to October, providing age appropriate sessions for children aged 4 and up. As well as providing a healthy physical activity the sessions help to promote community cohesion with groups of parents and carers chatting on the side lines as the games are in progress.

This year continued with the Highfield Community House staff presence and the football sessions provided a great opportunity for the staff team to meet local children and seek to build relationships. On some weeks there were up to 60 children partaking. The young people appreciate the activity and some are now coming to other Church-based events, such as Rock Solid and ID.

e) Other activities wider than the local Community

The Church has a growing awareness of being part of a global community, with ECO Church raising awareness of global issues including deforestation, climate change, food poverty and pollution. SRMC is a registered Fair Trade Church and a partner in Toilet Twinning.



Eco-Church

Responding to stewardship of the planet.

SRMC takes its responsibility for the environment very seriously. Eco considerations impact all areas of Church life and is monitored for performance and improvements through membership of the A Rocha Eco Church Scheme. Eco Church is an ecumenical scheme which assesses environmental performance across a number of areas of Church life: Worship and Teaching, Building, Land and Gardens, Community, Lifestyle



Since achieving a Silver Award in 2022 SRMC has strived to actively demonstrate its 'eco credentials' in several ways;

- Climate Sunday and Eco Church services are held annually
- Demonstrations and prayer walks
- The redevelopment of the building in 2020 saw the installation of more efficient heating and lighting
- An area of the garden has been set aside for re-wilding and more pollinator friendly planting completed
- A weekly 'rescued food' market and a pay as you feel café was set up in 2021 to save waste food from landfill
- Sharing of ideas, tips and support and encourage each other to live responsibly via our WhatsApp group and newsletter

SRMC was delighted to receive a Silver Award in May 2022 and look forward to further improvements progressing towards 'Go for Gold'. In the last year there have been tree planting and bulb planting events which involved the wider community and ran alongside Eco Church Coffee Mornings. Also, SRMC has been working alongside the local authority, Citizens Advice and other charities to host an Energy Saving workshop to provide advice regarding the cost of living and fuel poverty.



5. Financial Review

The Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2023 are set out at the end of the Trustees' Report. The Church funds are made up of a general unrestricted fund, a restricted fund – the Benevolent Fund, an endowment fund – the Development Fund, and the funds of three Internal Organisations – the Children & Youth Project, Bridges and the Spread Drama Group. Only the unrestricted fund is available to meet the day to day running costs of the Church.

Stewardship Initiative

In April 2022 SRMC launched a *Stewardship Initiative* amongst its members, drawing attention to three key tenets of Membership namely, the giving of time, talents and money to support the work of the Church in the community. Additional activities and events over the year require additional volunteer support, together with additional finances. Also, the ever increasing cost of living over recent years was impacting general Church funds. The membership has responded to the Initiative brilliantly in every respect, with the consequence that the Trustees can move forward with planning and execution of existing and new events and activities in confidence that volunteer and financial support is available.

Unrestricted fund

During the year ended 31 August 2023 there was a surplus of receipts over payments of £32,395 (2022: deficit of payments over receipts of £3,056) before internal transfers to the Children & Youth Project of £5,000 and the Development Fund of £2,000 and transfers from Bridges of £660 and Spread of £750, totalling a net transfer of £5,590 (2022: transfers from the Development Fund of £1,491 and Bridges of £405, totalling £1,896). Bills were paid promptly and the outstanding liabilities at the year-end (i.e. invoices relating to before the year-end paid after the year-end) amounted to £119 (2022: £89). Collections and funds raised specifically for other charities or external organisations are excluded from both receipts and payments. At the year-end the balance on the Unrestricted fund stood at £63,906 (2022: £37,101).

The Finance and Property Committee reviews the budget each June for the following year and the net surplus after internal transfers of £26,805 compared favourably with the break-even budget at the start of the year (after budgeted internal transfers). The reasons for the surplus were primarily due to increased regular giving, a large number of successful fundraising events, and some one-off grants and legacies, together with cost savings on property maintenance and printing.

Offerings and tax recovered via gift aid totalled £91,391, which was significantly higher than last year's total of £65,235. Letting receipts from hiring out the premises improved from £6,021 last year to £10,610 this year.

Within payments from the unrestricted fund there are three major areas over which the Church has little control: i) the Circuit assessment; ii) property repairs; and iii) utility bills. Repairs at Strathmore Road were kept to a minimum again this year following the redevelopment of the building in 2020. Utility costs increased by 90% compared to last year. These are monitored very closely and steps taken to obtain the most cost-effective contracts. We wish to record our grateful thanks to all those who work tirelessly to carry out repairs and maintenance to the Church buildings and grounds, clean the premises on a regular basis and minimise the utility and other costs.

Restricted Fund

The Benevolent Fund is available to make small payments at the Minister's discretion in cases of individual hardship or poverty. There were receipts of £285 and payments totalling £124, resulting in a balance carried forward of £339 (2022: £178). During the year, the Church also received a donation of supermarket vouchers worth £340, which were used to buy food and other necessities for families suffering hardship.

Endowment Fund

The Development Fund was established to finance the redevelopment of the Church buildings at Strathmore Road. In accordance with guidance issued by the Methodist Church in July 2019, "Accounting for tangible fixed assets", donations intended to provide an asset for long-term use, i.e. a fixed asset, should be classified as an expendable endowment and not a restricted income fund. Consequently, the Development Fund has been classified as an expendable endowment in the accounts. During the year, the fund received £3,154 (2022: £5,627) and a transfer from the Church unrestricted funds of £2,000, as a contribution towards the cost of the refurbishment of what was formerly the caretaker's flat. The Fund made payments of £28,763 (2022: £10,404 and a transfer of £1,491 to the Church unrestricted funds, being the refund from the builder of energy costs used during the redevelopment). Payments during the year included the repayment of the second instalment of £6,000 of the loan of £30,000 received from The William Leech Charity in the year ended 31 August 2021. The balance on the Fund carried forward was £9,192 (2022: £32,801).

Internal Organisations

The Internal Organisations manage their finances separately from the main Church funds but report to the Church Council.

The Children & Youth Project had net receipts during the year of £43,931 (2022: £5,339) before receipt of the transfer of £5,000 from the Church unrestricted fund (2022: £0). The balance at the year-end was £72,257 (2022: £23,326).

Bridges had net receipts for the year of £439 (2022: £1,368) before a transfer to the Church unrestricted fund of £660 (2022: £405), being the proceeds of a fundraising event. This resulted in a balance of £8,807 (2022: £9,028) at the year-end.

Spread Drama Group had net receipts of £1,413 (2022: £849) before a transfer to the Church unrestricted fund of £750 (2022: £0), being a donation towards heating and lighting costs, leaving a balance carried forward at the year-end of £4,978 (2022: £4,315).

Further information on all funds is provided in the accounts and the notes to the accounts.

Reserves policy

Unrestricted funds

The Church recognises the need to maintain a reserve in the General Fund to enable it to function effectively. Additionally, the Church considers it appropriate to maintain a reserve as a contingency, for unplanned expenditure or indeed, reduced income. The Trustees have established their mission aims, including the resources available in terms of people, property and money. Mission initiatives and projects are fully costed, or estimates made of projected costs which incorporate the needs of the buildings and the necessary requirements of the Quinquennial Inspection Report(s). The Church Council is aware of the continuing need to maintain an appropriate level of reserves and has agreed that any General Fund reserve should be a minimum of £40,000 and not normally exceed six months operational expenditure. In conjunction with the Finance & Property Committee, the Treasurer monitors the reserve and reviews this policy annually.

The Church Council recognises the need to be accountable as Charity Trustees for all income and expenditure and in that regard, submits an Annual Report in accordance with the requirements of the Methodist Conference and the Charity Commission guidance in CC19.

General Church running expenses for the current year ending 31 August 2024 are expected to be around £96,900 (2023: £91,000). Therefore, the required reserve for unrestricted funds is between £40,000 and £48,450 (2023: £45,500). The General Fund at 31 August 2023 was approximately £15,400 more than six months operational expenditure, primarily due to increased regular giving, a large number of fundraising events during the year and some one-off grants and legacies received. This reverses the trend of deficits in four out of the last five years and places the Church in a healthier position to meet its general commitments and to continue its outreach work in the local community.

Restricted funds

There is a very small Minister's Benevolent Fund, which is distributable at the Minister's discretion to those in need. It is hoped this can be increased in future years.

Internal Organisations

Children & Youth Project – This account receives funding from time to time which is allocated to particular projects however, all funds held in this account are treated as restricted to paying the salaries of lay employees and supporting activities such as Sunday Club and for children and youth generally. The sources of funding vary however, it is important to retain an appropriate level of reserves to enable the project to continue planned operations for at least 6 months in the event of an unexpected fall in income and also, to meet any redundancy and related costs in the event of its termination.

A part-time Children and Families Pastor was employed from 1 June 2023 and two part-time Youth and Community Outreach Pioneers were

employed from 1 September 2023. Consequently, all funds are committed until 2027 at the earliest.

Bridges and Spread do not aim to make a significant surplus and the reserves at the year-end are held to enable them to carry on their activities, including their community projects, in the following year.

Funds held by the Internal Organisations are not available to meet general Church expenses.

Endowment Fund

The Development Fund is made up of specific donations, grants and a loan, net of payments, relating to the development of the Church building at Strathmore Road, which physically commenced in summer 2020 and was largely completed by December 2020. An interest free loan of £30,000 was secured in October 2020 from The William Leech Charity to cover a short-term funding gap, and is repayable in 5 equal instalments of £6,000. In the year ended 31 August 2023, the upgrading and refurbishment of what was formerly an attached caretaker's flat was completed and the Trustees are currently considering best use of the facility going forward. The balance of the endowment fund is required to repay the loan and meet any final costs of the development.

Ethical Banking

For a number of years Church Council has been looking at the subject of Ethical Banking and considering the option of moving its banking facilities to a more ethical provider. The report "Choosing an Ethical Bank account" produced by The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) and information on the Ethical Consumer website, were used to inform the debate. The decision was taken by Church Council in June 2023 to move its banking arrangements to The Co-operative Bank and the application process began shortly thereafter. The switch to The Co-operative Bank was completed in February 2024.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by

Rev Ann Varker

Date:

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH (Charity no. 1179206)
ON THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

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.

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 Independent Examiner's Report

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.

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination and confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give 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 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 not obtained independent verification of all investments with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes ("TMCP") or held in other Trusts, Bank balances and Funds at the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church ("CFB"), which are individually in excess of £10,000 (ten thousand pounds) at the balance sheet date.

Signed by

Date

Peter Nelmes FCCA
Glenavon, Peth Lane, Ryton, NE40 3PB

**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023**

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

CHURCH excluding Internal Organisations	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Fund Benevolent	Endowment Fund Development	Total Funds 2023	Total Funds 2022
		£	£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS	2					
Offerings and Tax recovered	3	91,391	0	3,120	94,511	70,860
Bank interest		1,628	0	34	1,662	127
Lettings		10,610	0	0	10,610	6,021
Other receipts		14,887	285	0	15,172	4,694
TOTAL RECEIPTS		118,516	285	3,154	121,955	81,702
PAYMENTS	4					
Circuit Assessment	5	61,024	0	0	61,024	59,350
Donations		8	0	0	8	141
Repairs and Maintenance		4,249	0	0	4,249	3,001
Utilities		15,282	0	0	15,282	8,010
Endowment payments		0	0	28,703	28,703	10,311
Other payments		5,558	124	60	5,742	8,724
TOTAL PAYMENTS		86,121	124	28,763	115,008	89,537
NET (PAYMENTS)/RECEIPTS FOR THE YEAR		32,395	161	-25,609	6,947	-7,835
Total funds brought forward		37,101	178	32,801	70,080	77,510
Transfers with Internal Funds & Organisations	6	-5,590	0	2,000	-3,590	405
CHURCH FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	8 & 9	63,906	339	9,192	73,437	70,080

**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT**

INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS REPORTING TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL	Notes	Receipts £	Payments £	Net receipts/ (payments) £	Transfers with Church £	Opening balances £	Closing balances £
Children & Youth Project		56,607	12,676	43,931	5,000	23,326	72,257
Bridges		7,884	7,445	439	-660	9,028	8,807
Spread Drama Group		5,480	4,067	1,413	-750	4,315	4,978
Total of Internal Organisations		<u>69,971</u>	<u>24,188</u>	<u>45,783</u>	<u>3,590</u>	<u>36,669</u>	<u>86,042</u>
Church totals from previous page		121,955	115,008	6,947	-3,590	70,080	73,437
TOTAL FOR CHURCH INCLUDING INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS		<u>191,926</u>	<u>139,196</u>	<u>52,730</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>106,749</u>	<u>159,479</u>

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

CHURCH FUNDS HELD AT 31 AUGUST	Notes	Opening balances 2022 £	Closing balances 2023 £
Cash in hand		200	228
Bank Current accounts		38,349	14,574
Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Deposit account		<u>31,531</u>	<u>58,635</u>
Total of Church accounts		<u>70,080</u>	<u>73,437</u>
Total funds held by Internal Organisations		<u>36,669</u>	<u>86,042</u>
TOTAL CASH FUNDS		<u>106,749</u>	<u>159,479</u>
OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES			
Land and buildings	10	3,457,362	3,767,407
Plant and equipment at insured value		158,523	174,536
Loan for redevelopment	11	24,000	18,000
Other liabilities		89	119

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by:

.....
Rev. Ann Varker, Chair

.....
Jill N Warden, Treasurer

.....
Date

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

- 1 Accounting basis** - The accounts have been prepared on the cash basis. "Gross income" for the purpose of determining whether accruals accounting is required, excludes receipts of endowment capital. The gross income of the Church for the year ended 31 August 2023 for this purpose is therefore, total receipts of £191,926 less endowment capital receipts of £3,154 giving a figure of £188,772. As this is less than the threshold of £250,000, accruals accounting is not required.
- 2 Receipts** do not include collections or funds raised specifically for other charities or external organisations. See note 7 for details of these amounts.
- 3 Offerings and Tax recovered** for 2023 for the Church Unrestricted funds includes Gift Aid of £15,058 (2022: £10,234).
- 4 Payments** do not include the passing on of amounts collected or raised specifically for other charities or external organisations. See Note 7 for details of these amounts.
- 5 The Circuit Assessment** is the Church's share of the Circuit's annual costs, primarily relating to Ministers' salaries and housing.
- 6 Transfers with Internal Funds & Organisations** - During the year the Church transferred £5,000 to the Youth & Children Project and £2,000 to the Development Fund, as a contribution towards the cost of the refurbishment of what was formerly the caretaker's flat. The Church received transfers from Bridges of £660 and Spread of £750 (2022: received transfers of £1,491 from the Development Fund, which was the reimbursement from the builder for energy costs used during the redevelopment, and £405 from Bridges).

7 Money received and passed on to external organisations

	2023				2022
	Church	Youth	Bridges	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Brought forward			1,260	1,260	2,350
Collections/Receipts	2,738		10,312	13,050	13,664
Payments	-2,738		-10,582	-13,320	-14,754
Balance still to be paid at 31 August 2022	0	0	990	990	1,260

The receipts and payments for Bridges relate primarily to the annual Church holiday to Keswick.

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

8 Restricted Fund - The Church has one restricted fund known as the Benevolent Fund, which is available for the Minister to spend at her discretion in cases of individual hardship or poverty.

9 Endowment Fund - The Church has one endowment fund known as the Development Fund which is for a major building project to extend and redevelop the Church buildings, which took place primarily in the years ended 31 August 2020 and 2021. In accordance with guidance issued by the Methodist Church in July 2019, "Accounting for tangible fixed assets", donations intended to provide an asset for long-term use, i.e. a fixed asset, should be classified as an expendable endowment and not a restricted income fund. Consequently, the Development Fund has been classified as an expendable endowment. The Endowment Fund has been shown in a separate column in the Receipts and Payments Account and an analysis is provided below, showing the comparative figures for the prior year.

	2023	2022
	£	£
Receipts		
Donations and grants	3,120	5,625
Bank interest	34	2
	<u>3,154</u>	<u>5,627</u>
Payments		
Building project payments	-22,703	-4,311
Bank charges	-60	-93
Loan repayment	-6,000	-6,000
Net (payments)/receipts	<u>-25,609</u>	<u>-4,777</u>
Funds brought forward	32,801	39,069
Transfer from/to Unrestricted Funds (see Note 6)	2,000	-1491
Funds carried forward	<u>9,192</u>	<u>32,801</u>

**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)**

- 10 Land and buildings** - The Church land and buildings are owned by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes as custodians. The Church at Strathmore Road opened in 1902 and the halls were added in 1958 but there is no information available about their historic costs. In conjunction with the redevelopment of the Church buildings, the Trustees have estimated the value of the land, based on average land values in Gateshead. The land value will be reviewed every 5 years. The existing buildings are included at their insurance value in accordance with Methodist Church guidance.

	2023	2022
	£	£
Land at Strathmore Road - estimated value	388,000	388,000
Insurance value of redeveloped buildings	<u>2,970,787</u>	<u>2,698,231</u>
	3,358,787	3,086,231
Chopwell Methodist Church - insurance value	<u>408,620</u>	<u>371,131</u>
	<u>3,767,407</u>	<u>3,457,362</u>

* Note only: Cost of redevelopment to 31 August 2023 £692,051.

- 11 Loan** - In October 2020 The William Leech Charity made a loan of £30,000 to cover completion of the redevelopment of the Church buildings, prior to receipt of an equivalent amount of pledged donations. The loan is interest-free and is repayable in 5 equal, annual instalments, the first being paid in October 2021.