

DORSET GARDENS METHODIST CHURCH
Registered Charity 1160211

www.dgmc.org.uk

Annual Report of the Trustees for Year ending 31st August 2023

The Trustees of Dorset Gardens Methodist Church welcome you to our Annual Report covering the Financial Year ended 31 August 2023.

1. Mission statement and Aims

Mission Statement : “We will share God’s love with those around us”

Worship

Our worship is open and inclusive of all, celebrating God's saving love expressed through Jesus in ways that are relevant, collaborative and inspirational.

We do this by:-

- Providing a rich blend of words and music that embraces and reflects our diverse community.
- Offering worship that is relevant, encouraging and challenging.
- Creating an atmosphere which enables everyone to express worship in ways which are meaningful to them.
- Helping everyone to discern and develop their own gifts and talents within worship and the community.
- Offering wholeness through worship, prayer and a healing ministry.

Nurture

We offer opportunities for everyone to grow and learn as Christians within a supportive and accepting environment.

We do this by:

- Creating opportunities for everyone to study and pray together.
- Using arts and crafts, music and literature in ways which encourages spiritual growth.
- Creating opportunities for young people and children to deepen their faith and feel valued as active members of our community.

Pastoral Care

We are a loving church family where everyone is welcomed, loved, cared for and supported by each other.

We do this by:

- Looking after our church family through hospitality, fellowship and caring for each other.
- Extending that care into the community.
- Being a praying people who also embrace the needs of our community and the world.

Service

We express God’s love by serving the community and the world, challenging injustice and being responsible stewards of God’s creation.

We do this by:

- Providing an environment where everyone finds a loving welcome, a sense of worth and a listening ear.
- Offering our love, our energy and our prayers wherever they are needed
- Enabling and working in partnership with community groups
- Actively promoting awareness of injustice and helping everyone to respond appropriately.
- Being an eco-friendly church as far as possible.
- Being a place of welcome and support to students and meeting them where they are.

Equal Opportunities Statement

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church is an inclusive church.

All are welcomed regardless of age, gender, race or sexual orientation.

2. Objectives and Activities

In planning its activities, Dorset Gardens has considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and in particular the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion together with the 'Our Calling' framework as defined by the Methodist Church of Great Britain. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament as we try to enable people to live out their faith as part of the wider community.

3. Achievements and Performance

a) Worship

1. In October 2022, we celebrated two of our longest standing members: Sybil Rogers and June Cooke, who have been members for 70 years.
2. The Harvest All Age Service had a 'green' tree theme led by the Revd Deborah Cornish, followed by a simple harvest lunch. All donations of dry items were given to support the work of the City Mission food bank.
3. The annual World Aids Day Service was held on 4th December and led by Revd Heather Leake Date & Revd Michael Hydes from the Village Metropolitan Community Church (VMCC).
4. Our Carol service and Nativity was held on Christmas Eve in conjunction with VMCC and included readers from a number of our user groups. Again it was very well attended and a lovely way to start Christmas.
5. We hosted the Circuit Ash Wednesday service and in March 2023 was honoured to host the Circuit Together Service celebrating our awarded status as Circuit and Churches of Sanctuary with the Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, past President of Conference, and Founder and President of the City of Sanctuary movement.
6. Another joy was congratulating Ken Smith as he received his certificate for 60 years as an accredited local preacher.
7. During Holy Week, a Prayer & Praise service including communion was held on Maundy Thursday and on Good Friday Revd Deborah Cornish led a service of reflection and contemplation.
8. At the beginning of May we celebrated twenty years in our new building with a special service of the theme 'past, present and future'. We were joined by the Revd Peter Shilling, whose vision for a new place of worship kickstarted the process, then Revd Cynthia Park shared her experiences of being the first presbyter to minister in this new place, followed by Deborah who covered the present and looking ahead. Whilst this was going on in the sanctuary, our young people were making golden orbs and our Tots had fun in the main hall. Afterwards all joined for a celebration lunch which also marked the King's coronation.
9. For Refugee Sunday a group from the Ukrainian Ladies Choir contributed to the service with some beautiful and moving folk songs.
10. July 23rd marked our church farewell to Deborah as she led her final service as Minister of Dorset Gardens. She concluded with the hymn 'God's spirit is in my heart.' It followed a tea the day before where our love and thanks were extended to Deborah and John.

b) Pastoral

1. Pastoral care is at the centre of the church's mission and ministry. Currently, there are 8 pastoral group leaders, along with the Minister, gladly giving their service. The Committee meets twice a year and is responsible for the provision of pastoral care.
2. One way the pastoral leaders demonstrate their faithfulness as a Christian community is by offering help and care to a range of people both in the church and wider community. Care and friendship are offered by home visits, over coffee and/or through regular phone calls/emails. During a wide range of circumstances and in demanding situations, the

pastoral leaders seek to be a helpful presence, often listening attentively, sustaining others through prolonged difficulty or immediate needs, offering guidance about resources, bringing different perspectives or simply listening, helping people discover God's will and love and developing friendships.

3. The act of praying is at the heart of pastoral work. Besides being in touch through visits and/or phone conversations, pastoral care providers continue to support members through a prayerful ministry.
4. Pastoral care is available for all irrespective of whether anyone attends church regularly or not. Strict confidentiality is maintained when offering pastoral care unless someone is at risk of abuse or harm when the issue is discussed with the minister.

c) Mission and Evangelism

1. At our November 2022 Church Council we agreed to begin the process of becoming a Church of Sanctuary, building on the Circuit Refugee Project, by ensuring that our church is a place of welcome, where all can feel safe and loved.
Fund raising and events followed culminating in our celebrating our awarded status as Circuit and Churches of Sanctuary. Now our task is for the church to do all in its powers to help challenge the injustices that refugees and asylum seekers encounter.
2. Revd Heather Leake Date continued her work as Sussex HIV Chaplain including overseeing the World Aids Day Candlelight Vigil and Names Reading, the World Aids Day service at Dorset Gardens, providing pastoral care including conducting funerals and promoting her work via social media and publications.
3. From the beginning of February the Warm Spaces was launched to assist folk struggling with the current fuel and cost of living crises. Promoted via The Brightonian magazine, we are opened for the remainder of winter on Thursday afternoons (with Open House) and Sunday mornings during Worship, whilst Lunch Positive open our premises on a Tuesday.
4. A close relationship is maintained with nearby Carlton Hill Junior School including supporting their 2023 Summer Fete which raised nearly £2,500. DG on behalf of our Circuit project was given a table at the fete, monies raised were donated to the school as it is a School of Sanctuary.
5. Our banners, incorporating descriptive words such as welcoming, loving and inclusive in a heart shape, all suggested by members of the church family, have been printed and are framed and hung in various locations around the building, including the Welcome area. We also now have an LGBTQ+ banner in the window and official confirmation that DG is authorised for the solemnization of same sex marriages; the first such event is already in the diary!

d) Young People

1. Our Young Church meets weekly and attracts an enthusiastic group, enjoying a range of activities and participating in the worship from time to time.
At Christmas we made lots of star and heart decorations for the Action For Children Christmas tree as part of the Woodingdean Christmas Tree Festival and we made a stable to house our Nativity figures.
2. Tearaway Tots continues in popularity, sometimes up to 60 toddlers and babies attend the weekly sessions. Parents, carers, toddlers, and babies from across the globe are welcomed and enjoy the healthy toddler snacks and limitless cuppas, as well as a lively singsong, and fun craft sessions.
3. The Autumn the half-term holiday club had a harvest theme where our youngsters were helped to make pumpkin soda bread, followed by apple and cinnamon muffins. The children were able to take these home to share (or not), and the church was left with the wonderful aroma of apple and cinnamon. Everyone also created beautiful pop art leaf printing and there was even time for beany mosaics.
4. At the Christmas 2022 Holiday club there were crafts, which included making Mary and Jesus figures to hang on the Christmas tree, as well as a mini-wreath. Then everyone learnt to wrap up bars of chocolate to look like penguins, reindeers and snowmen. It wouldn't be a holiday club without a bit of baking, this time pizza wreaths. There were a

couple of games and, when the grown-ups arrived to collect their children, they were invited to listen to the children sing. The children went home with bags of goodies that they had made, and those who were involved in running the day went home for a lie down, exhausted but happy!

5. At Easter pancake making and eating was as popular as ever.
6. In May to mark the Coronation, our toddlers had a busy time making beautiful crafts; the egg box bouquets were painted a regal purple and gold, with some wonderful finger painting on blue crowns for the new king.
7. The Summer 2023 Holiday Club had a space theme this year and our children 'reached for the stars' as they made rocket pizzas, models of the solar system, crafted wool stars and told some funny astronaut-themed jokes. Our marshmallow and spaghetti constellations were awesome, and the chocolate moon crater cakes got five-star reviews.
8. Thanks to all our volunteers who worked incredibly hard to support such successful events and particularly to Liz Neale, our Children and Families Worker for her energetic leadership, preparation and creativity.

e) Service & Community

1. Open House @ DG continues to thrive, open for business from 2 pm to 4 pm every Thursday, come rain or shine and providing a warm welcome, good conversation, a chance to play a game or two or work on a craft, sometimes enjoy live music and always available delicious cake and a cuppa. It is a great afternoon, and everyone is always welcome.
2. Knit 'n' Natter meet on the first Friday of each month and apart from enjoying social time together the output from the groups goes towards various needs including hospitals, overseas aid and Christmas gift boxes.
3. Community Lunches are held on any 5th Sunday of the month with the volunteers led by Rosemary Cuthbert. A small, dedicated team cook and serve a hot meal to over 50 people who live on the margins of society. The meals are appreciated as indicated by return attendance and feedback received.
4. The 14th Brighton Scout Group continue to thrive with all sections of Scouts, Cubs and Beavers full and a range of indoor and outdoor activities including camps and overland hikes. Scouts are also able to complete additional badges in a range of activities such as Forestry, Sailing, Pioneering and Aviation. One of the Scouts, Dylan Andrews, went to the World Jamboree in August 2023 which was held in South Korea.
5. The 3rd Brighton Rainbows & Brownies also call Dorset Gardens home and 30 Rainbows and Brownies enjoy fun meetings which include: craft evenings, recipes, cooking, playing games working on the completion of badges throughout the year.
6. We are also pleased to provide a home for the following community groups:
 - a) Lunch Positive reach, support and involve large numbers of people living with HIV, providing weekly a healthy and enjoyable meal, a range of complimentary services and a safe and supportive space for all.
 - b) Regular worship space for the Village Metropolitan Community Church where all can truly be ourselves.
 - c) The Clare Project supports hundreds of trans, non-binary and intersex adults across Sussex. They run popular weekly drop-in and neurodivergent group, alongside 1:1 support and psychotherapy services. Whilst the group is mainly attended by transgender, transsexual and gender dysphoric people, they aim to be all-inclusive as they recognise the complexities surrounding the issue of gender identity.
 - d) Held in Mind is a partnership project that aims to offer and deliver counselling support to the parents and carers of children at Carlton Hill and Elm Grove Primary Schools and at Tarner Nursery. As well as providing a therapy room, which offers a safe and comfortable space for delivery, Dorset Gardens contributes to the funding of their adult counselling project.
 - e) Dance for Parkinsons: A dance and fellowship group for people affected by Parkinsons disease.
 - f) Sussex Defend the NHS: The group brings together NHS Workers, Campaigners and Communities. They are concerned with what is really happening to our NHS.

Their aim is to protect the NHS for Patients and Staff through campaigning and raising awareness.

- g) As safe space for 12 Step Groups including Alcoholics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Co-Dependents Anonymous meetings.

4. **Financial Review**

The Standard Form of Accounts for year ending 31 August 2023 are attached and were signed off by the Church Council Meeting held on Sunday 18th February 2024.

Our Income comes from three sources: Individual giving, church lettings and rental income from the property at 12 Dorset Gardens.

As anticipated our Income did not cover expenses and the shortfall was taken from the reserves. Expenses increased, particularly utility bills over the Winter period and will continue during the current cost of living crisis.

Ongoing thanks to all the worker of our Treasurer Jennie Lamb.

5. **Structure, Governance and Management**

a) **The Circuit Meeting**

The Circuit Meeting of Brighton & Hove is the body of Managing Trustees that is responsible for the affairs of the five Methodist churches: Dorset Gardens, Hove, Patcham, Stanford Avenue and Woodingdean. The Circuit Meeting acts as the focal point of the working fellowship of the churches in the Circuit, overseeing their pastoral, training and evangelistic work.

b) **The Church Council**

The Church Council of Dorset Gardens is the body of Managing Trustees that is responsible for the affairs of the Church and the development of Church Policy. The Church Council Meeting together with the Church Minister, the Church Stewards & Leadership team, and lay employees exercises that combination of spiritual leadership and administrative efficiency which enables the Church to fulfil its purposes as set out in the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church.

c) **Staffing**

Revd. Andrew Lowe, Circuit Superintendent.

Revd. Deborah Cornish, Dorset Gardens Minister.

b) **Safeguarding**

The Methodist Church is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry. Safeguarding is about the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. We all of us need to do our best to ensure everyone who comes into our church building is safe, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults. We are an all-inclusive church, so we need to try and take care of them all. We have people coming into our building who have mental health issues, addiction problems, homelessness, anxieties about their sexuality or immigration status.

Training sessions "Creating Safer Space" have continued for those with specific roles in the church. No Safeguarding issues were reported during this period.