



BOOK OF REPORTS

June 2023

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING



This year we celebrated 50 years of the URC with a special Church Family Weekend



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MINISTER'S REFLECTIONS

As I look back on the last year, it feels like it's been a year of both change and continuity.

Early on in the year (summer 22), Lilly and I knew that it was time for us to be moving on, although we didn't know to what or where – just when (summer 23)! With that transition in the background, I've continued to minister here, guiding us through the church's own times of change and continuity...

We've continued on with our Action Plan (AP), trying to ensure that it shapes and informs the bulk of what we're doing and planning as a church. We completed the sermon series '*Good News to Tell*' – along with the accompanying *practical workshops* – and had opportunities to invite people to *accessible services* (like Café Church) and events (like the *Fish & Chip Supper and Film Night*) (AP Goal #1). In worship we've had some short interviews with representatives from *Memories Café*, *HEAT* and *Just Food* and we were able to contribute to the town's *network of warm spaces* (AP Goal #2). We've launched the *Link Persons initiative* to help us strengthen our relationships with groups that regularly use our premises; and we enjoyed their participation in our *Christmas Tree Festival*, whilst more recently we've put up *Prayer Boxes* to offer them the opportunity to ask for prayer (AP Goal #3). We've relaunched *Café Church services*, had more *youth-led services*, added to the catalogue of *Online Worship services* and continued to deliver *printed sheets of Sunday services* to the housebound (AP Goal #4). We've also discerned which *churches to visit and learn from* in the months ahead (AP Goal #5). **It's encouraging to see the progress that's been made with the Action Plan and the blessings that have been felt as a result of it.**

As we've pressed ahead with all these things, average congregation size on Sundays has generally been lower, however, with so many of

our members now struggling with frailty, many being housebound or in care homes. At a recent Pastoral Care Team Meeting we counted 14 people who are now in this category! We've also said goodbye to Ray Seggar, who died in February and had been a faithful worshipper at Great Meeting for many years. And with Landry finding work in Norwich and Lionel and Tracy now away at university, we've definitely felt the youthful gap left by them! All in all, we're having to face the challenge that as a congregation we are smaller and more vulnerable. But **we shouldn't be disheartened; God calls us to be faithful with what we have – and promises all the resources we need to do his will.** We've certainly seen that in the last year in *Monks Eleigh*, where despite the challenges, we've still managed to have meaningful times of worship and outreach.

The *Church Family Weekend* in March also pointed us towards continuity and change as we celebrated 50 years of the URC together. Some of the old photos shared certainly confirmed that we are not what we used to be! Yet they also testified to progress: the improvements made to the Ansell Centre, for example. It was **a special time to celebrate God's goodness and faithfulness** – with an uplifting blend of worship, fun and fellowship. At the thanksgiving service, the songs and hymns we sang from each decade of those 50 years – and all the way back into the 1800s – were an apt reminder that whilst the truths remain constant, the form and style can (and should) change.

As a church family, this year we also returned to the question of same-sex marriage – this time considering it within the broader context of *marriage and sexuality*. With clear objectives and a variety of ways to engage, **I consider that, regardless of your particular view on the topic and the outcome of the vote, the process itself was very positive:** we examined the scriptures, shared experiences and dialogued together in love. In that sense it provided a strong precedent

for future discussions and debates about topics that we may disagree on. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the vote resulted in a significant change to what this church will offer in terms of marriage. To some of us that is very welcome and exciting, to others of us it is very difficult and painful. So, it will be vital to continue that spirit of love and respect for each other, keeping our eyes fixed on what unites us: Jesus (you might like to revisit the mini-series 'United' from 1 Corinthians 1, which is now on the Talks page of our website).

This year, as individuals and a church, we've also had to face the change in circumstances caused by high inflation, energy price hikes and increased cost of living. On the organisational level, we put plans in place to use energy more efficiently and negotiated reasonable rises in hire fees. At the pastoral level, we started the *Fellowship Fund* to help any in our congregation who may be in need, whilst a dedicated team of helpers hosted our *Warm Space* in the Community Room every Friday morning throughout the winter months. **These are all good examples of how an inherently unwelcome change can provide opportunities for us to continue (in new forms) our ministry of practical love** – to each other, to the wider community, and even for creation (more efficient energy use!).

Given what we've experienced this year, it's not surprising that we can see in the Bible how change and continuity are both components in the kingdom of God. 'Old wineskins can't hold new wine', but 'Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever'! The sacrificial system is superseded by the sacrifice of Jesus, who in turn becomes our new 'Great High Priest'. The temple is demolished; but the church, the people of God, filled with the Spirit, becomes the temple. **What's of ultimate importance is that all of our changes, and continuities, are grounded in the scriptures, with Jesus and the gospel being the focal point – and the lens through which we appraise them.** Hopefully our current sermon series in Romans ('What a Save!') is

helping us appreciate just how powerful and all-encompassing the good news of God's salvation is.

So, as this 'AGM year' – and my ministry here at Great Meeting and Monks Eleigh – draws to a close, it's definitely true to say that there are significant changes ahead for all of us. But the constant of God's loving faithfulness is there. Through the guidance and equipping of the Holy Spirit, may we all be blessed with the wisdom and courage we need for both change and continuity.

Grace and peace,

Bryn

SECRETARY'S REFLECTIONS

It doesn't seem possible that it is time to write the annual report again! Where has the last year gone? It has certainly been a year of joys and challenges, with more on the horizon I am sure.

As I think back over the last year, I have thought of the highlights and challenges. I wonder whether you agree with them or have extra thoughts to add to my reflections?

The process of discernment about whether the Church should register to conduct same sex marriage was a time of growth for the Church as we explored different video clips, participated in a debate from both sides, based on interpretation of the Bible and shared with each other our views. Prayers for this and the Prayer Tapestry helped prepare us for the vote to discern whether the Holy Spirit was calling us to register the Church. The vote this time felt very different from the previous occasion and I felt at peace about whatever the outcome would be. As you know, the outcome was to register the Church and this registration has now taken place.

The Carol Service on Christmas Eve was a very special service with contributions from a group of Ukrainian singers. They came dressed in national dress. Two things really struck me about this. The first that the choir was made up of only women and children and it brought home the reality of the fact that their men folk were still in Ukraine defending their country against the invasion. The second was how beautiful they all looked in their national dress. Imagine fleeing your country with only suitcases and yet you feel that it is essential to pack your national dress.

We have been blessed to have several series of services, planned and mainly led by Bryn. He works so hard to prepare for these and use images, clips, hymns and prayers to help us engage with the message. Thank you for all the work and effort you put into worship, Bryn. I particularly enjoyed the series during Lent of Looking At the Son and the Maundy Thursday communion service was very moving indeed.

The two youth services have been well organised and it has been lovely to see our young people working together to prepare the service and then lead worship for the rest of the Church family.

Our Church Family Weekend and the service of celebration for 50 years of the URC finally happened in March. It was great to have more time to chat with our Church family and friends and enjoy food together. We were delighted to use some of Phil Phillips bequest to pay for the fish and chip supper.

The challenges have included the number of people who are no longer able to worship with us in person. We really miss these people. They are still part of our Church family and we try to keep in contact with them as much as we can. But of course, it is not the same as seeing every week at Church.

The smaller congregation means that there are less people to do things and of course we still have the same expectations of what Church

should be and do. With many of those who have roles of responsibility not being as young and active as they were, this proves to be an ongoing challenge. Maybe we need to reconsider our priorities and do less things really well rather than spread ourselves too thinly.

The upcoming vacancy and how the Church copes is an ongoing challenge, which I ask you to pray for regularly.

I would like to end this report by thanking and paying tribute to Bryn for everything he has done since coming to Great Meeting in September 2015. He has led the Church with professionalism and looked after us in so many ways. The challenges of the pandemic and worship on line were embraced and we were able to be Church even when we couldn't meet in person. The Action Plan has helped the Church move on since 2020 and we are ahead of many other Churches with the development of this. THANK YOU Bryn. We wish you God's "grace and peace" and every blessing in the next stage of your ministry.

Claire Coster

PASTORAL CARE

The Pastoral Team has met every three months, usually after Wednesday prayers and coffee.

We have reorganised some of the groups because we have lost two of our pastoral group leaders. Thanks to Mervyn and Linda for all the work they have done looking after the people in their groups. Their love, care, phone calls and visits have been appreciated.

We have also tried to organise 'a regular visitor' to those who are in a care home or unable to attend worship in person now. We plan that this 'regular visitor' will supplement other visits made by people from the Church but will ensure that the person being visited has some

regular prayer time as well as catching up on Church news and offering any support needed.

We have also discussed how offers of transport could be made so that people who wish to come to Church could be given a lift once a month.

After Easter we tried to offer Holy Communion to those who were unable to attend Church. Bryn, Nigel Crisp, Ronnie Howson, Michael Tillet and Janice White are all willing to bring Communion to people. Please let me know if you would like it brought to you.

As we approach the vacancy, it is important that we look after each other and keep each other informed of our family news. The Core Team are Claire Coster, Barbara Dixon, Elizabeth Meeks and Ann Swallow. Please do let us know if there are any ways that we can help and support you. We may not be able to do it in person but we will know somebody who can.

Thank you to all those who are pastoral visitors. Your love and prayers for our Church family are much appreciated.

Claire Coster

(Pastoral Care Team Convenor)

WORSHIP GROUP

The Worship group has met over the past year to continue to discuss and help to develop aspects of worship in line with the overall church action plan. The broad aims of our group remained as last year:

- To discuss the key aspects of worship at Great Meeting
- To act as a means for the wider congregation to share their views
- To reflect on the impact of worship in our community

We continued to look at worship outreach in the local community with Bryn's visits to schools, the impact of Messy Church worship and visitors to our Sunday services, such as representatives of Memories Café and The Hadleigh Foodbank.

Another key aspect has been how to use social media to help engage others with our church and worship. To that end a social media sub-group was formed to look specifically at our Facebook page-how it presented, what it contained and to monitor interaction. The work with this continues.

The Worship Group led an Advent Carol service entitled 'From Darkness to Light' which linked with Bryn's overall Advent theme.

Access to worship for those unable to attend church continues, via a live link and paper copies. In the two weeks following, our services are viewed between approximately 12 and 30 times

Looking forward, the group will meet again with our thoughts very much on the preparations for worship during the interregnum and how we can maintain continuity and access to as many people as possible.

Many thanks to all who have contributed to worship at Great Meeting over the last year.

Jane Tillett

MID-WEEK PRAYER

The Wednesday Prayer time continues to be held from 10:30 am until about 11 o'clock. There are nine people who take it in turns to lead the session, which usually includes a Bible reading, and a time of reflection and prayer. There is a blue folder in the Prayer Corner and this includes a list of people who have requested prayer. These people are prayed

for, as well as the streets in Hadleigh that are suggested by Church Together In Hadleigh.

We have recently introduced Prayer Boxes in the Church, Community Room and the Ansell Centre. These will be emptied each Wednesday and those who have requested it will be prayed for that day.

The number of people who attend varies each week. Healing prayer is now offered on the second Wednesday of the month and refreshments are offered on the second and fourth Wednesday. You can still join the service via Zoom although this is not as well used as it was last year.

Thank you to all those who spend time preparing and leading the sessions and thank you to all those who attend. If you have never attended, please come and try it. It is a vital part of our Church life.

Claire Coster

MESSY CHURCH

We've continued the hallmark Messy Church blend of family fun over the last year – with each session having activities, games, songs, stories, crafts and food (thanks to all those who have organised and served!). We've had our 'regulars' and some new faces too.

It's not quite been every month due to other activities (e.g. the Synod Big Day Out in July which we encouraged our Messy Church families to come to) and there were a couple of cancelled sessions.

But we've had some fun and engaging times: we were in Maureen's garden in September – following clues around Psalm 104 for a trail, playing charades and eating fresh bread with olive oil and drinking 'wine to gladden the heart' (Psalm 104!) – just the adults drinking the wine, by the way! In October we had a Light Party, in November we were 'remembering' and in February we launched into Lent with sand

and pancakes (thankfully not sand in the pancakes). In March we explored Easter.

Chloe and Inga have done a great job of capturing many happy moments from the above sessions on camera – all available on the HURC Messy Church Facebook page and some of which have been shared as slideshows before Sunday services. Seeing the enjoyment on the kids' faces is priceless.

With the Rickards about to move on, a few of us met at the beginning of March to discuss 'succession' and future plans. As a result, Bryn and Lilly were able to take a more back-seat / supportive role in March and will do the same in June. Looking ahead, we're planning on focusing efforts on quarterly sessions.

Get in touch with Chloe if you think you might be able to be involved or support in any way!

Lilly Rickards

JUNIOR CHURCH

This has been a transitional year for Junior Church. Many of our previous young people led worship this year as young adults, a wonderful sign of their growing relationship with God. We continue to have a small core of regular attenders and it is lovely to welcome the grandchildren of some members of the congregation when they are visiting.

In the summer holiday sessions the children made a banner to display in the Church and throughout the autumn term we maintained two Junior Church sessions a month. The children also took part in a special Christmas service.

Over the spring term we looked at miracles from the gospels, which we explored through films, games, activities, art, science and discussion.

A very special morning was held in the Easter holidays where fourteen children from both Junior and Messy church explored Jesus' journey to the cross, including the emotions Jesus felt and built a beautiful Easter garden.

This term we are teaching the children the Lord's Prayer so they will understand this special prayer which is shared around the world. Wherever they go, they will recognize it and be able to join in.

We continue to be grateful for the team of people who regularly work with the children and to those parents who support us. Mostly, we are grateful to the children we have the chance to work with and for their willingness to join in all our activities with enthusiasm and curiosity.

Karen Harman

STREET CHILD

Street Child reaches out to help and improve the quality of life to those living in many difficult, unstable, demanding situations due to natural disaster, war, displacement and poverty.

The organisation also works with local partners in Africa and Asia. They pledge to assist every child in these areas to an education, changing their lives.

In 2022 we held a joint fundraiser coffee morning on 26th March with Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal, £100 was sent off to Street Child. I received a letter of grateful thanks for our support in helping them to continue their vital work, especially in low resourced environments and emergencies.

Street Child's website is: www.street-child.org if you'd like to take a look.

Hilary Crisp

BLYTHSWOOD CARE SHOEBOX APPEAL

Precious gifts for Christmas. Transforming lives through Christian care for body and soul. Items which we may take for granted become luxuries to people living in poverty.

On 1st November 2022, 120 gift filled shoeboxes left our Church after being blessed during our Church service on 30th October. These were delivered to those in need in Romania or Serbia.

2022 brought a new criteria of underwear needing to go into each box. £100 had been raised from our joint coffee morning of 26th March with Street Child, to purchase essentials and help towards transport. I always carefully source bargain offers, but there just wasn't enough to cover all the costs. I was thinking how do we fund this! We were blessed; prayers were answered in the form of unexpected extra donations. Each box from our church did contain pants and socks, plus we were able to fund nearly £2 per box towards transport.

On 14th May 2022 we began a new initiative, which was also an idea to give people company after periods of isolation time with the pandemic. A workshop was held, preparing ahead for filling the shoeboxes. Time together was spent covering boxes, making cloth bags for the soap, flannel, toothbrush and paste to go into and larger bags to use instead of shoeboxes as these are becoming more difficult to find. We sharpened pencils, made up pencil case kits, notebooks, knitting needles were on the go, lots of chatting took place, and exchanges were made on various patterns and ideas. Helpers arrived with items that they had knitted during the winter months; gloves were threaded together so that they couldn't lose each other, hats and scarves were matched up into sets. It was a good social, productive time, which made the filling of boxes more organised later on in the year.

Two happy filling sessions took place on Tuesday 2nd August 10am-4pm and Tuesday 11th October 10am-12. At the end of October we had a small working party ensuring that each box had all it needed before travelling off to be processed.

Sincere thanks go to the many people that enable this appeal to be successful.

If you'd like to take a look, Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal website is: www.blythswood.org/shoebox

Hilary Crisp

OPEN THE BOOK

Open the Book, is run by Bible Society, it's loyal patron was our late Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September 2022.

Open the Book teams visit primary schools, leading assemblies of dramatized Bible stories which all the children are involved in. The teams are Christians from local churches.

This is our 9th year of Hadleigh Open the Book ministry.

At the beginning of the new academic year in Sept 2022, with Covid more under control, we were pleased to be returning back to our regular monthly assemblies in person. Our last appearance in person was March 2020!! How we have missed being with the children. The schools were very grateful to have had our monthly 'you tube' Open the Book stories during the difficulties of the pandemic, which Nigel recorded for us.

During the summer term 2022, Hadleigh Community School asked if the Hadleigh Team could help by delivering a one off session for Year 2 children to meet the curriculum needs of understanding parables. The date was agreed and set for 9th July. We were eager to go and spend time with the children. It proved to be a very successful and fruitful morning. We concentrated on the stories of The Lost Sheep and The Lost Son, with appropriate little workshops and craft activities. The morning concluded with a question and answer time held in the

schools outside story telling area with a song to finish. The whole morning was enjoyed by all and appreciated by the staff.

Since the Autumn Term 2022 we have been also attending St Mary's Primary School. They had also enjoyed sharing the 'you tube' stories during the difficulties of running school lessons over the depths of the pandemic.

We have been truly blessed with two more people joining the team at the end of 2022, this has made delivering our monthly stories so much easier.

If you interested in learning more about Open the Book, the website is: www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book/programme the history information on the Bible Society is an interesting little read.

Hilary Crisp

WARM SPACE

Between the months of November and March, Great Meeting at Hadleigh URC opened its Community Room as a Warm Space for the people of Hadleigh. From 11 am to 3 pm every Friday, we welcomed familiar faces and new with regular refreshments and cups of soup and buttered bread rolls with a friendly smile and a chance to sit down and chat. People could find puzzles, magazines, mandala colouring books to entertain themselves if conversation wasn't what they needed.

We learnt many lessons while running the Warm Spaces, one of which was that the Baptist Church's toddler group and the Anglican Church's coffee and bacon rolls are too well-established in people's routines to compete with on a Friday morning! We also learnt how to better serve the community we live in with the talents and skills we have.

George Elmer

Christmas Tree Festival 2022



A group of Ukrainians sang one of their traditional carols for us at our Candlelight Carol service



This year we were able to fully resume our recent tradition of **blossoming the cross** on Easter Day



A fast-moving **Light Party** in October!



The newest member of the worship band!

MONKS ELEIGH

On Wednesday 24th August a Songs of Praise was held to which 11 people came.

Harvest Songs of Praise was held on Thursday 29th September to which 13 people came. A donation of £126.50 was sent to Tearfund's Harvest Appeal from money given at both services.

A Carol Service was planned for Thursday 15th December but it was cancelled because Maureen Morris, who prepares the Chapel for services, fractured her wrist on 13th by slipping on ice and it was still very icy on the 15th which would have made attendance difficult.

On Wednesday 19th April a service with an environmental theme was held when Andy Jowitt, Engagement Officer for Foxearth Meadows Nature Reserve spoke on "Nature God & Us". 11 people attended and £80 was given for A Rocha Czech. (Maureen was unwell and unable to attend.)

On Wednesday 10th May from 2.30 – 4.30pm an Afternoon Tea was held to raise awareness and funding for the Christian charity working in Syria, Samara's Aid. 9 people attended and together with donations from people who were unable to attend £180 was raised.

The Chapel continues to be offered as a day retreat centre as H.O.M.E – Heart of Monks Eleigh and there have been a few bookings in the past year.

On 23rd April an after-church meeting was held at Hadleigh to consider the future of the Chapel - as a place of worship and as a day retreat facility, and also the old Manse which is now being renovated. In the coming year the plan is to hold 3 to 4 services with a particular theme.

Maureen Morris

CAMPUS MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

The Management Group is responsible to the elders for the upkeep, maintenance and buildings works in the Church. It is also responsible for the oversight of the Saturday morning maintenance team.

Our membership is drawn from both the ACC and the Church. An excellent arrangement that works well. Jan Dicks is our Secretary.

Typical of what we do is to carry out regular safety tests of our lighting, PAT tests and the like. The Saturday morning team keep the Church, both downstairs and up, clean and as tidy as possible. We do a monthly clean out of the refrigerators in the ACC kitchen. It was a member of the Saturday morning group and Management group who painted the Ansell Centre doors.

There are a number of projects planned for the coming year, such as creating an office for our administrator, plastering the walls in the upper rooms where the damp had got in and installing security cameras around the Ansell Centre. Be assured that other matters will arise during the coming year that will require our attention.

May I thank all these marvellous volunteers that are members of the Group, and those (also from both the ACC and Church), who work so assiduously to keep our Church and Ansell Centre in the pristine condition that it is.

And, of course, if anyone wishes to add to our numbers – particularly, the Saturday Morning Group - do please give me a call.

Ronnie Howson

(Group Convenor)

FINANCE

This is a Summary for Year Ended 31 December 2022.

We opened the year with a total of £38,579 at the bank and ended the year with £43,181. Our major payments were £30,752 to Ministry and Mission, £8,671 on administrator and cleaner wages, £2,108 on buildings maintenance, £5,393 on gas and electricity and £5,252 on insurance.

Income mainly consisted of £27,313 offering plus £7,231 refund from Gift Aid, £19,536 from lettings and £8,625 from the School House rent. We also received the remainder of our insurance claim of £7,152 in March. Income from lettings appears to be back to normal after two years of interruptions due to COVID. Energy prices have increased significantly and we will see a further increase in autumn 2023 when our electricity contracts renew. Many thanks to Mervyn for his work with the energy contracts, ensuring that we are getting the best possible deals.

We started the Fellowship Fund in autumn 2022 to help support anyone in our fellowship who runs into financial difficulties during the current difficult economic times. The year ended with £367 in this fund.

It should be noted that the operation of the Church's finances is very much a team effort. In particular, George looks after incoming payments such as banking the weekly offering, Sammy looks after outgoing payments and Mervyn looks after all our energy contracts. Ronnie and Nigel have also been a great help with all sorts behind the scenes and I am very grateful to all of them for their constant hard work.

The following tables and graphs show a summary of income and expenditure for 2022.

Tom Gordon

(Treasurer)

	2022			2021		
	Restr.	Unrestricted	Totals	Restr.	Unrestricted	Totals
INCOME						
Offering and Donations		£27,843	£27,843		£36,338	£36,338
Gift Aid Refund		£7,231	£7,231		£3,437	£3,437
Lettings		£19,536	£19,536		£13,064	£13,064
Rent		£8,625	£8,625		£11,500	£11,500
Funerals and Weddings		£230	£230		£450	£450
Miscellaneous		£8,115	£8,115		£12,085	£12,085
Fellowship Fund		£367	£367		£0	£0
TOTAL INCOME		£71,946	£71,946		£76,873	£76,873
EXPENDITURE						
Ministry and Mission		£30,752	£30,752		£34,527	£34,527
Pulpit Supply		£175	£175		£175	£175
Ministry & Outreach		£641	£641		£938	£938
Charities		£5,294	£5,294		£2,950	£2,950
Miscellaneous		£3,095	£3,095		£1,693	£1,693
Wages		£8,671	£8,671		£8,615	£8,615
Buildings Maintenance (Excluding Manse)		£1,744	£1,744		£7,940	£7,940
Buildings Maintenance, Manse		£363	£363		£35	£35
Insurance		£5,252	£5,252		£4,278	£4,278
Caretaking and Cleaning		£160	£160		£44	£44
Gas and Electricity		£5,393	£5,393		£3,689	£3,689
Communications		£1,885	£1,885		£1,551	£1,551
Water and Council Tax (Including Manse)		£3,918	£3,918		£3,813	£3,813
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		£67,344	£67,344		£70,248	£70,248
CASH FLOW		£4,602	£4,602		£6,626	£6,626

	2022			2021		
	Opening Balance	Cash Flow	Closing Balance	Opening Balance	Cash Flow	Closing Balance
Current Account	£22,510	£4,478	£26,988	£13,396	£9,114	£22,510
Savings Account	£14,727	£14	£14,741	£19,725	-£4,998	£14,727
Creditors Payable	£0	-£700	-£700	-£1,168	£1,168	£0
Debtors (Unpaid Invoices)	£1,342	£810	£2,152	£0	£1,342	£1,342
Total	£38,579	£4,602	£43,181	£31,953	£6,626	£38,579

See the inside back page for pie charts

ENERGY

Currently, Hadleigh URC is responsible for monitoring six energy meters, three of which are gas SMART meters. All our tariffs are on Business and not Domestic rates. As a Registered Church Charily we do not pay the Climate Change Levy (CCL) and our VAT on all energy invoices is 5%.

The total cost of the energy invoices for the Financial Year End December 2022 was £5273.53. This is an increase of £1820.97 over the previous year. In the main this reflects an increase in usage of both the Church and the Ansell Centre by Community Groups towards the end of Covid. (See also comments in the last paragraph) Lettings are now back to normal levels 2022-2023. Since October 2019 all three gas readings have been collected remotely by SMART meters.

The total of £5273.53 for all Energy Invoices Jan 22 – Dec 2022 can be illustrated as follows:

Gas to the Church Community Rooms	408.12
Gas to the Ansell Centre kitchen +HW	346.41
*Gas heating to both the Church and Ansell Centre	1912.04
Electricity to Monks Eleigh Chapel	199.42
Electricity to the Ansell Centre	1440.11
Electricity to the Church and Community Rooms	967.43

*The gas supply to the church and the Ansell Centre heating is controlled by one meter as shown above, located in the boiler room of the Ansell Centre.

In recent years new heat efficient central heating boilers have been installed in the Church/ Ansell Centre, Ansell Centre entrance inc. toilet areas and Church Community Rooms. Nigel has played a major role in providing the technical specification for these heating installations. Most recently this has involved a substantial upgrade to the heating

system in the Ansell Centre. We should also thank Ric and others for matching the lettings to the heat programme to save costs.

Contracts for the supply of energy are currently provided by two companies, Regent Gas and SSE. We work with our brokers, Cost Advice, based in Chesterfield. This is to ensure that we get the best tariffs through the URC Eastern Synod group bargaining deals.

The Church Elders, at their meeting held on 7th October 2019 agreed to adopt Green Electricity Tariffs for contracts which commenced on 01.11.20 and end on 31.10.23.

The church is not immune to serious increases in energy charges. Our current gas contracts end on 31.07.24. Our current electricity contract provided by SSE since 2020 runs out on 31.10.23. This fixed term contract has cushioned us from major national increased for the last three years. We shall eventually have to face the music when new electricity tariffs are negotiated.

Ronnie is always minded to thank a small group of knowledgeable church members who anticipated the rapid rise in **gas** energy bills and who spent considerable time during Autumn 2022 to re-calculate the letting fees. These now reflect our community responsibility and at the same time are realistic and cost effective. This was a wise move as the **gas** heating charges for the Church Worship area and the Ansell Centre Hall for the four months so far this year January-April 2023, show a total of £3139.03 compared with the same period in 2022 when it was £1071.79. There are two reasons for the increase in charges, one because the new fixed term gas contract commenced on 1st August 2022 which runs until 2024 and the other because of an increase in use of the premises.

Mervyn Cort

ROOM HIRE

The year 2022 saw a real end to the pandemic with most of our regular users returning and groups joining too. We invoiced £18,872 from 318 bookings during the year which is once again up from 2021 which was £12,648 from 144 bookings.

The automation of the functions of room letting is improving and the monthly invoices are produced automatically. The production of these is also recorded in a spreadsheet which allows me to keep tabs on each users account.

In addition the activities listing for the week is done by reading the Church Calendars automatically, feeding the data into a spreadsheet and printed out to a PDF. The PDF is sent by email to various people. If you want to receive this listing, please contact me to have your email added to the list.

To aid in enquires from current users, I can list out their bookings for a period in one or multiple rooms. For enquires from potential clients, I can list the availability of a room for a particular day over a period of time. For example a prospective user might want to hire the Community Room weekly on a Tuesday afternoon for the next 9 months. The report would show if the Community Room was available with those criteria without me having to browse through the calendar manually.

I have managed in the last year to improve communication with some of the groups that use our church facilities. I regularly meet with the Craft Club, Calligraphy Group, U3A Art Group and French Group. I also have occasional contact with many of the other groups, especially those who meet when the Church Office is open. I see every one of the occasional users who have children's parties on a weekend. I always ask if jelly and ice-cream are on the menu but sadly it isn't. It seems kids

these days don't go for it (or more likely no one wants to clear up the mess afterwards).

Let's hope that 2024 brings more users into the Church and we are able to use our contacts with them to bring more people to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour

Ric Lambert

LINK PERSONS

As mentioned in the Minister's Reflection, during the last year we have been able to appoint 'Link Persons' for each regular user of our premises – a team of about 12 covering almost 30 different groups.

In this way, we can improve our communication with these groups and offer a kind of chaplaincy. In practice it looks like:

- **Call in on once a month** – just to say hello and see how things are going. For some groups this might involve sitting with them for a while whilst for others it might be popping in before or after the event.
- **Liaise with them about opportunities for collaboration** – letting them know about any initiatives the church would like them to be involved with and letting elders know about any ideas they may have.
- **Offer practical or prayer support** – see if they need help with anything (feeding back any premises-related issues to Ric) and offering prayer – either informally in conversation or by checking that they know about the prayer boxes.

ANSELL CENTRE CHARITY

During 2022 most of our activities returned to normal after lockdown. We were delighted that Ruth Rowland agreed to continue as our chairperson for another year. She was determined to set up internet banking for the ACC during her time as chair and has been trying (so far in vain) to complete the various forms and collect all the required signatories. It seems that the TSB is determined to make this as difficult as possible. However, we are hopeful that everything will be organised before our next AGM in October.

In April we were glad to welcome a new trustee, Peter Gower, who has agreed to become our new treasurer. John Cunningham had previously announced that he would like to continue as treasurer until his 90th birthday which takes place later this year. We are indebted to John for his meticulous accounting skills and his willingness to pay all sums in to the post office on a regular basis and draw cheques as necessary. John has kindly agreed to continue to deal with all cash transactions after internet banking has finally been organised.

We were saddened in the summer to hear of the death of one of our founder trustees, Joyce Willis. She touched the hearts and lives of many people in Hadleigh and is especially missed by our First Lunch Club where she continued to play a main role even after she had retired from being a trustee. We are very grateful to Barbara Breeze for taking on Joyce's role.

For the last couple of years, some of our trustees have been busy investigating the purchase of a new notice board. Hopefully many URC members will have spotted the smart new board which was made by a local carpenter and partly paid for by a legacy left to the ACC by our good friend and church member, Phil Phillips. It is a fitting reminder of a very kind lady who was always very appreciative of the meals

prepared for her at the lunch clubs and the happy times she spent at the Memories Cafe on Thursdays.

We are also delighted that this year, thanks to Karen, we have been able to facilitate the opening of the Men's Shed in Hadleigh.

Unfortunately, the Ansell Centre itself is not a suitable venue, but we are very pleased that temporary premises have been found in Benton Street.

Our main activities have returned to normality after lockdown, though with fewer members attending the lunch clubs and cinema. The Memories Cafe is going from strength to strength and is providing a much needed weekly meeting place for those living with dementia and their carers, as well as others who live alone and who enjoy the opportunity for a chat, a shared lunch and the option of taking part in a variety of stimulating activities.

None of these activities would be able to go ahead without the wonderful volunteers. The help and support they give to the trustees at these activities mean that each event is the great success that it is.

We hope that we will be able to continue to serve the Community with our events held at the Ansell Centre for many years to come.

Eve, Jan, Janice, John and Karen

HADLEIGH COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOODBANK

(formerly called JustFood)

Hadleigh Community Support Foodbank is situated in the Ansell Centre. The Group is managed by Neil J Bevis (Founder/Organiser) and Julia Hepworth (Organiser). Food and household products are stored in readiness to be organised into food parcels to help the local community. For over two years, **Hadleigh Community Support**

are grateful to have rented a room, for this purpose within the Ansell Centre. This has proved to be ideal, as it is racked and laid out for easy picking and convenient for people who live in Hadleigh. Parcels can be organised ready for pick up outside at an arranged time. We now only deliver if the person has no means of getting to the centre and have no family or friends to pick supplies up for them.

The aims of **Hadleigh Community Support** are:

- To support the local community by providing food and household products/items (such as cleaning products, towels, bedding) to families or individuals who are out of work or are struggling due to hardship
- Support elderly people who cannot get out of the house for food
- Support those who are isolating and cannot get out of their homes
- To work with other local agencies/networks such as **Hadleigh Plus** to support families
- To build relationships with local Donators, Supermarkets and Government agencies
- To donate food to local community initiatives and gatherings when we have surplus stock, such as Ansell Centre Lunch Club and Memories Café
- To re-cycle devices (laptops, phones, computers) to support people who have no access to technology and therefore are unable to connect electronically. Assessments are based on how many devices available and the need of the proposed recipients

We are currently supporting over **20 families** in Hadleigh and surrounding villages. Some of this is regular support, where families are helped on a twice monthly basis and, for others, it may be on an

ad-hoc basis, or at certain times of the month where they may be struggling financially. We are now helping less families than we did a year ago, this is largely due to not offering a delivery service as we have done previously and the families we supported have chosen not to pick up and we also are slightly more vigorous with our review process, as we felt that some families were using our service as a shopping service rather than a food bank resource for emergency supplies – which was disheartening. The people we now help, either cannot work due to disability or mental health conditions that make this difficult, adults who are actively looking for work, or the elderly - who struggle to manage on their pension and need a bit extra support.

A few of our families struggle to budget effectively, or they choose to spend their benefits/money on non-food items, such as cigarettes and alcohol, as it is the coping mechanism they reach for, before prioritising food. As mentioned above, many of the families and individuals we look after do have mental health conditions, for a variety of reasons, and unfortunately their coping strategies often do not include 'healthy eating' generally. We still help them even if this is the case, as these are long term habits, however we do encourage them to try and budget and prioritise better.

We are delighted that we have been able to welcome and support people from Ukraine, who have settled in Hadleigh. We have noticed that they are always happy to come and pick up their food, grateful for what we give and extremely keen to find meaningful work as soon as they can. This ethos has been really refreshing for us and we are happy to support any families like this, as many of them have gone through considerable hardship, had their families split and exceptionally worried for close family members who are still in Ukraine and are unable to leave.

We ask our families to let us know a few days in advance, if this is not an emergency parcel, so we can put this together for them, whilst there are no activities on in the Ansell Centre.

We often have fresh food and vegetables to supplement our other food stock to at least try and make sure that people are eating better and that their children are given a better diet, such as bananas, apples, oranges, rather than just sweeties and chocolate biscuits, which are usually asked for.

We also support the Lunch Club/Memories Café, when we have surplus supplies as this is usually well received and the guests at the clubs seem to be really grateful to receive it, so we feel great that it is going to the right places. We also share our produce with Bildeston Community Support and if we are short of particular food items, they share with us.

We do not generally hold our fresh produce within the Ansell Centre as we like to get this out to families as soon as we receive it, so it is not wasted. However, we do try and freeze low life products, such as bread, meat and berries, so it reduces waste and our families are really happy to receive it.

Membership is open to anyone who:

- Can prove that they are experiencing hardship; and/or
- Are referred by a government agency confirming hardship
- Live in Hadleigh or a local surrounding area

Membership is free, however an initial assessment will be carried out, usually over the telephone to confirm criteria is met, before food parcels can then be arranged. We continue to reassess need every few months, if the need is continuous.

Assessment questions are more rigorous and frequent than before and will include:

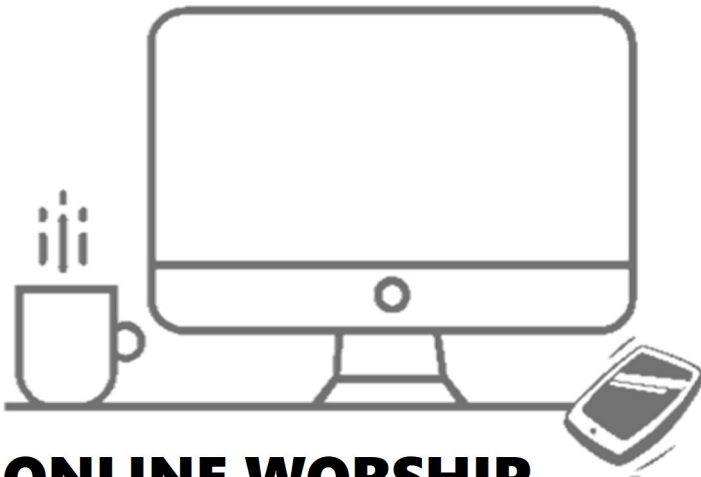
- Name, address, how many people in the household (adults and children – ages)
- If adults are in employment or actively seeking employment or why they are unable to work
- How long they have needed assistance
- Have they used a foodbank before
- Why do they need help
- Have they got a vehicle to be able to collect the food parcel
- What frequency do they envisage they will need assistance

Neil J Bevis and Julia Hepworth make the decisions about food parcels and their distribution, based on the criteria above.

All money raised by or on behalf of **Hadleigh Community Support** is only to be used to further the aims of the group and must fall into the **Aims** criteria above.

We would like to thank the Hadleigh United Reformed Church for continuing to give us the opportunity of using the Ansell Centre so we can offer this service to support our local community. Over the past year, we have been lucky to have received grants which have enabled us to replace our previous fridge/freezers with more energy efficient models to keep our energy costs low. We are now donating our old models to people who need fridge/freezers for clubs or families in the area.

Neil J Bevis and Julia Hepworth



ONLINE WORSHIP

There is now a catalogue of these interactive services covering Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest and New Year at:

www.hadleighurc.org.uk/online-worship-home

Why not invite someone to take a look?

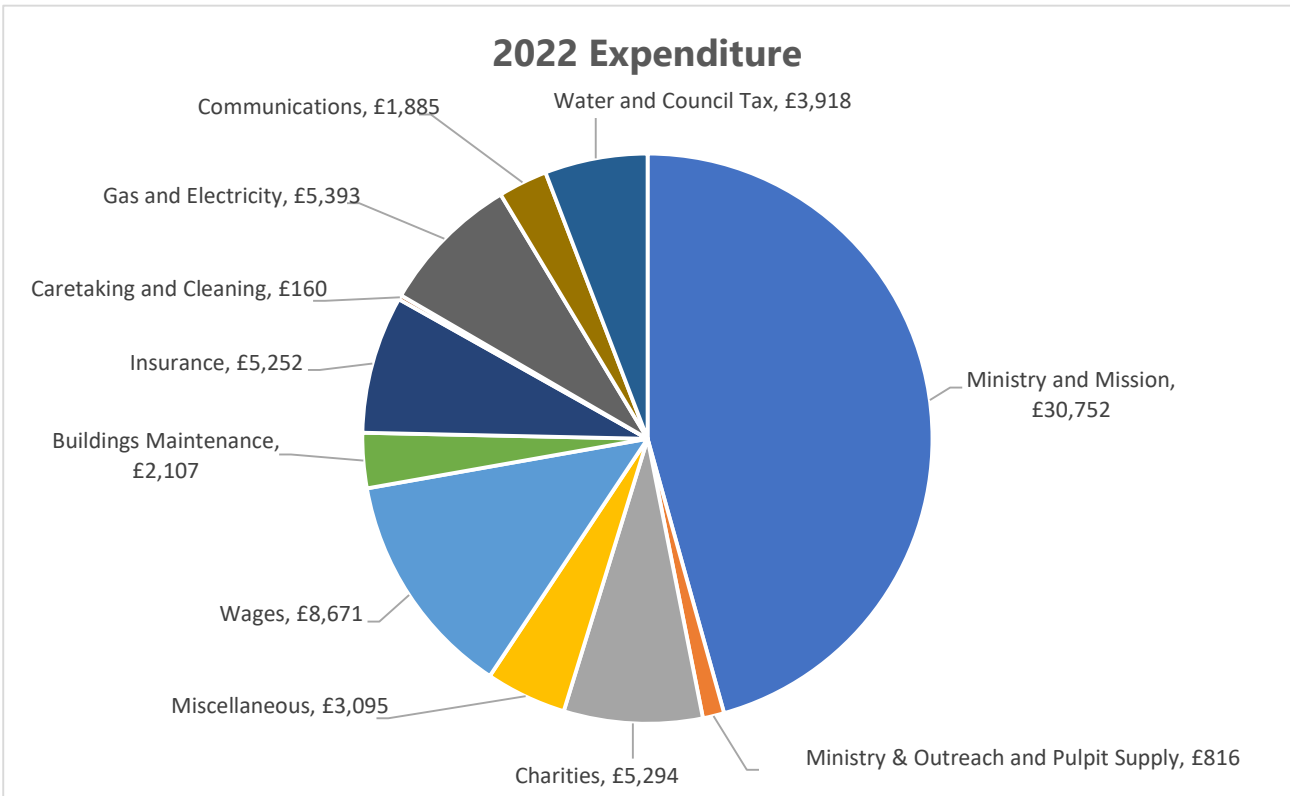
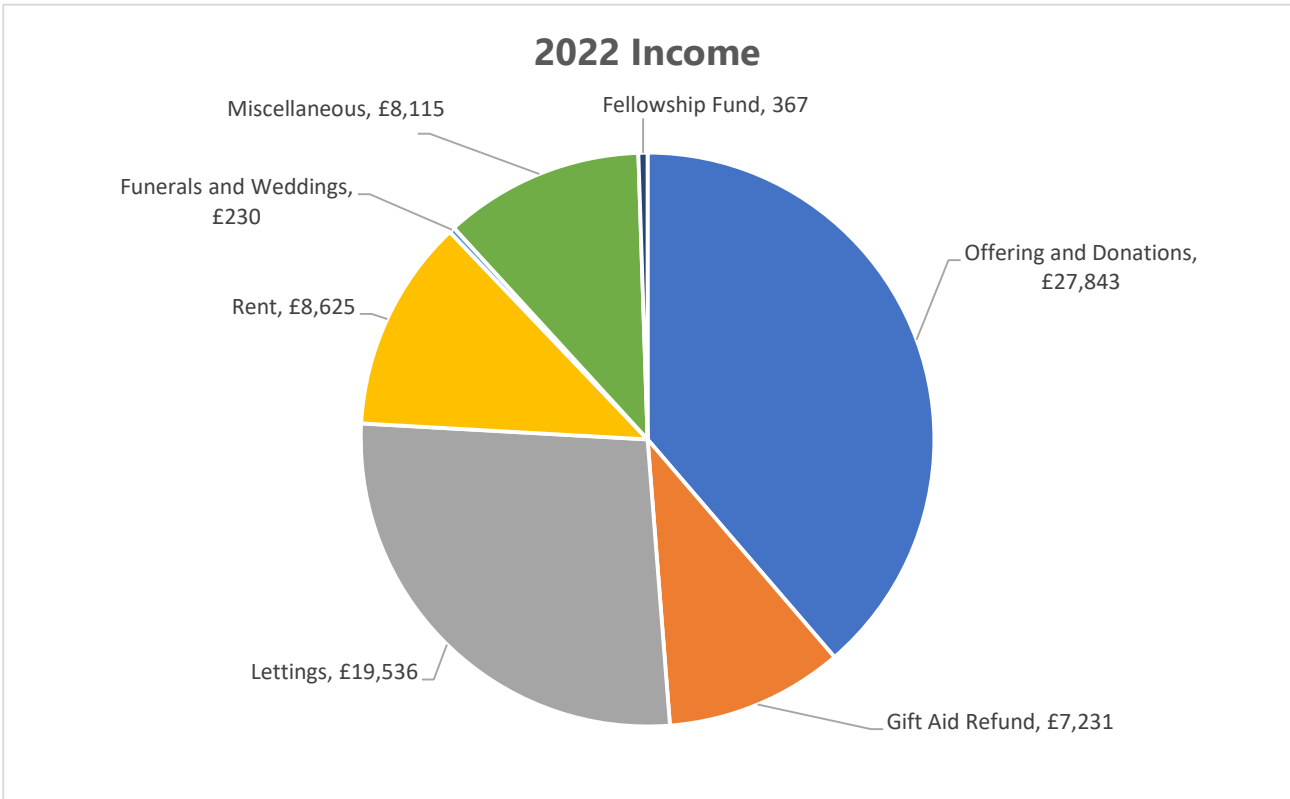
The Easter one is especially accessible for those who aren't Christians.

LIVESTREAMED WORSHIP

Every week we are also livestreaming Sunday services on our YouTube Channel (Hadleigh URC). You can also choose from a back catalogue of past services.



HURC FINANCES FOR 2022





A Church at the Heart of the Community

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