

**The Methodist Church  
Hucclecote**  
<http://www.hucclecotemc.org.uk>  
**Annual General  
Meeting**  
**Sunday 18th May 2025**  
Following worship  
and a Bring & Share Lunch

**Our Vision – An active community of people seeking to follow Jesus and trying to live as God intends, and inviting others to do the same**



**“Opening The Book”**

## Minister's Report

A serious man once advised John Wesley: *“Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember you cannot serve him alone. You must, therefore, find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of a solitary religion.”* Wesley never forgot this. Someone bore testimony of the early church, *“See how those Christians love one another”*. They knew that they were in it together and their works testified to it. That did not mean their life course was easy, usually the opposite. Often they tread choppy water, but no fear, they did not look down at the waves but to the cross which went before them, *“looking to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2).

Many have gone before us in the life of our church, and some now rest from their labours, but their good deeds follow them of which we are the beneficiaries. This time last year Barry wrote his final preface concluding *“let’s ensure my great grandchildren will be able to visit a thriving, bustling, loving church.”* Like him I love this church, you are my kind of people, and I see all sorts of good deeds happening not least the welcome café which continues to thrive. Since joining with you I have been involved in quite a few funerals and one baptism, and at Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas and Easter we have had very well attended church services. I have got around half the church members and adherents homes and enjoyed getting to know each of you, not just shaking hands at the church door on a Sunday morning.

As a leadership team we have not been able to fill the role of ‘lay pastor’ which we take as *“God was not in it”*, but we are looking to refashion our mission action plan in line with the developing circuit mission plan with Jayne Webb’s help, a journey we have already begun, with further meetings and discussion planned as we seek to discern what is God in, and go for that. I believe church is everything we do in God’s name (not just a Sunday morning) so I look forward to reading all the church reports and attending my first Annual Church Meeting at Hucclecote Methodist Church.

Easter Greetings, Rev John

## **From The Stewards**

As a team of Stewards we continue to grow in confidence leading Local Arrangement services across the year. On average we are planning and leading worship in morning services once a quarter. We welcome Rev. John McNeill who, since last September, has been kept exceptionally busy with his oversight and care of ourselves, Churchdown and Lonsdale Road Methodist Churches. Having advertised again for a Local Lay Pastor, unfortunately there were not any suitable replies in application for the post. In response to this; the stewards, with Rev. John and others, recently met with Co- Superintendent Rev. Jane Webb to discuss our way forward in mission. She is very positive in her outlook for us and will meet to talk and discuss with the whole Church later in the year.

Currently your Church Stewards are:

Lead Steward Retiring – Lynne Cooke

Retiring – Christine Brewster

Remaining - Beth Sweet

Remaining – Sue Clarke

Remaining – Sylvia & Tim Blake ( Job sharing partnership)

It becomes evident that we will need new members to join the Church Stewardship team later in September. We are a friendly group with varying skills who welcome others to come and work alongside us.

We would also like offers of help to prepare LA services from other members of our congregation. You may find that stepping outside your comfort zone becomes wholly rewarding. Please get in touch if, in any small way, you could contribute. Many thanks to those of you that have already helped in this way.

We look forward to seeing you all at the Church AGM on Sunday May 18<sup>th</sup> after a shared lunch.

Sue

## **Junior Church**

Junior Church continues to meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays in the month. The numbers are low but there have been children attending most sessions with a few visiting ones too. The JC leaders have been using material from the Methodist Church website which includes DVD presentations, music and quizzes. There is a big age division but most sessions have been able to have inclusive activities as well as age related ones.

The crib service at Christmas was its usual success with about 80 people attending including 25 children. You have probably heard of Christingles but on Palm Sunday the children made Eastingles with a hot cross bun as the base and sweets representing a palm tree, the bread and wine, God's love and a rainbow for His promise of being with us always.

There are planned ventures for Brigades and Junior Church together, the first of which is Easter Quest Family Fun. We feel this is a way forward to be all inclusive and Junior Church could be considered as a mission to young children in a wider aspect rather than just a Sunday morning activity. Please pray for this new initiative.

Sylvia

## **“The Chosen” Study Group**

We have been meeting weekly on Tuesday afternoons in the Lounge, to watch and discuss The Chosen. There are usually about 10 of us present, but more are welcome.

The Chosen is an American Christian historical drama television series. It is the first multi-season series about the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Primarily set in Judaea and Galilee in the 1st century, the series depicts the life of Jesus through the eyes of the people who interacted with him, including the apostles and disciples of Jesus, Jewish religious leaders, Roman government and military

officials, and ordinary people. Four seasons have been released, with seven in total planned.

So far with Seasons 1 and 2 we have been introduced to many familiar people such as Mary Magdalene and the disciples as Jesus meets and asks them to join him - and we have seen the depiction of well known stories and miracles - The Wedding at Cana, Simon with the big catch of fish, the healing of lepers, the woman at the well, the feeding of the 5 thousand, the healing of the paralysed man at Bethesda, and many more.

The series gives us the historical context, how life looked at that time and an insight into aspects of life under the Romans which we have found enhances our understanding.

Importantly, while there is some dramatic licence, everything is done with respect for the scriptures.

If enough interest is expressed, it is proposed to run an evening meeting to study this series, for those unable to attend the afternoon group.

Diana

## **5th Gloucester Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association**

We have had another successful year as a company. We continue to grow our numbers across all sections with membership around 47 young people.

All sections have been enjoying their weekly meetings working towards their badges which they will be awarded at our awards evening in May.

As usual we have entered lots of competitions this year and have had our most successful year for some time.

The Anchor section took part in a new battalion photograph competition and won. The Junior section came 1st at the battalion

bowling and swimming gala. They have also taken part in the battalion chess competition and the junior district sports.

The company and seniors took part in the national bowling competition back in October and for the 1st time in around 20 years we won the whole competition. They also won the battalion bowling and came joint 1st at the swimming gala. At the district sports they won the frisbee, uni hoc and under 13's football. I am very proud of the success we have had at competitions this year. I am not just proud of the success but the children always compete with good sportsmanship and are always a credit to the company.

As we approach the end of the session planning is under way for our awards evening and summer programme. After the summer programme the company and senior sections are off on their annual week camp this year they are off to the Dartmoor activity centre. This is always the highlight of the year for those two sections and lots of planning is going on to make it a fun and enjoyable week.

The company would not have the numbers it does or the success if it wasn't for the 14 officers and helpers that continue to give their time at the weekly meetings, competitions, events and planning time at home.

I'd also like to thank the parents and friends association and the church for the support and fundraising. Without the fundraising we would not be able to run the fun programme that we do.

Finally we have our annual awards evening on Friday 23rd May starting at 19.00 in the church hall. All are welcome to help us celebrate the achievements of the young people.

Scott

## **Hucclecote Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association Parents and Friends Association**

Fundraising for the current year 2024/5 is progressing very well with good amounts raised to date at jumbles sales Strawberry Fayre and the Christmas Fayre. A cheque was handed to the above organisation at the AGM/Cake and Quiz night in October. Funds raised during the year help the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association officers to provide a varied and interesting programme for the young people.

All events during the past year were well advertised and attracted people not only from Hucclecote, but also from the wider Gloucester community which raises awareness of both the Brigade and church.

We thank the Church Family and our Friends for their continued support.

Mary

## **Church Green Displays**

There are many posters and banners displayed throughout the church premises. This has, at times, resulted in a lack of consistency as to where they are placed. Nick Butler has worked very hard to create a policy document in order to establish an element of consistency. This was welcomed by Church Council.

The Church banner on the fence was originally intended to be temporary, after the original fixed board was removed. The options for a new permanent church sign have been researched and presented to Property & Finance who have been given a mandate by CC to make decisions on the details. This was agreed, however, funding is not available from the general church finances at the present time. The Welcome Café have agreed to provide the full funding, therefore a new sign can now be progressed.

Key events in the religious calendar are specifically celebrated:

- Easter - we erect 3 large crosses with the centre one being appropriately dressed. 2 posters are attached to the fence. On Easter Day, a further "He is Risen" poster is added plus the dressing on the cross is changed.
- Pentecost - We have 2 posters to celebrate Pentecost.
- Christmas - our Nativity has been on the green for 3 years now and is increasingly well received by the general public. It is a great attraction and an important part of our Outreach.

We would always welcome any comments and suggestions for the future.

Peter

## **Church Flowers**

Thank you to everyone who sponsors the Church Flowers. Flowers have been different during the winter, because of worshipping in the Church Hall. A Flower Pedestal doesn't really work in the hall and so many have provided plants and vases of cut flowers instead. All are equally beautiful and enhances our worship.

If you have a special date - birthday, anniversary etc, and would like to celebrate with flowers in Church, please contact me.

Dawn

## **"A Place To Remember"**

Work has continued this year to prune, tidy and plant in this quiet area for reflection and prayer. Our most recent project has been to lay slabs on the path, which will have the added bonus of reducing the amount of weeding required.

The number of pebbles painted in memory of friends and family is gradually increasing.

Ali & Jenny Rotherham have expressed their appreciation of the garden by supplying pots of bulbs beside the bench in memory of Peter & Di.

Diana



## Eco Church

Did you know we are in a hotbed of Eco Church activity in Gloucestershire? Over a quarter of our churches have an Eco Church award (5 Bronze (including us), 4 silver and 2 gold) That is two of only eleven churches in England and Wales with a Gold Eco Church award.

Here at Hucclecote our Eco Church Steering group is Nick Butler, Elaine Keasley, Ron Keasley, Peter Shaw and Beth Sweet (if anyone else is interested in joining please let us know.).

We are in a state of transition because A Rocha the charity which runs the Eco Church awards updated their survey questionnaire at the end of 2024. We are currently developing an action plan to progress towards a silver award during 2025.

The survey has several domains. We are strong in Land and Nature and Worship and Teaching (thanks to the Welcome Gardeners for tending and developing the garden and for updating the Land and Nature section). We are doing reasonably well with Lifestyle and Local and National Involvement . We know from the previous survey that the Church building is one of the things which is holding back our progress towards our next award because there is a lot of work required to make it an energy-efficient space.

The recent Church Council meeting agreed three things as part of our Eco Church work

1. Hucclecote Methodist Church has recognised the climate and nature crises and the fundamental injustice these represent. We commit to reducing our carbon footprint year-on-year, in line with the Methodist Church's commitment to net zero by 2030. (The Steering Group are currently exploring how to calculate the carbon footprint of the Church and its activities).
2. We can register the Church Green as a People's Nature Reserve. (This is part of a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust project to create a People's Nature Reserve across Gloucestershire.)

3. We can offer the Church Green to the Hucclecote Hub for a 'Songs of Praise style' service on a convenient date in the summer of 2025. (This will help us show we are encouraging outdoor worship at our church).

We have identified a local company who can come and conduct an energy efficiency survey of the church itself to help us understand how we can improve the energy efficiency of that part of our building. We are currently exploring grant funding so we can complete this survey.

Thank to Beth for including prayers for creation in our notices and worship during Lent. Please continue to pray for the work of A Rocha an international Christian charity encouraging climate care as well as our work towards a Silver Eco Church award.

Nick

## **Handbell Group**

Things are still going well with the Handbell Group, and we are continuing to improve. We played at the Carol Service and Mothering Sunday, and thank you for all your positive comments.

We received a small grant from Declan Wilson the local Councillor and were able to purchase some new music stands, which are much better for our music books.

Peter has decided to take a well-earned break from his leadership of the handbell choir. His patience was amazing, and we are ever grateful to him for all the help. We also lost two further members during this year, due to other commitments, so we do have space if anyone would like to join us, especially from the younger people. You do not need to be able to read ordinary music, so please let me know if you are interested.

It's still good fun, we still laugh a lot, and we will continue to amuse you when we can.

Dawn

## **Hucclecote Hub**

The three churches in Hucclecote – Hucclecote Methodist Church, St Phillip and St James' Church and Hillview Church work together in Hucclecote supporting each other.

In 2024 a local Foodbank distribution centre was set up to meet the needs of local people. The donations from each of the churches has made a difference to those in need.

Messy Church is always well attended and open to all children and their parents in the Hucclecote area.

Every year, as Christmas approaches, NOAL, Nativity on a Lorry, travels around both sides of the main Hucclecote Road over two evenings in December bringing much good cheer to both young and old. December 2024 saw the lorry visit Coopers Edge for the first time. Many young people and their parents dressed as angels and shepherds and enjoyed a pizza prior to following the lorry. The lorry was well received by those living in the Coopers Edge area and there were many positive comments made.

Christchurch Abbeydale also saw the lorry over two evenings covering the local neighbourhood.

Plans are already in the early stages for 2025 NOAL which brings a wonderful witness to the streets of Hucclecote and surrounding areas and reminds every one of the true meaning of Christmas.

one of this would be possible without the many volunteers across the three churches who work together.

Keith

## **Jellytotz**

We have had a successful year since September. We lost a few to pre school last summer and some long term regulars to school. So it has been a lot of new mums/grandparents. Started slowly but soon

began to build to 10/12 families. Generally a younger group so not so hectic. We do more craft with the help of one of our mums and play dough too is very popular. It's been different this year but successful. Much more mother and toddler and babies. We are about to plant sunflower seeds with the children and we celebrate special occasions such as Mothering Sunday and Easter. A very friendly and social group with lots of grandparents

Kathy

## **Lunch Club**

Lunch Club continues to be a great success. It's a great opportunity to meet together with both the members of the Church family and people from the community socially. It's also a good opportunity for those who live alone to have a meal with others. Meals vary from roast, stews and casseroles to old favourites such as Toad in the Hole, and again, the most popular pudding is Apple Crumble and custard.

My very sincere thanks to all the helpers, but especially to Marion, Elaine and Bev, without whom lunch would not happen, and to 'The Three 'R's' -Ron, Richard & Roger for their patience with the not so mobile members.

During the year we received a donation from one family in appreciation of the friendship and fellowship their mother receives from our Club. During the Summer break, this money was used to provide an Afternoon Tea just for all the helpers and Cooks, and was greatly enjoyed.

We do have some spaces, if you would like to come along, please add your name to the list on the Lunch Club notice board - quickly!!!!

Dawn

## **Open The Book - Dinglewell**

It was in 2011 that the Reverend Noel Sharp drew together a group of volunteers from Hucclecote Methodist Church to find out more about Open the Book. Open the Book (OtB) is an exciting storytelling project where Bible stories are shared with children in a

way that is fun, interactive and memorable. As invited guests in school, storytelling teams use the Open the Book programme to prepare and present a 10–15-minute scripted Bible story to a school assembly, involving the children as much as possible.

To cut a long story short a team from Hucclecote Methodist Church has been going into Dinglewell Infant School on most Tuesdays ever since. Along with Noel the original team included John Rainbow, Pam Meeks, Dorothy Crabtree, Dorothy Dwight, Elaine Keasley and Freda Payne. There have been changes to the team over the years with Ted Wilson, Angela Richards, Richard Clarke and Di Rotherham playing their part. Following Covid some of our members retired (but several were approaching 90!) and, sadly, we lost Di, leaving our current team of Liz and Stewart Wheeler, Kay Jenkins, Viv Austin, Ron and me. Mark Dickens and Keith Long have recently joined us on a part-time basis, taking part when Hartpurvy College and the Bishop of Gloucester can spare them.

I want to thank *all* of those people who have faithfully turned up every Tuesday to rehearsals and to Dinglewell Infant School to prepare and share Bible stories with an enthusiastic audience of 180 children, the majority of whom do not attend a church regularly. It is a *wonderful* opportunity to share something of our faith with the wider community and continues to bless us all. I could go on about the fun we have dressing up, playing tyrants, surprising the children with the Voice of God but if you want to know more then just ask one of us. We are always looking to recruit additional team members so, if you are interested, please come and talk to me.

Elaine

## **Open the Bible – Coopers Edge**

A small ecumenical group of people go into Coopers Edge School once a month to act out a Bible story in the children's assembly. The group consists of 3 Methodists, 2 from the United Reform Church and 1 Catholic. It is performed in front of the whole school consisting of over 400 pupils and the children look forward to these special assemblies, often recognizing "God" or "Jesus" when out shopping in the supermarket! It is fun and rewarding to do so if anyone is

interested in joining us you will be very welcome as new people are always wanted. It doesn't take up too much time and it is an important part of our Christian outreach.

Sylvia

## **The 9th Annual Christmas Tree Festival 2024 - Christmas Carols**

Christmas seems a long time ago but I am sure you will all recall how beautiful the church looked for the Christmas Tree Festival. Each tree depicted a popular Christmas Carol, and as usual each organisation had such unique ideas and the result was that every tree was stunning. Congratulations to the children and young people in BB & GA, Jellytotz and Junior Church who stretched their imaginations but also had great fun making the decorations for their tree.

We had great fun running the quiz where visitors tried to find hidden letters on the trees and then work out our Christmas Message, which of course was, God has been Good to us.

Visitors came from far and wide, as well as from the local community and Church Family, and everyone was very complimentary of all the work. Again, thank you to everyone who took part - whether making decorations, decorating trees, stewarding or serving refreshments, not forgetting the great team who helped to clear up and put the Church back together again.

Thank you also for your advice, enthusiasm, passion and wonderful creative ideas.

Dawn

## **Pastoral Report**

The pastoral stewards meet regularly to discuss general pastoral issues, particular needs and ongoing changes to membership/worshippers' lists.

Due to the reduced number of members now able to carry out the role of pastoral visiting, letters were given to all members with their

new membership cards advising of new system. Any church members willing to become a pastoral visitor would be very welcome.

Debbie Long continues to provide details of DBS and safeguarding requirements and advises of any ongoing training required. There are four pastoral stewards and the total number of church members stands at 96.

Mary

## **Safeguarding**

As members and worshippers at Hucclecote Methodist Church, we value every person as part of God's creation. Our community emphasises hospitality and openness, reflecting God's grace and love for all.

Safeguarding refers to the actions of our wonderful Church volunteers who undergo a Disclosure Barring check, the Hucclecote Methodist Church Safeguarding policy approved by our Church Council and practices designed to ensure the safety, health, and wellbeing of Church Members and individuals who enter our Church premises, particularly those who are vulnerable or at risk of harm.

### **Key Principles of Safeguarding**

Effective safeguarding is built upon several principles:

- **Prevention:** Taking proactive measures to stop abuse or harm before it occurs.
- **Protection:** Actively safeguarding individuals who are at risk.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring everyone involved in safeguarding is responsible for their actions and decisions.
- **Empowerment:** Supporting individuals to understand their rights and make informed decisions about their own safety and wellbeing.
- **Partnership:** Collaborating with organisations, communities, and families to ensure comprehensive protection.
- **Proportionality:** Responding to risks appropriately and without overreaction.

At Hucclecote Methodist Church, we are fortunate to have brilliant volunteers who know that Training is an essential component of safeguarding and will give up their valuable time to attend the Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit's Creating Safer Space training. The training equips our Church volunteers with the knowledge to identify risk factors, recognise signs of abuse, and respond appropriately.

Safeguarding is a cornerstone of social wellbeing, ensuring the protection of vulnerable individuals who meet on our Church premises and fostering an environment where everyone can thrive without fear of harm. While challenges persist, ongoing efforts to strengthen training, awareness, and collaboration will continue to enhance safeguarding practices. By focusing on safeguarding at Hucclecote Methodist Church, we collectively embrace the responsibility of creating a safer, more inclusive world.

Debbie

## **Property Report**

Another challenging year. It takes a lot of time and effort as well as money to keep our premises in the state to which you are all accustomed to. To achieve this the Property & Finance Committee meet as a subcommittee of the Church Council on a bi-monthly basis. New members are always welcome to join from the Church Council.

Over the last twelve months several maintenance tasks have been identified and completed, but by no means a full list e.g.

**Flat Roofs:** Ongoing. Three quotes obtained. Unfortunately, the application made to Benefact Trust came up short, only providing a 1/10<sup>th</sup> of what the Church had applied for equalling £1,750. As a result, the Grant Sub-Committee are having to make further grant applications elsewhere.

**Quinquennial Electrical Inspection:** Carried out on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Various issues were raised that required to be carried out before Certificates were issued. All works have since



been carried out including a new main board which involved National Grid. The Church's Insurers were notified accordingly that works had been completed.

**Hall Lighting:** Quotes received to replace existing light fittings with LED lights to reduce electricity costs and to work towards the Church's aim to be more Eco friendly.

**Total cost £960 + VAT.**

**Hall Heaters:** Investigating whether a replace elements are still available. If elements no longer available, then a new heater to match the existing heaters?

**Total cost £470 + VAT.**

**Outside Security Lights:** To be looked at.

**Soft End of Hall Roof:** Repaired.

**Welcome Radiators:** To increase the amount of heat generated in the Welcome, a team stripped and cleaned the radiators and modified the appearance of the radiators. We believe this has been a success and saved the Church circa **£1,200** if it had chosen to replace them.

**Church Car Park:** Thanks to Martin Parkinson, who arranged for one the Highways' contractors, that he works with, to complete the dropped curb, to improve access.

**Quinquennial Inspection:** 5-year inspection carried out in February this year. Awaiting report.

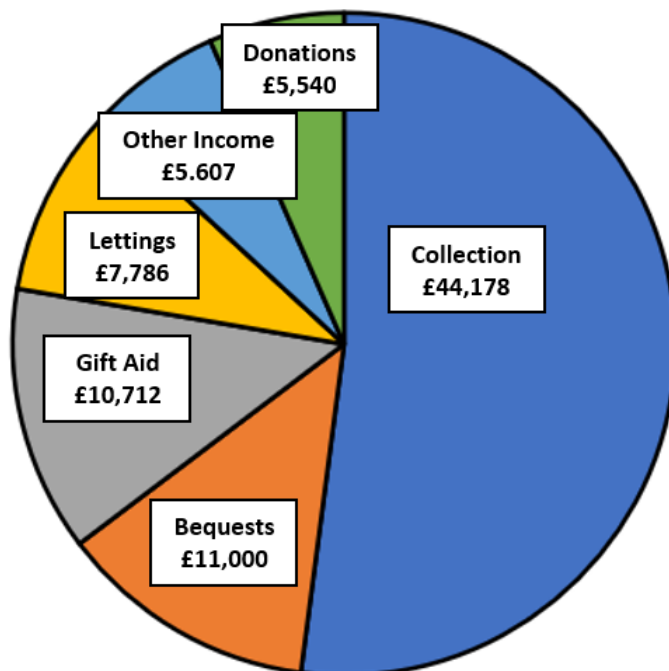
**Finances:** Further to the separate Treasurer's report, allowing for the efforts of the various fund-raising activities, the Church's balances bucked the trend of decline in the last financial year by finishing up on the previous year. However, the P&F have already overspent on this year's budget for maintenance, so we hope no unplanned expenditure appears.

How can you help! Well, the obvious one is reviewing your giving. Do you pay by standing order, thereby ensuring the Church receives your collection whether you attend or not? Gift Days. A lot of Churches also rely on members/adherents leaving a donation in their Wills either via a direct instruction or by a separate 'side letter'. Just some thoughts for your consideration.

Mark

## Finance Report

No two financial years are the same at Hucclecote Methodist! We were very grateful for two bequests, totalling £11,000. This has helped us to do much-needed work on the Hall. The chart of income sources, below, shows how our total income for our General Fund (which covers our everyday operations) of £84,824 was made "Donations" is mainly gifts from individual groups in the church. We

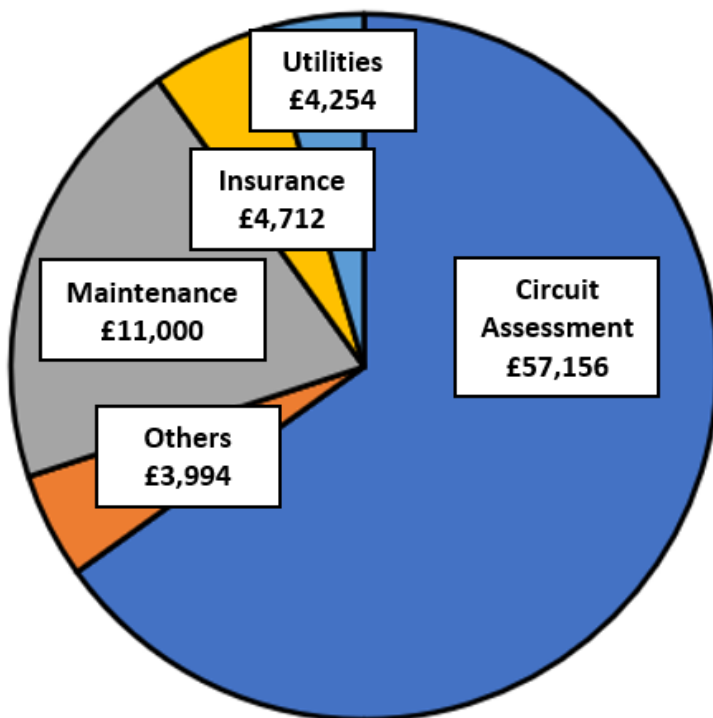


are grateful for this, particularly the amounts given from the café.

The work of the fundraising group just shows in “Other Income” as most of that money was used for the Hall & Church Improvement fund (see below). We see the importance of the Lettings income – thanks to Jane & Andrew for organising this.

We now come to how that income was spent. Most of our money goes to the Gloucestershire Methodist circuit to pay ministerial stipends and support our mission to Gloucestershire (and we are sometimes given grants by the circuit – money goes in both directions!).

The Maintenance figure is large as it includes work done in the Hall.



Finally, we spent £2960 more on the day-to-day running of the church than we received in income. The main cause was the improvements to the Hall, which is, of course, an investment for the future.

During Covid we closed our Improvement fund, but we have resurrected it since some major work is planned, particularly to some flat roofs. We were allowed to divert our fundraising efforts to this fund – we now have £6,002 in readiness for the work. In addition, we have a number of promises of contribution for the roofing, which is most encouraging. Grants are being sought to complete the necessary funding for the roofs.

We were able to make the following donations, from our communion collections, special appeals and a tithe of our fundraising:-

The Leprosy Mission	124
Gloucester City Mission	500
James Hopkins Trust	200
Trussell Trust	500
Christian Aid	500
All We Can	703
Water Aid	179
Easter Offering	350
Action For Children	309
Maggies Cheltenham	200

A total of £3566. This, of course, doesn't include the fundraising for various causes that church groups make that doesn't come onto the church books. It is good to see how we respond to a world of need. Again, if anyone wants details how of these amounts are made up, please ask.

Everything reported here relates to the financial year that ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024. This financial year might be more challenging. We are faced with £5000 increase in assessment and an increase in utility bills.

I have, however, been heartened by the number of you who have responded to the recent appeal for an increase in giving to the collection. Despite these times of financial insecurity, I'm glad that you feel that our church is worth supporting.

Finally, we should recognise all the work done by Andrew Jackson and Ron Keasley for all they do to help me with the Church finances.  
John

## **Craft Group**

We have 31 members with about 25 coming each week.

We had a bring and share party on the first session back after Christmas.

During this year we have supported members through difficult times. We have made blankets for Brockworth House, cardigans, hats and blankets for GRH baby unit. We also supported the church Christmas tree festival. We also made an Easter banner for the church as requested by Rev Barry Bishop.

Our last Christmas sale raised about £530 for church funds. This year, 2025, our sale will be Saturday 15th November. We give donations to the Welcome Cafe who supply our teas and coffees and the rest of our subs go into church funds.

Lynne

## **Friendship Club**

Another year has passed and we're still getting between 20 & 30 ladies at each meeting. We have 32 ladies on our register.

We've had some interesting talks on Victorian dress, life in prison, jelly babies and from Medicin Sans Frontiere. We also learned about keeping ourselves as safe & strong as possible as we get older.

There has been some lovely music with Jenny Parker. At Christmas we had a bring and share lunch and we enjoyed the Christmas music Andrew played for us.

There have been quizzes and a beetle drive and of course some cake!

We raised over £180 at our bring & buy afternoon and the money was split between Feed the Hungry & Maggie's - the 2 charities that were chosen at our AGM.

Sadly we've lost Joan Edwards who was a long time member and 2 ladies who had been members – Sheila Davies & Glenda James.

We look forward to another year of friendship.

Helen

## **Mens' Social**

We have now been running for just over 12 months. Our meeting is on the 2nd Tuesday each month, except for August. Regular numbers vary between 12-18.

Sadly, during the year, we have lost two of our regulars, Irvine Browning and Ted Wilson. We remember Elizabeth and Anne and both their families.

We meet at 10am for 2 hours, starting with a chat over coffee and biscuits. This would normally be followed by a speaker or other activity, such as table games (shove halfpenny/bagatelle). Speakers have ranged from; HGV Driving, A Day in the life of a Wedding Photographer, Education - not as we know it, Life Behind Bars - Prison Service, amongst others.

Our December meeting was a Christmas lunch at the 12 Bells. The format seems to be well received and we have all benefitted from getting to know more about each other, resulting in friendships rather than passing acquaintances.

The meeting is intended not just for those attending HMC, but also friends and anyone else from the community.

Peter

## **Ladies' Lunch**

A small group of us enjoyed lunch at The Wheatstone Inn in March. The food was excellent, as demonstrated by the empty plates! But the main aim of the outing is fellowship and conversation, and there was plenty of that. It is good to have an opportunity to have an extended chat with people you might not otherwise come across apart from a brief coffee after church. It's a great way to get to know people better.

We will be going out again in the autumn and would be delighted if more ladies were able to join us. Lifts are always available and suggestions for a change of venue are welcome.

Diana

## **Badminton Club**

We now meet on Monday mornings 9.30 – 11.30. The number of our players – ladies and gentlemen – increases, and we welcome anyone who wants to join us. We don't have any skill level qualification – our matches are strictly for fun. And between games we always have time for refreshments and a chat!

Andrew

## **MWiB (Methodist Women in Britain)**

Thank you to all those ladies, this year, who helped by taking part in our Easter Offering Service; monies raised which go to support Methodist World Mission projects. You helped us to raise £300 to send from Hucclecote.

Recently 8 ladies from the Bristol District, including 3 from Hucclecote, met in Swanwick for the Annual Conference. We enjoyed a weekend packed with fellowship, fun, workshops, craft stalls and prayer, all held in beautiful surroundings. The keynote speaker was Dr. Rev. Sonia Hicks, previous Leader of Methodist Conference.

All 8 of us would recommend this valuable time away, enjoying the company of like-minded Methodists, learning a great deal about the various world wide projects that we promote and fundraise for. Coming up in the autumn is a district wide Creative Day, held at Hucclecote, date yet to be confirmed.

Sue

## **Water Aid**

Hucclecote Methodist Church continues to support WaterAid projects so that they carry on ensuring everyone everywhere has a sustainable source of clean water and access to proper hygiene and sanitation. We helped fund projects in Bangladesh, Uganda, Pakistan, Ethiopia and other deprived areas.

We sell a wide variety of goods and have raised £2330 since last April 2024. Card sales are very popular but jigsaws, pictures and men's hobbies paraphernalia sold by Sue Woodward at model railway shows have brought in most of the money recently. We have heard that stalls across Gloucestershire give people an opportunity to support WaterAid. Men tend to give at model rail shows and women at church and craft fairs. Cards and a variety of crafts made by Monday Makers are sold at Christmas time and there will be a table in the church hall at coffee time on some Sundays after Easter, so please take a look.

Sue Clarke and Sylvia Blake were invited to a presentation in Bristol as one of the top fundraisers. We heard about WaterAid projects and that they work with the villagers so that they know how to use and maintain the water supplies, otherwise they have found the local people have boycotted the project and not used the new facilities created. Giving clean water in local vicinities enables children to go to school as it's the youngsters that walk miles to fetch water daily and they do not have time for education.

Thank you to all who have donated and supported us during the year.

Sylvia



## **All We Can**

The Christmas Card Collection for 2024 amounted to £265.

AWC is an important contributor to areas in the world suffering from Natural and other disasters. This is often done through partner charities who are better equipped to provide feet on the ground. A recent example is the launch of a fund-raising appeal in early April for the earthquake disaster in Myanmar. At the time of writing (Apr 15th) they have raised £20k of a £50k target.

Peter

## **Action For Children**

The Methodist Church has been passionate about helping children and families for more than 150 years. Our support helps vulnerable children and young people today, and helps them have a brighter future, by making sure they have somewhere to turn in a crisis.

In 2024, we collectively raised £1200.16 through the collecting boxes plus a Christmas collection of £360.

A very big THANK YOU to all our box holders.

Lorraine

## **The Welcome Café**

The Café continues to be very successful as an outreach into the community with new customers appearing most weeks with some saying, "It's a lifeline."

Regular groups meeting on our premises use the facility. Every session is busy with Mondays serving, not only Brigades parents, but others from close by. On Wednesdays we warm the Welcome Gardeners, Mindsong, Probus members and other visitors. Thursdays will find us serving the Craft Group and on Saturdays people from the local community as well as church members.

We have been able to support our church by contributing to the heating and lighting, covering both our own and costs to the church. All our income is via donations. We do not charge, thus being able to

support those who may like to chat, without worrying as to the financial cost. We are a warm as well as a welcoming space. You will have noticed the recently replaced chairs. We were in need of more user friendly seating. The originals being too heavy and clumsy to move or stack. Now we can accommodate more people and the furniture is more easily adapted to the space. The cost of these was self-funded with the additional help of a 50% grant from the Gloucester Methodist Circuit.

We have also lately received a grant towards our costs from Councillor Wilson in appreciation and support of our work and available place in the Hucclecote Community.

We are very grateful to those who support the Café in your giving. Whether it be by visiting and donating financially; baking the most delicious cakes, scones and biscuits: and by serving in the Café itself. We could not have achieved such positive outcomes without YOU.

The Café always has need of more volunteers to give our regular helpers a break. With the summer approaching it would be good to have a few more volunteers to take up the odd available shift for a couple of hours, especially on a Wednesday morning. Please contact Sue C or Sylvia if you would like to serve our mission in this way.

Sue

## **The Welcome Garden**

The Welcome Garden volunteers meet on Wednesday mornings throughout the year from 10am until 12. We are a group of up to 9 people who enjoy chatting at the same time as growing vegetables and fruit. Anyone is welcome to come along and, if you cannot help us physically, then please come and sit on a bench and share your growing tips. We always spend (lots of) time in the Welcome Café – especially if it is cold and wet!

Using our field to grow food, trees and pollinator-friendly flowers has arisen out of our concern about the decrease in biodiversity in the

UK and wanting to do something as a church to help in the battle to tackle climate change. We aim to grow produce as sustainably as we can so we don't use slug pellets or weedkiller. Our experimental "no dig" bed has been very successful. We make our own compost and leaf mould, turning natural materials (mowed grass and fallen leaves) from the church grounds into soil improvers. Wildlife using the garden this year has included frogs, toads, newts, many different butterflies and birds, dragonflies and hedgehogs.

Last year the produce from the garden was used at our own Friday Lunch Club and at the St Oswald's Food Hub in Coney Hill, we occasionally delivered some to the Gloucester Windrush Meal Venture, we ate some ourselves and we gave some to people in the Welcome Café. We grew bags full of beans (broad, runner and French), enormous potatoes, a huge crop of onions, many pickings of kale, Swiss chard, peas, squashes, beetroot, tomatoes, sprouts, sweetcorn, gooseberries, rhubarb for several crumbles and damsons that were turned into jam. Over winter we have made a support frame for our thornless blackberries and loganberry and hope, this year, to take a crop of raspberries. We have planted 2 apple trees and are gradually training them into fan-shaped trees on the metal fence.

We want to encourage children to get involved in growing food so we work with Jellytotz and the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association, helping them to plant and enjoy sunflowers and food crops. We also led the BB and GA in creating a small pond for wildlife.

We have been blessed in receiving grants from The Leonard Laity Stoate Charitable Trust, Rotary and the Gloucester Active Communities Fund as well as scaffold boards from a local company. Having painted the boards with preservative we had left them to dry over the Easter weekend 2024 when, to our dismay, most of them were stolen in the early hours of Easter day. We replaced them with some of the grant money: now all of the beds are edged and as soon as the painting is finished the long border will be too.

The grants have enabled us to pay a contractor to re-lay the paved area behind the BB garage to provide safe and level hard standing for our use. While we were planning this a neighbour of some of our church members offered us a greenhouse – if we could take it away in the following few weeks! This was a very generous and useful gift and it is now sitting on the hard standing waiting for the glass to be put back in and some broken panels to be replaced. There is no shortage of jobs!

With the agreement of the Church Council, we have also created 2 small pollinator-friendly flower beds in front of the Welcome. The beds were full of a rainbow of flowers last year and drew many positive comments from passers-by. This was particularly encouraging as it shows that local people notice what we are doing and, hopefully, the actions of Hucclecote Methodist Church to increase biodiversity and care for creation.

Developing the use of our grounds to grow food and to be more wildlife-friendly and sustainable also improves the church's score when applying for an EcoChurch award. But the motivation of the Welcome gardeners is just as much about enjoying working and socialising together and experiencing the changes of the seasons, the hope of new life in the ground and the harvest. You are very welcome to join us - whether you want to garden or just have a chat about gardening.

Elaine