

1. Objectives and activities

In setting our objectives and planning our activities the Church Council meets three times a year under the leadership of the presbyter in pastoral charge. Due to the work involved with emerging from the pandemic, and focused conversations on same sex marriage registration, we had 5 church council meetings this year, along with a general church meeting.

Mission Statement

Bognor Regis Methodist Church: Journeying with God **Forming Community, Celebrating Faith, Deepening Discipleship**

Journeying with God: Acknowledging God's love for us, we respond to God in the way we live as individuals and community through celebrating faith, forming community and deepening discipleship.

Forming Community: Offering a variety of spaces which are welcoming and inclusive for people from all walks of life. Being a place of safety and security to all, where pastoral care is available and all are valued. A growing community where all can participate, find belonging, and friendships can be nurtured.

Celebrating Faith: As individuals in our day to day lives, and in gathering together for worship, study and prayer, we celebrate our diversity and faith with praise and thanksgiving.

Deepening Discipleship: Discovering more about God, life and faith in ongoing learning through fellowship, study and prayer, and allowing our faith to make a difference to the world in the way we live.

2. Achievements and performance

Overview

We continue to benefit from the ministry and leadership of Rev Dan Balsdon, whose ministry is also shared with Felpham and Westergate Methodist Church, along with the support of a part-time lay worker (7hrs per week between BRMC and Westergate).

The year has focused on emerging from the impact of the pandemic. We continued to use our mission statement as a tool to reflect on our activity and discern how to change and develop as we work towards its greater fulfilment.

Our 2 Priorities for the year were:

Priority 1: Restore and strengthen fellowship (social and spiritual) across the BRMC community

Priority 2: Stabilise the financial position of the church

Trustees have also considered whether to register the premises for Same Sex Marriage. An indicative vote indicated there was a majority of trustees in support of registering. However, the use of the premise by New Day Church meant that following government guidance we also required their consent. New Day's governing authority is in Brazil and, as we understand it, would not offer the consent required. Therefore trustees took the decision to not register at this time and review again in Spring 2024.

Forming Community

As the year has progressed there has been an ever increasing ease which has gradually enabled more activity to take place in the life of the church. A key community forming space has been Well-Come Point, our community drop in, offering a safe space for friendship and refreshment. This is a key space through which we seek to reach out to the Bognor Regis Community.

Some other groups in the life of the church pre-pandemic have not resumed, with energy being focused on other areas – adopting a 'less is more' approach – seeking to do a few things well rather than spread ourselves too thinly.

Our relationship with the Brazilian-Portuguese congregation continues to develop, including some informal support that has created an English conversation group to support them in learning the English language.

Pastoral Care has continued to be maintained through regular phone calls to one another by our Pastoral Team and wider church community, as well as through increasing amounts of face to face to interaction.

Celebrating Faith

With the easing of restrictions meaning singing was permitted again from September 2021, the life and vibrancy of worship has gradually increased, and we have enjoyed the opportunity to sing together.

We have continued to share some worship and discipleship opportunities through email, zoom, post and other means. Much of this has been shared with friends at Felpham and Westergate Methodist Churches, as well as the wider circuit.

BRMC has joined with the members of other churches in the West Sussex (Coast and Downs) Circuit to celebrate other Christian festivals –online and/or onsite.

Deepening Discipleship

Two house groups and a church fellowship continue to attract interest, one of which also draws members from Anglican and Roman Catholic congregations. Through lockdown Rev Dan has continued to prepare and/or deliver materials for discipleship in print and digital forms, and these have been both welcomed and utilised by some.

Resourcing Mission

Church funds and Grants made to other bodies, are all detailed in the Church accounts. The policy of the Managing Trustees on Grant-Making is to ensure that all applicants can demonstrate the public benefit, showing imagination and creativity as well as the perceived need, of that which the grant is being applied for.

As we emerge from the pandemic, there have been significant changes in roles in the life of the church. This has resulted in significant amounts of energy needing to be invested in restructuring some areas of governance as well as training and equipping volunteers.

As the congregation gets older, there are several areas of church life where additional people are needed, including some roles within the life of the church. A lack of volunteers is a source of concern for trustees.

As we emerge from the pandemic the finances of the church have been in a particularly difficult place. The council appointed a new Finance & property team which, with Rev Dan, has been working to implement a deficit recovery plan. While there is still work to do, they have made significant strides towards bringing the church into a more financially stable position.

In respect of Governance and oversight of Mission and Ministry at BRMC, and in line with denominational guidelines, we have implemented up to date policies, procedures, and training, including Safeguarding and Licence Agreements for community users.

2.1 Plans for future years

- Continued work to implement our Mission Statement, including reviewing our current activities, the needs of our members and community, and the management of resources (e.g. property, people, finance) at our disposal.
- Continued work and monitoring of the deficit recovery plan
- A full review of the premises and detailed property workplan. We are aware of some potentially significant areas of property work that may need planning for in the coming years.
- Encourage initiatives for Mission in the local community, as well as Discipleship and the strengthening of Pastoral Care.
- Long-term work continues in seeking to put plans together to make our premises and facilities more accessible and inclusive.
- Continuing to support Churches Together in Bognor Regis and District and building the ongoing links with New Day Church and other Community groups.
- Ensure that all those required to do so, attend appropriate safeguarding training.
- In May 2022 Rev Dan Balsdon indicated he would not be seeking an extension to his appointment, moving on in Summer 2023. The coming year will involve preparing for transition between ministers.

3. Financial Review

Please see the accompanying accounts. The church's principal sources of funds are from the free-will gifts of the members of the congregation and from fund-raising events. The church holds no freehold property.

The Managing Trustees have continuing concerns over the financial future of the Church, although this position has improved in comparison to last year.

Investment policy and performance

To comply with Methodist Standing Orders, monies for long-term investment are lodged with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP). These sums are invested in unitised investments or held on deposit. The investment returns are close to tracking the movements on the FTSE100 index. This deposit mirrors the deposit rates available elsewhere. The Managing Trustees' investment policy is aligned with that of the CFB and TMCP because these organisations take into consideration the social, environmental and ethical considerations, both negatively and positively, making investments suitable for the Methodist Church.

Short term deposits are lodged directly with the Central Finance Board (CFB) and attract good rates of interest.

3.1 Reserves Level and policy

Please see the accompanying Reserves level and policy agreed by the Church Council.

4. Trustees' Responsibilities

For each financial year ending on 31st August the Managing Trustees are required to prepare financial statements that give a true and fair view of the Church's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing these financial statements the Managing Trustees must:

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- Follow applicable accounting standards
- Prepare accounts using The Methodist Church Standard Form of Accounts

The Managing Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, the financial position of the church and enables them to ensure that financial statements comply with the law. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Church and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

4.1 Risk

The Church takes a cautious approach that significantly limits its exposure to risk.

Structure, governance and management

The Church is governed by the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union and the Model Trust Deeds of the Methodist Church.

5.1 Structure

Bognor Regis Methodist Church is part of the West Sussex (Coast and Downs) Circuit. As such it is represented at the Circuit Meeting which meets four times a year. The Methodist Conference meets once each year as the supreme denominational body for all Methodist Churches.

1. Overall regulatory authority rests with the Methodist Conference.
2. The Connexional Office implements decisions made by the Conference and is responsible for the stationing of presbyters and deacons (collectively known as ministers) in individual Circuits within the District.
3. Connexional decisions are passed to the Chair of the District and the appropriate officers of the District for implementation.

4. The District passes appropriate policies and decisions down to Circuit level for implementation by the Superintendent Minister, ministerial staff and Circuit Stewards, and authority is delegated to the Circuit Meeting for certain matters.
5. The Circuit Meeting passes regulatory control down to Church Councils for local implementation by the presbyter, the Church Stewards, and other officers, and this regulatory control is then exercised by the Church Councils as Managing Trustees of their charity.

5.2 Purpose of the Church

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

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

5.3 Governance

The Church operates within a statutory framework of regulation and seeks to ensure that it follows Methodist Standing Orders. It relies on the Connexional Office at 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5JR to provide guidance on changes that could affect the Church.

The members of the Church Council are appointed under the terms of S.O. 610(2). The Superintendent is *ex officio* chair of the Church Council but may delegate this task to other presbyters in the Circuit. The Church Council normally meets three times per year and deals with routine and exceptional matters. It oversees the work of other groups within the life of the Church.

5.4 Responsibilities of the Church Council

The responsibilities of the Church Council and other committees are set out in Standing Orders 603 – 604 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church.

6. Reference and Administrative Details

6.1 Name of the Church

Bognor Regis Methodist Church

6.2 Charity Registration number

Not Applicable

6.3 Superintendent Minister

The Revd Ian Suttie MA

6.4 Presbyter in Pastoral Charge

The Revd Daniel J Balsdon

6.5 Names of Managing Trustees (as of 31/08/22)

Marina Blake

Tony Brazier

Chris Monkton (*Circuit Steward*)

Deborah Dean

Hazel Denman

Sheila Harding

Anita Hayward

Carole Kotin

Martin Laver

Tony Poland

Roger Saunders

Forbes Sutton

Janet Tapping

John Wren

Colin Whitmill

Dan Balsdon (Circuit Presbyter)

Bob Sneddon (Circuit Presbyter)

Ian Suttie (Superintendent)

6.6 Independent Examiner

Adams Beeny, 4 Sudley Rd, Bognor Regis PO21 1EU