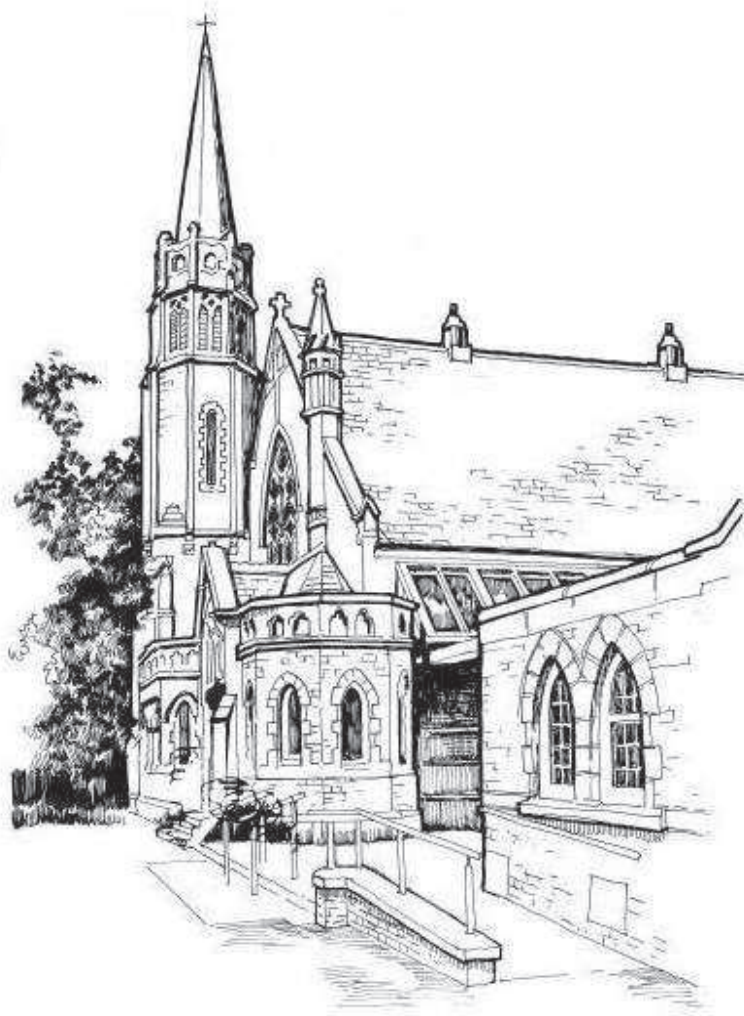


Fulwood Methodist Church

Registered Charity No. 1133929

Watling Street Road, Fulwood, Preston, PR2 8EA

www.fulwoodmethodist.org.uk



Annual Report 2015 – 2016

for the General Church Meeting - 22nd May 2016

Church Council Membership

Superintendent	Revd Mark Slaney
Ministers	Revd Malcolm Hickox Deacon Yasha Mashoko
Church Stewards	Miss Doreen Britton - until 23 rd February 2016 Mrs Elizabeth Ellison Mr Stephen Grice - until 23 rd February 2016 Mr Joe Hamilton - from 20 th October Mrs Amanda Latham Mrs Libby Stone Mrs Anne Garsed Mrs Margaret Squire
Church Treasurer	Mr Ted Lowes
Secretary to Church Council	Mrs Linda Butterworth
Secretary to Pastoral Committee	Mrs Sue Penrith
15 Elected Reps from GCM	Mrs Hilary Banks Mr Allan Clarke Miss Ann Done Mr John Ferris Mrs Veronica Frost Miss Beryl Hoyle Mrs Pam Johnson Mr Colin Maudsley Mrs Gill McGill Mr Geoff Oldham Miss Charlotte Penrith Mrs Julia Scott Mr Ken Wales Mrs Lindsay Walton Mrs Delma Whitman
Co-ordinators of Church Groups	
Church Life	Vacancy
Church Outreach	Mrs Margaret Squire
Finance	Mrs Amanda Latham
Property	Mr Mike Ellis
Co-opted members	Mrs Janet Wales (Junior Church) Mrs Lesley Birkett (Safeguarding)
Circuit Steward	Mr John Spencer

Minister's Reflections

From Revd. Malcolm Hickox

It was on one of his visits to the Church on a Wednesday morning that Mark Slaney, our Circuit Superintendent Minister, stood back looking at all the activity and said, "This is Church!" His comment was based on a whole series of factors, but especially the diversity of those present and the interaction between the church members there to serve and a host of folk from the local community experiencing warm hospitality. In some ways Welcome Wednesdays are a more accurate reflection of the Church engaged in Mission than our regular Sunday morning worship. Although, it's good to be able to report that we have seen new worshippers joining us on Sunday mornings as a result of what they have experienced in our midweek activities. Worship and prayer are clearly at the heart of Church life, but the point about Welcome Wednesdays is that we have two experiences of Christian fellowship mixed in together. In the Cedar Room for part of the morning we have an informal, but recognisable, Communion Service, where we 'break bread' and share as we reflect on the gospel and offer prayers for the world and our local concerns. Then we have another sort of 'breaking bread' and sharing around tables in the Willow Grove and Oak Hall, where this 'diverse group from the local community' experience the gospel in action. Some are severely disabled, others have their own particular special needs. Some are becoming frail and don't get out much, so come for the company over a game of dominoes. Some are retired and drop in to meet old work colleagues for a coffee, others drop in because they haven't got much money and the New2You stall helps what they have go further. Some are lonely or bereaved and come because they are valued and cared for. As I go round to meet and greet folk on these mornings I'm conscious just how much appreciation there is for what we are offering and what it means to the most vulnerable. I'm also conscious that a lot of good will is generated through this open hospitality and that its message is spreading around the neighbourhood. If you've never been to a Welcome Wednesday, then you really must come and see it for yourself!

Once again this annual report gives a 'snap shot' of the last year at Fulwood Methodist Church and highlights the amazing quantity of activity which takes place each week on the Church premises or elsewhere in the name of the Church. We owe a huge debt to so many people who give unstintingly of their time and talents to enable all the different activities and groups to function week by week and to those who contribute behind the scenes, enabling our property, finance and administration to function efficiently. You can read about all they do in this report, but please pause as you do and offer thanks for their service and reflect on whether you might also be called to undertake some new avenue of service.

Fulwood Methodist Church has always been known for its commitment to children and young people and it is good to report that all our youth and children's groups are thriving, in fact some of them are full to capacity. That frequently means that we are in need of additional helpers. As we reported last year, our Friday evening 'open' groups, Escape! and the Youth Club, had grown to the point where we needed to employ a sessional youth worker. Stuart Johnson originally joined us as a Preston Youth for Christ worker whilst Yasha was on maternity leave, but from September 2015 the Church took on his employment for the Friday evenings when the clubs were operating. Stuart is now well settled in his role and is a great asset to our work.

In a similar way with its success, the Theatre Visits Group needed additional administrative support at the same time as it was recognised that we needed more administrative support for the Church's general activities. As a result, the Church Council agreed to create a part-time Church Administrator post (nine hours per week) to support both these tasks. Following interviews last Summer, Sharon Beck was appointed and started at the

beginning of September. She soon settled into her new role, bringing with her a great deal of administrative experience which is proving to be a real asset for the Church. At the time of Sharon's appointment, the Theatre Visits Group was seeing a significant increase in new people joining the trips and so the majority of Sharon's time over recent months has been spent on that group developing new systems and procedures to cope with the increased numbers, rather than on general Church administration. However, the benefits of Sharon's role have been seen with additional assistance for our room bookings and in negotiating better terms for some of the contracts the Church has with local companies.

Whilst this report has its focus in the life of Fulwood Methodist Church, we are conscious that members are involved in a host of charitable activities in the local community. Several make a very significant contribution to the Churches Together help desk at the hospital, the drop-in at Central Methodist Church and the work of Methodist Action North West, to name just three projects. This report provides the opportunity to acknowledge their service and also for us to thank everyone who contributes in any way to the life and witness of our Church. A special word of appreciation must go to our Church Stewards and to Sue Penrith, our Pastoral Secretary, who together with Deacon Yasha Mashoko and myself, have acted as the Church Leadership Team over the last year. Without their commitment and their personal support, we would not have been able to undertake all that has been expected of us in our ministry.

Malcolm Hickox

General Overview from the Church Stewards

The small group of stewards is working hard to maintain the life of the church and support our ministers in our ministry and mission within our community.

Sadly, we have lost two of our number during the year. Thanks to Doreen Britton who offered to join us in September. However, due to health problems felt unable to continue. We thank her for stepping up to the mark when the plea was made and for her commitment to the duties each week. At the beginning of the year Stephen Grice decided it was time to step down too as he has taken on another role with the L'Arche Community in Preston which demands quite a lot of his time. Stephen has been a great asset to the team over the years he has served us and we thank him for his work and guidance. Stephen will continue to co-ordinate the music team at the moment, but has ceased his other stewarding duties. Thanks must also go to Janet, who has ably supported him each week.

We have a good team of Worship Stewards who do a sterling job assisting with setting up for worship each Sunday morning, which helps the Church Steward enormously with the responsibility of the day. If you feel called to be either a Church Steward, or a Worship Steward, please have a conversation with Malcolm or any of the stewards to see what the work entails and if you would be able to assist. The more people we have, the easier the load.

Over the coming weeks the team will be working on our vision for the future of our Church as we work towards seeking a new minister when Malcolm steps down in 2017. The process to find someone begins in the summer and we want to be prepared.

Thank you to all the congregation who support us in our work and encourage us to carry on!!

Margaret Squire
Senior Church Steward

Church Life

Church Life Group

In the absence of a Church Life Co-ordinator, Janet Wales has been chairing the meetings of the Church Life Group. Having created a separate Youth Leaders Meeting, which is now well established, the Church Life Group receives regular reports on their activities, which enables the life of the Church to be seen as a whole. The number of representatives from the different groups within the Church has grown over the last year as those from the more recently established activities have been welcomed to the meetings for the first time. These include the Knitting Group and Book Club whose activities are proving popular, together with Alphabites, which we inherited from the former Deepdale Methodist Church. We also welcomed Ray Armstrong to the group, who along with Dave Topping, is starting to co-ordinate the Church's social activities. We were delighted to hear of the success of the recently formed Community Choir. As an outreach social activity it has started to draw local people into the life of the church, including Sunday Worship. We also welcomed Joe Hamilton to his first meeting in his capacity as co-ordinator of the Publicity Group and talked about some new initiatives in that area.

Work has been progressing on the issues which need to be addressed in order for the Church to apply to the District for a **Child Friendly Church Award**, with Janet Wales, Lesley Birkett and Yasha Mashoko taking the lead.

The **Christian Festivals** continue to play a central role in the worship life of the Church and the Christmas services in particular draw in a large number of people from the edge of Church life as well as from the local community. The Toy and Gift Service was once again very well supported, with gifts going to Surestart, the Women's Refuge and other local charities. The generosity of our congregation and the uniformed groups was remarkable, especially since the appeal for filled shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child the previous month had produced such a wonderful response. Our thanks to everyone who gave so generously. A small group came together to plan the Advent and Lent liturgies that were used each week, with the emphasis on both seasons being times of preparation and discipleship for all ages. Plans are underway for more fresh produce to be on display at the Harvest Festival, alongside the flower arrangements, with the idea that it might then be used in the catering for Welcome Wednesday. The gifts of tinned food and packets donated at Harvest were gratefully received by Methodist Action for those in need and the financial gifts for All We Can – Methodist Relief and Development were equally appreciated.

The **Prayer Table** in the corner of the Church is being used more as people notice its existence. The Prayer Book is taken into the Wednesday morning service of Holy Communion where it is used alongside the Methodist Prayer Handbook so that we pray for local concerns as well as those across the world. In addition, we have a **Prayer Chain** which Judith Harvey co-ordinates (details on the back of the notices).

Janet Wales & Malcolm Hickox

Worship

The Worship Planning Group continues to meet quarterly. Convened by Lesley Birkett and chaired by Malcolm Hickox, it reviews the content and pattern of our worship and makes plans for the next quarter. Holding together a Church community with differing tastes in music, worship styles, church backgrounds and ages, and with a broad theology is always a challenge! We are therefore fortunate to be able to call on a number of musicians, organists, keyboard players and the 316 Band. We deliberately arrange different patterns and liturgies for Holy Communion, sometimes coming forward to the rail to receive and sometimes receiving the elements in the pews. Whilst the size of the

morning congregation and the layout of the worship area place certain restrictions on what can be undertaken during morning worship, the evening services have become much more flexible making use of the URC, the Chancel in the Church and the Willow Grove. Judging by attendances and the comments received, the variety of styles from café-worship, Taize liturgy, Compline, and informal worship to seaside and garden services and Summer Praise has been appreciated. The Sunday morning crèche continues to be much appreciated by families with babies and toddlers. Our thanks go to Emma Byers who co-ordinates it and to those on the rota, but we could do with some more volunteers. The children's bibles and biblical story books for young children to borrow during services are on a small table by the door to the Willow Grove and are well used. On parade services we also provide a table at the front with suitable quiet activities for those under five who are too old for the crèche.

The Advent Liturgy, with its use of the Christmas postage stamps, created some good discussions and was appreciated as was the Lent Liturgy with its 'Lenten-eggtra' dimension. These gave a real sense of building up to and preparing for the great festivals of Christmas and Easter. All the Christmas services were well received with their mix of the traditional and the new. Music played an important part in all these services and we were very grateful for the contributions from a wide range of musicians, including the 316 band, augmented choir, community choir and our organists. It was very encouraging to see a large number of visitors and those on the fringe of the church attending over the Christmas period. We noted that it had been difficult to explain the concept of the Messy Nativity Service to some regular members of the congregation, but on the day it was enthusiastically received by many and there were more children and young people present than had been the case at recent Nativity services. We were grateful to Janet Wales who provided a crèche at the Carol Service, which was used by ten children and clearly demonstrated a need. The Peace Light Service was appreciated by the small group who attended and plans are in hand to explore whether it might be integrated into another act of worship rather than continuing as a separate service. The Holy Week meditations were again appreciated and with their very different styles made a significant contribution to the exploration of the events of that week, culminating in the moving experiences of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. With over 100 attending the 'Messy Good Friday' session we reached a significant number of families who might otherwise have not explored the Easter story and it's clear that such approaches are an encouragement for us to develop other initiatives at times convenient to families.

Melody Clarke, our Circuit schools' worker (shared with the Chorley Leyland Circuit) joined us for an all-age morning service on Education Sunday and enthused the congregation. During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Malcolm Hickox was invited to preach at Christ Church for a Sunday morning service at which he celebrated Holy Communion with special permission of the Bishop. Special acts of worship were held in most of the churches in Fulwood and Broughton over the week and our Wednesday service of communion and prayers was opened to others with the result that around 50 attended.

The Church Council agreed that we should purchase some copies of the relatively new Methodist Hymn Book, 'Singing the Faith' and that we should attempt to use it regularly on Sunday mornings. Members of the congregation were also offered the opportunity to purchase their own copy through the church. A grant was received towards the cost of the hymn books from 'Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd' which was much appreciated. Some copies of the Methodist Worship Book were also purchased for use by those who find it more difficult to see the words projected onto the wall.

Our thanks go to the Worship Stewards, who support the Church Stewards in the smooth preparation for the services; the Communion Stewards; the musicians; the team of sound operators; all the people willing to read and participate in dramatic presentations; the welcomers; the coffee servers, the flower arrangers and not forgetting those who count the

collection and drive the minibus. You are all an integral and important part of our worship team, but more volunteers are always needed.

Lesley Birkett

Sunday Club

This year has been a productive one for Sunday Club as we have achieved many of the goals we set this time last year. Numbers continue to be stable with about 43 children and young people on our database although weekly attendance is considerably less. Currently there are 8 leaders who work with the young people on a rota basis.

Goal 1. Re-write our mission statement and prepare information about Sunday Club for the church website.

Much time was spent discussing the aims/values of Sunday Club and the following have been agreed. Please note these aims need to be viewed alongside the principles of the whole Church's ministry and work with children and young people.

Sunday Club aims to help children and young people to discover:

1. That they are special to God whose love is there for us.
2. What it means to be a follower of Jesus
3. Who they are as creatures created by God, in God's image
4. The nature of the God we see revealed in the life of Jesus.
5. That they belong to God's people – the Church

These values will underpin the focus of the teaching and learning which is based on themes such as the life of Christ etc. on a weekly basis. This year (from April 2015) we have focused on the themes of 'Stories Jesus told', 'Christian values' and the 'Life of Christ', our current topic is 'the Living Church' – people and buildings. We continue to provide positive, active and fun learning experiences to enable these values to be developed.

Action - prepare information about Sunday Club for the church website

Goal 2. Continue to develop the way we work with a mixed age group.

The challenges presented by a mixed age group and children and young people who often only attend once a month are problematic and make the planning of individual sessions quite difficult. Although we follow a thematic approach, it is important to regard each session as a stand-alone one and we cannot assume any prior knowledge or continuity. It is a concern that we have to spend so much time at a basic level instead of discussing the implications of stories and views. We try to share some open ended prompts with the older ones and offer a range of activities to engage different learning styles and ages. Craft and computer tasks are always popular.

Action – continue to develop range of activities to meet needs of young people

Goal 3. Contribute to the church application for the Child Friendly Church award.

Significant progress has been made with this but some work still needs to be done by the church as a whole before the application can be submitted.

Action – support application for award

Goal 4. Work with parents to maximise learning and experiences.

Sunday Club Facebook site was launched at the end of February and has proved to be extremely popular. It is a 'secret group' because of safeguarding issues so anyone wishing to join needs to contact Christine Hickox. We try to post information about the coming Sunday and then use photographs of activities taken during the

sessions. Occasionally we post links to YouTube clips which we have used so that people can see them again at home. It is clear that there is huge potential here to keep in touch with families even when they have not been able to attend the service.

Action – explore further developments with social media with emphasis on keeping in touch with families.

In addition to these developments, Fulwood Sunday Club was also one of four Methodist Church groups in the North West to participate in the 'Mirror Project'. This involved our young people being filmed as they were interviewed about their views on church and what they would like to see happening. We were delighted at the mature and thoughtful way our young people responded to the questions and hope to use the DVD that was made by Alison Hulse and colleagues to inform our response as a church to the issues that arose from the interviews. It was clear that children and young people enjoyed a lot of the celebrations and the fun activities they became involved with. It was also good to remind ourselves that it is right to ask questions about our faith and be honest when we have not got the answers.

Opportunities this year to work more closely with Messy Church at Christmas and Easter have been very successful. The session held the Sunday before Christmas attracted a large number of children and young people and might point the way forward for other celebrations. Although the purpose of Sunday Club is different from that of Messy Church, there are ways in which we can learn from each other.

The greatest challenge for the coming year for Sunday Club will be staffing. Katrina Holyfield, Hilary Banks and Yasha Mashoko have left the team and there may be other changes in the coming year. It is vital that the whole church considers this important work and how it can best meet its responsibilities.

Janet Wales

Pastoral Care

The last few months our thoughts and prayers have been especially with the families of those who have died: Grant Williams, Hazel Beardsworth, Margaret Brown, Dorothy Cooper, Frank Sandford, Olive Howarth, Kay Speight, Ethel Parry, Irene Hacking, Jimmy Allen and Marie Harrison. Revd Malcolm Hickox, Liz Ellison (as Hospital Chaplain) and many members of the Church family continue to support people in different ways. To add to our usual ways of visits, flowers, cards, prayers, prayer chain, phone calls, texts and email, there has been a "WhatsApp" group to support a family in special need. The pastoral meeting was asked to consider modern technology as a way of giving support when needed. The quarterly Church Magazine continues to be greatly appreciated, especially by the housebound, and our thanks go to the editorial and production teams for their excellent work. Over fifty plants were distributed at Christmas to our more frail members and to others who had experienced particular difficulties. With the Harvest and Easter church flowers also distributed to a large number of folk we have been able to express our love and commitment to a wide group of people.

At a recent Pastoral Meeting the Church family were invited to a talk on 'Facing Death and Bereavement' by Tony and Dorothy Bonser. As part of the talk they made it clear that everyone is different as to how they respond to death and bereavement and there is no right or wrong way. They gave many guidance points for responding to the people and leaflets for guidance (which many pastoral visitors will have).

The Pastoral care of this Church family is dependent on us all responding appropriately to the needs we are told about, being observant to who may have missed worship or groups, keeping confidentiality when needed and continuing to support those who are in need. The prayer life, for various needs within our community and further afield, continues through worship, the prayer chain, prayer book, the prayer table and personal prayer. We

thank everyone who supports our Church Pastoral Care, especially our faithful team of Pastoral Visitors and Magazine Distributors.

Sue Penrith

Church Membership Statistics

Each November a statistical return is completed for the Methodist Church, giving details of our Church membership and activities. Last year we recorded that in addition to 296 church members we were in contact regularly with over 960 other people, of which over 460 were children and young people who attend our weekly activities. Our membership details were as follows for the year ending 31st October 2015:

Membership as at 1st November 2014 - 306

Deaths	4
Members Transferred Out	3
Ceased to be members	3
Total Losses	10

Membership as at 31st October 2015 - 296

Baptisms during year November 2014 - October 2015	8
Weddings	2
Funerals	11

Malcolm Hickox

Safeguarding

“The Methodist Church, along with the whole Christian community, believes each person has a value and dignity which comes directly from God’s creation of male and female in God’s own image and likeness. Christians see this as fulfilled by God’s re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things, this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.”

These are the opening words of our Church Safeguarding Policy, which is reviewed by the Church Council each year. Hopefully most people will have noticed that the full policy is displayed on the notice boards at the entrances to the Church premises.

In a joint statement on safer recruitment, the Church of England and Methodist Church state that they *“are committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and adults, and the care and nurture of children within our church communities. We will carefully select, train and support all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles.”*

A Church the size of Fulwood requires a large number of people to voluntarily take on roles of responsibility and these people will be aware that ‘Safer Recruitment’ procedures involve form filling, some training and in certain cases police checks. Gone are the days when it was sufficient just to say “I’ll do it” to be given a job to do in the Church, but I would hope that everyone understands the need for and importance of these procedures. Currently, I am working to try to ensure that all relevant paperwork is completed and up-to-date, and I would appreciate the continued co-operation of the volunteers in this. I can also report that, as it is now some five years since most volunteers received their initial ‘Creating Safer Space’ training, an up-to-date refresher course is being prepared and should be available for use by Churches and Circuits later in the year.

Please contact me if you have questions or concerns in relation to safeguarding and I will do my best to be of help.

Lesley Birkett, Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Women's Fellowship

Our average attendance has been 25 at our weekly meetings. We are once again pleased to have gained one or two new members and enjoyed a very varied programme, especially as it included our 70th Anniversary Celebration on September 15th 2015. We catered for 80 people. Revd Malcolm Hickox and Christine Hickox gave a service which included hymns, poems, solos, and the history of The Women's Fellowship and also an invitation to try bell ringing. Stephen Grice played well known melodies on the piano to accompany our singing. Before going into Oak Hall for tea, Kathleen Speight, and Joan Hardman our President, were asked to cut the celebration cake. We received a number of cards and favourable comments in appreciation of the celebration from our friends who had joined us for this special event. It is with deep regret that through bereavement we have lost the following members, Kathleen Speight, Marie Harrison, Dorothy Cooper, Margaret Brown, and also Gladys Ryan who had moved out of the area to be nearer her daughter in the Midlands. At this time, we remember them and their families. The following Summer Outings have been arranged for 2016: May 10th Websters at Tarleton, June 14th Free Port Fleetwood, July 5th Botanical Gardens Churchtown, August 16th Lunch at The Cottage.

Muriel Crossley & Mary Fox

Ladies After Eight

Ladies After 8's continues to flourish; we have 46 names on our books and our average attendance is between 25 and 30. We have four new names added to our register this year. Our speakers over the last year have included some members from our own congregation: Malcolm Rae, Ellen Gregory, Wendy Tyson, Stephen Harrison and Graham Johnson, not to mention Malcolm who is always there to help and support. We have enjoyed a members' evening, chatting amongst ourselves, getting to know each other even better whilst having a Beetle Drive! Some of our members attended the Ecumenical Evening at Our Lady & St Edwards. We visited Broughton Inn for our Christmas meal and we are due to visit Samlesbury Hall next month for our Summer outing. We heard about Carly Miller's 2012 Olympic Experience; Eddie Regan came and talked about his 40 years at the Preston Guildhall; Sue Davies enthralled us with her version of a story about the wife of one of the three Wise Men who visited baby Jesus; Gill Parkinson entertained us telling us about her time in Madrid during Franco's reign and The Trinity Singers inspired us with their witness through song and word. The warmth, support and companionship of this group is greatly valued by all its members and any new members would be made very welcome.

Sue Whiteford

WOW (Women on Wednesdays)

WOW still meets on a monthly basis and continues to form a network of support for its members. We have recently extended our list to include some newcomers to church and also people I have met through Brownies and Messy Church. In January we had a Spanish and Tapas night which proved very popular and other activities have included a summer bonfire last July, some evening walks, pottery painting, a cinema trip, and a Christmas meal at Moka in town. Recently we have had a few ideas coming from different people which is helpful and hopefully adds variety to our programme. It is still our aim to be more accessible to new members perhaps by having a notice on a board in church or by being more organised with dates on the church calendar. Essentially we are a group of busy mums run by busy mums so administration tends to fall by the wayside but we hope that everyone is approachable and friendly should somebody new wish to come along. Long may WOW help us to maintain our relationships within the church family and to have the strength in number and individually to reach out to others and offer friendship and fellowship where it is needed.

Sarah Farrell

AM Club

We came to the end of our 29th season just before Easter after a very interesting and enjoyable series of meetings in the Cedar Room. Years ago we had visits to places of interest, but there is no particular interest in such things now. We have followed our long established pattern and have travelled to Japan, Siberia, New Zealand, Holland and Belgium, as well as our own lovely country, as we shared in the experiences of our speakers. Attendances on Tuesday mornings tend to be 15/16 and very long and happy friendships are enjoyed. Old friends Charles Wisbey and Frank Sandford passed away during the year and are well remembered. We have also had topical talks on climate change, refugees in Calais and problems in Sierra Leone, and numerous stories and former work experiences. Our members greatly enjoy each other's company and look forward to our meetings.

Allan Clarke

Alphabites

It is now three years since we started Alphabites at Fulwood. We are thrilled that this year the numbers have increased, and now an average of 16-18 attending. We continue to meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 7.00 p.m. Our meetings start with a two course meal, and this is enjoyed by all (many good appetites and empty plates!). Following this we have a time of worship and Bible Study. Our minister, Malcolm, leads the group and since September we have been studying St John's Gospel. This had led to many questions and discussion. It is good to delve a little deeper into Bible passages and discover more of our amazing God.

Margaret Holmes & Beryl Hoyle

Book Club

The Book Group is now in its second year of operation. The Group holds four or five meetings a year and usually is attended by around ten people. The Group chooses which book or theme it is going to discuss at its next meeting, taking into account our different interests and tastes. We don't usually start with a religious or spiritual topic but it is fascinating how often our discussion moves into that direction. At a recent meeting we talked about short pieces of writing that interested us - short stories, magazine articles, poems etc. - and we were enriched by the Revd. Malcolm Hickox's thoughts on the gospel of Mark as a piece of literature. Sometimes themes or passages in the books which we are discussing remind us of our own spiritual experiences and challenges. The group is open to all - even those who don't read much but enjoy sharing their ideas - and everyone is welcome. You don't need academic qualifications but an open mind helps!

Ken Wales

Theatre Visits Group

The Theatre Visit group has had a busy and successful year. The highlight for many of us was being able to include a group of pupils from Ribbleson Avenue Methodist Junior School to see a performance of the BFG at the Octagon Theatre in Bolton in January. This was the first visit to a theatre for many of the children. Another highlight was our overnight visit to Stratford to take in two plays performed by the RSC. We regularly visit the theatres in Keswick, Blackpool, Liverpool, Salford and Manchester and this year, for the first time, Oldham. Over the year some 400 coach seats and tickets have been sold. Of equal significance are two further developments. First, much of the work of taking bookings and administering the whole process has been undertaken by the Church administrator, Sharon Beck. This has given us the opportunity to look at all the various stages in the process and to make them more secure and efficient. Sharon has worked very hard on this and now has good systems in place and a good understanding of what is involved.

Second, the opportunity has been taken to provide a major report to the Church Council about the mission opportunities which this community service offers and its place within the wider purposes and activities of the Church. More will be said about this at the meeting when it is intended that we discuss the arrangements whereby we will ensure that there is a longer-term future for the life of the Theatre Visit Group.

Ken Wales

Knitting Group

Knitting club continues to thrive, so much so that we have outgrown the Sycamore Room and now meet in the Copper Beech! We regularly have 12 members attending and it is a pastoral group as well as knitting. Members attend other church activities such as table top and plant sales, craft fairs etc. It is a lively group with plenty of laughter and no one ever wants us to cancel a Thursday night, it is so popular.

Jan Astley

Handbell Group

A request was made to Christine in September 2015 about having a go with the bells after the Women's Fellowship Anniversary. Those who were interested began to meet on a Tuesday morning. The numbers vary, but there are between 4 and 8 each week and occasionally a lady and her carer who come to the Alzheimer support group join us. We asked the Church Council if the Church could purchase a set of bells as the ones we used belonged to Christine. The young people who play at Christmas would also like to do so more often and so the request was agreed. Our music ranges from nursery rhymes to Beethoven, songs from musicals to hymns. This is an open group so we welcome anyone who would like to join us and have a go. We have lots of laughs ... which is supposed to be good for you.

Christine Hickox

Community Choir

Back in September while looking for ways to utilise our facilities more, we came on an idea to try and set up a Community Choir, much motivated by the Gareth Malone factor. Early indications showed that there was a demand and I am pleased to report that our optimism has been warranted and we now have a regular attendance of up to 20 people. The interesting thing is that at least half of our attendees were not from our regular congregation although some now come to our services. We look to sing popular songs and songs from the Musicals and are continually stretching ourselves with new material. There is flexibility in so much as we meet on different evenings in order that everyone has a chance to join in and there is no requirement to be a good singer, but you do need a sense of humour as the whole object is to enjoy the experience. We were pleased to take an active part in the Carol Service singing 'When a Child is Born' and hope we may be able to play a small role at the Remembrance Service with the Band as well as giving a rendition at the post Christmas Community meal. If you would like to join us please speak to any of our group, we are always open to new members (particularly male voices).

David Topping

Publicity Group

Primary activity during the past twelve months, has been ensuring that the 'Wayside Pulpit' continues to be updated on a regular basis. Margaret and Beryl have continued with this 'unsung' task thus ensuring that the 'message' is regularly updated. Over the period new posters have been commissioned. The key notice boards around the Church are monitored, and refreshed as and when required. Behind the scenes, Sue Whiteford and Beryl Hoyle edit the Church Notices each week and John Butterworth maintains the Church Website. These are two significant areas of publicity for the life of the Church and we are very grateful for the diligent work that goes into them by our 'faithful threesome'.

Outside of these areas there is little activity to report. Suffice to say the Publicity Group is here to help anyone seeking publicity or marketing ideas for their specific project. Consider us as a 'free publicity consultancy', ideas or at least signposting in the right direction are our forte.

Joe Hamilton

Other Groups

In addition to the above, we have a Zumba dance session which contains a significant number of people from outside our usual church circles and provides a good outreach opportunity and a table tennis team which plays regular matches. Several other local community groups from AA to children's dance and drama classes, and the Alzheimer's Society also meet regularly at the church for their activities.

Activities for Families, Children & Young People

Toddlers' Club

We currently have 138 children on the register. This is very slightly down on last year but isn't giving us much of a respite. Through Toddlers' Club 112 families have some contact with the Church and most weeks we see new people coming along to give us a try. Pleasingly, many of our Mums tell us that we are the best Toddler Club in the area. Toasted teacakes seem to be our U.S.P. We have a good selection of toys to suit all the age groups we cater for. Unfortunately, a while ago a number of dinosaurs went missing. Despite a poster campaign they have failed to return. This is the first time anything like this has happened and although the toys have been replaced, it saddens us that they have clearly been taken. When possible we try to end our session with a sing song. Some of the Mums have recently offered to lead this for us. We are currently well staffed with six of us regularly helping and a few others we can call on to help out when necessary. More help is always appreciated and if anyone else would like to join the crew that would be great.

Janet Porter

OMG (Our Methodist Group)

We have had another positive year with a great group of youngsters aged 10 – 14. We continue to meet once a month at church between 4.00 and 6.00 p.m. The group enjoy activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, big games and the food and tuck shop are always popular. Earlier this year, we had a great night out watching basketball in Manchester. Our programme up to the summer will once again include "balsam bashing" in the woods along the Savick Brook and we hope to have a summer day out on Nicky Nook! There are fewer children coming into OMG from our younger age group so our numbers have fallen somewhat in the course of the year. We hope to gain a few new recruits from year 5 though in September. Thank you to all who help and support this group.

Wendy Bennett

The Big Group

The group has continued to meet monthly around the commitments of the youngsters. To keep up the links in the summer break three of us did a daytime walk to Barton Grange along the canal. We have watched and discussed the films 'Unbroken' and 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. We had a joint Christmas party with OMG and in the New year went to Manchester to see a basketball match with them. Together with OMG we also did a Geocashe search in Moor Park. We are planning to continue on a similar basis next year, trying to encourage the older boys to join in. Some of the age group still want an activity based session. The hope is to have some discussion about faith as well as just getting together.

Christine Hickox & Charlotte Penrith

Escape and Youth Club

Friday night is a noisy night! Both Escape and Youth Club are thriving, with regular attendances of up to 55 and 30 respectively, each Friday evening during term time. Escape is for children from 7-11 years old, meeting from 6.30 to 8.00 p.m. and Youth Club is for young people at secondary school, meeting from 8.00 to 9.30 p.m. Various activities are provided including, football, X Box football, table tennis, pool, dodge ball, table games, different crafts every week - these being more popular with the younger age-group and of course eating 'tuck' from the well-stocked tuck shop and healthy drinks!! Martin's delights come regularly from the kitchen to include: bacon, sausage, chicken dippers, potato waffles, oven chips, pizzas and others - but not all at once. The older youngsters simply like to 'chill out' with their friends. All the young people are brought to and collected from the clubs and it is good to see parents on the premises talking to each other and to us. Of course anyone is welcome to come and help us and join in the fun.

Stuart Johnson and the Team

4th Fulwood (Methodist) Scout Group - Beavers, Cubs & Scouts

For the 6th year running, the group has grown in numbers which is really superb. It has probably just about reached capacity which is a really good place to be. We are unable to take children in who are over Beaver Scout age (6 years old) so it is good to get your child on the joining list as soon as possible.

We have been able to celebrate the success of several of our adult volunteers this year. Mike Cushing, our treasurer has received the Chief Scout's Commendation for Good Service, as has Steve Williams who is our Scout Leader. Mike has been our treasurer for over 15 years now and this is well deserved as he does such a good job of reigning in the group finances. Steve has had a great impact on the group with his enthusiasm and encouragement of the Scout section that has grown under his leadership. Allen Jackson is also receiving an award, the Award for Merit. Allen is one of the Beaver Scout leaders, but in addition to that currently he is also the Assistant District Commissioner for Beaver Scouts in Preston. He does an awesome job in both of these roles, so this is a very well deserved acknowledgement of his time spent Scouting.

Our Scouts have been busy this year including an 11 day trip to Guernsey with other troops, and this was an amazing experience for the young people....and loads of fun! The Scouts are often out camping at weekends and also doing geocaching, going on incident hikes, playing laser tag.

Our Cub Scouts are currently celebrating their 100th year nationally and started their year off by attending the Biggest Beach Party at Blackpool Pleasure Beach. They have also been participating in a badge called Disability Awareness and the Cub Scouts have been learning sign language and learning about braille. They also tried their hand at the para Olympic sport Boccia as well as blindfold bucket ball.

The Beaver Scouts are also celebrating as their section is 30 years old and they have been having parties and attending District and County events. They have been working on the Disability Awareness Badge too and have had a visit from Dogs for Good. They have also visited Alston Observatory, Blackpool Zoo, had several sleepovers including one for 2 nights, which is a first for our Beaver Scouts.

Family camp was well attended last summer with nearly 100 parents and young people all camping together and doing activities all around Waddecar. I am stepping down as the Group Scout Leader as I have a new role in the District and we are currently looking for someone to take on this role. We are also looking to find a new treasurer and someone to audit the accounts. Want to join us? Or if you can help in any of the above vacancies just give me a call.

Lesley Thomas, Group Scout Leader

Rainbows

About 18 months ago we decided to increase the size of our unit to 18 girls owing to the demand for places and we have remained at that number ever since. We encourage families to place their daughter's name on our waiting list when they reach their third birthday to ensure a place.

At present I am the only warranted leader as my co-leader is taking a break for family reasons. Fortunately, a new adult leader has come forward who is hoping to achieve her leadership qualification in the near future. We are lucky enough to have another unit leader as well as young leader who is volunteering as part of her Duke of Edinburgh award. We also gratefully acknowledge the support we receive from the Brownie leaders.

We aim to offer a varied programme of activities which reflect the interests of our members whilst promoting the aims of Girlguiding UK. Between Christmas and Easter we took part in a variety of activities so that the girls could earn an Aim High badges. These were presented at an end of term event to which parents were invited.

Jayne Myatt

Brownies

At the moment we have 25 girls in Brownies, aged 7-10 years. This number is due to rise to our maximum of 30 girls later this year as we gain a number of girls from Rainbows, while only having a few moving up to Guides. If anyone has a daughter who wants a place at Brownies, but hasn't been a Rainbow, please give us at least a year's notice as we have a long waiting list, particularly as we automatically reserve a place for every Rainbow (they too are full) and we rarely have any extra places available. Over the last year we have been really busy with a variety of activities, both at Church and outside. We had a Pack Holiday at Waddecar Scout camp in July where almost all of our girls spent a weekend away, taking part in activities such as archery, assault course and paddling in the stream (which was a favourite, especially with the girls who managed to sit/fall in the water). We also had a joint campfire with Cubs, Scouts and Explorers.

The Autumn Term saw some trips out and our usual work for Operation Christmas Child (23 boxes) and the Tombola at the Christmas Fair. We went on a welly walk and celebrated Bonfire Night with the Rainbows. We had a sleepover at church in October with our Friends from 10th Blackpool Brownies and went to the pantomime at The Playhouse with Rainbows and Guides in December.

Spring saw the girls given the opportunity to attend a production of 'Annie' at Our Lady's High School. Every Brownie attended and we saw a few of our Guides (ex- Brownies) in a superb production. There was a District Thinking Day event in Ashton in February and just over half our girls attended, with three Leaders and a Young Leader. We also went trampolining at Energi Trampoline Park with the Rainbows and Guides in March and managed to get back unscathed (though the same could not be said of one of our Guides). This term we have had an outside speaker in, doing the first aid badge with the girls and we have a music night, games night, craft night and a party in the park planned. We are taking a few of our Brownies on Pack Holiday at Guy's Farm in July.

Diane Bird

39th Preston Guides

We currently have 27 Guides on the register, one Young Leader, one warranted Guider (retiring in July), three leaders in training and three unit helpers, two of which are leaving this term. All the Guides who attended 'Guystonbury' thoroughly enjoyed themselves either singing along to bands or taking part in the many other wet! and dry! activities on offer. We also enjoyed the pantomime at The Playhouse with the Rainbows and Brownies. A Pamper evening with the Brownies saw both groups enjoying foot spas, hair braiding, nail painting and healthy snacks. The Guides have completed various badges

this year including Go for it Grrreeeeen, Go for it Fitness, Agility, Craft, Camp and Communicator Badges. We celebrated 'Burns' with a traditional Haggis Supper, Bagpipes included! and a Scottish themed Quiz. Four Guides have completed their Baden Powell Challenge with another seven working towards it. An evening out at Energi trampolining was enjoyed by some Guides and an experience for others!

Alison Allcock

Messy Church

Messy Church continues to grow and try new ventures. This year we have followed the theme 'People Jesus met' basing our evenings on a certain character whose life was changed by meeting Jesus. The format of the evening remains the same with various craft activities – always something edible to make! Tea – a time to chat and have fellowship together followed by a short time of singing, story and prayer. We were pleased to have David and Gina, two visually impaired members of Central to join us when we thought about Jesus meeting the blind man. Gina brought Frank her guide dog – he was very popular.

This year, building on the success of our Good Friday Messy Church we attempted a Messy Nativity on the Sunday before Christmas. We had a wide range of activities available in the Hall and Malcolm led a more traditional approach to the Christmas Story for those who wished to remain in Church. We concluded the morning by all joining together in 'Jesus' Christmas Party' a dramatic presentation of the Nativity Story that had been put together during the morning. It was a great occasion in which many people shared together.

Our Good Friday Messy Church was very popular, with over 100 people signing in. We gave each family an Easter Garden kit to make over the holiday thus moving the Easter story on from Good Friday to Easter Day. Some pictures appeared on Facebook. Messy Church is quite a challenge. We never know how many to expect and it is great to see new faces each time. If you know of anyone who would enjoy Messy Church do encourage them to come along. As a team we have great fun planning our sessions but it is time consuming. Thanks to everyone involved for their enthusiasm and commitment.

Delma Whitman

ACTS

Unfortunately, this year we have not managed to do a production. A number of people were unavailable for our usual February half-term slot, the Easter holiday was considered but not all schools had the same holiday! Acts is an activity that spans the generations so we have to consider our younger members thus school holidays are our ideal production time. Some school holidays are busier than others!

A number of ACTS members have been pressed into action for short pieces of drama in worship. During the year we have been very fortunate to have some new cupboards built for storing our costumes and props. Thank you to the members of the Property team who undertook this. If you need a costume for a fancy dress party or school event please ask Eva if she can help. We do lend out costumes for a small donation – proceeds going towards new costumes and props. ACTS doesn't have a fixed membership – it's join in if you are interested!! Hopefully we will do a production next year. If you want any information or wish to express an interest please talk to Delma Whitman or Martin Burt.

Delma Whitman

Church Outreach

The Outreach Group continues to work hard to make connections with our local community and work to support Christian outreach nationally and across the globe.

World Church

Due to work commitments Ali Birkett is no longer our World Church co-ordinator. We would like to appeal for a volunteer to take on this important role in the life of our church. The main thrust of the work is to encourage and enable our congregation to be aware of the wider church across the world – to be an ambassador for the work of the Methodist Church throughout the world, and identify places where we can learn more about our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our links with Methodist Women in Britain and the annual Women's World Day of Prayer provide other opportunities to learn from our partners across the world and the use of the Methodist Prayer Handbook each week at our Wednesday Communion Services helps us to focus on their concerns.

Earlier this year Mr John Spencer, Circuit Steward, and Revd Mark Slaney visited Sierra Leone to learn how our partners there have survived and coped following the Ebola outbreak. Their week-long trip was described to us by Mark in a service on Palm Sunday and many were touched by the way that the people there have continued to have faith that by the Grace of God they will be able to move forward. We responded by sending a donation of £1,000 from our Benevolence Fund to support them at this time.

Recklinghausen

The visit from the Church in Recklinghausen took place immediately before last years' General Church Meeting and was reported upon at that time. However, we heard later that the visit was much appreciated by our guests. The twining of our two towns celebrated its 60th Anniversary in April of this year and we sent a card with a suitable greeting to the Church in Recklinghausen. We hope to set up another skype link with the Church during a service later in the year.

Christian Aid

We were encouraged again to take home a plate to place on our dinner table at Christmas, remembering those across the world who would not have enough to eat and proceeds from the Church Christmas Card were also given to Christian Aid. The house to house collection continues during Christian Aid Week in May and unlike many other charity collections is still well supported by households in our area. However, it is becoming more difficult to find volunteers from the Churches to undertake this work.

Church Project

For many years the church has supported fundraising for charities locally, nationally and internationally. As well as raising money we have always tried to provide information about each charity. Our current policy is to donate 10% of the money raised through the Church's 'outreach events', namely: Welcome Wednesdays, Farmers Markets, Table Top & Plant Sales, Craft Fair and Craft & Book Stalls, and the catering associated with these events. The aim is to raise £1000 for a specific project, with additional fund raising events being organised, should the target not be reached within a year from the 10% levy. Due to the level of outreach activity we have been able to support more than one project in a year and since the re-launch of the scheme in 2015, we have made donations to Embrace (formerly the Bible Lands Society), Heartbeat and the Alzheimer's Society. Our new project will be to support the Ronald McDonald House Charity, which provides accommodation for parents and families of sick children at major children's hospitals. Indeed, two of our congregation were recently able to stay in the Ronald McDonald House in Manchester, close to St Mary's Hospital, when their son was born.

Eco Church

We currently need to reassess our commitment to this project and will be asking the Church Council to decide if and how we can move forward.

Methodist Communications

Lesley Birkett continues to send out all the information on events which take place, locally, within the Lancashire District and further afield. She does this by email so if you do not receive her regular notes then please contact her to be added to her address list, lesley.birkett@yahoo.co.uk.

Local Community

Libby Stone co-ordinates our local community events. This work continues to grow and we now provide coffee on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings to a wide range of local groups and others who just pop in for a chat. Partnerships are now well established with the local Age UK and Alzheimer's Society as well two special needs organisations, who bring their members on a Tuesday or Wednesday morning. Numbers are increasing each week so if you would like to consider having your name on a rota to serve coffee please see either Libby or myself and we can share the load. Welcome Wednesday is an amazing success story with the whole of the Oak Hall and Willow Grove buzzing with activities all through the morning. Our lunches are so popular now that in order to make sure there is enough food, orders are taken during the morning! We regularly serve up to 40 hot meals with often only a few scraps left for the kitchen staff!! As well as serving excellent food, the kitchen volunteers are consistently awarded the highest food hygiene rating (5) by the local authority. Extra hands are always welcome, to wash up, serve, or even just to sit and chat with newcomers. The New2You stall has now become a much valued service to the local community and our highly committed and well organised team of volunteers constantly receive quality items for sale from a wide variety of sources. The outreach activities have not only raised the Church's profile and reputation in the local community, they give practical expression to the gospel we preach. In order to sustain this important mission we need to recruit more volunteers.

Fairtrade

We held a Fairtrade Breakfast during Lent and our Fairtrade stall continues to be well supported on the second Sunday morning of each month. The Farmers' Markets for the rest of this year will be on 25th June, 24th September and 24th November. Do remember to support these events as we continue to encourage everyone to think of where our produce and foodstuffs are sourced. We thank Anne Garsed for all her hard work promoting the work of both Christian Aid and Fairtrade throughout our church and community.

Christmas and other Activities

We again had a good response to our appeal for singers to join us singing carols around the residential homes on two evenings. Our visits are always well received and it was much easier with many more voices to swell the throng. We are looking for someone to liaise with the homes before our visit this year. Sue Penrith has done this for many years and we thank her for all her hard work. This is not an onerous task and only requires the use of a telephone to arrange the visits once a year. If you think you could take this on please contact Sue or myself. The Festive Lunch, between Christmas and New Year, was a great success this year and we provided a hot lunch with all the trimmings as well as entertainment for over 80 people from our Church and community. This is an opportunity for anyone who finds themselves alone over the Christmas period to share a meal and entertainment with others from both inside and outside the church. Thank you to all the helpers who gave up their time during the Christmas holiday.

Action for Children & Methodist Homes

We raise money for our two well respected Methodist Charities, Action for Children and Methodist Homes, in several ways. We have the League of Light lantern boxes for Action for Children which folk keep in their homes. These are emptied annually by Pauline

Kirkham and Margaret Holmes and raise a significant amount of money. Our thanks go to all who contribute. Pauline and Margaret would be delighted to supply lantern boxes to anyone who feels they would like to collect in this way. On the special Sundays for Methodist Homes and Action for Children we not only promote the work of the charities, we issue gift envelopes for members of the congregation to make their own personal contributions, which are then topped up from the Church's funds.

Churches Together in Fulwood and Broughton (CTFB)

CTFB continues to provide volunteers to staff the help desk at the Royal Preston Hospital, although additional volunteers are always needed. A programme of ecumenical services was arranged for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January which enabled us to experience the different traditions of the various denominations in the area. Cards delivered to houses advertising the Churches' Christmas services were replaced by adverts in the Fulwood Focus magazine, but due its publication dates the Easter Service cards were retained. A pilgrimage was again held in the autumn and an ecumenical service for Pentecost was hosted by Christ Church, Fulwood.

We are a very active church at Fulwood, trying to connect particularly with our local community. However, none of the events above would happen without a lot of dedication from a small number of people. If you think you could offer to help out serving coffee or chatting with people even once in a while, please speak to Libby or myself and we will make sure you are added to the rotas. Likewise, if you have any new ideas of ways we can reach out to our local community please let us know.

Margaret Squire
Outreach Group Co-ordinator

Property Group

The Property Group has met four times during the past year. Recent work by the Group and its members includes:

The Church Building

- **Dado rails:** These have been fitted to most of the rooms to prevent the chairs damaging the walls.
- **Additional storage space:** Storage cupboards have been built against the north wall of the Cedar Room by members of the Property Group.
- **Improvements to signage in the Willow Grove:** Two additional signs have been installed pointing to the Sycamore Room & Exit and The Cedar Room & Toilets.
- **Portable ramp:** The provision of a portable ramp for use in church to give wheelchair access to the Olive Grove (Chancel) has proved to be not practicable.
- **Contract:** The pest control contract has been let to Preston Pest Solutions giving significant financial saving.
- **Communications:** Telephone and internet reception in the Copper Beech Room and internet reception in the Cedar Room have been significantly improved.
- **Kitchen:** Tiling has been installed around the sinks and hatch.
- **Storage:** The storage in the two rooms off the Oak Hall has been rationalised.
- **Kneelers:** Thanks to a generous gift, we have been able to procure communion rail kneelers to match the existing colour of the pew cushions.
- **Church Administrator:** Part of the Copper Beach Room is now the Church Office which is occupied by our Church Administrator (Sharon) who is now managing service contracts and assisting with room bookings.

Health, Safety and Security

- **Defibrillator:** The North West Ambulance Service has provided a defibrillator which has been installed on the outside wall of the Copper Beach Room. It is intended for use by the community. It can only be accessed via the 999 system. It cannot give someone a 'shock' that doesn't need it! NWAS will service it. We have to provide a small amount of electricity to keep the batteries charged. The Church Administrator will check weekly that it is available for use.
- **Exit door security:** An alarm has been fitted to the Fire Exit doors from the Oak Hall. The alarm is for use by the Toddlers Group only.
- **Christmas tree:** Following a Risk Assessment, it has been decided that installing a Christmas tree on the outside balcony of the Church is no longer acceptable.

Ongoing and near-future work

- **Portable (Electrical) Appliance Testing (PAT):** All the portable electrical equipment was tested in 2014 by the in-house team. The next round of testing will be in October this year.
- **Forthcoming quinquennial inspections:** The quinquennial (building) inspection (which is a Circuit responsibility) is expected to be carried out later this year. The Electrical System Quinquennial inspection will be conducted in the summer (this is currently the responsibility of FMC).
- **West Chancel Window wall:** The wall needs re-pointing and weather proofing before redecoration.
- **Oak Hall window:** The Oak Hall window (over the door to the Copper Beech Room) – brickwork needs pointing and then internal decoration.
- **Digital Projector:** A digital projector will be mounted to the ceiling of the Cedar Room projecting onto the screen in front of the new cupboards. Controls will be wired back to the electronics in the left hand cupboard.
- **Audio/Visual:** A working group will meet to consider possible improvements to the audio/visual facilities within the church premises. The church projector may need to be replaced in the near future.
- **Tables:** The Property Group are investigating the possibility of obtaining some small Gopak folding tables to match the existing.
- **Re-decoration:** It is planned for the Cedar Room and the Oak Hall to be re-decorated later this year.
- **Five Year Programme:** Ideas raised at the recent 'Open Meeting' will be fed into the development of the Five Year Programme of major property maintenance, repair and renewal expected in the near to medium-term future to support the church's outreach and assist in its financial planning.

Minibus: We are in need of more drivers, particularly for Sunday mornings, otherwise we may not be able to run the service to church on some Sundays. Unfortunately, our insurance precludes drivers who are 70 years of age and over.

The Property Group wishes to put on record its grateful thanks to all volunteers for their splendid work during the year in maintaining and cleaning our premises and looking after our garden. A special word of appreciation also to our Church Cleaner, Richard McClay, who goes about his duties efficiently and with good humour and frequently offers additional assistance to enable our Church activities to take place.

Mike Ellis & Martin Burt

Finance Group

Finance Report for year ended 31st August 2015

Headlines

At 31st August 2015, we finished the year with £108,970 in the bank. This included both our general funds and the funds held on behalf of our internal groups. This balance has increased significantly since the start of the year, when we held £83,218 in the bank. This increase was due to a growth in general funds of £15,062 and in internal funds of £10,689.

The growth in the General Fund has been driven by our outreach and catering activities, which contributed over £21,000 to general funds in 2014/15. The growth in internal funds is due primarily to the success of our Theatre Visits Group, Escape/Youth Club and Toddlers Club – further testament to the growth in Outreach activities.

During 2014/15, we contributed over £2,000 to our new Church Projects fund. This has been raised by applying a 10% levy on the net contribution from general outreach activities such as fundraising and catering. We also continue to raise significant sums of money for external organisations. This is on top of the regular grants and donations we make from the General Fund and Benevolence Fund.

General Funds

Income	2014-15	2013-14	Variance	Notes
Offerings and tax received	108,020	110,482	-2,462	Note a
Interest and investment income	288	477	-189	
Lettings	10,993	11,130	-137	
Donations received	2,100	10,056	-7,956	Note b
Minibus	873	567	306	
Church outreach activities	27,784	17,032	10,752	Note c
Magazine advertising	515	498	17	
Other income	523	2,894	-2,371	Note d
Total Income	151,096	153,136	-2,040	
Expenditure				
Circuit assessment	-80,170	-66,670	-13,500	Note e
Donations	-6,481		-6,481	Note f
Utilities	-18,854	-16,565	-2,289	Note g
Repairs and maintenance	-6,504	-10,139	3,635	Note h
Worship expenses	-5,048	-159	-4,889	Note i
Sunday Club	-569	-475	-94	
Outreach activities	-6,505	-4,827	-1,678	Note c
Minibus	-1,274	-2,764	1,490	
Hygiene and vermin services	-2,812		-2,812	
Cleaner	-6,411	-7,503	1,092	Note d
Admin expenses	-2,360	-3,445	1,085	Note j
Other	-717	2,644	-3,361	Note k
Total Expenditure	-137,703	-109,903	-27,800	Note l
Transfers to restricted funds	1,670			Note m
Transfers from restricted funds				Note m
Increase (decrease) in general fund	15,062	43,233	-29,841	

The main movements since last year are explained below.

Note a - Offerings and tax received

Income from offerings is analysed below. It was pleasing to see the increase in the use of envelopes compared to cash. Single gifts are ad hoc in nature and so we cannot expect similar levels year on year.

	2014-15	2013-14	Variance
Sunday Envelopes	27,004	25,703	1,301
Standing Orders	49,930	49,882	48
Gift Aided -Pew Envelopes	861	1,024	-163
Sunday Cash	10,001	11,952	-1,951
Gift Aid	18,224	18,637	-413
Single Gifts	2,000	3,284	-1,284
	108,020	110,482	-2,462

Note b - donations

The nature of this balance is that it is made up of ad hoc amounts which are not repeated year on year. Donations were high in 2013/14 as they included more donations from internal groups towards running costs. These will be shown as transfers between funds in future years. There were also some large, individual donations in 2013/14 which were not replicated this year - e.g. from families of people who had passed away during the year.

Note c - outreach activities

Outreach activity continues grow - making a significant contribution to the Church. The big events, such as the Christmas Fair, the Plant Sale and the Curry Bean Show have contributed to the £16,000 fundraising balance, but we steadily collect an average of £700 per month from the sales of books, crafts, New2You and so on. The income generated by our catering team has contributed over £7000 of funds. This is due to the incredible success of Welcome Wednesday. We also get funds from the Knitting Group, Farmers Markets and many other sources.

	2014-15	2013-14	Variance
Outreach income	27,784	17,032	10,752
Outreach expenditure	-6,505	-4,827	-1,678
	21,279	12,205	9,074

Note d - other income

The fall in other income is due mainly to the fact we have changed the way we have calculated the figure. In 2013/14 other income included a contribution of £1200 from URC towards the cost of the cleaner. In 2014/15, we have netted this contribution off the cost of employing the cleaner so you will see a corresponding fall in costs. In 2013/14, other income also included a £490 refund from Scottish Power which is a one-off transaction.

Note e - circuit assessment

The variance is due to the way we calculate the numbers for the accounts – which is on the basis of actual cash paid. The assessment was £80,000 in both years. In 2013/14, we used to pay £20,000 quarterly in advance and in 14/15 we changed to paying £6,667 monthly in advance. As such, £20k of the 13/14 assessment was paid in 2012/13, before the start of the year. This was partly offset by £6667 of the 2014/15 assessment being paid in 13/14. During 2014/15 we simply paid 12 lots of £6667.

Note f - donations

This balance represents donations that are paid directly from general funds - i.e. they are not the church projects (funded by outreach contributions) or monies collected directly for external organisations. Last year, we did make donations but we consolidated them with the funds we held for external organisations. As we are now able to differentiate different types of donations we report them separately.

Note g – utilities

Utility costs have continued rising at a fast pace. This is consistent with the national trend. We saw a large rise in electricity costs, which the Property Group has spent a lot of time reviewing. They have been able to identify some areas for potential future savings.

Note h - repairs and maintenance

In 2013/14 the repairs and maintenance figures included costs relating to vermin control and hygiene services. They have now been separated out given their scale. These costs accounted for £3,736 of the R&M spend in 13/14, which explains the whole variance.

Note i - worship costs

Most of the variance is due to costs being posted to this account in 2014/15 when they were treated as miscellaneous or admin costs in other years. See note k.

Note j - Admin costs

Admin costs have fallen as some costs in 2014/15 are now treated as Worship Costs - see note i.

Note k - Miscellaneous costs

Miscellaneous costs in 13/14 included £9,800, which related to debtors brought forward. We wrote these off as miscellaneous costs as we did not know what expenditure lines they related to. When we restated the 13/14 accounts on a cash basis, we reversed this charge to the accounts. Without this adjustment, miscellaneous costs would have been £7,156 in 2013/14 versus £717 in 2014. The large difference between these amounts reflects the work we have done in 2014/15 to recode miscellaneous costs to a more appropriate heading. See Note i above.

Note l - Total costs

In total, costs appear to have risen by £27,300. However, when we strip out the variances arising from the new accounting method (the variance on the circuit assessment of £13,333 and the £9,800 adjustment in note k), the variance reduces to £4,333. Most of this variance is then due to real increases in utility costs (£2,289), especially electricity. The rest (£2,044) can be accounted for by general inflationary pressures.

Note m - Transfers

Transfers in 2014/15 relate to donations from internal groups towards general running costs. In 2013/14, these were included within donated income in error.

Internal funds

The balances overleaf show the movements in funds over the last two years. These figures do not include any petty cash balances held by internal groups.

2013-14											
Restricted funds	Balance b/fwd	Income	General Payments	Donations - external funds	Transfers to general fund	Transfers between restricted funds	Balance c/fwd	Income	General payments	Correct 13/14 errors	Don d
Benevolence fund	4,643	2,348	-150	-3,524			3,317	1,520		134	
Church project fund	0						0	2,085		30	
Building improvement fund	44,319	17,456	-2,946		-51,500	350	7,679	420			
Theatre	2,256	24,232	-23,867				2,621	31,804	-27,033		
OMG	11	734	-1,076				-331	160	-179		
Ladies after 8	0	690		-72	-300	-200	118	1,029	-339		
WOW	55	132					187	0	-65		
womens fellowship	0	590	-100	-50	-300	-150	-10	420			
Youth club							0	1,423			
Flower Fund							0	201	-212		
Toddlers	0	390	-50				340	1,748			
AM club		50					50	50			
Alphabites		100					100	0		-30	
Messy church							0	161			
District funds							0				
Total	51,284	46,722	-28,189	-3,646	-52,100	0	14,071	41,021	-27,828	134	