

Annual Report of Morpeth Methodist Church and Centre for the Community, Registration No 1128303, for the year to 31 August 2009

Administrative Information and Structure

The Church's mission statement is 'To make Christ visible in this world'. The means by which this is discharged is discussed in this report.

The Church building comprises the Sanctuary and a suite of five rooms, and it is located on Howard Terrace, Morpeth, NE61 1HU, phone no 01670 511078.

The Church was originally opened in 1905, extended in 1986 and reconfigured and further extended to its present format in 2005. The Church has 203 confirmed members, and adherents numbering about 100.

The Church is a member of the South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area, a federation of Methodist and United Reformed Churches.

The Governing Body of the Church is the Church Council whose members, the Trustees, during the year were:

The Minister Keith Harbour, the Stewards namely Paul Christensen, Bob Hill, Lorna Leithead, Enid Ross, Peter Scott Barry Wadge, and the following elected and ex-officio members, Lynda Wadge, David Brough, Malcolm Kennedy, John Leithead, Maureen Robson, Rhona Dunn, David Pallett, Neil Robinson, Jean Gaunt, Valerie Donaldson, John Carss, David Simpson, George McCowie, Jan Bronsema, Colin Colclough, Ron Morris, Carolyn Hilton, Bevan Whitmell, Enid Robinson, Marilyn Smith, Pat Folkard, Marjorie Laundon, Elsie Gordon, Nick Wild, Sarah Wild and Richard Groves.

The Trustees have read and understood their responsibility described in your document 'The Essential Trustee' dated January 2007.

A number of committees and groups report to the Church Council. Their functions and terms of reference are described in Appendix 1.

The Church Council meets four times per year to conduct all relevant Church business, to receive committee reports and take all necessary decisions. An annual general meeting of all Church members is also held when elections to Church Council are held and financial reports received.

Aims, Objectives and Delivery

The aims of the Church as shown on the Charities Commission website are:

'The provision of regular public acts of worship open to members of the Church and non-members alike. The provision of sacred space (a building) for prayer and contemplation. The teaching of Christianity through sermons, courses and small groups. Pastoral work including visiting the sick.'

Following the completion of extensive renovations and extension of the premises in 2005, the Church changed its name to 'Morpeth Methodist Church and Centre for the Community'. This has enabled it to offer to the wider community in Morpeth modern facilities to hold regular meetings of clubs, societies and focus groups and special events.

The Church, therefore, seeks to pursue its mission statement by 'Celebrating Christ, growing in His love, praying and acting for Him and being a Centre acting as a resource for the wider community'.

The committees and groups that report to Church Council are as follows:

Leadership Team, Communications Group, Finance Committee, Pastoral Team, Pilgrims' Way, Family Committee, Centre Management and Development Group, Property and Resources, Pilgrims Way – Youth and Young Families Working Group, and the Social Events Group.

In addition, a Church member is engaged as Staff Supervisor of Receptionists and Janitor, Safeguarding Officer and Health and Safety Officer. Another Church member acts as Church Secretary.

As indicated above, the Terms of Reference of these committees, groups and individuals are set out in Appendix 1.

The formal structural organisation of the Church seeks to cover three broad areas of influence, as follows:

1. The spiritual, social and pastoral needs of its members
2. The care and development of the physical assets of the Church, and
3. The promotion of the facilities for the wider community.

In the case of the service to the wider community, Appendix 2A lists the diverse organisations, based in Morpeth, who use the Church premises for their regular meetings. Appendix 2B lists the Church organisations that also use the premises on a regular basis.

Comment on the Annual Accounts

The audited accounts for the year ended 31 August 2009 are set out in Appendix 3.

The Church Finances operate on the basis of a balanced annual budget with outcomes monitored by the Finance Committee. Reserves are held, approximately equal to six months of normal expenditure. This level is in accordance with a recommendation from Methodist Church Headquarters.

It will be noted that offerings and associated tax refunds comprise about two-thirds of our annual income which is subject to review from time to time and which may identify the need for a stewardship campaign (last held in 2007). Receipts from use of premises is just below one-third of income.

Most of the payment items are self-explanatory. By far the largest expense item is the Area Assessment, which is fixed by the Area Executive and covers the Church's central overheads, including stipends and all other central expenses.

A team of receptionists is in attendance throughout the time when the premises are being used. In charging outside organisations for the facilities, it can be seen that full overhead recovery is not applied and that the contribution made by the community, is only slightly in excess of the administrative costs indicated in the accounts. Payments to Methodist Division and charities are listed in Appendix 3.

Responsibility for day-to-day receipts and payments and the presentation of final and interim accounts are the responsibility of the Church Treasurer.

Review of Progress and Achievements

Progress against the stated aims of a Church organisation are more difficult to define compared with other businesses.

Nevertheless there are several achievements to be reported throughout the year.

Morpeth suffered due to disastrous flooding in September 2008. Significant funds were raised and disbursed to help many of those affected. Members of the congregation contributed enormous time and talent to the organisation and logistics of the flood relief.

The objective of increasing the utilisation of the premises to meet the needs of outside organisations was met with a 15% increase in such activity.

So far as young people are concerned, significant increase in membership of uniformed organisations can be reported, together with the development of plans for the establishment of a 13+ young people's group in 2010.

A relationship has been formed with a young people's choir in Uganda (The Pearl of Africa Choir) with an initial visit and performance.

The appreciation of the Church as a centre for musical events has grown significantly, with the building being used extensively for choirs, orchestral, brass band and organ recitals open to the general public.

The Social Events Committee operating in its first full year, not only raised significant funds but also drew in many fringe members by their participation.

The financial objective of the Church, the avoidance of any deficit, was achieved without relying on the significant legacy received during the year.