

**United Church Dorchester**  
**Annual Report**  
**January to December 2023**

Charity registration number:1137996

Location: 49-51, Charles Street, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1EE

## **1. The Charity: its constitution, organisational structure, and governance.**

### **1.1. Overview**

1.1.1. The United Church Dorchester (UCD) was formed in 1978 by the coming together of the former South Street Methodist and South Street United Reformed congregations as a formal Local Ecumenical Partnership under the sponsorship of “Churches Together in Dorset”, the county ecumenical forum. It originally received its charity status indirectly because of its membership of both the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, themselves both independent charitable bodies. However, following changes to Charity Law, the United Church Dorchester adopted its own written constitution and registered with the Charity Commission in 2010 as a charitable unincorporated body. (Registered Charity Number: 1137996).

### **1.2. The Purpose of the Charity**

1.2.1. The purpose of the Charity is to advance the Christian faith in Dorchester and its surroundings in accordance with the principles and practices of the Methodist and United Reformed churches.

1.2.2. To achieve its purpose, the Charity will engage in a range of activities, either on its own or with others, including (but not restricted to):

- a. the celebration of public worship.
- b. the teaching of the Christian faith.
- c. mission and evangelism.
- d. pastoral work, including visiting the sick and the bereaved.
- e. the provision of facilities with a Christian ethos for the local community, including (but not restricted to) the elderly, the young and other groups with special needs.
- f. the support of other charities in the UK and overseas.
- g. maintaining the fabric of the United Church and associated buildings in order to facilitate all these activities.

### **1.3. Membership**

1.3.1. Our current membership remains at 165 and three retired Methodist ministers. The latter all have full membership rights under a local arrangement at UCD. During the year, 7 new members were welcomed into the Church, while 1 former member had their membership transferred to another church and 6 former members died.

### **1.4. The Council of Stewards and Organisational Structure**

1.4.1. The Council of Stewards is the trustee body of the Church. This group constitutes the legally responsible body of the charity. Trustees, called Stewards, are elected from the membership by Church Members at the Annual General Meeting. A Steward is appointed for an initial period of three years; the period of office can be extended by a further year after which time the Steward must stand down for at least one year before being eligible for re-election. The Minister is an ex-officio member of the Council of Stewards. All Stewards have up to date DBS clearance and have had Advanced Safeguarding training. All Stewards completed on-line training in EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) during 2023. Copies of our current governance documents, including the constitution, our management structures, and Policies and Procedures and the role of a trustee, are available to all members in a restricted section of the church website.

Brian Savage stood down from his role as Senior Steward on 5<sup>th</sup> September and Michael Humphrey was elected by the Council of Stewards to take over.

1.4.2. The Council of Stewards meets approximately monthly. The chair is the Senior Steward, who is elected from within the Council of Stewards. The Council of Stewards also includes the Treasurer and Church Secretary. (Currently the Treasurer's position is confirmed annually by a 75% agreement at the AGM since he has served longer than the standard 4-year term) The Council of Stewards (i.e. the Trustees) is responsible for administering and managing the Church in support of its Vision. It supports and advises the Minister in promoting the whole mission of the United Church and the wider Church in its teaching of the Christian faith and in its pastoral, evangelistic, social, ecumenical, and charitable work. The Council of Stewards is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the United Church buildings at numbers 49 and 51 Charles Street, Dorchester, which are owned by the United Reformed Church.

1.4.3. The Church Meeting meets at least 4 times a year and can advise the Council of Stewards. The management structure, for the day-to-day management of the church has been re-vamped this year. Management is delegated to six major committees (Worship; Pastoral; Youth and Family; Finance; Property; Resourcing Mission) and their constituent subgroups, which report regularly to the Council of Stewards, and to Church Meetings. The committees have delegated authority to make routine decisions related to their remit and some have authority to spend a budget allocation. Decisions requiring extra funding for any items outside the delegated authority of the committee are referred to the Stewards who may decide to seek advice from the Church Meeting. Future planning has been problematic since September due to the serious ill-health of both Rev John Yarren and Mary Martin, Church Secretary. Mary stood down as Church Secretary and sadly, died in November. However, Rev Gwyneth Owen was appointed as Ministerial Support to UCD and Senior Steward, Michael Humphrey has carried out the Church Secretary duties. This temporary arrangement has enabled the smooth running of the Church to continue. John has made a good recovery and Gwyneth has remained an ex officio member of the Council of Stewards.

1.4.4. Our AGM was held on the church premises in March 2023.

The Council of Stewards (Trustees) who served during 2023 comprised (Year of appointment shown in brackets.)

*Our Minister:*

□ Revd John Yarren (inducted September 2020)

*Stewards who served all year* (Management Sub-committee membership shown in brackets)

- Colin Gannaway (2004)
- Paul Smith (2021)
- Brian Savage (2020)
- Treasurer (Finance Committee)
- (Property and Finance Committees)
- Senior Steward & Chair of Council of Stewards
- Stepped Down as Senior Steward Sept 2023 but remains a Steward until April 2024

- Michael Humphrey (2022)
- Jenny Mair (2021)
- Rev David Cuckson (2022)
- Mary Martin (2022)
- (Resourcing Mission Committee); Senior Steward from Sept 2023
- (Worship Committee)
- (Health and Safety subgroup)
- (Pastoral Committee & Church Secretary)
- Sadly, Mary died in November 2023, having stepped back from her roles in September 2023)

Linda Scott (2023)

(Youth and Families Committee)

Gill Robinson (2023)

(World Church Committee and Pastoral Committee)

#### *Stewards who stood down at the AGM:*

- Maria Jacobson (2019)

#### *Stewards who stood down during the year*

- Elizabeth Martin stepped down Oct 2022
- Mary Martin stepped down in Sept 2023

#### *Stewards elected March 2023*

- Gill Robinson
- Linda Scott

#### *Observers*

- Sue Bird (representing the Dorset S & W Methodist Circuit; retired Aug 2023)
- Chris Smith (representing the Dorset S & W Methodist Circuit; from Aug 2023)
- Catherine Welch (2021) Safeguarding Officer stood down Sept 2023
- Council of Stewards agreed that Linda Scott, with cover from Diana Leeming (as necessary) would hold the role of Church Safeguarding Officer.

*Minute Taker* Ellie Minns- (UCD Administrator)

### **1.5. Staff members**

- Minister: Revd John Yarrien
- Pastoral Visitor: Mrs Ruth Magee was appointed 1st March 2023.
- Children and Families Outreach Worker: Mr Peter Jenner –
  - part time; (employed by the Circuit)
- UCD Administrator: Ms Ellie Minns, 13 hrs per week ( Sept 2022)
- Shop and Coffee Lounge Finance Administrator: Di Lawrence, 2 hours per week (Sept 2022)

### **1.6. Senior Volunteer Managers:**

1.6.1. Although we have paid members of staff, UCD is mainly managed by volunteers.

Key post holders include:

- Senior Steward – Brian Savage (stood down Sept 2023)
- Senior Steward – Michael Humphrey from (Sept 2023)
- Secretary – Mary Martin (stood down Sept 2023)
- Treasurer – Colin Gannaway
- Finance chair– Paul Smith
- Pastoral Care chair– Wendy Hilton
- Youth and Family chair – Peter Jenner
- Property chair - Paul Smith
- Worship Secretary – Linda Gundry
- Lettings chair– John Hilton
- Coffee Shop Managers – Elizabeth Haynes, Sue Gannaway and Diana Leeming
- Church Shop Managers – Pat Smith, Pat Brown and Peter Jenner
- Wednesday Morning Coffee – Sue Gannaway
- Safeguarding Officer – Linda Scott
- World Mission – Gill Robinson
- Resourcing Mission – John Yarrien

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Mary Martin, who died in Nov 2023, after a short illness. Mary was our Church Secretary until shortly before her death. She was a very active member of the church. During her membership here she has been a Steward, Senior Steward, Church Secretary, Story Tots organiser, Journey to the stable coordinator, coffee shop volunteer and, as a former nurse, she was always there when someone felt ill in church. She will be greatly missed.

#### **1.7. Relationships with Related parties:**

The United Church Dorchester is a member of the Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit and the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church. The United Church Dorchester and Bridport United Church (also a member of DS&W Methodist Circuit) constitute a joint pastorate within the URC. The United Church Dorchester retains its links to both parent bodies through the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church and the Southampton District of the Methodist Church. It is also an active member of Dorchester Churches Together and seeks to work closely with other churches in the community.

#### **1.8. Governance;**

- 1.8.1 The Stewards meet regularly, usually monthly, and discuss activities. They revisited the United Church Vision discussion that was started before the pandemic.
- 1.8 Following the absences of the Minister and Church Secretary, the Methodist Circuit appointed Rev Gwyneth Owen as Ministerial Support. Along with Michael Humphrey, Gwyneth undertook a revamp of the duties of Church Secretary to make the role more manageable for new incumbents. Many of the day-to-day duties of the Church Secretary are now shared by the Stewards and the Church Administrator.
- 1.9 UCD has its own website at <https://www.unitedchurchdorchester.org.uk> which is maintained internally by Susy and Kevin Rogers. This year, the re-design launched in autumn 2022 has been bedding in, and new secure areas have been created to support the Church's administrative systems.

## **2. Public Benefit Statement, Achievements and Performance**

### **2.1. Our Objective**

- 2.1.1. When planning our activities for the year, the Ministers and Council of Stewards have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion and our Vision for the wider Church. Our main objective is to try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our Church community through:
- a. the celebration of public worship.
  - b. the teaching of the Christian faith.
  - c. mission and evangelism.
  - d. pastoral work, including visiting the sick and the bereaved.
  - e. the provision of facilities with a Christian ethos for the local community, including (but not restricted to) the elderly, the young and other groups with special needs.
  - f. the support of other charities in the UK and overseas.
  - g. the maintenance of the fabric of the United Church and associated buildings in order to facilitate all these activities.

### **2.2. The celebration of public worship**

- 2.2.1. As a Christian Community, the United Church welcomes everyone because God loves all people. We value our diversity. Whatever our age, background, culture, gender, or race, we each have something special to share with others and the Council of Stewards is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our church. The Council of Stewards maintains an over-view of our worship and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within Dorchester and its surroundings. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music, and sacrament.
- 2.2.2. UCD is extremely blessed to have a very skilled musician as our Musical Director – Heather Reed; she is an exceptional organist and accompanist and gives up a great deal of her time to ensure that the choir and music groups' contributions to worship is of an appropriate standard. Many new members comment on the high standard of the music at worship.
- 2.2.3. Currently, UCD provides a variety of worship styles at different times throughout the week:
- a) The 10.30am Sunday service - our main act of worship. Services are led by our Circuit ministers, retired ministers, or lay preachers from both the Methodist tradition and the United Reformed Churches. Numbers attending the 10.30am service are usually between 100 and 140. The 10.30 am service at UCD is regularly recorded and edited by Peter Robinson and available on the UCD, YouTube channel.
  - b) Sunday Evening services at 6.30pm are held, usually twice a month, with attendance between 8 and 30. Different types of worship, such as Taizé and modern worship songs are intentionally included in some services.
  - c) On the second Sunday afternoon each month, instead of an evening service we now have Afternoon Tea and Favourite Hymns, known simply as Tea-Pot. People arrive from 3.30pm for a formal start at 4pm. We serve sandwiches and cake with

cups of tea. At about 4.45pm we give out hymn books and have an informal time of hymn singing, with the hymns chosen by those present. We finish at about 5.30pm. All are welcome. There is no charge or collection, but we welcome donations towards the cost of the tea. The numbers have gradually built up, and we now usually have between twenty and thirty attending.

d) A short (20 min) Market Day service on Wednesday morning regularly attracts 20-30 people.

2.2.4. Printed services for use at home are made available weekly by the Dorset South and West Circuit, for those unable to attend worship at UCD, but without modern computer technology.

2.2.5 We hold a series of special services throughout the year, in particular over the Christmas period:

2.2.5.1 About 20 people attended our Quiet Christmas; a gentle Christmas service for those who do not feel able to celebrate Christmas enthusiastically, either through bereavement or because of dementia or autism. Several members of UCD's congregation brought friends because they had enjoyed the service last year.

2.2.5.2 On Christmas Eve the Church was busy for our Christingle service. Led by the junior church staff, it was wonderful to see so many families enjoying a relaxed service that enabled them to make their own Christingles, as well as hear the Christmas Story, told very simply.

2.2.5.3 On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December we held our annual carol service, which was well attended. Along with a mix of traditional and newer carols, the choir sang several festive pieces to accompany the story of the nativity as described in the Gospels.

2.2.5.4 Special services were held during the year, focusing our World Mission outreach, particularly the URC and Methodist World Church charities and also our Church charity for the year: Wheels for the World; a charity that sends refurbished wheelchairs and other mobility aids to Africa.

2.2.5.5 In November, 25 donated, Christmas shoe boxes and two bags of assorted box fillers were blessed in the morning service. They had been filled and wrapped for children living in poverty in Southeast Europe.

### **2.3. Teaching of the Christian faith**

2.3.1 Dorset County Show. In September 2023 UCD worked ecumenically as the Churches in Dorchester had one joint marquee pitch at the Dorset County Show. The team consisted of people from across the Churches. We offered refreshments, crafts, games, baby changing & and feeding facilities with a place to relax. Over 1000 drinks were made over the weekend and 250 families used the baby changing facilities. A Harvest Festival service was held on the Sunday led by the Bishop of Sherborne and local clergy. It was a very hot weekend; we had a great location and lots and lots of conversations with folks, lots of fun and were a visible Christian presence at the show. We are working together ecumenically again for the 2024 County Show.

2.3.2 Forest Praise Café: formerly known as Forest Praise, is run in conjunction with our friends at St George's, Fordington on the last Saturday of the month and continues to go from strength to strength. There are at least four activities each session including song and story and we have Forest Praise Café, where bacon rolls, toast, juice and hot and cold drinks are

available. This has been a very successful addition and works really well. On average we have between 12 -18 Families attending each session

2.3.3 A small team of volunteers welcomes a number of children to Junior Church each week. The children generally remain in church for the first part of the 10.30 service before leaving for their own activities, in another room.

## **2.4. Mission and evangelism**

2.4.1 Story Tots is a weekly stay and play opportunity for babies and pre-school children, has gone from strength to strength. We now must use the main hall on a weekly basis, as attendance varies between 25-30 children with Parents, Grandparents, and carers. There are plenty of toys to play with, craft activity and drinks and biscuits. Story Tots suffered a massive blow when the leader, Mary Martin, passed away in November which effected the team and those who attended Story Tots. Story Tots is valued very much by parents and children and is supported by a team of volunteers who work as one.

2.4.2 Journey to the Stable, an interactive re-telling of the Nativity story and was held again in 2023. Over 240 children and teachers from four local schools attended and enjoyed their time and gave positive feedback. We opened the event to the public and those who came were glad that they had experienced it.

2.4.3 This year, two Christmas Family Fun Days were held in Church in the week before Christmas. Children had the opportunity to try different crafts, play on a range of toys and games and have refreshments. We also introduced "Getting in the Picture", where children could dress up in costume and be part of a stable setting to have their picture taken (by a parent or carer.) The church was packed as over 150 children with parents attended over the two days.

2.4.4 On Easter Saturday we gave out flowers and sweets to the community.

2.4.5 The South Street window is changed regularly to depict what is happening throughout the year, i.e. the different seasons, activities and events, local and world concerns.

2.4.6 Our "Outreach" committee has now become the "Resourcing Mission" committee to ensure that appropriate resources are in place, before starting any new projects.

## **2.5 Pastoral work**

2.5.1 Our Minister, Rev John Yarrien, cares for the spiritual and emotional needs at UCD. Mrs Ruth Magee was appointed as a Pastoral Support Worker to support the Minister and Pastoral committee.

2.5.2 The United Church maintains a system by which all members and adherents are assigned to a Pastoral Visitor, who tries to keep in touch with them and understand their concerns. Every pastoral visitor has their own Pastoral Visitor.

2.5.3 An Annual Welcome Meeting is organised for all new people who have started attending UCD over the last year. This is an opportunity to meet other new members and learn more about the Church. Thirteen new adherents were invited to this year's Welcome Meeting. Each new adherent is also given a welcome pack.

2.5.4 Every new adherent is asked to complete a GDPR form explaining what information is kept and how it will be used. These details are kept on our Church Member's database.

2.5.5. The Pastoral Visitors usually meet twice a year for training and to share experiences.

2.5.6 The Quiet Christmas service with refreshments was attended by 20 people and led by the Pastoral committee.



- 2.5.7 As part of our pastoral support to the local community we provide comfort and support to the bereaved. Ministers took 13 funerals this year and provided support to the families; not all the deceased were Church members. Although there were no weddings in our Church this year, we held our first Same-Sex wedding blessing, alongside a couple in the Church also celebrating 25 years of marriage. We also held two child baptisms. The baptised children and their siblings received a Christian book from the junior church.
- 2.5.8 Another component of our pastoral care is the “Prayer Chain” where those in need, are remembered in prayer by several Church Members, including those who are housebound. The prayer chain keeps a confidential list of people for whom prayer has been requested both daily and weekly.
- 2.5.9 The Coffee Shop now regularly opens on Tuesday and Friday mornings and there is a Wednesday coffee morning in the hall. A welcome and a listening ear is given to all those who attend.
- 2.5.10 In the weeks before Christmas, UCD members tried to spread the good news of the birth of Christ, the true meaning of Christmas. During the week before Christmas, the Action for Children group arranged Carol Singing outside the church, offering knitted angels to passers-by.

## **2.6 Serving the local community.**

- 2.6.1 With its central location in the town, the United Church Dorchester is ideally placed to offer itself as a reasonably priced venue for many events. Among others, the Regional Blood Transfusion Service runs well attended donor sessions regularly on our premises. Our local Alcoholics Anonymous group meets here three times a week, finding the lack of alcohol on the premises, a result of our Methodist roots, a positive benefit. The local Child Contact centre has also started to operate from UCD again on a regular basis. Other lettings, such as the Country Market, a local amateur orchestra, several well-established choirs, along with U3A Table tennis and U3A local history classes continue to use our premises throughout 2023.
- 2.6.2 The Church Shop remains open for four mornings a week. It is staffed entirely by volunteers. It provides a wide range of Christian books, gifts and cards, and ‘fairly-traded’ goods, including food. As a Fairtrade Church and eco-congregation, we continue to use our premises to actively promote the use of ‘fairly-traded’ goods within the Church and more widely in our locality. The shop window attracts passers-by into the church and customers come from a wide radius around Dorchester. When open, the shop also acts as an information point for the church. The team of three of the buyers manage the shop.
- 2.6.3 We continued to provide lunches for the homeless; these are organised monthly by members of the Church. We never throw anything away and those coming always take a second dinner away with them. It is a very rewarding experience. We have a small team of regular helpers (Sue Gannaway, Jean Janes, Roni Boyden and Diana Leeming); Peter Jenner and John Yarren help as and when they can.
- 2.6.4 Support of other charities in the UK and overseas. The United Church Dorchester has a continuing commitment to local, national, and international charities through members working as volunteers and donations of goods and money.
- 2.6.5 Locally the Church has supported, amongst others:

- a) The local food bank continues to have a collection point at UCD. In addition, at Christmas, Church Members gave financial support to the Family Support charity, which provides Christmas hampers to families with children receiving free school meals.
- b) The Dorchester Child Contact Centre provides a safe space for children of divided families to meet their non-resident parent for a few hours' interaction in a supported environment. It is an independent charity, but the Church offers free accommodation and many of the volunteers are Church Members.
- c) Dorchester Alcoholics Anonymous Groups, who appreciate the "dry" status of our buildings, receive accommodation at a reduced rate.
- d) The church also made donations of between £100 and £800 to the following local charities: Dorchester Child Contact Centre (£300), Dorchester Carers Hub (£400), Dorchester Family Support (£600), Dorchester Poverty Action (£800), Dorchester Volunteer Centre (£150), Dorset Carers Hub (£400), Dorset Mind (£200), Dorset Nightstop (£300), Dorset Race Equality (£200), Durnovaria Silver Band (£250), Food Bank (£300), Home Start (£600), Methodist Homes for the Aged (MHA) (£200), NHS Foundation Trust (£300), Quiet Space (£200), Transition Towns (£100), URC Retired Ministers' Housing (£300), Weldmar Hospice (£500) and Women's Refuge (£400).
- e) The Action for Children Fundraising Group raised a total of £3590.63 from a range of events, including a garden party, carol singing, a quiz night, charity stalls, several collections at Church services and the "League of Light boxes", which are added throughout the year by regular donors.

2.6.6 Internationally, the Church is committed to relieving poverty and disaster and to funding development through the work of Christian Aid. Over the year from September 2022 to August 2023, Christian Aid raised funds in excess of £17000. Our primary focus remains Christian Aid Week in May although we have settled into a new pattern for fund-raising activities, spread more evenly across the year. Two very successful collections have been held in South Street during the year; one in Christian Aid Week and the other in the Autumn and carol singing in South Street always makes for further good fund raising. Other successful fund-raising events have been two excellent Dorchester Choral Society concerts at Cerne Abbas and in the Borough Gardens in June; a sponsored 'Walk to the River Jordan' in September; the Christian Aid Market; Ploughman's Lunches during Lent, organised by Sue Gannaway; the 'Evening with Peter Green' with poems and stories accompanied by a 'fish and chip' supper; a bingo evening at St George's in February. We have also sold more than 520 Recipe Books.

In Christian Aid Week (May 2023) our ecumenical service was led by Revd Keith Magee at St Peter's Church. It was a truly inspirational experience with Revd. Martin John Nichols, from Christian Aid, being our keynote speaker. He stressed the need for all Christians to be committed and 'political' in their approach to issues of global justice, quoting the prophet Micah: to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Our World Church Project during 2023 was Wheels for the world; a Christian charity that collects unwanted wheelchairs and other disability aids, refurbishes them, sends them to the developing world for livelihood creation. We organised two World Church Sundays and two World Church Coffee mornings and several smaller stalls throughout the year and raised a total of £4503.23 for the charity.

As well as the fundraising sales we organised a well-attended Quiz evening and an Autumn Concert. A team from the Church was able to collect and deliver used wheelchairs and walking aids to a UK depot to be sent out to Africa and that members knitted numerous glove puppets for distribution to children during those charities aid visits.

The Church contributed £911.90 each to the Methodist World Mission Fund the United Reformed Church's Council for World Mission (CWM) from a combination of and a small amount from general funds and retiring collections. In November 25 shoe boxes and two bags of additional small gifts were received and blessed in a Sunday morning service. They were collected for the charity FSCI (Foundation for Social change and Inclusion) for distribution to families in Eastern Europe.

## **2.7 Maintaining the fabric of the Church building.**

- 2.7.1 A contract to replace several rusting iron retaining rings in the Spire with internal stainless-steel rings and replace stonework showing significant external cracking were signed off by the Architects Crickmay Stark.
- 2.7.2 The condition of the Hall windows continues to deteriorate, requiring more repair work. The project has been discussed with the URC Wessex Synod Property Officer on several occasions and in November we learnt that only uPVC windows were not accepted, so the existing windows are to be repaired.
- 2.7.3 Plans to upgrade the ground floor toilet block at the Charles Street end of the church has developed such that only a refurbishment is now proposed, and this is being progress 'in house'.
- 2.7.4 The floor tiles in the hall were lifted and replaced. Although the specification of "non-slip" was complied with by the contractor, they were too slippery to play Badminton on. After several rounds of scrubbing, the surface became sufficiently non-slip that Badminton and table tennis could be played. However, when a professional company was brought in to paint the court lines, they immediately started to lift off. After some thought and experimentation, the property committee were able to paint on lines using indelible ink. These lines are still working efficiently and, although they may need to be touched up annually, appear to be working well.
- 2.7.5 The wifi in the building was extended so that good reception was possible on the top floor of number 49 and in the hall.
- 2.7.6 During regular testing, it was found that several of the emergency lights were no longer holding charge. They were replaced by suitably qualified members of the property team. Also, to reduce electricity consumption, some light switches were replaced by sensors to avoid them being left on.
- 2.7.7 The Sydling room was equipped for use by Circuit staff.
- 2.7.8 Our contract cleaner retired after many years of sterling work. A new contract cleaner was taken on but backed out of the contract when they were not able to recruit new staff. After much hard work by Michael Humphrey in finding another contractor and by many church members spending several weeks cleaning the building as negotiations continued, a new contract cleaner has been hired and, to date, things seem to be working well.
- 2.7.9 The chairs in the hall were bought when the United Church opened. Although they had been inspected in the last year for obvious problems in the welds, several chairs

had collapsed when people sat on them. As a result, all the chairs were condemned, and 80 new chairs were bought.

- 2.7.10 Members of the Property committee, along with a few church members, contribute a huge amount of time to the maintenance of the church premises. Ray Harris often assists in practical ways.

### **3 Ecumenical Relationships**

#### **3.1 Local Relationships**

We continue to work closely with friends from various churches and denominations across Dorchester and the surrounding area through Churches Together in Dorchester. Mr Anthony Boyden, one of our Church members, is currently the lay chair for Churches Together in Dorchester. Highlights of Churches Together in Dorchester include:

- a very positive response across the churches to taking part in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 2023.
- the Walk of Witness on Good Friday with a slightly different format, which attracted perhaps its best turn-out to date.
- the lovely Sunrise service at Maumbury Rings on Easter Sunday which again attracted a record attendance.
- our ecumenical Christian Aid and Pentecost services in May.
- an ecumenical service of support for a range of public service personnel at Dorchester Baptist Church in October.
- a time of prayer and meditation on Peace held at the War Memorial in the week prior to the Civic Remembrance Service.

CTD also produced a pamphlet 'The Way Forward' to highlight the range of services provided by member churches and community facilities to individuals and families experiencing difficulties. The United Church Dorchester has good working relationships with other Christian churches in the town, in particular, Forest Praise is now carried out jointly at St George's Anglican Church, as was the midnight mass on Christmas Eve.

### **4 Staffing and Other Issues**

#### **4.1 Employed Staff**

4.1.1 The Reverend John Yarren has continued as UCD's minister as well as superintendent of the Dorset South & West Methodist Circuit and is proactive in moving forward UCD's Vision. Unfortunately, John was taken seriously ill in September 2023 but has recovered well and led many of our Christmas Services before a full return to duties in January 2024.

4.1.2 Mr Peter Jenner has continued to take a lead on key areas of Families and Young People's work within UCD, particularly, supporting the teams that deliver Forest Praise, Story Tots and Journey to the Stable. Peter also chairs the Youth and Family committee. As well as his work with the wider circuit, Peter has been working with a small team to develop a Saturday outreach project aimed at families and young children, starting with a Family Fun Day at Pentecost. In the coming year, he will be exploring the possibilities of a town wide holiday club for school children.

- 4.1.3 Ms Ellie Minns is our Church Administrator. She helps the Stewards and Senior Management of the church with clerical work and manages the booking system for letting rooms in the Church.
- 4.1.4 Ms Di Lawrence is employed for 2 hours a week to manage and support the financial operations of the Church Shop and Coffee Lounge, including paying the bills, and keeping the accounts.
- 4.1.5 Mrs Ruth McGee was employed as a new Pastoral Support worker, subject to the completion of necessary training and probation period. Ruth has focussed on offering a presence at Market Day services, building relationships with local care homes and offering support and training to pastoral visitors.

#### **4.2 Volunteers**

4.2.1 The majority of the work carried out by and in the United Church is done by volunteers. All aspects of church life require Church Members and friends to freely give of their time; from pastoral visiting, making sure services run smoothly, fundraising for the charities we support and practical help such as the Coffee Shop and the Church Shop. Although we cannot accurately estimate the time given, it must amount to several hundred person hours per week.

4.2.2 We continue to benefit greatly from the ministries of retired Ministers and lay leaders of many denominations, who are part of our Church and Circuit. This support in depth was extremely helpful during the recent illness of our Minister.

## **5 Financial review**

### **5.1 Reserves policy**

5.1.1 The Church has a Reserves Policy, a requirement of the Charity Commission, to secure the future in case of unexpected or exceptional need. Although our expenditure in 2022 was higher than normal, there were one off expenses, e.g. repairs to the main roof and refurbishing the Hall floor which will not recur for many years. Thus, the figure of £82K will continue to be used as the target for the Reserves Policy.

5.1.2 Our reserves are held as unrestricted (freely available) funds which are ring-fenced from our budgeted annual commitments and planned expenditure. The Charity Commission suggests that we consider future planned expenditure, and possible risks and contingencies, including the possibility of a reduction in income of the Church. The Finance committee has tried to strike a balance by taking the figure recommended by the Charity Commission, which is equivalent to six months' worth of our working capital to be held as reserves. Therefore, it is necessary for us to hold an amount of at least 50% of the annual expenditure of the United Church as a sufficient reserve. Currently the general reserve is more than adequate to cover six months expenditure, normally, about £82k.

### **5.2 Restricted and Designated funds**

5.2.1 Restricted funds and endowments, i.e. funds designated for a specific use, are not included in the reserves:

- a) The Florence Fare Trust is an endowment; only the interest may be used and must only be spent on Youth and Family work.
- b) An Outreach fund was created to ring-fence money from the Methodist Circuit to be spent on outreach at the United Church (now stands at £630).
- c) The designated fund of £60K, held specifically for ensuring the Spire was put into a safe condition, has been fully used. The work carried out to stabilise the Spire has been successfully completed this year.

### **5.3 Investment Policy**

It is our policy to invest our fund balances between the Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF), Senator House, 85 Queen Victoria Street, London. EC4V 4ET and the Trustees for the Methodist Church Purposes, Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester. M1 1JQ.

### **5.4 Names and addresses of:**

Bankers: HSBC 15, Cornhill, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1BJ.

Independent examiner – Mr Denys Hood, (address on application)

(Due to the closure of the local HSBC branch in 2023, the church's account was moved to the Lloyds Bank in early January 2024. Bank details for the new account can be obtained

## **6 Safeguarding**

- 6.1 Safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse and children is taken very seriously by the Church Stewards. We now have two Safeguarding Officers at UCD, sharing the responsibility.
- 6.2 The Church has a robust and comprehensive safeguarding policy which is displayed on the noticeboards of the church and on the website alongside the contact details for the two safeguarding officers. It is reviewed annually and updated as necessary. A programme of safeguarding awareness training is delivered regularly to all those in the Church who work or volunteer with children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse.
- 6.3 We ensure staff and volunteers are aware of the Prevent Strategy and able to protect children and young people who are vulnerable or at risk of being radicalised. Training must be repeated every three years.
- 6.4 A Safer Recruitment policy and procedures are now in place. These require that new staff and volunteers complete an application form and have two references taken up, and those appointed to roles are subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- 6.5 Catherine Welch stood down after a number of years of service as our Safeguarding Officer at the November Church Meeting and has been replaced by Linda Scott, with support from Diana Leeming.
- 6.6 The Health & Safety sub-group has overseen several Risk Assessments throughout the year. 'Site Safety Rules for Contractors' relating to our premises are available and Fire Safety training was given to Stewards and other volunteers.

United Church Dorchester, April 2024

# STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

		<b>ASSETS</b>					
2022	<b>Fixed Assets</b>					2023	
	Investments						
64,430		TMCP - Florence Fare Trust				61,608	
29,287		TMCP - Surplus Funds Trust				29,312	
2,598		TMCP - Elma Burge Bequest				2,691	
34,622		COIF - Investment Trust				37,856	
							131,467
	<b>Current Assets</b>						
14,000	Debtors						15,393
	Current Accounts						
16,095		HSBC Bank				35,467	
0		Lloyds Bank				2,293	
							37,760
	Deposit Accounts						
77,930		COIF - General				81,345	
50,264		HSBC Bank				0	
0		Lloyds Bank				0	
							81,345
		<b>LIABILITIES</b>					
-43,343	Creditors						-2,857
-1,985	Church Groups						-2,406
<b>245,883</b>		<b>Net Assets/Liabilities</b>					<b>263,108</b>
		<b>REPRESENTED BY FUNDS</b>					
Last Year End	Fund Name		Net Income During Year	Transfer	Revaluation of Investment	This Year End	
	Endowment						
64,430	Florence Fare Trust				-2,822	61,608	
	Restricted						
2,684	Youth and Family		-155			2,529	
630	Outreach Group		-287	575		918	
	Designated						
251	Lunches for Homeless		142			393	
45	Church Flowers		50			95	
0	Maurice Dale Legacy		-220	1,000		780	
0	Music Fund		-440	575		135	
	Unrestricted						
177,344	General Funds		71,746		-52,440	196,650	
<b>245,384</b>	<b>Total Funds</b>					<b>263,108</b>	

## Receipts and Payments for Year Ended 31 December 2023

2022		2023	
		<b>RECEIPTS</b>	
61,486		Giving	65,381
	6,243	Cash	10,167
	10,545	Envelopes	4,823
	44,698	Standing Orders	50,391
2,501		Donations	3,789
16,758		Lettings	17,162
1,813		Investment Interest/Dividends	5,860
13,321		Gift Aid Tax Refund on donations	14,740
8,670		Grants	19,000
8,777		Earmarked	9,314
1,754		Other	305
3,537		Youth and Family	3,453
9,300		Coffee and Shop Account	16,500
50,000		Transfers from Reserves	25,000
<b>177,916</b>		<b>Total Income</b>	<b>180,504</b>
2021		2022	
		<b>PAYMENTS</b>	
79,735		Church	99,022
	52,350	UCD Assessment	62,225
	5,164	Church Administrator	9,373
	0	Pastoral Visitor	4,761
	5,660	Insurance	6,373
	7,755	Cleaning and Waste Collection	7,664
	4,003	Gas	4,758
	2,821	Electricity	2,489
	933	Telephone and BB	809
	85	Water	126
	963	Business Rates and BID	444
8,934		Minor Items	5,950
122,128		Property	19,090
	9,869	Property Maintenance - General	4,621
	60	Property Maintenance - Emergencies	5,256
	32,982	Roof Repairs	8
	-6,530	Insurance/VAT reclaim	0
	6,375	Access to Flat Roof	0
	338	No51 Loft Spce	924
	74,780	Church Spire	2,491
	128	Main Toilets	0
	4,126	Hall Floor	4,243
	0	Church Heating	405
	0	Kitchen Shutter	1,142
15,368		Charitable Giving	9,615
1,206		Music in Worship	1,800
		Outreach Group	65
		Churches Together	40
<b>1,534</b>		Youth and Family	<b>3,608</b>
<b>228,906</b>			<b>139,190</b>
<b>-50,990</b>		<b>Net Receipts/Payments</b>	<b>41,314</b>

MAIN ACCOUNT FOR  
UNITED CHURCH DORCHESTER