

The United Church Dorchester

Annual Report

January to December 2018

Charity registration number:1137996

Location: 49-51, Charles Street, Dorchester, Dorset

DT1 1EE

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

The United Church Dorchester 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 as a result 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 ).

### **1.1 The Purpose of the Charity**

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

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; and

- 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.

## **1.2 Membership**

Membership of the United Church Dorchester is open to anyone who formally accepts the Faith and Practice of the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church with regard to Baptism and Reception into Membership. Our current membership is 199. During the year, 7 people were welcomed into the Church (6 through transferred membership and 1 by confession of faith), 8 members died and 4 moved away. Another 113 people are regular worshippers but have not chosen to be members.

## **1.3 The Council of Stewards and organisational structure**

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 Ministers are ex-officio members of the Council. We have no policies adopted for the induction and training of trustees. However, our current procedure is to give every new trustee a bound folder containing information on our constitution, the role of a trustee and the management structure of the organisation.

The Council of Stewards meets approximately every month. The chair of the Council, the Senior Steward, is elected from within the Council, along with the treasurer and 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 Ministers 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 is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of the United Church buildings, owned by the United Reformed Church, at numbers 49 and 51 Charles Street, Dorchester.

The Church meeting, which can advise the Stewards' Council, meets at least 4 times a year. Much of the day-to-day management of the church is delegated to nine major committees (Worship; Pastoral and Fellowship; Youth and Family; Community Service, Home and World Mission; Finance; Property; Lettings; Outreach; and Administration) and their constituent subgroups, which report regularly to the Stewards' Council, and to Church Meetings. The sub-committees have delegated authority to make routine decisions related to their remit and may have a budget allocated to such ends. Decisions requiring extra funding for any items outside the usual scope of the committee are referred to the Stewards who may decide to seek advice from the church meeting. The Ministers, Senior Steward and Secretary meet regularly to review needs, progress plans and co-ordinate future date planning.

#### 1.4 The Council of Stewards (Trustees) who served during 2018 comprised:

Our Ministers	Revd Stephanie Jenner (unavailable for work during most of 2018) Revd Peter Clark
Stewards who stood down at the AGM in March 2018	Alex Reed
Stewards who resigned in 2018	Carol Illingworth (May) Heather Bland (August)
Stewards who served all Year (Management Sub-committee membership shown in brackets)	Mary Martin (2017) – Senior Steward & Chair of the Council of Stewards (Community Service, Home & World Mission) John Hilton (2017) – Church Secretary (Worship, Lettings) Gillian Daniel (2017) - (Finance) Colin Gannaway (2004) - Treasurer (Finance, Lettings) Roni Boyden (2015) (Pastoral) John Saunders (2017) (Property)
March 2018	John Parson (Administration)
Observer	Sue Bird (representing the Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit)
Stewards co-opted in 2018	Paul Smith (Property) Maria Jacobson (Youth & Family) Janice Young (Outreach)

## **1.5 Staff members**

Joint Minister: Revd Stephanie Jenner, nominally 70%  
(unavailable for work during most of 2018)

Joint Minister: Revd Peter Clark, nominally 30%

Because the Revd Jenner was not available for work during most of 2018, the United Reformed Church Wessex Synod and the members of the United Church Bridport kindly agreed that Revd Clark would spend 50% of his time working for the United Church Dorchester for a period of 6 months.

Administrative Assistant: Mrs June Faulkner - 10 hours per week

Pastoral Visitor: Mrs Angela Fisher 5 hrs per week (employed by the Circuit)

## **1.6 Senior Volunteer Managers:**

Although we have paid members of staff, the church is mainly managed by volunteers. Key post holders include:

Senior Steward – Mary Martin

Secretary – John Hilton

Treasurer – Colin Gannaway

Pastoral Care – Wendy Hilton

Property - Paul Smith

Lettings – John Hilton

Coffee Shop Manager – Shirley Hood

Church Shop Manager – Margaret Knighton

Worship Secretary – Linda Gundry

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

The United Church Dorchester and the Bridport United Church are in the same new, Dorset South and West Methodist circuit and are combined into a joint pastorate by the URC. As a result the Rev Stephanie Jenner (a Methodist minister based in Dorchester) and the Rev Peter Clark (a URC minister based in Bridport) are joint ministers of the two churches. Rev Jenner spends nominally 70% of her time in work for the United Church Dorchester and Rev Clark nominally 30%. Because the Revd

Jenner was not available for work during most of 2018, the United Reformed Church Wessex Synod and the members of the United Church Bridport kindly agreed that Revd Clark would spend 50% of his time working for the United Church Dorchester for a period of 6 months.

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 issues**

This year, much of the time of the Stewards' Council was taken up reorganising work to cover, the absence of the Revd Jenner. Other major items of work included updating the constitution, which took a considerable amount of management time, as did the development of a data privacy policy and the resulting consent forms required under the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. Much of the practical implementation of the latter was carried out by the Pastoral Support Group. The stewards, aided by the Junior Church leaders, spent some time developing a programme to build a new vision for the UCD for the next few years.

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

When planning our activities for the year, the Ministers and the Stewards' Council have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. Our main objective is to try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our church community through:

1. the celebration of public worship;
2. the teaching of the Christian faith;
3. mission and evangelism;
4. pastoral work, including visiting the sick and the bereaved;
5. 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;
6. the support of other charities in the UK and overseas;

7. the maintenance of the fabric of the United Church and associated buildings in order to facilitate all these activities.

## **2.1 The celebration of public worship**

**2.1.1** 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 Stewards' Council is committed to enabling as many people as possible to worship at our church and to become part of our church. The Stewards' Council 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. At the end of the year, 3 members of the United Church were appointed as celebrants of Holy Communion by the URC: Ruth Archer, Penny Fennel and Mary Lucraft.

**2.1.2** The Church provides a variety of worship styles at different times throughout the week.

**2.1.3** Over the year, the 10.30am Sunday morning services have been led by our Ministers, (incumbent or retired) and accredited lay preachers. The typical weekly congregation is about 117 worshippers. The format for Sunday mornings is flexible with a mixture of traditional and modern hymns and songs. Hymns and worship songs are led by a variety of singers from the choir and/or the singing group with musical accompaniment from a traditional organ, piano, a music group with woodwind and stringed instruments and/or the brass group. The choir practises weekly to support congregational singing in worship and performs anthems and other items, and an informal singing group offers the opportunity for anyone to learn new worship material. There is always the opportunity for children and young people to take part in worship both with the adult congregation and in their own Junior Church worship. The sacrament of communion is included in one 10.30 service a month, usually the first Sunday.

**2.1.4** Sunday evenings tend to follow a more traditional format with a smaller, but faithful congregation of between 25 and 35 worshippers. However during the year it can include a variety of forms of worship, such as: reflective (Taize)

style, Celtic style, traditional healing and wholeness and songs of praise. Irrespective of the form of worship a service of communion is included in one service a month, usually the third Sunday.

**2.1.5** On the second Sunday in the month, an early morning communion service is held at 9.00am.

**2.1.6** A short, twenty minute service is held on Wednesday morning to coincide with the town's Market Day and is accompanied with refreshments and stalls in the Hall. Typically about 30 people attend the service and, although most are regular Church goers (though not necessarily from the United Church), a few, who would see themselves as non-church goers, regularly attend.

**2.1.7** As well as continuing to offer our regular services during the main festive periods at Easter and Christmas, we have additional, special services and activities during these celebrations. We also offer, jointly with other churches in the town, a number of ecumenical services during the week of prayer for Christian Unity, Bible Sunday, Remembrance Sunday and others.

**2.1.8** Over the Christmas period, we offered a variety of services: a Christingle Service for the very young and young at heart; a Quiet Christmas service for those who could not cope with a loud and busy service, such as those suffering from Dementia and those going through bereavement; a carol service; midnight communion on Christmas eve and a short, Christmas morning service. Collections from these services raised a total of £715.26, which was divided equally between two charities: Christian Aid and Action for Children. A Midnight service was held on New Year's Eve.

**2.1.9** Two church groups meet regularly for reflective prayer and meditation.

**2.1.10** This year was the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the union of the South Street Methodist congregation with the South Street United Reformed Church to form the United Church Dorchester. To mark the event a special birthday tea was organised on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October followed by an Anniversary service on the next day, led by the Reverend Naomi Cooke, who candidated for the ministry from UCD.

**2.1.11** No baptisms were performed this year.



## **2.2 Teaching of the Christian faith**

**2.2.1** The Church has a number of house groups that meet regularly to explore the Word as expressed in the Bible, through discussion and conversation. During Lent 2018, the theme was "Walking the Way".

**2.2.2** A key objective of our Junior Church is to educate our young people in the basis of our Faith. Numbers are now very small (0 -5). Most Sunday mornings they share in part of the main service before leaving for their own sessions but once a month meet separately as First Steps for their own worship and activity time with their parents and carers.

## **2.3 Mission and evangelism**

**2.3.1** This year the church hired a space at the Dorset County Show. The team provided refreshments, baby changing and feeding facilities, games and information. A similar facility was provided in the church in the week running up to Christmas, offering an open door onto South Street for a few hours each day to anyone in the town wanting respite from the commercial activity and facilities to feed and change babies.

**2.3.2** Prior to that, over a period of three weeks in December, we repeated the 'Journey to the Stable' (J2tS); a short journey explaining the true meaning of Christmas. Over a four day period, 180 school children from five local schools visited, along with their teachers. In the following eleven days 210 members of the public visited. In another initiative, many people from inside and outside the church had been taking part in a Knitted Christmas Angel project organised and promoted by the church's AfC committee. Over 400 small angels were knitted and a brief Christian message was attached. The angels were then given out during Journey to the Stable and AfC Carol Singing. The events planned for the Christmas period were widely publicised in various ways, including giving balloons to people (particularly children) passing by in the street on "Cracker" night and on the first day of public opening of J2tS.

**2.3.3** The annual Christingle service, held on Christmas Eve, was led by Mrs Karen Whiter. It was extremely well attended and many of the congregation were not regular worshippers at UCD.

- 2.3.4** This year in Holy Week we again staged the interactive Journey to the Empty Tomb. This consisted of seven stations, each highlighting an element in the passion of Christ, ending with the final station, staged in the empty tomb. It was well received and encouraged members of UCD and many visitors to reflect on the events of Easter. The Good Friday Walk of Witness commenced with a short service at the United Church and concluded with a short service followed by refreshments at St Peters. All these celebrations culminated in a dawn service on Easter day at a local green space on the edge of town, a notorious spot in days gone by for executions. Breakfast was supplied afterwards back at the church Hall before the celebration of a family service for Easter.
- 2.3.5** In the carnival atmosphere of the town's Christmas lights switch on (Christmas Cracker) we provided refreshments and mince pies. Music was provided by the church choir and the United Brass, an interdenominational brass group operating from our church. This brought many people of all ages into the church and they stayed to sing Carols and Christmas songs. A voluntary collection raised £86.88 which was donated to the Charity, Dorchester Poverty Action.
- 2.3.6** The 'Story-Tots' group, run by a team of dedicated volunteers, meets once a week during term time. It continues to welcome babies and pre-school children and their carers who share a time of play together. Currently there is a regular group of at least ten carers/parents and often it is more.
- 2.3.7** One member of the Church continues to be involved in the management and running of the Quiet Space in Poundbury.
- 2.3.8** Chaplaincy work in Dorchester continues. Chris Warren, one of our church members is Chaplain to Dorset Fire and Rescue. Several of our church members have responded to the call to be chaplains to retailers in the town. The total number of Retail chaplains, recruited from across the churches in Dorchester, increased to 17 this year. A (UCD) chaplain now attends at the weekly Wednesday Market Coffee morning at UCD.
- 2.3.9** The Church's window onto South Street, continues to show to passers-by something of the life and concerns of the Church with a frequently changing display.
- 2.3.10** Posters have been put up in many rooms as discussion starters and are currently being reviewed.

**2.3.11** The Junior Church leaders and the Youth and Family committee started a new initiative this year, called Forest Praise. Two events were held, this year, at the Family Centre, Poundbury and consist of outdoor activities and a short act of worship. Numbers have increased over the year and into 2019.

## **2.4 Pastoral work**

**2.4.1** 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 appreciate their concerns. As well as each member or adherent being assigned a visitor the visitors themselves are grouped under a number of coordinators, who look after the visitors' pastoral welfare. Training for pastoral visitors this year has included a discussion of pastoral visitor issues.

**2.4.2** A special welcome was given to recent new members to help provide them with information, the welcome pack was distributed which included the Church activities booklet.

**2.4.3** Our Ministers offer 24/7 care for spiritual and emotional needs, Rev. Peter Clark (United Reformed Church Minister) from the Bridport Pastorate, offers 30% of his time (50% for the last 3 months of the year). Because our Methodist Superintendent, Stephanie Jenner, who is based at the United Church, was unavailable for work for most of the year, the gap was filled by the pastoral visiting team, including our Lay Pastoral Visitor, who is employed by the Circuit, on behalf of the United Church

**2.4.4** A Death Cafe (a place to ask all those practical questions about death that you never felt able to ask) was organised for the spring but due to the "Beast from the East" most stall holders were unable to attend. However leaflets and refreshments were available to the few who managed to brave the weather and names and queries were forwarded to the relevant stall holders. A repeat is being planned for 2019.

**2.4.5** Another component of our pastoral care is the "Prayer Chain" where those in need, are remembered in prayer by a number of Church members, including those who are housebound. The Tuesday prayer group also keeps a list of people for whom prayer has been requested.

**2.4.6** The Coffee Shop continues to be a hub of social activity, offering a listening ear and a friendly welcome to all. It opens up to four days a week and is manned by church volunteers and others from different walks of life. It now has a regular clientele, some of whom are either physically or mentally frail. They are well known to the staff and use the facilities as a place to come and feel at home. In addition to providing pastoral care to its customers the coffee shop also contributed £7000 to church funds from profits made throughout the year.

**2.4.7** A further opportunity for friendship was provided in previous years by a regular lunch time club called "Picnic People". However, numbers have fallen recently and it has faded away. An attempt will be made to resurrect the group in 2019. The Quiet Room and the Church itself are open daily for all to use for quiet prayer and reflection and as a place for quiet conversation.

**2.4.8** The Solo's group meet once a month for friendship and activities such as lunch at a local cafe, a short trip to a seaside resort, an afternoon quiz or a talk on a specialist subject.

**2.4.9** As part of our pastoral support to the local community we provide comfort and support to the bereaved. The Ministers were involved in funerals throughout the year, not all for Church members. Monthly communion services continue to be held at two residential homes and one sheltered housing complex and, through our Pastoral Visitor and Ministers, we hold occasional services at three other locations in the town.

## **2.5 Serving the local community**

**2.5.1** With its central location in the town, the United Church 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 four times a week finding the lack of alcohol on the premises, a result of our Methodist roots, a positive benefit.

**2.5.2** A number of local charities receive advantageous rates for the use of rooms. In specific instances accommodation is provided free-of-charge. One such group is the bi-monthly Contact Centre where children can come to meet their non-resident parents, often under potentially confrontational circumstances.

**2.5.3** Because of the good acoustics in the main church, The Church is used by a number of choirs for rehearsals and occasional concerts.

**2.5.4** Our Admin Officer, June Faulkner (a paid member of staff), assisted by a Lettings Group, manages all church bookings. The Wessex Trust of the United Reformed Church owns our buildings and delegates us powers to let rooms under strict conditions set by the URC. The lettings group was formed to make sure that we comply with URC requirements and to assist with some aspects of the lettings process.

**2.5.5** We let rooms in our building to another Christian denomination, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, allowing others to celebrate public worship in a different way to our own traditions,

**2.5.6** The Church Shop opens six mornings a week from 10.00am to 12.30pm and is manned by volunteers. It provides a wide range of christian books, gifts and cards, and fairly traded goods, including food from Traidcraft. The shop window attracts passers-by into the church and customers come from a wide radius around Dorchester. Mrs Margaret Knighton is the shop manager, assisted by a team of volunteers. The shop contributed £5,000 to church funds. As a Fairtrade Church and eco-congregation, good practice is actively promoted within the Church and more widely in our locality.

## **2.6 Support of other charities in the UK and overseas**

**2.6.1** The United Church has a continuing commitment to local, national and international charities through members working as volunteers and by donations of goods and money.

**2.6.2** Locally the Church has supported, amongst others:

- Dorchester Poverty Action, through both direct donations and free use of rooms.
- The local food bank, for which the Church continues to be a collection point
- The Dorchester Child Contact Centre, which provides a safe space for children of divided families to meet their non-resident parent for a few

hours interaction in a safe and controlled environment. The church offers free accommodation and many of the volunteers are church members.

- Dorchester Alcoholics Anonymous Groups, who appreciated the “dry” status of our buildings and who also receive accommodation at a much reduced rate.

**2.6.3** We continue to give financial assistance to the Dorchester Support Group for Action for Children (AfC) through a combination of personal giving via home collection boxes and the donation of collections made at services over the Christmas period and the proceeds of a number of events held throughout the year, including an ever popular quiz night.

**2.6.4** Internationally the Church is committed to relieving poverty and disaster and to funding development through the work of Christian Aid. The main focus of raising funds was through Christian Aid Week, most particularly the annual house-to-house collection and the Christian Aid Week market, an example of ecumenical cooperation, hosted by our Church. Members too volunteered for the street collection at the end of Christian Aid Week which has now become a regular fixture. The Lent Lunches also raised awareness of Christian Aid and over £1,188.48. The congregation at United Church alone raised nearly 25 per cent of the near £19,000 total amount raised in Dorchester.

**2.6.5** The Christian Aid Facebook account remains a very successful way of disseminating news of Christian Aid activities.

**2.6.6** Church members have been heavily involved in other ecumenical events for Christian Aid. The Church hosted the travelling ‘Inherit the Earth’ exhibition in September which focused on the use of alternative energy sources and the impact of personal legacies on different projects. Other links have included: two very popular events with similar, like-minded aid organisations which have not only helped raise funds but more widely publicise their activities: the ever-popular Quiz Night and traditional Carol Singing on Christmas Eve.

**2.6.7** Members of the Church have shown great generosity in their contributions both to regular collections and in other fund-raising activities. The Church’s chosen charity in 2018 has been: Virtual Doctors, a charity providing the infrastructure to allow Health Assistants in African countries to access assistance from medical specialists across the world via their mobile phones. Huw Jones, the founder of Virtual Doctors, introduced us to the work of this

organisation in our World Church Sunday Service. Over 2017/2018 a total amount of £6,224.38 was raised.

**2.6.8** Church members continue to be heavily involved in lobbying on such matters as climate change and environmental issues through our Christian green group and the Churches Together Ecology group.

**2.6.9** The Church continues to make a tremendous contribution to the fight against injustice and working to bring hope to the poorest and most powerless people in the world. Its' contribution to all Christian Aid activities provides an excellent example of commitment to cooperation with many of the other Dorchester churches.

**2.6.10** The Church contributes to world mission through the World Mission fund of the Methodist Church and Council for World Mission (CWM) in the United Reformed Church.

**2.6.11** As in previous years charitable donations have been made by the Coffee Shop by contributing from the regular "tips" box. £430.10 was raised this year and donated to the Dorchester Child Contact Centre.

**2.6.12** The weekly market day stalls and coffee in the Hall have again distributed their proceeds to 18 local and national charities. Many of the Church social groups also made donations towards Church expenses or their preferred charity.

**2.6.13** In June the UCD hosted the summer meeting of the Friends of the Congregational Library and the Dr Williams Library (a national charity which is a major custodian of important documents recording the development of the Congregational Church).

**2.6.14** Over six days in early July, the UCD hosted the biennial Hardy International Conference; a meeting of leading academics and enthusiasts for the works of Thomas Hardy.

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

**2.7.1** In September 2016, when the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee met at UCD some seven projects at UCD were considered, two being 'future' projects. It is

disappointing that none of the outstanding projects, have been completed in 2018, (although one was in January 2019). As tenders for the new lift had proved to be too expensive the installation was redesigned and having invited new tenders, one quotation of £86,767 (not including the lifts themselves) was received. Efforts continue to obtain other tenders. Detailed approval for the redecoration of the church had been received and late in 2018 two more quotations were obtained and the contract was let to Diamond Decorators of Blandford.

**2.7.2** A structural engineer surveyed the loft space of No 51 Charles Street and was commissioned to design a simple structure to permit the removal of the cross beams to improve access throughout the loft. Details of the design were received in January 2019!

**2.7.3** Some more progress has been made on the repairs of the church spire. The Architect used generally by the church suggested three contractors who were asked to submit quotations, all refused! Of the three suggested contractors, one has ceased this type of work, one has viewed the work but has yet to submit a quotation and one is yet to be contacted. When we find a contractor, our Structural Engineer will oversee the work.'

**2.7.4** Quotations were invited for the refurbishment of the main toilets, after a meeting at the church and the exchange of many emails, one quotation was obtained. (In 2019).

### **3 Ecumenical Relationships**

**3.1** The United Church Dorchester has good working relationships with other Christian churches in the town. We are a member of Churches Together and take part in a number of joint church initiatives in the town.

**3.2** Additionally, through the Quiet Space on Poundbury where several members of our congregation are volunteers, the Church actively contributes to and supports an ecumenical Christian presence in Dorchester. We continue to participate in the leading of prayers and worship at the Quiet Space **See 2.3.6**

**3.3** This year the Church participated in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and we celebrated the Good Friday Walk of Witness, beginning at UCD and ending at St. Peter's with a service followed by hospitality. Other denominations joined us at Churches Together's "Sonrise" service on Easter Sunday. We continue to seek ways to work with other churches in the town.

**3.4** In addition to the 'Inherit the Earth' exhibition, Christian Aid welcomed speakers from Bangladesh and Haiti, both areas where there had been national emergencies to combat huge national disasters. Hilfield Friary have worked with us on publicising 'green issues' and we are involved in the 'Big Shift' campaign to persuade banks to withdraw funding from fossil fuels.

## **4 Staffing and Other Issues**

**4.1** The loss of our Dorchester based minister, the Revd Stephanie Jenner, who has been unable to work for much of the year, has created a large hole in our work. She has been temporarily replaced as Superintendent by the Revd Gwyneth Owen, the superintendent of the Christchurch and Wimborne circuit and deputy chair of the Southampton Methodist District. She has given generously of her time to UCD. She filled in, as time allowed, in the planning of worship, in pastoral activity and, particularly in supporting the senior management team.

**4.2** 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.

**4.3** Our URC Minister, Revd Peter Clark, continues to give about a third of his time (increased to 50% for the last three months of the year) to United Church Dorchester, leading worship, sharing leadership of one of our Fellowship groups and serving on the Council of Stewards. He also comes regularly to our Coffee Shop and makes himself available to church members and visitors alike.

**4.3.1** The Dorset South & West Circuit (comprising Bridport, Dorchester, Portland and Weymouth and the surrounding area) came into being in September 2018. Regretfully, Revd Stephanie Jenner was unable to take up the post of Superintendent Minister in the new Circuit, so during the year 2018/19, temporary cover was provided by the Revd Gwyneth Owen, Superintendent of a neighbouring Circuit and deputy Chair of the Southampton District. With her

support, the new Circuit has addressed significant staffing and financial challenges, and begun to build a 'mixed economy' of mission and ministry, based on teams of ordained and lay staff and others.

- 4.4** Our pastoral visitor, employed by the Methodist Circuit, continues to work closely with the Ministers and pastoral team.
- 4.5** Our Admin officer carries out the routine administration of the lettings of rooms in the church buildings and carries out some administrative duties to assist the Church Secretary.
- 4.6** 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, the church shop or Contact centre. Although we cannot accurately estimate the time given, it must amount to several hundred person hours per week.

## **5 Financial review**

### **5.1 Reserves policy**

The Church has a Reserves Policy, a requirement of the Charity Commission, to secure the future in case of unexpected or exceptional need.

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, currently £82k.

## **5.2 Restricted and Designated funds**

Restricted funds and endowments, i.e. funds designated for a specific uses, are not included in the reserves. The Florence Fare Trust is an endowment, of which, only the interest may be used and must only be spent on Youth and Family work. There two other, small, restricted funds: the memorial fund and the Outreach fund. For the former, both interest and capital may be used but only for items used in or work carried out on the sanctuary area of the church. The latter is money from the Methodist Circuit to spend on outreach at the United Church. Finally a designated fund has been set aside by the church meeting to cover the costs of stabilising the church tower, which is in an unsafe condition. Work is still ongoing to find a qualified contractor who is prepared to take on the work.

## **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)

## **5.5 Risk Assessments**

Because of the extra work involved in managing the church resulting from the ongoing staff shortages outlined elsewhere in this report, further work on the development of our risk management system has been put on hold.

## **5.6 Safeguarding**

**5.6.1** Safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse and children is taken very seriously by the Church Stewards. Two members of the congregation have been appointed to act as joint safeguarding officers and the church also takes the lead in the circuit for safeguarding.

**5.6.2** 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 and young people, and adults at risk of abuse. As part of this training 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.

**5.6.3** A Safer Recruitment policy is now in operation which requires that all staff in roles eligible for Disclosure and Barring clearance are required to apply.