

# **St. Andrews Methodist Church Harlow**



## **Annual Report 2024**

## **Minister's Message**

“Count your blessings name them one by one,” was written by Johnson Oatman Jr., a 19th-century American gospel songwriter, who wrote more than 5,500 hymns. He wrote “Count Your Blessings” in 1897 as part of a project for a local church. I guess he felt that that particular church had many blessings to count and a lot of things to be thankful for. So do we. The pages that follow document some of the blessings and thanksgivings that have been part of our church life in the past year. On these pages are written our efforts at mission, our love of bible study, our devotion to one another, and our commitment to Christ. Here you will find description of the trying, sharing, and loving that are all part of who we are. These pages don't begin to say it all. They don't go into detail and they don't reveal the confidential giving, the private conversations, the personal prayers, and the individual unsung efforts that are at the heart of every church, but they give us a sense of all those things. The last year has been a good one. New people have been coming almost every Sunday, new members have been baptised, The building has continued to be used by many different groups, and on Sunday mornings we have all done our best to praise God, and count our blessings. Thanks be to God for all that has been, and thanks be to God for all that is yet to come.

**In and with the love of Jesus,  
Rev Blair**

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## WORSHIP

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### **Holy communion.**

Participants of Holy communion this year have stayed the same with an average of 30-63 members.

On Maundy Thursday, we celebrated the last supper with a meal followed by Holy Communion, with 30 members taking Communion.

Easter Sunday morning service 10.30 am was well attended with 63 members receiving Communion.

Margaret Nunoo  
Juliet Arthur

### **POP IN PRAYER report for AGM 2024**

Just a few of us meet every third Saturday at 11am in the chapel for half an hour. We would welcome more members and friends to share in this time of prayer. Please note that because of the Harvest date, the September 21<sup>st</sup> session is cancelled. *Hazel Taylor*

## **MONDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Members meet every Monday at 12 o'clock with an attendance between 5 and 8.

We are studying Luke at the moment and read a few chapters each week.

We bring a packed lunch (snack) with us and we eat this first with a cup of tea/coffee.. Then we each take a turn at reading a section of the chapter we are studying, and we all discuss it. It is very interesting as people see different aspects and we learn as we go. We also have some laughs as people tell us things that have happened to them related to the reading . So we have learning and fun together. It's good.

## **THURSDAY LUNCHTIME ZOOM BIBLE STUDY**

There are just four of us who attend this Bible study, but we enjoy it. We are currently looking at the gospel of Matthew and we always learn something new about God's word whenever we meet. As it is on Zoom, we do it in the privacy of our homes, but we feel connected to one another and to the church. All are welcome.

*Blair Kirkby*

## **TUESDAY AND THURSDAY BIBLE STUDY – ANNUAL REPORT**

The Tuesday Bible study group meet at the chapel from 7:30 - 8:45pm.

We have gone through the book of Genesis and have just started studying the Gospel according to John.

We engage in very informal discussions through sharing and contributing our thoughts on the bible passage.

Individuals are free to ask questions which are discussed, frankly.

We have been having a great and enjoyable experience with the study of the Word of God and we welcome individuals who would like to join or visit.

The Thursday Bible study is held on zoom from 7:30 - 8:30pm.

We started the year with studies on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, followed with the Books on Galatians, Ephesians and are currently studying the concluding chapter of Philippians.

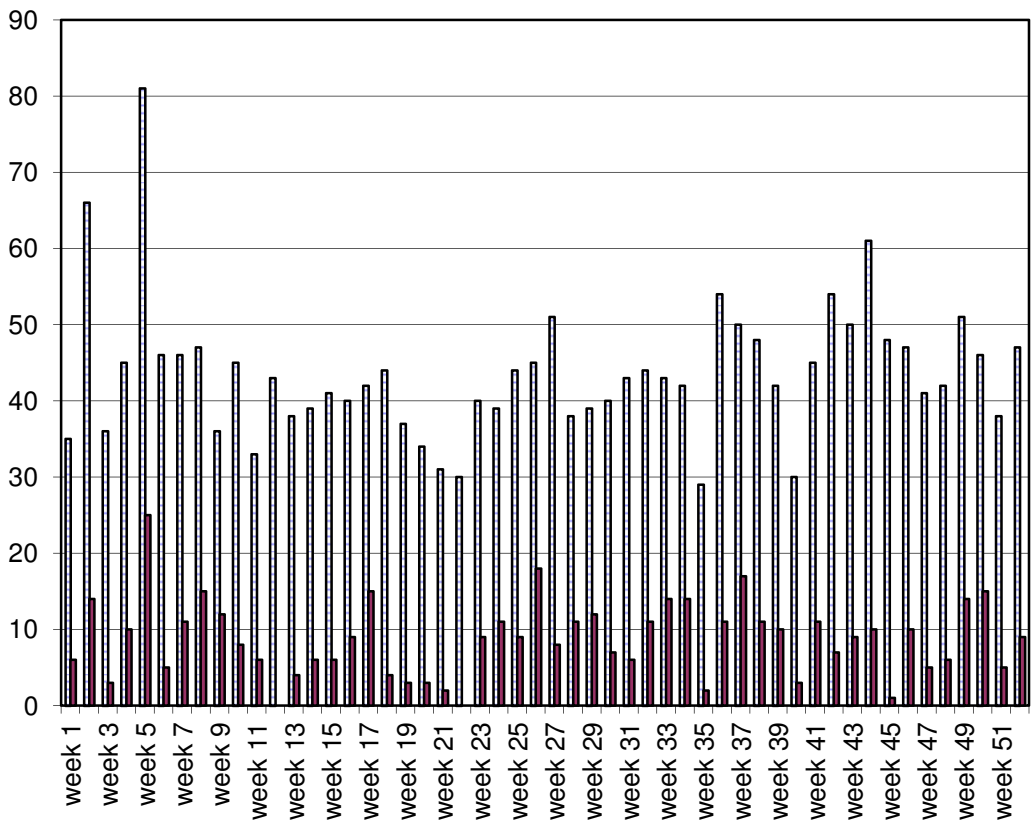
It is our study plan to continue with Colossians and the rest of the letters of Paul.

In our study, much emphasis is placed on the life application of Scriptures.

*Frederick Arthur*

# Sunday Attendance

2023-24 Sunday attendance



The above chart shows the weekly attendance during Sunday Services at St. Andrew’s Methodist Church from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023 to 24<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Physical attendance of adults are shown in Blue Squared pattern columns, children in solid Purple columns. The weekly average is 43.57 for adults and 8.71 for children.

Kay Wong  
Weekly Notices Editor

April 2024.

# Property and Finance

## Stewards' Report

I would like to start with a big thank you to the stewards for their continued support, and for once again stepping in when I couldn't carry out my duties at late notice. At this point I want to say that it has been a privilege to serve St Andrew's in this capacity, but it is with deep regret that, due to returning problems with my breathing, I feel that I need to step down from my duties and take a back seat. I will continue to support and help wherever I can, but I need to lessen the responsibility and reduce the stress I have been feeling. The stewards continue to give much valued support to the Church in many ways and we thank God for their willingness to serve.

Eddie Collier (Lead Steward)

## Property Report

In October the security alarm and the fire alarm were serviced. It was noted that the system, on the security alarm that alerts either Revd John or Revd Blair has been disabled. I note that these two alarm systems are maintained by different companies. Is there any reason for this, or could we get a better deal if the services were carried out by one company?

I have been concerned about the fire safety in the building and asked the Fire Prevention Officer from Harlow Fire Station to meet me, which he did on 17<sup>th</sup> November. He pointed out a lot of things that needed to be done, including fire doors to be fitted, gangways to be cleared, fire exit signs to be clearer, plus other important issues. He said that the church must get a fire assessment done, which was arranged by Morgan Fire. I was told to be prepared to give up a day to be with this person, as it was a big job. I met the assessor at 10.30 a.m. and he left before 2 p.m. The report, costing £750, was not received until early February and was, to say the least, very unhelpful stating that we needed fire doors but not specifying which ones. The Fire Prevention Officer had said we must have steel shutters from kitchen to hall and from hall to corridor – the assessor did not mention these. He did, however, say that the fire door from the first floor to the balcony was unsatisfactory, but no comment was made as to what should be done to improve it. He told me that, if we needed a specific report on fire doors, that would be a different survey and that his job was just to point out the risks, which to me, were fairly obvious. I have since contacted Harlow Fire Prevention and have been told that someone will meet me to give stronger advice. I wait to see.

The leaking water heater in the back gents' toilets was replaced. Work was carried out by Richard Burbridge to the front gents' toilet; clearing large damp area in the cubicle, rubbing down walls and repainting – also fitting an extractor fan. Other works completed by Richard were: working on the corridor behind the stage, redecorating the damp ceiling by the chapel and repainting the walls. Also repairing holes to Room 3 ceiling and fitting LED lighting.

Both boilers were serviced by Sterling Gas, who also fitted a sump pump in the boiler room to stop any further flooding there. I would point out that the boiler service is an annual requirement.

Yet to be done at the end of April is a full electrical survey. This is a five year legal requirement.

Eddie Collier (Property Steward)

## Envelopes and Gift Aid Secretary's Report

Based on figures supplied by the Treasurer, I have worked out the income from all offertory sources for the 2023-24 financial year, and from that the expected Gift Aid refund that we can claim. The results are as shown in the following table. I have also included for comparison figures from the last full year before the onset of Covid (2018-19) and first full year after Covid (2022-23). The offertory income includes all regular donations from envelope holders, standing orders, direct payments to bank, 'loose' collections on Sundays and *ad hoc* contributions via various channels.

Year	Description	Offertory Income	Offertory Change	Gift Aid Claim	Gift Aid Change
18-19	Last full year before Covid, the 'Baseline' for comparison	£32273	Baseline	£8586	Baseline
22-23	First full year after Covid	£32949	Virtually Unchanged	£8076	6% DOWN
<b>23-24</b>	<b>Subject Year</b>	<b>£32540</b>	Virtually Unchanged	<b>£8100</b>	<b>6% DOWN</b>

From the table we can see that, after the hiatus brought about by Covid, our offertory income has indeed returned to pre-Covid level, (in numerical terms without considering the effect of inflation). We would like to thank the generosity of all our regular subscribers and other donors for sustaining the church's finances during those difficult three years.

Currently, we have 28 members on the envelope scheme and 15 members offering via Standing Orders or BACS, making a total of 43. In comparison, for the last full year before Covid (2018-19), the corresponding figure was 54. We have lost over a dozen regular donors in the past few years. The effect is most apparent in our Gift Aid income.

As can be seen in the table above, our Gift Aid claim is some 6% down compared with what we were able to achieve some years back, despite the fact that through our concerted drive for more Gift Aiders we have increased its membership from 29 in 2018 to 34 at present. A few more Gift Aiders would have been most helpful.

So, if you have not done so already, please consider putting your donations on Gift Aid. This gives the church the ability to increase the value of your contribution, at no additional cost to yourselves, by up to 25%, which will be much appreciated and valued.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

*Andrew Wong*

*Envelope Scheme and Gift Aid Secretary*



St Andrew's Methodist Church, The Stow, Harlow

**Summary of Receipt and Expenditure from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023**

Offertory			
Offering via SO	(16,946.22)		
Envelopes	(13,573.54)		
Sub total Envelopes		(30,519.76)	
Loose Offertories	(3,624.06)		
		(3,624.06)	
Total Offertory		(34,143.82)	
Lettings		(16,827.81)	
Other Receipt			
Sundries i.e. Gift Aid	(8,880.73)		
		(8,880.73)	
Donations Received by St Andrew's		(3,670.10)	
Collections for third parties			
Food donation	(100.00)		
Collection for third parties	(1,069.55)	(1,169.55)	
		(64,692.01)	0.00
St Andrew's Contribution to HAEBEA		24,000.00	
Donations given by St Andrew's	665.00		
Property Fund			
Presbyters & Deacon			
		665.00	
Repairs & Maintenance			
Building Repairs	20,620.48		
		20,620.48	
Utilities			
Water	882.34		
Gas & Electric	8,474.13		
Insurance	2,451.89		
		11,808.36	
Other Payments			
Cleaning	1,937.25		
Purchase	618.59		
Sundries	2,654.15		
		5,209.99	
<b>Collections for third parties settlement</b>			
Action4Children/World Mission Fund JMA	1,472.65		
		1,472.65	
		63,776.48	0.00
(Surplus)/Deficit		(915.53)	

## **Lettings and Buildings use**

This year I want to reflect on the use of our building and not just give a brief summary of our lettings.

Our worship life is centred on our regular Sunday worship --its importance shown on Easter Sunday with 60 adults and 8 children and probably a further 7-8 people on zoom. The buzz of conversation in the entrance and over coffee etc in the hall is significant.

Our fellowship continued in The Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship and the bible studies on Monday and Tuesday and the monthly pop-in prayer and Spud and Pud lunches.

Tuesdays in term-time sees the hall busy with Stars for parents and carers with young children and then in the afternoon the 3<sup>rd</sup> Harlow Guides.

The Methodist commitment to alcohol-free premises makes us an appropriate venue for the series of six Alcoholics Anonymous groups that meet on our premises, particularly important for those who need an alcohol-free space on Christmas Day.

Our church sanctuary is used three Sundays a month in the afternoon by a Tamil congregation, and from time to time by other Christian groups for special worship.

Our service to the community means that on Wednesdays the hall is the venue for Activity Groups providing mental, physical and social activities for those with problems of age. We provide space too for courses for those with the physical problem of diabetes two short courses run over consecutive weeks by the NHS for those already diagnosed, and a longer spread out pre-diabetes course run on behalf of the NHS.

Cultural activities have their place in our building with its good acoustics with the Harlow Brass Band who rehearse in the hall each week and use the church for a Spring and a Christmas concert each year, and the New Edition choir who use our premises as one of their venues for summer and winter concerts. We continue to be a venue for ABRSM music exams.

As part of our service to the community we provide a suitable location for family activities such as children's birthday parties since our hall provides a safe space for among other things a bouncy castle; and at the other end of life the hall is a good venue for "celebration of life" events. Rooms One and Three provide suitable spaces for a number of other community groups.

Our charges make a significant contribution to the maintenance of our building, but as part of the extended church's work are not, and cannot be, at commercial rates.

All these contribute to the witness of St Andrews to Christ in our community and will provide a basis for developing our mission in the future.

**John Buxton**

## **St. Andrew's GDPR**

Another quiet year with no Data Breaches reported, or Subject Access Requests (SARs) received. We are assembling a St. Andrew's Data Register containing all our collected personal information (Data), to enable us to respond more easily within 30 days to any SARs.

I have issued a letter to all Data Holders to refresh our safe handling of Data and to provide information on how we will respond to any GDPR situations that may arise. If you have Data, but have not yet received this update letter, please let me know.

The website has a number of GDPR forms available for Data Holders to provide me with new information as it arises, and these have a system of password protection, available to all Data Holders, to keep our Data private if sent by email.

Apr 2024

Bob Taylor (gdprprocessor@standrewsharlow.org.uk)

## **St. Andrew's Website - standrewsharlow.org.uk**

In January, we successfully transferred our hosting from HostPapa in Canada, to EUKhosting in Britain, at considerable lower cost, for the next two years, and beyond.

### **Website Visits**

Visitor numbers are about twice last year's figures with about 200 each month so far this year, although still very few stay for very long. The Chinese seem to be more interested than previously, and considerably more than anyone else including the Russians! Let's pray that the 'good news' may be reaching into that land.

### **Scam Attacks and Spam**

We have had a couple of attacks recently, impersonating our Minister, but fewer attacks overall than in the past, hopefully because of the spam filters I am able to put in place.

Spam continues to blight our email accounts, though. If you are receiving a lot of spam from your church email account, please let me know and I will see if it has a common factor which might allow me to block it.

### **A Second Website Editor**

As I say each year, there is a need for continuity should I be unable to maintain the website for any reason, so the church needs someone ready to take over the operation of the website in my absence. The position requires someone with some computer and/or programming skills, but I can provide tuition for the post. If you would like to put yourself forward, please apply to Revd Blair Kirkby.

In the meantime, the Minister has full details of the present operation of the website, available for the eventuality that I may not be able to personally hand over it's running to someone else.

Apr 2024

Bob Taylor (siteeditor@standrewsharlow.org.uk)

# Mission and Service

## **CHURCH MAGAZINE report for AGM 2024**

Our Magazine is still distributed in print form to about 75 people plus a full colour copy to those who can receive it by email.

A colour version, with email addresses and phone numbers removed goes on our Church Website. We are trying to get a copy once again onto the HAEBEA Website.

I would still welcome more articles, information, and photos in jpg form from any members, although I sometimes need to alter or shorten submissions. The deadline date for copy for the next magazine is always in the current one but submissions before the deadline are appreciated.

Hazel Taylor, 438905, [magazine@standrewsharlow.org.uk](mailto:magazine@standrewsharlow.org.uk)

## **FRIENDSHIP GROUP report for AGM 2024**

We are a small group of St Andrews' ladies who meet in members' houses once a month. We eat lunch together and chat, then close with an epilogue and prayer time.

If there is a fifth Thursday in the month we meet for a restaurant lunch and we also have occasional outings. Although this is a small group, we enjoy fellowship together and support each other. If you worship at St Andrew's and would like to join us, please ask me for details. We would really like to include more ladies but you do need transport or are able to come by bus.

Hazel Taylor

**St. Andrews Methodist Church, The Stow, Harlow.**

**Report on Missions' (General). Sept. 2022- Sept.2023**

Donations received via the 'box' system were lower than the previous two years and it may well be that some people are donating directly to the finance department at Methodist church house, If so, please let Andrew Wong know,

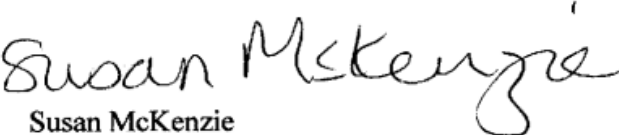
Thank you to those who continue to donate via the 'box' system – great for your small change!

If you'd like to join the scheme let me know.

'Self-denial' envelopes issued on 'Covenant Sunday' showed a significant increase from last year.

**World Mission**

Boxes	£ 39,09
Tax (gift aid reclaim)	13.00
'Self – Denial' envelopes;	301.05
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£354.04</b>

  
Susan McKenzie

29.4.24

## JMA Report

Over the period September 2022 to August 2023, we were thankful to the Lord that with COVID restriction behind us, we were able to do regular JMA collections once again. The JMA awards were kindly presented by Mrs. Susan McKenzie on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

The details of the awards are as shown below:

<b>JMA year 2022-23</b>	<b>Year of Service</b>	<b>Badge Type</b>
<b>Eslie Okyere</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>New Member 2023</b>
<b>Dominic Annobil</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Annual 2023</b>
<b>Samantha Osei</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Annual 2023</b>
<b>Christopher Annobil</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Annual 2023</b>
<b>Isabel Annobil</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Annual 2023</b>
<b>Zachary Castle</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Annual 2023</b>
<b>Isabella Castle</b>	<b>Year 7 Long Service</b>	<b>Annual 2023</b>
<b>Vaughn Mojzes</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Annual 2023</b>

<b>Collections &amp; Donations</b>	<b>£914.95</b>
<b>2022-23 Gift Aid rebate</b>	<b>£185.00</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£1099.95</b>

JMA is starting a new term in September. All eight members remain on their collection duties. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the parents who have been supporting and encouraging the children and enabling them to stay in church after Sunday service to do their JMA.

In addition, big THANK YOU to everyone for your continuous prayers, generous subscriptions, kind support, and donations to “Junior Mission for All” which support our mission partners for their work around the world and at home.

*Kay Wong*  
*JMA Secretary*  
*April 2024.*

## Christian Aid Week Report

Christian Aid Week 2024 is on 12th-18th May. St. Andrew's Church will follow our tradition of supporting this event with the following activities:

- Envelope collection: individuals can make donations with the Christian Aid envelopes which are available and can be handed in with the Church offertory from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> May
- Donations online: please use the following link to make donations online  
<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>
- Christian Aid Lunch: on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May, starting at 12.00pm.
- Christian Aid information display on the Church foyer in May
- Church's supporting prayers

The 2023 event at St. Andrew's collected a total of **£842.55**, made up of online donations (£160.00), envelopes with cheques & cash donations (£610.55), and Christian Aid lunch intake (£72). Of the total, £695.00 are Gift Aided, giving a tax rebate of £173.75.

We reflect together on God's love and the call to love our neighbours. We follow the story of Aline Nibogora, from Makamba Province in Burundi. Aline has experienced abuse and extreme poverty, but she has found ways to persist in faith, hope and love.

- **£5** could buy the savings book that will help someone set up the small business that enables them to escape the inhumanity of poverty.
- **£27** could buy the lockable safe that protects a community's savings, hopes and dreams.
- **£100** could provide ten people with the training that supports their families to set up small businesses, such as selling home-grown vegetables.

*Kay Wong & Susan McKenzie*  
Christian Aid Week Organisers  
*April 2024.*

### **Harlow Foodbank**

During 2023, a total of £946 in cash and cheques donations was sent to the Michael Roberts Charitable Trust to be used for the work of Harlow Foodbank. Thanks to some late donations, this was rather more than I reported in the February edition of the St Andrews Magazine. (The previous year's total was £1,110.23). My thanks go to Andrew Wong who has inspected the accounts.

I am told that we now receive very few donations of food brought to St Andrews for Foodbank. What does come is collected by Alison and Kevin Brand and is transported to the depot at Houlsham Hall Farm at Matching Tye. Our donations of money are therefore all the more important to maintain the important work of Harlow Foodbank in helping to provide emergency basic food supplies for individuals and families in extreme need. The simplest way to make a donation in the name of St Andrews Methodist Church is by putting cash in an envelope with your name and address (email address if you have one) in an envelope and handing it to Hazel Taylor. She will pass it to me and I will acknowledge every donation I receive. If you need to write a cheque it should be made out to 'Michael Roberts Charitable Trust'.

John Hutchings