

St. Andrews Methodist Church Harlow

Annual Report

Church Meeting May 2025



**Minister :
Rev. Dr. Frank Okai-Sam**

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Dear Friends,

The past connexional year has not been easy for the circuit regarding changes from an ecumenical area (HAEBEA) to a circuit (HAEBBC). The year ahead is even more uncertain as Rev. Gill Hulme retires, and the circuit looks at its future. However, at this church's annual meeting, there is reason to rejoice in the wonderful acts of God that has been experienced over the past year.

There is the gradual surge in attendance at Sunday services. Secondly, worship and prayer go together. The bimonthly prayer walks, and monthly prayer times have been very refreshing. We rejoice that prayer requests are catered for consistently in the church and community. We also give thanks to God for the many answers to the prayers that are presented at worship services, prayer meetings and by individuals, even at their leisure times. However, I wonder if I can remind you of your commitment to the Methodist Way of Life that includes prayer. Hence the prayer times and walks will do with more people.

I wonder if you can also take some time off your busy lives and praise God for the weekly Bible Study (face to face and on zoom). Like prayer, the studies are yearning for more attendance. Another praise item is the commitment of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders as they meticulously prepare to lead worship and bring varieties of worship to the doorstep of this congregation. I wonder if I can use the opportunity to invite members to consider becoming Worship Leaders or Local Preachers. Remember, 'the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few'.

Pastorally, members continue to visit and look out for each other. However, I wonder if a few more members would consider to be Pastoral visitors to carry on with the momentum.

I would be very ungrateful if I do not mention the many acts of mission, evangelism and service that members of this church as well as people from this community help to undertake to make this place a welcoming church. And talking about mission, the church has been able to appoint a property team that is looking at how best the building can be maintained to serve the congregation and the community. Secondly, a mission enabler, has been appointed to encourage and facilitate the church's mission and growth objectives for the next three years. Thanks to the circuit for proving most of the funds. Another point is that the church will start to engage with the 'Methodist Way of Life' (MOL) resources in the autumn. This will help it to revisit its mission or growth plans for the next few years. I also wonder if I can encourage friends who have come to join the church to consider becoming members. It does not need to be a public recognition. You can quietly approach the Minister, and a quiet transfer of membership can be done if you are already a member of another congregation. It can also be done for the one who is joining the Christian community for the first time. You can have a dual membership as well.

The following pages give a taste of the church life in the past year. As you read and reflect upon them, I wonder if I can remind you that everything we do is not about us but God. First, give thanks to God for the opportunity he has given to us to serve him in his kingdom. Let us also thank him for the fact that as we serve him, we are given opportunities that challenge and/or increase our faith in him.

I look forward to another year of the Holy Spirit's enablement in dealing with challenges and opportunities that come in this church's mission encounters.

It is my prayer that you have an effective deliberation.

God bless you all.

Yours sincerely,

Frank

Holy Communion

This year, the number of participants in Holy Communion has remained consistent, averaging between 30- 60.

On Maundy Thursday, we commemorated the Last Super with washing of hands and Communion, where 17 members participated, showing a decrease of last year's Maundy Thursday's participants of 30 members.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrated our Risen Lord with a Sun Rise Breakfast before Easter Sunday service at 10:30 am which saw a good turnout with 82 members receiving Communion.

Margaret Nunoo
Juliet Arthur

POP IN PRAYER report for AGM 2025

This half an hour on the third Saturday each month at 11am is the only CHURCH PRAYER MEETING. We would encourage more people to join us in the chapel to share in this time of prayer.

Hazel Taylor

THURSDAY LUNCH TIME BIBLE STUDY GROUP.

The group is an offspring from the former Trinity URC church and has continued under the umbrella of St. Andrew`s. I took over the leadership when Rev. Blair retired last summer. We are currently studying selected Psalms. We used Psalm 22 on Maundy Thursday to revisit the cross. The group meet on zoom as one member now lives in Norwich. I have my own personal zoom account.

We are only three or four but friendly and enthusiastic and all have the opportunity of giving their own opinions. It is disappointing that the group has not grown although the zoom link is given each week in the church notices. Work commitments may make joining difficult. If there is a demand I would be prepared to do a repeat at a more convenient evening time but on zoom.

Bible study is an important aspect of our Christian journey. We can never stop learning. I revisit bible passages that I thought I understood and frequently learn something new.

Arthur

Thursday Evening – Bible Study Group

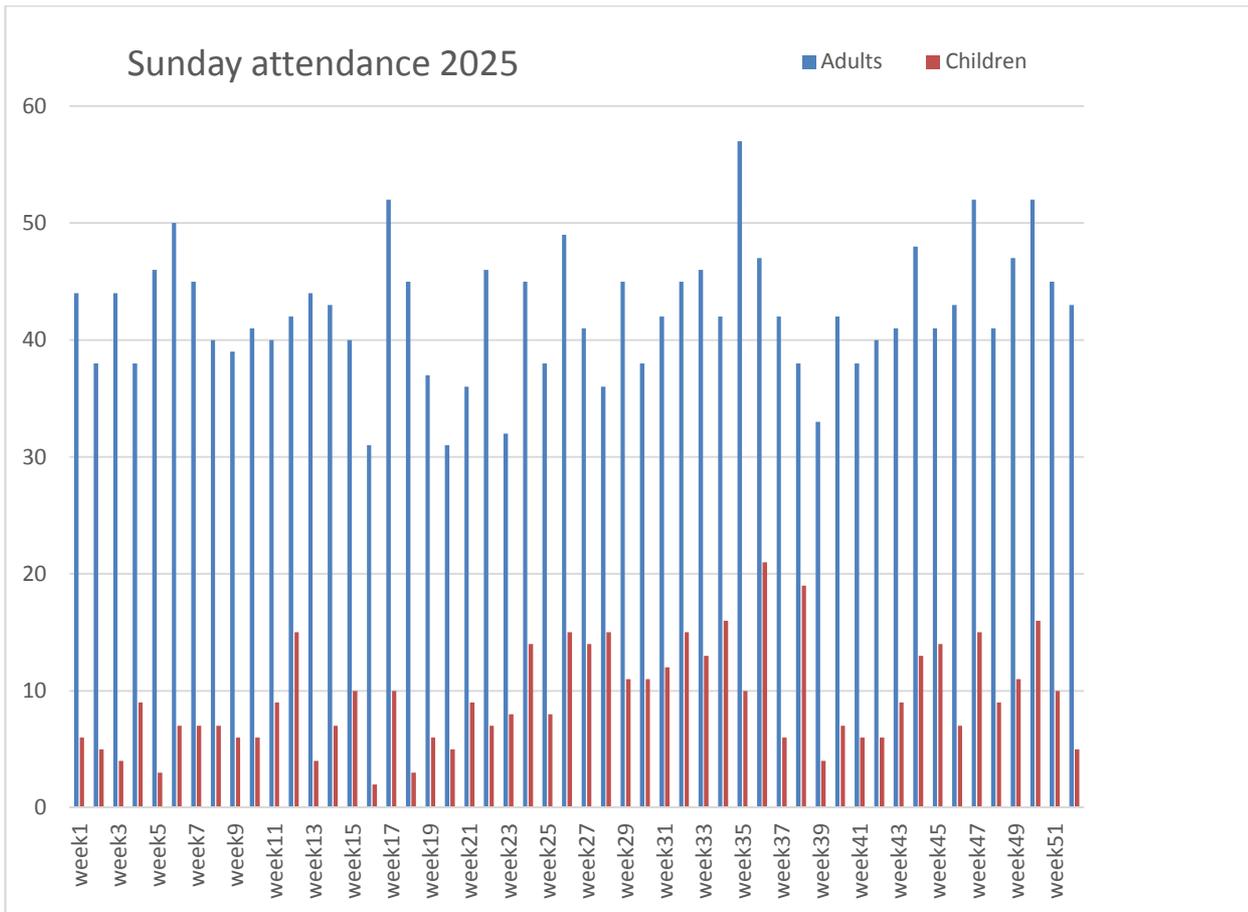
Over the past year, our Bible Study Group has been small but committed. We met faithfully every Thursday evening from 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm on Zoom.

Each session was centred around the reading and discussion of selected Bible passages. We not only explored the meaning and context of the Scriptures but also focused on how to apply these teachings practically in our daily lives. Our conversations were thoughtful, encouraging, and often deeply personal, strengthening both our faith and our fellowship with one another.

Overall, the year has been a great blessing. We are grateful for the consistency of the group, the insights shared, and the opportunity to grow together in God's Word. We look forward to continuing to build on this strong foundation in the year ahead.

Frederick Arthur

Sunday Attendance



The above chart shows the weekly attendance during Sunday Services at St. Andrew's Methodist Church from 7th April 2024 to 30th March 2025. The weekly average is 42.32 for adults and 9.36 for children.

Kay Wong

Weekly Notices Editor

April 2025

St. Andrews Methodist Church Property Report

Date: April 2025 Prepared by: Mr Alexis Mojzes

1. Introduction

This Property Report serves as a record of the current status of the church property and outlines the structure of the newly ratified Property Team. The report also provides a basis for ongoing maintenance, development, and planning activities related to the church building and associated assets.

2. Property Team

At the most recent Church Council meeting, a new Property Team was officially ratified to oversee the maintenance, management, and improvement of church property. The team comprises the following individuals:

- **Mr. Alexis Mojzes**
- **Mrs. Cecilia Mojzes**
- **Mr. Eddie Collier** (In an advisory capacity)
- **Mr. Joe-Ike Impraim** (Co-opted Treasurer)

The team brings a mix of experience, commitment, and practical knowledge to the stewardship of the church's physical resources.

3. Immediate Priorities

The first priority for the newly ratified Property Team was to review the **Fire Assessment Report** received in **February 2024**. This follows up on issues initially raised in the previous year's Property Report, submitted by **Mr. Eddie Collier**.

The report identified several areas of concern requiring urgent attention to ensure compliance with current fire safety legislation and to protect the safety of all users of the church premises. These concerns included:

- **Clearing of gangways** to ensure safe and unobstructed exits in case of emergency.
- **Improved fire safety signage** throughout the premises for clearer evacuation routes.
- **The installation of modernised fire doors**, which was noted as the most pressing issue. The current doors do not meet the requirements of updated fire safety legislation.

To receive clearer guidance and support the church's compliance efforts, **Mr. Alexis Mojzes** contacted the **Essex Fire Department**, who recommended that the church complete the **Home Office guide: "A Guide to Making Your Small Non-Domestic Premises Safe from Fire."**

Working together, **Mr. Mojzes and Mr. Collier** completed this assessment and confirmed that the previously identified priorities were valid and required addressing **post haste**. Additional concerns highlighted during the process included:

- **Storage of furniture and bric-a-brac**, which poses potential fire hazards and obstructs escape routes.
- **Improper storage of consumable wares and cleaning materials**, some of which are flammable and must be secured safely.
- **Blocked or insufficient means of escape** from **Room 2** and **Room 3**, which must be rectified to ensure safe evacuation in emergencies.
- **Fire safety training** for **Church Stewards and Youth Leaders**, to improve preparedness and response in the event of a fire.

The Property Team is now prioritising these issues and exploring immediate and long-term solutions. Contractors and training providers are being reviewed, and a phased action plan will be proposed for Council approval.

4. Quinquennial Report Findings

Mr. Alexis Mojzes received the **2024 Quinquennial Inspection Report** from **Rev. John Buxton**, providing a comprehensive review of the condition of the church building and its associated facilities.

After carefully reviewing the report, Mr. Mojzes has identified several issues that require immediate attention, both from a **Health and Safety** perspective and to prevent further **wear, tear, or structural damage**. Addressing these concerns promptly will help preserve the integrity of the church building and ensure the safety of all users.

To that end:

- **An action plan has been drafted** by the Property Team to prioritise the most urgent tasks.
- **Quotes are currently being sought** from approved contractors and tradespeople to carry out the necessary repairs and upgrades.

The Property Team will provide a full breakdown of recommended actions, estimated costs, and timelines in the next Church Council meeting. Long-term maintenance items noted in the Quinquennial Report will also be factored into future budget planning and grant applications where applicable.

5. Financial Considerations

The co-opted Treasurer, **Mr. Joe-Ike Impraim**, will work closely with the Property Team and Finance Committee to ensure all projects are cost-effective and within the church's budget. Any proposed expenses will be documented and submitted for council approval.

6. Eco Church Registration

St. Andrews Methodist Church is proud to announce its official registration with **A Rocha UK's Eco Church programme**. This marks a significant step forward in the church's commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability.

The **Eco Church programme** is designed to support churches in caring for creation as an integral part of loving their neighbours and following God faithfully. It encourages practical action across five key areas:

- **Worship and Teaching**
- **Buildings**
- **Land**
- **Community and Global Engagement**
- **Lifestyle**

By registering, St. Andrews has begun the process of evaluating and improving its environmental impact across these areas. Future property decisions, including maintenance, energy use, and procurement, will increasingly reflect the church's eco-conscious values.

The Property Team will work alongside other church groups to integrate Eco Church principles into the ongoing use and care of the building and grounds.

7. Next Steps

- Schedule a full property inspection by a licensed professional.
- Develop a 12-month maintenance and repair plan.
- Complete an Eco Church questionnaire to achieve bronze status.
- Review existing service contracts (cleaning, groundskeeping, utilities).
- Establish a regular reporting schedule to Church Council.

. Conclusion

The Property Team is committed to the responsible care and enhancement of St. Andrews Methodist Church's facilities. With the full support of the Church Council and congregation, the team will aim to ensure the church remains an Eco- friendly, safe, welcoming, and functional space for worship and community outreach.

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 2024-25 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 figures from the previous year for comparison. The offertory income includes all regular donations from envelope holders, standing orders, direct payments to bank, 'loose' collections on Sundays and *ad hoc* contributions to the church via various channels.

Year	Description	Offertory Income	Offertory Change	Gift Aid Claim	Gift Aid Change
23-24	Previous year for comparison	£32848	Baseline	£8205	Baseline
24-25	Subject Year	£33997	+3%	£8448	+3%

From the table we can see that, at least in numerical terms before accounting for inflation, our offertory income has stabilised after the hiatus caused by Covid, and, in the past year, has even shown signs of a modest recovery. We would like to thank the generosity of all our regular subscribers and other donors for sustaining the church's finances during difficult times.

Currently, we have 32 members on the envelope scheme and 16 members offering via Standing Orders or BACS, making a total of 48 who make donations on a regular basis. In comparison, last year's corresponding figure was 43.

Thanks also to those who have opted to join Gift Aid. Our claim last year has gone up by 3%, even as the number of active Gift Aiders on our books has decreased by 1 to 33. A few more Gift Aiders would have been very helpful.

Because of fiscal drag – the fact that the basic income tax threshold had not been uplifted in line with inflation for the past three years (and will not be for at least 3 more years), some people in employment or on state pension who were not liable to income tax before, would be progressively dragged into the bracket for paying basic incoming tax in future. If you are one of those affected, and you want some of that tax money to be redirected to support work in this church and in the local community, the simple way is to become a Gift Aider, and allow the church to reclaim that money on your behalf.

So, please consider putting your donations on Gift Aid if you have not done so already. This gives the church the ability to increase the value of your contributions, at no additional cost to yourself, 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
April, 2025

St Andrew's Methodist Church, The Stow

Harlow

Receipts and Payment for year ending 31 Aug 2024

	Yr. 2024 Amount £	Yr. 2023 Amount £
Receipts		
BACS	(15,655.40)	(17,144.71)
Envelopes	(19,847.94)	(21,003.09)
Loose	0.00	0.00
Gif tAid	(6,965.70)	(8,880.73)
Let tngs	(14,112.00)	(14,835.00)
Third Party	(784.95)	(586.75)
Sundries	(29,109.04)	(3,587.87)
	<u>sub total</u> (86,475.03)	(66,038.15)
Payment		
Ministry	24,000.00	28,300.00
Donat ions by St Andrew's	254.48	640.00
Repairs Maintenance	12,411.82	20,790.97
		0.00
Ut lit es		
Insurance	2,472.80	2,451.89
water	2,194.87	882.34
heat ng	37,484.81	6,565.60
light ng	5,370.47	1,908.53
		0.00
Other payment		
Cleaning	2,250.00	1,937.25
Third party	1,753.48	1,860.15
Sundries	4,593.61	3,872.57
	<u>sub total</u> 92,786.34	69,209.30
(Surplus)/Def cit	6,311.31	3,171.15

Another quiet year with no Data Breaches reported, or Subject Access Requests (SARs) received.

We have now assembled 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.

The website has a number of GDPR forms available (on the GDPR Documents page) 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.

If you have new or changed Data on any existing or new members, please inform me via the 'Data Change Forms' available there, in order to keep our Data Register up to date. Please request the password from me.

April 2025

Bob Taylor (dataprocessor@standrewsharlow.org.uk)

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

Website Visits

Visitor numbers are slightly less than last year's figures at about 150 each month so far this year, although still very few stay for very long. Interest from the Chinese and Russians has drastically reduced over the year. The Americans still provide most of the visitors we receive.

Scam Attacks and Spam

I have not received, nor heard of, any scam attacks during this past year.

Spam continues to blight our email accounts. Much has already been blocked, but spammers are always coming up with new specimens. 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.

Refreshing

The browsers we use to view the internet are lazy, and display web pages saved from any previous visit, rather than those now available on the website visited. When viewing time-critical pages such as the 'Diary', use the 'F5' key each time to show the latest version of the page.

For the future

The Minister continues to have full details of the present operation of the website, (and of our GDPR operation also) should I be unable to continue with these tasks in the future.

April 2025

Bob Taylor (siteeditor@standrewsharlow.org.uk)

CHURCH MAGAZINE

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. I have refreshed the look of the April/May edition.

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

Hazel Taylor, magazine@standrewsharlow.org.uk

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

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 to use a bus or car to get to the various houses.

[Hazel Taylor](#)

JMA Report

Over the period September 2023 to August 2024, we were able to make regular JMA collections. The JMA awards were kindly presented by Mrs. Margaret Torkildsen on 15th September.

The details of the awards are as shown below:

Collections & Donations	£862.55
2023-24 Gift Aid rebate	£174.00
Grand Total	£1036.55

I am sincerely appreciative to the children for their long service and their commitment to JMA. 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 collection.

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

Kay Wong
JMA Secretary
April 2025

Christian Aid Week Report

Christian Aid Week 2025 will be held on **11th-17th May**. St. Andrew's Church is continuing our tradition of supporting the event with the following activities:

- **Envelope collection:** individuals can make donations through the Christian Aid envelopes which will be available and can be handed in with the Church offertory from 4th to 25th May.
- **Donation online:** please use the following link to make donations online <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>.
- **Christian Aid Lunch:** will take place on Sunday 11th May, starting at 12.00pm. Charge of £5 to cover the cost. Please take this opportunity to sit down with friends to enjoy a lunch and catch up on Church matters.
- **Christian Aid information display** will be in the Church foyer in May, please watch out for them.
- **Church's supporting prayers**

In 2024, St. Andrew's collection for Christian Aid Week was £831.58, plus Gift Aid tax rebate of £175.00. We thank everyone for their kind support and enthusiastic contributions. We hope to maintain a similar level of collection this year and rely on your generosity and support.

Worship with Christian Aid: Christian Aid Week is the perfect time for our church to come together in celebration and reflection. Pray during this Christian Aid Week that people at the brink of poverty can find the strength and opportunity to push back harder and fulfil their hopes and ambitions.

Your support makes a difference: With your support, more families can build reliable and diverse incomes that bring them food security, better health, safer homes, increased resilience and hope.

Please Give, Act and Pray for this Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid Week Organisers
Kay Wong & Susan McKenzie
April 2025