

SHIRLEY METHODIST CHURCH
Registered Charity No: 1127524

Annual Report
2023

Our Mission Statement

As followers of Jesus Christ, our mission is to honour God by our daily living as individuals and our corporate life as a church

Our Congregation

- ❖ To offer God worship which is both lively and dignified
- ❖ To stimulate one another to grow in our faith and develop our discipleship

Our Church

- ❖ To honour God by our daily living as individuals and our corporate life as a church

Our Community

- ❖ To offer welcome and care to all, regardless of age, status, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, ability or disability
- ❖ To work with our fellow Christians in Shirley, to serve our neighbours and share with others our experience of God's love

MINISTER'S REPORT

One thing I am realising, as I get older, is the importance to keep stopping and reflecting. And our General Church Meeting gives us the opportunity to do just that.

I have nearly been with you a year now and this is an ideal opportunity to look back on the church year, reflecting on the life and ministry of the church. Thank you to all those people who have submitted reports - Please do read and pray through these reports.

I am really enjoying my time as minister of Shirley and have really settled into church life. I am enjoying the things you have been doing for some time, and also enjoying the new ventures we are sharing: Christmas Tree Festival, Bread Making, Lent happenings. And I look forward to what is to come. I am keen to make more connections with our community, to discern together what some of those needs might be, and how we as a church can respond.

As well as doing the business we have to do at our meeting, we are given the opportunity to reflect on the life and mission of our church, and this is where we need YOUR input. Come along and have your say as we reflect on what shape church we need to be to serve this present age and our community. Your contribution matters.

Richard

OUR CONGREGATION – WHO WE ARE (RESOURCES)

CHURCH MUSIC AND POWERPOINT REPORT

- Again this year church music has been provided by David Tayler, Tau Wey and Hsin Wey. Music has been mainly on the organ, but where appropriate our piano has been used instead. We are also indebted to Tau and Hsin who have enhanced our worship by playing pieces on the piano and cello and this has been thought provoking as we contemplate the message of the sermon.
- PowerPoint presentations have been provided every Sunday in the last year by Bhu Kalsi and David Tayler. Sometimes a video or MP3 file has been added. **We are really in need of more volunteers so, if you use PowerPoint at work, at college or at school and you can give us a couple of hours once a month, you would be a real asset.**

David Tayler

CONSULTATION ON WORSHIP

- The meetings to consider and agree consultation at Shirley are held twice a year. The meeting is chaired by the minister and everyone is invited to the meeting and welcome to take part. The last meeting was on Tuesday 8 November 2022.
- At the meetings those present reflect on services of the recent past, discuss and share ideas on how we can build on and improve on what has been done.
- Reflecting on the year, physical attendance at Church continues to improve and numbers joining virtually, by Zoom, remain steady. We welcomed new members during the Covenant Service.
- Steady attendance of 10/12 at Prayer breakfast gatherings and Bible Study meetings.
- Our first ever Christmas Tree Festival (Friday 9 – Sunday 11 December) was a great success, with local church groups, community groups, schools and our Lets taking part. There was also a Christmas Café offering seasonal treats during the festival. The festival

ended with a beautiful and well attended Carol Service in the glow of the lights from the Christmas trees displayed around the Church.

- Revd Lowson has introduced *Breadmaking Tuesdays at Shirley* - on the third Tuesday of the month members of the community are invited into our church to make bread. No experience needed, beginners are welcome and all ingredients and equipment is provided.
- *4 Films for Lent* and *A passion 4 art*, offered us a refreshing new way to experience the messages of Lent and were well attended by members of our church family and guests from the wider community. Holy Week included a Maundy Thursday Service at Shirley and Easter Communion led by Revd Leslie Griffiths.
- The next Worship Consultation meeting will be in June.

Ruth Dodoo

THE GUILD

- Goodness! Where do I start?

I think it has to be last July when the group enjoyed an outing to Wesley's Chapel led by the intrepid duo of Jennifer Potter and Leslie Griffiths. We enjoyed its history, its hospitality, Margaret of course featured in that, realised its importance in social history and came away thinking that John and Charles Wesley were the intrepid duo of their time. We sang a Charles Wesley hymn accompanied on the organ that Charles played (David really enjoyed that bit) and on which Charles composed many of his hymns.

- Then the Autumn Guild scene began in fine style with our friend Malcolm Jennings who took us on an informed and breath taking tour of the New Forest, glorious with Autumn colour. Next up came our own Alison Hunt with a moving and inspirational look at the work of St Christopher's Hospice; Alison is well placed to guide us through that, because she had worked there for a considerable time and now fund raises for them through awareness talks. In November Richard Lowson gave us a most interesting tour of his life journey by collecting books from his personal bookcase and commenting on their significance for him finding time for us as he was so busy with the Christmas Tree Festival - speaking of which, the Guild put in a lovely tree in Guild colours, complete with badge and lots of baubles with our Guild speakers and topics on them.
- In January, we were treated to a most delightful evening with Rachel Wooden, one of "our own" from way back, now ordained and not only preaching for her church but doing great things - hands on - in the sphere of provision in new build housing for folk

with disability and for those with limited means. Margaret King was the rightly proud mum listening to her daughter. Well done the King family!

- In February our friend Jeremy Davies treated us to an evening about the Oberammergau Passion Play and what it had meant to him when he visited last year. It all awoke wonderful memories for those of us who went there at some point and made all those who have not been yet eager to go.
- Finally, in March, Leslie Griffiths, ably supported by Margaret, showed us how they brought about the building of a fine new school in Haiti by a mixture of persuasion, cunning planning, sheer hard work, loads of faith and persistence through all odds to improve the lot of a local community. It did make the building of our own new church a few years back look relatively easy!!
- What a year! Bring on the next!

Ruth Tayler, on behalf of the Guild Steering Group

HOUSE GROUP

- We continue to meet every 3rd Thursday in the Church Lounge.
- Over the last year we have looked at how we pray for the marginalised, at our views on mission and other subjects.
- Copies of the material we have used will be available in the church.
- I am pleased to say that Juliet Ushewokunze will be taking on the role of leading the group.

Brian Sherrell, Worship Leader

PRAYER CHAIN

- The Prayer Chain is made up of two groups who circulate the names of those who are in particular need. Requests come from the Church fellowship, the neighbourhood and much further afield and this ministry is much appreciated.
- Names are only put on the Prayer Chain with the consent of the person concerned and remain for one week – unless otherwise requested. Consent forms must be completed,

due to the General Data Protection Regulations, and are available from Elizabeth Smart. All information is treated in strictest confidence.

- If you feel you would like to be a member of the Prayer Chain please have a word with Elizabeth Smart.
- Referrals are made to Elizabeth and are passed to both sides of the Chain.

Elizabeth Smart

PRAYER BREAKFAST

- This continues to meet on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 9-15 a.m. in the Church Lounge.
- This is a time of open prayer when we can share our concerns for the church and the world.

Brian Sherrell

WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Sunday Morning Club Report



- Sunday morning club continues to run on every Sunday (apart from those designated as all age worship).
- Our numbers are holding steady at 2 to 6 club members per session. Although the attending members attending vary, we do get some regular faces! (Syon and Amelie in particular).
- In the last year, we have run a busy and varied programme. During the summer (2022) we thought about the example that Jesus set as the servant King. After reading various bible passages in which Jesus serves others, we came up with some ideas about how we could follow his lead within the context of our own church. These activities included serving drinks after the service, making cold fruit punch drinks for the congregation on the hottest Sunday of the year, gardening, making cards for church members in need and litter picking.
- At Christmas (2022) we contributed to the Christmas tree festival (our tree was themed 'Jesus the light of the world') and covered a range of diverse subjects including Christingles, the importance of prayer, repentance, Jesus and his friends, the

Beatitudes, salt/light and keeping promises.

- Recently, we've been thinking about the Easter story and examining the stories of Lazarus, Palm Sunday and Thomas in greater detail.
- I would like to finish by reiterating our commitment to high quality children's activities at this church on a Sunday morning. As Rosemary, Jenny and I have said on many occasions, we passionately believe that even if we only have one attendee, that child **is important** and the sessions that we run are of immeasurable value.

Simon Tayler, Youth Committee Convenor

OUR CHURCH – WHAT WE HAVE (RICHES)

CHURCH COUNCIL

- We welcomed Rev Richard Lawson as Chair of church council on 28th September 2022. It is good to have Richard steering the meetings, bringing fresh vision and new ideas as we explore what it means to be church in post-pandemic times.
- In the meantime Tau Wey has commenced his tenure as church council secretary, which includes taking minutes at meetings, and submitting annual reports to the charity commission. He is assisted by his predecessor Margaret Chan, who has continued to produce the church directory and Annual Report for the General Church Meeting.
- Church Council meetings are open to all to attend. If you wish to become a voting member as well as a trustee of the church, please do let any of the stewards know. We discuss a whole range of issues, from approving finances for building maintenance, to planning events like the Tree Festival.
- Following the Methodist Conference's approval of same-sex marriage in church, one of the future decisions will be whether the church council, as trustees of this church, would like to enable this at local church level.

Tau Wey, Church Council Secretary

PASTORAL REPORT

- The membership of the Church is 126 and there are 49 Friends of Shirley Methodist Church.
- Keeping in touch with members of our church family is an important part of the pastoral care that we strive to do and we give thanks for the Pastoral Links who have taken on this role. At a recent Pastoral Links gathering we shared a conversation on Dementia and Pastoral Care with the Revd Jennifer Potter and Revd Richard Lowson. It is hoped that we can set up a Pastoral Library as a resource for Pastoral Links and others to use.
- Revd Richard is taking Home Communion to those who are unable to come to church and this is so much appreciated.
- Dates and times are being planned for those who wish to explore membership and this can also be for those who wish to refresh their membership.
- It is a joy to warmly welcome all who worship with us and we hope they have felt at home. There is always an opportunity to share conversation over a cup of coffee after the service with the church family.
- Please continue to let Richard and me know of any pastoral needs so that we can continue to support and care for our church family. The General Data Protection Regulations mean that we must have consent for prayers on the weekly Notice Sheet or the family news in Shirley Methodist Matters. Consent forms are available from Ruth Dodoo and myself.

Elizabeth Smart, Pastoral Secretary

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

- The main event during this reporting period was the replacement of the cast iron radiators in the Hall, Rear Hall, Corner Room, kitchen and main corridor with copper piping and modern, high output radiators.
- The church boiler was replaced. The new boiler and basement boiler are now in the Upper Room.

Buildings.

- Externally, the buildings are sound and watertight. Some repainting is required to the fascia boards to the church just above the flat roof of the Lounge and the porch. This has been delayed due to covid restrictions and the poor state of church finances.
- Internally the 1930s parts of the building require redecoration. Again, this has been delayed because of covid and lack of funds.
- The current cleaning contractors do a good job with the rooms being generally tidy and well kept.

Grounds.

- The grounds, fences and hedges are all in good order. The contractor keeps the grass, hedges and ivy (behind the corner room and kitchen) neat and presentable.
- The Anniversary Garden has added a delightful extra dimension to the grounds and is much admired. Many thanks to all the enthusiastic gardeners who created it and worked hard, particularly during lockdowns and last summer's drought, to maintain and improve it.
- The new trees are now quite well established but will need regular watering if there is another dry summer.

Lettings.

- The rooms are sought after and used by many and varied organisations. The fees make a significant contribution to church income.

Volunteers.

- Though the property and grounds are in reasonably good order regular maintenance is required to keep them up to standard. In particular, a small team to keep the grounds tidy and free from rubbish, needs to be re-established.
- If you can help, please speak to Bill Smart or any of the Church Stewards.

Bill Smart, on behalf of the Finance and Property Committee

CHURCH WEBSITE

- The Church website which was re-vamped just before Lockdown has continued to be an important point of contact for church members and those in the community
- The church notices and monthly magazine are posted there and there is an archive of past magazines
- The top banner has details of events The Sunday service is always uploaded the same day
- Previously we had only had photos of our premises but now we have one of our congregation, taken at the end of Bennie's last service. Church is the people – not just bricks and mortar!
- There are links too to photos of events e.g. The Book Sale
- I regularly receive enquiries (particularly about lettings) via the 'contact us' page – so it shows that our readership is wider than just our members
- My thanks go to Steve Hunt at Poppy IT for the technical support and to my husband Graham, who is my trouble-shooter.

Kate Marsden, Webmaster

SHIRLEY METHODIST MATTERS (SMM)

- Looking through the ten (joint issues for July-August and December-January) SMM issues for the past year, many of the covers reflect local events and national events – the Platinum Jubilee Garden Party last June, the death of Elizabeth II in September, the 15th Great Book Sale in March. Other covers, featuring the natural world, showcase the photographic talents of SMC members, Wilderness volunteers and Croydon Camera Club – please keep the pictures coming!
- We continue to be grateful to our regular contributors for some of the magazine's content - Elizabeth, Jean and Leslie. Losing Bennie's monthly items was a bit concerning; however our new minister, Revd Richard Lawson offered to write a monthly column, *From the Manse*, which we are delighted to feature.
- We continue to benefit from our membership of the Association for Church Editors, to provide some articles we can use from its monthly newsletter and to run conferences

and workshops for church magazine editors. Kate attended the conference in October and received a Certificate of Achievement for our magazine – it's displayed in the Welcome Area on a noticeboard. Jenny is going to an ACE workshop in May on various aspects of church magazine production. You may have noticed one new useful feature in SMM – a contents page – no more leafing through to find that item you spotted somewhere in the magazine!

- The magazine helps us to learn more about each other – in May's magazine Shirley members have written about their volunteering activities. Kate and Jenny are always pleased to receive YOUR contributions - your experiences, stories, poems, prayers, photos – which you may like to share with church friends.

Jenny Crook, SMM joint editor

SAFEGUARDING

- Safeguarding is about being proactive in ensuring everyone's welfare as part of the church community, and preventing harm and abuse.
- There are two Safeguarding Officers at SMC: Tau Wey and Fran Byard. There are posters around church detailing how to raise concerns and who to contact.
- As part of the proactive stance, Methodist guidelines require individuals, including volunteers, in a range of posts to have safeguarding training every four years. I am extremely grateful to all those who have been able to undertake this training, giving up their precious time.

Tau Wey, Safeguarding Officer

STEWARDS' REPORT

- At the end of the last Methodist year we said our goodbyes to Choi and Bennie. We had a party with two spectacular cakes, some great music from Tau, some shared memories and we lifted the roof as we sang "And can it be". Choi and Bennie had been our friends and our pastors over many years and we wish them both every happiness in their retirement. Then in September we welcomed Richard and over the months we have been getting to know him and to embrace the new ideas and fresh energy that he has brought us. We look forward with thankfulness as a Church community.

- Our Christmas celebrations saw us try something new as we mounted a Christmas Tree Festival in the Church. Our lets, community and Church groups decorated trees and we had a cafe selling refreshments. We invited everyone from the local community to come and walk round and enjoy the experience. We made no charge but people were invited to contribute to St. Christopher's Hospice. The weekend culminated in a Carol service by the light of the Christmas trees and the Church was full with many people from our own congregation but also many visitors. The fact that it started snowing outside as we sang "Silent night" was a magical moment.
- After Christmas we saw the return of The Great Book Sale! This biennial event had been put on hold because of covid restrictions. There seemed to be more books than ever, perhaps reflecting the fact that people had bought a lot of books to read during lockdown and were now getting rid of them! The sorting of books on Wednesday mornings and the sale itself have always been occasions for the community to get involved and there was great enthusiasm and appreciation that we were up and running again!
- One of the activities introduced by Richard has been bread making. Again the hope is that Church members and people with little or no involvement with the Church will come together to bake bread and share conversation. So far a harvest bread sheaf, white loaves, hot cross buns and soda bread have been baked and the group is growing in size.
- Our Lent and Holy Week activities this year have been given a new focus by Richard. We have watched and discussed four films during Lent, each with some thought provoking material. A group of people have joined Richard at the National Gallery on two occasions to look at some pictures of the passion of Christ. Then on Maundy Thursday Richard led a meditation and communion service focusing on Judas. This was a really moving and thought provoking experience. Charlotte Stonehouse set up a prayer labyrinth on Easter Saturday and on Easter Sunday we had a magnificent communion service led by Leslie Griffiths and Jennifer Potter. About eighty people were there at the service and it was a great celebration.
- We are so fortunate to have a congregation of people with many and various talents but in an article of this type we can't begin to name names and thank individuals. Our recent stewardship campaign will hopefully remind us again of all the gifts people have to offer.

We look forward to another year of worship, fellowship and service to our local community. Thank you all!

Rosemary Jones, Senior Church Steward

OUR COMMUNITY – WHERE WE WORK

SHRUBLANDS TRUST FOOD BANK

- The Food Bank continues to be needed by more and more families as the increased cost of living affects so many. All the churches support the project. The Trust itself needs more support as officials seek successors.

Jonathan Baxter

SHIRLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD CARE (SNC)

- SNC moved offices from SMC to West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church (WWSBC) in August 2021 from where it runs Lunch Clubs on Mondays and Thursdays. In addition there is a Shopping Bus to Sainsbury and Tesco every fortnight and Outings as and when. Medical Drives remain the priority however.
- WWSBC have given SNC notice to leave their office (the Lunch Clubs will continue there) by 31st July so SNC are seeking new premises. At the same time Croydon Council have withdrawn financial support for SNC and similar organisations.
- The Film Club at SMC will resume once SNC have settled down in their new premises.

Jonathan Baxter

CROYDON CHURCHES FLOATING SHELTER

- CCFS has not operated a shelter for rough sleepers since March 2020 due to Covid and latterly the problems with guests and volunteers breathing the same air for more than 12 hours at every host church. Instead every host church has supplied 8/12 loaves of

mixed sandwiches to Nightwatch on the evenings they would have hosted the shelter. Hence SMC supplied sandwiches on the Sundays in November and December 2022.

- If CCFS operates a shelter again it is unlikely that SMC will be able to host it due to the lack of volunteers especially those staying overnight. The church's insurance would be compromised if there was nobody from SMC on the premises at all times.

Jonathan Baxter – CCFS Trustee/Company Secretary

ECUMENICAL LINKS

Churches Together in Shirley

- Churches Together in Shirley (CTIS) continued their monthly Prayer Meetings on zoom until their AGM at St George's in March, when it was agreed we should try to meet in the flesh most months.
- Churches were asked to put forward dates in the first week of the month when they could host the Prayers (in the flesh and/or via zoom). The annual Unity Service was held at St George's in January and it was hoped that SMC would host the Unity Service in 2024.
- Meanwhile there will be a Quiet Day based at St John's on Saturday 2nd December led by Reverend Hilary Fife.
- SMC and St John's representatives have not met together since March 2020.

Jonathan Baxter

HALL GRANGE MHA

- The home is running well and all the residents are supported by the whole of the staff. The residential side has a few spaces while the Dementia side is full. Residents in the Dementia Wing are looked after by caring staff who are trained in that area.
- A variety of activities is usually available to residents on both sides of the home. The activity co-ordinators arrange all sorts of events. The food is also a special area, together with homemade cakes and biscuits, which all the residents enjoy.

- The chaplains help with the well-being of the residents, families and all the staff. They are always available to talk or listen and this is appreciated.
- The Hall Grange Coffee morning was on 13th May between 10.00 and Noon. There were stalls and gifts made by the residents.
- On Sunday, 21st May, the President and Vice President of the Methodist Church are attending the afternoon communion service.
- The Wilderness Garden has held a few events and there are more to follow over the next few months. The garden has looked good with the spring flowers and the sound of the birds singing and also with the wildlife in and around the garden. The residents and all the staff will enjoy sitting in the garden when the weather gets a little warmer.

Fran Byard, MHA Representative

WORLD SERVICE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMITTEE

- This Committee has not met since September 2020 as there have been no funds to distribute to charities and worthy causes.
- Separate reports on Christian Aid, Ecumenical Links including Shirley Neighbourhood Care and the Floating Shelter appear elsewhere in this Report.

Jonathan Baxter – Chair WSN Committee

CHRISTIAN AID

- Christian Aid Week 2022 (May 15th – 21st) raised £1,155, plus £261 from Gift Aid – making a total of £1,416. This was given to help rural farmers in Zimbabwe combat the effects of Climate Change.
- The Christian Aid stall at the Platinum Jubilee Garden Party on 28th May, 2022 raised £51.10.

- Our church's response to the East Africa Hunger Crisis after the worst drought in 40 years in that region, was £250. This was raised from the sale of goods from our weekly stall and the delivery of tea-breads and crumbles during the week.
- We were delighted to once again welcome Revd Cameron Kirkwood, Christian Aid's Volunteer Ambassador for the London churches, to our Christian Aid service on October 30th. We saw a film of how children in Sierra Leone were being rescued from collecting rubbish and sent to school.
- Traidcraft Christmas cards were on sale at our stall again, supporting people without the money to put food on the table and send their children to school.
- A Retiring Collection after the Covenant Service on January 8th, 2023 raised £345.50. To this was added £200 from our stall's 'Emergency Fund' – making a total of £545.50. This went to support rural farmers in Malawi.
- In response to the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Northwest Syria we sent £600 in February 2023.
- Our weekly stall raises a steady source of income and this year the sale of home-made marmalade has been supplemented by beautiful cards supplied by our craft group, home-made fabric bags made by a church member, Margaret Griffith's book featuring the different manse kitchens she has cooked in and knitted Easter chickens. A huge 'thank you' to all who have helped.
- This year's Christian Aid Week (May 14th – 20th) focused on women farmers in Malawi. The money collected will ensure more children will have the chance to finish school and pursue their dreams. It will also enable farmers to combat the effects of Climate Change.
- A group from Shirley plan to take part in the London sponsored walk for Christian Aid this May.

Jean Beecher, for the Christian Aid Committee

LEPROSY MISSION

- The congregation has continued to generously support TLM through monetary donations and also by donating stamps, postcards, coins and jewellery. In 2022, financial donations amounted to £1033.85, and in 2023 the total donated so far has been £583.70. Both fantastic amounts – thank you!
- We were blessed to have Community Partnerships Manager Wendy Piccinini to lead our TLM service last year and this year, when she spoke of the development of the Anandaban Hospital in Nepal and the vital work carried out there. We hope to welcome Wendy again in February/March 2024; she is clearly dedicated to the aims of the Mission and is passionate in getting the message across.
- Unfortunately, after many years of raising funds through selling stamps and other collectibles, TLM took the difficult decision to bring this to an end in April 2023 as their value has gradually been diminishing and it was no longer viable to continue. This was disappointing news, but understandable, and we are looking into other ways of raising funds here at Shirley, possibly through holding a quiz or similar event later in the year.
- Finally, I would like to record my thanks to Adele Sluce for her commitment to raising awareness of the plight of leprosy sufferers, to Jean Beecher for organising joint Christian Aid/Leprosy Mission collections, and of course to Jose Riddiough who tirelessly collected, sorted and trimmed stamps over many years and who sadly passed away this month.

Heather Tarling, TLM Representative