

Year ended 31 August 2025

Charity: 1179206

Trustees' Annual Report

Strathmore Road **Methodist** Church 



rowlandsgill.org.uk

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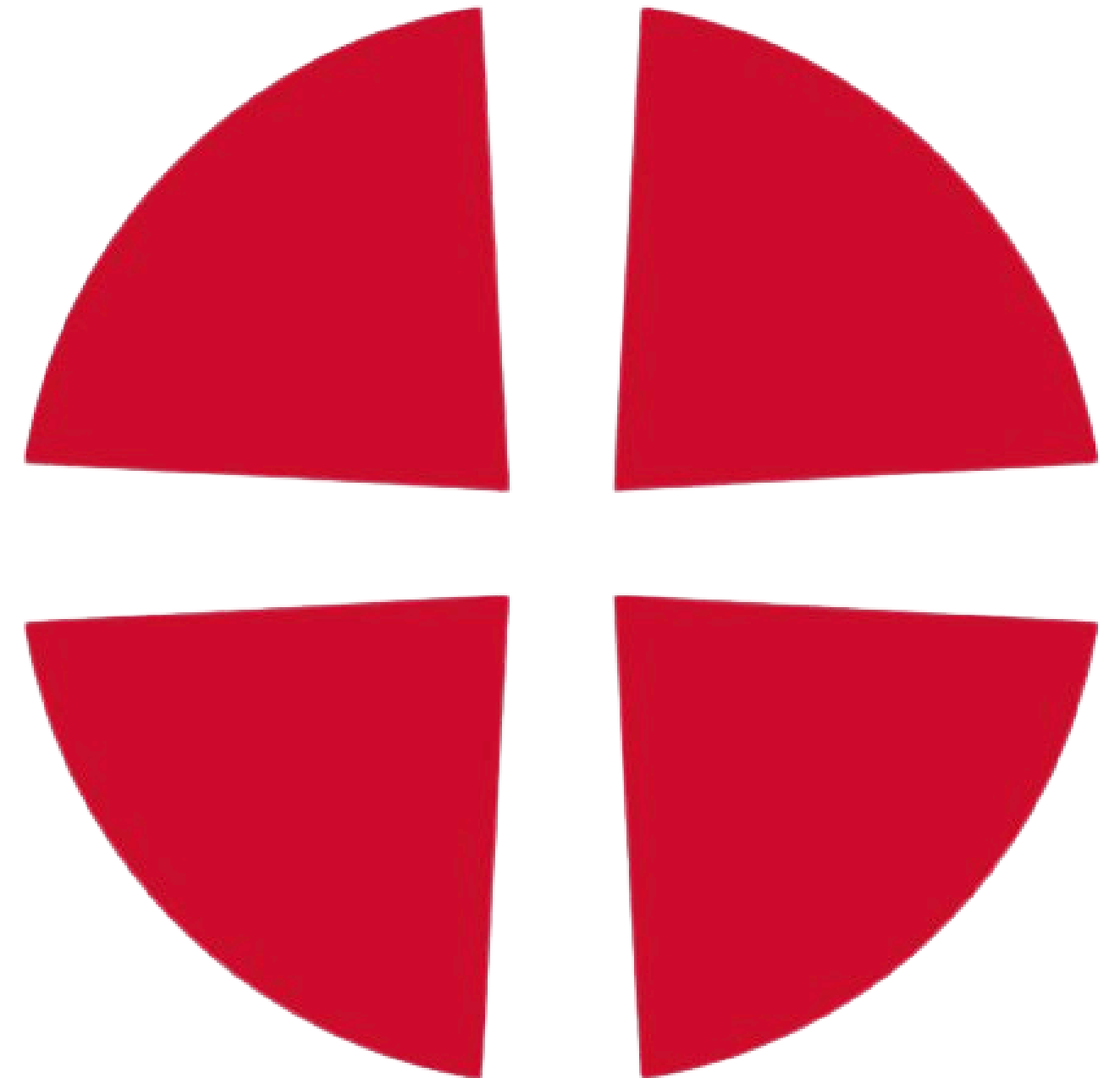
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Structure & Management



The Methodist Church is said to have been created after John Wesley's conversion and is a Free Church. Strathmore Road Methodist Church (SRMC) includes premises both in Rowlands Gill and Chopwell and is part of the South West Tyneside Circuit and Newcastle upon Tyne District of The Methodist Church, the governing body of which is the annual conference of The Methodist Church. The Methodist Church Act 1976 gives the authority under which The Methodist Church acts. The constitution, practice and discipline of The Methodist Church, together with The Deed of Union (Act of 1929 adopted 1932), govern the objectives and activities of The Methodist Church.

In general, The Methodist Church is excepted from the need to register as a charity by the combined effects of Section 46(4) (A) of The Charities Act 1993 and Paragraph 4(2)(C) of the Charities (exception from registration) Regulations 1996 as amended by Statutory Instrument 2014 No 242. SRMC however, registered as a separate Registered Charity in England and Wales, effective from 16 July 2018.

The Managing Trustees of SRMC (see page 26) are all lay people, with one exception: the Minister, Rev. Ann Varker, who is ordained by The Methodist Church and was stationed to the South West Tyneside Circuit. The Youth Worker, Keith Crulley, and the Children's and Families Pastor, Ruth Hallatt, are employed by SRMC, along with two Youth Outreach Pioneers, Heather Woods and Barry Watkins.

The Managing Trustees convene at least three times a year as the Church Council, where they make all major decisions. They delegate some day-to-day responsibilities to a Leadership Team, all of whom are also Trustees. The Church Council is chaired by the Minister.

Trustees who have served during the year or since the year-end are appointed annually by the church, either through a general meeting or as ex-officio members.

The church's day-to-day operations are overseen by those appointed by the Church Council, including the Leadership Team, the Pastoral Committee, the Finance and Property Committee, the Worship Team and the Youth Workers.





Our Objectives

SRMC aims to be a warm, inclusive and vibrant Christian community. We strive to reflect the love and teachings of Jesus Christ by serving others, sharing our resources and fostering connections.

To effectively support our local and global neighbours, we align our efforts with The Methodist Church Act (1976). Our premises are dedicated to church activities, community initiatives and charitable work. We also engage in outreach programmes focused on children, refugees, the elderly and those facing social or economic challenges.

In September 2019, SRMC in Rowlands Gill merged with Chopwell Methodist Church, creating a single church with two sites. Together, the congregations have worked to build a unified church family, sharing a mission across both sites. This partnership allows us to nurture lifelong learning in the Christian faith and create opportunities for spiritual growth and discipleship.

SRMC is committed to the safe recruitment and support of all who work with children and vulnerable adults. Our safeguarding practices are guided by the Church's Safeguarding Policy, current legislation and established best practices.

Our Mission Statement

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we seek to live our lives as **a loving community** with each other and the world around us, **following the example and teaching of Jesus Christ** and **worshipping God**.

As a loving community, we:

- Warmly welcome everyone, fostering a true sense of belonging and family.
- Share God's love with people of all ages through our words and actions.
- Provide pastoral care, fellowship and prayer to support one another.
- Champion social justice, peace and positive change in the world.
- Collaborate with other churches, charities and organisations to amplify our impact.

Following Christ's example, we:

- Support spiritual growth through biblical teaching and prayer.
- Inspire everyone to use their unique gifts in both church life and daily living.
- Encourage whole-life discipleship, emphasising responsible stewardship of time, money and resources.
- Carefully nurture and guide children and young people in their faith journey.

Worshipping God, we:

- Worship in ways that honour Him, centre our focus on Jesus and deepen our awareness of the Holy Spirit.
- Create worship experiences that are inclusive, uplifting, meaningful and of the highest quality.
- Actively encourage and celebrate the diverse talents of our congregation in worship.



Sunday Worship

Worship at Rowlands Gill

SRMC has 122 members, encompassing all ages, including a thriving ministry amongst families, children and youth. Within the church, people appreciate different forms of worship and the church values being able to offer a diversity of styles in its services to enable all people to encounter the living God.

Our Sunday morning services at Rowlands Gill are geared towards all ages and use contemporary worship, interactive activities and different media. Most Sundays have a short time of worship together before the children and young people move into Sunday Club where there are groups for children aged 1 to 16. Once a month, the young people attend a Forest Church service in the grounds of the church, an expression of worship which continues to thrive.

We also have regular Local Worship Sundays – here we work without a local preacher or minister and invite speakers from a range of organisations and charities to hear about their work and explore how we might get involved.

During the summer, we ran a café church service each week. This is a rich worship space for our congregation but also an inclusive welcoming space for the wider community to stay connected whilst other groups take a summer break. We also hold bi-monthly 'Together' services where we seek to meet God together as an intergenerational family.

The Sunday evening services held at Rowlands Gill also aim to utilise the best in traditional Methodist worship, often with the aid of a pipe organ.

We are delighted that throughout this year our services have continued to grow, flourish and develop in their own unique ways, connecting with a diverse wider community.

Worship at Chopwell

At Chopwell, our Sunday morning worship is a more traditional Methodist style, though as new families continue to join us, this congregation and worship is developing in response to the needs of those who attend.



Community Hub

Every Monday, SRMC's Community Hub brings together a variety of activities.

With support from Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (GMBC), SRMC continues to operate a weekly 'Warm Space' on Monday mornings. The aim of Warm Spaces is to provide a safe and respectful atmosphere for anyone having difficulty with energy costs and keeping warm. Anyone in the community is welcome to use the building to keep warm, meet friends over a free hot drink and use our Pay As You Feel Cafe. We also offer free Wi-Fi access, mobile phone charging and a small bring-and-take library. Although initially intended for winter months, GMBC and SRMC quickly recognised the year-round value of providing a warm welcome and a positive friendly environment for people to come together. During the year, the Hub hosted various 'road shows' on energy efficiency, volunteering opportunities, and housing advice.

Since February 2021, a weekly Rescued Food Market has operated from SRMC. This offers surplus food collected from Fareshare and local supermarkets in return for a donation. The market is open to anyone and attracts a wide range of customers from those in financial difficulties, to people concerned about the environment and wishing to reduce food waste.

The market has the twin benefits of helping meet our Eco Church objectives while providing a further opportunity to serve our local community. Over 20 volunteers from SRMC, nearby local churches and the wider community are involved in collecting food, welcoming customers, running the market and clearing away.

The Pay As You Feel Cafe run by volunteers from SRMC and the wider community is open for breakfast alongside the Market and provides hot sandwiches, cakes and biscuits throughout the morning with a soup and roll lunch served later.

Since 2021, members of the community can visit a trained Citizens Advice advisor at SRMC on a drop-in basis. This dovetails well with other Community Hub activities as visitors can use the Cafe, Warm Space and Rescued Food Market before or after their appointment. Clients appreciate having the service based in the local community as it enables return visits without inconvenience and costs of a visit to central Gateshead.

A peer support group supported by professional mental health nurses is also available on site as part of the Community Hub and provides valuable help to visitors suffering from anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns.



Alpha



The Alpha Course is an evangelistic initiative designed to create a welcoming space for people to explore the Christian faith, ask questions and encounter Jesus Christ. Running from the New Year through to Easter, Alpha provided a structured yet informal opportunity for our community to consider the foundations of Christianity in the context of food, friendship and honest conversation. Its central objective is to introduce people to the good news of Jesus and to invite them into a deeper relationship with God through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Alpha has contributed meaningfully to the church's mission statement. Through Alpha, we have intentionally created a loving and hospitable community, reflecting Christ's example. The course has strengthened relationships within the congregation while also engaging those beyond our regular worshipping community. By inviting friends, neighbours and local residents into our space, we have fostered deeper connections in the wider community and provided a gentle, accessible pathway into church life and relationship with Jesus.



“Alpha has been a time for learning, caring, discovering and re-discovering. It’s also been a community for me and about making friendships. It’s a safe place for me to discover my own faith through the videos and through the others in my group.”



Discipleship Groups

Our Discipleship Groups form a central part of our church's commitment to nurturing faith and deepening Christian community. These groups provide intentional spaces for spiritual growth, prayer and biblical study. We currently have seven house groups that meet weekly, some hosted in the church building and others in people's homes. Together, they reflect our desire to be a church that grows not only in numbers but in maturity and Christlikeness.

The primary aim of each group is to study the Bible and grow in faith with one another. Open to all, they cater for different ages, stages of Christian journey and a range of theological perspectives. Whether someone is exploring faith more deeply, newly committed or has been following Christ for many years, there is space for them. By gathering in smaller settings, members are able to ask questions, share insights, pray together and support one another in everyday discipleship.

Through regular fellowship, shared study and mutual care, the groups cultivate loving community and help participants follow the teaching of Jesus more closely. They have strengthened relationships within the church and extended hospitality beyond Sunday worship, enabling faith to be lived out in homes and daily life.

Bridges

The Bridges group has been active for more than 30 years, evolving with changing members throughout that time.

The group's core aim is to 'bridge the gap' between the church and the local community. Their mission is to create opportunities for building relationships with those on the fringes, both within the wider church and among local residents. They also welcome spouses, family, neighbours and friends who may not wish to attend church but want to be involved in the broader community at SRMC.

A key focus of Bridges is fostering intergenerational connections, encouraging generations to mix and engage with one another.



Annual Church Family Picnic

This event brings together church families and others the church has built relationships with, such as local Syrian families and attendees of the church hub.

Bridges Walk

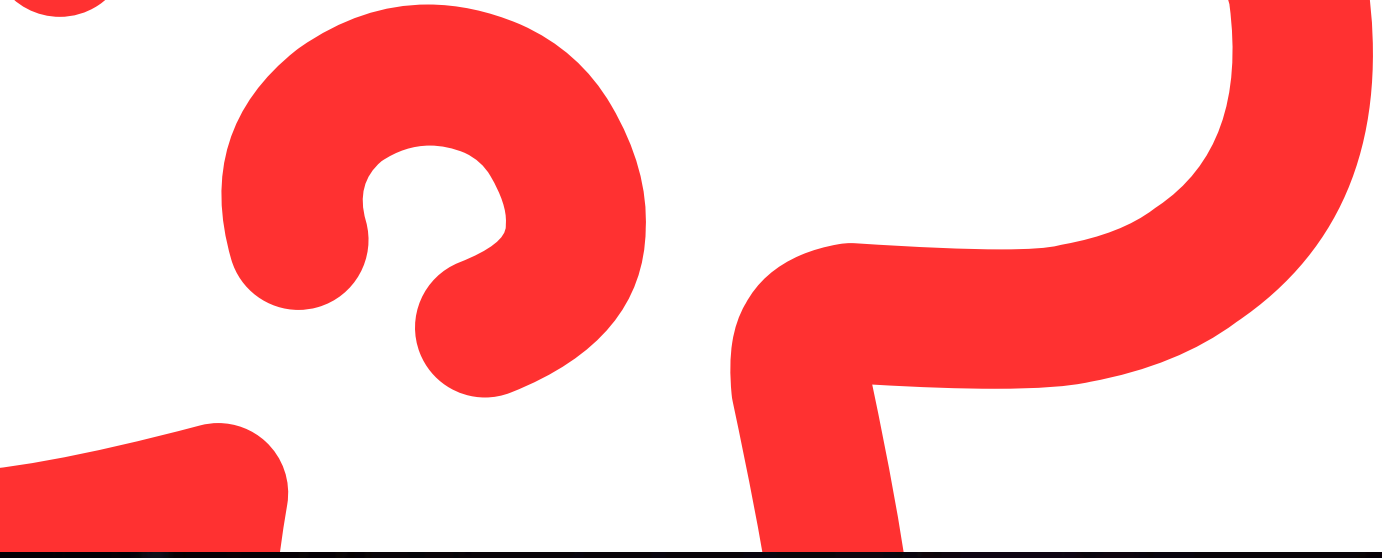
Last year, Bridges organised a walk between Christmas and New Year, which encouraged over 60 people to exercise and enjoy fellowship during the holiday period.

Support for Other Groups and Events

Bridges provides organisational expertise, funding and practical help for various church and local community events, including a community BBQ at the church featuring food, drinks and games for all ages.

Church Family Holiday to Keswick

This year, 106 people participated in the trip, including families, couples, singles, young and old - ranging from 3 weeks to 79 years old! The week is a time to chat, listen, break bread, walk together and live in community. For many, it serves as both a holiday and a spiritual renewal. Strong relationships are formed and deepened, accompanied by much laughter and joy.



Spread Drama Group

Throughout September to early December Spread worked alongside 25 individuals of diverse ages, backgrounds and needs, some regular attendees of the church and others from our local community. We met to develop their theatrical skills, strengthen their confidence and grow their social skills. As well as being a theatre group who perform productions, Spread is a loving, supportive and caring community group that supports people onstage and offstage. In December, we welcomed over 500 people from across the community to watch our pantomime, offering a community event featuring entertainment for all ages, at an affordable price. Following the pantomime, we resumed weekly meetings, gathering to explore theatre, support one another and have fun. Spread is a community that reminds us that church doesn't always look like a traditional service with a sermon, it can indeed look like a community of people singing, dancing and enjoying time together.



Eco Church

SRMC recognises its responsibility of stewardship of the Earth and has retained its Eco Church Silver status to support its aims. SRMC continues to improve energy efficiency by the installation of a new boiler and solar panels which have reduced emissions. We continue to recycle pre-loved adult's and children's clothes and household items at the Community Hub.

With financial support from the Gateshead Food Partnership, of which we are members, fruit trees have been planted in the church garden at Chopwell which also hosted two events with the Chopwell Regeneration Group.

Open Doors

Rowlands Gill's Open Doors is an inclusive women's fellowship group that gathers weekly. Its purpose is to create a warm, supportive environment where women from all faith backgrounds – or none at all – can connect and grow together. Over the past year, the group has explored faith through personal stories, tackled pressing issues and engaged with thought-provoking discussions on social justice.

Creative mornings and fun quizzes have strengthened bonds among members, while opportunities to lead sessions have helped build confidence. The group's fundraising efforts for charity have been both successful and enjoyable, fostering deeper ties within the wider community. Regular prayer and reflective mornings have deepened spiritual understanding and strengthened members' grasp of Christian teachings.

The strong sense of community has attracted new members this year, offering a nurturing space for exploration, learning and spiritual growth. Looking ahead, the group hopes to expand on this foundation, warmly welcoming and supporting even more women into their church family.



Wednesday Morning Gang

For several years now including throughout this last year, a small dedicated team has worked hard to maintain our premises and grounds at both Rowlands Gill and Chopwell. As well as putting the world to right over a cuppa, this 'more mature' group of retirees, spend the morning every week doing odd jobs around the premises and grounds and also provide the very necessary mandatory premises inspections and checks on a weekly, monthly and annual basis.

In addition to the administrative side of the activities, the volunteer work centres around practical odd jobs including repairs to chairs, doors and windows, fixing leaks, clearing leaves, planting and pruning, drainage clearance, fence repairs, minor decoration and other general repairs. We are fortunate to have 'skilled contributors' within the team who are willingly able to provide a competent response to both specific emergency and ongoing general maintenance and repairs, so supporting our user groups in providing wide ranging activities in safe, secure and comfortable facilities.

Monthly Coffee Mornings

Throughout the year, various groups within the church at Rowlands Gill have hosted one of our monthly Saturday coffee mornings. Those attending have been treated to a myriad of cakes, biscuits, pastries and treats to accompany their morning drink, whilst enjoying each other's company in a pleasant social environment. At Chopwell, our members have provided a welcoming warm space meeting place for their coffee mornings, cakes and biscuits.

The mornings at both locations have been well attended and appreciated by attendees from all walks of the church from our young Sunday Club members to our more mature members. The opportunity to come along and just to participate in a friendly chat has been commented on as very welcome by many folks. In addition to the valued friendships and conversation, the coffee mornings have been successful in raising some significant and very welcome funds, for our church over the year...long may the coffee continue!



Men's Breakfast

The Men's Breakfast continues at SRMC with the mission to create a safe, non-judgemental space for men to improve their mental health, reduce isolation and foster open conversation. The Men's Breakfast group aim to cement their relationship with Christ and each other through shared experiences and spiritual discovery.

Our activities over the year began with the group hosting the first coffee morning of the Methodist year which included a photo competition judged by an external expert. We then enjoyed a guided tour of the Locomotion Museum in Shildon and our annual retreat in November, led by one of our circuit ministers, explored the concept and nature of evil. The Christmas dinner and quiz was attended by around 25 men, with some non-church members coming along. In the new year we were treated to an illustrated talk on the theme 'Berlin to Bavaria'. We also invited the Deadlifting preacher, a curate from the Magdalene Community Church in Chopwell, who joined us to give a powerful and moving account of her journey to faith, from atheist army captain to ordination.

Moving forward it is the group's intention to rebrand and relaunch the group in order to attract some of the new people attending SRMC.



Chopwell

Monthly Coffee Mornings attract a steady crowd, offering a warm and welcoming space for locals to connect. Our Community Garden and church grounds have been transformed with the help of local fruit and tree projects. This space not only engages families and communities but also provides a productive and eco-friendly environment where people can tend to fruits and herbs.

Each Wednesday at Chopwell begins with prayer, leading into 'With Refresh' – a chance for the church to open its doors to the community. We've partnered with Welcome Warm Spaces to offer soup and a roll, and our presence allows us to extend Jesus' love to anyone who passes by. 'With Bairns' is a free stay-and-play session for parents and carers of children aged 0–5 in Chopwell. Held every Wednesday at noon, it features toys and a sensory exploration area. The goal is to engage families, support their needs and introduce them to church services and events throughout the year. One parent shared, "It's been wonderful for my daughter's confidence and my mental health too."

Over the year, we opened our doors for special events too. Our Christmas Cracker was a festive highlight, featuring market stalls, refreshments, live music and activities for children. The event thrived with a beautiful atmosphere and a heartwarming joint carol singing moment with another local Community Church. Held in July, Chop-Fest is designed to bring people together in a welcoming outdoor community space opposite the church. We collaborated with local organisations, the council and volunteers to create an inclusive event for all ages. Around 200 attendees and 40 volunteers joined us for an afternoon of fun, connection and celebration. This festival allowed us to engage with the community, highlight local activities and build relationships with other organisations. It also gave us a chance to show our presence and openness in the area, fostering conversations and interactions that share the love and hope of Jesus.



Spiritual Art Journalling

We started the monthly Spiritual Art Journalling group in 2024 with the intention of giving people a creative way to express and explore their spirituality. We are not accomplished artists; but we are open to learning, playing and practising the God-given creativity within us all. We begin each session with a prayer and a few words to spark our thinking. We aim to be accessible to those of all faiths and none, so we use a mixture of the religious and secular – Bible quotes, poetry, lyrics and prose – to inspire each session. Then we try out different art mediums and techniques to enable us to express our feelings in a creative way. When we are working with our hands, conversation flows more easily and people can share their troubles, their faith and their artwork without judgement. It is amazing just how cathartic art can be.

“The group helps to deepen my connection with God and has nurtured my creativity.”

“The group is the highlight of my month! It is a special, welcoming space to slow down, reflect and connect with God in a really meaningful way. I always leave feeling uplifted, grounded and grateful.”

“You can let your thoughts wander, share them if you want to and enjoy creating artwork for your personal journal in a kind and supportive environment.”





Children & Youth

Over the last year we have been able to expand the groups that we offer to children both within our church and the local area. Our activities enable the church to reach children ranging from newborn up to 16 years old.

Holiday Fun

For a decade, Holiday Fun has partnered with churches in Rowlands Gill to provide meals and activities for children from families on limited budgets during school holidays. The programme works closely with local schools and GMBC to reach eligible families.

- Christmas theatre outing
- With support from GMBC and funding from the Brighten the Day fund, children and their accompanying adults enjoyed a coach trip to Northern Stage in the City Centre. They watched Christmas Carol followed by a meal together.
- Summer community activities
- This year, without GMBC funding, the programme adapted to continue supporting families through four Holiday Fun Lite sessions during the summer holidays. Sports activities were led by coaches from GMBC, hosted in the church. Volunteers from SRMC supervised children and assisted coaches. A two-course cooked lunch, prepared by a contracted caterer and served by volunteers, was provided.

Holiday Fun benefits from a large and diverse group of volunteers from all partner churches. This year, a young volunteer from one of our local Syrian families joined the team - a meaningful sign of the relationships built, as he had attended Holiday Fun sessions with his brothers after arriving in the UK.

Little Gems

This year, Our Little Gems baby and toddler group embraced change and new opportunities. Although we experienced a slight dip in numbers due to other local groups running at the same time and changes in 2-year-old funding, the team responded with thoughtful adjustments. By moving sessions to the afternoons, we successfully reduced scheduling conflicts within the village, welcoming more little ones and families from the area. This shift has truly helped us connect with a broader community. Our dedicated Gems team has also grown stronger and more collaborative, planning sessions together to create a warm, supportive environment. We are delighted to continue supporting new parents and carers on their wonderful journey.

Play and Praise

Play and Praise is a vibrant new group this year for little ones aged 1 to 4 years. This special space invites children to explore Bible stories through playful activities, with plenty of dancing and singing to spark joy and learning. We're thrilled to see a steady and growing attendance, including families new to the church community. One parent shared,

“It’s a really wonderful way to introduce children to the Bible. There’s nothing more important than children knowing the word of God to help them navigate life.”

Sparks

Sparks continues to grow and attract new young people on a Saturday afternoon. The focus is to invite primary-aged children in from the local area and to explore who Jesus is together. It is also an opportunity for the children from our church community to invite their friends to hear about who Jesus is too. The children have loved engaging with Bible stories re-enacted through Lego animations and love to create their own versions as part of their reflections.



Rock Solid

Rock Solid is our vibrant group for older primary-aged children, where curiosity and energy come together. Recently, the children have been enthusiastically exploring their 'big questions' – from topics like bullying and racism to the origins of the world – in a supportive group setting. This lively group thrives on thoughtful discussions as much as on fun and active play, creating a balanced space where children can both think deeply and enjoy themselves.

Highfield Community Football

This activity remains popular and well-loved by both young people and parents/carers in Highfield (neighbouring area). Designed to engage children of different ages across the school years, it also provides valuable opportunities to connect with adults and young people as they wait for their turn to play. On the pitch, participants develop important values such as exercise, respect, and teamwork. Each session concludes with a brief prayer, bringing the group together in reflection.

Rooted

Rooted is a youth group which has developed from Highfield Community Football. We take a group of teenage boys down to the church for pizza, hot chocolate and sports, and explore life and faith. We regularly have 12 attendees from the local community and have some wonderful conversations about who Jesus is. We have had opportunities to share sport and faith with other organisations including football matches with Sunderland Samba and Football freestyler Al Johnson visited to teach new skills.





Embers

Embers are young people growing in their faith and getting used to praying, singing, worship and reading the Bible together.

Wonder

The purpose of this group is to provide young women with a safe space to discuss the issues affecting their lives and the wider society, while also offering an opportunity to explore faith and build a personal relationship with God. It has been truly inspiring to witness friendships grow among the young women, as they become comfortable opening up to one another and to leaders, sharing and praying for each other's needs.

ID

The ID group has been thriving as the teenage boys from the church and local community increasingly enjoy taking on more challenging crafts and activities. Recently, they had a blast building their own dens and designing spaceships to protect an egg dropped from height - sparking creativity, teamwork and problem-solving. Beyond the fun, ID continues to be a trusted space where the boys feel comfortable discussing any topics or issues in their lives, fostering openness and support.

Fuse

Our young people's house group has continued this year and has seen the relationships of the group really grow. We have loved seeing the young people step out in prayer, get excited to delve into God's word and learn from each other.





Youth Band

The group is now well established and growing with up to 12 young people meeting monthly to play instruments, sing and experience being in a worship band. They have helped lead worship services and special events over the year and many of them are regulars with our church's main worship band. We are hoping to see our youth in our Sunday morning bands and circuit service bands more over the next year.

Kairos

This year we were particularly thrilled to take 12 young people to a Christian youth camp, 'Kairos'. The teenagers really enjoyed meeting Christians from other youth groups and exploring faith together. The camp included worship, seminars, prayer and a whole host of activities to enjoy together as a youth group.

Christmas

This year, we were able to provide an interactive Nativity experience for over 250 local school children. It was Lego-themed and a huge church-team effort. Following the schools' event, we hosted a community celebration called The Surprise Spectacular, where we opened our doors and invited the wider community in. Visitors came to explore the Lego Christmas journey, enjoy a hot sandwich, meet Santa, listen to live music and take part in Christmas crafts.

Easter

Over Easter, we opened up the worship space at SRMC to explore the Easter story. We changed the space every day and explored the story through activities like washing each other's feet and being on an unfair trial. We also tried out our first ever Family Faith Feast on Good Friday and welcomed over 70 people. It was a chance for all generations from the community to come together over food and talk about their life's journey.



Schools

We have continued to strengthen our links with our four local primary schools. We have developed volunteers to deliver monthly prayer spaces and assemblies and have supported pupils in Year 6 with their transition to secondary school. We had lovely feedback from a school who said, "The delivery of the sessions were perfectly pitched for the children, adding in your own personal experiences really helped support their transition." Over the next year we are hoping to expand our schools work further to include Chopwell Primary School and to use our site in Chopwell to do this.



Summer Holiday Club

We held our first Bible summer holiday club this year with a deep sea diving theme. We had children attend who had never explored the Bible before, children who love Jesus and were excited to learn more about Him and children who loved getting to know more about under the sea! It was amazing to hear the discussions during the Bible study times, to see children from our community engaging with worship and witnessing the children reflecting on how precious they are.



Financial Review

The Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2025 are set out on pages 28-33. The church funds are made up of a general unrestricted fund, a restricted fund – the Benevolence Fund, an endowment fund – the Development Fund and the funds of three Internal Organisations – the Children and Youth Project, Bridges and the Spread Drama Group. Only the unrestricted fund is available to meet the day to day running costs of the Church.

Unrestricted Fund

During the year ended 31 August 2025 there was a surplus of receipts over payments of £4,959 (2024: surplus of receipts over payments of £30,198) before an internal transfer to the Children and Youth Project of £7,000 (2024: £6,000 and a transfer from Spread of £500 resulting in a net transfer of £5,500). Bills were paid promptly and the outstanding liabilities at the year-end (i.e. invoices relating to before the year-end paid after the year-end) amounted to £348 (2024: £367). Collections and funds raised specifically for other charities or external organisations are excluded from both receipts and payments. At the year-end the balance on the Unrestricted fund stood at £86,564 (2024: £88,605).

The Finance and Property Committee prepares a budget each June for the following year. The net deficit after internal transfers of £2,041 for the year compared favourably with the budgeted deficit at the start of the year of £19,500 (after budgeted internal transfers). The main reasons for the lower deficit were: higher than expected letting of the premises, a number of one-off donations, refund of a contribution to the Methodist Pension Reserve Fund (made in December 2021) and a higher Gift Aid refund.

Offerings and tax recovered via Gift Aid totalled £94,126 (2024 £91,042). Letting receipts from hiring out the premises, although higher than expected, reduced slightly from £16,343 last year to £15,517 this year, which includes letting of the former caretaker's flat.

Within payments from the Unrestricted Fund there are three major areas over which the church has little control: i) the Circuit assessment; ii) property repairs and iii) utility bills. Repairs at Rowlands Gill in the year included the following major, non-routine items: repairs to the coping stones £8,500; tree surgery and removal £3,860; reupholstering a significant number of chairs in the worship area £1,350. Utility costs are monitored very closely and steps taken to obtain the most cost-effective, green energy contracts. We wish to record our grateful thanks to all those who work tirelessly to carry out repairs and maintenance to the church buildings and grounds, clean the premises on a regular basis and minimise the utility and other costs.

Restricted Fund

The Benevolence Fund is available to make payments at the Minister's discretion in cases of individual hardship or poverty. There were receipts of £20,848 (2024: £5,236) and payments totalling £13,442 (2024: £3,194), resulting in a balance carried forward of £9,786 (2024: £2,380). Receipts included three grants from GMBC totalling £8,925 (2024: £3,675) to help support individuals and families suffering hardship as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

Endowment Fund

The Development Fund was established to finance the redevelopment of the church buildings at Rowlands Gill. In accordance with guidance issued by the Methodist Church in July 2019, 'Accounting for tangible fixed assets', donations intended to provide an asset for long-term use, i.e. a fixed asset, should be classified as an expendable endowment and not a restricted income fund. Consequently, the Development Fund has been classified as an expendable endowment in the accounts. During the year, the fund received £18,428 (2024: £3,134) from a donation and grants for the installation of solar panels and battery storage. The Fund made payments of £21,360 (2024: £6,150). Payments during the year included the repayment of the fourth instalment of £6,000 of the loan of £30,000 received from The William Leech Charity in the year ended 31 August 2021. The balance on the Fund carried forward was £3,244 (2024: £6,176).

Internal Organisations

The Internal Organisations manage their finances separately from the main church funds but report to the Church Council.

The Children and Youth Project made net payments during the year of £22,944 (2024: £8,729) before receipt of the transfer of £7,000 (2024: £6,000) from the church's unrestricted fund. The balance at the year-end was £53,584 (2024: 69,528).

Bridges made net payments for the year of £164 (2024: net receipts of £196). This resulted in a balance of £8,839 (2024: £9,003) at the year-end.

Spread Drama Group had net receipts of £1,798 (2024: £1,009 before a transfer to the church unrestricted fund of £500), leaving a balance carried forward at the year-end of £7,285 (2024: £5,487).

Further information on all funds is provided in the accounts and the notes to the accounts.

Reserves Policy

Unrestricted funds

The church recognises the need to maintain a reserve in the General Fund to enable it to function effectively. Additionally, the church considers it appropriate to maintain a reserve as a contingency, for unplanned expenditure or indeed, reduced income. The Trustees have established their mission aims, including the resources available in terms of people, property and money. Mission initiatives and projects are fully costed or estimates made of projected costs which incorporate the needs of the buildings and the necessary requirements of the Quinquennial Inspection Report(s). The Church Council is aware of the continuing need to maintain an appropriate level of reserves and has agreed that any Unrestricted Fund reserve should be a minimum of £40,000 and not normally exceed six months operational expenditure. In conjunction with the Finance and Property Committee, the Treasurer monitors the reserve and reviews this policy annually.

The Church Council recognises the need to be accountable as Charity Trustees for all income and expenditure and in that regard, submits an Annual Report in accordance with the requirements of the Methodist Conference and the Charity Commission guidance in CC19. The Reserves Policy set out herein is recorded in the Trustees' minutes and the Annual Report.

The church running expenses for the current year ending 31 August 2026 are expected to be around £147,095 (2025: £125,835). Therefore, the required reserve for the Unrestricted Fund is between £40,000 and £73,548 (2025: £62,900). The Unrestricted Fund at 31 August 2025 was approximately £13,000 more than six months operational expenditure, primarily due to a number of one-off donations during the year and cost savings in some areas, such as utilities. Also, some £10,000 of property work anticipated was unable to be executed in the year and has therefore been carried forward and is included in the figure of £147,095 above. The reserves now available will assist with a budget for the church to carry out some important refurbishment work at Chopwell and thereby to continue its outreach work in the local community there.

Restricted Fund

The Benevolence Fund is distributable at the Minister's discretion to those in need. During the year ended 31 August 2025, grants totalling £8,925 were received from GMBC and collections at Communion Services have been made in favour of the Fund. The result of which is that the church has been able to significantly increase the support it is able to offer those in need. This support has been co-ordinated by a small team led by the Minister, in conjunction with the Rowlands Gill Community Hub Team.

Internal Organisations

Children and Youth Project – this account receives funding from time to time which is allocated to particular projects however, all funds held in this account are treated as restricted to paying the salaries of lay employees and supporting activities such as Sunday Club and for children and youth generally. The sources of funding vary, however, it is important to retain an appropriate level of reserves to enable the project to continue planned operations for at least six months in the event of an unexpected fall in income. The Project currently employs four part-time Children and Youth workers. Consequently, all funds are committed until 2027 at the earliest.

Bridges and Spread do not aim to make a significant surplus and any reserves are held to enable them to carry on with their activities, including their community projects, in the following year.

Funds held by the Internal Organisations are not available to meet general church expenses.

Endowment Fund

The Development Fund is made up of specific donations, grants and a loan, net of payments, relating to the development of the church building at Rowlands Gill, the first phase of which started in summer 2020 and was largely completed by December 2020. An interest free loan of £30,000 was secured in October 2020 from The William Leech Charity to cover a short-term funding gap and is repayable in 5 equal instalments of £6,000. The balance remaining at 31 August 2025 was £6,000. In the year ended 31 August 2025, grants of £15,300 were received to provide solar panels, which were installed and are now making electricity cost savings. The balance of the endowment fund is required to make the final loan repayment, the small shortfall of around £250 will be covered by a temporary loan from the church until the Gift Aid is received. Certain parts of the development had to be postponed until additional funds could be secured and at 31 August 2025, applications for grants were in progress to fund further energy-saving projects.

Trustees

- Helen Braun
- John Clark
- Lily Collinson - until May 2025
- Hannah Dawson
- Ann Dixon - until May 2025
- Sandra Dixon
- Jill Emmanuel
- Mary Glease
- Gillian Gordon - from May 2025
- John Gordon - from May 2025
- William Gray
- Marie Hutchinson
- Pete Hutchinson
- Mary Imlah - until March 2026
- Linda Innes
- David Johnson - until Sept 2025
- Gillian Johnson
- Helen Johnson - until Feb 2026
- Bryn Lauder - from Feb 2025
- Tracy Lauder
- Sharon Mackie
- Simon Mackie
- Christine Middlemiss - until May 2025
- Eunice Peacock
- Colin Robson
- David Robson
- Sue Robson
- Ranjith Rosa
- Boomie Shodeinde
- Marie Sidgwick
- Josh Simpson
- Keith Stamp
- David Thompson
- Jill Warden
- Eileen Wright
- Keith Crulley - Youth Worker
- Ruth Hallatt - Children and Families' Pastor
- Rev Ann Varker - Chair (Minister) - until Aug 2025
- Rev Stephen Lindridge - Chair (Minister) - from Sept 2025

Declaration

The Trustees declare that they have approved this Annual Trustees' Report.

Signed on behalf of the Charity's Trustees:

Signature(s)

Full name(s)

Position(s)

Date



**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH Charity no 1179206
ON THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025**

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under Section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act), and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination and confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that, in any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

I have not obtained independent verification of all investments with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes ("TMCP") or held in other Trusts, Bank balances and Funds at the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church ("CFB"), which are individually in excess of £10,000 (ten thousand pounds) at the balance sheet date.

Signed by

Date

Peter Nemes FCCA
Glenavon, Peth Lane, Ryton, NE40 3PB

STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

| CHURCH excluding Internal Organisations | Note | Unrestricted Funds | Restricted Fund Benevolence | Endowment Fund Development | Total Funds 2025 | Total Funds 2024 |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| RECEIPTS | 2 | | | | | |
| Offerings and Tax recovered | 3 | 94,126 | 2,447 | 3,120 | 99,693 | 95,723 |
| Bank interest | | 3,895 | | 8 | 3,903 | 3,789 |
| Lettings | | 15,517 | | | 15,517 | 16,343 |
| Other receipts | | 10,798 | 18,401 | 15,300 | 44,499 | 20,539 |
| TOTAL RECEIPTS | | 124,336 | 20,848 | 18,428 | 163,612 | 136,394 |
| PAYMENTS | 4 | | | | | |
| Circuit Assessment | 5 | 73,593 | | | 73,593 | 64,744 |
| Donations | | 8 | | | 8 | 8 |
| Repairs and Maintenance | | 20,090 | | | 20,090 | 4,900 |
| Utilities | | 15,079 | | | 15,079 | 15,961 |
| Endowment payments | | | | 21,300 | 21,300 | 6,090 |
| Other payments | | 10,607 | 13,442 | 60 | 24,109 | 15,467 |
| TOTAL PAYMENTS | | 119,377 | 13,442 | 21,360 | 154,179 | 107,170 |
| NET (PAYMENTS)/RECEIPTS FOR THE YEAR | | 4,959 | 7,406 | -2,932 | 9,433 | 29,224 |
| Total funds brought forward | | 88,605 | 2,380 | 6,176 | 97,161 | 73,437 |
| Transfers with Internal Funds & Organisations | 6 | -7,000 | | | -7,000 | -5,500 |
| CHURCH FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD | 8 & 9 | 86,564 | 9,786 | 3,244 | 99,594 | 97,161 |

**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT**

| INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS REPORTING TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL | Notes | Receipts £ | Payments £ | Net receipts/ (payments) £ | Transfers with Church £ | Opening balances £ | Closing balances £ |
|---|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Children & Youth Project | | 76,271 | 99,215 | -22,944 | 7,000 | 69,528 | 53,584 |
| Bridges | | 2,967 | 3,131 | -164 | 0 | 9,003 | 8,839 |
| Spread Drama Group | | 6,362 | 4,564 | 1,798 | 0 | 5,487 | 7,285 |
| Total of Internal Organisations | | <u>85,600</u> | <u>106,910</u> | <u>-21,310</u> | <u>7,000</u> | <u>84,018</u> | <u>69,708</u> |
| Church totals from previous page | | 163,612 | 154,179 | 9,433 | -7,000 | 97,161 | 99,594 |
| TOTAL FOR CHURCH INCLUDING INTERNAL ORGANISATIONS | | <u>249,212</u> | <u>261,089</u> | <u>-11,877</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>181,179</u> | <u>169,302</u> |

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

| CHURCH FUNDS HELD AT 31 AUGUST | Notes | Opening balances 2025 £ | Closing balances 2025 £ |
|---|--------------|--|--|
| Cash in hand | | 658 | 1,075 |
| Bank Current accounts | | 8,538 | 8,538 |
| Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church Deposit account | | 87,965 | 89,981 |
| Total of Church accounts | | <u>97,161</u> | <u>99,594</u> |
| Total funds held by Internal Organisations | | <u>84,018</u> | <u>69,708</u> |
| TOTAL CASH FUNDS | | <u>181,179</u> | <u>169,302</u> |
| OTHER ASSETS AND LIABILITIES | | | |
| Land and buildings | 10 | 4,058,832 | 4,168,905 |
| Plant and equipment at insured value | | 178,898 | 184,265 |
| Loan for redevelopment | 11 | 12,000 | 6,000 |
| Other liabilities | | 367 | 348 |

Signed on behalf of the Trustees by:

Rev. Stephen Lindridge, Chair

Jill N Warden, Treasurer

Date

**STRATHMORE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH
YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS**

- 1 Accounting basis** - The accounts have been prepared on the cash basis. "Gross income" for the purpose of determining whether accruals accounting is required, excludes receipts of endowment capital. The gross income of the Church for the year ended 31 August 2025 for this purpose is therefore, total receipts of £249,212 less endowment receipts of £18,428, giving a figure of £230,784. As this is less than the threshold of £250,000, accruals accounting is not required.
- 2 Receipts** do not include collections or funds raised specifically for other charities or external organisations. See note 7 for details of these amounts.
- 3 Offerings and Tax recovered** for 2025 for the Church Unrestricted funds includes Gift Aid of £18,896 (2024: £15,030).
- 4 Payments** do not include the passing on of amounts collected or raised specifically for other charities or external organisations. See Note 7 for details of these amounts.
- 5 The Circuit Assessment** is the Church's share of the Circuit's annual costs, primarily relating to Ministers' salaries and housing.
- 6 Transfers with Internal Funds & Organisations** - During the year the Church transferred £7,000 to the Youth & Children Project. (2024: Transferred £6,000 to the Youth & Children Project and received a transfer of £500 from Spread.)

7 Money received and passed on to external organisations

| | 2025 | | | | 2024 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Church | Youth | Bridges | Total | Total |
| | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Brought forward | 182 | | 660 | 842 | 990 |
| Collections/Receipts | 492 | | 14,319 | 14,811 | 14,198 |
| Payments | -674 | | -14,979 | -15,653 | -14,346 |
| Balance still to be paid at 31 August | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 842 |

The receipts and payments for Bridges relate primarily to the annual Church holiday to Keswick.

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

8 Restricted Fund - The Church has one restricted fund known as the Benevolence Fund, which is available for the Minister to spend at his discretion in cases of individual hardship or poverty. As this Fund has grown in recent years, there is now a team of individuals who assist the Minister with the distribution of support.

9 Endowment Fund - Development Fund

In accordance with guidance issued by the Methodist Church in July 2019, "Accounting for tangible fixed assets", donations intended to provide an asset for long-term use, i.e. a fixed asset, should be classified as an expendable endowment and not a restricted income fund. Consequently, the Development Fund for the extension and redevelopment of the Church building at Strathmore Road has been classified as an expendable endowment.

The receipts and payments of the Endowment Fund have been shown in a separate column and an analysis is provided below, showing the comparative figures for the prior year.

| | Year ended 31 August | |
|--|----------------------|--------|
| | 2025 | 2024 |
| | £ | £ |
| Receipts | | |
| Donations and grants | 18,420 | 3,120 |
| Bank interest | 8 | 14 |
| | 18,428 | 3,134 |
| Payments | | |
| Building project payments - installation of solar panels | -15,300 | -90 |
| Bank charges | -60 | -60 |
| Loan repayment | -6,000 | -6,000 |
| Net (payments)/receipts | -2,932 | -3,016 |
| | | |
| Funds brought forward | 6,176 | 9,192 |
| | | |
| Funds carried forward | 3,244 | 6,176 |

YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

- 10 Land and buildings** - The Church land and buildings are owned by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes as custodians. The Church at Strathmore Road opened in 1902 and the halls were added in 1958 but there is no information available about their historic costs. In conjunction with the redevelopment of the Church buildings, the Trustees have estimated the value of the land, based on average land values in Gateshead. The land value was based on a valuation in 2019 and after 5 years in 2024, the value was reviewed and was increased by £2,000. It will be reviewed again in 2029. The existing buildings are included at their insurance value in accordance with Methodist Church guidance.

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| | £ | £ |
| Land at Strathmore Road - estimated value | 390,000 | 390,000 |
| Insurance value of redeveloped buildings | <u>3,347,507</u> | <u>3,250,000</u> |
| | 3,737,507 | 3,640,000 |
| Chopwell Methodist Church - insurance value | <u>431,398</u> | <u>418,832</u> |
| | <u>4,168,905</u> | <u>4,058,832</u> |

* Note only: Cost of redevelopment to 31 August 2025 £707,441.

- 11 Loan** - In October 2020 The William Leech Charity made a loan of £30,000 to cover completion of the redevelopment of the Church buildings, prior to receipt of an equivalent amount of pledged donations. The loan is interest-free and repayable in 5 equal, annual instalments, the first being paid in October 2021 and the final repayment in October 2025.

Strathmore Road Methodist Church

Strathmore Road Rowlands Gill
Tyne and Wear
NE39 1HX



Charity: 1179206



rowlandsgill.org.uk