

# BRAMHALL METHODIST CHURCH ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



## GROWING LOVING SERVING

 **Bramhall**  
Methodist Church  
*Jesus at the heart of life*

Bramhall Methodist Church is an inclusive congregation of around 300 members that reaches out to the Bramhall village community with a wide range of opportunities to nurture faith and to share fellowship.

It is a registered charity, part of The Methodist Church in Britain, one of twelve churches that make up the Bramhall and Wythenshawe Methodist Circuit, and a member of the eight-strong inter-denominational Churches Together in Bramhall and Woodford network that promotes unity among Christian churches.

The church is also connected to the Messy Church movement that fosters informal, family-friendly worship for those who might shy away from more traditional church services.

The numerous charitable and socially responsible causes it embraces include:

- **Christian Aid** - that fights to bring an end to poverty around the world;
- **Fair Trade** - which aims to secure better prices, decent working conditions and fairer terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world;
- **Action for Children** - a charity actively supported by the Methodist Church that strives to make life better for the UK's most vulnerable children and young people.

The **Methodist Church** 





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We seek to be  
a people who:

**Love**

God,  
each other,  
and the World

We aim to be a church that puts Jesus at  
the heart of life, where everyone can:

**belong**  
and feel at home

**discover**  
and grow in faith

**receive**  
support for daily life

**contribute**  
and get involved in church life

## Message from the Minister

Dear Friends

This Annual Report captures and reflects on another year in the life of Bramhall Methodist Church. In many ways it has been a year of change, with the appointment of Matt Hill as our new Lay Pastor and Catherine Armstrong as our new Children and Families Worker, for example. This has also been a year where we've experienced and shared joy and hope - I think the Platinum Jubilee Community Lunch was a real highlight, and the Alpha course was a source of great encouragement, but it has also been a year where we've experienced grief and loss; in all of this we have been held in the faithful love of God and learned something new of what it means to be a community of faith. I hope you will see glimpses of this, and more, in the pages of this Report.

It feels to me that in various ways over the past year we have been on the threshold of a new beginning, or even several new beginnings; as we step over those thresholds into the new and continuing work God is calling us to, may we truly know and share "the love that holds us in a Saviour's care, faith strong to welcome all that lies before us [and may we have hope in] our unknown future, knowing God is there." (Timothy Dudley-Smith, Singing The Faith 684)

Sarah



## Worship & Prayer

We offer a wide variety of opportunities for people to encounter God through worship, in different styles, at different times and in different places. Prayer and worship is at the heart of all we are as a church community.

### Services

Weekly services of worship have been held in the main building on Sunday and Thursday mornings and these are live-streamed. They can both also be heard live on the telephone. A Sunday evening service is held once a month in the Welcome area. Refreshments are available after each service.

Over the year a few joint services have been held with Connect, alternating between Church and Centrepont. And at Easter, Holy Communion was held jointly on the forecourt – a great celebration of our Risen Lord!. These have all been much appreciated. Some of these have been followed by lunch in Centrepont to continue the fellowship.

### Connect

Connect is an informal service providing opportunity to connect with God, each other and our community. There have been various themes during the year, but with particular focus on Prayer, Alpha and Foodbanks. For the year ahead we look with anticipation as to how God will lead us – in our individual walk with Him, supporting each other and reaching out with the good news of Jesus to the community.



## **Worship Night**

Worship Night meets on the third Thursday of each month, with 12-15 people usually attending. Most are regulars but there are some who join occasionally. It is a great opportunity to dwell in the presence of God, praise him, be filled anew with the Holy Spirit and to listen to God's will for us. Why not give it a try?

## **Messy Church**

During the Pandemic, Messy Church was suspended so we made a fresh start in 2021. We currently welcome an average of 15 children along with parents and grandparents. They have a great time doing crafts and activities relating to the theme, leading to the celebration service which is followed by a tea time meal. This takes place on the second Sunday of every month from 4-6pm.



## **Prayer Life of the Church**

Prayer plays an essential role in all our Church services and there is opportunity for personal prayer at the end of the Connect services. Each day the Prayer Diary remembers a church member and gives us other ideas for prayer. There is a weekly prayer meeting on Zoom every Tuesday at 9.30am and another at 10am every Wednesday with Matt on Facebook. Connect4 WhatsApp groups each have around 4 people who pray for each other's concerns. The prayer network on email has around 50 people ready to respond to any prayer requests.

## **Flower Ministry**

The re-establishing of the 'church flowers' ministry has been enjoyed and appreciated by everyone. Thank you to those who have donated in memory of a loved one and also to those who have helped our flower fund. At Christmas the Church looked especially attractive thanks to the inspiring grand plan by Jenny Williams and the additional talents of our flower team. We hope to maintain a steady show throughout the year. Please continue to donate by adding your name to the flower chart in the Welcome area for a chosen Sunday.



## Exploring and Growing in Faith

A fundamental part of our church life, is in providing different ways in which people can encounter the good news that lies at the heart of the gospel, and nurture and grow in faith.

### **Alpha**

During the year we ran a very successful Alpha course, the first one we have run for a number of years and used the updated version of the Alpha course material. All sessions were well attended, food was enjoyed, fellowship was shared and we had an excellent away day at St Mary's in Handforth.

“It has been wonderful experience, exploring faith and meeting such lovely people” and “I feel re-energised in my faith” were typical of the feedback comments. At least one person gave their life to Christ, and a few others are on that journey.

### **The Ultimate Book Club**

It has taken just over 5 years to complete the 66 books of the Bible on a book by book, month by month progression. We have encouraged people to read the book before the speaker came who helped us understand it better. We trust those who took part now have a greater insight of God's word and are encouraged to continue to get to grips with the Scriptures.

The presentations are available on the BMC website under the Resources menu.

### **Lent Discussion Groups**

This year's Lent discussions used Hilary Brand's "Not a tame lion" which is based on the writings of CS Lewis and two related films "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" and "Shadowlands". We explored a wide range of sometimes challenging topics including: what it might mean for it to be "always winter but never Christmas", the challenges and joys of sharing our Christian experience and how we respond when our faith is tested. We enjoyed some lively conversation as well as space to ponder for ourselves the things we had seen, heard and shared.



## Children & Families

Each week, we interact with many families - through such varied activities as Pre-School, uniformed groups and Messy Church. Continuing to develop our work with children and families is an important strand of our mission and ministry as a church.

### Children & Families Work

In the autumn we were delighted to welcome Catherine Armstrong to the role of Children & Families Worker. This is an important part of our establishing a new pattern of work with children and families, recognising that some of the familiar things from the past are no longer suitable for the present. Baby Chat has now re-started, and we are looking at what new programmes and activities should form our work with children and families, and also looking at potential youth work

### Baby Chat

Baby Chat is a very relaxed group for new mums to come and chat to each other. It takes place each Friday morning, and provides a calming environment for the babies, and space for the mums to chat over a hot drink and toast. Please visit [bmeshs.link/baby-chat](https://bmeshs.link/baby-chat) to book a place each week.

### 1st Woodford Scout Group

BMC is pleased to be linked with the Scout group that meet at the Woodford Scout and Guide HQ on Moor Lane. We have thriving Beaver, Cub and Scout sections providing a range of activities for young people from 6 - 14 years of age. All sections take part in a wide range of fun activities as part of their programmes, and there are often opportunities to go on camps and other trips.

Please take a look at our website for more information, or to find out how to join us.  
<https://1stwoodfordcheshire.weebly.com/>





## 12th Bramhall Rainbows

We have had a great year exploring new skills and topics from performing first aid on our teddy bears to learning to chop up fruit; balloon karate to fake snowball fights! Rainbows have loved being back singing all together and generally making lots of happy noise.

We've been very proud to see our first two Rainbows achieve their Gold Award, having completed badges across all our Girlguiding themes. Our current waiting list is about two years long so if you have a three year old or under please get their name down ASAP at <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/information-for-parents/register-a-child> - we'd love to welcome them!



## 11th Bramhall Brownies

We started the year with a mixture of “Know Myself” and “Be Well” activities. We had fun making an adventure golf course from old bottles and boxes, with golf clubs made from newspaper and used ping-pong balls. The Thinking Day event at Benja Fold had a duck theme as the date was 22.02.22. We also had our own Thinking Day celebration where Brownies brought in food from Mexico, Italy, India and France for us all to try. We had a Platinum Jubilee party with Rainbows from St Michael’s. We tied this in with a “Time Travelling Celebration” and had old-fashioned party food and games. We also had a Baby Shower party because Snowy was due to have a baby. Baby Ava was born in October.

One Brownie achieved her Gold Award in the Spring before she left us to go to Guides. This is the highest award a girl can achieve in Brownies and given that we didn't meet face to face for a year was a great achievement for her. In September each Brownie made a page for a book of condolence to celebrate the life of our late Queen. The pages were put together and the book sent to Buckingham Palace. We had various trips, including an Alice in Wonderland activity day. The day was great fun and Brownies made their “Drink me” potions, and decorated mugs and biscuits. We also had a trip to see Matilda - The Musical. This was a national event taking over cinemas across the country.

## **12th Bramhall Brownies**

In our first full year after COVID-19, I am delighted to say we have a full Pack with a 2 year waiting list.

In March, 16 Brownies had fun at our Aviation Sleepover in the Pre-School's rooms making different sorts of planes. Following this we made indoor dens and decorated them as Fairy Tales. In May, 15 girls went to Glenbrook in Derbyshire to learn camping skills where our Sparkle Owl and her group won the firelighting challenge. For Pack Holiday we turned the Children's Inn at Rowarth into Casa Madrigal with crafts, challenges and lots of food.

Enjoying the good weather we had a sponsored Hop, Skip and Jump along the Middlewood Way and raised £500 for the Red Cross in Ukraine. To end the year we went to the cinema to see Matilda. In between all this the girls have worked hard on the Brownie Programme and we were proud to present 6 Bronze, 8 Silver and 8 Gold Awards.

## **11th Bramhall Guides**

The 11th Bramhall Guides have been busy working towards Guide Badges and learning all about important global issues. We marked Thinking Day on the 22nd of February, celebrating Girl Guides and Girl Scouts all over the world, thinking in particular this year about Girl Guides in Ukraine and enjoying some traditional borscht. The Guides have recently completed their Communicate Skills Builder, which aims to develop their communication skills and help them build confidence speaking in front of a group, and we're currently working towards the First Aid Skills Builder, which teaches them how to act and how to stay calm in an emergency.

At Christmas, we supported the Bramhall and Woodford Rotary Club's Santa Float, helping to raise money for local charities and keep the Guide's promise to serve our local community. We've got lots more exciting activities planned for this year, including taking part in Girlguiding's 'Wellies and Wristbands' festival camp, and some special activities to celebrate the King's Coronation. As ever, we're very grateful for all the efforts of our Leadership Team and supportive parents.

## Pre-School

Another super year at Pre-School, with 75 children on register with a wonderfully strong staff team of 15.

The children have been up to all sorts, from a circular 379 bus trip route, engaging in our magic story box each week and recently starting up the visits to Hillbrook Grange again. Jane, one of our grandmas, comes each week to help in the potting shed and football sessions have also remained on Tuesday mornings, a firm favourite with the children! The team's energy and passion for early years, ensures each child at Pre-School has a wonderful start to their education.

We held the first of our parents' evenings in December which was a great opportunity to meet our families and there's another in June. We have amazing families at Pre-School and the parent reps also held a super Christmas disco for them, a huge hit, with an Easter one soon. We are filling incredibly fast for the 23/24 academic year!



*There are lots more pictures on our website at [www.bmcpreschool.org.uk](http://www.bmcpreschool.org.uk)*



## Making friends

Sharing fellowship together is an important part of our life as a Christian community. We offer a range of different activities for different interest groups, some more energetic than others!

### Rambling Club

The Rambling Club arranges walks every other Saturday of between 7 and 9 miles in length, 18 walks were completed this year adding up to a total of 140 miles and 435 stiles. Stile fund donations were made to DEC Ukraine Appeal (£87) and DEC Pakistan Flood Appeal (£100). Numbers are down following the COVID-19 break and vary from 6 to 12 members per walk averaging 9. If anyone would like to join us our dates are included in Contact. Lifts can be provided if needed.

### Friday Nighters

During the pandemic, the group managed to stay in touch by holding quizzes and group chats on Zoom. Subsequently, when the rules allowed, we then began to meet outside for coffee and afternoon tea. Since September we are now meeting on the first Friday of the month and have followed a program of theatre trips and house group activities.

### Indoor Bowls

During this current season (October 2022 to March 2023) meeting every Tuesday afternoon, the club has increased its membership, which is particularly encouraging considering the alarming losses experienced by COVID-19. The club's overall aim is for members to enjoy themselves in friendly company. They don't have to be bowl players, just interested, and all are welcome, so just come along.

### Badminton

Our membership has remained fairly static this year, and both Monday evening (Mixed) and Wednesday afternoon (Ladies) have met regularly. We enjoy some energetic and fun games, and new wheelaway badminton posts have been ordered, to save our backs from heavy lifting. We always have a sociable chat over a much needed cup of tea!

## Art Group

It has been such a relief to return to our pre- lockdown state and once again be able to meet up each Monday afternoon to enjoy two hours of drawing, painting and chat. We have maintained our numbers pretty well - some have gone but new members have replaced them and of course the addition of the Craft group to share the venue has worked out very well.

New members are most welcome to join us in either the Art or Craft groups - no previous skill required - and find plenty of help and encouragement from other members. So drop in for a chat and cup of tea!

## Craft Group

We have a lovely group of about 9 crafters who meet along with the Art Group on Monday afternoons 2 till 4pm. Looking round the group we've got 2 cross-stitchers, one working on a ginger cat and the other a border collie, 1 hat knitter, 1 cardmaker, 1 making a rug with scrap strips of material, 2 or 3 quilling and another recruit who has 'defected' from Art and is learning to quill and 1 working on decoupage. As you can see "anything goes". It was good to see 3 or 4 of the group knitting the 100 woollen decorations which were hung outside church at Christmas. We are always happy to accommodate more crafters if you'd like to join us for a pleasant afternoon out.



*Knitted decorations could be seen hung around the church at Christmas*



## Supporting Life's Journey

BMC has a rich and varied pastoral support network, provided by a group of highly valued pastoral leaders and visitors, alongside a variety of groups offering fellowship and support for people at different stages of life.

### Pastoral Care

Our pastoral visitors continue to provide a hugely valued service to individuals across the church family. We particularly thank June Nightingale, Patricia Cameron and Liz Dooley as they step back after many years of faithful leadership to the team. Matt would love to speak to anyone interested in becoming part of this fantastic team.

### Link

Link meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 2.30pm with a speaker, fellowship and a cup of tea. All ladies are made to feel welcome.



*Thursday Club Christmas Dinner*

### The Thursday Club

In April, the Thursday Club will be 38 years old. We are so fortunate to have wonderful volunteers and a full membership of lovely friends, each of whom brings their own special talents and experiences. Our days are busy – plenty of conversation, games, quizzes, music, exercises, speakers and delicious meals. We have even held owls and watched amazing working dogs. We are a big 'Happy Family'. Importantly, we do need more volunteers. Come & join us!



## Supporting Life in the Village

Located in the centre of the village, we are a very visible Christian presence in the heart of the local community. On a week by week basis, and on special occasions, we encourage people to come and experience the fellowship and love that is central to the gospel.

### Thrift Shop

The constant flow of incoming goods we receive from church members and the community is quite remarkable. This enables us to spread God's love through our charitable donations to many worthwhile causes, medical research and sadly the disasters we have all seen in recent months.

In the last 12 months, we have donated a total of £19,000 to a variety of charities nominated by our Thrift Shop volunteers as well as DEC appeals for the Pakistan Floods and the Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal.

Hopefully we are more than just another charity shop. Our aim is to spread the love of Jesus by caring, listening and helping those who come into the shop just for a friendly chat or are perhaps new to the area.



### Coffee Shop

The Coffee Shop continues to be a welcoming place for people on their own, families and groups. Members of a local book club reserve a table and meet every month. We serve freshly baked scones, teacakes, excellent bean-to-cup coffee and have now started light lunches Thursday and Friday 12.00 to 1pm. The Coffee Shop is ecumenical but unfortunately, we have lost several volunteers from all of the Bramhall churches over the past two years. Helpers required!

## **Gardening**

The church gardens are now tended by two volunteers. This has saved the church over £1000. During the summer the gardens were tended weekly, with Elaine Bates keeping the grass neatly mown. The gardens this year have benefitted from the severe pruning inflicted on the shrubs the previous year. The azaleas were magnificent in the spring. We no longer tend the shrubs in the dell, having cut them well back two years ago.

Nearly all the saplings planted in the spring have taken and will soon be increasing in size. They will not be allowed to grow too large. The hedge cutting of the laurel was outsourced. There are now 2 water butts which will help if/when we get another prolonged dry spell.

As the weather warms up, we will resume gardening duties. More volunteers would be most welcome.

## **Platinum Jubilee**

In June 2022 we were delighted to join with the nation in celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. As people up and down the country shared in the Big Jubilee Lunch, we joined in by inviting people from across Bramhall to join us for a celebration barbecue. Although we had to move into Centrepoint because of the great British weather, we had fantastic food and enjoyed a quiz, heard music from the last 70 years, and shared stories with each other. We'll be inviting people in the community to join us in May 2023 to celebrate the Coronation.

## **The Mill**

The Mill, a Churches Together Project continues to provide a social hub for Bramhall's church and unchurched 11-18 year olds and has now been operating for over 22 years.

The numbers attending dropped during the pandemic but are seeing an increase once again although we are now only open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. We continue to employ two youth workers, Ian Watson and Sharon Sephton.



# JUBILEE LUNCH



Join us to celebrate the  
Queen's Platinum Jubilee  
Sunday 5th June 2022 11:30-2pm  
**All welcome**  
[www.bramhallmethodists.org.uk](http://www.bramhallmethodists.org.uk)



*The Platinum Jubilee Lunch was a great community celebration*

Thank you for  
a lovely spread!  
😊

54.



## Being Part of Something Bigger

The World and Neighbourhood team (WaNT) meets 3 or 4 times a year, to review the activities of the many projects BMC supports locally, nationally and worldwide. We welcome anyone to share information about a Charity or needs close to their heart.

### **Foodbank Initiative 2022**

During 2022, BMC has actively supported the foodbanks at Hope Central in Handforth & Brownley Green in Wythenshawe.

Support within the Church family of gifts for the foodbanks has continued and been greatly appreciated. However, a new development has been a food collection point for the wider community of Bramhall, at the monthly Worker Bee Markets in the Precinct. Month on month donations increased throughout the year, with large amounts also received at the Bramhall Summer Festival and Light Up Event in November.

WaNT members were invited to take part in a Harvest Festival assembly at Moss Hey Primary School, to promote the work of the foodbanks and received 50+ bags of donations from the children. Donations were then received after the school Christmas Fair and will continue throughout 2023.

The foodbanks also benefited from the generosity of BMC members at the Harvest Festival in September. Last year a short professional film, featuring the Hope Central foodbank and interview with the Manager was created by a BMC member. A powerful follow up film focused on an interview with a Hope Central client.

Thanks to all who support this vital work through regular giving of money or food donations.



*Foodbank collections took place at the Worker Bee markets*



## Action for Children

BMC remains a loyal supporter of Action for Children, the Charity which was set up by a Methodist minister over a century ago. We collect by using League of Light Boxes, by donations from the Carol Singing on Christmas Eve and by donations from Christmas services. In 2022 the total from these three sources was £428.

The actual amount of donations has substantially reduced in recent years, mainly as a result of the pandemic, as well as falling numbers of the congregation. The local AFC office which used to supply a lot of support closed during COVID-19 which was a sad loss.

## Communion Collections

In the last Church year, we were able to raise £15,061 through communion and special collections. This was given to local, national and international charities including Walthew House, MHA, local foodbanks, All We Can Pakistan floods appeal, Action for Children, Christian Aid, Seashell Trust, Alzheimer's Society, Literacy Trust and the DEC Turkey/Syria Earthquake appeal. We are very grateful for the prayerful generosity shown by our church members. If you would like to nominate a charity to be supported in this way, please speak to Sarah.

## Help for Ukraine

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in March 2022 many Ukrainian refugees arrived in Stockport as part of the Homes for Ukraine initiative. They arrived with small bags and limited possessions.

By the end of April, 1st Bramhall Scout Group had set up a welcome hub on Sunday afternoons. Clothes, toys and toiletries had been donated and were handed out to those in need.

Our church followed this up by welcoming hosts and their guests on Friday mornings. Volunteers served refreshments and welcomed them with a smile. This proved very popular for both groups. They were able to share their experiences and offer help and advice. Each adult was given a card which entitled them to complimentary coffee and cake at Centrepoint. The congregation responded by donating much needed items.

One of our Brownie leaders, Gemma McDonough and her sister organised a 'shop' in an empty shop in Cheadle Hulme. It is now housed in Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church and is still helping the refugees.

We were able to befriend over 50 refugees, many of whom are now rebuilding their lives in the Stockport area.





## Resources

### Finance

The financial position of the Church remains strong. Our overall reserves increased from £180,000 at 31st August 2021 to a draft accounts figure of £188,000 at 31st August 2022. The increase came primarily from increases in the Coffee Shop and Thrift Shop reserves as they returned to more normal working during 2022.

In the late Summer and Autumn of 2022 we completed the refurbishment of the back hall in line with our strategy to make it a Community Hub. However, given the substantial spend on the buildings over the last four years our Property Renovation reserve is now exhausted and in the year had to be supplemented by a transfer of £7,000 from the General and Property account leaving a small surplus per the draft accounts of £640 to be transferred to the General reserve. However, our large suite of buildings is now in excellent condition.

Of the £188,000 reserves some £103,000 relates to Pre-School. This is restricted and can only be used for purposes that relate to the Pre-School.

The small surplus on the General and Property account was achieved with a reduced level of giving, due to declining numbers. However, because we had a gap in the employment of our Lay Pastor and we didn't recruit a Children and Families Worker until recently, this reduced the expenses compared to the budget and led to the surplus. Both these positions have now been filled, therefore we will need to see an uplift in income in the current year to make sure we cover the costs of these investments in our people as we build back after the pandemic. I would be grateful if you could prayerfully consider your giving to the Church.

Overall we are in a sound position but to continue with our mission and support for one another and our community, we will need to increase our income in future. Some of this will come from rental income from use of the Property but some will need to come from the Congregation.

## Property

The resources team meet on a monthly basis and discuss topics such as finance, human resources, income from hirers, office updates and property issues including any projects on the go. A summary of our activity is circulated to Church Council.

We are grateful for the continuing support we receive from volunteers and special thanks to Mike Calow for looking after our heating so efficiently, and to our Church Administrator Rachel Pennells, who has been instrumental in providing support to all our user groups.

One of our goals has been to generate sufficient income to pay for the general maintenance and cost of running the church including heat & light and cleaning etc. We are pleased to report that income contributions have grown from £48,000 to £68,000 over the last year with most of the additional income coming from external hirers using Centrepoint.

In August we commenced a project to liven up the rear hall and rename it as the Community Hub. This was a project that required considerable help from several volunteers as we changed the look of the hall and brought this space back into a wider use for everyone. We are delighted with the number of new hirers including dog training classes, boot camps and many others who enjoy this space. Church related organisations continue to widely use the facilities and praise has been received from the local community to the improvements made. We have secured around £2,000 grant funding from Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent fund, Manchester Guardian Society Charitable Fund and SMBC Flexible Funding to help fund this work.

The Climate Emergency is still with us and together with the cost-of-living crisis presents many and varied challenges to church premises and BMC is not immune from this. We have plans to lessen our reliance upon gas and increase our solar capacity, however all this is for next year's report!



BMC is delighted to hold the Eco Church Silver award



*What a difference the refurbishment of the Community Hub has made!*



### **Getting in touch**

This report gives a flavour of the activities that go on week by week across our busy church. If you would like any more information, or to find out more about the ministries and activities in the life of the church, please get in touch with our Church Administrator in the Church Office on 0161 439 1204 or email [office@bramhallmethodists.org.uk](mailto:office@bramhallmethodists.org.uk).

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