

Great Hollands Free Church

because Jesus sets us free



**Annual Report
&
Accounts for 2023**

Message from the Pastor

Mark Wigston

What is the real difference?

Have you ever asked yourself the question: what is the real difference?

What is the real difference between a believer in Jesus and a non-believer?

What is the real difference between someone who has been born again and someone who has not been born again?

What is the real difference between someone who has received Jesus as Lord and Saviour and someone who has not?

What is the real difference?

Are we aware that the difference is only by grace?

We, who belong to Jesus, are so similar to our friends and neighbours, who do not belong to him.

We are similar in so many ways:

All of us are concerned about the on-going cost of living crisis.

We would all love to see an end to the war in Ukraine.

All of us are horrified by the Israel / Gaza conflict.

We are all concerned about what another general election might bring, here in the UK.

All of us long for our children and grandchildren to do well.

We all wonder if we and our families will have enough to live on, in old age – and some of us even wonder, if we will live to old age?

All of us are affected by the advance of Artificial Intelligence, for good or for ill.

And we are all affected, when public services are overstretched and under-funded.

The people of God are so similar to unbelievers, in so many ways.

All of us face many of the same hopes and fears, expectations and regrets.

So, what is the real difference between us? What is that difference, that is only by grace?

The real difference is that we have come to know the God who loves us, whilst they have yet to come to know that same God who loves them too.

We are children of God, whilst they have yet to become his children.

We are brothers and sisters within the family of God, whilst they have yet to enter into his family.

In John's Gospel we read:

To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

Over the last year, we have benefitted from being the family of God. We have worshipped our wonderful God together, we have been fed from his word, we have served together, we have cared for each other and we have prayed for each other.

Let us continue doing all of that, and also pray for the people that live near us, who do not yet know our wonderful Saviour.

We are so similar to them, in so many ways.

Perhaps we should be telling them about Jesus.

Maybe we should be inviting them to become children of God.

Perhaps we should be inviting them to become part of God's wonderful family.

In the book of Acts, Jesus told his disciples:

It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:7-8

We are called to be his witnesses too!

Thank you for your faithfulness over the last year.

May the Lord bless you, as you continue to serve him.

Making a difference - locally and around the world

Life continues to be difficult for many of us, during the cost of living crisis. However, we are also aware that God has blessed us with so much too, and blessings are for sharing. With this in mind we sought to share some of those blessings, over the last year.

Locally

We always promote a list of urgent items, on Sundays, that are needed by the Bracknell Foodbank so that folk can donate items at various drop-off points around the community.

We have also been supporting Yeldall Manor drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, which offers healing, hope and practical support to those struggling with substance abuse. Some of us also took part in their supporter events.

We also make a donation to FIEC every year. This is the group of about 640 churches in the UK, to which we belong. They are committed to seeing healthy, independent, evangelical churches sharing the good news of Jesus across our land.

Around the world

We have continued to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering for their faith. Much of our information on this comes from Open Doors – an organisation that we have been partnering with for many years.

We have sent them a further gift to help them in their work on the ground.

One 2 Free

Fiona Marston

During the first half of 2023, and due to there being low numbers of young people attending church, One 2 Free did not meet during the Sunday morning services (We did, occasionally, have worksheets available during the services). However, as new families started attending our church, the decision was made to reintroduce some teaching time for them at least once a month. This started in September and continued to the end of the year. The plan, moving forward, is to extend this to every two weeks. Our young people have also been involved with the services throughout the year, joining in with prayers, music and drama.

One 2 Free Home/Extra

Fiona Marston

This group of young people have continued to meet once a month on a Sunday evening in various people's homes. In the Autumn, a few of our older members went off to university, so this left around 4-5 remaining young people who meet to have a Bible study and discussion on a variety of topics and enjoy some food and fellowship together. We pray for all of our young people, as they continue in their walk of faith.

Belovèd

Fiona Marston

Belovèd is a Bible study group for ladies. We meet in various homes on Fridays at 10am, where we study the Bible and build one another up in our faith and our relationship with God.

During the Spring term of 2023, we studied 'Women and Identity', which examined the roles and identity of women in the Bible and how we can apply those examples to our busy lives today. In the Summer we studied the book of Hebrews and the focus on Christ as more superior than anything else that we may follow or cling to in life. We continued this subject into the Autumn, and then moved on to study the book of James. Although this is a short book, it is full of practical ways of how to walk the life of a Christian, and has proved to be a very deep study for us to learn from and grow in faith.

We continue to encourage one another as we meet for prayer, study, and fellowship. We pray for God's continued blessings and grace.

Mums in Prayer is part of a global prayer ministry for mums and grandmothers to come together to pray for their children and the schools in their local area. We currently have two groups running - one in Bracknell and one in Wokingham.

Bracknell Group

Our Mums in Prayer group has continued to meet on Tuesday evenings in term-time by zoom, which works well as most members work full time and do not need to take extra time away from their families to travel to the meeting. We were delighted to have 2 more mothers join, which makes a total of 6 mothers when everyone is there. The times together praising/thanking God, in confession and praying for our children, families and schools have been very encouraging, especially seeing many answers to prayer. The prayers, fellowship and support of the ladies in the group have been particularly valued when families have gone through difficult times, but we shared joyful celebrations too. We are grateful to God for his goodness to us all.

Wokingham Group

During 2023, Mums in Prayer, Wokingham group, continued to meet online on alternate Tuesday evenings. There are usually 5-7 mums who attend, and we continue to see God's faithfulness and goodness in the many answers to prayer throughout the year. At each meeting we focus on an attribute of God and follow the MiP 4 steps of prayer – praise, confession, thanksgiving and request – focussing on our children and their schools. We thank God for His grace, love, and mercy.

Home Group

Mark Wigston

Pilate asked Jesus “what is truth?” but did not stay around long enough to hear the answer.

Our home group is a great place to ask questions, and to find the answers, in the Word of God.

We enjoy a wonderful blend of worship songs, prayer and scripture - shared together by people who like a lively discussion and are not afraid to challenge each other's perspective. In addition to this, hot drinks are available too.

We meet every other week in our home. If you would like to join us, please see up-coming dates on our calendar (on the website) or speak to us. Meetings are fun and informal, and there is plenty of space to ask questions.

Thursday Prayer Meeting

Emmanuel Hayfron Acquah

It's hard to believe that our online prayer meeting has been running for about a year now! The first invite went out on the 15th of May last year. Many thanks to all who have consistently and faithfully joined in the work since then.

Our numbers are often low and on one occasion only 3 or 4 members turned up, but we were undeterred and carried on as normal.

2 Thessalonians 3:1 says "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you..." Given our present challenges and dwindling numbers, we should all be praying for God's word to 'speed on and triumph' among us. And we should be praying together. So I'll extend the invitation to all members again, to join in the work of praying for the church and for one another, on Thursdays at 7.45 pm. No church moves forward without prayer.

Lunch Club

Mark and Gabi Wigston

I started this Church Report by asking: What is the real difference?
Now I want to ask another question: What's not to love about our Lunch Club?

Lunch Club is a great opportunity for our church to get out into our community to meet new people. We have been running for 5 years - so let me tell you why it is so popular: We enjoy a good meal, with some lovely people, in a great location. And we get it for a great price too!

There are about 30 people, all around our community, who have been proving that it meets a need, by turning up, month by month. Why do they love our Club so much?

Is it the fact that you can choose anything you want from the menu?

Maybe it is the amazing deal we offer – a hot meal, jugs of water, and tea or coffee, all for around £7.

Or, perhaps it is the fun and friendly atmosphere combining a good natter with great grub.

We meet on a Thursday, at 12.30pm, once a month, at the Silver Birch Restaurant in Birch Hill, next to Aldi. We are in a great location, easy to get to, on foot, bike or bus, with plenty of parking nearby too.

Lunch Club is a great opportunity for our Church to serve the community, here in Bracknell, and a number of people from the club have been coming to church over the last year.

What's not to love about that?

Other Events

Various

In February we held a Gift Bingo evening at the community centre, which was well attended. This was made up of families and friends of the church and folk from the Lunch Club. We hope to hold more events in the future.

Although we didn't hold any of our own quizzes, Great Hollands Community Association continued with their regular quiz nights in the Community Centre and varying numbers of people from GHFC participated. This is a good opportunity to meet the local community as well as having an enjoyable evening.

Church Membership on 30th November 2023

Emmanuel Hayfron Acquah	Rob Mead
Sylvia Hayfron-Acquah	Gill Mead
Clare Bumpass	Jolame Nalumisa
Peter Burch	Asena Nalumisa
Sarah Burch	Karen Rogers
Peter Goodson	David Warrilow
Richard Greenidge	Sheena Warrilow
Gareth Jenkins	Mark Wigston
Anne Jenkins	Gabi Wigston
Fiona Marston	

Total membership: 19

* Indicates a new member in 2023 (this was Robyn-Lee Upton who also resigned her membership later in the year)

During 2023 the following members either resigned or were removed from the membership roll: David Goodall; Sandy Goodall; Sheila Hopkins; Robert Little; Faith Little; Paul Michael; Mei Michael

Treasurer's Report: Year ending 30th November 2023

Notes

Summary	2023	2022	Budget 2024	
				1
Opening Balance 1/12	£28,911.32	£25,476.57	£28,692.33	
Income	£48,848.48	£52,793.35	£42,520.00	
Expenditure	-£49,067.47	-£49,358.60	-£49,890.00	
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Closing balance 30/11	£28,692.33	£28,911.32	£21,322.33	
Income				
Freewill Gifts	£38,353.16	£42,919.38	£34,600.00	2
Refund from Inland Revenue	£9,412.35	£9,647.95	£7,400.00	3
Miscellaneous	£500.00	£99.00	£20.00	4
Bank Interest	£582.97	£127.02	£500.00	5
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Total	£48,848.48	£52,793.35	£42,520.00	
Expenditure				
Employment Costs	£40,537.07	£40,591.85	£40,800.00	7
Gifts	£1,990.00	£2,280.00	£1,750.00	6
Miscellaneous	£2,791.40	£2,651.75	£3,340.00	8
Hire Fees	£3,749.00	£3,835.00	£4,000.00	9
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Total	£49,067.47	£49,358.60	£49,890.00	
Change in Funds				
	-£218.99	£3,434.75	-£7,370.00	

Notes

Current Balance	2023	2022	
Various Floats	-£61.50	-£0.00	10
Cash in hand	£30.79	£22.42	11
Current Account	£447.35	£200.84	12
Deposit Account	£28,208.77	£28,653.56	
60 Day Account	£66.92	£34.50	
Total	£28,692.33	£28,911.32	
Liabilities	-£451.41	-£341.87	13

Notes on the Accounts

1. The 3 columns of figures represent the following:
 - a) The first column shows the amounts for the year ending 30th November 2023
 - b) The second column shows the amounts for the previous year (ending 30th November 2022) for comparison
 - c) The third column represents my estimate for the current year (ending 30th November 2024) for budgetary purposes
2. This represents all freewill offerings made to the Church. They can be further broken down as follows:

	2023	2022	Budget 2024	
Designated (External)	£1,064.72	£789.70	£400.00	a)
Designated (Internal)	£16.99	£0.00	£200.00	b)
Regular Gifts	£26,285.00	£28,185.00	£22,000.00	c)
Collection	£4,427.87	£5,455.11	£5,500.00	d)
Other Donations	£6,558.58	£8,489.57	£6,500.00	e)
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Total	£38,353.16	£42,919.38	£34,600.00	

- a) ‘Designated (External)’ represents gifts that were received specifically for the support of other Christian organisations (see note 6 for details). In some cases, these gifts were also received such that the tax is reclaimable by the Church and passed on to the relevant organisation.
- b) ‘Designated (Internal)’ represents gifts that were made for the support of specific activities within the Church. This year these gifts were towards supplying the refreshments for the Christmas Celebration.
- c) ‘Regular Gifts’ represent those gifts that are made by regular donations. The majority of these are subject to reclaims from the Inland Revenue. Since April 2000, any gifts made by a taxpayer can be ‘Tax Efficient’ provided that they are not made anonymously.
- d) ‘Collection’ covers the money in the collecting box each Sunday. Since April 2013, any loose cash in the collection box (which means any amount less than £30) can be assumed to be subject to Gift Aid. However, if the amount is greater than £30 (for example a bundle of notes that have been put in together),

then Gift Aid cannot be reclaimed. During this year, £1,576 has been put in the box for which Gift Aid is not claimable. If this money **had** been given Tax Efficiently, then a further £394 could have been reclaimed from the Inland Revenue.

e) 'Other Donations' covers other one-off gifts.

3. This represents the money that the Church has been able to reclaim from the Inland Revenue and corresponds to the tax paid on gifts made to the Church using the Gift Aid Scheme. This year I have made a reclaim for Gifts received during the 2021 - 22 Financial Year, and so we are up to date on our Gift Aid reclaims. If anyone would like to know more about how to make their giving 'Tax Efficient', then please speak to me about it. Note that higher rate taxpayers should ensure that they declare any Gift Aid donations on their Income Tax returns, since they will receive tax relief on such gifts.
4. This represents payments received by the Church for a specific purpose. This year it represented a grant from FIEC to support churches with poor finances.
5. This represents the interest we receive on our bank accounts. The church is benefitting from the rising Interest rates (though not as much as personal savings accounts are benefitting).
6. This represents gifts made to other individuals or organisations. The following table gives details of all the gifts made and indicates where part of the gift had been given to the Church specifically for that purpose. Note that if money is given specifically for a cause, then at least that amount of money is always passed on. In most cases, Gift Aid is claimable on such gifts and the anticipated Gift Aid claim is also passed on to the intended organisation. Note that we have received about £75 for Yeldall Manor which we have not yet passed on (but will do so on the next financial year)

The total amount given during the year represents about 4% of our income.

The payment to FIEC, is lower than that recommended by them, based on our Church Membership. It was agreed to pay them the amount for the lower band of members as we are short of funds.

Gifts For / To	Totals	
	Received	Given
Yeldall Manor	£429.70	£500.00
Open Doors	£635.02	£800.00
Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches		£540.00
Visiting Speakers		£150.00
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Totals	£1,064.72	£1,990.00

7. This represents the Employment costs of the Church, namely the Salary and Pension contributions we pay to Mark and Gabi Wigston including Tax and National Insurance. From April 2016, there has been a special dispensation for most organisations such that the first £3,000 (increased to £4,000 in 2020 and to £5,000 in 2022) of Employers' National Insurance Contribution each year doesn't need to be paid. In our case, that covers all our Employers' National Insurance, and this saving should apply in future years.
8. This covers all the other expenditure. The following provides a more detailed breakdown:

	2023	2022	Budget 2024	
Annual	£916.02	£876.65	£950.00	a)
Banking	£60.00	£84.00	£60.00	b)
Printing	£75.50	£83.25	£100.00	c)
Magazines, Books etc.	£46.50	£51.75	£50.00	d)
Allowances	£417.35	£467.99	£840.00	e)
Beloved	£0.00	£64.69	£0.00	f)
Publicity	£100.00	£100.00	£150.00	g)
Youth Work	£0.00	£44.91	£100.00	h)
DBS Checks	£153.40	£225.80	£200.00	i)
Capital Fund	£141.47	£203.07	£300.00	j)
Internal Gifts	£30.00	£12.00	£100.00	k)
Refreshments	£258.82	£216.61	£270.00	l)
Stationery and Stamps	£7.00	£15.20	£20.00	m)
Other	£585.34	£205.83	£200.00	n)
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Total	£2,791.40	£2,651.75	£3,340.00	

- a) 'Annual' represents one-off annual charges such as Insurance, our PO Box and our Copyright Licence.
 - b) 'Banking' represents our monthly bank charges.
 - c) 'Printing' represents the costs for Bulk Printing and consumables for the Church Printer.
 - d) 'Magazines, Books etc.' represents the costs of purchasing Evangelicals Now.
 - e) 'Allowances' represents mileage payments made to Mark plus costs of books and an allowance for his phone.
 - f) 'Belovèd' represents the cost of Bible Notes bought for Belovèd. (There were no such purchases this year.)
 - g) 'Publicity' covers the cost of publicity for the Church. The main cost now is for our ongoing advert in Great Hollands Matters.
 - h) 'Youth Work' represents the cost of materials for the children's and youth work on Sundays. (There were no such costs this year.)
 - i) 'DBS Checks' represents the cost carrying out DBS checks on youth workers.
 - j) 'Capital Fund' represents one-off capital expenditure. This was to purchase new equipment for the music group.
 - k) 'Internal Gifts' represents gifts to members of the fellowship to mark special occasions.
 - l) 'Refreshments' represents the cost of refreshments on Sundays and for special events. In many cases, the costs have been donated to the Church.
 - m) 'Stationery and Stamps' also includes payments made to people for printing on their own printers.
 - n) 'Other' covers anything that doesn't fall into any other category. The main costs were for the purchase of songs from iSing, training of members in Food Hygiene and hosting costs on the Church's website.
9. This represents the costs of hiring the school, and the Community Centre each Sunday and on other occasions.
10. Some people who regularly spend small amounts of money are given cash floats which are topped up when necessary and accounted for at an appropriate time. This sum represents the money that is held in these floats, but which has not yet been spent. The fact that it was

negative, meant that at the end of the year some money was still owed (but it has since been refunded).

11. This represents cash that I have received, but not banked yet.
12. This represents the amount nominally in the bank.
13. This represents payments that are due, but which have not yet been made. The outstanding payments were: the Tax and NI deducted in October and November but not yet paid to IR; Hire fees for the School and Community Centre in November 2023 and money donated to Yeldall Manor which hasn't yet been passed onto them.

Financial Outlook for 2024: As can be seen from the summary on page 9 the projected income for 2024 is expected to be about £7,400 less than the expenditure. In other words, we are spending more than we are getting in each month. This is due mainly to an ongoing deficit of around £610 per month. We need to close this gap moving forward, as our reserves are being rapidly used up. Therefore, we all need to consider increasing our giving towards the work of the Church (tax efficiently wherever possible!).

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Peter Goodson and Karen Rogers for carrying out an independent examination of the accounts. I would also like to thank those who have helped in checking the collection each Sunday.

Gareth I Jenkins

WHAT WE BELIEVE - THE FIEC BASIS OF FAITH

1. GOD

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator, Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

2. THE BIBLE

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

3. THE HUMAN RACE

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

4. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

5. SALVATION

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is

offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

7. THE CHURCH

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local Churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between Churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between Churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

8. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the Churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

9. THE FUTURE

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

Church Officers as at 30th November 2023

Elders

Mark Wigston (Pastor)

Emmanuel Hayfron Acquah

* (Dave Goodall resigned in July 2023)

Deacons

Fiona Marston (Church Secretary)

Gareth Jenkins (Church Treasurer)

Rob Mead

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