

Great Hollands Free Church

because Jesus sets us free



**Annual Report
&
Accounts for 2024**

Message from the Pastor

Come to Jesus

Festivals are big business in the UK today that offer many genres of art, craft, music and entertainment. According to one estimate, a third of the UK population have attended a music festival since 2016. Some people plan their whole year around festivals, but sometimes, a festival does not live up to the publicity, meaning that the festival-goers return home disappointed.

In the time of Christ, the Jewish nation had many religious festivals that reminded them of their history and culture. Whilst many of these festivals were meant to remind them of how God had blessed them in the past, the festival organisers focussed too much on the festival, and paid little attention to the God who had worked wonders in the past, and who was about to do a new thing in their generation.

At the Passover Festival, for example, whilst they were meant to be celebrating their God who had set them free from slavery in Egypt, they refused to recognise Jesus, the Messiah, who had come, to set them free from slavery to sin.

Another very interesting festival, which was celebrated in September or October, was known as the Festival of Tabernacles or the Festival of Booths, because the people lived in temporary leafy shelters, to remember the 40 years when their ancestors had wandered in the wilderness, and God had been faithful to them.

Jesus attended the Festival of Booths, with his disciples, and from what we can ascertain from John's Gospel, the festival was not meeting the people's deepest needs. They had been there for days, and I am sure that there was plenty of religious tradition, but the festival-goers were left feeling dry on the inside. There was nothing at the festival to meet their deepest needs, until Jesus spoke up, on the last day of the festival. This is what he said:

John 7:37-38

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.'

Some of us have been part of this church for many years, whilst others have joined much more recently, but, whatever your own situation, if you are thirsty, please *come* to Jesus every day and drink. His promise is as valid for you today, as it was all those years ago at the Festival of Booths - *rivers of living water will flow from within you*.

The last year has been very challenging for many of us, within the church, as we have faced illness and other difficulties, which have left us feeling weary. If you are in this category, then these words of Jesus, from Matthew's Gospel, are for you too:

Matthew 11:28

'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Thank you to all of you who are part of our church. It is so good to follow Jesus together, to support each other, and to reach out to our world together. Our Sunday meetings are a great time of celebration, as we focus on what God has done for us in worship and prayer, and as we dig deeper into the scriptures. During the week we have further activities which offer us the opportunity to explore, care, share and serve together. The church is described in the Bible as being the Body of Christ, with each of us having different functions within the body. Let us all continue to serve him faithfully, according to the role that he has given us.

The needs of others - locally and around the world

It is important, as a church, to be aware of the needs of others around us, both locally and globally.

We continue to promote the Bracknell Food Bank every Sunday, so that people can donate food items in a way that is convenient to them. We also sent them a small cash donation. Our pastor issued vouchers to a number of folk and helped them attend the Food Bank by providing transport and a friendly face. One of our members also volunteers at the Food Bank.

We also sent a small donation to *Yeldall Manor* drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, which offers healing, hope and practical support to those struggling with substance abuse.

We sent another donation to FIEC. 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.

Our Pastor preached in Romania and Moldova in a number of churches, whilst on holiday, and also spoke at a Christmas event at a children's mission in Moldova. Various individuals from our church contributed to this mission in Moldova.

One 2 Free

It is always a privilege and a pleasure to teach the next generation about Jesus and his love for us. We met together every other week and explored the armour of God together during the first part of the year, moving on to the Parables of Jesus later in the year.

The young people are an important part of our church, praising God during our Sunday worship, serving in music and drama, and assisting with audio and visual technology for the services.

We thank the Lord for each of our young people and pray his blessing upon them.

Belovèd

Belovèd is a Bible study and prayer group for ladies. We meet in various homes on Fridays at 10am to build each other up in faith and in our relationship with God.

In Spring 2024 we continued our study of the book of James, which is full of practical ways to walk the walk of faith. We followed this in the Summer with the books of Titus and Philemon which, although short, were nevertheless encouraging and succinct in their content. In the Autumn we moved on to the letters of Peter, which focused on our call as God's chosen people living to bring hope and light to the world.

We continue to encourage one another in our daily lives, and we pray continually for God's blessing and grace.

Mums in Prayer

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 weekly in term-time over zoom with 6 people attending. Each week we focus on an aspect of God's character such as: He is Holy; our Fortress; Omniscient; the Potter; Worthy.

In our times of thanksgiving, we have been encouraged by answered prayer and how God has worked in the large and small details of our families' lives.

We have seen God's goodness in providing for and guiding our children, whom we pray for each week. Our children range from age 1 at nursery, through the school years, to those at university and working adults, so we encounter a wide variety of needs and blessings!

Wokingham Group

Mums in Prayer, Wokingham group, continued to meet online on alternate Tuesday evenings in 2024. There are up to 6 mums who attend regularly.

At each meeting we choose an attribute of God to focus on, and then we follow the MiP 4 steps of prayer – praise, confession, thanksgiving, and request – inserting our children's names in a chosen Scripture to pray for them and their schools and teachers.

We have been blessed to see God's faithfulness and goodness in the many answers to prayer throughout the year. Praise be to God for His infinite grace, love and mercy.

Home Group

Who is Jesus? What does he say about himself?

Our home group is a great place to ask such questions, and to find the answers, in the Word of God. Over the last year we focussed on Jesus's own words about himself in his *I am statements*, found in John's Gospel.

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. 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 (Online)

Against all odds our prayer meeting goes on - from the comfort of our own homes. We have had new members join us, there have been battles with technology, and also health or work or family challenges for some, but it is great to have persevered through all of these and not given up when the going was hard.

Why do we pray?

1. Because the Lord tells us to. (Luke 18:1)
2. Because we encourage, strengthen and support each other.
3. Because we, our families and friends, our church etc. all face challenges.
4. Because we have received answers to prayer, some quite dramatic.
5. Because of the signs of the times.

We'd like to encourage everyone to join when they can. Watch and pray.

Lunch Club

Lunch Club continues to be a great opportunity for our church to get out into our community to meet new people.

We have been running for 6 years - so why is it 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 convenient 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.

Other Events

We had a lovely service of dedication in January where we thanked God for the birth of a baby girl, and prayed for the child and her parents. This was followed by a Bring and Share lunch.

There was a festive atmosphere again in September at our Harvest Celebration, where we thanked God for all his blessings to us, including his love and grace, and also the food on our plates. This was followed by a Bring and Share lunch and Harvest Games.

As the year drew to an end, we held our Celebrate Christmas event. This was a blend of Christmas carols and worship songs, together with Bible readings, drama and a thought for the season. At the end, everyone stayed on for festive food and drinks.

Great Hollands Community Association also hosted their quiz nights in the Community Centre and a number of people from the church participated. This is a good opportunity to meet the local community as well as having an enjoyable evening.

Church Membership on 30th November 2024

Emmanuel Hayfron Acquah	Rob Mead
Sylvia Hayfron-Acquah	Gill Mead
Peter Goodson	Karen Rogers
Richard Greenidge	David Warrilow
Gareth Jenkins	Sheena Warrilow
Anne Jenkins	Mark Wigston
Fiona Marston	Gabi Wigston

Total membership: 14

During 2024 the following members either resigned or were removed from the membership roll: Clare Bumpass; Peter Burch; Sarah Burch; Jolame Nalumisa; Asena Nalumisa

Financial Report: Year ending 30th November 2024

Notes

Summary	2024	2023	Budget 2025	
				1
Opening Balance 1/12	£28,692.33	£28,911.32	£25,097.33	
Income	£43,922.05	£48,848.48	£41,500.00	
Expenditure	-£47,517.05	-£49,067.47	-£49,640.00	
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Closing balance 30/11	£25,097.33	£28,692.33	£16,607.33	
Income				
Freewill Gifts	£33,892.02	£38,353.16	£33,000.00	2
Refund from Inland Revenue	£9,004.30	£9,412.35	£8,000.00	3
Miscellaneous	£148.22	£500.00	£0.00	4
Bank Interest	£877.51	£582.97	£500.00	5
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Total	£43,922.05	£48,848.48	£41,500.00	
Expenditure				
Employment Costs	£40,852.60	£40,537.07	£41,600.00	7
Gifts	£562.50	£1,990.00	£1,050.00	6
Miscellaneous	£2,144.75	£2,791.40	£3,040.00	8
Hire Fees	£3,957.20	£3,749.00	£4,300.00	9
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Total	£47,517.05	£49,067.47	£49,990.00	
Reduction in Funds				
	£3,595.00	£218.99	£8,490.00	

Notes

Current Balance	2024	2023	
Various Floats	-£0.00	-£61.50	10
Cash in hand	£173.58	£30.79	11
Current Account	£580.99	£447.35	12
Deposit Account	£273.83	£28,208.77	
60 Day Account	£24,068.93	£66.92	
Total	£25,097.33	£28,692.33	
Liabilities	-£413.68	-£451.41	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 2024
 - b) The second column shows the amounts for the previous year (ending 30th November 2023) for comparison
 - c) The third column represents my estimate for the current year (ending 30th November 2025) for budgetary purposes
2. This represents all freewill offerings made to the Church. They can be further broken down as follows:

	2024	2023	Budget 2025	
Designated (External)	£50.00	£1,064.72	£100.00	a)
Designated (Internal)	£319.73	£16.99	£200.00	b)
Regular Gifts	£22,660.00	£26,285.00	£22,400.00	c)
Collection	£4,069.57	£4,427.87	£3,600.00	d)
Other Donations	£6,792.72	£6,558.58	£6,700.00	e)
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Total	£33,892.02	£38,353.16	£33,000.00	

- 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, £680 has been put in the box for which Gift Aid is not claimable. If this money **had** been given Tax Efficiently, then a further £170 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 we have made a reclaim for Gifts received during the 2022 - 23 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 the Leadership Team 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 other income payments received by the Church for a specific purpose. This year it represented money from the sale of Christmas cards in 2023 and for purchasing Bible Notes and Evangelicals Now.
5. This represents the interest we receive on our bank accounts.
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 given about £75 to Yeldall Manor which we received in the last financial year).

The total amount given during the year represents about 1.3% 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 a smaller amount as we are short of funds.

Gifts For / To	Totals	
	Received	Given
Yeldall Manor		£100.00
Foodbank	£50.00	£62.50
Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches		£300.00
Visiting Speakers		£100.00
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Totals	£50.00	£562.50

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. There is a special dispensation for most organisations such that the first £5,000 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:

	2024	2023	Budget 2025	
Annual	£561.54	£916.02	£600.00	a)
Banking	£60.00	£60.00	£60.00	b)
Printing	£0.00	£75.50	£100.00	c)
Magazines, Books etc.	£40.00	£46.50	£50.00	d)
Allowances	£455.90	£417.35	£850.00	e)
Publicity	£133.00	£100.00	£150.00	f)
Youth Work	£0.00	£0.00	£50.00	g)
DBS Checks	£193.70	£153.40	£200.00	h)
Capital Fund	£171.65	£141.47	£300.00	i)
Internal Gifts	£30.00	£30.00	£100.00	j)
Refreshments	£328.73	£258.82	£350.00	k)
Stationery and Stamps	£23.49	£7.00	£30.00	l)
Other	£146.74	£585.34	£200.00	m)
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Total	£2,144.75	£2,791.40	£3,040.00	

- a) 'Annual' represents one-off annual charges such as Insurance, and our Copyright Licence. In previous years this also covered the cost of our PO box, but it was decided in 2024 to cancel that.
- b) 'Banking' represents our monthly bank charges.

- c) 'Printing' represents the costs for Bulk Printing and consumables for the Church Printer. There were no such costs in 2024.
 - 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) 'Publicity' covers the cost of publicity for the Church. The main cost now is for our ongoing advert in Great Hollands Matters.
 - g) 'Youth Work' represents the cost of materials for the children's and youth work on Sundays. (There were no such costs this year. However there is a budget for such costs in the future.)
 - h) 'DBS Checks' represents the cost carrying out DBS checks on youth workers.
 - i) 'Capital Fund' represents one-off capital expenditure. This was to replace a broken lock in the Community Centre and to install a PO Box in the Community Centre.
 - j) 'Internal Gifts' represents gifts to members of the fellowship to mark special occasions.
 - k) 'Refreshments' represents the cost of refreshments on Sundays and for special events. In many cases, the costs have been donated to the Church.
 - l) 'Stationery and Stamps' also includes payments made to people for printing on their own printers.
 - m) 'Other' covers anything that doesn't fall into any other category. The main costs were for training of members in Food Hygiene and Anti-Virus software for the Pastor's laptop.
9. This represents the costs of hiring the school, and the Community Centre each Sunday and on other occasions. The hire cost for the school went up this year for the first time in 20 years.
 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.
 11. This represents cash that has been 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 2024.

Financial Outlook for 2025: As can be seen from the summary on page 9 the projected income for 2025 is expected to be nearly £8,500 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 £620 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, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Peter Goodson and Karen Rogers for carrying out an independent examination of the accounts. We would also like to thank those who have helped in checking the collection each Sunday.

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 2024

Elders

Mark Wigston (Pastor)

Emmanuel Hayfron Acquah

Deacons

Fiona Marston (Church Secretary)

Rob Mead

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