***The Two Rivers Mission Community***

Annual Report and Financial statements

of the Joint Council

for the year ended 31st December 2024

*A logo for a mission community

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Rector: Reverend Gary Owen

Bankers: *Lloyds Bank*

Independent examiner: *Ian Cornwall*

Website: [www.tworiversmissioncommunity.org](http://www.tworiversmissioncommunity.org/)

The Mission Community Council is an Excepted Charity

**A report on the activities of the Mission Community**

There is much to celebrate as we look back on 2024, despite a number of challenges within the mission community and a difficult Church and national context.

We have continued to maintain weekly Sunday services in seven churches, twice per month in two, monthly in one and quarterly in our chapel of ease. Sunday services are the focus of the life of Christians in each parish. They are also an offering to the wider community as we worship and pray on behalf of everyone, and as we endeavour to help the whole community mark important seasons and national events; some explicitly Christian such as Christmas, some to mark the agricultural year, and some to mark important civic occasions such as Remembrance.

In 2024 we conducted 4 baptisms (11 in 2023), 9 weddings and 2 blessings (8 and 1 in 2023) and 26 funerals and burial of ashes (43 in 2023). Decreasing numbers may be a blip or may be due to a number of factors; potentially an increasingly secular society, other options for weddings and funerals, loss of confidence in the Church of England due to safeguarding scandals and issues of human sexuality, and the lack of clergy time to ‘encourage’ people to use church to mark important life events.

Our churches have shown a number of creative ways to reach out to their communities and share the gospel. A few highlights include children’s activity mornings, services aimed at families such as messy church, café church and wild church, and food based social events including coffee mornings, biscuit clubs, soup lunches and progressive suppers. We conduct assemblies in all four local schools, and help out with RE and ethos committees. There is an out of school club in High Bick, a youth group for children aged 8+ in Newton Tracey church and 11+ in Beaford village hall.

Each of our church buildings is open every day (except Alverdiscott which is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays) so that visitors may come to pray, seek peace and space for reflection, or to enjoy the history and architecture. We endeavour to make our buildings attractive and speak of Jesus.

Making our churches as safe as possible, and meeting all our safeguarding requirements, is a massive undertaking. We have invested considerable resources in DBS checking.

We have run safeguarding training locally to complement online training from the Church of England. We are working through improving our risk assessments. Given national safeguarding failures, the hurt that many have suffered and the adverse effect on the reputation of the Church of England, we cannot expect anyone to trust us just because we are Christians. Trust must be earned. We thank everyone who has played their part in helping us do all that we can to be safe and give people confidence that we are safe.

Much of our pastoral care, of church members and the wider community, is done on an informal basis by church members ‘loving their neighbour as they love themselves’. Focal ministers are generally well embedded in their local community and are a first point of contact when something more specialist is required. Carol in Yarnscombe is now licensed to take funerals and Jacque in Roborough will be licensed in early 2025. Julia, our parish nurse deacon offers more specialist pastoral care to young families through toddler groups, and to the elderly, those who are poorly and to people in end-of-life care. The synergy between her role as parish nurse and deacon is very helpful in making connections between members of the wider community and the church family.

We have sought to place prayer at the heart of everything we do. Each term in 2024 we began with a day of prayer and fasting. We joined in the international Thy Kingdom Come prayer event and Southwest Awake (praying on the coast path at Baggy Point). Members of the mission community council gathered for prayer before each business meeting. We trust that Jesus is faithful and will be good to his promise that, “Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14.13).

In 2024 our parish participant figures totalled 138, an increase of 8 on 2023; so a modest but nonetheless significant increase given the context of declining numbers nationally. All of our churches met their common fund request in full.

It was a great sadness that Rev Cathy retired in September due to a stroke. Cathy offered much wisdom to the leadership team as well as creative flair in encouraging Tawstock church. She and husband Steve will be sadly missed. We hope to appoint a new team vicar (reduced from half time to house for duty due to pressure on diocesan finances) in the Spring of 2025. Ally, our curate was priested in June and is now a very competent member of the leadership team. Sue Turner is due to finish training as a lay minister in June 2025 and will join the leadership from January 2025 in preparation for this. Rev Gary took a sabbatical from August to November 2024. This inevitably led to something of a loss of momentum as he couldn’t progress things he might have done otherwise. But Rev Ally, supported by Rev Tracey as rural dean, and the rest of the team, kept the mission community moving forward through the Autumn and set up a Christmas that saw a wide variety of services and excellent attendance. We expect Rev Gary’s sabbatical study and reflections will help shape future progress within the mission community, and indeed be helpful to other mission communities treading a similar path to ours.

Beyond our mission community boundaries, Rev Tracey serves as rural dean of Torrington and two members of the Two Rivers serve as officers for deanery synod. David Halpin acts as archdeaconry warden of lay ministry. Rev Gary serves on the executive committee of Churches Together in Barnstaple and the Exeter Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship. He is called on periodically to speak about the Two Rivers to groups exploring focal ministry,

Finally, we thank everyone who plays their part in helping our churches and mission community to maintain our ministry and mission. There are too many to mention, but we do record our special thanks David Large who is retiring as mission community treasurer having served in the role since its inception, and to Julie Clarke who has served from May to December 2024 as our mission community administrator. As St Paul says, “There are different kinds of service but the same Lord” (1 Corinthians 12.5) and everyone who plays their part, whether its leading worship or running youth groups, keeping the accounts and polishing the brass, is important. Thank you… and keep up the good work.

And so, we go into 2025 with hope the hope that God is with us and for us, and that he has good plans for us. we pray that he will continue to build his church to his glory, and that his kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.

Rev Gary (Rector)

**Safeguarding**

The Joint Council has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to the House of Bishops’ guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

The safeguarding officer is Mrs Lynne Carter

**Structure, Governance and Management**

The Joint Council has the following membership:

(a) The minister of each parish to which the scheme applies, ("minister" having the meaning specified in Rule 83(1) of the CRR).

(b) Every clerk in Holy Orders who is beneficed or licensed in the participating parishes.

(c) The designated ‘focal minister(s)’ of each parish as nominated by the Team Rector or Priest in Charge of the Benefice and agreed by the Joint Council

(d) Two persons from each Parish being lay members on the electoral roll of that Parish. These shall include at least one Churchwarden of each parish church and one other lay representative (or in the absence of a churchwarden, an alternative lay representative) nominated or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the relevant Parish.

(e) The Joint Council may also co-opt up to two additional members (who may be clergy or lay) if it considers that their particular skills or experience would be of benefit to the Joint Council.

Chair: Rev Gary Owen

Vice-chair: David Smallridge

Treasurer: David Large

Secretary: Julie Clarke (from 1st May, vacant before then)

**Administrative information**

The correspondence address is The Rectory, High Bickington, Umberleigh, EX37 9AY.

The Joint Council is a body corporate and Section 3 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 apply as if the Joint Council were a Parochial Church Council (PCC).

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**Budget 2025**

***Assumptions:****Gary and Ally to work for 12 months. Team vicar for 6 months.  
Cost of administrator not included. Cost of children’s worker not included*

**General fund income**Contribution from churches (9\*£95x12) £10,260  
Donations £5,000  
Gift Aid £1,250   
Use of photocopier £300

**Total income £16,810 £16,810**

**General fund expenses**

**Ministry team expenses**  
Transport for clergy £4,500  
Telephone, broadband and Zoom £1,000  
Hospitality £300  
Retreats/clergy training £1,000  
Focal minister retreat and training £800  
Other ministry team expenses £500 £8,100

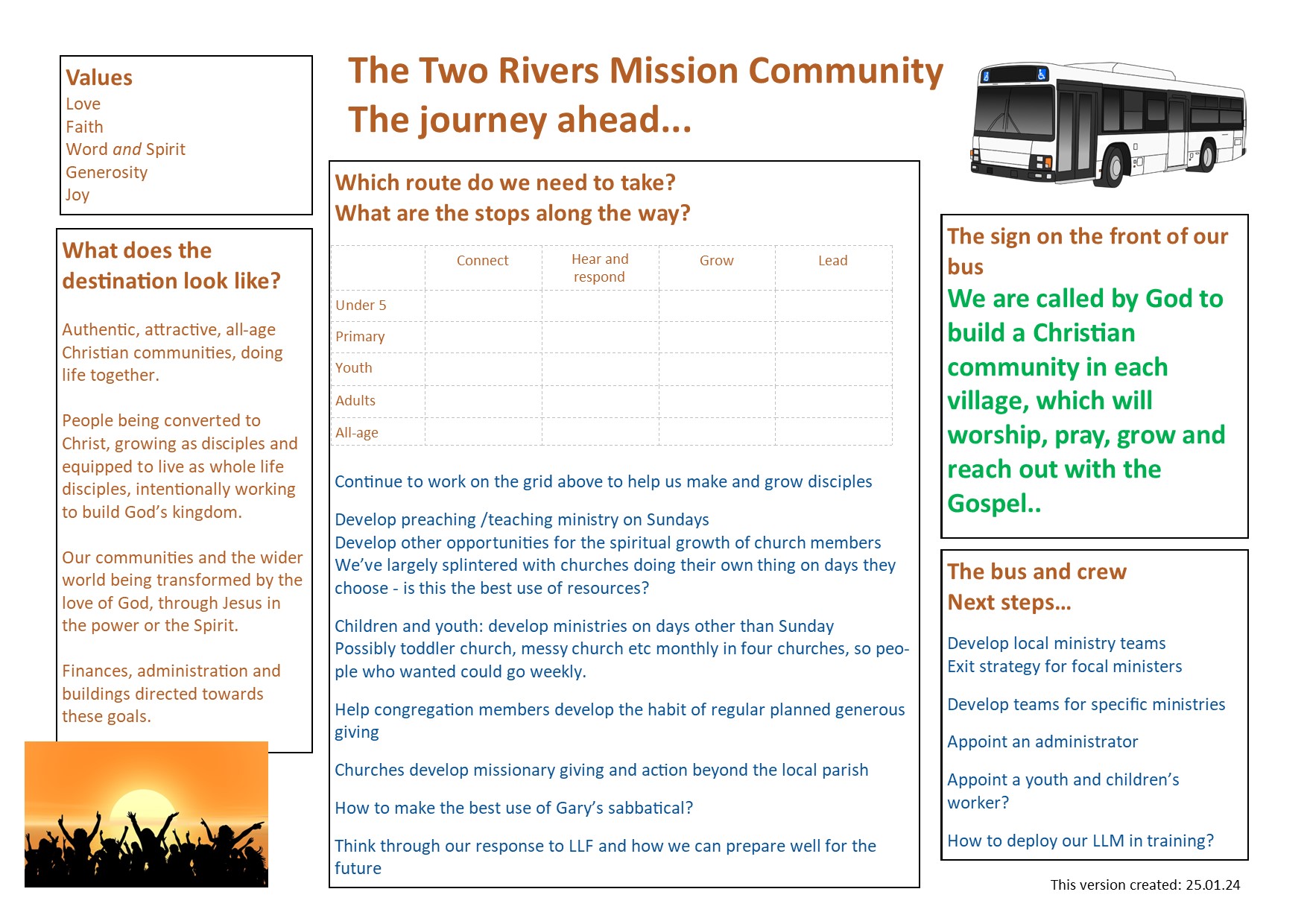
**Mission Community expenses**Worship resources(including i-sing)£500   
Website £350  
Insurance £250 £1,100

**Administration**  
Printing and office supplies £800  
Other administrative expenses £750 £1,550

**Mission and evangelism**  
Mission and evangelism £500  
Schools £1,500  
Children and youth £500  
Other £500 £3,400 **Rector’s discretionary fund** £500 £500

**Parish nursing** £750 £750

**Total expenditure £15,400  
Excess of income over expenditure £1,410**

**Mission Action Plan (2024)**