



THE VILLAGE
METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY CHURCH

PUTTING
PEOPLE
FIRST

Annual reports 2019

I think we begin with the AGM in December last year. It went well; The changes in constitution were approved, (Thank you to Keith and Sarah for their hard work), Keith accepted a two year term on the board, and the budget, accounts, and reports were all accepted with no major changes. During the worship service that day we brought 5 folk into membership (Will, Bill, Tony, Philip, and Charlie), bringing our official membership to 21.

During November and December 2018 I attended Chichester college online, taking a course on *How to deal with challenging behavior*. It was especially useful in light of those in our congregation who live with learning difficulties as it covered care reports etc.. Along with Tony Wares I also completed a first aid course that was facilitated by MCC Brighton at the Brighthelm Center. Tony officially became our social media coordinator and we now have an active presence on twitter, facebook, and instagram.

In November a number of church members, as well as Peter and I, attended the Transgender day of Remembrance service. It was an emotional service. And then at our own service a few hours later we had an incident when someone defaced the prayer book and interrupted a quiet communion prayer moment with an inappropriate and unpleasant action. It was very upsetting and made us aware that we need to be ever vigilant.

Over the year both Rev. Peta and I made pastoral visits, both to church members and community members. Sometimes we would meet with folk via skype because they lived too far away to meet in person. One young person, who watches our services on youtube, travelled three hours to just meet for coffee and a chat, and make sure we were real.



Our Christmas service saw contributions from members and guests alike. Thank you to Chris who worked so hard to ensure that some amazing talent from Brighton's choirs came to celebrate with us, and for everyone who gave of themselves. We have some talented folk at *The Village MCC*! There were 39 in attendance, a number only equaled by our Pride service the previous year when Peter Tatchell came to speak.

In January Rev. Peta and I, along with a half dozen pastors from churches in the area, met with Lord Bourne - the parliamentary minister for faith. We talked about how churches are picking up much of the work that was once done by the council and how the government can support that work. It was an interesting conversation and he was very keen to hear about the work of *The Village MCC*.

On March 3rd our guest speaker was a young non-binary transman from Russia, Mark Kandolsky. Mark manages an LGBT centre in St. Petersburg which includes a thriving Trans group, Christian group, and Bisexual group. He talked about the situation for LGBT people in Russia, especially for Christians. Obviously there are no accepting, or welcoming, or affirming churches in Russia, so it was an interesting experience for Mark as well as us. We raised £200 for his continuing work.

In February we began a fortnightly group based on the *Phoenix Affirmations*. It was an exciting series, well attended and well received. On occasion Charlie's home was so full that some had to sit on the floor.

The Rainbow Hub opened on St. James street and over the year both Chris and Peta were trained as helpers and took volunteer shifts.

Four years after opening the doors *The Village MCC* received a email from MCC to say we are now a full church as opposed to a emerging one.

March was a difficult month, and heralded a difficult season. Dameon, our Lay Delegate, was hit by a car whilst crossing the street. He was left with a damaged liver, ruptured spleen, fractures in his skull and spine, broken clavicle, broken pelvis, a broken ankle, and many lesser injuries besides. Many of the injuries were compound and serious. Always tenacious, Dameon was up on his feet and getting around within a couple of months. However, his injuries were life changing and it will be many years before the full impact is felt.

After surgery Will was away for a couple of months. We missed his presence as much as we missed his leadership in worship.

Trans activist and local celebrity Sophie Cook came to speak at the church. She told her story and was then available afterwards to chat and sign her book. It was mothering Sunday, a nice coincidence as Sophie is also a parent.

For myself much of April was hampered by a severe dose of sinusitis, a chest infection, plantar fasciitis, and a spondylosis flare up. Rev. Peta was around to pick up the slack when I couldn't even get to church, and my husband was able to drive when I could not. Having said which, there was plenty to do that I *could* do to keep me busy.

Of course there were good things too. Rev. Peta won the annual International *Purple Grass award* for their work in the community. As the local denominational representative Chris Baker announced the win and gave the award. There were some great photo's in the MCC *Headline News*.



The Easter week began with Palm Sunday (26 in attendance) where we handed out the traditional palm crosses and blessing. This year's Seder was attended by 19, (the same as last year) and was lots of fun. Thank you so much to the anonymous donor who contributed 4 legs of lamb. It was local Sussex lamb and probably the best I've every tasted. It was a lovely evening, with lots of socializing and great desserts.

The following Sunday we celebrated our Easter Sunday service. Again, there was a lovely atmosphere and getting quite late before we all left. Thank you so much to Simon

for the Lemon Drizzle cake, it sat with my sermon perfectly!

Perhaps the highlight for me was the installation of our first Deacons. Isla Munro, Wendy Burgess, and Charlie Notley all agreed to form our fledgling deaconate. The function of the team is one of support rather than any ecumenical status, but the deacons do speak with the authority of the pastor and are accountable to the pastor and to each other.

Will was well enough recovered from surgery and was able to lead us in worship on Easter Sunday. He was missed more than he could have guessed! As was Dameon, who had recovered enough to be able to attend church. It's been wonderful to see how church members have helped out, some with shopping, some with cleaning, others with visits, both for Will and Dameon, and it truly warms my heart to see love at work in the church.

May began with the *Clergy standing together* event sponsored by *Brighton and Hove faith in action*. I'm often amazed by the warmth with which we are welcomed to multifaith groups, and this occasion was no different. There was great food and representatives from the Buddhist, Old Catholic Church, Muslim, Bahai, Greek Orthodox, and freechurch traditions. We spoke about ways in which we could connect more freely, and visits to churches and mosques were explored.

The Kemptown festival was on June 1st and Chris and I threw the doors open to guests. It was nice that folk dropped in and the festival was fun, if noisy! I did like the fact that by 6pm it all closed down. There was a stage just outside our front door! I would like us to be involved next year and we will start making plans soon.

June 6th was busy as we had stalls at both the *Brighton and Hove faith in action* resource day, and the *Working to connect* (WTC) resource fair in the evening. Thank you so much to Rev. Peta, Isla, Sheila, Philip, Dameon, Charlie, Stephen, Simon, Tony, and Keith, for helping out during the day. It really was a great witness to the city.

On Thursday June 13th WTC held a Funding workshop at Dorset Gardens Methodist Church where we were able to look at some possible funding options as we move forward.

The MCC conference was in Florida the first week of July. Chris volunteered and spent 14 hours a day running the conference app, streaming services, and all the virtual stuff. Dameon sat through all the business sessions, and despite the unusual session lengths only once did he pop back to the room to get more pain killers. Despite the pain and discomfort he sat through hour after hour of business meetings, some of which



were exciting but most of which were inevitably tedious. One day we had a continuous session that lasted 7 hours! The business meetings went on so long they had to be extended into Friday, and many of the other events had to be rescheduled or omitted altogether. As a denomination we use *Roberts Rules of Order*. They help to facilitate the meetings, but also drag them out. Elder Don Eastman did a creditable job stepping in as chair, and the mood was generally good humoured. After the last conference, which failed to elect a new moderator, there was definitely a determination not to

have a repeat of the same events. But, with the inevitable points of order, points of information, friendly amendments, etc., they were long days.

In the first round of voting Cecilia was ahead with around 50% of the votes, whilst Tony and Liz each had around 25%. Tony graciously stepped out after the first round and on the second round Cecilia was decisively voted in as our new moderator. I still don't know what it will mean for us to have an English moderator based in the UK, (Cecilia lives just outside Bath), but there has already been an overhaul of the staffing structure and I suspect there are still more changes afoot. Please lift Cecilia and our new board in prayer as they wrestle with some of the challenges ahead.

As to the rest, the voting went much as the church asked Dameon to vote. The new board has quite a task on hand but looks very capable. The vote on whether baptism should be a requirement for church membership was postponed and a theologies team will be set up to look at it. You can read more about it on the mccchurch.org site.



All in all it was a good conference experience. It was nice to meet up with old friends, and there were a couple of tearful reunions. There seemed to be a spirit of determination in the air, and a consensus that God has not finished with us yet! Wherever people are marginalized, denied their rights, taught that God's love does not include them, it was agreed that there is a place for MCC.



Of course, whilst I was away church life here in Brighton continued without missing a beat. We are all the body of Christ and *together* we are the church, so thank you to everyone who helped. I do want to say a special thank you to Rev. Peta for being available 24/7, and to Tony for recording the sermons. I've heard that I missed some great worship. Although *I can't believe that you had lemon drizzle cake without me lol!!!*



And then for Trans Pride Rev. Peta brought together a group of volunteers to help on site. Well done all.

The Phoenix Affirmations series concluded after the 12 sessions and we all agreed that it was a rewarding experience. Thank you so much to Charlie for hosting with tea and chocolate biscuits every time.

Just before PRIDE, along with many of the other LGBT supportive faith leaders, I met with the Mayor at a pre-pride event held at the town hall. Hidayah now has a small chapter in Brighton and I hope that we can offer some support as time goes on.



Pride in the park went well, and all our volunteers were great. In fact, it was insanely busy! However, most folks were out of the area, and very few of those we served either knew, or cared, that we were a church. My hope is that in 2020 we will reach out through more of the local events, smaller pride gatherings, and those community festivals where we can promote the church.

Our Pride service went well and Councilor Alexandra Phillips, Mayor of Brighton and Hove spoke well. After some lengthy preparations to ensure that protocols were heeded the Mayor arrived on a bicycle in a



rainbow flapper's dress. She looked amazing, was genuine and personable, and stayed to answer questions.

Since September 2018 I have been running my own business as a funeral celebrant. It feels like an extension of my work as an MCC pastor and my ecumenical approach has meant that I've had a manageable flow of work. To be honest, I had no idea how important that work would become. Richard Tredgett's death deeply affected the community, especially the Brighton Gay Men's Chorus where Richard's fiancé was the musical director, and the Actually gay men's chorus where Richard sang. There are church members that sing with each of the choirs. Then, just a week later, I led Michael Wall's funeral service. He was a long time contributor to Gscene and there were many from the community in attendance. Then only a week or so later Mark Slater-Hyndman died. Mark sang with The Actually gay men's chorus so they were hit especially hard.

Alas, it was then just a only a couple of months and, after a short illness, James Ledward died. We held the service at St. Mary's church and there were around 500 present. Fr. Andrew and I led a mainly 'non-religious' service that focused on a celebration of his life. The *Brighton Gay Men's Chorus* and the *Actually Gay Men's Chorus* sang together. David Raven and Jason Sutton sang *Somewhere over the rainbow* in a tearful duet. Good friends read poems, and both Chris Gull and Andrew Kay gave moving tributes to his life and work. After the service I led a private committal at the crematorium. All the feedback I have received has been positive. I believe that it was a really positive example of the work of the church supporting the LGBT+ community.

But the challenges weren't over. One of Matthews Carers, Balint, died suddenly of pneumonia. It was totally unexpected as he was only in his early 40's and had been in good health. Also Peter Howes, who had been coming to *The Village MCC* regularly until he became seriously ill in August, also sadly passed away late September. Each of these deaths touched the lives of our members and friends.

On a positive note Wendy, Sarah, and I, attended Matthew's birthday party. (Mathew has special needs and attends worship most Sundays with a carer). It was a lovely day and Matthew seemed genuinely thrilled that we were there. Wendy and Sarah bought him a beautiful new rainbow tie, and the church gave a colouring book and crayons.



During the year we held two one day retreats. One for planning the church year ahead, and one for recharging the batteries. At the planning retreat I think we designed a really lovely liturgical year, with some exciting guests, and I'm looking forward to that unfolding as we move forward. And the healing retreat was very special. At one point there were games being played at one table, crafting and planting seedlings at another, and in our worship area Taize' with various participants singing in tongues. It was a really blessed day, and I'm very grateful to everyone who helped out in some way. I am so grateful to Wendy and Sarah for providing the perfect space for a planning retreat, and Mary's unit was perfect for a healing retreat, thank you to all for your very generous help. There were 15 at the planning retreat, and 16 at the healing retreat.

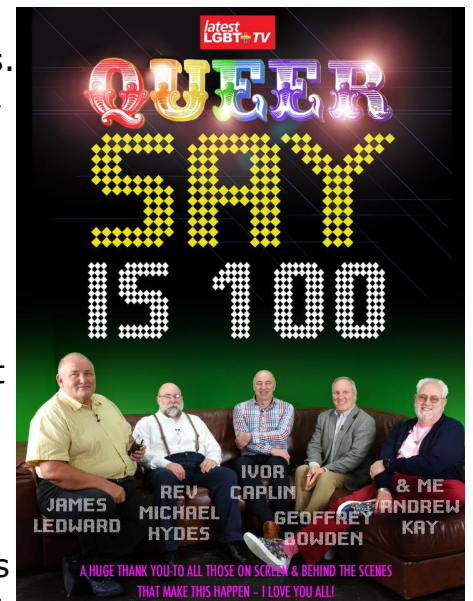




During September I attended the annual Martin Fisher stakeholders meeting. I was excited to see that their HIV infection prevention strategies are working well and the infection rate has been dropping. However, there is still a long way to go and we had an in depth conversation about reaching out to those churches that still treat infection with judgmental attitudes. *Lunch Positive* provided some great food.

During the year we gave out numerous pickle fund payments. Most were small amounts to cover emergencies, usually £20, however one payment was made in concert with the *LGBT Community Safety Forum* (lgbtcsf) and *Mindout* to an individual who was moving into their first flat and needed both a fridge freezer, washing machine, and wardrobe.

I recorded a few episodes of *Queersay* with Andrew Kay for *Latest TV*. However, I think I'm probably quite a boring guest as I refuse to be drawn into inflamitary rhetoric that, although it may be entertaining, would not be a reflection of my beliefs.



On a personal level the year was challenging. There were lots of health difficulties for both Chris and I, and during the year we lost our cat, Fred, and then one of our beagles, Pebbles. Fred was around 20 and had been with us almost 17 years, Pebbles was around 15 years old and had been with us since she was found abandoned as a pup. Both animals have helped to defined our family over the years and they are sorely missed. My health has continued to be problematic, but I get around well enough with a stick and I've only had to miss two Sundays because of ill health. Thank you to everyone who steps up the plate to help out; especially Rev. Peta, Keith, Tony, Sheila, Isla, and Robert, who have all stepped in at the eleventh hour to cover an absence.

As we move into the new year I've become aware that we are facing challenges for which I have no concrete Solutions. The male bias in our congregation. Congregational health and growth. Spiritual education. A suitable worship space that can handle growth. From the new year I plan to hold a bi-weekly Tuesday evening prayer group in my home, with the option to skype or call in if someone is not able to be there in person. We will lift our future to the one who has *all* the answers. Also, we will hold a bi-weekly bible study group, grounded in a study of the book of Genesis. With summer breaks it will take us *two years* to cover the study workbook – which I can make available in pdf form free of charge. Charlie has graciously agreed to host this group.

I have loved the homilies brought by Sheila and Bill, as well as the get to know you with David, Philip, Sheila, and Chris (deftly interviewed by Stephen). We have enjoyed Simon's cakes and the hospitality extended by the day centre. We continue to connect tightly to the LGBT+ community as I sit on the *LGBT Community Safety Forum* and Rev.

Peta works with *The Hub*. We serve the community in so many ways, just as Jesus has called us to do so, and although there's much more to be done we have certainly been the good samaritan to many people in many ways.

You will see from Keith's report that we are holding our own financially, and although we are not a wealthy group we are most certainly a faithful one.

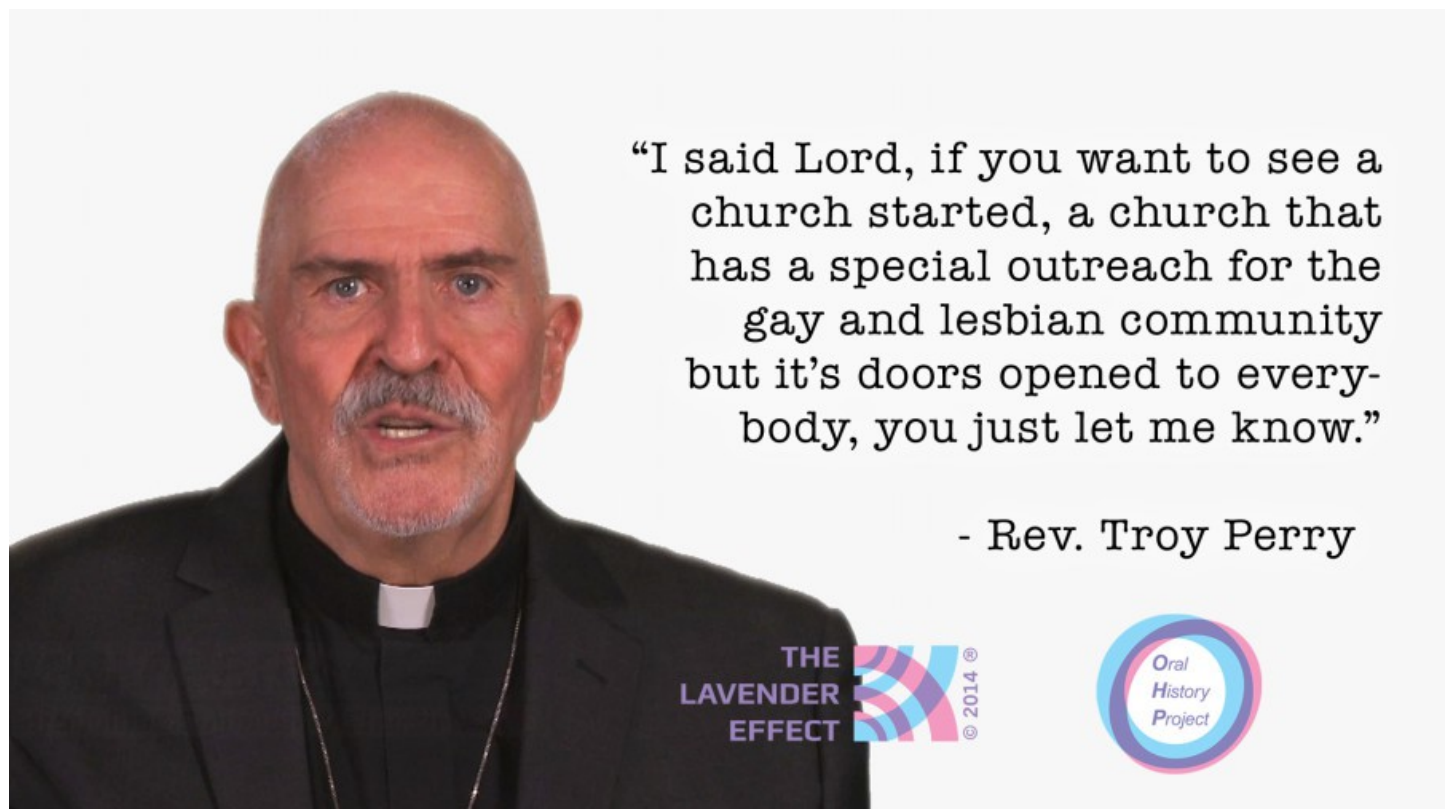
There's so much more I could write about, and Rev. Peta's contribution to the life of the church has been substantial. I have deliberately omitted much that they have included in their own report, but I have to say how much depth their work has brought to our community and what an amazing difference they make in the community.

Of course there are so many of our members and friends that I'd like to thank, but I think I will simply thank my Chris, Rev. Peta, our board, (Wendy, Keith, Simon, and Peta), our deacons (Isla, Charliem and Wendy), our pickle team (Sarah, Stephen, Isla, James, and Peta), and our minstry support team and leaders, (Sarah, Mary, Dameon, Will,), liturgy team (Tony P, Tony W, Keith, Stephen, Wendy, Sheila, Bill, and Peta), and ask that you include yourself in a general thank you for all that you give and do. I don't want to leave anyone out and if I try to name everyone I'm sure to forget someone! Together we are a rainbow coloured hand of Christ, and I'm very proud to be able to work with you. Thank you for all that you do, you truly are amazing.

As we move into the new year I'm excited about all the God has in store for us. I hope you are too!

Love

Rev. Michael.



Associate Pastor's Report AGM 2019

My second year with The Village MCC began well, as I finally got to take part in a Christmas Open Mic, after missing the previous year due to illness, and really enjoyed the variety and depth of talent shared by The Village community, including some wonderful comedy!

Back to work in January, Rev Michael and I attended a meeting of Brighton churches to discuss more coordinated approaches to supporting the homeless in the city, and tackling some of the root causes. Other useful events this year were the Fundraising information evening at which various groups such as the Rainbow Fund provided an overview of what they offered, and how to go about applying; the Faith in Action event at the Open Market and the Working to Connect event at the Friends Meeting House in the summer, where we had stalls and were able to make connections; and the recent event for LGBT+ students to help them find welcoming and affirming churches. Most recently, I've represented The Village giving a talk and Q&A session for the Faith, Gender and Sexuality Group that meets at St Nicholas' Church.

I also found a new Spiritual Director at the beginning of the year, and have definitely benefitted from their assistance in discerning where the Spirit is calling me. I've provided pastoral care through the year to a number of people, much of it online with those living a long way from this, or any, MCC.

Besides sermons and celebrating at The Village, I've also preached twice for MCC Brighton, and we continue to slowly build a better working relationship there. I've also visited MCC North London for London Trans Pride, and marched with Christians Together at Pride in Oxford, also attending their Pride services and speaking to people there about MCC and about ways in which churches can be more welcoming.

Our own Brighton Trans Pride was a success again, and a number of volunteers from The Village stepped up to take round collection buckets and to help with set-down at the park – thank you all for your hard work.

The visit of Mark Kandolsky was a high point for me, and I enjoyed showing him around Brighton and hearing about his work in Russia, and the situation there. In July, of course, Rev Michael was away for General Conference, but to be honest he organised things so efficiently before he left that there was little more for me to do than usual! I was sorry not to be able to attend Conference myself, but I did get to take part in the online discussion forums beforehand, and contribute my ideas in the panel on the theology of baptism and how some of the proposed bylaw changes might affect the church in the light of that theology.

And September and October's Retreat Days were very special, and quite different from each other. The chance to get to know each other better, and to explore in a relaxed way the different ideas, spiritual giftedness and creativity of each member of the community. Huge thanks to everyone who worked so hard to put together the activities, and to feed us!

In November much of my focus has been on preparing for TDOR, both in Brighton and Newcastle where I've been invited to preach for Northern Lights MCC, and also in preparing the Membership class.

I'd like to thank the Prayer Team, for their hard work and creative ideas, it's great to work with such a thoughtful and prayerful team.

The Garden has gone from strength to strength, and produced an impressive amount of crops for its first full year. At the high point of the summer it was more than I could deliver on my own, and I had to call in extra hands to get all the veg to Lunch Positive – I know that Gary and the Lunch Positive team were very pleased.

From a personal point of view I've struggled with health and employment this year, but things are much improved now, and I'm grateful for the concern and support offered by The Village. I took the opportunity, while not at work, of volunteering at the Rainbow Hub, where I've been able to answer people's queries about safe worship spaces for LGBT+ people, and also to take part in various community events.

Most of all, I've simply valued the community, worship and generosity of The Village, who offer open hearts, genuine warmth and gentle wisdom through their week-to-week gathering and ministry. It is a privilege to worship with you.

Rev. Peta.

Secretary's Report (Simon Markham)

First of all, I have to say WOW! I cannot believe I am sat here writing this report, it only seems a couple of months since I wrote the last!

What a year it has been for our lovely and blessed church. A huge "thank you" to Reverend Michael, Reverend Peta, our pastoral team, prayer team, pickle fund team and everyone who have given so much over the year. We became a full church and have a church garden we are growing in body and spirit. Pride was as ever our large event, a great day and lots of temporary tattoos applied everyone looked FABULOUS!!!!!!

Our seder evening was a lovely spiritual time and brought us all together. And our day retreats, two of them this year. Again a big "thank you" Reverend Michael and all involved in making them so varied and enjoyable. The days were different and gave everyone a chance to sample varied programme, all who attended had enjoyed them and both days were evenly numbered.

For me this year has been a bit of a nightmare health wise, with 2020 the dark unknown at the moment. But having you all my supportive church family and Jesus by my side keeps me going. Knowing I am prayed for and cared for keeps me strong. As the song goes "Be Strong, Be Bold, for the Lord your God is with you" and that is exactly what I intend to do in this coming year. The enemy will not win!! I intend to keep serving this church for a long time yet. A lot more time praying and communing with the Lord.

Be blessed throughout 2020,

Peace,

Simon

Accounts 2019 with 2020 proposed budget

Income	2018	2019	* Expenditure	2018	2019
Cash collections :	2629.59	2599.90	Rent	2156.00	1958.00
Standing orders :	10218.00	10573.00 (j)	Pastor	5700.00	6250.00
Designated collections :	212.20	391.05	* Travel expenses	178.30	242.18 (c)
Soul Safari :	150.00	0.00	Office Costs	567.14	841.44 (d)
Pride :	10.00	150.00	Advertising	518.40	586.60
Lgbt History Grant :	0.00	0.00	Designated collections	110.70	341.55 * (a)
Donation :	35.00	125.00	Tithe to `MCC	1175.80	1231.74
Community works grant :	262.50	0.00	Music/ audio Equipment	31.98	0.00
Pickle Fund :	1264.00	700.00	* (i) Ministry Supplies	138.99	52.04 (f)
Sleep Safe :	0.00	0.00	Guest Speakers	370.00	100.00
Seder Meal donations :	175.00	150.00	Seder Meal	102.71	150.80
Conference Donation :	0.00	200.00	Pride	38.92	210.74
Retreat Donation :	0.00	51.00	Sleep safe Payments	18.10	0.00
:			Crisis/ Pickle fund	848.21	686.94 *
:			Community Works Grant	60.98	0.00
:			Pastoral costs	38.50	145.42 (g)
:			Soul Safari	397.98	0.00
:			Training	92.90	100.00 (h)
:			Gen Conference	0.00	2540.52
:			Retreat	0.00	142.59
	<u>14956.29</u>	<u>14939.95</u>		<u>12545.61</u>	<u>15580.56</u>
31 October c/f :+	4730.72	7141.40			
	<u>19687.01</u>	<u>22081.35</u>			
less exp :-	12545.61	15580.56	*	Budget does not include designated givings.	
	<u>7141.40</u>	<u>6500.79</u>	(a)	£151.00 Fellowship Sunday collection to ber paid out.	
			(b)	Monies held for Sleep Safe	
Balance in Bank :	<u>7141.40</u>	<u>6500.79</u>	(c)	Mileage travel and Parking	
Music fund :	7.18	0.00	(d)	Insurances, Licenses, domain names and general office costs.	
Pickle Fund :	1293.21	1306.27	(e)	Gscene, banners flyers	
Sleep Safe :	345.53	345.53 (b)	(f)	Bread gels candles items for services	
Conference allocation Bal :	1450.00	309.48	(g)	Pastoral gifts, flowers, pastoral support gifts.	
Fellowship in hand :		151.00	(h)	First Aid training and Study materials.	
Community works :	0.00	0.00	(i)	£600.00 was given by one donor at £50 pcm. This will no longer be received on a regular basis, from November 2019	
General funds available :	<u>4045.48</u>	<u>4388.51</u>	(j)	A Standing order for £100.00 PCM will no longer be received on a regular basis from Nov 2019	
b/f		£36.47			
Refreshments in	90.95	157.33			
out	-54.48	150.56			
Bal in hand	<u>36.47</u>	<u>43.24</u>			

<u>Budget</u>	2017 - '18	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	2018- '19	<u>Actual</u>	
<u>Inc</u>	1000 pcm	<u>12882</u>		14000 1166.66 pcm	<u>13849</u>	pcm 1154.08
Rent		2156		2500	1958	-2
Stipend		5700		6000	6250	\$.
Pastoral		38		100	245	(1)
Office		567		1000	1236	€. (1)
Advertising		518		650	587	
Tithe		1175		1400	1232	
Conference Allocation		850		1200	1200	
<u>Misc costs</u>		<u>1027</u>		<u>1150</u>	<u>504</u>	#. (1)
		<u>12031</u>		<u>14000</u>	<u>13212</u>	

§	Rev Michaels remuneration increased by £50 pcm from may 2019.
€	No one big purchase just general costs.
#	Seder, pride, retreat
(1)	Items previously reported under misc now reported under other headings
(2)	£50 gift for hire of Rathen Court to be paid.

(x) Budget only increased by £500.00 as a regular standing order for £100.00 pcm will no longer be received from November 2019

Budget	2019 -'20	
Inc	14500	1208pcm
Rent	2000	
Stipend	6600	
Pastoral	300	
Office	1550	
Advertising	650	
Tithe	1450	
Conference Allocation	1200	
Misc costs	750	
	14500	