

BRAMHALL METHODIST CHURCH

Annual Report 2023-24



Bramhall
Methodist Church

Living out the love of Jesus

Bramhall Methodist Church is a welcoming church 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.
- Eco-Church: A Rocha UK's award scheme for churches – we hold the silver award, recognising the importance we place on caring for God's world.

The **Methodist Church** 



| | Page | | Page |
|---------------------------|------|-----------|------|
| Message from the Minister | 4 | Mission | 11 |
| Faith | 5 | Community | 13 |
| People | 8 | Resources | 22 |

We are a church that seeks to live out the love of Jesus

faith

Where all can
encounter God and
grow in faith

people

Where all can belong,
and be encouraged
and supported

mission

Where we long to see
God's kingdom grow
and flourish

community

Where God's love in
action is seen in our
village and beyond



Dear Friends

This Annual Report is a snapshot of our life together as Bramhall Methodist Church and encapsulates some of the breadth and diversity of all it encompasses: what a joy and privilege it is to be part of such a faithful, active and engaged church!

In the midst of all the busyness, it can be easy to lose track of everything that goes on in our life together over the course of a year, but this Report is a helpful reminder. Perhaps you might like to join me in using the Report as a prompt for prayer and reflection in the coming months as we seek to live out the love of Jesus together as individuals and as a community of faith, and discern God's call: what is God asking us to consolidate, what might we need to leave fallow for a season, and where are the tender young shoots that would benefit from some special care and extra attention at this time? I pray we will be granted the wisdom to discern answers to these questions and the courage to put them into practice.

As we reflect on, and give thanks for, our life together as BMC over this past year, may we look to the future in faith and hope because we know that God's love never fails.

Sarah

From the Stewards: We are particularly thankful for our very talented staff team, Sarah, Cathy, Jo and Rachel plus all our volunteers who drive and support the life and work of BMC. We could not do it without you so thank you, it is greatly appreciated.

Services

Worship services in our main building are held weekly on Sundays and Thursdays. These are often live-streamed and services in church can also be heard by phone. Worship takes a variety of traditional and contemporary forms, with Connect, our more informal service, taking place in Centrepont. A relaxed and informal evening service is held on the first Sunday of the month in the Welcome Area. Messy Church is a very different format designed for families and takes place monthly. There have been some joint Sunday morning services with Connect, alternating between Church and Centrepont. Holy Communion is celebrated monthly in both buildings and on Easter Sunday jointly on the Forecourt. Membership services have been held in both Sunday morning services. Wedding and Baptism services are held as required.

Service times

Sunday

- 10.00am : Traditional worship in Church
Providing the opportunity to reflect on scripture, pray and worship together.
- 10.00am : Contemporary worship in Connect
A more informal service, seeking God's vision and purpose for our world and ourselves as we worship.

Thursday

- 10.00am : A mid-week oasis of song, prayer, reflection and worship.

Monthly Sunday worship

1st Sunday : Monthly evening worship takes place at 6.30pm in the Welcome Area.

3rd Sunday at 3 : A new short informal service is held in the Welcome Area on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 3pm, followed by refreshments and fellowship.

4th Sunday : Messy Church from 4pm

Connect

Connecting with God, Connecting with each other and Connecting with our community

During autumn we used these 'Connecting with' pillars as the foundation for a sermon series on "Belonging" and introduced "My Monday Morning" - a conversation with a member of the Connect family about what their Monday morning looked like and what we could pray for. We often realised how little we knew of people and it has helped both in getting to know them better and in praying in a more informed way.

Looking ahead, aside from more sermon series in the spring and autumn, there are also evolving plans for "pop up" groups that will create opportunities to get involved in exploring a topic/theme in a time-bound way.

We are grateful to all those who volunteer so loyally and help make Connect work, and it's been great to see some new people joining regularly. We ask that you pray that we continue to grow in relationship with God, with one another, and with those around us in our everyday.

Worship Night

Worship Night continued to meet monthly, with an average group of around ten people. Each meeting we were inspired to worship our amazing God, through a different passage from the bible, and then reflected on how God wanted us to respond. Whilst we have recently stopped meeting, we seek God's will as to how he might evolve our worship in the future.

Prayer Life

Prayer is a vital aspect of church life.

- The Church Prayer diary remembers a church member each day and offers other ideas for personal prayer.
- Opportunity for personal prayer at each Connect service.
- A Zoom prayer meeting each Tuesday at 9.30am.
- The BMC email prayer network has people ready to respond to prayer requests. There are a number of Connect4 WhatsApp prayer groups.

Flower Ministry

Our work with Church flowers this year seems to have been greatly appreciated and we are managing despite finding fewer people who are able to help with the arranging due to illness and other pressures at home. However, extra volunteers do come forward for our special Church festivals and this is a great help.

Harvest Festival, Christmas and Easter especially inspire us to do justice to our lovely church and our contribution with flowers enhances God's House. After services, flowers are also taken to those who are ill or celebrating a special occasion – which is much appreciated.

Please let us know if you would like to join the team – all help is very welcome!

Lent Discussion Groups

This year the Lent groups met in the Fellowship room to discuss the 'Justice-seeking church'.



Rambling Club

The club was formed in 1978 with walks every two weeks. In 1985 a stile fund was set up to initially support the Church Building Fund and afterwards local charities. £8,466 has been raised and donated (at 1p per stile per person – that’s a lot of stiles!).

Recently our numbers have reduced as members have ‘aged’, so we no longer have a committee or a stile fund. We continue as a small group of friends who enjoy a 7/8 mile walk every couple of weeks, weather permitting.



Friday Nighters

The Friday Nighters are a group of 13 members who generally meet on the first Friday of the month. The social programme ranges from quizzes and games in friends’ homes to meals out, walks and theatre trips. New members are always welcome. Please contact Malcolm Webb for more information.

Indoor Bowls

This has been a successful year, regarding the membership of the club. We held a club lunch in January for members. The new season will recommence at the beginning of October and run through to the following March. All are welcome to come and enjoy a couple of hours of good fun. No experience necessary.

Badminton

We meet for mixed doubles on Mondays 8-10pm and Ladies doubles every Wednesday 1.30-3pm in the Community Hub. We have a good number of players, often 6 or 7 in a session, with a wide range of ages. We have recently welcomed some new faces to the club. For more information, please contact Ann Durnford.

Art and Craft Group

The BMC Art and Craft Group meets every Monday in the Community Hub from 2.00-4.00 pm. We share the large room and join together for refreshments during the afternoon.

We have about ten members in each group and would welcome anyone who is interested in joining us for either Art or Craft. Please contact either Margaret Burgess for craft or Ann Bonner for the art group.

Members choose their own activity and although we have no direct instruction - members help and encourage one another with good advice! We look forward to welcoming you to either group.

House Groups and Life Groups

There are four groups which meet on Wednesday afternoons and one which is evening based. Two of the groups are for ladies only. Each group has between 6 and 12 members, and while each is slightly different they generally include discussion around a bible study or a topic such as the report on The Justice Seeking Church or women in the New Testament. Fellowship and friendship are common themes as the members seek to know each other and God better.

Please speak to Jo Smith if you are interested in joining a small group, and would like more information.

Link

We continue to meet on the second and fourth Thursday at 2.30 p.m. and welcome all ladies. We have a variety of speakers, recently we have heard about waste recycling, being a mystery shopper, the history of lace and had a tour of Edinburgh Castle. Our annual party included entertainment by a Ukelele Band followed by an excellent afternoon tea and was enjoyed by 30 ladies.

Pastoral Care

Our network of pastoral visitors provide a hugely valued service to individuals across the church family. This year we welcomed Jo Smith as our new pastoral worker, to provide further support to Sarah and the team of pastoral visitors. New pastoral visitors are always welcome, so do please speak to Jo if you would be interested in becoming part of this fantastic team.

Messy Church

Messy Church is a vibrant group that takes place on the fourth Sunday of each month from 4pm, bringing together around 15 to 20 children with their parents, grandparents or carers. The emphasis is on fun and creativity whilst hearing more about the Bible.

Each Messy Church includes fun crafts, and a short time of celebration, followed by tea, which is an opportunity for socialising and building connections among the children, volunteers, and parents who attend.



The success of Messy Church is down to the dedicated group of volunteers who generously contribute their time and effort. Their enthusiasm and commitment create a positive and welcoming environment, ensuring that each session runs smoothly, and participants feel valued.

Christingle and Light Up Bramhall

The Christmas period provides many opportunities for inviting people to hear of the good news of Jesus and experience Christian fellowship. We took part in 'Light up Bramhall' with lantern making and a bouncy castle in the Community Hub which was very popular. Christingle on Christmas Eve is a lovely start to the Christmas festivities, with many from our local community coming together to hear the Christmas story and make Christingles. Cathy, our Children and Families worker was turned into a giant Christingle!

Bitesize Church

Following an extended period of planning, preparation and prayer, on Sunday 10th September 2023 Bitesize Church met for the first time. After a last-minute venue change, the Open Arms Youth Centre became the home to Bitesize Church, a new form of church established at the heart of the community of the Colshaw Farm estate near Handforth. Bitesize meets on the second Sunday of each month from 10am.



Bitesize Church is all about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in new ways. Food is important to us, and we start with a breakfast buffet, with bacon and sausage rolls available during the morning. There is plenty of time to chat or simply to relax, aiming to create a community feel. There is informal worship, prayer and a short talk. Our themes have focused on the basics, using the stories that Jesus told as a way of finding out more about him and about the good news.

It has been such a blessing to see God at work in this community. We have seen one person give their life to Christ, and are so encouraged by answered prayer, and a small community that are becoming more comfortable to ask for prayer, and discuss God's word. Please continue to hold this work in your prayers as we continue to seek God's guidance on how Bitesize Church should develop in the future.

Baby Chat

Baby Chat, which re-commenced in February 2023 post Covid on Friday mornings, provides a warm and welcoming space, and has successfully created a supportive community for new mothers, enabling them to connect on a personal level. The platform has become a valuable space for mums to discuss their parenting journeys, seek advice and share the joys & challenges of motherhood. Since inception, Baby Chat has played a crucial role in building a sense of camaraderie and contributing to a stronger support network within the community.

Seedlings

In October 2023, the Seedlings program was introduced as an extension of Baby Chat, catering specifically to pre-school children. Seedlings offers a lively and engaging environment where children can play, participate in craft activities and enjoy storytelling sessions. The inclusive nature of Seedlings is evident, with parents, grandparents and caregivers actively participating.

A heartfelt expression of gratitude goes to the dedicated volunteers who have been instrumental in the success of both Baby Chat and Seedlings.



12th Bramhall Rainbows

We have had another fantastic year having lots of fun and making lots of noise on Monday evenings. We've been scientists, fitness coaches, astronauts and explorers and even made passports for our teddies so that they could come on our travels with us. Our favourite game involves pretending to be a hedgehog, we love a (fake) snowball fight and we can't resist silly songs. Our unit is currently full with a long waiting list but if you have a future Rainbow who is aged three years or under, please do get their name down on our list via www.girlguiding.org.uk/information-for-parents/register-a-child.

12th Bramhall Brownies

2023 was a fun, varied year for the Brownies, who meet on Thursdays in the Community Hub.

We enjoyed tasting crisps, learning about sustainable fishing and visiting the chip shop for the Fish and Chip Challenge. 12 Brownies joined the County Thinking Day event doing activities from around the world. Our young Ukrainian helper taught us the Brownie Promise in Ukrainian. We enjoyed climbing, orienteering, a barbecue and entertaining at Hillbrook Grange.

For badges we worked on My Rights, Grow your Own (Jack would have been proud of our beanstalks), Inventing and Performing. During the year we were very proud to present 3 Gold Awards to leaving Brownies.

Thanks to our wonderful team of Leaders who give the girls such great experiences.

11th Bramhall Brownies

We had a full Brownie unit with 24 girls last year, and whilst we have recently seen eight Brownies move up to Guides we will be full again soon as new Brownies join us after Easter. We meet in Centrepont on Wednesday evenings.

In February and March we did our Power Girl award. One of our Dads works for Electricity NW and we had great fun with a thermal camera in Centrepont working out where the hot spots were. In March we had fun at Chill Factor[®] on the snow slides, downhill donuts and sledge racing. It was lovely to see the confidence growing as the evening progressed. In June we went to Magic and Mayhem at Waddow Hall in Lancashire and slept in a big top. The weather was very warm and there were lots of great activities including circus skills, craft, toasting marshmallows and inflatables.

In the autumn term we attended the Bramhall Remembrance Parade, and in the previous meeting we had decorated glass tea light holders to help us remember someone.

We had a cake sale for Children in Need and raised £230 and all enjoyed making and eating cakes. In December we went to see the latest Disney film, Wish. This is a national event where Girlguiding takes over whole cinemas across the country.



11th Bramhall Guides

This year the Guides have been busy working towards their Theme Awards, recently completing their 'Make Change' Stage 3 Skills Builder that showed the Guides how to identify issues in their local community and helped them take action to change things for the better; and working towards their 'Lead' Stage 4 Skills Builder that helped to develop the Guides' confidence and core leadership skills.

The Guides have also been busy completing their Interest Badges, particularly enjoying the confectionery, mixology, and natural remedies badges. In the summer, we attended the Girlguiding 'Wellies & Wristbands' festival at Waddow Hall where we got stuck into adventurous challenges including rock climbing, archery, and raft building, as well as enjoying the live music and camping under the stars.

Once again, we supported the Bramhall and Woodford Rotary Club's Santa Float at Christmas, working as Santa's elves to help raise money for local charities and keeping the Guides' promise to serve our local community. In February, we joined in with Stockport County's 'Around the World in 50 Years' Thinking Day activity, taking part in craft and fun activities that celebrated the WAGGGS World Centres and tied in with Girlguiding Stockport County's 50th anniversary.

We're busy planning lots more exciting activities for this year, including an ice-skating trip and a summer camp. As ever, we're very grateful for all the efforts of our Leadership Team and supportive parents. We meet on Wednesday evenings in the Community Hub.

Pre School

Wow, what a fantastic year it's been at preschool! We're thrilled to have 65 energetic little learners on board, supported by our incredible team of 13 dedicated staff members. The passion and energy of our team shines through every day, and we're proud to say it's been recognised in our recent Ofsted report.

We've been busy sprucing up our outdoor play area, and let me tell you, it looks absolutely fabulous! The kids are loving it, and it's definitely extended the fun factor out there by quite a bit. Our Class Reps meetings are also a hit every week! The reps come armed with their badges and clipboards, ready to discuss the "very important matters" with Mrs. Lomax. Trust me, they always have something interesting to say!

Our magic story box continues to spark imagination each week, and our visits to Hillbrook Grange are now a regular highlight. And who can forget the 8by8 football sessions? They're a firm favourite. We even had Ivy's daddy bring his fire engine one day!

One of our best-loved activities has been our Mystery Readers. Picture this: clues are read out, and the children have to guess which parent, grandparent, or family member is stepping in to read for the day. It's always a blast!

We're big on keeping parents in the loop too. From parents' evenings to stay and play mornings, we love giving families a sneak peek into the magic that happens at our pre-school. And let's not forget the epic discos organised by our parent rep Maryona each term.



The Mill

The Mill Youth Centre was opened in 2000 as a Churches Together Project to cater for young people aged 11-18. In that time so many young people have passed through The Mill and experienced kindness and fairness and fun there, which will be a warm memory for them always.

Due to difficulties recruiting trustees and youth workers, and with reduced numbers of young people attending sessions, the decision has been taken recently to close The Mill, with the last session being in May 2024.

Action for Children

BMC continues to support AFC with a donation of £461.50 from Christmas services and £178.88 from the League of Light home Collection Boxes. It was good to hear that AFC has again secured the franchise to run the Mother and Baby Unit at Styal. The Charity helped 765,905 children, young people and families in 2022-23, an increase of 95,000 over the previous year.

Coffee Shop

Now in its 32nd year the Centrepoint Coffee Shop continues to welcome customers from 10.15am - 12.30pm six days a week. We serve a variety of bean-to-cup coffee, tea, hot chocolate, freshly baked scones, toasted tea cakes etc. by willing volunteers in a friendly atmosphere.

Only a small percentage, perhaps 10% of customers, are members of BMC. We continue to financially support Churches Together in Bramhall and Woodford.

For various reasons each year we lose volunteers who we are constantly trying to replace.

Thrift Shop

The Thrift Shop continues to flourish with a steady flow of incoming goods which are sorted and sold by our faithful volunteers.

Since the AGM 2023 the Thrift Shop has been able to donate £25,500 to various charities, locally and much further afield, including the Red Cross Ukraine Appeal. All the charities are nominated by the Thrift Shop volunteers.

From March 2024 the Thrift Shop will be supporting the Bitesize Church project by donating £6,000 annually for a period of three years.

We are thankful to be able to continue each year with our Christian outreach to those in need.

Monthly Communion Collections

The Communion Collections group (or Charitable Giving Group) meets twice a year and is responsible for deciding which charities BMC raises money for.

Charities supported in this way over the last twelve months include The Message Trust, Methodist World Mission, Christian Aid, Methodist Homes for the Aged, Action for Children, The Leprosy Mission, Foodbanks, Wellspring, St Ann's Hospice, Wythenshawe Warm Fund, All We Can, Mind, The Fund for Human Need, Bite Size Church.

Excluding Foodbanks, Wythenshawe Warm Fund and Action for Children (covered elsewhere in this report), over £5,000 has been raised via the Communion Collections. Thank you to everyone for your generosity.

Please do let Sarah or one of the Stewards know if you would like to nominate any charities - local, national or international - to be included in the monthly collections.

Foodbanks

Over the last 12 months we have transferred £7,050 to the two Foodbank projects we support at Brownley Green and Hope Central. At Christmas we raised £2,200 through donations to the 'Warm Fund' to help families in the Brownley Green area of Wythenshawe to top up their gas and electricity meters.

Moss Hey Primary School continues to support our project through donations every half-term as well as their annual Harvest Festival. In total we have taken approximately 400 bags of food to the two foodbanks over the past 12 months – this includes more than 50 bags of food donated at the Moss Hey Primary School Harvest Festival as well as 20 bags every two months from the school. At BMC we have collected between 8-10 bags every month in addition to the donations from our own Harvest Festival.

We collected food at a number of Worker Bee Markets in the Village Square although these collections have been affected by the closure of Sainsbury's in the Village Square

We have raised money to buy 60 Easter eggs for families in the Brownley Green community through the Real Easter Egg Campaign. We are looking to increase our support through various new initiatives in the coming year in consultation with Rev Dave Warnock.

Thursday Club

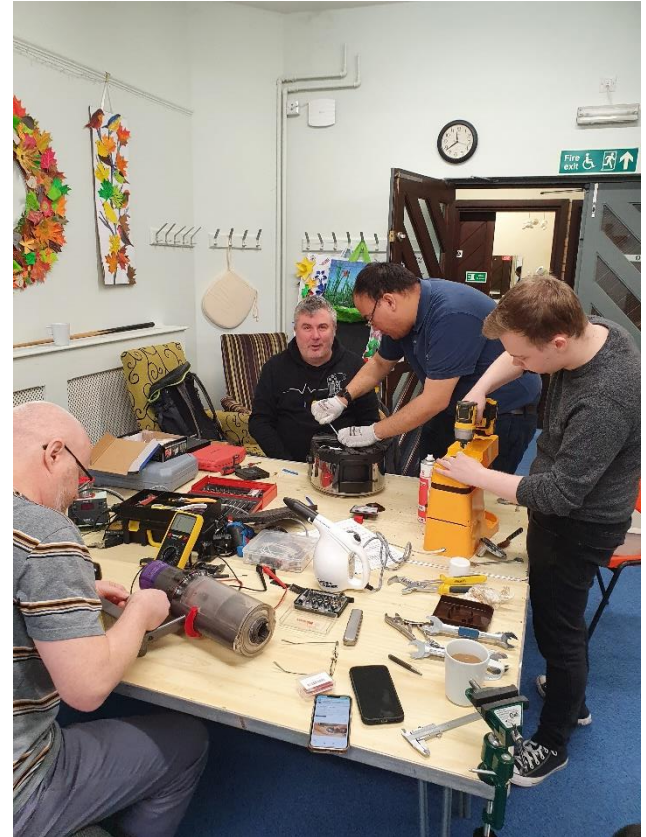
Thursday Club is thriving. What happy days we have. Our membership is full. Volunteers are exceptional, but we always have room to welcome more. We have busy days. Activities range from music, talks, making chocolates, crafts, visits from animals (hedgehogs were very popular!). Lunches are also popular! Thank you for your ongoing support.

Bramhall Repair Café

As part of the Bramhall Green Network, since April 2023 we have been pleased to host the Bramhall Repair Café on the first Saturday of each month, 10am till 12 noon.

At the Repair Café volunteers try to repair household items, and pass some repair skills on to the people who bring items in. We repair small electricals like hair straighteners, lamps, food mixers, vacuum cleaners. We mend clothes that have holes or seams and hems coming apart. An upholsterer is keen to put new life back into small furniture. General repairers will fix things like punctures in bike and pram tyres and try to put back together broken objects. All this is done in a friendly environment with tea and cake!

By repairing we save items going to landfill, save the carbon emissions of remanufacturing and earth's precious finite resources, it helps raise the idea of fixing things into all our consciousness again and gives people an opportunity to go somewhere to get help to fix things. By providing this example we hope it will show policy makers the need to put laws in place which ensure manufacturers make items that can be fixed, so we can all live more sustainably in our shared world.



Finance

The financial position of the Church remains strong. The full accounts to the year to 31st August 2023 have not yet been fully prepared and independently reviewed. However, it is possible from the draft accounts to make the following comments.

Our overall reserves have increased again in the year to August 2023 primarily from increases in the Coffee Shop and Thrift Shop reserves.

The forecast for the General and Property account is to break-even for the year to August 2023. Total giving reduced further from the year to August 2022. However, increases in rental income compensated for the reduction in income. Indications for the year to August 2024 are that giving has stabilised and that the appeal to the congregation has resulted in increases in personal giving. We have also seen good increases in income from the letting of our property.

The support for the financing of Bitesize Church was a particularly encouraging feature of the year.

Overall, we are in a sound position but continue to face cost increases, particularly in utilities. We will need to continue to find ways to increase income as we continue with our mission and our support for one another and our community.

Property

The Resources Team continue to meet on a regular basis and discuss a wide range of topics. With the main refurbishments complete, the last year has been one of consolidation and keeping a control on expenses, which as we all know is easier said than done!

On the income side this grew by £7,500 to £73,000 with the Community Hub contributing £6,000. Hiring rates were increased earlier in the year and we expect income to grow again.

On the expense side utility costs & cleaning, proved challenging. In January we renewed our gas & electricity contracts to 31st December 2025 on favourable but increased rates. Cleaning costs increased again partly due to increases in the Living Wage feeding through. Overall, our property income is sufficient to cover day-to-day maintenance of the church buildings and utility costs.

Our thanks go Mike Calow who looks after our heating needs, Rachel Pennells who organises day to day maintenance & liaises with hirers, and Claire Lee who arranges to pay the property related invoices.

Looking ahead we have plans to extend our solar generation subject of course to raising sufficient funds. The radiators in Centrepoint are struggling with our heating requirements so we will look to upgrade those at some point.

Thanks for your continued support.

Church Gardens

The last year has been challenging. There are just three of us attending to the gardens. Elaine Bates mows the lawns, weeds, prunes and clears the pathway by the side of Centrepoint. Gill Day is on a mission to eradicate weeds from the front of church. Lynne Ormiston weeds, prunes and tries to keep the flower beds in front of the main doors looking presentable. We have introduced new planting to these beds which has filled them up.

The side bed by the minister's parking space has also benefitted from some TLC. The drive has been widened by cutting back the laurel hedge. The saplings donated by The Woodland Trust for the Queens canopy are doing well.

Elaine is stepping down for a while so it would be great if more people could help out. Or just come down when you have a minute or two and weed or cut back what you think is over growing. We have no agenda.

Bramhall Methodist Church
23 Bramhall Lane South, Bramhall, Stockport, SK7 1AL

web: www.bramhallmethodists.org.uk
email: office@bramhallmethodists.org.uk
phone: 0161 439 1204



Bramhall
Methodist Church

Living out the love of Jesus