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DAY  
ASSEMBLY  
BRIGHTON

ANNUAL REPORT  
2014 - 2015

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# Reference and Administration Details

**Organisation name:** Sunday Assembly Brighton

**Principal address:** St. Andrew's Church, Waterloo Street, Hove, BN3 1AQ

**Organising committee:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Dates acted if not full year</b>
Anita Balkham	Vice-Chair	
Catie Holdridge		
Maggie Houghton	Treasurer	
Simon McGregor McGill	Chair	
Joanna McQueen	Secretary	
Richard O'Brien		
Rob Parker		
Jim Simpson		
Robert Stovold		

# Structure, Governance and Management

For the first year, Sunday Assembly Brighton operated without a formally adopted constitution but the decision to adopt a formal constitution was made at the inaugural annual general meeting in September 2014. We were then able to open a bank account in the name of Sunday Assembly Brighton, operating as an unincorporated association.

Since setting up in 2013 we have been operating as an independently organised Sunday Assembly, associated with and following the broad structure of Sunday Assembly London and the general Sunday Assembly guidelines. In April 2015 we were peer-assessed by organisers from assemblies in London and Bristol and accredited by the Sunday Assembly central body. This is a new system for all Sunday Assemblies and Sunday Assembly Brighton is currently one of eight accredited assemblies eligible to vote at the Sunday Assembly International AGM. Through the process of accreditation, Sunday Assembly Brighton is acknowledged as having the appropriate formal underpinning, as providing good quality services and has demonstrated a long term commitment to its provision of assemblies.

The primary purpose of Sunday Assembly Brighton has been to organise monthly events for the Brighton, Hove and Sussex community, consisting of songs, readings and inspiring guest lectures. We still hope to be more involved with local community groups and projects, both to build the Sunday Assembly community and to integrate with and benefit the wider local community.

Full details of our formal structure, governance and management, as well as the details of our association with the Sunday Assembly central organisation, our aims and ambitions are explained in the constitution which is available on request.



# Objectives and Activities

The aims and objectives of Sunday Assembly Brighton as defined in the constitution are as follows:

- 1) To provide meetings, assemblies and other activities which celebrate life, and reflect the ethos 'Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More'; and to support the promotion of this ethos within and beyond our local community
- 2) To support and facilitate interest and action groups that encourage the growth of the Sunday Assembly Brighton community
- 3) To form and maintain a committee and group of members for the purpose of aims 1 and 2.

Over the past year (as in the previous year) we have curated and produced 13 assemblies including special events to tie in with the Brighton Science Festival and the Brighton Fringe Festival. Each service aims to inspire and uplift and to uphold the Sunday Assembly ethos.

In order to build our own community we have supported the following activities:

- Mindfulness course
- Choir
- Third Thursday social
- Sunday Circle creative writing group (including a performance of work)
- Second Sunday social
- Bunting stitch-up

With regard to the impact on our local community, over the past year Sunday Assembly Brighton has made the following contributions:

- Food drive for Fareshare
- Setting up and regular food collection on behalf of Hangleton Food Bank

There is potential for our local community involvement to be increased and we encourage members to suggest any projects they think we could support (such as the forthcoming Brighton and Hove Food Partnership 'Feeding the 5000' project).

We have been active with the following promotional activities:

- Promotional film for YouTube
- SA Brighton website and regular blog
- BBC Radio Sussex interview in November
- Radio Reverb interview in December

Our social media activity has increased over the past year. We now have

- 589 followers on Twitter (168% increase in the past year) and have circulated over 2000 tweets
- 1166 'Likes' on Facebook (155% increase in the past year)



In our support of the wider international organisation, representatives from Sunday Assembly Brighton have:

- attended the UK conference/training day
- successfully completed the accreditation process
- attended the international AGM in Atlanta
- participated in the development of the proposed voluntary 5% financial contribution to the international organisation
- attended online 'webinars'
- participated in online network discussions
- hosted sessions at the Sunday Assembly tent at Wilderness Festival
- recorded an interview for 'I Believe' interactive web documentary for Bournemouth University



# Achievements and Performance

Over the past year, attendance figures have evened out with around 100-130 people coming along every month. This has risen to 214 for the Science Festival special in February, and peaked with a capacity of 300 (including volunteers) attending the Spiegeltent event in May.

Our themes have been varied but aim to be thought-provoking, to touch on subjects that everybody can relate to and that we often encounter at some point during our lifetime. Themes and the guest speakers are detailed below and where available, attendance figures are written in brackets.

September (our 1<sup>st</sup> year anniversary & followed by the AGM) : *Nourishment* (126) - Amanda Walderman

October: *Giving* (including a food drive for Fareshare) (129) - Bernadette Russell

November: *Gratitude* (110) - Jude Claybourne

December: *Yule Rock* - Abbie Palache

January: *Animals* (159) - Richard Robinson

February science special: *Consciousness* (214) - Anil Seth

February: *Creativity* (178) - Maggie Boden

March: *Conflict* (134) - Chris McDermott

April: *Play* (126) - Andrew Cain

May Fringe Festival special: *Connection* (300) - David Bramwell

June: *Acceptance* (102) - Joshua French

July: *Wild!* (102) - Tony Whitbread

August: *Express Yourself* (98) - Jo Hunter

The calibre of our main 'sermons' has been incredibly high. Speakers have been sourced from a variety of established forums including TEDx Brighton, the University of Sussex, and Brighton's popular Catalyst Club, as well as from positive projects and organisations such as Action for Happiness, Mindapples, 366 Days of Kindness, 64 Million Artists, and the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

We have had regular contributions from Russell Arnott and Richard Robinson for our 'Science slot', from Rosa who has written poems especially for Sunday Assembly Brighton, and from several congregants sharing their personal experiences in our 'This Much I Know' slot.

We feel that the success of our first year has continued into our second and we are very proud of our achievements and growth, as well as the standard of events that we deliver. Sunday Assembly Brighton is regarded as a benchmark for other assemblies around the world, particularly for the community feel that is experienced.

A considerable amount of voluntary work has been undertaken by the Sunday Assembly Brighton organising committee, various members of the congregation and by the many speakers, musicians and performers who have given up their time to produce these events. All Sunday Assembly Brighton committee members, performers and helpers give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or other benefits, with the exception of the monthly guest speakers who are offered travel expenses. We are grateful to every single person who has contributed to the growth of Sunday Assembly Brighton over the last two years: without the generous and valuable contributions of time, energy and expertise it would have been impossible to achieve.

That said, the committee recognises that it is a challenging level of work to sustain and hopes that one of the aims of the incoming committee will be to consider how the workload can be distributed to protect individuals from burn-out and adopt a sustainable model of event provision (see Future Plans).

# Sunday Assembly International AGM and Conference Report

Sunday Assembly International (SAI) held their second annual general meeting (AGM) in Atlanta, USA on the 30th May 2015. As an accredited assembly Sunday Assembly Brighton was one of 8 voting members.

The AGM voted to:

- have Adam Newton (SA Nashville) and Gillian Claus (SA Silicon Valley) as the elected representatives on the SAI Board
- organise a working group to develop a proposal for monetary contributions from local SAs to support the work of the central organisation
- amend the SAI charter so that it now reads:  
*The Sunday Assembly Is A Secular Congregation That Celebrates Life*  
*Our Motto: Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More*  
*Our Vision: To Help Everyone Live Life As Fully As Possible*  
*Our Mission: A Sunday Assembly In Every Town, City And Village That Wants One*

Sunday Assembly Brighton also raised concerns about lack of transparency in central decision making processes, and lack of communication from elected representatives to the international network. These points were acknowledged and the AGM was assured this would be addressed in the future.

The AGM formed part of a 3 day SAI annual conference, which was an event packed with impressive and thought provoking speakers, many discussions and workshops centred on the development of both the Sunday Assembly movement, but also its volunteers and congregants. Highlights included talks by Dale McGowan (author of 'Parenting beyond Belief') on reasons to celebrate life and Mandisa Thomas (Founder of Black Nonbelievers) on diversity; and workshops by Dr Sam Brown (editor of Philosophy in Practice) on radical inclusivity and Pippa Evans (stand up comedian and co-founder of Sunday Assembly) on improvisation skills.

More generally, spending 3 days immersed in activities and dialogue with members of the global Sunday Assembly movement helped highlight some of the challenges SAI will have to navigate as it grows. Different interpretation of the Sunday Assembly charter, in particular around the aim of being a radically inclusive movement, and the terms 'secular' versus 'nonreligious' made for some challenging conversations amongst participants. It seemed clear that the Sunday Assembly movement fulfil a different function in people's lives in areas where communities (including schools, community action, business networks and social clubs) are deeply rooted in a religious institution, as opposed to in the UK, where the secular is generally the norm, and communities more typically form out of geography or (secular) interests. There are also great cultural differences when it comes to fundraising approaches, and a degree of disagreement about the SAI organisational structure.

This highlighted a need for Sunday Assembly Brighton to be clear about its objective to provide a service to the local community it serves, and to continuously check that this objective is not at odds with the direction taken by SAI as it grows. However the Sunday Assembly Brighton committee strongly feel that we are well placed at the moment to influence the direction of SAI and the international community; we have one of the largest congregations and most stable team of volunteers, and the committee have a great passion for Sunday Assembly as a vehicle to celebrate life and bring people together.





# Financial Review

## SA Brighton Financial Report September 2014 - August 2015

### Overview

Starting balance	£	1,057.28
Income	£	2,779.54
Expenses/ Outgoings	£	2,928.32
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<b>Balance (29/08/2014)</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>908.50</b>

### Income (detailed) :

Donations*	£	243.00
Collections	£	2,536.54
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<b>Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>2,779.54</b>

### Expenses (detailed):

Venue Hire	£	1334.00
Equipment Hire	£	240.06
Equipment Purchase	£	202.58
Insurance	£	63.60
Consumables	£	347.76
Stationery	£	20.56
Travel Expenses (volunteers)	£	464.66
Travel Expenses (speakers)	£	63.00
Training/ conference fees	£	192.10
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<b>Total</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>2928.32</b>

### Assets as per August 2015:

A selection of second hand children's toys and books  
Projector screen & AV cables  
Tally Counter  
Fairy lights  
Torch  
Laminator

\*From participants at Mindfulness course

# Future Plans

Our continued focus is to provide regular monthly services that appeal to the Brighton & Hove and surrounding community. In addition, suggested plans for the forthcoming year have been discussed by the outgoing committee but are open to review by the newly elected team.

The proposed plans are:

- to increase capacity both in terms of volunteers and those engaged in the planning stages of Sunday Assembly Brighton services.
- to increase efficiency including delegation of tasks.
- to develop and expand a rota of event and floor managers.
- to establish a much clearer distinction between committee and planning activity (NB members of each group can be involved in the other). Roles within each area need to be clearly defined in order to offer clarity.
- to find new ways of gaining feedback.
- to maintain 'sustainable assembly' status.
- to spend more funds on community-led initiatives, perhaps through grants or 'start-up' funding. It should be encouraged that these ideas be brought to the committee and led by congregants.
- to explore ways to allow international AGMs without the need to spend large amounts and fly great distances. Sunday Assembly Brighton should be committed to find, suggest and lobby for cost effective and more environmentally-sound methods of attending and transferring knowledge. It is Sunday Assembly Brighton's intention to maintain strong links with the international movement and will attend such events according to budget and with consideration for other activity.
- to hold fundraising events with the intention of donating money to the central organisation with the purpose of furthering the global movement. It has been proposed that a 5% voluntary donation of revenue be made to the central organisation on an annual basis by those assemblies who are considered as being financially sustainable. This money will largely go towards the salaries of the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Community Creator who are employed by Sunday Assembly to support the existing assemblies and to further the growth of the movement. As an alternative, Sunday Assembly Brighton propose that a one-off fundraising event would provide a bigger boost to the funds raised, and will allow clearer communication to potential donors as to what their money will go towards.

