

## **TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR CORNERSTONE (BRAINTREE) 2024/2025**

### **Aim and purposes**

The trustees of Cornerstone (Braintree) have the responsibility of cooperating with the senior leadership of the church in promoting the objects of the Trust as laid down in its governing document:

To advance the Christian faith for the benefit of the public through the worship of God, the instruction and edification of Christians, the care and Christian instruction of young people and children, the evangelisation of non-Christians and the relief of sickness and poverty

We seek to follow the Commission's guidance on public benefit, and specifically that offered to charities for the advancement of religion. The varied activities of the church, as described below, are all designed to provide a secure and welcoming environment for those with faith as well as those still seeking. Through worship and prayer, teaching, encouragement, pastoring and outreach we aim to offer spiritual, emotional and physical support to the residents of our village.

Trustees are further responsible for oversight of the church buildings and for maintaining good standards of budgetary management.

### **Objectives and activities**

The trustees are committed to encouraging maximum participation in the life of our church by all the local residents. Sunday morning services take place every week and are specifically designed to bring an experience of God to every age group. Transport is provided for the elderly or disabled who require it, and children's activities of a high quality are provided by a team of dedicated and experienced Sunday School teachers. The atmosphere of the church services is very informal and lends itself to families with young children feeling comfortable and welcomed.

Evening services take place monthly and provide an opportunity to focus more on worship and prayer and listening to God. Open to any who wish to attend, these services also allow those outside the regular leadership team to gain experience and explore their gifts.

Events during each week draw in children from the community whose parents do not necessarily attend the church, as well as those from the church family, and provide fun and activities as well as an introduction to Christian principles. In this respect, a widely-used event called Messy Church is staged 3 times a year. Up to 100 children and adults from the village participate in these, many of them otherwise uninvolved in church life.

Messy church and family services build on the weekly provision of activity time for pre-school children and their carers (JAM – Jump and Music) which is very well attended and takes place in the main church hall. This multi-purpose space functions

as the place of worship on Sundays, as well as a community resource throughout the week. Further details below. The trustees of Cornerstone, and all involved in caring for children and youth or vulnerable individuals, are required to undergo DBS checking and the trustees are monitoring the current changes in government legislation to ensure that any new guidelines are complied with.

Safeguarding procedures, documents and training have been fully reviewed and updated once again in this year (last review and update was in 2022/23), with all volunteers and paid staff involved with children or vulnerable adults receiving the new documentation and training. Trustees are also expected to undergo safeguarding training.

Groups are also arranged from time to time for those interested in discovering more about the Christian faith, such as the Alpha course. There have also been more frequent WAILMIF (What am I letting myself in for) meetings that give new arrivals at Cornerstone the opportunity to learn about all aspects of the church and decide whether this particular expression of the body of Christ is the right one for them.

Regular meetings during the week take place for fellowship between members of the church, including housegroups, prayer groups and discipleship groups for women and for men.

## **Achievements and Performance**

### **Worship and Prayer:**

The past year has seen a steady increase in attendance at morning services, with numbers varying from around 80 to up to 150 adults and children. In keeping with the findings of the Bible Society's survey in early 2025, visitors to the church, many of whom have stayed, include an increasing proportion of younger people (18-34yo), especially men and ethnic minorities. This has led to greater diversity within the congregation which is very welcome. Some services see the church filled to capacity. If adults and children that take part in weekday activities are included, we estimate that some 250 people in the village are regularly receiving from the church. Worship is informal and in a mixture of styles so that it can be relevant for the whole spectrum of individuals who make up the church. Teaching is Bible-based and with a strong emphasis on challenging both character and lifestyle.

Prayer is another important element in the life of the church, and takes place within regular small groups, as part of our Sunday services, at specific prayer events and via an email prayer link to members. Two small prayer groups that grew up during the pandemic lockdown have continued to meet once a week via Zoom and sometimes in person. Three more regular prayer meetings have grown up in the last 6 months which happen at different times to allow greater participation. Whole church 24-hour prayer events take place at least annually, allowing everyone to take part at the level they are able to commit to.

For special events such as Easter and Christmas the residents of the village are invited by personal invitation or by door to door leafleting to family friendly services and Messy Church events. All members of the public, whether of the Christian faith or not, are welcomed to the church at these times and indeed to all of our Sunday services throughout the year.

In response to the cost of living crisis, a free Pantry is available during the week where essential household provisions can be collected without charge by local residents in need. Although a small grant from the Councillor's Fund was received last year, the bulk of the costs are borne by the church and this will continue to be the case throughout 2026.

### **Pastoral care:**

The church employs two of the senior leaders for one day per week. They have oversight of pastoral care within the church, including responsibility for a newly-formed pastoral care team and one is also active in community work, especially through our Coffee House. Pastoral care also takes place within weekly fellowship groups. Strong and supportive friendships often develop in these groups over time.

During 2023 another paid community worker has been taken on for one day per week. This role sits alongside our existing worker (whose role is to develop links with local residents through the Coffee House and other sources of contact, to provide help, support and prayer) but with a more specific focus on developing what we offer for children both in and outside the church.

The church also runs a weekly Mums and toddlers' group to welcome and provide support for young families in the local area. This continues to be very popular, attracting up to 70 parents and their children. Our latest community worker runs this and offers pastoral support as needed to some of the mums who attend. This is in addition to regular groups catering for children up to the age of 18.

The church has a coffee shop, open to all, which has been running since 2018. Known as The Coffee House, it serves excellent hot drinks and delicious cakes four mornings per week and one Saturday per month. There are no formal prices but a voluntary donation is encouraged. The cost of establishing the facilities has been borne by the church from its building fund, however the Coffee House has now become self-funding in daily running costs. Maintenance and future capital costs will continue to be borne by the church. The finances are monitored and are currently showing a small surplus.

This space is also used for meetings (including the Alpha course), social events and youthwork and is proving a tremendous asset in furthering the church's aim to show God's love to the community around us. It is also made available to several community events as a meeting space, for example as an information hub for the Alzheimer's Society.

## **Buildings and facilities:**

The church buildings and car park are held in trust for the benefit of the church members and the wider community. The buildings are vested with the Official Custodian service of the Charity Commission, as recognised in a new Register of Title EX803386 dated 12.06.2017.

The trustees take seriously their responsibility to maintain the standard of these assets. To this end, refurbishment takes place on a rolling basis to ensure that the condition and facilities provided are of a good standard. Major refurbishment works were undertaken last year to resolve long-standing damp issues in the Coffee House building. In addition, solar panels have been installed which will reduce our utility outgoings while reducing the church's carbon footprint.

During this year, full external painting and renovation of deteriorating wooden fascias has taken place.

## **Outreach:**

Cornerstone places a strong emphasis on reaching the local community and underprivileged groups around the world.

Numerous weekday activities take place in the church buildings that appeal to all age groups from pre-primary school children (Mums and toddlers group) through to the more senior members of our community (coffee and lunch clubs, craft afternoons). A well-established Repair Café one Saturday a month in the church invites local residents to bring along items to be fixed and provides advice and help for people who want to reduce their utilities costs.

The church is very aware of the enormous needs in the wider world. It supports Christian Youth Outreach and Braintree Youth Project locally and has strong links with the charity Stand by Me (formerly known as Kids Alive) which provides care, education and medical treatment for orphaned children in a number of sites across the world. Several teams from the church have travelled to Kenya and Nepal in recent years to help the permanent staff at the children's homes with practical projects and to give time and love to the children. The most recent volunteer team visited a children's home in Romania in April 2018. In addition to providing holiday activities for the local children, the team also gave much needed food supplies to their families. A planned visit to Ethiopia in November 2024 has been postponed because of local unrest. A further visit to the Romanian children's home is expected in 2026.

Overall, the church is committed to giving away 20% of its annual income directly to outreach and humanitarian projects in the UK and abroad. This figure has been exceeded in each of the last 3 financial years.

### **Financial control:**

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining proper and prudent control over the financial affairs of the charity. Annual accounts are scrutinised by an accountant to ensure that correct procedures are being followed and both the Trustees and the church leadership would be alerted by the Treasurer should any significant imbalance between income and budgeted outgoings arise. To provide further security, the Trustees receive a quarterly report from the Treasurer to include the following details – income, expenditure, tax refunds, bank balances, budget comparisons, any recommended actions.

The Trustees' aim, in the current financial year, is to maintain a reserve balance of unrestricted funds representing 3 months outgoings, a figure in the region of £20,000.00. The reserve at the 2024/25 year end was **£21,924.88** with an additional sum on deposit of **£78,791.39** representing a building fund.

### **Management and governance arrangements:**

Cornerstone (Braintree) is a charitable trust established by Trust Deed on January 16th 2007.

The trust deed was established with five trustees and requires a minimum of three. Were there a requirement for new trustees, these would be identified and appointed by resolution at a meeting of trustees at which a majority of trustees is present.

The induction of any new trustee involves awareness of a trustee's responsibilities, the governing document and administrative procedures. A new trustee would receive copies of the previous year's annual report and accounts and the Charity Commission leaflet 'The Essential Trustee: What you need to know'.

Philip Hale was appointed as a Trustee to Cornerstone (Braintree) on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2011.

Bridie Mariae Cousins resigned as a Trustee to Cornerstone (Braintree) on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020.

Christopher John Smith resigned from Trusteeship on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014

Rowland Dawe resigned from Trusteeship on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2021

Margaret Jessa was appointed as a Trustees on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2022

Carol Bland was appointed to the Trustees on February 4<sup>th</sup> 2023

The remaining trustees have held office since the inception of the Trust. The trustees annually review the risks that the charity faces. To date these have mainly related to budgetary management, as the main source of income is through the regular giving of the church congregation. Budgets are monitored and revised to stay within the available income of the Trust

The Trustees have undertaken to provide advice to the church leadership on fulfilling the Charity's obligations under GDPR. Suitable guidelines are now in place that satisfy those obligations.

There are minor areas of risk relating to employing staff, which have been covered by implementation of proper contracts and procedures.

### **Declaration**

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report above.

Signed: Mr Robert Thompson – Trustee to Cornerstone (Braintree), on behalf of the Trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SR Thompson', written in a cursive style.

10/01/2026

# CORNERSTONE (BRAINTREE)

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

|                                    | Notes | Unrestricted<br>funds<br>£ | Total<br>2025<br>£ | 2024<br>£      |
|------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>          |       |                            |                    |                |
| Voluntary income                   |       | 91,387                     | 91,387             | 87,694         |
| Investment income                  |       | 889                        | 889                | 1,039          |
| <b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>    |       | <u>92,276</u>              | <u>92,276</u>      | <u>88,733</u>  |
| <b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>          |       |                            |                    |                |
| Governance costs                   | 2     | 83,174                     | 83,174             | 65,603         |
| Grants payable                     | 3     | 16,782                     | 16,782             | 32,328         |
| <b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>    |       | <u>99,956</u>              | <u>99,956</u>      | <u>97,931</u>  |
| <b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>       |       | - 7,680                    | - 7,680            | - 9,198        |
| <b>TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD</b> |       | 114,100                    | 114,100            | 123,298        |
| <b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b> |       | <u>106,420</u>             | <u>106,420</u>     | <u>114,100</u> |

# CORNERSTONE (BRAINTREE)

(charity number: 1120051)

## BALANCE SHEET

31 MARCH 2025

|                       | Unrestricted<br>funds<br>£ | Total<br>2025<br>£ | 2024<br>£      |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>CURRENT ASSETS</b> |                            |                    |                |
| Debtors               | 6,271                      | 6,271              | 5,945          |
| Cash at bank          | 100,716                    | 100,716            | 114,500        |
| Creditors             | -567                       | -567               | -6,345         |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>   | <u>106,420</u>             | <u>106,420</u>     | <u>114,100</u> |
| <b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>    | <u>106,420</u>             | <u>106,420</u>     | <u>114,100</u> |

Signed on behalf of the trustees:



Print name: S R Thompson

Date: 15/01/2026

# CORNERSTONE (BRAINTREE)

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

### YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

#### 1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

##### **a Basis of preparation**

The accounts have been prepared on the basis of historic cost and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

##### **b Incoming resources**

These are included in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when:

- the charity becomes entitled to the resources;
- the trustees are virtually certain they will receive the resources; and
- the monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

##### **c Donations**

Donations are only included in the SoFA when the charity has unconditional entitlement to the resources.

##### **d Tax reclaims on donations**

Incoming resources from tax reclaims are included in the SoFA at the same time as the gift to which they relate.

##### **e Volunteer help**

The value of voluntary help received is not included in the accounts.

##### **f Liability recognition**

Liabilities are recognised as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to pay out resources.

##### **g Grants payable**

These are recognised in the accounts when a commitment has been made.

##### **h Fund accounting**

Funds held by the charity are either of the following :

Unrestricted - these can be used in accordance with the objects of the charity at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted - these can only be used for restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

# CORNERSTONE (BRAINTREE)

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

### YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

#### 2 GOVERNANCE COSTS

|                   | 2025          | 2024          |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
|                   | £             | £             |
| Leadership        | 6,300         | 6,048         |
| Administrator     | 4,428         | 4,560         |
| Community workers | 10,499        | 9,009         |
| Administration    | 3,656         | 4,231         |
| Evangelism        | 773           | 1,648         |
| Adult ministry    | 3,042         | 7,614         |
| Youthwork         | 546           | 873           |
| Buildings         | 40,206        | 16,481        |
| Other expenses    | 13,724        | 15,139        |
|                   | <u>83,174</u> | <u>65,603</u> |

#### 3 GRANTS PAYABLE

|                         | £             | £             |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Empower                 | 7,920         | 7,920         |
| Stand By Me             | 2,952         | 2,952         |
| Carmel Ministries       | 0             | 12,500        |
| Tear Fund               | 1,000         | 1,000         |
| Braintree Youth Project | 550           | 550           |
| Other                   | 4,360         | 7,406         |
|                         | <u>16,782</u> | <u>32,328</u> |

## **Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Cornerstone (Braintree) on accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 March 2025.

### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity's trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

### **Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that, in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

N K Smith FCA

19 Highbury Way, Great Cornard, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 0HE

14 January 2026