



BIRCHWOOD EVANGELICAL CHURCH

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

For the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023

Registered charity: 1125230

Company limited by guarantee: 06501443

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Birchwood Evangelical Church, more commonly known as Birchwood Community Church, is a registered charity (charity number 1125230) and a company limited by guarantee (company number 06501443).

Our principal address is:

25 Benson Road
Birchwood
Warrington
WA3 7PQ

Website: www.birchwood-church.org

During the period of this report the following charity trustees were responsible for managing the charity.

John Rockley
Dorothy Seed
Surinder Chahal
James Towers
Allan Stevenson
Derek Ellison

All trustees served for the full period of the report.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The charity is governed in accordance with a Memorandum and Articles of Association and is constituted as a company limited by guarantee.

The trustees of the charity are the members of the Church Leadership Team (CLT) in office (elders and deacons), as permitted by the professional circumstances of each leadership team member or unless otherwise prevented through conflict of interest. The trustees may also invite others who are not members of the CLT to serve as a trustee. It should be noted that John Rockley is not a member of the CLT but is a trustee by invitation of the other trustees. None of the trustees received any remuneration from the church. The members of the CLT are appointed and agreed by church members in accordance with the Church Constitution. The trustees are responsible for the management of the Church and approval of all expenditure. During the reporting period the CLT met 7 times. The trustees met 4 times.

A special AGM was held in March to discuss proposed amendments to the constitution. The annual Church AGM was held in November.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objectives of Birchwood Community Church are set out in our governing document and can be summarized as follows:

- i) To advance the Christian faith in accordance with our statement of beliefs, in the area of Birchwood and beyond
- ii) To provide services and support which promote good health and relieve sickness and financial hardship.

Our vision is '**Jesus Changing Lives**' – connecting up to our Lord, connecting in with each other and connecting out into the community. Through this we aim to bring healing and meaning to people's lives and encourage belonging to Jesus and His Church family. We want as many people as possible to have the opportunity to hear about the Christian faith, to share in worship with us and to benefit from our groups, ministries and caring support.

Throughout the year we welcomed people of all ages, backgrounds, nationalities, cultures and abilities to our Sunday worship services (Birchwood Community High School), our **multi-purpose Encounter Centre** and other activities/groups/events.

We maintained a strong partnership with the other two churches in Birchwood under the Churches Together banner, and a number of events took place jointly through the year. We continued to enjoy excellent relationships with Birchwood Shopping Centre and their management team who remained highly supportive of the work we do in and through the Encounter Centre.

We maintained a church website www.birchwood-church.org and two Facebook pages www.facebook.com/BirchwoodCommunityChurch and www.facebook.com/EncounterCentre/ to help us communicate our faith and promote the church, our activities and events. We also continued development work on a new website, intended for launch in 2024.

In enabling all the activities and the ministries of the church to take place the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on **public benefit** and in particular the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. More information about these activities during 2023 is provided in the next section of the report under Achievements and Performance.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

At the start of the year we set ourselves three goals for our church life, in line with our vision:

- **Pray** (eg family prayer events and a day retreat)
- **Eat** (eg holding 4 Slow Sundays)
- **Greet** (eg review and refresh Welcome)

We reviewed our progress against these at our November AGM. Here are some of the highlights:

- We held a prayer retreat at Northwood Christian Centre, attended by 14 people. Children also joined us for the concluding fireworks.
- The wider church family enjoyed 4 Slow Sundays over the year.
- Improvements introduced in our Welcome ministry were well received. People especially appreciated the provision of toiletries in the toilets and being greeted with chocolates as they came through the doors on Sundays.
- A church weekend away in the National Forest in June proved very enjoyable for all ages and abilities.

These are some of the highlights of our **Encounter Centre** activities:

- Between 20-25 people regularly attended our **coffee mornings** on Tuesdays and Fridays. Some of these started to attend church on Sundays as a result of their engagement with us in the Encounter Centre.
- Thursday's **Talking Point** which originally started as a pilot in 2021 developed so successfully it went on to become a blueprint for the establishment of 6 other Talking Points across Warrington. Working with Warrington's Wellbeing Service, Adult Social Care and other partners such as Bridgwater Health and Livewire we were able to offer advice, support and guidance to people who came in looking for help. Our input centered around offering spiritual advice as well as a friendly welcome.
- The Encounter **Community Fridge**, run through Neighbourly, the national umbrella surplus food organisation, continued through 2023, with regular donations from Aldi Birchwood. Food was always much appreciated by those who received it.
- A **Bible study** continued to run on Tuesday afternoons, growing to around 20 regular attendees from the Heart group. The studies provided the opportunity to discuss matters of faith together. Conversations were often thought-provoking and thoughtful.
- Our **Chat & Charity** group grew in numbers through 2023, with 10-15 people coming regularly to chat over coffee, knitting blankets and other items for refugees and others in need.
- **Birchwood Blokes** – one men's group for the three churches in Birchwood – continued its outreach to men, both church-based or in the community. A main feature was regular Men's Breakfasts, which were enjoyed by all who attended.

- The Encounter Centre remained an official **Warm Welcome** organisation, responding to the ongoing cost of living crisis by offering free, warm, welcoming spaces for local people.
- We continued a one-to-one **grief counselling** ministry through 2023, often behind the scenes. This was enormously beneficial to those receiving counselling.
- **Saplings** (see further information below) continued to meet at the Encounter Centre on Mondays as another key outreach opportunity for the church. Through this connection we were able to invite young families to church events and to share our faith with them.

The number of children attending **Sparklers** (pre-school) and **Torches** (primary age) remained small and we had varying numbers of attendees. We started using Premier NexGen resources and the youngsters were enjoying working their way through the Bible over the academic year.

As far as our **youth ministry** is concerned we thank God for our young people and we praise him that in 2023 he brought in new, younger faces as older ones departed for University. Rachel has been our **supported worker** with Youth for Christ in Birchwood High School for three years now. Given the much-publicised difficulties that young people faced in Birchwood in the past 12 months, having a Christian presence in the High School continued to be extremely important. Rachel set up a Prayer Space in school and her group called **Fresh** made a strong start, with regulars and newcomers joining in. On Sundays we continued to run **Beacons** for our older youth.

We ran **Ignite** for Years 7-9 on Friday nights and **Fuel** for Years 9-13 on Sunday nights.

One of our young people went on a mission trip to Lebanon over the summer. Two of them (who had become students by this time) got baptised.

Nine **Life Groups** regularly took place during the week, meeting at different times and places.

We continued our **BSL (British Sign Language)** signed services, taking place on the fourth Sunday of every month.

Heart, our art and crafts group, was consistent this year in terms of numbers, although some were not able to attend as regularly as they would have liked due to illness. Diamond art proved very popular. One half of the group happily pursued this whilst the others continued to do their colouring, cards and painting.

Our Sunday evening Bible studies called **Deeper** were kept on a hybrid basis, meaning in person at the Encounter Centre, plus live on Zoom. The sessions were recorded and made available on the church website for anyone to watch later. Numbers attending and watching on catch-up fell slightly during the year.

Saplings, our Encounter Centre group for babies and pre-school children, went from strength to strength over the year. We bade farewell at our summer party to the children who were heading off to school. When we reopened in September at our new morning time we were very pleased that God sent many new families to our group along with the younger siblings of some of our existing Saplings.

As part of our ongoing **Prayer Programme** we held 3 family prayer events and a very popular prayer retreat in the nearby countryside. We ran a monthly online Prayer Space and sent out 47 weekly Friday prayer emails for reflection.

We ran a **student ministry**, keeping in contact with 8 of our young people attending university. We used Facebook, emails, WhatsApp and post and sent regular parcels by way of encouragement.

In October we opened a new ministry, **iCafe**, a weekly conversation class for non-native English speakers. The group quickly built up to around 15 by the end of the year, mainly people from Hong Kong. Everyone had plenty of opportunities to practise English and learn new vocabulary.

In line with our **safeguarding** policy all our youth and children's ministry leaders completed their safeguarding training, using resources provided by 31:8. All our volunteers supporting these ministries were in the process of being registered to complete their training too.

Our church hospitality team worked with supporters of the Encounter Centre to hold two special **outdoor events** – a Coronation Lunch and Encounter Fest. Both were well attended.

The **Welcome** Team reviewed and refreshed their approach to welcoming people to church on Sunday mornings. Improvements were introduced and more were planned at the end of the year, including better external signage and a more effective process for following up newcomers to church.

We worked with the other churches in Birchwood (Thomas Risley and The Table) to plan and deliver joint events, as '**Birchwood Churches Together**'. These included a joint Easter service, a stall at Birchwood Carnival, a presence at Birchwood's artisan markets, and a Light Party for children.

We participated in Church Warrington's planning for **J John's Christmas carol service** outreach at the Halliwell Jones stadium in December. Our involvement ranged from distributing flyers across Birchwood to giving financial support for its promotion. More than 3,000 people attended the event from across Warrington and beyond.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Total incoming resources for the year amounted to £111,775. Total resources expended amounted to £105,948. Net income amounted to £5,827. Total income was similar to that of 2022 although it should be noted that 2022 income included restricted income donated for the Recife kitchen project. Expenditure decreased, mainly because the 2022 figures also included the Recife kitchen project expenditure.

Including bank and cash balances brought forward at the beginning of the reporting year the balances carried forward at 31 December 2023 totalled £34,364. The trustees keep financial expenditure under close and regular review at quarterly meetings.

RESERVES POLICY

The trustees' aim is to maintain a balance on unrestricted funds if possible which equates to three months unrestricted payments. This was sustained throughout the year.

Approved by the Trustees on 10th April 2024 and signed on their behalf

Surinder P Chahal

Dorothy K Seed

BIRCHWOOD EVANGELICAL CHURCH

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Year ended 31 December 2023			Year ended 31 December 2022
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income	110950		110950	99176
Activities for generating funds	0		0	0
Investment income	0		0	0
Other incoming resources	826		826	3862
Total incoming resources	111775		111775	111567
Resources expended				
Charitable activities	75222		75222	83134
Governance costs	28394		28394	23157
Other resources expended	2333		2333	4280
Total resources expended	105948		105948	110571
Net (outgoing) resources	5827		5827	996
Net movement in funds	5827		5827	996
Total funds brought forward	28537		28537	27541
Total funds carried forward	34364		34364	28537

BALANCE SHEET

	At 31 December 2023 £	At 31 December 2022 £
Cash at bank and in hand	34,364	28,537
Profit and loss account	34,364	28,537

Approved by the Trustees on 10th April 2024 and signed on their behalf

Surinder P Chahal

Dorothy K Seed

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Birchwood Evangelical Church

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on pages 8 to 9.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Martin F Smith

Relevant professional qualification or body: ACA

Address: 6 Hapsford Close, Locking Stumps, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6NA

Date: _____ 2024