



## **BIRCHWOOD EVANGELICAL CHURCH**

### **TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT**

**For the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024**

**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](http://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.

The annual Church AGM was held in November.

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of Birchwood Evangelical 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](http://www.birchwood-church.org) and two Facebook pages [www.facebook.com/BirchwoodCommunityChurch](https://www.facebook.com/BirchwoodCommunityChurch) and [www.facebook.com/EncounterCentre/](https://www.facebook.com/EncounterCentre/) to help us communicate our faith and promote the church, our activities and events. We completed development work on a new website and launched it during the year.

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 2024 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:

- **Encourage Prayer** (eg arranging two external prayer events and evolving monthly evening prayer sessions)
- **Encourage Fellowship** (eg building on the Slow Sundays format and holding a church weekend away)

- **Encourage Outreach** (invite Saplings families to dedication services and organise an evangelistic meal)

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

- We introduced 'Prayers For' at the end of every month, enabling us to focus on a specific theme or missions work. Examples included praying for our students at college/university and praying for our church over the year ahead.
- We held three Slow Sundays over the year and put plans in place to run double sessions for 2025 in order to avoid overcrowding.
- We enjoyed another church weekend away in the National Forest in September.
- Comedian Andy Kind entertained us and shared his faith at a well-attended evangelistic outreach evening.
- Saplings families came to the dedication service of one of our church babies.

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 began to attend church on Sundays as a result of their engagement with us in the Encounter Centre. We also had the pleasure of baptising some of them.
- Due to their recent structural changes our hosting of **Birchwood Talking Point** on Thursdays reduced to twice a month. Local people continued to benefit from advice and support from the Talking Point team. Our input focussed on offering spiritual support and practical advice.
- The Encounter **Community Fridge**, run through Neighbourly, the national umbrella surplus food organisation, continued through 2024, with regular donations from Aldi Birchwood on four days a week. Food was always much appreciated by those who received it. We became part of the Food Network across Warrington with the ability to share donations between us depending on the need.
- A **Bible study** ran on Tuesday afternoons for the Heart group. The studies provided the opportunity to discuss matters of faith together. Conversations were often thought-provoking.
- **Birchwood Blokes** – one men's group for the three churches in Birchwood – continued its outreach to men, both church-based or in the community. Men's Breakfasts were a main feature, enjoyed by all who attended. The sessions provided an excellent outreach opportunity as well as encouraging believers to continue to grow spiritually.

- We continued a one-to-one **grief counselling** ministry through 2024, often behind the scenes. This was enormously beneficial to those receiving counselling, whether Christians or non-Christians.
- **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 engage with young families and share our faith with them.
- We were able to introduce a **Games Morning** on Thursdays with the support of £500 of local funding. People began to relax and open up whilst they played board games or snooker.

A number of new families with young children joined the church during the year. We therefore took the decision to split the children's work (for **Sparklers** and **Torches**) back into two classrooms on Sunday mornings. By the end of the year the teaching team had started to build good relationships with the children. Teachers and assistants continued to value the hands-on approach and flexibility of the Premier NexGen resources.

The Lord laid the plight of Birchwood **young people**, particularly at the high school, on the hearts of many in our church during the year and we spent time seeking how to serve them in the name and power of Jesus. As a result of the long-term sickness absence of our supported **youth worker** our volunteer youth workers took on additional responsibilities. We were able to begin a detached ministry which was starting to bear fruit. Our Mission Director built a good relationship with the Head of Birchwood Community High School. Our High School group **Fresh** had a slow start but we prayed that it would build up once more.

On Sundays we continued to run **Beacons** for our older youth.

We ran **Ignite** for Years 7-9 on Friday nights. Numbers attending were high but it was proving difficult to cater for the needs of the mixed groups of young people who were attending.

Eight **Life Groups** regularly took place during the week, meeting at different times and places. We were considering the possibility of creating another evening group in order to provide people with an improved choice.

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. The group enabled people to come together and enjoy each other's company as well as having the opportunity to try a different art activity each week. Many people continued to bring their own Diamond Art.

Our Sunday evening Bible studies called **Deeper** were kept on a hybrid basis, meaning in person at the Encounter Centre, plus live on Zoom. Six to ten people regularly attended in person. On average the recorded sessions were watched 61 times over the year. Two studies had over 100 views. The studies were based on a doctrinal approach, encouraging people into a deeper understanding of their faith.

**Saplings**, our Encounter Centre group for babies and pre-school children, saw a time of change over the year as the very little ones were growing up and becoming much more mobile. It proved to be a growing experience for the leaders and helpers too. Saplings continued to be a welcoming and fun place to be.

As part of our ongoing **Prayer Programme** we held two external prayer events and another very popular prayer retreat in the nearby countryside at Northwood. We evolved our monthly online Prayer Space into a new format 'Prayers For' which proved very popular. We sent out 46 weekly Friday prayer emails for reflection.

We ran a **student ministry**, keeping in contact with six of our young people attending university. We used Facebook, emails, WhatsApp and post and sent regular parcels by way of encouragement. We progressed to sending out weekly devotions and many of the church family also wrote cards.

We had our third year of **iCafe**, a weekly conversation class for non-native English speakers. Between 8 and 14 people from Hong Kong regularly attended during the year. We covered a range of subjects and had field trips to Bents, the local garden centre and Walton Gardens. We even covered the General Election and car maintenance.

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. We began a review of our safeguarding policy to bring it into line with new legislation.

Our church **hospitality** team organized the catering for two baptisms. The decision to double up on Slow Sundays was taken to ensure we could accommodate everyone who wanted to attend. The first of these new sessions was planned for January 2025.

The **Welcome** Team introduced new Welcome packs and oversaw the introduction of welcome banners/flags on Sunday mornings. One of the Elders sent welcome emails to newcomers by way of introduction to the church and to provide encouragement.

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 in the Shopping Mall, a stall at Birchwood Carnival, a Light Party for children and a Christmas carol service also in the Mall.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

Total incoming resources for the year amounted to £107,717. Total resources expended amounted to £98,258. Net income amounted to £9,459. Total income reduced by 4% in comparison with that of 2023. Expenditure decreased by 7%, mainly due to reduced costs associated with youth work.

Including bank and cash balances brought forward at the beginning of the reporting year the balances carried forward at 31 December 2024 totalled £43,823. The trustees kept financial expenditure under close and regular review at quarterly meetings. The trustees also carried out a review of financial controls and agreed on a policy which would help guide financial management.

## **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.

The Trustees regularly review the level of cash in the BCC bank account. Towards the end of 2024 the Trustees took steps to implement an across-the-board 50% increase in giving for missionary support with effect from the beginning of 2025. In addition they approved a number one-off gifts to some of our missionaries. During 2025 we expect the following to reduce our cash level:

- Recommencement of funding for our youth worker via Warrington Youth For Christ, with the possibility of back payments as well.
- 50% increase in missionary giving as described above.
- Possible overlap for salary payments with the departure of one of the elders and the appointment of a replacement. The current timeline for the latter is from 1<sup>st</sup> September.
- Review of cash position by Trustees in Q3 at which decisions will be taken on expenditure to reduce cash holdings.

**Approved by the Trustees on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 and signed on their behalf**

**Surinder P Chahal**

**Dorothy K Seed**

# BIRCHWOOD EVANGELICAL CHURCH

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Year ended 31 December 2024			Year ended 31 December 2023
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming resources</b>				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Voluntary income	105786		105786	110950
Activities for generating funds	0		0	0
Investment income	0		0	0
Other incoming resources	1930		1930	826
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<b>107717</b>		<b>107717</b>	<b>111775</b>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
Charitable activities	67164		67164	75222
Governance costs	28569		28569	28394
Other resources expended	2525		2525	2333
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<b>98258</b>		<b>98258</b>	<b>105948</b>
<b>Net (outgoing) resources</b>	<b>9459</b>		<b>9459</b>	<b>5827</b>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>9459</b>		<b>9459</b>	<b>5827</b>
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>	<b>34364</b>		<b>34364</b>	<b>28537</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>43823</b>		<b>43823</b>	<b>34364</b>



## BALANCE SHEET

	At 31 December 2024 £	At 31 December 2023 £
Cash at bank and in hand	43,823	34,364
Profit and loss account	43,823	34,364

Approved by the Trustees on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 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 2024, 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: \_\_\_\_\_ 2025