

# Annual Report to the Charity Commission

## For our Annual General Meeting 2024

### Charitable Objective

The Charity is governed by an Approved Governing Document which states that the principal purpose of the charity is the advancement of the Christian faith according to the principles of the Baptist denomination to include the advancement of education, community service and such other general charitable purposes in such parts of the United Kingdom and the world as the Church shall determine. The Church occupies premises which are held by the Baptist Union Corporation Ltd, on Trusts which are entirely compatible with the above object.

Woodbridge Quay Church is affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain, and is part of the Eastern Baptist Association.

### Vision and Values

Our Vision is to be **‘A Good News Church following an Extravagant God.’** We believe that this is the Church that God is calling us to be. In a world increasingly full of bad news we want to be Good News to all those who join us for the journey, we want to be a church that is Good News to our wider community. Most importantly we want to show people the Good News of Jesus Christ and all that he has done for us through both our words and actions. God is extravagant in giving his only son as a gift for us, and so we want to follow him in all that we do.

In 2015, a legacy given by a long-standing church member allowed for a piece of art to be erected in our church grounds that might draw the eye. A piece of art that says this is a healthy place where God is encountered. The result was the hand sculpture that stands in our church grounds, and that is now daily, one of the most photographed locations in Woodbridge. It is because of this hand sculpture that we are known affectionately to the town as **‘The Church with the Hands.’** We believe that our vision as a church is achieved when we embrace our identity as **‘The Church with the Hands’** and so our values stem from this identity.

We want to be Hands that:

- **Pray** – Making prayer a priority
- **Open** – Invite the Holy Spirit to move among us
- **Care** – Connecting people to the welcome, love and care of Jesus
- **Raise** – Aspire to excellence in all things
- **Love** – Choosing love, because love transforms
- **Give** – Saying ‘Yes to God’ whatever it costs
- **Move** – Deepening and Increasing the Kingdom of God through lives rooted in Jesus

### Context

In November 2021 at our AGM, we introduced a new leadership structure within the parameters of our constitution, introducing the two roles of Elders and Guardians. Both Elders and

Guardians serve as charity trustees, and have a bi-monthly full trustees meeting, but also meet for separate Elders and Guardians meetings.

Our Elders for this reporting year were Jonathan Knight, Debbie Scurrrell and Amanda Phelan, who assisted the Pastors, Doug Waller and Guy Mansell within the Eldership of the church. Elders are *'Those entrusted with the oversight of the spiritual health and direction of the Church'*

The Elder's role is to: Lead the church (1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 5:1-2), Teach and preach the word (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9), Protect the church from false teachers (Acts 20:17 & 28-31), Teach sound doctrine (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:13-17), Visit the sick and pray (Jam 5:14; Act 6:4), Judge doctrinal issues (Act 15:6)

Our Guardians for the reporting year were Wendy Collins, Emma Grant (Church Secretary) and Sarah Fowler and Louis Kamfer (Church Treasurer). Guardians are *'Those who are Guardians and Protectors of the Church, its Ministries and Ministers (By ensuring professional and legal obligations are intentionally met).'* The Guardians role is to oversee: Annual Budget, Data Protection, Financial Regulations, Legal Regulations, Staff Welfare, Annual Appraisals, Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Charity Commission returns and the administration of the church.

Both Guardians and Elders are expected to pray regularly for the work of the church, to be involved in its ministries, and to be men and women of good Christian character and conduct.

The Full Leadership Team has met on 6 occasions over the course of the year. Guardians meeting separately on 6 occasions, and Elders meeting separately on 10 occasions. Notes and minutes of the separate meetings are made available to each group to promote transparency and accountability.

The church employs Kevin Bitter as our Operations and Hub Manager, and he is responsible for much of the day to day running of our facilities, and communications. Over the course of this year, we have also appointed Gwyn Smith as our Children's and Youth worker and Jane Pears as our Pastoral Worker to support the growing ministry of the church.

## **Achievements and Performance**

Whilst it is always feels difficult to talk in church life of achievements and success, this year the church adopted a mantra 'To do more in 2024.' Within this were a number of core aims:

- Increase Staffing to improve capacity and release gifting
- Fully Explore 1 Quay Street as a Hub Opportunity
- Plant Further Congregations at Quay
- Run Two Alpha Courses in January and September, to be intentional about sharing about Jesus
- Establish ourselves as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

### **Increase Staffing to improve capacity and release gifting**

The Leadership Team identified the need for additional ministry support in the life of the church as a priority. As the church has grown in terms of numbers both on a Sunday morning but also through the various ministries that are in operation, this had been placing an added pressure on the capacity of our existing staff team and volunteers. The recruitment and importance of

setting aside people for the work of Christian ministry was agreed to be the best way to meet some of the challenges we had been facing.

There has been tremendous work going on amongst our Children and Youth work. In 2020 we took the step to invest in this area of ministry and we called Guy as our Families Pastor. In the time since, we have seen our children's and youth work grow and flourish, and it has been a blessing to see many of our young people proclaiming their faith in Jesus through the waters of baptism.

We decided that we wanted to employ a children's and Youth worker in a part time role who would support Guy in this area of ministry, assisting in the growth and development of family ministry at Woodbridge Quay Church through leading Children's and Youth Groups on Sunday mornings and being involved in leading Sunday Services and leading outreach events. In April 2024 we appointed Gwyn Smith to this role. In the 6 months of being in post so far, she has had a great impact on all of our areas of children's work: helping to write and deliver a new children's curriculum for Sunday mornings, mentoring young people in the church, setting up an outreach kids club that runs at the Peterhouse Crescent estate, and developing relationships with the families within the church.

In June 2024 we also appointed Jane Pears to be our Pastoral Worker. Working closely with both Guy and Doug, Jane has been able to help meet some of the day-to-day pastoral needs in the life and ministry of the church and support the Pastors with their pastoral load. This has also involved leading and working closely with the Pastoral Care Team, helping to provide pastoral support church family members. This happens through a range of means such as phone calls, visitations, emails and letters. This approach has helped us in not just being reactive, but proactive in pastoral care for our community. Jane has been involved and a presence in several ministry areas, established a prayer ministry team on a Sunday morning, and also helped create a small group in one of the local retirement housing projects.

We are still in the process of actively seeking a third member of staff to become our Worship Team Leader, who will oversee the provision of worship at all church events, from Sunday worship, mid-week events, conferences, rites of passage and staff meetings. They will help to develop and equip members of the church to be involved in the worship band both as musicians and on the AV side. The recruitment for this part time role, at the time of this report, is still ongoing.

### **Fully Explore 1 Quay Street as a Hub Opportunity**

One of the challenges that we have experienced as a church is that as the number of people attending has increased, there has been less capacity for some of our activities on a Sunday morning. Our children's groups were struggling with the size of their rooms because of the number of children we have been seeing. Not only this, but in terms of the use of the building throughout the week, there is very little capacity for new relationships through lettings.

1 Quay Street, a property, approximately 100 yards away from the church had been available and, on the market, which had the potential to be a community hub. This could have hosted services such as a clothing bank, counselling services and a community café, to name just a few ideas. It would have also provided additional space for existing ministries of the church and provide a different environment for outreach events.

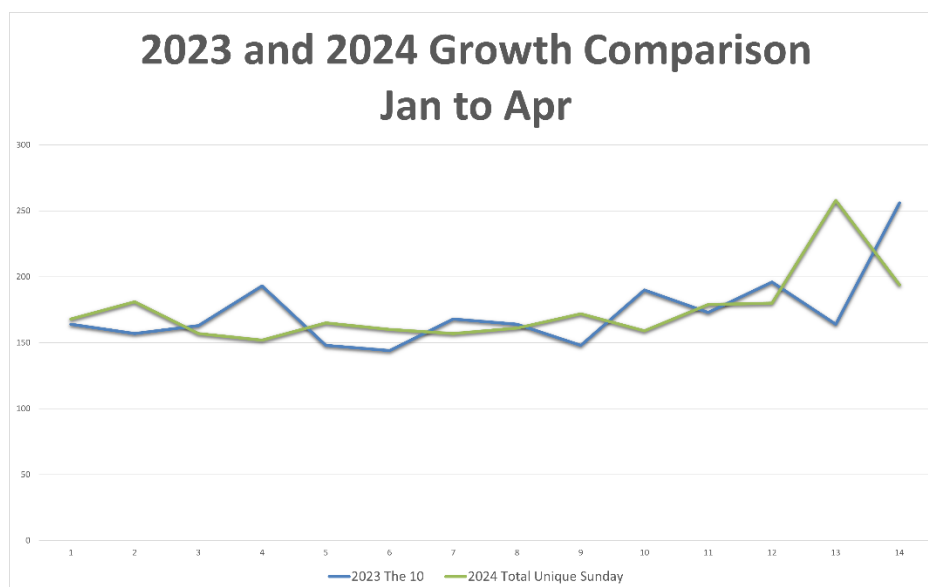
The Leadership Team instructed a group of church members to research and undertake the feasibility and viability of such a project. The team made contact with a local quantity surveyor, whose recommendation having examined the building was to level the site, and build a purpose made facility at an approximate cost of £1million. The team also instructed a building consultant to look into the potential of repairing and converting the building in its current state. The budget cost assessment for these works were £765,000 excluding VAT. Part of the survey gave notice that because of a former fuel deposit underneath the site, remediation works could potentially be costly and challenge the viability of the proposed scheme as well. The building itself was on the market with a guide price of £450,000. With all these factors considered, the Leadership Team felt that there was too much risk involved, and didn't want to proceed with a possible acquisition at this stage. The Leadership Team encouraged the church to continue to pray about the heart and desire to reach out to the community in this way.

### **Plant Further Congregations at Quay**

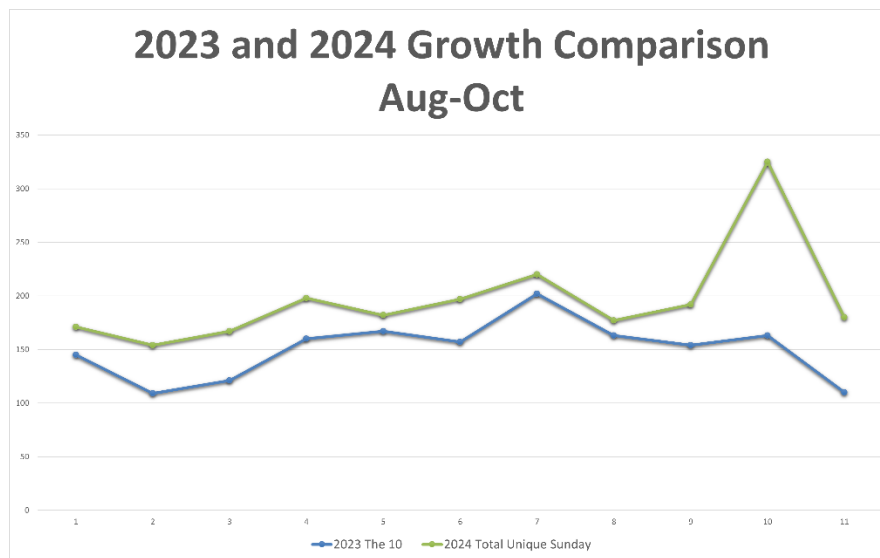
As has been mentioned regularly throughout this report so far, towards the end of 2023, we were aware that our Sunday morning gatherings were at capacity, and as a result we were struggling to retain newcomers. Church studies have shown that once a church reaches 80% of it's seating capacity, the church struggles to grow beyond this point, and by the end of 2023 we were averaging around 160 people per Sunday morning service. However, we had seen our membership and fellowship numbers remain relatively static in that time.

It was for this reason that for the beginning of 2024, we made the decision to add an additional service and so 'The 7' an evening congregation was formed. This was in the hope of providing additional capacity and space for the morning, as people may have preferred an evening congregation, but most importantly also allowed for a different focus and space for encounter with the Holy Spirit. This has also provided an opportunity to those who may have served in the morning at The 10, to receive teaching and ministry themselves.

As you can see from the graph below, in the first part of the year we saw a relatively similar trend to the same period in 2023. Whilst the 10 averaged 155 people from Jan-Apr, and the 7 43, if it was taken as people attending church at least once during that period, we saw on average 173 people per week on a Sunday, with 175 attending in the same period in 2023.



However, as the year has progressed, and as the effect of staff recruitment and some of the additional capacity made at the 10 has been filled as the year has gone on, there has been an increase in the period from August – October 24 in comparative terms to last year. During this period the Sunday average has risen to 193 people coming to church at least once (Averaging 176 at the 10, 42 at the 7). As you can see from the graph below, this is now consistently higher than the same period last year (Average 2023 for the same period 152). Even if we were to remove from our data a Baptism Sunday which had the highest recorded attendance in the last 8 years, the growth in numbers is still higher than in the same period.



Whilst the temptation is to just think about numbers, we also acknowledge the reason that we do this. When Jesus tells the story of the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 in order to find the 1 that has gone astray, there is a pastoral element transferable to us today. We count people because people count. Each person who comes to Quay matters to Jesus, and the primary purpose of measuring Sunday attendance is to reach out to those who may have gotten lost, and also to help people in their walk of discipleship. One of the implications of this is that we have also seen growth in number in our church family membership role, as we are being more intentional about helping getting people connected into the life of the church, so that they might flourish in their walk with the Lord.

Year	Sunday Large Circles (Year End Adjustment)	Membership Number	Baptisms
2017	221 (195)	100	7
2018	226 (210)	98	1
2019	280 (250)	98	2
2020	265 (265)	102	0
2021	269 (259)	129	0
2022	351 (330)	140	4
2023	320 (318)	150	4
2024 (OCT)	375 (293)*	163*	5*

Which is also what leads us to our next goal.

### **Run Two Alpha Courses in January and September, to be intentional about sharing about Jesus**

One of the areas that we felt we needed to re-establish a healthy rhythm is to have regular Alpha Courses. Alpha is an opportunity to explore the Christian faith in a welcoming and friendly environment. This year we ran a course in January which had 12 attendees from a variety of different backgrounds, some with existing connections to the church, and some with none. It was great to see relationships develop as the weeks go by, culminating in our Maundy Thursday meal, where the entire church joined with the Alpha group for the final session, 'What about the Church?' Encouragingly from the Alpha Course we saw one person come to faith, and because of coming to Alpha, another later in the year made the decision to be baptised. Further encouragement has come in the shape of the fact that one of the tables has continued to meet on a monthly basis ever since the course finished, where they continue to discuss questions of faith.

In September we launched another Alpha course, this is still happening at the time of this report. We have 16 attendees, and we have been tremendously blessed by the small groups of the church providing meals each week for our guests. We have had one person come to faith, and a number of people begin to reaffirm an existing commitment to Jesus.

### **Establish ourselves as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)**

At the beginning of the year, we set ourselves the aim of establishing ourselves as a CIO. This is something that we have had the desire to move over to for a number of years, but have lacked the capacity to put into process. With the support of Mike Astbury, this year we have begun this journey, and the church has a new constitution that it will be voting on at a Special Church Meeting at the end of November 2024. Once this is in progress, the Leadership Team with the support of Mike, will then begin the process of moving over to the CIO model.

### **Church Values**

Alongside our core aims for the year, as a church we also hold to our seven core values, details of how we have tried

#### **Hands that Pray**

##### *Making Prayer a Priority*

In 2024 we have established a regular rhythm of prayer in the life of the church, with a week of prayer in May, and term-start prayer meetings in both September and January. These have allowed us to gather corporately in prayer, and make it a priority at the beginning of key moments in the year

During our Sunday mornings together, we have been more intentional in praying together before the start of the service, with all teams encouraged to gather to pray at 9:15. We have also created a prayer space at the back of the church for people to use for prayer ministry at the end of the service and is attended to by the prayer ministry team. Since its introduction in September this has seen regular use.

Throughout the last 12 months, our church small groups have continued to offer prayer support and encouragement to one another. Pastoral visitation continues to take place, with the Pastoral Care team prioritising those who are not connected to a small group, or those who need additional support. This has presented an opportunity for the Pastoral Care team to pray and journey alongside a number of people. We continue to utilise a prayer chain and also use our private church Facebook group which provides opportunities to pray for one another.

## **Hands that Open**

*Invite the Holy Spirit to move among us*

In trying to do more in 2024, we believe that we have been stepping out in faith not sure of what might happen, inviting the Holy Spirit to lead us in it all. What we have found, is that God is incredibly faithful. The introduction of the 7, the recruitment of staff and the re-introduction of Alpha, have been significant moments in the church this year. We have seen God's blessing in each of those areas, but also the way in which He has continued to bless the ministry of the church.

We have seen 5 Baptisms in 2024 (Sara, Sophie, Hugo, Leah and Lottie), with potentially more to be baptised before the end of the year. Each time someone has been baptised it has been a powerful occasion in the life of the church, which both edified those being baptised, but also edified the church body. We believe the Holy Spirit is continuing to do a work in this area, as people publicly declare Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and that they belong to Him.

## **Hands that Care**

*Connecting people to the welcome, love and care of Jesus*

Through the support of the pastoral care team, we have supported those going through difficulties on a range of things such as relationship breakdowns, illness and infirmity, bereavement, and social isolation.

We have continued to lead a monthly Songs of Praise service, where people can come enjoy one another's company, and sing songs together. This has been incredibly helpful for the building of community. People have been very open in sharing the challenges that they have been going through, but it's also been a great place of encouragement and has been a worthwhile addition to the ministry at Quay.

Quay Time, our monthly meeting place for coffee and entertainment that we operate in partnership with the lions continued in 2024 and is seeing consistently good numbers each time. It continues to address a growing need to connect with those who might be socially isolated. It's been very encouraging to see a greater number of men attending each month, so that now the group is more balanced in terms of gender.

Coffee@Quay has also offered people a space for to meet on Saturday's once a month, and has also had opportunities to support various charities.

Quay Women has continued and serves a great need amongst the women of the church, who will meet to deepen connection and share life's joys and struggles.

Various ministries in the church have extended the welcome of Jesus to those who might not ordinarily come to church such as Little Hands Parent and toddler group. We also have seen this during our Big Family Day Out in July. This year we once again worked closely with St John's Church in Woodbridge, under the banner of Hope Woodbridge and invited Gemma Hunt of Cbeebies Swashbuckle to come and share about her faith and engage with the many families who come.

The Big Family Day Out is a real 'Good News' event with Hog Roast, Train Rides, Bouncy Castles, FacePainting and Cream Teas. Through it, we try and show the generosity of our God to the community around us, and try and do what we can to serve them and be good news to them. That's why everything about the day is Free, we don't want any money for this event, we just give people the gift of a fun free day out together as families. In this we can point people to Jesus, the One who has freely and generously given himself for us.

### **Hands that Raise**

*Aspire to excellence in all things*

As part of our devoted worship, we want to grow more in the likeness of Christ. This year we began with a series on relationships (A thing called Love) during our Sunday mornings, this took us from January to April, whilst in the evening we were exploring our Church vision and values (Salt and Light) After Easter we worked our way through the book of Philippians together (JoyFull), whilst in the evening we looked at two miniseries, Facing Life's challenges and The Best of Friends. Over the summer, we explored the 'Meeting Jesus', a series about a range of encounters that people had with Jesus in the Gospels, with a range of different speakers preaching on these. Then this autumn, we have looked at a series called 'Compelling Lives' a series all about our formation as Jesus disciples and in the evening we have been working our way through a series on Prayer (open-hearted). These teaching themes continue to hopefully challenge and provoke us about how we are to be living sacrifices as we worship the Lord.

We have continued to livestream services, so that those who are unable to be with us in room on a Sunday, can still be very much a part of what is going on through watching online. We are still seeing a significant number of views each week (approx. 25-30 live views) through the livestream.

We've continued to improve our communications utilising a variety of different platforms, Facebook, Instagram, ChurchSuite, our Website [www.thequay.org.uk](http://www.thequay.org.uk) and this year we have been more intentional in sending letters to members where necessary.

In considering this value, we recognise that in the case of all of the ministries of WQC, a lot of time and effort and love is put in to make them excellent. People give their best, from our Sunday School leaders and small group leaders, to our worship band, from our AV team, to those who serve tea and coffee. Our thanks to all of those people who have voluntarily served in ministry areas this year, giving their best as part of their worship of Jesus.

### **Hands that Love**

*Choosing love, because love transforms*



Following on from the previous value, many of the activities run, have been done not just as an act of worship, but as a sign of love for people. Our Sunday school teachers, showing children the love of Jesus, and loving them. Our Little hands team, getting alongside young parents who have endured a lot of their parenting lives, and showing them love and empathy. The activities that we have offered to our community for free, such as the Light Party and BFDO. It's all been out of love.

## **Hands that Give**

*Saying 'Yes to God' whatever it costs*

Throughout this year we have regularly said Yes to God whatever it has cost. This has been in numerous ways.

Firstly, through faithful financial giving. At the beginning of this year, the church was budgeting to be in deficit. It was a step of faith when the budget was set in 2023 that God would provide, and he has through the generosity of his people. We had set the church the challenge of increasing their giving by the cost of a cup of coffee a week £3.50, this would go towards supporting the recruitment of new staff. Whilst one of the roles has currently remained unfilled, the giving of God's people means that our finances have been stable throughout this time, and we are in a promising financial position when that position is filled.

We have also continued to try and be open handed and generous as a church. As part of our annual budget, we will have given £23,400 to the Baptist Union Home Mission Fund, the Baptist Missionary Society, Just 42, Footsteps Counselling Service, African Pastors Fellowship and Addis Kidhan Church in Ethiopia. Whilst not going through the church accounts, members of the church have also given £15,269 to Compassion UK. A significant sum has been given to various charities through Coffee@Quay.

For our Harvest Offering this year, we have given £787.50 to Tools with a Mission, alongside a vast number of tools to be distributed to the developing world. We also took a great number of goods to the Salvation Army foodbank and a number of Boxes were donated to Operation Christmas Child.

It's incredibly encouraging, that, together the church has given in excess of £40,000 in this past financial year to various different Christian organisations and charities.

We also believe that God has blessed us with the buildings that we have, and their purpose is not fully utilised if we keep them solely for ourselves. They need to be available for use so that we can become a community hub. This is part of our vision, to be Good News to our community. We have continued to work closely with Barnabas Preschool who use our buildings, and this has led to great partnerships being developed, and presented us with another frontline opportunity. We were delighted when they received an Outstanding Ofsted inspection this year. We also have had our buildings utilised by Footsteps Counselling Service, Christians Against Poverty, Woodbridge Town Council, Woodbridge Society, ActivLives and hosted NCT classes.

It is also important to acknowledge that giving isn't limited to finance, and so many people have given very sacrificially of their time over the course of this year, without which, many of the ministries and events the church has laid on would not have happened.

## **Hands that Move**

### *Deepening and Increasing the Kingdom of God through lives rooted in Jesus*

25 new church family members have joined us, as part of our 'Joining in' session. Here they heard about the ministry of the church, were able to share their story, and had the opportunity to covenant with us. This feels like a real discipleship step and moves away from the old-style interview and report setup that was in place. It is an example of the growth that we are seeing in the church. However we also want people to be growing in their own walk of discipleship. From joining in, to small groups, there are opportunities to journey together with fellow pilgrims.

Church small groups are the primary place where we receive pastoral care, encouragement, and the opportunity to grow in relationship with one another as we '**do life together.**' Our small groups haven't quite grown in number this year, yet we recognise the importance of this and have identified it as a core priority for 2025.

Our Origin Youth Group continues to thrive and flourish, with approximately 20 secondary school age children taking part in the Sunday evening Youth Program. They also had a Weekend away this year, which has been incredibly successful and influential in our young people's walk with Jesus.

## **Summary**

2024 was the year where we said that we would try to do more. As we have gone through this year, we have seen the church pick up a great amount of momentum. We continue to be excited by the growth that we have seen, and we believe this has been largely down not to programmes but a heavy emphasis on relational mission. We have recognised that we needed to invest in staffing and additional services, this has been a challenge that has been willingly accepted by the church family. We are grateful to God for all that he has done among us. It feels as though it has been a year that whilst there has been some numerical growth, there has also been a growth in depth, as people are taking their discipleship more seriously. We are continually bewildered by what has been happening, and excited about what God might be leading us into next.