



Sandwell Churches Link Annual Report and Audited Accounts

December 2020

Report of Chair of Trustees 2020

1. Induction of Strategic Coordinator: although James Lynch joined SCL in November 2019, his continued induction marked the start of 2020. This led into an exploration of how James would help trustees take SCL forwards, working with existing and new networks of churches and communities. James has worked with trustees and local partners and together we identified some new ways to help churches support communities, looking at resources and talents within local churches.
2. A fresh Business Plan to meet the challenge: trustees commissioned Gareth Brown, a partner with local and national expertise, to work on development of the refreshed business plan. The revised plans have built on our existing work with themed and town networks which help residents to find solutions to financial pressures through debt advice, education support groups; to tackle homelessness through a Community of Practice working together on initiatives like "Housing First"; to promote food sovereignty through local initiatives such as Food Pantries, cafés and lunch groups.
We asked: "what further initiatives could arise if more churches were able to open doors to local communities. Initially, in a climate of Covid19, this seemed a paradox but Covid19 has created a climate for new thinking & new ways of working together.
3. Covid19- more challenges and solutions: just as our work was developing, Covid19 and "lockdown" presented new challenges to us. James had been meeting local churches to explore the new approach and suddenly, Coordinator, trustees, churches and partners , alongside communities were plunged into a new world of lockdown, social distancing, Zoom, remote working and isolation. Churches faced a range of pressures, and responded in very different ways. One of the ways SCL was able to help in this new world was to listen to churches, understand the pressures and feed back our findings from that work. Our study in autumn 2020, "Reflections on Covid19 ", has helped to establish a new rapport with churches and will inform our future work with partners.
4. Partnerships and Resources: we have built on existing partnerships and with the development of the new business plan have been able to establish new partnerships and new resources, which promise to take our work to a different level. The continuing and additional support from the Walter Stanley Trust enabled us to continue through the most difficult part of 2020. It has paved the way, not only for the growth of our work with churches in West Bromwich, but for our new partnerships with All Churches and St Peter's Trust Saltley. The "Opening New Doors" proposal was accepted for major transformational funding in autumn 2020 and work started at once, using the feedback from the reflections with churches.

5. Personnel, partners and trustees: We have developed a project team of trustees and partners to support the Strategic Coordinator in the development of "Opening New Doors". We welcomed Trevor Palfreyman (recently retired as CEO of Adullam Housing Association) and Elizabeth Farley(Mission Enabler for Black Country Methodist circuit). Trevor has led on the development of our risk register. Esther Spence and Hazel Bloxham have led on the development of new policies. David Gould has taken on the supervision of our Strategic Coordinator, James Lynch. James was furloughed during lockdown and returned in the autumn, working initially from home. Our longstanding advisor from Diocese of Lichfield, Rev Dr David Primrose retired in the autumn. Our thanks to him for all his support for SCL. I would also like to thank all our trustees, our current advisor from THRIVE (Diocese of Birmingham), Fred Rattley, James Lynch, Strategic Coordinator, and all our partners for their work with us and local churches on our 21st century mission to tackle poverty in Sandwell.
6. Message from retiring Chair: During 2020 I notified trustees that I would be resigning as chair at the end of 2020, in preparation for a move to be closer to family. Over the past 8 years, with the support of staff, trustees and advisors SCL has developed as a CIO, created significant partnerships, networks and new initiatives from our work on Just Finance, a Food Action Plan for Sandwell to a Community of Practice on solutions to Homelessness and most recently Opening New Doors, helping churches to look differently at how they use their talents and resources. All involve an asset based approach to work with communities. Our future work must be asset based, in order not just to be sustainable, but to enable communities to take charge. The values of ubuntu are at the heart of what we do- we are interconnected and that is the essence of our being. We support each other because of a core Gospel message to love our neighbour and show love in action. This means enabling people to come together, engage, find solutions and by sharing resources multiply them.

Sandwell Churches' Link Accounts for 2019/20

	2019	2020
Receipts	£	£
CUF	20,000	3,750
Walter Stanley Trust	5,000	10,000
Sustain Alliance	2,500	2,500
Cadbury Trust		5,000
AllChurches		31,232
Total	27,500	52,482
Expenditure		
Coordinator's Salary	26,167	21,277
Rent for office	150	300
Food Power	1,697	4,500
Community of Practice	209	
Coordinator's Expenses	603	971
Other expenditure	720	677
Consultant's fee		1,250
Total	29,546	28,975
Surplus / (Deficit)	(2,046)	23,507
Brought forward	10,211	8,165
Balance at	31 Dec 2019	31 Dec 2020
31,672	8,165	

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Accounts prepared by Hazel Bloxham (Hon Treasurer)

**Accounts examined by Eric Moore FCA 5 February
2021**