



Diverse Church

Report of the Trustees

For the year ended 31 December 2024

The trustees present their report, which covers the period from 1 January 2024 to the year end 31 December 2024, together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2024. The trustees have prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis as the total income of the charity is less than the SORP threshold for the year, in line with Charity Commission guidance, CC15d November 2016.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Charity number

1179441

Correspondence Address

18 Albert Drive
Belfast
BT6 9JH

Trustees

Revd Dr S.M. Wells (Chair – resigned January 2024)

R. C. Kehoe (Chair as of January 2024)

A. J. Irwin

P.S. Counsell (until June 2024)

V. Taylor-Blackford

K. J. Allen

A. H. Tooms

S. H. Brooke

N. C. J. Dawson

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, the Constitution, and is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO - Foundation) and was registered with the Charities Commission on 3 August 2018.

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

The trustees of the charity are responsible for the leadership and management of the charity to fulfil the objects of the charity in line with Christian principles and legal requirements. Appointment of additional trustees is the responsibility of the existing trustees.

Risk management

The trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Diverse Church was founded in 2014 by Revd Sally Hitchiner, who over the next several years established and developed the organisation, and served as our first National Director. Diverse Church was established and exists to foster Christian communities across the United Kingdom and Ireland that enable young LGBTQIA+ people to celebrate their identity and flourish in faith. These communities provide a safe space for LGBTQIA+ Christians to share their experience of their sexuality and gender identity, to discuss the interrelation of their sexuality or gender identity and theology, and to support each other. Diverse Church also supports young LGBTQIA+ people for whom faith has been a particularly challenging part of their lives and experiences, who may no longer identify with faith as a result.

The objects of the Church are for the benefit of the public, and are

The advancement of the Christian faith, in particular, but not exclusively, amongst lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) Christians, and human rights, through 1. The promotion of religious harmony; 2. The promotion of a public sentiment that will put an end to discriminatory treatment of LGBTQIA+ Christians; 3. The provision of pastoral support; 4. The provision of theological discussion; 5. And other related activities as the trustees from time to time think fit.

In accordance with its aims, Diverse Church has planned and delivered a range of support and activities throughout the year. This support and the activities were planned with due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion.

Diverse Church participants become part of online cohorts using a closed Facebook group, and create communities of 50-100 members. Given the situations many of the young LGBTQIA+ people who join Diverse Church have experienced, the welcome into the group is especially important. The beauty and importance of this welcoming process where people, who have often been very isolated, are able to talk to somebody supportive who will listen, potentially even for the first time, cannot be underestimated. It is easy to forget just how powerful and important this is, but a beautiful quote from one of the members sums it up perfectly:

So I'm sure most, if not all, of us have struggled with the idea that we had to choose either our sexual identity or our faith/religion. But being here, it's so comforting and reassuring to have a place/group where both (y)our faith and sexuality can coexist without having to choose one, or be more one way than the other.

There are online meetups and discussions for encouragement and support, with communication and support from Diverse Church facilitators and local and national physical meet ups arranged, as an additional layer of development. These online meetups and discussions and physical meetups include training, thematic workshops, encouragement, wellbeing activities and collective acts of worship or reflection.

Aims and purposes

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that Diverse Church fulfils its charitable aims, which are to advance the Christian faith, in particular, but not exclusively, amongst LGBTQIA+ Christians, and human rights, through the promotion of religious harmony, the promotion of a public sentiment that will put an end to discriminatory treatment of LGBTQIA+ Christians, the provision of pastoral support, the provision of theological discussion and other related activities.

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Charitable activities and review of the year

Diverse Church is open to all LGBTQIA+ young adults, with a faith or of no faith, to provide support, and encouragement at what can be very difficult parts of the individual's journey.

During 2024, Diverse Church supported members, parents and carers, friends and wider communities such as charities, community groups and faith-based groups in a range of ways, including peer support groups, training, workshops, mentoring, reflections and social events. A total of 270 LGBTQ+ young adults, 220 parents and carers, 25 young people (under 18 years old), 16 community based organisations and 63 faith leaders have been supported by DC throughout 2024. Moreover we have a wide public reach, with 4.8K followers on X, 830 Facebook page followers and 2.5K members on our Diverse Church Friends Facebook group.

Young people continue to join DC, finding community which helps them breathe, think, feel, connect and be themselves. With many LGBTQIA+ people already experiencing oppression and discrimination in their family units, workplaces, hometowns and faith groups, inequalities (e.g. health and education inequalities) can be disproportionately painful for many people involved in DC communities. The need for such safe, brave and inclusive spaces continues. DC takes a blended approach to provision of support and services, with a mixture of online and in person programmes, always prioritising the needs and wellbeing of the communities. In the words of a DC member,

"I have been told so many times in so many ways that I am bad, wrong and sinful. I have been removed from positions of leadership purely because of my gender identity. It has been so restorative for my heart, mind and soul to find a community where I can not only be myself in safety, but where this is celebrated." – DC Member

As well as facilitated workshops and sessions lead primarily by the DC Director, DC members themselves have taken opportunities to contribute both within the DC communities and more publicly through DC's platforms. Members have generously shared their stories, offered activities for the wider groups using their skill sets, provided advice and information, mentored, written poems or songs, prayed, campaigned, networked and collaborated. Special events were held throughout the year, often linking with significant calendar dates such as Pride month, Lent and Advent. The willingness of DC members to open their minds, hearts and lives has sustained communities that truly feel connected, as well as resourcing the public and wider society to become more mindful and inclusive in their own communities and lives.

As an organisation, we were able to scale up many of the projects and community supports that are vital for LGBTQIA+ young people, young adults and their families with thanks to funding from The Benefact Trust. Many ideas and plans have been set in motion, or already come to fruition. We are particularly proud about having commissioned some of our creative members to host a podcast which had the capacity to reach LGBTQIA+ people who need it the most, particularly young people in non-affirming spaces. This podcast was an amazing element of the project which we would not have been able to do without this funding. The podcast in 2024 had 289 listeners from across 14 different countries. The hosts both expressed how thankful they were to be able to utilise the skills they had, and indeed to gain more through this experience. They are both LGBTQIA+ in terms of their lived experience, and they were generous with their own stories on the podcast as well as sourcing excellent other stories and facilitating interesting and meaningful conversations. We know through feedback and listeners getting in touch that for most who tuned in, this was interesting, and for some it was life-saving.

The impact of training, workshops and mentoring have been far reaching and beneficiaries of the workshops have gone on to continue to disseminate information more widely within their professional and personal contexts. In a social context where LGBTQIA+ young people are so much more likely to struggle with both major and minor mental health difficulties as well as experience social challenges such as harassment, prejudice and exclusion, we are delighted to see that so many young people themselves and their families have received the one to one, small group and larger group support, with a focus on wellbeing, skills growth, safety and inclusive community.

To quote some members and beneficiaries themselves on the benefits of this grant puts the impact into perspective:

"I am autistic and queer. I am generally not understood well in terms of wider society. I have loved being in DC and having the opportunity to both participate and lead on things, where my skills are valued and where I can develop more without always having to mask my own needs." – DC Volunteer Leader

"I have been able to connect with my daughter so much more since she has been involved with DC. It's like she has found a way to like herself again, which has helped her open up more to letting me love her for exactly who she is."– DC Parent

Staff and Volunteers

All areas of Diverse Church are staffed by volunteers who freely give their time and skills, and without whom the charity could not function. The volunteer National Director leads the direction and pastoral care of Diverse Church. The charity has been able to pay facilitation costs for significant pieces of work, thanks to funding from The Benefact Trust.

During the year all policies and procedures are reviewed (and updated where appropriate). The Safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and kept current in line with expert advice.

Connections

Diverse Church has connections with other charities and organisations, particularly those with a faith connection and / or those with an LGBTQIA+ support or advocacy focus. During the year the National Director and other Diverse Church members were invited to deliver training and facilitate workshops to other organisations on behalf of Diverse Church. These have included other charities, faith-based organisations, youth groups and educative organisations. As an organisation, we recognise the important work and support that a wide range of organisations are doing, and we take a collaborative, partnership approach.

Diverse Church has been able to provide pastoral, emotional and practical support to young LGBTQIA+ people throughout the year. In all these areas the Trustees are grateful to God for direction and provision, and wish to record their thanks to all the volunteers and participants who have sacrificially given of their time and finance to support and to equip both the Diverse Church cohorts and groups, together with the wider community. As these connections and opportunities to support young LGBTQIA+ people continue to increase, it has been very encouraging to that Diverse Church secured grant funding from Benefact Trust for two years. This has significantly supported the essential, life-giving work of DC.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Finances

As all activities of Diverse Church have generally been carried out by volunteers, fundraising was not previously considered necessary. However, as Diverse Church has grown in both numbers and opportunity, it has become clear that to continue to support the community well, to increase the effectiveness and the reach of Diverse Church and to fulfil the charitable aims, it would be advantageous if it were possible, in future years, for the National Director role to become a full-time remunerated post.

Benefact Trust (Previously All Churches Trust) awarding Diverse Church a total of £20,000 per year for 2022 and 2023. The first payment was received in early 2022 and the final payment in January 2023. The Benefact Trust permitted the underspend of funding to be carried into 2024.

Ongoing fundraising and funding opportunities continue to be a priority for DC to build upon the vital support we provide, and to grow towards sustainability for the future.

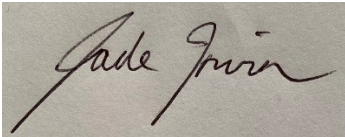
Reserves policy

The Charity has a Reserves Policy that identifies a prudent level of reserves, based on holding an amount equal to circa six months operating costs. This is always under regular review and will be updated as fundraising activities allow the implementation of the strategy for establishing remunerated key posts within Diverse Church.


Approved by order of the board of Trustees on 30th September 2025, and signed on its behalf by



Rachel Kehoe - Chair of Trustees (appointed 15th January 2024)



Jade Irwin – Trustee and National Director



CHARITY COMMISSION

FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name

DIVERSE CHURCH

No (if any)

1179441

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from

Period start date

To

Period end date

01/01/2024

31/12/2024

CC16a

Section A Receipts and payments

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds	Bank Current Account	18,792	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	18,792	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	R. Kehoe	Rachel Kehoe	30/09/2025	
	Angela Jade Irwin	Angela Jade Irwin	30/09/2025	