

Holding fast to God's promises.

"For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"

This year began on a wave of hope and excitement as we celebrated the completion of the building phase of our Energise project, dedicating the newly refurbished spaces within our building to God's service on May 13th 2023 and it ends with us holding fast to God's promises for both the church and our pastor Tim, as Tim battles with poor health and we begin a period of pastoral vacancy. However, throughout it all God has been our constant companion, our hope and our provider. As we look back over the last twelve months it is amazing how much ground we have covered despite numerous challenges. Time and time again prayers have been answered just at the right time.

When we embarked on the Energise Project, we took an enormous step of faith, praying that God would guide us and enable it to happen if it was His within His plans for us. Four years later, on May 13th 2023, it was a joy to show the wider community our newly created Enterprise office hub on the top floor of the building and the coffee bar in the cellar. The joy continued as we watched both areas spring into life in the months that followed. The offices were let almost immediately and the coffee bar opened in September. Getting these spaces up and running has been challenging at times. A new superfast fibre internet connection needed to be installed to enable good connection for everyone using the building. Then the resignation of our first cellar project manager and lack of volunteers meant the coffee bar could only open one day a week through the winter. However, we persevered and our prayers were answered when we were able to recruit Ian Setchell as project manager in April. We look forward to having the coffee bar open several days a week again very soon. The cellar has partnered with the charity "Renew" running a wellbeing café, Renew@Thecellar each Friday since September. A space where it is 'ok not to be ok' that is covered with a rhythm of prayer throughout the day which visitors are welcome to join in with if they wish. Many ideas for the coffee bar are being explored by Ian and the cellar management team. May God bless the use of our energise spaces and reveal His plans to us in the year ahead.

Attendance at Sunday worship has fallen slightly this year to an average of 30 each week. Several members are no longer able to get out as much as they would wish due to age and health concerns. However, we have welcomed new faces and supported two Iranian gentleman seeking asylum. Rejoicing with them when they received their 'right to remain' documents in March. Mohammad then moved away for work but Pezhman hopes to remain in Bridgwater with his wife and son joining him later in the year.

Throughout the week our building continues to bustle with community and church activities. Community groups including Blossom in Somerset, Ballet, Rock Choir and U3A groups continue to meet in our building and recently we welcomed a new support group for mums to this list. As church we continue to hold Coffee morning on Wednesdays, Make it on Monday, Friday Art and CAMEO as places where everyone is welcome to come along and friendships are made. Parents & Toddler group welcomes between 8 – 16 children each week providing a safe space for them to play while the adults make connections and support each other. This group urgently needs more helpers to be able to continue. Our small groups offer times to study God's word, prayer and build relationships.

At harvest we supported BMS world mission and Bridgwater Food Bank as part of our celebrations and joined together for a shared lunch following the service. At Christmas we joined for services of celebration with our Alive and Methodist friends as well as holding our traditional carols by candlelight service and afternoon carols for all service connecting with the wider community.

Our Christmas fayre, a cream tea at the manse, a quiz night, historic talk, film night and Martin's sixties evening gave friends opportunities to gather socially, connect a little deeper with each other and invite those from the wider community as well as raise money for our Energise, project, BMS World Mission and Home mission. All these varied activities are allowing our church to grow stronger and be more effective in our witness.

We continue to support BMS missionaries in Nepal, Alan & Megan Barker and Angus & Helen Douglas, with our prayers.

The deacons meet regularly with the leaders of Alive Christian Ministries and MSBN. This helps to ensure good communication between the congregations. As we pray and give encouragement to each other's projects and build closer connections. Again, this year we held a joint service at Christmas and Easter with Alive and continue to help them host Messy Church once a month. This important and very well attended outreach for junior aged children is also in need of more helpers from our church as sadly Tim is no longer able to be involved. An ever-present spirit of Christian love is allowing the churches to journey well together.

With the building so busy it is always in need of running repairs and general maintenance. Such as gutter and drain clearance to stop some of the rain water ingress, plumbing repairs and deep cleaning. It is a very old building and over time the roof fabrics have worn out. Rain water is finding its way in to the building in several places which will soon affect the use of the rooms if not addressed with some urgency. So, we have engaged a conservation architect to carry out a roof survey to assess and advise on the repairs needed. Then we can begin approaching grant funders hoping to gain their support. Extensive repair work will need to be undertaken in the years ahead. We hold fast to God's promises in each step of this process. As we believe He has plans for us to continue the work we do in His name in this building.

Throughout the last twelve months Tim's health has been a constant concern for prayer. He took a three-month Sabbatical in August to rest, reflect and recuperate but sadly things did not improve and in January with a heavy heart Tim explained to the church that he would be taking early retirement as his health was not going to allow him to continue as our minister. He and Karen began exploring what needed to be in place to enable Tim to retire including securing accommodation. We pray God will provide the right people to support and advise them on this journey as they prepare to leave Bridgwater in the next few months. Tim, Karen and Kez will be sorely missed by us all. Tim encouraged and inspired us during his short ministry. We truly saw God at work resourcing our Energise vision with funds and people. We pray God will bring healing and blessing to Tim in the days ahead.

In January 2024, while supporting Tim and Karen on their journey, the church began the process to seek a new minister. With Tim's blessing the deacons met with our Region minister, Rev Nigel Manges. The church held a vision day and wrote a church profile. This is currently on the BU pastoral vacancy list for minister seeking new pastorates to view. We pray God will put our church on the heart of the minister he has planned to work with us in the near future. In the meantime, His work doesn't stop so let us step forward in faith, expectant of what the future holds for our church in the year ahead. Aware that the pastoral vacancy will bring extra pressures. It will be a time when our care and pastoral support of each other will be vital and we will all need to hold fast to God's promises for us in all we do.

Bridgwater Baptist Church**Account examiners report for 2023/2024**

I find the accounts to be a true record of income and expenditure and therefore have no hesitation in signing them off.

I do raise the following concerns regarding income in some areas.

HALL RENTS.

1. Why is there no rent paid from the Portuguese church in April/May/June 2023 ?
2. As I mentioned in my report last year the rents from the Ballet Teacher are inconsistent.

We should charge a set rent for a set number of hours hall hire. Not accept what she thinks she will pay. There was no rent received in June, August, September, and November 2023 nor in January and March 2024. One needs to ask how many hours she is using the hall and divide this into the amount of rent received for the year. We received £1937 for the year.

I have done some investigated what she charges for lessons . The Bridgwater School of Ballet established in 1972 and is run by Diane Turner charges.

September 11th to Christmas £57 for a half hour lesson for a 5 year old.
£75 for a ¾ hour lesson for an 8 year old. These are per term. And for adults £6 per week. For a ¾ hour lesson.

Therefor Sep. to Christmas taking out a week for October half term leaves 9 weeks of lesson. School have 13 weeks holidays a year leaving 39 weeks for lessons. We have received rent for 26 weeks. Her income for 39 weeks with just one lesson per week for these three groups is as follows.

5 year olds £6.33 x 39 = £246-87 x 10 children = £2716

8 year olds £8-33 x 39 = £324-87 x 10 children = £3249

Adults £6 x 39 = £234 x 5 adults = £ 1170

TOTAL £7135

It was difficult for my sauce to ask too many questions but bearing in mind she does lessons for groups from 3year going onto grade 8 .then I suspect she must have at least 6 classes a week netting her an income of £14,270 leaving a profit of £12,333 per annum for 39 weeks work. I would appear we are grossly undercharging her.

3. OFFICES

There is no income and expenditure for the offices therefore putting the church in a situation whereby it doesn't know whether or not it is covering its costs.

The rents should be paid into a separate bank account so that we can prove we are using the money for the correct purpose. As I understand it the office income is to be used for the cellar café to be a facility for the community. If this is correct then we should show,

INCOME

Office rentals

Café Sales.

EXPENDITURE

Cafe manager's salary

Ingredients for cake making plus purchases of soft drinks, coffee, tea etc.

Office electricity, café electricity,

WiFi

Water.

Maintenance of offices and café.

This is the only way we will know whether or not it is a viable venture.

I suggest a quotation be obtained from The Electricity supplier to have individual meters for each office as the tenants can leave on heaters, dehumidifiers, lights etc. and not be concerned about the cost.

The cost of this work should be paid for from the rents received from the office rents alone.

Frank Pates

August 20th 2024

DEACONS/TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Apr 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024	ActualTotals
£960.00	£1,340.00	£1,920.00	£980.00	£1,070.00	£1,040.00	£1,040.00	£1,370.00	£1,160.00	£1,125.00	£1,040.00	£1,370.00	£14,415.00
£1,694.00	£555.20	£1,230.00	£589.37	£584.60	£425.00	£534.70	£325.00	£321.00	£517.00	£460.00	£464.00	£7,699.87
£515.00										£60.00	£2,270.00	£2,845.00
							£3,470.53	£20.00				£3,490.53
£91.00	£117.00	£102.30	£110.00	£115.94	£86.00	£94.00	£81.00	£93.00	£82.00	£94.00	£78.00	£1,144.24
											£35.00	£35.00
		£60.00		£1,211.00	£220.00	£123.00	£140.00				£42.00	£1,796.00
												£0.00
£150.00												£150.00
								£250.00				£250.00
												£0.00
								£250.00				£250.00
								£189.60				£189.60
								£373.27	£250.00			£623.27
										£2,594.40	£2,104.25	£4,698.65
£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£525.00	£6,300.00
		£169.98	£1,144.60	£1,233.43	£1,233.43	£1,233.43	£1,233.43	£1,569.13	£1,233.43	£1,233.43	£1,063.45	£11,347.74
£1,999.50	£1,912.00	£1,682.00	£2,755.00	£1,929.00	£1,817.00	£2,204.00	£1,933.00	£2,270.00	£2,709.00	£2,150.00	£1,855.00	£25,215.50
£5,934.50	£4,449.20	£5,689.28	£6,103.97	£6,668.97	£5,346.43	£5,754.13	£9,077.96	£7,021.00	£6,441.43	£8,156.83	£9,806.70	80,450
Apr 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024	Totals
				£64.00		£50.00				£50.00	£50.00	£214.00
												£0.00
												£0.00
£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,849.54	£2,115.60	£2,115.60	£32,726.60
												£32,940.60
									£300.00			£300.00
							£103.00		£250.00			£353.00
							£20.00		£189.60			£209.60
												£862.60
				£3,198.99								£3,189.99
												£0.00
£184.41	£189.00	£189.00	£189.00	£189.00	£189.00	£189.00	£189.00	£189.00	£189.00			£1,885.41
				£130.00		£190.00	£85.00					£405.00
				£716.86								£716.86
		£138.00				£763.08						£901.08
												£0.00
	£126.22		£172.78							£169.64		£468.64
£1,212.42	£931.51	£350.19	£72.26	£119.60	£136.55	£59.53	£276.86	£1,072.10	£1,329.80	£1,607.54	£1,128.38	£8,296.74
£686.60	£606.10	605.23	£564.10	£561.72	£491.12	£537.19	£627.36	£699.85	£812.88	£728.99	£743.46	£7,664.60
		£79.00	£296.00	£200.00			£472.00				£366.00	£1,413.00
												£0.00
£99.18			£15.78	£116.95	£117.22	£116.59	£116.59	£116.59	£116.59	£843.98	£498.28	£2,157.75
		£614.40										£614.40
												£27,713.47
£721.01	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£474.03	£5,935.34
£284.47	£284.47	£284.47	£379.29	£494.49	£521.47	£521.47	£459.49	£521.47	£521.47	£521.47	£521.47	£5,315.50
	£328.71			£496.98		£865.32			£241.66	£269.83	£86.24	£2,288.74
											1,082	£13,539.58
			£722.45	£722.45	£722.45	£722.45						£2,889.80
£2.80	£3.60	£2.40	£6.00	£2.40	£4.00	£17.60	£25.84	£20.59	£25.53	£4.80	£2.00	£117.56
												£0.00
	£368.30											£368.30
												£0.00
£34.75	£34.75	£34.75	£44.50	£44.50	£44.50	£44.50	£34.75	£34.75	£37.50	£37.50	£37.50	£464.25
												£0.00
									£297.00	£316.25		£613.25
		£380.39	£35.00				£20.00	£50.00	£19.98	£60.00	£76.38	£641.75
												£2,205.11
												this omits line 78
												£0.00
												£0.00
£6,075.18	£6,196.23	£6,001.40	£5,820.73	£10,381.51	£5,549.88	£7,400.30	£5,753.46	£6,027.92	£7,654.58	£7,199.63	£7,181.08	£77,261.36